

# A SLAVE WHO WOULD BE KING

ORAL TRADITION AND  
ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE RECENT PAST  
IN THE UPPER SENEGAL RIVER BASIN

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Front cover: The village of Bamabarayading seen at sunset  
Back cover: SRI Nexus and IFAN fieldwork team at the conclusion of the field investigations  
in the exploration camp at Sabodala

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# Contents

<b>List of Figures and Tables .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>List of Tables.....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Methodology .....	1
Regulatory Framework of the SCHP.....	1
International Regulatory Framework .....	1
Senegalese Regulatory Framework.....	3
Site Significance.....	3
Project Chronology and Summary Results .....	4
Report Organization .....	5
<b>Chapter 2: Environment and Culture History in Southeastern Senegal .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Environmental Setting.....	6
Geologic Background.....	7
Cultural Setting .....	9
Paleolithic Assemblages .....	9
Neolithic Assemblages .....	12
The Iron Age and Historical Period.....	12
Ethnography of Southeastern Senegal.....	13
Research Questions .....	14
Paleolithic .....	14
Neolithic .....	15
The Iron Age and Historical Periods .....	15
<b>Chapter 3: Village Histories and Ethnography within the Oromin Sabodala Concession.....</b>	<b>16</b>
Objectives and Methodology .....	16
Culture History and Affiliation in the OJVG Concession.....	18
Phase 1: The Time of the Bassari .....	20
Phase 2: The Soumare Soninke Period.....	20
Phase 3: The Cissokho Lineage Period .....	20
Village Histories and Settlement Dynamics.....	22
Society and Social Organization .....	27
Malinke Society.....	31
Peul Society .....	31
Chieftaincy.....	31
Merchants .....	32
Healers .....	33
Endogamous Craft Specialists.....	33
Blacksmiths and Potters.....	33
Griots.....	33
Slave Descendants .....	34
Cultural Heritage .....	34
Public Ceremonies and Festivals.....	34
Sacred Sites.....	35
Industrial Mining and Local Community: Opportunities and Concerns .....	39
Conclusion.....	39
<b>Chapter 4: Archaeological Field Methods.....</b>	<b>41</b>
Pedestrian-Survey Methodology .....	41
Detailed Site Mapping .....	44
Site Test Excavations.....	46
Summary .....	47

<b>Chapter 5: Archaeological Survey and Test-Excavation Results .....</b>	<b>48</b>
Material Culture and Features .....	48
Material Culture .....	48
Feature Types and Functions .....	50
Site Types .....	50
Resource-Processing Sites .....	54
Field Houses .....	56
Site 129 .....	57
Site 133 .....	57
Site 155 .....	58
Farmsteads .....	59
Site 11 .....	61
Site 78 .....	64
Site 79 .....	64
Site 147 .....	65
Site 149 .....	67
Site 151 .....	68
Hamlets and Villages .....	71
Hamlets (Example Site 77, with Site 153, and Site 130) .....	75
Site 77, with 153 .....	75
Site 130 .....	82
Villages (Example Sites 71, 123, and 156) .....	87
Site 71 .....	87
Site 123 .....	95
Site 156 .....	99
Polity Centers .....	102
Sites 8, 9, 10, 11, 78, and 79 .....	108
Ideological/Sacred Sites .....	118
Site 1 .....	118
Site 157 .....	122
Excavation of Feature 1 .....	124
Excavation of Feature 3 .....	124
Discussion of Site Settlement Types and Distribution .....	127
<b>Chapter 6: Artifact Analyses .....</b>	<b>129</b>
Ceramic Sampling and Analysis Procedures .....	129
Method for Analyzing Body Sherds .....	129
Plain Sherds .....	130
Slip .....	130
Plastic Impression .....	130
Subtractive Motifs .....	130
Twine Impressions .....	130
Cord-Wrapped Stick .....	130
Carved Wood Roulette .....	130
Incision .....	133
Channeling .....	133
Other subtractive motifs .....	133
Additive Motifs .....	133
Multiple Attributes and Unidentified Motifs .....	135
Method for Analyzing Rim Sherds .....	135
Rim Attributes and Morphology .....	135
Simple Rims .....	135
Everted Rims .....	135
Collared Rims .....	135
Other Rims .....	138
Results of Ceramic Analysis .....	138
Small Finds .....	141
Conclusion .....	143
Lithic Analysis .....	144

Field Collection Strategy and Analytical Procedures .....	144
Results .....	146
Lithic Tools from Test Excavations .....	147
Lithic Material from Surface Contexts .....	147
Debris .....	147
Flakes .....	147
Cores .....	150
Handaxes .....	150
Milling Implements.....	152
Grinding Slabs .....	152
Pestles .....	152
Pierres à Cupules.....	153
Traces of Wear on Milling Implements.....	153
Hammerstones.....	155
Axes .....	155
Miscellaneous .....	156
Conclusions .....	156
<b>Chapter 7: Geoarchaeological Investigations.....</b>	<b>158</b>
Introduction .....	158
Preliminary Buried-Site Model .....	158
Methods.....	158
Field Methods .....	158
Laboratory Methods .....	166
Results .....	168
Backhoe Trenching.....	168
Proposed Freshwater-Reservoir Area.....	168
Proposed Haul-Road Alignment .....	180
Summary and Discussion.....	180
Buried-Site Probability .....	182
Association of Landforms and Archaeological Sites.....	183
Conclusions .....	184
<b>Chapter 8: Where Are the Sites, and Why Are They There? A Methodological Exercise in Archaeological Predictive Modeling .....</b>	<b>194</b>
The History of Predictive Modeling.....	194
Inductive versus Deductive Models .....	196
The SCHP Predictive Models.....	199
Buried-Sites Model.....	199
Surface-Sites Model .....	199
Combined-Sensitivity Map.....	201
Summary.....	204
Why Are Sites Located Where They Are? The Case for Agent-Based Modeling.....	205
Conclusions .....	207
<b>Chapter 9: Settlement Dynamics in Beledougou in the Second Millennium A.D.....</b>	<b>208</b>
Beledougou in Context.....	208
Continuity in Settlement.....	210
Settlement Dynamics.....	210
Masato: The Archaeology of a West African Polity Centre .....	213
Sabodala and Internal Frontiers .....	214
The Past Living in the Present.....	214
<b>Chapter 10: Summary.....</b>	<b>216</b>
Significance Evaluations .....	216
Sacred and Traditional Resources .....	216
Archaeological Sites.....	217
Impact Analysis.....	221
<b>Appendix A: Gazetteer of Sites .....</b>	<b>224</b>
<b>Appendix B: Gazetteer of Features and Sites.....</b>	<b>241</b>

<b>Appendix C: Ceramic Decorative Techniques.....</b>	<b>252</b>
<b>Appendix D: Ceramic Rim Sherd Data .....</b>	<b>255</b>
<b>References Cited.....</b>	<b>263</b>
<b>Agricultural-Soil Productivity of the Oromin Joint Venture Group .....</b>	<b>272</b>
<b>Concession, Senegal .....</b>	<b>272</b>
Introduction .....	272
Methods.....	272
Field Methods.....	273
Analytical Methods .....	279
Results .....	280
Evaluation of Agricultural-Soil Productivity for the OJVG Concession .....	280
Agricultural Management in Mamakhono .....	285
Traditional Malinké Agriculture.....	286
Agricultural Field Study.....	295
Assessment of Mining Effects on Agricultural Systems .....	307
OJVG Concession.....	307
Mamakhono .....	309
Summary and Recommendations .....	309
<b>References Cited.....</b>	<b>31</b>

## List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1.1. The OJVG concession.....	2
Figure 2.1. Hydrology map of the project area.....	8
Figure 2.2. Known Neolithic sites in Senegal (after Guitat 1970).....	10
Figure 2.3. Known sites in Senegal, including Neolithic and Paleolithic sites (after Ravisé 1975).....	11
Figure 3.1. Map of villages in OJVG concession.....	17
Figure 3.2. Map showing polities around the OJVG concession.....	20
Figure 3.3. Schematic time line for the villages in the OJVG concession.....	26
Figure 3.4. 1926 map, scale 1:200,000.....	27
Figure 3.5. 1933 map.....	28
Figure 3.6. 1957 map.....	29
Figure 3.7. Historic map of 1960.....	30
Figure 3.8. Locations of known sacred and archaeological sites as of May 2009.....	38
Figure 4.1. Terrain in the Oromin Joint Venture Group concession.....	43
Figure 4.2. Visibility with wet-season grass.....	44
Figure 4.3. Survey crew at work.....	44
Figure 4.4. Institut Français d'Afrique Noire Fiche de Prospection.....	45
Figure 4.5. In-camp artifact processing.....	45
Figure 4.6. Global Positioning System recording.....	46
Figure 4.7. Sample excavation unit at Site 156.....	47
Figure 5.1. Map of all sites in the OJVG concession.....	49
Figure 5.2. Legend for all GIS-generated site maps.....	50
Figure 5.3. A currently occupied domestic hut with foundation stones.....	51
Figure 5.4. A current storage hut with foundation stones.....	51
Figure 5.5. A typical 'rock alignment,' or cairn; Feature 4 from Site 156.....	52
Figure 5.6. A typical rock square or rectangle from Site 156.....	52
Figure 5.7. Map showing all resource-processing sites.....	53
Figure 5.8. Acheulean biface tools.....	54
Figure 5.9. Map of all field house sites.....	55
Figure 5.10. Site 129.....	56
Figure 5.11. Site 133.....	57
Figure 5.12. Feature 1 at Site 155, a stone circle.....	58
Figure 5.13. Feature 3 at Site 155.....	59
Figure 5.14. Map of the farmsteads discovered during the surveys.....	60
Figure 5.15. GIS-generated map of Site 11.....	61
Figure 5.16. Feature 1 at Site 11.....	62
Figure 5.17. Feature 2 at Site 11.....	62
Figure 5.18. Feature 4 at Site 11.....	63
Figure 5.19. Feature 8 at Site 11.....	63
Figure 5.20. Feature 1 at Site 147.....	64
Figure 5.21. Feature 8 at Site 147.....	65
Figure 5.22. GIS-generated map of Site 147.....	66
Figure 5.23. GIS-generated map of Site 149.....	67
Figure 5.24. Map of Feature 3 at Site 149.....	68
Figure 5.25. Map of Feature 2 at Site 149.....	69
Figure 5.26. Feature 2 at Site 149.....	69
Figure 5.27. Feature 4 at Site 149.....	70
Figure 5.28. Feature 3 under excavation. Note buried inverted pottery vessel to right of photo board.....	70
Figure 5.29. Feature 5 at Site 149.....	71
Figure 5.30. GIS-generated map of Site 151.....	72
Figure 5.31. Feature 2 at Site 151.....	73
Figure 5.32. Feature 6 at Site 151.....	73
Figure 5.33. Map of all hamlets, villages, and polity centers in the OJVG concession.....	74
Figure 5.34. GIS-generated map of Site 77 showing the three loci.....	76
Figure 5.35. Feature 1 at Site 77.....	77
Figure 5.36. Feature 2 at Site 77.....	77
Figure 5.37. Feature 3 at Site 77.....	78
Figure 5.38. Feature 2 at Site 153.....	78
Figure 5.39. Feature 5 at Site 77.....	79
Figure 5.40. Feature 1 at Site 153.....	79
Figure 5.41. Feature 1 at Site 153.....	80
Figure 5.42. Mapping a feature at Site 77.....	80
Figure 5.43. Recording a feature at Site 77.....	81
Figure 5.44. Archaeological feature (Site 77) with current farmstead in background.....	81
Figure 5.45. GIS-generated map of 130.....	82
Figure 5.46. Record drawing of Feature 6 at Site 130.....	83

Figure 5.47. Record drawing of Feature 111 at Site 130.....	84
Figure 5.48. Feature 7 at Site 130, a rock alignment.....	84
Figure 5.49. Feature 12 at Site 130.....	85
Figure 5.50. Beginning mapping Feature 6 at Site 130.....	85
Figure 5.51. Feature 7 at Site 130, subsquare.....	86
Figure 5.52. Feature 1 at Site 130 prior to cleaning and recording.....	86
Figure 5.53. Feature 12 at Site 130 prior to cleaning.....	87
Figure 5.54. GIS-generated site map of Site 71.....	88
Figure 5.55. Feature 37 at Site 71.....	89
Figure 5.56. Feature 78 at Site 71.....	89
Figure 5.57. Feature 97, a subrectangular stone platform.....	90
Figure 5.58. Feature 86, a possible burial.....	90
Figure 5.59. Feature 101 at Site 71.....	91
Figure 5.60. Feature 100 at Site 71.....	91
Figure 5.61. Feature 3 at Site 71.....	92
Figure 5.62. Feature 8 at Site 71.....	92
Figure 5.63. Feature 30 at Site 71.....	93
Figure 5.64. Feature 4 at Site 71.....	93
Figure 5.65. Feature 20 rock alignment at Site 71.....	94
Figure 5.66. Feature 2 at Site 71, a rectangular stone platform.....	94
Figure 5.67. GIS-generated map of Site 123.....	95
Figure 5.68. Enclosure, Site 123.....	96
Figure 5.69. The enclosure wall at Site 123.....	96
Figure 5.70. Site 123 enclosure wall.....	97
Figure 5.71. Stone circle inside the enclosure wall at Site 123.....	97
Figure 5.72. Sun-square stone outside enclosure wall at Site 123.....	98
Figure 5.73. GIS-generated map of Site 156.....	100
Figure 5.74. Record drawings of features at Site 156.....	101
Figure 5.75. Feature 26 at Site 156.....	101
Figure 5.76. (a) Map and (b) excavated section of Feature 6, Site 156.....	102
Figure 5.77. Feature 5 at Site 156.....	103
Figure 5.78. Feature 10 at Site 156.....	103
Figure 5.79. Feature 14 at Site 156.....	104
Figure 5.80. Feature 19 at Site 156. Note second hut circle in the background.....	104
Figure 5.81. Feature 20 at Site 156.....	105
Figure 5.82. Feature 56 at Site 156.....	105
Figure 5.83. A stone circle at Makhana Site 24.....	106
Figure 5.84. A large oval feature at Makhana Site 24.....	107
Figure 5.85. An oval stone feature at Makhana Site 24, identified by one informant as a burial.....	107
Figure 5.86. GIS-generated map of Site 8.....	109
Figure 5.87. GIS-generated map of Sites 9 and 10.....	110
Figure 5.88. 2009 panorama of the southwest corner of the enclosure at Site 8.....	111
Figure 5.89. Overall map of enclosure at Site 8.....	111
Figure 5.90. Map of Feature 57 at Site 8, the putative mosque.....	112
Figure 5.91. Map of Feature 49 at Site 8, a putative burial. Profile A-A not reproduced here.....	112
Figure 5.92. Feature 49 at Site 8, a putative burial, prior to excavation.....	113
Figure 5.93. Feature 62 at Site 8, a putative burial.....	113
Figure 5.94. Feature 61, the enclosure wall in foreground with putative mosque.....	113
Figure 5.95. Putative mosque Feature 57 after cleaning.....	114
Figure 5.96. Excavated section through west wall of putative mosque Feature 57.....	114
Figure 5.97. Enclosure wall Feature 61 in process of excavation.....	115
Figure 5.98. Enclosure wall Feature 61 during course of excavation.....	115
Figure 5.99. Excavated section through the enclosure wall of Feature 61 at Site 8.....	116
Figure 5.100. Feature 5 at Site 9 prior to excavation.....	116
Figure 5.101. Feature 7 at Site 8, a stone circle, prior to excavation.....	117
Figure 5.102. Feature 5 at Site 9 after excavation.....	117
Figure 5.103. Feature 7 at Site 8 after cleaning, with rammed clay floor clearly visible.....	118
Figure 5.104. GIS-generated map of Site 1.....	119
Figure 5.105. Scale drawing of the initial cluster of cup/cupules at Site 1.....	120
Figure 5.106. The cup marks at Site 1 on the summit of the hill.....	120
Figure 5.107. Features 9–11 at Site 1.....	121
Figure 5.108. Feature 47. Note the size of the ‘cup mark.’.....	121
Figure 5.109. GIS-generated map of Site 157.....	122
Figure 5.110. Feature 1 at Site 157, <i>tumulus pierre</i> .....	123
Figure 5.111. Feature 9 at Site 157, <i>tumulus pierre</i> .....	124
Figure 5.112. Feature 3 at Site 157, <i>tumulus pierre</i> .....	125
Figure 5.113. Feature 5 at Site 157, <i>tumulus pierre</i> .....	125
Figure 5.114. Feature 6 at Site 157, <i>tumulus pierre</i> .....	126
Figure 5.115. Scale map of Feature 1, pre-excavation.....	126



Figure 5.116. Scale drawing of Feature 3 during excavation. ....	127
Figure 5.117. Graphical presentation of percentages of the site in each site type. ....	128
Figure 6.1. Subtractive decorative techniques, twine impression (TW) .....	131
Figure 6.2. Subtractive decorative techniques, sabot and cord-wrapped stick .....	131
Figure 6.3. Subtractive decorative technique: carved wooden roulette (CWR) .....	132
Figure 6.5. Subtractive decorative techniques .....	133
Figure 6.6. Subtractive decorative techniques .....	134
Figure 6.7. Subtractive decorative techniques .....	134
Figure 6.8. Everted rim types.....	136
Figure 6.9. Major rim classes in the SCHK collection.....	137
Figure 6.10. Simple rim types.....	137
Figure 6.11. Collared rim types.....	138
Figure 6.12. Frequency of plain and decorated body sherds in the SCHK collection.....	138
Figure 6.13. Frequency of plain and decorated body sherds from test excavations.....	139
Figure 6.14. Rim morphology and decorative techniques documented in the SCHK collection.....	139
Figure 6.15. Rim morphology and decoration techniques documented at Site 8, Masato.....	140
Figure 6.16. Possible ritual vessel fragments 142.....	141
Figure 6.17. Small finds from the SCHK collection.....	141
Figure 6.18. Small finds from the SCHK collection.....	142
Figure 6.19. Lithic tools from the SCHK collection.....	149
Figure 6.20. Centripetal bifacial cores from the SCHK collection.....	150
Figure 6.21. Centripetal unifacialcores from the SCHK collection.....	150
Figure 6.22. Handaxes from the SCHK collection .....	151
Figure 6.23. Acheulean handaxes.....	152
Figure 6.24. Milling implements from the SCHK collection.....	153
Figure 6.25. <i>Pierre à cupules</i> from Site 137.....	154
Figure 6.26. <i>Pierre à cupules</i> from Site 71.....	154
Figure 6.27. Hammerstone from Site 233.....	155
Figure 6.28. Examples of axes from the SCHK collection.....	155
Figure 6.29. Partially polished axe from Site 294.....	156
Figure 7.1. Laterite exposed on an old geomorphic surface in the western part of the Oromin Joint Venture Group concession ...	159
Figure 7.2. Laterite exposed on an old geomorphic surface in the northern part of the Oromin Joint Venture Group concession, ..	159
Figure 7.3. Road cut showing laterite on a road south-southwest of Maka Madina.....	160
Figure 7.4. Close-up of laterite exposed in a road cut on a road south-southwest of Maka Madinal.....	160
Figure 7.5. Hilly terrain in the Masato area.....	161
Figure 7.6. Hilly terrain in the southern portion of the concession,south-southeast of Kunemba.....	161
Figure 7.7. Buried-site-probability map for the proposed freshwater-reservoir area.....	162
Figure 7.8. Aerial photograph of the proposed freshwater-reservoir area t.....	163
Figure 7.9. Idealized valley cross section showing Ruhe's slope elements.....	164
Figure 7.10. Locations of backhoe trenches in the proposed freshwater-reservoir area.....	165
Figure 7.11. Backhoe excavation of Backhoe Trench 6.....	167
Figure 7.12. Backhoe excavation of Backhoe Trench 11 in the proposed haul-road alignment.....	167
Figure 7.13. Photograph of geoarchaeology crew members screening fill from a backhoe trench.....	168
Figure 7.14. Channel of an intermittent stream during the dry season in the proposed freshwater-reservoir area.....	169
Figure 7.15. Stratigraphy of the T0 terrace fill exposed in the creek bank in the proposed freshwater-reservoir area.....	170
Figure 7.16. Profile of Backhoe Trench 2 in the proposed freshwater-reservoir area.....	172
Figure 7.17. Profile of Backhoe Trench 3 in the proposed freshwater-reservoir area.....	173
Figure 7.18. Profile of Backhoe Trench 6 in the proposed freshwater-reservoir area.....	173
Figure 7.19. West view of a remnant of T1 terrace in the proposed freshwater-reservoir area, west of Backhoe Trench 5.....	174
Figure 7.20. Profile of Backhoe Trench 4 in the proposed freshwater-reservoir area.....	174
Figure 7.21. Profile of Backhoe Trench 1 in the proposed freshwater-reservoir area.....	175
Figure 7.22. East overview of the proposed tailings-reservoir area from a hilltop.....	176
Figure 7.23. Location of Backhoe Trench 9 on the T0 terrace (floodplain), in the proposed tailings-reservoir area.....	176
Figure 7.24. Channel of an intermittent stream in the proposed tailings-reservoir area (near Backhoe Trench 9).....	177
Figure 7.25. Profile of Backhoe Trench 9 in the proposed tailings-reservoir area.....	177
Figure 7.26. Profile of Backhoe Trench 7 in the proposed tailings-reservoir area.....	178
Figure 7.27. Location of Backhoe Trench 8 on the T1 terrace, in the proposed tailings-reservoir area.....	178
Figure 7.28. Profile of Backhoe Trench 8 in the proposed tailings-reservoir area.....	179
Figure 7.29. Profile of Backhoe Trench 10 in the proposed tailings-reservoir area.....	179
Figure 7.30. Profile of Backhoe Trench 11 in the proposed tailings-reservoir area.....	180
Figure 7.31. Profile of Backhoe Trench 12 in the alignment of the proposed haul road.....	181
Figure 7.32. Profile of Backhoe Trench 13 in the alignment of the proposed haul road.....	181
Figure 7.33. Buried sherd in the bank of a small, ephemeral stream northwest of Kunemba.....	183
Figure 7.34. Close-up view of the buried sherd (see Figure 7.33) in the bank of a small, ephemeral stream.....	184
Figure 7.35. Distribution of sites, differentiated by site type.....	191
Figure 7.36. Distribution of sites.....	192
Figure 7.37. Bar graph of site frequency and site type for different landforms.....	193
Figure 8.1. Surface-sites predictive model.....	201
Figure 8.2. Mine development plan superimposed on the combined high-sensitivity zones.....	202

Figure 9.1. The geopolitical context of Beledougou.....	209
Figure 9.2. Abandoned field houses and (c) stone-circle foundations for an ‘archaeological’ hut at Wassa in 2009.....	211
Figure 9.3. Bambarayading, from the approach road.....	212
Figure 10.1. Archaeological sites within the areas of direct impact (ADI).....	220
Figure 10.2. Traditional sacred properties within the areas of direct impact (ADI).....	223

### **Agricultural-Soil Productivity of the Oromin Joint Venture Group**

Figure 1. Map of agricultural fields for a 2-year period (2008–2009) .....	274
Figure 2. Locations of agricultural fields and field controls in the Mamakhono area .....	275
Figure 3. Map of Fields 9/10 and the Field 10 control, .....	276
Figure 4. Mamadou Cisse ( <i>left</i> ) and Amy Colle Seck ( <i>right</i> ) collecting soil samples from an agricultural field. ....	277
Figure 5. Massal Diagne collecting unsaturated hydraulic-conductivity data from an agricultural field.....	277
Figure 6. Mamakhono Chief Boucary Cissokho with family and local farmers.....	278
Figure 7. Map of soil types in the Oromin Joint Venture Group concession .....	281
Figure 8. White sorghum in gravelly soil at Field 13.....	288
Figure 9. Ground white sorghum in a calabas (or gourd) bowl. ....	288
Figure 10. Maize in Fields 9/10 in 2009 .....	289
Figure 11. Rice field in the northeast arm of the proposed freshwater reservoir. ....	289
Figure 12. Common crops in the project area: .....	290
Figure 13. Field 8, a mango orchard near Mamakhono .....	291
Figure 14. Close-up view of abundant mangos growing in Field 8 .....	291
Figure 16. Conical iron tip of a digging stick used in planting.....	292
Figure 15. A hoe (dabo) such as this is one of the main farming implements .....	292
Figure 17. Elevated drying rack made of wooden posts, bamboo, and thatch.....	293
Figure 18. Drying rack made of wooden poles and bamboo .....	293
Figure 19. Typical agricultural field house made of bamboo and thatch .....	294
Figure 20. Field 10 on the T0 terrace (floodplain), with maize-crop residue and tree stumps .....	295
Figure 21. Bamboo-and-post fencing around Field 10 .....	295
Figure 22. Field 9 on the T1 terrace, with maize residue.....	296
Figure 23. Field 9 control in a grassland-woodland vegetation community. ....	296
Figure 24. Field 5, a field on the T1 terrace with numerous tree stumps. ....	297
Figure 25. Field 5 control on the T1 terrace, in an area dominated by bamboo .....	297
Figure 26. Field 6 on the T0 terrace (floodplain), with sorghum-crop residue and numerous tree stumps.....	298
Figure 27. Field 6 control, with thick, grassy vegetation.....	298
Figure 28. Field 7 on a T1 foot slope, a landscape position where runoff is concentrated. ....	299
Figure 29. Field 7 control on a similar T1 foot slope (see Figure 28), south of Field 7 .....	299
Figure 30. Histograms of organic carbon, nitrogen, carbon-to-nitrogen ratios, and available phosphorus .....	304
Figure 31. Histograms of calcium, potassium, magnesium, and sodium for all fields versus all controls .....	305
Figure 32. Histograms of soil hydraulic properties. ....	306
Figure 33. Map of the Oromin Joint Venture Group concession with agricultural land (2008 and 2009).....	308

## List of Tables

Table 3.1. Questionnaire .....	18
Table 3.2. Schedule of Activities .....	19
Table 3.3. Village Settlement History.....	24
Table 3.4. Sacred Sites .....	36
Table 4.1. Sites Selected for Detailed Mapping .....	46
Table 5.1. Number and Percentages of Sites for Each Type of Site.....	48
Table 6.1. Small Finds from Survey and Test Excavations .....	143
Table 6.2. All Lithic Artifacts .....	145
Table 6.3. Distribution of Lithic Surface Collection, by Type of Blank.....	148
Table 6.4. Lithic Tools per Site .....	148
Table 6.5. Raw Material Distribution within Different Classes of Grinding Equipment.....	152
Table 6.6. Distribution of Wear Types on Different Classes of Milling Stones .....	154
Table 6.7. Raw Materials Used to Manufacture Axes .....	156
Table 7.1. Dominant Geomorphic Processes and Expected Artifact Densities for Different Slope Elements.....	164
Table 7.2. Summary of Locational and Geomorphological Information for Backhoe Trenches.....	166
Table 7.3. Summary of Locational and Geomorphological Information for Backhoe Trenches.....	169
Table 7.4. Soil Chemical Properties for Soil Profiles in Backhoe Trenches 1–6.....	170
Table 7.5. Particle-Size Distributions, Textural Class, and Geometric Means for Soil Profiles in Backhoe Trenches 1–6.....	171
Table 7.6. Association of Diagnostic Subsurface Horizons for Different Geomorphic Surfaces in the Proposed Freshwater-Reservoir. ....	182
Table 7.7. Summary of Sites Found during Geoarchaeological Survey of Stream Channels, Subsurface Exposures.....	185
Table 8.1. Means and Standard Deviations of Elevation, Slope, and Runoff Accumulation, by Sensitivity Class .....	201
Table 8.2. Comparison of Model Predictions for the Test Sample and Survey Results.....	204
Table 8.3. Comparison of Model Predictions for Residential Site Types and Survey Results.....	204
Table 8.4. Means and Standard Deviations of Elevation, Slope, and Runoff Accumulation .....	204
Table 10.1. Significance of Archaeological Site Classes for the OJVG Concession .....	219
Table 10.2. Archaeological Sites in the Areas of Direct Impact (ADI) .....	221
Table 10.3. Sacred Sites in the Areas of Direct Impact .....	222
Table C.1. Body Sherd Decorative Techniques from the SChP Collection.....	252
Table C.2. Body Sherd Decorative Techniques from Tested Sites .....	254
Table D.1. Rim Sherd Data from the SChP Collection .....	255
Table D.2. Rim Sherd Data from Tested Sites.....	262

### Agricultural-Soil Productivity of the Oromin Joint Venture Group

Table 1. Soil properties that may indicate soil degradation caused by cultivation .....	273
Table 2. General characteristics of soils in the Oromin Concession (key for Figure 4). .....	282
Table 3. Area (hectares) of soil map units and agricultural land (years 2008 and 2009) for each village.....	283
Table 4. Malinke terms for soils, crops, other agricultural terms, landforms, and animals.....	287
Table 5. GPS coordinates, summary of last crops in each agricultural field, and vegetation in field controls.....	294
Table 6. Chemical soil properties of fields and field controls. ....	300
Table 7. Particle-size distributions, textural class, and geometric means of fields and field controls. ....	301
Table 8. Chemical soil properties for soil profiles in backhoe trenches 1-6. ....	302
Table 9. Particle-size distributions, textural class, and geometric means for soil profiles in backhoe trenches 1-6. ....	303
Table 10. Unsaturated hydraulic conductivity and modeled hydraulic soil properties for fields and field controls. ....	307

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Dr Jeffrey Altschul (SRI) was the Principal Investigator for the project. The fieldwork and analyses were led by Drs Ibrahima Thiaw (IFAN) and Gerry Wait (Nexus Heritage), assisted by Drs Bradley Vierra, Jeff Homburg, Diane Douglas, and Scott Kremkau all of SRI (USA). The field archaeological team consisted of Massamba Lame, Jidere Balde, Michel Waly Diouf, Ami Collé Seck, Demba Kébé, Massal Diagne and, Mamoudou Diallo. The study of Agricultural-Soil Productivity of the Oromin Joint Venture Group Concession, Senegal was by Dr Jeffrey Homburg and Gora Bèye. We also benefitted from discussions and interpretations with Jenny Wong of Wild Resources (UK) and Mark Vendrig then of SRK Consulting. Maria Molina and the production staff of SRI assisted with the editing the text and drafting many of the figures.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The Sabodala Cultural Heritage Program (SCHP) was designed to comply with the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) for the Sabodala Gold Mining Project (Vendrig and James 2008). Located in the upper Senegal River Valley of eastern Senegal, the gold mine will be developed by the Oromin Joint Venture Group (OJVG) in a 230-km<sup>2</sup> area, herein termed the OJVG concession (Figure 1.1). The ToR identified a series of specialist baseline studies for the ESIA, including one for ‘archaeology and cultural heritage.’ For the latter, the ToR outlined the study’s objectives as:

The primary objective of the Archaeology and Cultural Heritage specialist study is to identify, map and describe significant archaeological and cultural resources/spaces in the concession area and surrounding areas affected by the proposed mining project. A protocol for dealing with new archaeological sites in the project area will be developed, along with the relevant legal framework for the project design to remain in compliance with national legal standards and World Bank guidelines. The specialist should ensure that the specialist study undertaken meets or exceeds any relevant requirements of the World Bank Group Guidelines and/or Senegal legislation. Canadian Heritage Conservation Act: [http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/h/96187\\_01.htm](http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/h/96187_01.htm) [Vendrig and James 2008:73].

### Methodology

- Description of the baseline archaeological and cultural environment of the study area
- Description of the significance of any finds in a national context
- Summary of the relevant legal framework (national legal standards and World Bank guidelines) for archaeology sites in Senegal that could affect compliance of the project design
- Provide suggestions for dealing with any new archaeology sites that may be discovered during the proposed mining project.

In March 2009, Statistical Research, Inc. (SRI), a comprehensive cultural resource management (CRM) firm based in the USA, was awarded a contract from SRK Consulting (SRK) to complete the specialist baseline study for archaeology and cultural heritage for the Sabodala gold mine ESIA. SRI served as the prime contractor for the study, which it performed in partnership

with the Institut Fondamental d’Afrique Noire (IFAN), based in Dakar, Senegal, and Nexus Heritage from the UK. The principal investigators for the SCHP were Dr. Jeffrey Altschul (SRI), Dr. Ibrahima Thiaw (IFAN), and Dr. Gerald Wait (Nexus Heritage).

### Regulatory Framework of the SCHP

Several international conventions, charters, and policies provide guidelines for assessing impacts of projects funded by the WB and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) on environmental and cultural resources. Below, we summarize these guidelines as they pertain to the Sabodala gold mine as well as Senegalese regulations developed to help protect cultural resources.

### International Regulatory Framework

The international regulatory framework for environmental impact assessment is well known at a strategic level, but less developed in terms of project implementation. The principal conventions and guidance are:

- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Convention (1972)
- World Bank Operational Policy/Bank Procedure (OP/BP) 4.11—Physical Cultural Resources
- International Finance Corporation’s Performance Standards on Social and Environmental Sustainability (2006), especially Performance Standard 8: Cultural Heritage
- International Finance Corporation Operational Policies (e.g., OP4.01) (1998)
- The Equator Principles (2006)

In the last 40 years, standards of ‘best practice’ have developed, particularly in North America and Europe, with regard to the identification, protection, and management of cultural heritage sites and resources. These standards are generally at a project-specific level and serve to support implementation of the international guidance and conventions, such as the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, the IFC’s Performance Standards and Operational Policies, and the Equator Principles, which are strategic in nature and provide little practical guidance.

UNESCO has published a series of Conventions, Declarations, and Recommendations applicable to cultural heritage projects. Senegal is a signatory to



FIGURE 1.1. THE OJVG CONCESSION.

UNESCO and the UNESCO Conventions and ordinarily uses those conventions as if they were national legislation. The principle relevant instruments are:

- UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1973)
- UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (Paris 2003)
- UNESCO Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (2005)
- UNESCO Recommendation on International Principles Applicable to Archaeological Excavations (1956)
- UNESCO Declaration Concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage (2003)
- UNESCO Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore (1989)
- UNESCO Recommendation for the Protection of Movable Cultural Property (1978)
- UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas (1976)
- UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding of Beauty and Character of Landscapes and Sites (1962)

The International Council on Monuments and Sites—ICOMOS—is an international nongovernmental

organization of professionals dedicated to the conservation of the world's historic monuments and sites. ICOMOS works for the conservation and protection of cultural heritage places. It is the only global non-government organization of its kind, dedicated to promoting the application of theory, methods, and scientific techniques to the conservation of the architectural and archaeological heritage. ICOMOS has published a number of charters, of which the following are most pertinent:

- ICOMOS Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage (1990; the Lausanne Charter)
- ICOMOS The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS charter for the conservation of places of cultural significance (1999)
- ICOMOS Charter—Principles for the analysis, conservation, and structural restoration of architectural heritage (2003)
- ICOMOS Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage (Mexico, 1999)
- ICOMOS International Charter for the conservation and restoration of monuments and sites (Venice Charter; 1964)

By following these UNESCO conventions and ICOMOS Charters, the SCHP will be in accord with international best practice.

The World Bank Operational Policy/Bank Procedure (OP/BN) 4.11 Physical Cultural Resources set out standards for the treatment of cultural heritage resources in projects financed by the WB (see Goodland and Webb 1987). The trend at the WB has been to shift the treatment of heritage sites/resources from a condition of funding to a component of the Environmental Assessment (EA) process. The WB balances EA costs to the project applicant against need for sufficient information by national regulatory agencies/departments to make informed decisions about the known and potential impacts of a project. The presence of a known or potential World Heritage site may have serious implications for a project—sites of lesser significance would have lesser implications that the proponent could managed through the mitigation/compensation plans arising from an EA. The process also highlights the risk of discovery of significant heritage sites or resources in later stages of project design, or worse, project implementation where costs of mitigation can be very disruptive—a project applicant and the WB, IFC, and other major banking institutions will want to minimize risk, which means acquiring appropriate levels of information.

In practice, WB compliance requires implementing a variety of technical studies that identify the physical cultural resources at risk for project impact. Such studies typically include (among others) documentary research, analysis of aerial photographs, archaeological surveys, geophysical surveys, geoarchaeological surveys, ethnographic research, etc. To determine the studies to include in the baseline study, the proponent, in consultation with the WB, relies heavily on professionals to assess the amount of information available for an area. The less studied an area, the more intensive the baseline surveys.

Following the baseline studies to identify cultural resources, the proponent may need to undertake additional work to evaluate the resources in terms of their scientific and cultural importance. Test excavations are often required to determine the age of sites, their nature (e.g., settlement versus industrial versus agricultural sites), their rarity (a common site type versus a rare site type), and their degree of preservation. Proponents also may use test excavations to determine the depth, extent, nature, and density of buried artifacts and features within the site.

The extent to which site testing is required is again a function of professional judgment based upon the level of background knowledge available—what constitutes ‘sufficient’ information to allow informed regulatory decisions is not an absolute. In parallel to providing sufficient information to regulators, this process also allows project applicants to seek appropriate funding to manage cultural resource risk throughout a project. This final stage is to complete a CRM plan, which specifies how significant cultural resources will be adequately mitigated so that the proponent is eligible

for WB funding. Typically, cultural resource mitigation involves avoidance or the excavation of archaeological or historical cultural properties, followed by analysis and publication or presentation. Compensation for impacts within a mining zone is another mitigation option, particularly for traditional or intangible resources, by means of interpretive presentation of heritage resources.

### **Senegalese Regulatory Framework**

The principal Senegalese heritage legislation is Law 71 of 12 January 1971. This is divided into 4 parts:

Part 1 regulates, in Articles 1–12, the listing, preservation, and refurbishment of historic buildings and properties.

Part 2 concerns archaeological excavations and discoveries in Articles 13–21. For example, Article 13 includes a provision for archaeological excavations to be authorized by the government. Other articles address the issue of the ownership of discovered artifacts, including chance-finds (Article 21). Article 20 requires archaeological discoveries to be reported to the appropriate government agency.

Part 3 (Articles 22–27) provides for penalties that may be applied in the event of actions contravening the other Articles, including financial fines or imprisonment up to 6 months.

Part 4 (Articles 28–30) provides for a Historic Buildings commission with duties of advice.

This legislation is, by comparison with most industrialized countries, relatively weak. Senegal, however, is a signatory to UNESCO and the UNESCO Conventions; the country ordinarily uses those conventions as if they were national legislation.

### **Site Significance**

As described in the previous section the ESIA process requires OJVG to identify and evaluate cultural resources in the OJVG concession. Cultural resources can have scientific and traditional value. Local communities often place traditional values on places that symbolize their history and culture. Such places can be burial grounds, traditional medicinal plants, hunting grounds, churches, mosques, markets, and so forth. Although diverse, all traditional resources share the fact that they are part of an ongoing cultural system. In addition to physical locations, local communities may have significant intangible resources that are critical to maintaining their place in the world. Areas where spirits live or witches hide may appear to be nothing more than natural hills and valleys, but their disturbance will bring on real problems to the living (Altschul 2008; Smith and Akagawa 2009).

Archaeological and historical sites are generally considered important for their scientific information. There are exceptions, such as Thiaw (2003) documented on Gorée Island with regard to the use of archaeological sites to convey the place of the slave trade in Senegalese culture. For the most part, however, to determine the importance of an archaeological site, we must place it in context. How rare is it? What can it tell us that we don't already know?

One approach to compliance with regard to traditional and intangible properties is to create a list of these resources and try to minimize impacts to them. We have found that unless one can avoid all such resources, a better approach to compliance is to view these properties as part of a system. Our strategy is to work with local leaders and elders to ensure that the system is maintained regardless of the outcome to any individual property. For example, all cultural systems must pass on norms of acceptable behavior to the next generation. Often, stories that teach these norms are embedded in the natural environment, such as a tree struck by lightning, which is said to be the burned corpse of a man who disrespected the animals that he killed. It may not be possible to save the tree, but we may be able to work with the community to either save another endangered place that embodies the same story or to provide the local community with a place within the concession to create a similar story. Consultation is the key to a successful outcome.

We have also found that it is imperative that any mitigation strategy include all traditional and intangible resources. In this manner, we are not continually reopening negotiations over complex issues.

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The OJVG concession is located in the upper Senegal River Valley, which we took as the appropriate geographic context for the SCHP. As a first step in the ESIA process, we reviewed what was known about the environment, archaeology, ethnography, and history of the region based on published and unpublished sources. From this overview, we developed a series of research questions to guide site evaluation. These questions will be refined in consultation with the peer reviewers, as necessary as we develop management plans for significant resources affected by the project.

## Project Chronology and Summary Results

- **Reconnaissance Survey and ESIA Workshop.** In February 2009, Altschul and Thiaw, together with Dr. Masamba Lane of IFAN, attended a workshop in Dakar with Senegalese government officials and representatives of SRK to finalize the ToR for ESIA. Altschul and Thiaw then spent several days at the project site, documenting the existence of archeological sites and the range of site types.
- **Ethnographic Fieldwork.** Between April 28 to May 17, 2009, Thiaw and Wait conducted ethnographic research at the 10 villages in the OJVG concession. Fieldwork focused on identifying sacred and traditional sites, documenting village histories, assessing the ethnic composition of village residents, their social position, traditional beliefs, and traditional economy. Fieldwork resulted in the identification of 46 sacred sites and 49 archaeological sites (Wait et al. 2009).
- **Predictive Model.** In June 2009, SRK authorized the creation of surface and subsurface predictive models of archaeological site location. These models were completed in September and used in the in the mine development plan.
- **Reconnaissance Geoarchaeological Survey.** Geoarchaeological fieldwork led by Dr. Jeffrey Homburg was to begin in November 2009. However, the fieldwork was aborted due to unrelated matters related to geological explorations of the gold deposit. Homburg and Dr. Diane Douglas of SRI were able to make a reconnaissance visit of the area and recorded a number of archaeological sites.
- **Archaeological Monitoring.** To ensure that mine exploration activities were not affecting archaeological sites, a monitoring program was begun in January 2010 (Altschul and Douglas 2010). Between January 18 and February 24, Thiaw and Massal Digne performed two sessions of archaeological monitoring during which they recorded 64 archaeological sites (Thiaw et al. 2010a, 2010b).
- **Archaeological Investigations and Agricultural Study.** Between February 26 and March 31, the proposed areas of direct impact (ADI) for the gold mine were intensively surveyed. Additionally, geoarchaeological studies, focused primarily on the ADI, were conducted. Combining the intensive survey with monitoring and reconnaissance surveys, we recorded 251 archaeological sites in the OJVG concession. Seventeen sites were subjected to detailed recording, and test excavations were performed at 6 sites. Beyond archaeological studies, Homburg, in collaboration with Gora Beyé, completed a study of agricultural soil quality.



- **End-of-Field Report.** In April 2010, SRI, IFAN, and Nexus Heritage compiled the results of the intensive archaeological survey of the ADI and the agricultural study into an end-of-fieldwork report (Wait et al. 2010).
- **Baseline Reports.** At the end of July 2010, the SCHP submitted draft reports on the archaeological and ethnographic studies (this volume) as well as the study of agricultural soils (Homburg and Beyé 2010). The 251 archaeological sites were classified into 7 site types, each of which was evaluated in terms of its scientific and traditional value at local, country, and regional levels. Of the 251 sites, 66 will be disturbed either completely or partially by the current mine plan. In addition to the 46 traditional sites identified, 3 will be disturbed. Recommendations were then offered for the CRM plan as well as for the long-term management of cultural resources in the OJVG concession.

### Report Organization

This report documents the results of baseline archaeological and cultural heritage studies in support of the ESIA for the Sabodala gold mine. It is organized into 10 chapters. Following this introduction, the results of background and archival research are presented in Chapter 2 in the form of a cultural historical framework. We also present the research questions that guided the evaluation of the archaeological sites documented as part of the project. Chapter 3 is devoted to the ethnographic component. Here, we present our methods as well as the results of the sacred sites survey. We also describe the social structure that prevails in the villages and how that structure affects village life. Intangible resources, such as festivals and dances, are discussed. Field and analytical methods for survey and test excavations are the subjects of Chapter 4, whereas the results of archaeological fieldwork are presented in Chapter 5. Fieldwork resulted in the collection of a relatively large artifact assemblage, which is described and compared with other regional collections in Chapter 6. In Chapter 7, we present the methods and results of the geoarchaeological investigations, which allow us to conclude that buried cultural deposits, if they exist, are restricted to small parts of the OJVG concession. We undertake a methodological examination of predictive modeling as it was used in the SCHP in Chapter 8. Settlement dynamics are explored in Chapter 9 which when combined with our interpretation of site and feature function forms the basis for site type evaluations. We conclude in Chapter 10 with an evaluation of sites in terms of their scientific and cultural significance and offer recommendations on the appropriate treatment of sites that will be affected by the development of the mine as well as on long-term management of the OJVG concession's cultural resources.

### Acknowledgements

Dr Jeffrey Altschul (SRI) was the Principal Investigator for the project. The fieldwork and analyses were led by Drs Ibrahima Thiaw (IFAN) and Gerry Wait (Nexus Heritage), assisted by Drs Bradley Vierra, Jeff Homburg and Diane Douglas, and Scott Kremkau all of SRI (USA). The field archaeological team consisted of Massamba Lame, Jidere Balde, Michel Waly Diouf, Ami Collé Seck, Demba Kébé, Massal Diagne and, Mamoudou Diallo. The study of Agricultural-Soil Productivity of the Oromin Joint Venture Group Concession, Senegal was by Jeffrey A. Homburg and Gora Bèye. We also benefited from discussions and interpretations with Jenny Wong of Wild Resources (UK) and Dr Mark Vendrig then of SLR Consulting.