PART III

THE POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE
CHAPTER SEVEN

THE CHANGING RELATIONS OF AGRARIAN PRODUCTION
AND THE POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE

Introduction

This chapter examines the existing tensions between hosts and clients, youth (particularly young women) and an older generation as they attempt to negotiate changing relations in their struggles to survive and prosper. The first part of the chapter examines existing tensions between hosts and clients as a result of the reluctance of the former to set up a communal garden. A World Bank led imperative, dating from the early 1980s, to liberalise and privatize the economy has, among other things, emphasized the need to increase export production and diversify the agricultural base through the promotion of horticultural production and the establishment of communal gardens. The establishment of a communal garden would force hosts to temporarily relinquish their rights to the land, and guarantee migrants continued access to land, thereby temporarily changing the existing relations of agrarian production. The second part of the chapter examines changing agrarian relations between older and younger generations as increasing numbers of young women and girls are being educated and moving out of farming. As children go to school in greater numbers, and a younger generation refuses to farm, the female hosts of Suma Kunda are increasingly having to rely on their clients to work and preserve their land.

Communal Gardens and the Maintenance of Host-Stranger Distinctions

Whitehead (1990) outlines two main trends in the study of African rural female farmers: the feminisation of food production and the marginalisation of women through commercial production. What is happening in post-colonial Gambia contradicts this latter trend as women’s labour is central to the successful operation of export and communal farms in the region. The drive to liberalise the economy