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Outside the autochthon-migrant configuration. Access to land, land conflicts and inter-ethnic relationships in a former pioneer area (Lower Côte d'Ivoire)

Jean-Philippe COLIN, Georges KOUAME & Debegnoun SORO¹

This paper discusses land issues in a specific Ivorian context: that of a former pioneer area located on the margin of the Agni kingdom of Sanwi, which constituted a real no man's land between the Sanwi and the Abouré kingdom of Bonoua. In that region, which started to be populated and exploited through smallholder plantation economy at the beginning of the 20th century, one does not find the autochthon – migrant dichotomy which generally structures the land issue in Southern Côte d'Ivoire. This situation therefore offers the opportunity to document the conditions of land access and the interethnic relationships in a situation with no “real” autochthonous stakeholders. Land rights and land transfers have been molded by the interplay between migration flows (first, people originating mostly from Central and Southern Côte d'Ivoire, then from Northern Côte d'Ivoire and mostly, these past decades, from Burkina Faso), the dynamics of the smallholder plantation economy (disappearance of the pioneering coffee and cocoa plantations, rise of oil palm tree and of pineapple cultivation) and the dynamics of institutions governing access to land (especially land markets). The picture that results from this study is that of a melting pot where foreigners' land ownership rights are only exceptionally contested. The crucial land issue comes from the very active land lease market, with a large acreage of land rented out to Burkinabè pineapple producers – again, without major conflicts. This situation is contrasted with the neighboring Abouré country, where a large conflict over the tenancy practices arose in 2001, the young Abouré denying the right of the Burkinabè to lease in land.

Introduction

The autochthon – migrant (Ivorian or foreigners) dichotomy structures the land issue in Southern Côte d'Ivoire. The smallholder coffee and cocoa plantation economy expanded in forested Côte d'Ivoire in areas of low population. Its development therefore relied on the sometimes massive arrival of immigrants coming from regions ecologically unsuited for coffee and cocoa cultivation, as wage laborer but also looking for “black forest”² to clear in order to create plantations (center and northern savannah of Côte d'Ivoire, Haute Volta, Mali). The conditions of access to land for these immigrants

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² In local terminology, “black forest” designates a forest which has never been cut down in living memory. It is considered to be particularly suitable to develop coffee and cocoa plantations.

varied from one region to another¹, from the “gift” of black forest to its “purchase” or the purchase of already created plantations. The native - migrant relationship regarding access to land was often characterized by the social embeddedness of these land transfers. Under the institution of *tutorat*, the migrant gaining access to land through “gift” or “purchase” remained – or should have remained, in the native’s perspective – under an obligation to the one who “gave” him or “sold” him the land. Tensions and conflicts between natives and migrants often find their roots in disputes over the content of land rights which were transferred to the migrants. This is not new at all (see Raulin, 1957; Dupire, 1960), but it becomes a burning question in the current socio-political context of Côte d’Ivoire, especially with the surge of an autochthonous ideology, the 1998 land law (still not in force) which states that foreigners cannot own land in Côte d’Ivoire, and the dramatic events that started in September 2002.

This paper deals with the relationships between access to land, inter-ethnic relations and land conflicts in a very different context: in the area under study, a former “no man’s land” in Lower Côte d’Ivoire, one does not find the usual native – migrant dichotomy. This area is located at the furthestmost bounds of the Agni kingdom of Sanwi, in the Eotilé vassal territory, and not far from the Abouré country (cf. figures 1 & 2). The Eotilé have been, along with the Agoua, the first historical inhabitants of the Sanwi kingdom. At the dawn of the 17th century, their settlements lined the banks of the Aby (or Abi) and Tendo lagoons, as they were fishermen, while the interior of the country was neglected (Rougerie, 1957). The Sanwi kingdom was built between 1740 and 1823 by the Agni coming from the North-East. The Agni absorbed the Agoua, and extended their sovereignty over the Eotilé, Essouma and Nzima. The western region of the kingdom remained unoccupied until the beginning of the 20th century. The southwestern border of the Agni kingdom, which isolated it from the Abouré country, began to be occupied by immigrants coming from various regions of Côte d’Ivoire, Haute Volta and Mali, at the beginning of the 20th century². This infiltration of immigrants began along the Bonoua-Aboisso colonial track, and their number became significant at a regional scale as early as 1935. After World War II, it turned into a rush, converting for some time the region into a “Far West”, to use Rougerie's expression.

The empirical data come from investigations realized in three villages, Djimini-Koffikro, Kongodjan and Petit-Paris (Figure 1). Djimini-Koffikro (3000 inhabitants) is a “melting pot” village where the ethnic appropriation of land corresponds to a real patchwork, with Baoulé, Agni and Abouré as the dominant groups. Kongodjan (530 inhabitants) is a Senoufo village³, in terms of population as well as land control. The village of Petit-Paris (300 inhabitants) is populated with Abouré and Mossi, but most land is owned by Abouré. The pioneer phase developed in the region from West to East, starting in Djimini-Koffikro in the twenties, then in Kongodjan in the thirties and Petit-Paris in the forties – a time lag which gives the opportunity to capture the relationships between land access in a pioneer area and the increasing perception of the vanishing of the forest.

¹ Regarding the Ivorian forest area, one can mention the studies of Affou Yapi (on Attie ethnic group), Bouet-Surroca, Boutillier, Gastellu, Kindo, Rougerie (Agni), Chaléard (Abè), Chauveau and Richard (Gban), Dozon (Bete), Dupire (Abe and Agni), Hecht (Dida), Köbben (Agni, Bete, Dida), Léna (Bakwe), Raulin (Dida, Gouro, Gban and Bete), Schwartz (Guere and Bakwe) (see references).

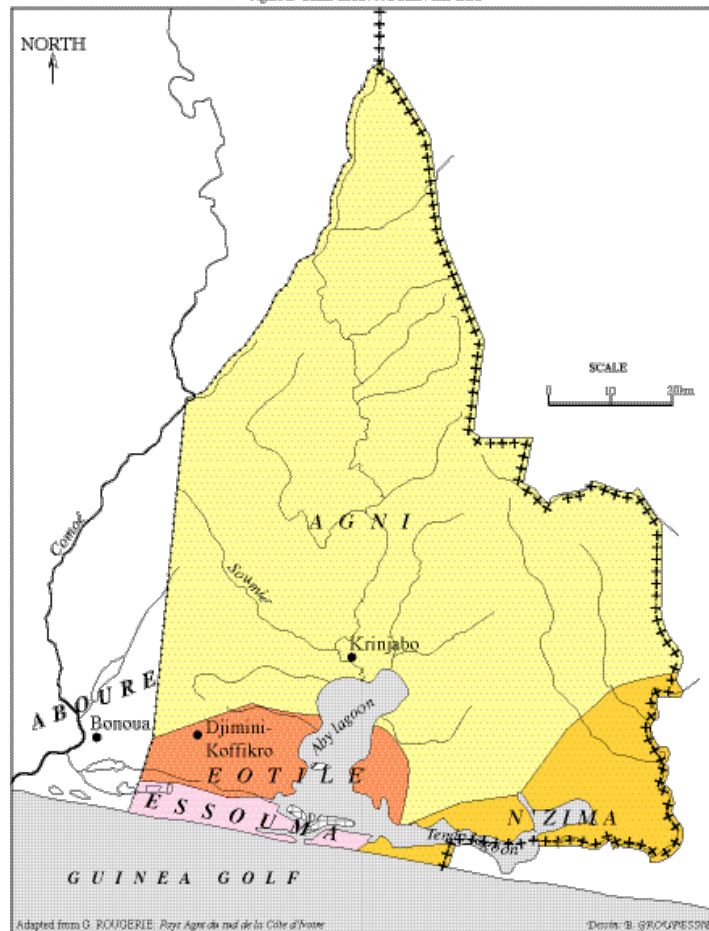
² The Agni, as the Baoulé, are part of the large Akan group. The Nzima belong, as the Eotilé, the Essouma or the Abouré, to the *lagunaire* (lagoon) sub-group, also from the Akan group.

³ The Senoufo group originates from northern Côte d’Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Mali. Regarding the Kongodjan case, see Soro and Colin (2004).

Figure 1. LOCATION MAP



Figure 2. THE SANWI KINGDOM



Djimini-Koffikro was the object of an intensive field research from 1983 to 1985, including the mapping and the “biography” of all plots in the village (origin of the first cultivation right, then transfers through inheritance, *inter vivos* donation or sale). Exhaustive data were also collected on land use and tenancy contracts (Colin, 1990). A second fieldwork phase started in 2001, aimed at capturing the dynamics in land rights, distribution and use, since the eighties. Intensive case studies have been combined with exhaustive surveys regarding land owners and tenants in the village, dealing with land transfers and land conflicts. Kongodjan was also studied at the beginning of the eighties, although not as intensively as in Djimini-Koffikro. In Kongodjan as well as in Petit-Paris, the current research, which started in 2002 and is still in progress, parallels the one conducted in Djimini-Koffikro, but with a more exclusive focus on case studies. This paper will rely mainly on the Djimini case, but will as well draw comparative elements from Kongodjan and Petit-Paris.

The first part of the paper analyzes the dynamics of land appropriation in the absence of autochthonous land stakeholders. It shows the role of shared principles in the regulation of the emergence of property rights in land, explores the reaction of the Agni regarding the massive arrival of ‘strangers’ (from Côte d’Ivoire or other territories) during the colonial time, and underlines the lack of inter-ethnic tensions or conflicts regarding land property rights. The structuring feature of the land issue in the region is in fact less the question of property rights, than the development of a very active land lease market for pineapple production by Burkinabè tenants. The second part of the paper deals with that issue, underlying the quite smooth functioning of that market in the area under study, which greatly contrasts with the neighboring Abouré country where severe troubles occurred in 2001 when young Abouré tried to expel the Burkinabè tenants. The last section of the paper deals with the situation in the region in the current socio-political context. This situation is characterized by the total absence of inter-ethnic open conflict, which however conceals perceptible tensions. As one might expect, the land issue as such constitutes only one part of the story in these tensions.

The emergence and transfer of land property rights in a former “no man’s land”: the dynamics of land appropriation in the absence of autochthonous stakeholders

The pioneers’ time: the role of shared principles

The first settler to arrive in what will become Djimini-Koffikro² was an Abouré who established a game encampment there, around 1915, in an area which was not yet populated or exploited. In the 1920’s, people from different origins arrived, with the realization of the Bonoua-Adiaké colonial track. They consisted mostly of Baoulé and Agni, but also Nzima, Gagou or Yacouba³. Some were fleeing the colonial forced labor in their native countries; others were brought to the region for these very same constrained enrollments. Some worked in the lumbering industry, others in roadwork. The

¹ Most of the information regarding the pioneer phase in Djimini was collected at the beginning of the eighties with pioneers then still alive (only one survives today).

² The name of the village comes from a Djimini (an ethnic group from Northern Côte d’Ivoire) called Koffi (*kro* is the Akan suffix signifying “village”). Koffi was not the new village founder, neither was his chief, but as he spoke French, he was sent to deal with the administration which named the village after him.

³ The Gagou (or Gban) originate from the West-Center and the Yacouba from the West of Côte d’Ivoire.

abundance of black forest incited them to settle there to create plantations, at a time where cocoa and coffee smallholder plantation economy was starting to develop. At the beginning of the seventies, a second wave of migration began, with the arrival of Voltaic and Malian who were drawn by the development of pineapple cultivation in the region, on leased land. These different migration floods created a genuine melting pot: in 1982, of every two inhabitants, one was a foreigner; sixteen Ivorian ethnic groups were represented in the village which counted around 1000 inhabitants. Since then, the population has risen up to 3000, mostly due to the Burkinabè Mossi immigration. The first Voltaic settler, a Senoufo, arrived in Djimini-Koffikro in 1933. He was a former servant boy in Grand Bassam, where he met one of the first settlers of Djimini who mentioned to him that land was available there. Upon his arrival, he was immediately given access to the forest in an area located a few kilometers from Djimini-Koffikro. He resided for some time in Djimini and then founded a compound close to his plantations, Kongodjan ("remote plot"). Kongodjan was later settled by Voltaic Senoufo and Malinké from Mali; since the sixties it is an independent village. The first person to cultivate in what is now the Petit-Paris village area was a Senoufo, at the beginning of the forties. He had already settled in Kongodjan and did not move to this new location, where he just cleared some plots in the savannah to produce food crops, without entering the black forest. Shortly thereafter, an Abouré discovered in a hunting expedition that there was plenty of black forest in this area - the lack of water supply explains how that this area remained neglected at the beginning of the pioneer phase. He settled a compound, Efeniblêwô, where he was later joined by Abouré relatives and a few non-Abouré migrants (Baoulé, Attié, Malinké), and renamed it Petit-Paris in order to emphasize the quality of the new village houses.

The pioneer phase in this region did not turn into a conflictive rush, even if it lacked customary socio-political institutions or if resorting to colonial authorities remained exceptional. Briefly reviewing the history of access to land during the pioneer phase brings to light shared principles¹ which played a central role in the coordination of individuals' actions. At the same time, it shows how the rise of conflictive interests through the pioneer phase, with the perception of the vanishing of the black forest, reflected upon actors' practices.

In Djimini, the first settler, Ablé Kraidi, an Abouré, was a hunter. Because he had a gun, he ventured deeply in the forest, and marked a large area as his hunting field. This area was acknowledged by the first migrants who followed him as his part of the forest. Kraidi's purpose was not as such to delimit a reserve in the forest in order to later create plantations. At that time, land was abundant and one did not even think in setting boundaries to personal reserves of black forest; on the contrary, one looked forward to having new migrants come and settle not too far, as wild animals were destroying the crops. When they arrived, Ablé Kraidi "set up" the first newcomers in different areas – "setting up" in the sense of showing them where to start clearing the forest. These first migrants began, in turn, to set up the newcomers, each one in his respective sector. The entire western part of what is now the village territory had been "allotted" by two Agni planters, the southeastern part by three Baoulé, the eastern part by a Nzima, and the northern part directly by the first Abouré immigrant (Figure 3)². A savannah area was initially neglected, as unsuitable for coffee or cocoa cultivation; the first interested in

¹ What North (1990) calls "informal institutions", including ideology and value systems.

² Dupire (1960) describes the same process in the Assouba area located in the Sanwi kingdom, North-East from the Djimini-Kongodjan-Petit Paris region.

cultivating there just “took the land”¹. Once he arrived, the newcomer generally found hospitality with a planter belonging to the same ethnic group. The place where he could clear was designated by one of the first settlers who were acknowledged as "regulators" of the land access control. The newcomer asked preferably access to land to someone of the same ethnic group - one therefore notes an ethnic polarization of land control during the pioneer phase, with different parts of the territory possessed dominantly at the end of the pioneer phase by Baoulé, Agni and Abouré (Figure 4 and Table 1).

Figure 3. ETHNIC ORIGIN OF THE FIRST PIONEERS WHO SETTLED NEWCOMERS IN DJIMINI-KOFFIKRO

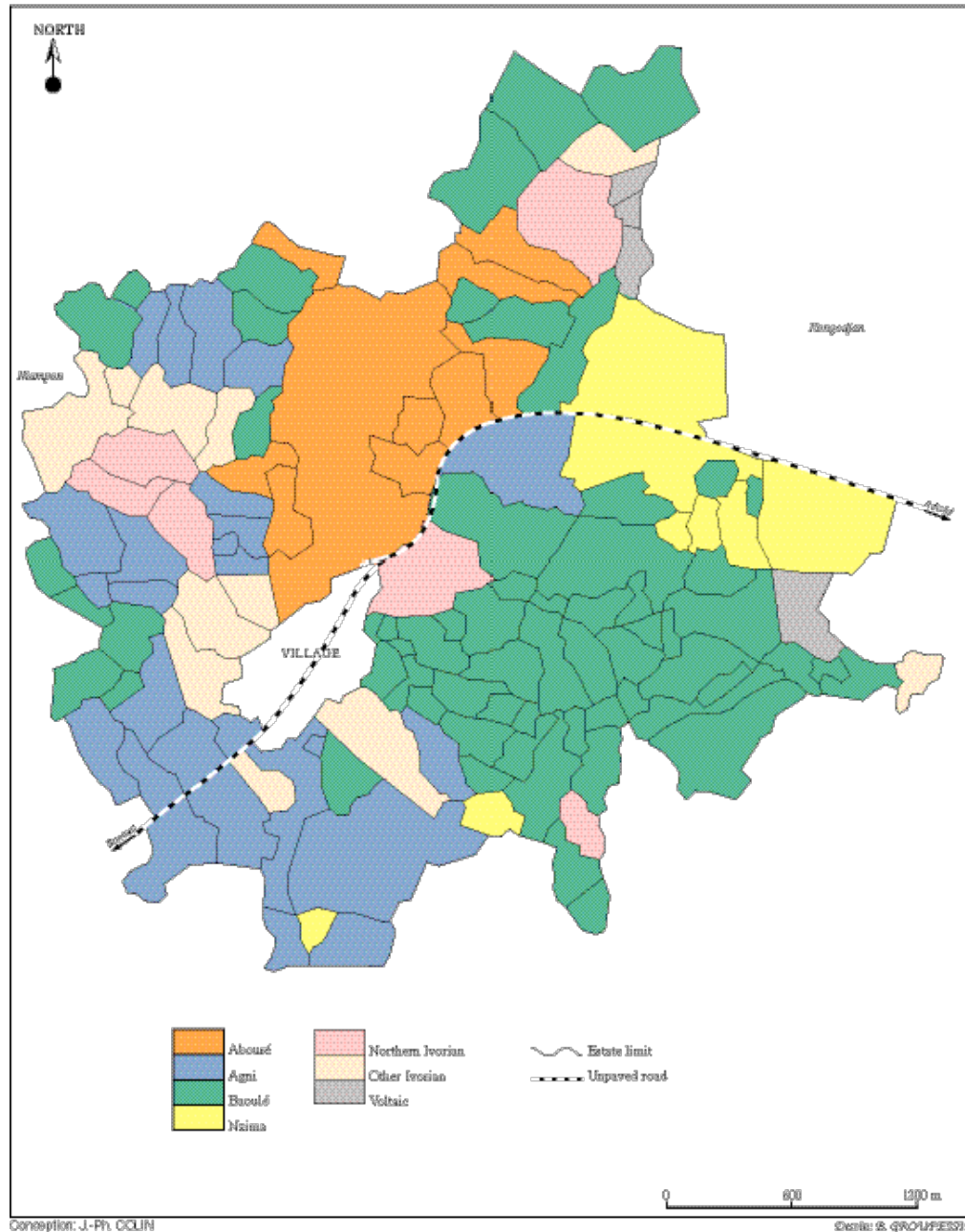


Conception: J.-Ph. CCLIN

Dessin: S. GROUPESSIE

¹ Later on, the introduction of oil palm tree, rubber and pineapple turned these soils as profitable as the other parts of the village territory.

Figure 4. LAND OWNERSHIP AT THE END OF THE PIONEER PHASE IN DJIMINI-KOFFIKRO



As “regulators”, Ablé Kraïdi and the first Baoulé, Agni and Nzima migrants designated to the newcomers where and in which direction they could start clearing the forest to create plantations. The clearing of the forest was then sufficient to insure one's uncontested individual right over the land. At that time, the delimitation of each plot to be cleared was not a concern. The newcomer was set up in the forest, at such a distance from the other planters that he could not jeopardize an expected expansion of his neighbors' plantations – therefore creating a reserve of black forest for these planters. The limit was defined only when two clearing fronts came close, in order to avoid conflicts - “*the use creating the boundary stone*” (Lesourd, 1982)¹. In the forties, competition over access to the black forest appeared. Without an *ex ante* delimitation of the forest to clear, and with the fundamental rule

¹ People often planted *Tonzué* trees to mark the limits.

that it was the cutting down of the forest which created a property right, anticipating strategies were then developed in order to protect one's interest. Installing newcomers in such or such place became a way to stand in the path of pioneers from neighborhood villages. Clearing techniques were also sometimes used; these consisted of multiplying the clearing epicenters in order to isolate a central area as a reserve (for similar practices later on in other regions, see Chaléard, 1979; Gastellu, 1980; Lesourd, 1982). Orienting the clearing of the forest in such or such direction was also a way to take preeminence over a neighbor – a strategy called “cutting one's head”. These strategies nevertheless did not create conflicts as the principle “the labor creates the right” was somehow legitimizing these practices. Another element explaining the lack of conflict at that time is that as the fourties ended, all of what is now the village territory was appropriated, including reserves of black forest. In other words, when the rush for the forest took on a major emphasis in the region, at the end of the fourties and in the fifties, property rights were already established and socially recognized in Djimini-Koffikro. The last settlement of newcomers in the black forest took place at the beginning of the fifties. These last settlements were established on already appropriated reserves of black forest. They benefited pioneers' relatives and also, in some cases, wage laborers who had worked some years for a planter who then lacked the cash to pay them and instead gave them part of the reserve of the black forest he could have constituted. The limits were then clearly indicated by the planter who was “giving the forest.”

Access to land in Djimini-Koffikro was conditioned by the perception of the area as a no man's land. All the old pioneers interviewed in the eighties said that at that time, “the land belonged to nobody.” They knew that they were formally in Agni country, or better said in Eotilé territory, under the control of the Sanwi kingdom, but the Eotilé were fishermen living far away along the lagoon shore, and the Agni even farther. Indeed, the Agni who settled in Djimini do not consider themselves as “the” natives – and they definitely are strangers in the Sanwi country, as they come from other Agni groups (Bongouanou and Indénié), and not from Sanwi. Access to land therefore rested on shared principles, which legitimized and regulated the land control and the organization of the settlements: (i) the principle, commonly found in African contexts, that labor creates the right on land and (ii) the principle that the anteriority in the arrival creates a legitimacy to regulate the settlement of newcomers. In other words, clearing the forest was creating a right, but one did not clear the forest anywhere. However, the fact that the “regulators” were acknowledged as those organizing the settlement of newcomers in the forest did not give them rights over the land cleared by these newcomers. They just received the usual bottle of gin, or some liters of *bangui* (palm wine). This lack of socially legitimized right over the uncleared forest explains why one does not find, in Djimini, cases of access to land conditioned by a previous labor phase to the advantage of the planter who provided the newcomer with the possibility of settling the land, as noted in other regions of Côte d'Ivoire. Nor does one find in Djimini the *tutorat* institution (Chauveau, forthcoming), through which migrants often received access to land in the forested area of Côte d'Ivoire – at least during the initial phase of immigration¹. This relation perpetuates a patronage relationship between autochthons and migrants to whom rights on land are delegated on the basis of a moral economy principle: any individual has the right to get access to the resources required to insure his and his family subsistence. The migrant owes his *tuteur* a

¹ Later on, once the migration flow increased, a frequent trend was for the immigrants to autonomize from this patron-client relationship with the autochthonous – fueling the latter's resentment against “ungrateful strangers” (see for example Dupire, 1960, regarding the Agni, or Hecht, 1985, regarding the Dida).

perennial gratefulness (transferred to his heirs), expressed through the gift of agricultural products, the contribution to his *tuteur*'s expenses at times of obsequies, etc. Dupire provides the following description of the traditional conditions of a migrant's settlement in the Sanwi kingdom: "*The foreigner who wished to settle on land had to do it through the agency of a host; he became his client and was call by him "my stranger". He was introduced by his host to the head of the segment of lineage and to the chef de terre who was in charge of the rituals. ... He obtained a use right through the offering required by this ritual, some gifts at the time of the first harvests ... and sometimes an in-kind duty for his host. This one designated a place to build his residence and sometimes gave him in marriage a woman of his family. The stranger only had the use right as long as he stayed with his host. ... The stranger ... showed in many circumstances his gratefulness and his dependency...*" (Dupire, 1960:183-84) As a pioneers' village, access to land in Djimini clearly did not follow this path: there were no autochthonous hosts, and the first settlers did not turn later into *tuteurs* regarding newcomers, if one defines *tutorat* as an enduring system of social obligations, perpetuated after access to land.

In Kongodjan the first settler, Ali Traoré, a Voltaic Senoufo, started to clear the forest at the place indicated by Kouadio Kpin, one of the three Baoulé who "regulated" access to land in Djimini. He then himself turned into the "regulator" for newcomers who gathered in his compound. As in Djimini, the encounter of the clearing fronts defined the limits between the pioneers' pieces of land, and no *tutorat* relation was established through access to land. The last pioneers' settlements occurred at the beginning of the fifties, on black forest reserves already appropriated by Ali Traoré. The beneficiaries were relatives who had helped him during some years, and also three laborers whom he could not pay at the end of their wage contract. Ali Traoré had to settle these people on his own reserves of black forest, as Kongodjan pioneers found themselves blocked in their progression in the forest by Abouré from Petit-Paris who bypassed them. As the old chief of Kongodjan recounts: "*At that time, forest was everywhere, we did not imagine that we could be blocked up. We stayed together in our sector because chimpanzees destroyed our crops; it was easier to keep watch on. Each day the Abouré were passing to enter the forest. When we were asking them what they were doing, they always answered that they were going hunting or collecting fruits. Instead, they were marking trees. When we wanted to clear the forest farther, we realized that the Abouré had taken everything by marking trees, even if the forest was still there. Really, we have been had! If we had known, we would have marked the forest from the beginning, but we did think of doing that, we thought that the forest was plentiful and that we had time to clear it.*" This case shows the encounter of two legitimizing principles in forest appropriation. As in Djimini, Kongodjan pioneers considered that clearing the forest made the land yours; they were still relying upon a cognitive map which took for granted that land was abundant. Whereas the Abouré newcomers had a clear consciousness of the increasing scarcity of the forest¹ and relied on the principle that you can reserve yourself a place just by marking it. What is interesting is that people from Kongodjan did not contest this second principle; they just regretted not having thought beforehand of using it.

In Petit-Paris, access to land thus followed a different path than in Djimini and Kongodjan; the pioneers used the technique of marking trees to delimitate a reserve in the forest. For instance, the first

¹ The Abouré had been driven back into a savannah region by the Agni. They had a very limited acreage of soils suited for coffee and cocoa cultivation – their neighbors called them *Ehounva*, landless men (Rougerie, 1957).

Abouré to arrive possessed a gun and ventured deeply in the forest, which allowed him to mark quite a large area that can be estimated around 150 hectares. After having found and marked the place, he went to the neighboring village of Kakoukro (three kilometers East from Petit-Paris) to inform Kakou, the chief and founder of this village¹, and offered the traditional gift of a bottle of gin. Kakou did not come in to review the place, he solely asked to avoid entering in other people's portions of the forest. In Petit-Paris, the clearing of the forest relied much more than in Djimini and Kongodjan on techniques aiming at securing a large area, leaving intact the inside zone. It is evident that just marking the forest was not seen as a sufficient guarantee at a time of rush on the black forest. Whereas no conflict has been documented between pioneers in Djimini and Kongodjan in the establishment of property rights over land, several cases of conflicts over clearing boundaries occurred in Petit-Paris. These conflicts were solved through the intervention of the colonial administration – at that time the formal chieftaincy had not yet been established in the village. The dynamics of land occupation in Petit-Paris does not therefore show the regulating role of the first pioneers, which operated in Djimini and Kongodjan². Each newcomer just tried to cut off his share of the forest, marking trees but also using sometimes intimidation. As counted by an Attié: *“Why did the Abouré have so much land? They were numerous. The Abouré took guns to enter in the forest. When they see other people, they say “Where you already cleared up, you stop”. When my father was meeting Abouré in the forest, the Abouré were saying “You, what are looking for here? Go out, otherwise we kill you”.*” One should not generalize such a statement, but it is illustrative of the exacerbation of interests due to the pressure over land that occurred at the end of the pioneer phase.

What appears therefore in the context of these three villages is the establishment of property rights over land through the clearing of the forest (which did not always mean the plantation of coffee or cocoa). Marking limits in the forest, as did the Abouré, acted as the establishment of a preemptive right over the forest, but it seems clear that the Abouré felt necessary to confirm and establish indisputably their right by multiplying the clearing fronts... or by intimidation. This process is not contradictory with the undisputed establishment of property rights over uncleared forest which could have been isolated with appropriated clearing techniques.

The settlement of a human group within a virgin area is of course not exceptional in contemporary Africa. The general model regarding land control in such a context describes the first individual to arrive as invested of mystic attributes (later on transmitted to his heirs) because he was the first one to intercede with the local spirits. That mystic power grounded him a first occupancy right which he used to regulate other people's access to land. The difference between what happened in our study area and that model is that the first migrants were not seen as invested with this mystic power and with a specific right over land that could allow them to exclude others – the first migrants were not granted with a “first occupancy right”, the “regulated clearing” made the effective right. This difference might be rooted in the fact that we are not dealing here with the case of an ethnic homogeneous group arriving in a new place with its culture, social organization and (formal or informal) enforcement devices³.

¹ Kakou, an Eotilé from Etuobé, was a truck driver who created the village of Kakoukro after the opening of the Bonoua-Adiaké unpaved road. At that time people were already settling in Djimini.

² As in Djimini and Kongodjan, one does not find in Petit-Paris access to land through a *tutorat* relationship.

³ This issue would require investigations that are beyond our scope at that time.

As a result of the conditions of access to land during the pioneer phase, one notes a clear ethnic polarization of land control at the end of that phase, in Djimini with different part of the territory possessed by Baoulé, Agni and Abouré as the dominant ethnic groups (Figure 4), and more evidently even in the other villages which did not present the same ethnic diversity – mostly Senoufo in Kongodjan and Abouré in Petit-Paris:

Table 1. The distribution of land possession at the end of the pioneer phase,
according to the planters' ethnic group

	Djimini-Koffikro		Kongodjan		Petit-Paris	
	Acreage (hectares)	Number of estates	Acreage (hectares)	Number of estates	Acreage (hectares)	Number of estates
Abouré	144,7	7	-	-	318	11
Agni	194,6	12	-	-	-	-
Baoulé	415,6	44	-	-	99	2
Nzima	91,1	6	-	-	5	1
Northern Ivorian ¹	55,6	4	-	-	100	5
Other Ivoirian ²	95,9	11	22	1	40	4
Total Ivorian	997.5 (95%)	84 (94%)	22 (15%)	1 (7%)	562 (96%)	23 (96%)
Voltaic ³	50,4	5	87	11	22	1
Malian ⁴	-	-	40	3	-	-
Total foreigners	50.4 (5%)	5 (6%)	127 (85%)	14 (93%)	22 (4%)	1 (6%)
Total	1047,9	89	149	15	584	24

In Djimini, the data are based on the measurement of all plots in the village. In Kongodjan and Petit-Paris, these preliminary results (crosschecking in process) correspond to declarative statements. (1) Malinké, Senoufo; (2) Gban, Yacouba; Attié; (3) Mossi, Senoufo ; (4) Malinké.

The reliance on different principles to legitimize land control (clearing the forest *versus* marking it), the use or not of clearing techniques aiming at maximizing land appropriation, and the Abouré easy access to family labor due to the closeness of Bonoua, translate into contrasted land distribution at the end of the pioneer phase. In Djimini, the acreage of the estates averages at that time around 12 hectares (20 for the sole Abouré) and in Kongodjan 8 ha, whereas in Petit-Paris it reaches 24 hectares (almost 30 for the Abouré).

As a result of the history of access to land in the three villages, none presents a specific land regulation authority. There is no *chef de terre*, no rituals provided by the first settlers or their descendants. Contrary to what is usually observed in Côte d'Ivoire, none of the first settlers became the first village chief. In the three cases, the chieftaincy looks only as an administrative rung, with no real authority except to deal with minor problems. They just operate as the link between the villagers and the administration – the *subdivision de cercle* of Assinie-Maffia and then Adiaké during the colonial time, the *sous-préfecture* of Adiaké now. All chiefs have been Baoulé in Djimini, Abouré in Petit-Paris and Senoufo in Kongodjan.

The Sanwi kingdom facing the strangers' infiltration

A dispute between a Mossi pioneer from Kongodjan and an Abouré from Petit-Paris triggered the opportunity for the only formal intervention of Agni - or better said Eotilé - authorities we could document in our investigations. The old chief of Kongodjan, the only pioneer still alive in the village, remembers quite well the case. “*Ali Traoré had given a forest to one of his laborers that he could not*

pay at the end of the contract. One day, as the Mossi was clearing the forest, an Abouré came and asked him to stop clearing because he had already marked the trees. The Mossi said that he had seen no signs and that it was Ali who had shown him the place. The Abouré got angry and went to complain to his King in Bonoua. We were called before the King's Court and when we arrived, we were told that we had to pay money in order for the Court to deal with our case. We said that we had no money and so we could not pay. They told us to come back with the money. We went home and did not return to Bonoua. A friend from Djimini told us to go to Adiaké to meet the commander [the "commandant", the chief of the colonial subdivision] because we were settled on Agni land in the Adiaké subdivision, not on Abouré land. When the Commandant was informed, he asked us to present the case to the chief of Etuoboué [an Eotilé village located on the Aby Lagoon]¹, and he was there too. After hearing the story from the Abouré as well as from us, the Agni chief told the Abouré: "You all came to settle on our land and we have said nothing and it is you, the Abouré, who want to prevent the others from working in order to feed themselves? You call the others thieves whereas in fact you are all stealing our land. Why did you take that matter before the Abouré King? You are not in Abouré country, you are in our country and when there is a problem we are the ones to deal with it". Then, the Agni chief came to define the limit between the Abouré and the Mossi. Since then, we have had no trouble with the Abouré".

This account illustrates, through a conflict over regulating authorities, the lasting tension - the "cold war", in Dupire's terms - between the Agni/Eotilé authorities and the Abouré from Bonoua. In that case, the Eotilé preponderance over the Abouré in this region was clearly established, with the support of the colonial authorities. It also shows that the Eotilé were conscious of the "invasion" of the western march of their territory.

The strangers started to settle progressively in unoccupied forested areas of the Sanwi kingdom during the Agni exodus to the Gold Coast, from 1913 to 1918² - a time which indeed corresponds to the first settlements in Djimini. The Assouba region studied by Dupire³, which counted four traditional Agni villages, was then practically a human desert from Assouba to Adiaké. According to Dupire, the King of Sanwi, upon his return in 1918 to Krinjabo, suggested to his subjects to leave to the strangers the land they had occupied because he worried about the demographic weakness of Sanwi. However a few years later, facing an increasing immigration pressure, the Krinjabo Court and Sanwi notables did try to control the immigrants' settlement. In 1935, the *chefs de canton* asked the strangers to request for an authorization before any settlement and to pay a fee whose amount remained open. The *palabres de conciliation* (conciliating discussions) did not succeed due to the opposition of the strangers' representative (see infra) (Dupire, 1960:214). In 1951, another conciliating meeting suggested the recognition of the strangers' rights over all plantations created at that time and the prohibition of new clearings without the authorization of an Agni authority (*chef de terre*, village's chief, *chef de canton*, superior chief) – these authorizations being granted free of charge or not. Some *notables* tried unsuccessfully to obtain an annual fixed fee (three loads of coffee, i.e., 102 kilograms) to the benefit of the King's finances. Anyway, these measures were not implemented, due to the strangers' opposition

¹ The informant presents that chief as an Agni chief, but he was certainly the chief of the Eotilé *canton* (county), as the *canton* chieftaincy was located in that village. In strangers' perception, Eotilé are not differentiated from Agni.

² The Agni were escaping taxation and especially, from 1916, military enrollment. They returned at the end of World War I (Rougerie, 1957).

³ This region is located North-East from our research area, see Figure 1.

(Dupire, 1960:215). In 1954, a King's Court regulation¹ stated that no stranger could acquire or clear any land in Sanwi without the authorization of an Agni *chef de terre*. The stranger's approach had to be respectful and meet the local uses. He had to pay to the customary chief an annual *assassitouo* (land tax), corresponding to one-fifth of the harvests. He would lose his rights in case he left the kingdom. In case of death, his plantations became property of the crown, except if his heir claimed it within six months, in which case he was entitled half of the plantations, the other half remaining for the crown² (Dupire, 1960:216-218). According to Dupire, no signs of enforcement of these measures were noticeable at the end of the fifties. Lastly, on April 2, 1958, was produced the *Code foncier agni du royaume du Sanwi* (the Agni Sanwi land code) was produced, which developed the 1954 measures (Amon d'Aby, 1960:174-175; Dupire, 1960:161-165, 218-219), among which:

- the constitution of a land register to record the land over which the strangers had use rights in each administrative district and the land fee collected;
- the restriction of land sale to the sole transfer of the use right. The seller had to justify his rights over land and prove the payment of land tax to the crown. The transaction required the authorization of a king's officer and a written agreement between the parties. The buyer had to be a subject of the kingdom, i.e., the strangers were excluded;
- strangers could clear a forest under a lease arrangement (*asseema*), for nine years or for an indeterminate length of time; at the end of the lease he had to be compensated for the improvements he had realized (the value of the plantations); the land rent had to be one-third of the harvest;
- the tenant had no right to expand or sale his plantation.

As the preceding attempts, these rules, which aimed at turning the strangers of the Sanwi kingdom into mere usufructuaries, remained unenforced. How can one explain these successive failures of the Agni to control the strangers' settlements?

A first element to consider is the role of French administration, which tended to support the migrants – a policy later followed by the independent State (Chauveau, 2002). The colonial administrators, considering that equal opportunity among Africans was the best way to promote economic development of the territory³, remained deaf to the autochthonous revendications. A note produced by the Agni *notables* presents the case: "... the colonial administrators favored the disorderly settlement of the anybody, settled the forest disputes in favor of the strangers under the sole justification of the effective exploitation, favored them regarding the granting of permits to hold hunting guns ... The animosity, the irritation, came that way, sometimes causing pitched fights, sometimes the burning down of plantations, maintaining permanently an atmosphere of hatred towards the stranger, who benefited from the support of the administration."⁴ As a matter of fact, one finds for instance the following piece in the Political report of the Assinie-Maffia subdivision for the first trimester of 1934, which goes indeed in that way: "*Ehoutilés and Essoumas: these two tribes were living under a latent*

¹ *Le statut juridique des terres, rédigé et codifié par les chefs coutumiers du Sanwi*, November 24, 1954.

² These rules were largely adapted from the 1904 *coutumier* based on information collected by Villamur and Delafosse.

³ The colonial authorities started to promote cocoa cultivation in the region in 1915 (Rougerie, 1957).

⁴ *Circulaire du roi et des chefs de cantons du Sanwi sur les conditions d'installation des planteurs étrangers*, Aboisso, 29/12/1957, quoted from Dupire (1960:225).

discord. The fault lies with the two chefs de canton. At the end of January a quarrel broke out between these two Chiefs: the dispute was brought to me under the form of competing claims over the land and fisheries located at the mouth of the Ganda River. The issue was no more no less to systematically bleed the non autochthonous who had settled there and these two Gentlemen did not agree over the share... This matter was quickly sorted out, as the two chiefs were invited to no longer look after this area and to leave the non autochthonous in peace.”¹ As soon as 1911, the Chief administrator of the Assinie Cercle commented: “The King of the Sanwi, who resides in Krinjabo, just bears nowadays an honorary title and only has the authority delegated to him by the Administrator.”²

The weakening of the Sanwi King’s power begun before colonization (Dupire, 1960), but then, the kingdom clearly suffered from a systematic French policy aiming at weakening it, once it came under direct rule in 1903 (Sanwi administered itself as a French protectorate from 1844 to 1903), by questioning the customary jurisdiction, canceling the Court’s sources of funds, taxing the kingdom’s subjects. The customary court of Krinjabo (where the strangers had no representative) never dealt with conflicts between Agni and strangers, as the latter were not forced to answer a King’s court notification – they instead resorted to the county court, where they were represented (Rougerie, 1957:95). According to Dupire (1960:212) the person recognized by the French administration as the chief of the strangers’ community also played an important role in resisting the Agni claims. He was a Toucouleur, awarded as *Chevalier de la légion d’honneur*, and President of the magistrates’ court (*Tribunal civil*) of Aboisso. As the chief of the strangers’ community between 1925 and 1948 – at the time of the “invasion” of Sanwi by stranger planters – he systematically opposed, with the support of the French administration, the autochthonous demands.

The heterogeneity in the effective Agni control of the Kingdom’s territory must also be taken into account in order to understand the strangers’ penetration. Rougerie locates the core of the Sanwi country between Aboisso and the Aby lagoon from North to South, and between Assouba and Maféré from West to East (Figure 1). Between 1920 (that is to say, after the return of the Agni from Gold Coast) and 1953, the number of strangers in the kingdom was multiplied by thirty. That year, the percentage of strangers was limited to 2 to 12% in the Agni core of the kingdom, but rose up to 75% in the Assouba region, the west-front of the Agni-populated area (Rougerie, 1957:128)³. In Assouba, there were still autochthons to complain and try to react: “The number of population centers controlling the forest of Assouba province rose from four Agni villages after the conquest of the country, to twenty now, almost all strangers except two Agni compounds. It is not without bitterness and aggressivity that the autochthons realize that: “There is no longer land, we are invaded by strangers.” (Dupire, 1960:178) Whereas the kingdom’s south-western march, formally part of the Eotilé territory, is presented by Rougerie as a no man’s land, a buffer zone under the mere formal control of the Agni/Eotilé, isolating them from the Abouré. These lands were de facto free of any human activity, as the Eotilé lived along the lagoons’ shores. In the Djimini-Kongodjan-Petit-Paris area, located on the extreme western limit of the Sanwi, no autochthonous village claimed these lands

¹ Unclassified archives, Adiaké sous-préfecture.

² *Monographie du Cercle d’Assinie*, 1911, National Archives, Abidjan.

³ Schwartz (1979) analyzes a dramatic lost, within a few years, of the autochthonous’ control over land due to demographic flooding by an immigration wave, in the Bakwé country (South-West of Côte d’Ivoire) in the seventies.

as his, and Agni Sanwi or Eotilé never came to revendicate rights over these lands¹. A 1934 colonial report describes the inland area west of Adiaké as free of autochthonous population or authority: *“In the subdivision, the Agni live in Aby and Adjoua [villages close to the Aby lagoon] in superb isolation ... we are in an immigrating region where since thirty years and especially since the after-war, elements of different races are juxtaposing ... We will never find chiefs in this region because the development of individual plantations, owned in full property away from the Tribe’s ascendancy, increases the individualism of the natives”*.² The report for the second semester of the same year also notes, regarding judicial affairs: *“the custom is absolutely not established in this country, because of the conglomeration of races”*. The 1939 report continues in the same vein: *“All the inhabitants – all immigrants – from the western side of the great lagoon [the Aby lagoon] administer themselves without a chief.”*

The infiltration in this region of Abouré coming from Bonoua, especially since the end of the forties, led in 1953 to a boundary conflict between the Abouré country and the Eotilé *canton*. The pressure exerted by the Abouré was all the more so since they had almost no land suited for coffee and cocoa cultivation in Bonoua. The Abouré claimed as theirs the entire region between Bonoua and the western shore of the Aby lagoon, whereas the Eotilé considered that the Abouré country stopped after the compound of Samo (see Figure 1) (Rougerie, 1957). A conciliating meeting settled the limits between the Abouré compound of Allohouré (just west of Djimini) and Djimini-Koffikro. Up to now, this point marks the boundary between the Bonoua and the Adiaké *sous-préfectures*. This contestation over the ethnic group territory boundaries did not turn into Eotilé’s land claims over the area which was confirmed as being under their jurisdiction; in other words, the issue was one of sovereignty and not one of land property rights.

The pioneers’ relief: fighting my cousin rather than the stranger

Access to land property in the post-pioneer phase

With the end of the pioneer phase, direct access to land under the conditions that have just been described no longer operated. Land was completely appropriated, the land rights were acknowledged, the limits of land patrimonies were well defined. From then on, access to land property came from inheritance, *inter-vivos* donations or purchase (in the second part of the paper, we will turn to the issue of the delegation of use rights through the tenancy market). The land market only operated significantly in Djimini, where one third of the total acreage of all land estates have been the subject of at least one transaction; two-thirds of the estates existing at the end of the pioneer phase have been sold partly or totally. Two transactions occurred in Kongodjan (13% of the total acreage of the village’s estates) and seven in Petit-Paris (4% of the total acreage possessed at the end of the pioneer phase).

The analysis of land transactions has focused on Djimini (Colin, 2004; Colin and Ayouz, 2004). Some of the oldest transactions concerned productive plantations, the land transaction being a by-product of

¹ The present chief of Kongodjan is the only elder who remembers having heard, in the forties, of Agni asking without success, “somewhere in the region”, for 100 kg of coffee per ton harvested, to be given to the King’s treasury.

² Subdivision political report for the first trimester of 1934, unclassified archives, Adiaké *sous-préfecture*.

the transaction: *"Beforehand, one bought the plantation, not really the land."* But in the beginning of the sixties, it was the land itself which found a market value, through the sale of fallow land plots or of old unproductive plantations. Contrary to other regions in Côte d'Ivoire, land sales in Djimini can be considered as "complete" – they are outright sales, in Hill's terms (Hill, 1963): the buyer is free from any obligation towards the seller, once the transaction realized¹. The fact that Djimini-Koffikro was an immigrant village facilitated the constitution of a land market on two accounts: most pioneers could manage their land patrimonies as they wished because these had not been acquired through customary inheritance, and the return of pioneers to their native village prompted the supply on the land market. Most land was indeed sold by planters leaving the village to go back home, or by planters' heirs unwilling to settle in Djimini-Koffikro – what explains that half of the transactions occurred between 1965 and 1975. All transactions in Djimini have been realized outside the legal framework, with in some cases a "formalization" through a simple written receipt². With the exception of the Abouré, all ethnic groups have participated in land transactions. This ethnic exception – Petit-Paris shows the same Abouré specificity in regard to the constitution of the land market - can be explained by the proximity of Bonoua and the fact that the pioneer's families would strongly disapprove his selling the land when it was so scarce in Bonoua. In Petit-Paris, those who sold land were Attié, Baoulé, Gban or Malinké. In the case of Kongodjan, the lack of land sales has to be related to the fact that even if some pioneers went back home, most were replaced by family members (the two sellers were an Attié and a Malinké).

The opening of the land market in Djimini led more to a renewal of the group of the planters than to a land concentration in favor of already settled planters. In this process, the ethnic or national control over land somewhat shifted, part of the buyers originating from Northern Côte d'Ivoire, Mali or Haute-Volta / Burkina Faso:

Table 2. The distribution of land estates in 2002 according to the ethnicity or nationality of the planters

	Djimini-Koffikro		Kongodjan		Petit-Paris	
	Acreage (hectares)	Number of estates	Acreage (hectares)	Number of estates	Acreage (hectares)	Number of estates
Abouré	127,9	11	-	-	317	28
Agni	198,9	21	-	-	-	-
Baoulé	321,9	46	-	-	100	5
Nzima	140	10	-	-	5	1
Northern Ivoirian ¹	125,9	11	137,5	18	105	4
Other Ivoirian ²	40,1	3	15	1	26	3
Total Ivorian	954.7 (89%)	102 (84%)	152,5 (100%)	19 (100%)	553 (94%)	41 (89%)
Voltaic/Burkinabè ³	85,6	14	-	-	28	4
Malian ⁴	21,9	5	-	-	6	1
Nigerian	11	1	-	-	-	-
Total foreigners	118.6 (11%)	20 (16%)	-	-	34 (6%)	5 (11%)
Total	1073,3	122	152,5	19	587	46

Note: between the end of the pioneer phase and 2002, the total acreage controlled by the planters slightly increased through purchases in neighboring villages. (1) Malinké, Senoufo, Tagbana; (2) Yacouba; Attié; (3) Mossi, Senoufo ; (4) Malinké.

¹ Köbben (1963) for example describes the custom for the "seller", in Bété country, to consider as a right to repeatedly ask for "gifts" long after the transaction. He also mentions outright sales in that same region.

² In order to be legal, a transaction has to concern a plot which is formally registered and titled; no plot of land in Djimini fulfills these conditions.

A striking result of the table, when compared to the data regarding the end of the pioneer phase (Table 1), is the transformation of Kongodjan villagers from Voltaic or Malian origin into Ivorian. In the study conducted at the beginning of the eighties, interviewees presented themselves as Senoufo from Haute-Volta or Malinké from Mali. Since then, they got Ivorian identity papers. They now present themselves as Senoufo or Malinké from Kong (North of Côte d'Ivoire). We will later turn back to this issue.

Land conflicts: intra-family rather than extra-family contestation of land rights

Most land property transfers since the end of the pioneer phase occurred through inheritance and inter-vivos donations. Intra-family tensions and conflicts over these transfers are common. In Djimini-Koffikro, out of the 54 estates over which we have the information at that time, 27 have been affected by an intra-family contestation of land property rights¹. These tensions are much more frequent in matrilineal groups and become “structural” among the Abouré.

The usual extra-family land conflict arises over a plot's limit (26 over 124 land estates in Djimini have been concerned by such conflicts). In the past, two planters would leave a small forest strip between their plots, or plant *Tonzué* trees to mark the limit. Conflicts over the limits of plots multiplied these past two decades due to the full clearing of each plot and to the development of tractor plowing for pineapple production, which often destroyed these markers and even the trails. The effect of the removal of plots physical limits are accentuated by the renewal of generations (*“At that time, there were no boundary problems, thanks to the Tonzué. Now, there are only heirs who do not know well the limits and create problems”*) and the high valorization of land (*“Disputes over limits came these past fifteen years. Beforehand there were no problems but now the elders are not here any longer and the children fight. All this boils down to a money problem”*). As a matter of fact, the exhaustive fieldwork realized at the beginning of the eighties almost did not document such conflicts. Most of them are settled through amicable agreements, with the village's chief and his notables serving as mediators, as they concerned very limited acreages (most often a few square meters).

These conflicts just question the plot's physical limit over which a property right is exerted, but do not question this right as such. Compared to other regions of Côte d'Ivoire, contesting one's property right in land by questioning or renegotiating one's past conditions of access to land remains exceptional, even in the current socio-political and legal context. Six cases took place in Djimini – no case was documented in Kongodjan and Petit-Paris. Five of these conflicts relate to cases in which, at the end of the pioneer phase, planters gave some of the forest reserve they had constituted to wage laborers whom they could not pay at the end of their contract. An Abouré planter gave plots of forest to two Baoulé. After he died, in the sixties, his children came back to frighten the Baoulé that they would take over the land unless these paid an annual fee. One of the two Baoulé accepted to sign a paper

¹ In three cases, the conflict arose when a pioneer decided to sell all or part of his land when returning to his home village while still having children in Djimini. In the second part of the paper, we will turn to the intra-family conflicts induced by the development of land leases.

acknowledging this debt and indeed paid 20 000 CFA Francs¹ each year, up to his death. Then his son refused to continue to pay: *“My father was the first one in Djimini to start planting oil palm trees with SODEPALM. When he began harvesting oil palm seeds and getting paid by SODEPALM, the Abouré became envious. They convoked the old man to remind him that he was on Abouré land and asked him to annually pay for a “tip”. When I inherited, they came to tell me that I should continue to pay. I refused and we went to see the village chief. He recorded them that the old Kissi had given this plot to his laborers instead of paying them, whereas they planned to leave the village. If the Abouré wanted to get the land back, they had to pay for the work my father did at that time... This meeting closed the file, I am no longer bothered”*. The other Baoulé concerned refused to sign the paper and to pay. He was no more threatened because, according to his son, he had married an Abouré woman from the family of Ablé Kaidi, the first Abouré to settle in Djimini. The other cases of such “gift of forest” occurred when a Nzima planter gave plots of forest to three Baoulé laborers that he could not pay. At that time, he stated that he would get back the land if they were to leave the village, and excluded explicitly any sale². In 1984, long after the Nzima’s death, two of the Baoulé tried to sell these plots before going back to their native villages. Informed, the Nzima’s heirs opposed the transactions and got the land back (“snatched the land”, in local terms) – respectively 1.1 and 2.7 hectares. At the same time, they asked the third Baoulé “to show them gratitude” – i.e., to give some money from time to time. As he did not comply, they convoked him before the village’s chief but did not win the case and did not come back to present their claim.

What has to be underlined is that in all these cases, the claims occurred regarding plots of forest which were already clearly appropriated when they were given to the former laborers. No such claim has been formulated regarding plots cleared under the “regulation” of the first migrants. The limitation (prohibition of sale) or attempts at getting some belated profit (asking for “tips”) could be somehow legitimized because of these conditions –therefore leading to a type of situation which corresponds to what is often observed in Southern Côte d’Ivoire, when natives try to renegotiate the past conditions of migrants’ access to land (denying past “sales” or “gift” of forest). Discussions today with the heirs of the first Baoulé pioneers who “installed” the newcomers show that questioning now these past access to the forest is completely out of the question, as it would lack any element of legitimation – whoever got that access, foreigner or Ivorian, Ivorian “from the South” or Ivorian “from the North”.

The sixth extra-family conflict over land property rights we mentioned relates to the only contestation of a land sale that occurred in Djimini, Kongodjan or Petit-Paris. About thirty years ago, a Baoulé planter, *“angered by the fact that nobody from the family came to help him”*, sold his plantation in Djimini to a Mossi at the time of going back home. In 2001, the seller’s son, a retired salaried came back to Djimini to ask the buyer’s heir to sell him back the plot at the original purchase price. The Mossi refused and the case first went to the Aboisso court; it was then transferred to Abidjan where it is still in process. It is, of course, not a trivial matter that the claim was formulated after the vote of the 1998 land law and in a socio-political context which was already tense at that time. Discussing that case with “Central and Southern Ivorian” in Djimini, the position that emerges distinguishes two situations. On the one hand, contesting the right of a foreigner is not perceived as legitimate when that person received access to land by clearing of the forest, or by inheritance of a land obtained that way,

¹ Around 30 U.S. dollars at the current exchange rate.

² We received this information from discussions with several pioneers.

or by buying the land from another foreigner who had cleared it – a position that can be linked with the lack of autochthonous stake in the local context. On the other hand, when the foreigner bought the land from an Ivorian, the attempt by the seller's children to get the land back is seen as legitimate. For instance, the village chief (a Baoulé) considers that in the case just mentioned, the seller's son is entitled to purchase back the land with the argument that *“during all these years the Mossi took benefit from that land”*. The general argument regarding this “right” to contest a sale relies on an explicit patrimonial and intergenerational principle: the control that the family should exert over land sales, in a context where land has become a scarce resource of high value: *“I cannot sell; it is economically stupid and land is a family asset. If I am not any longer here, my heir will settle on it. It is too hard to find a piece of land: there are people who have been here for ten years and could not even find five hectares. The children did not ask to be born, so you have to leave them something, it is even recognized by law. If today I get up to sell, my cousin would present a claim to the justice and they would snatch the land from me.”* According to this principle, contesting a sale carried out by a parent is justified and it is considered that the law will naturally come out in favor of the claimants: *“If my father had sold land, I would try to get the land back; the law authorizes me to kick the buyer out”*¹. In other terms, it is not the commoditization of land as such that is contested – the principle that land can be sold is not discussed. Neither is discussed as such the principle of the “completeness” of a land transaction: in the local context, it is self-evident that buying the land discharges one from any obligation towards the seller. It is rather an intra-family concern that emerges: my father should not have sold the land, we as the family need it, so we can legitimately contest the transaction in order to get the land back. At the same time, the potential implementation of this principle is implicitly conditioned by the legal (and socio-political) context, as it is seen as applying to Burkinabè or Malian buyers, not Ivorian buyers. Legally contesting the sale is legitimate, but it is perceived as conceivable only regarding foreigners, as it is understood that the new land law does not allow them to own land. Otherwise, as long as there is no family stake in a past sale, foreigners' land ownership is not contested in Djimini, at least up to now.

Three elements contribute to explain why such contestations remain exceptional. First, the fact that most land has been sold by pioneers going back home without leaving family members in Djimini *de facto* reduces the risk of such claims being effectively presented – the case *supra* corresponds however to such a situation². Second, some of those who consider as legitimate such a claim mention the cost and the uncertainty of going through a legal process. Third, the position that has just been discussed is expressed by a few people, such as young men living in the village or educated pensioners. Such a claim is not contemplated by mature and old planters, and is even seen as opportunistic by some.

The general picture that emerges therefore is one where land rights are frequently contested within the families, but they remain quite secure otherwise, even in the present socio-political context. Compared with other regions in Côte d'Ivoire, we interpret this lack of conflict as the result of the absence of autochthons who could present claims over land.

¹ In fact, a strict application of the 1998 law should lead to the registration of the plot as public land in such a case.

² Over 19 foreigners owning land in Djimini, 14 bought it or inherited land that had previously been bought. In 5 cases, the sellers were foreigners; in the remaining 8, relatives of only 3 of the sellers still live in Djimini.

The outburst of a tenancy market: the surge of a “Burkinabè tenants *versus* Ivorian landowners” dichotomy

What structures in fact the land issue in the entire region located between Bonoua and Adiaké is the land lease market for pineapple production. This market is grounded in a dichotomy between Burkinabè tenants who grow pineapple and Ivorian landowners leasing out land. The striking observation that can be drawn in this respect is that our study area kept out of the conflict that surged in 2001 between the Abouré natives and the Burkinabè tenants in the neighboring Bonoua region.

The conditions of emergence of a tenancy market and the “Burkinabè tenants *versus* Ivorian landowners” dichotomy

The emergence of a tenancy market in the region is directly linked to the mutation of the local smallholder plantation economy, combined with a strong immigration flow since the end of the seventies. During the pioneer era, coffee and cocoa plantations were developed over all the area suitable for that purpose (i.e., excluding savannah zones). In the case of Djimini, the issue of the renewal of this form of plantation economy emerged as soon as the end of the sixties, with the ageing of the initial plantations. The attempts at replanting with coffee and cocoa failed, due to local soil considerations. The intervention of different parastatal or private companies which introduced new crops in the region re-boosted the local economy¹. Contractual relationships with small farmers favored substitutions in the cropping systems, from old coffee or cocoa plantations to coconut tree, oil palm tree, rubber and pineapple (see Colin, 1990, for an analysis of the mutation of the local plantation economy)². Pineapple production was initiated in 1965 when SALCI, a canning factory, started to develop smallholder production. Canned pineapple disappeared in 1985, with the collapse of most of that industry in Côte d’Ivoire and the closing down of SALCI. However, another type of pineapple production had started to develop since the beginning of the eighties, when exporters started to prospect in the region, looking for subcontractors in order to supply them in pineapple for export as fresh fruits. Since then, several export cooperatives were created, which regrouped part of these small producers (the others sell their fruits to members of cooperatives or to private brokers).

The following table bears witness to the total reconversion of the local economy. Whereas most land in Djimini has been planted at some point in the past in coffee or cocoa, the mutation that was already largely engaged in 1983 was completed in 2002. The data show the very strong impetus in pineapple production for export as fresh fruits, between 1983 and 2002.

¹ Regarding the role of parastatals in the diversification of the agricultural sector, see Colin and Losch (1990).

² Due to the time lag between the pioneer phases in Djimini, Kongodjan and Petit-Paris, the mutation of the plantation economy occurred later in Kongodjan and Petit-Paris. In the eighties, there was still a large acreage of coffee and cocoa plantation in these villages. Now, the cropping systems are quite similar in the three villages and one sees no difference in the landscapes, with a common dominance of oil palm tree, rubber and pineapple.

Table 3. Land use in Djimini-Koffikro (hectares)

	1983	2002
Coffee, cocoa	139	5,6
Coconut tree	68,3	19,4
Oil palm tree	277,8	299
Rubber	5,7	72,3
Canned pineapple	84,9	0
Pineapple for export as fresh fruits	43,2	407,1
Food crops	167,2	95,7
Fallows	158,5	157,3
Abandoned plantations	128,4	16,6
Total	1073	1073

The dynamics of pineapple production is mostly induced by a “second immigration flow” of people coming from Burkina Faso and having access to land through tenancy contracts. The mutation of the local plantation economy has indeed been accompanied by a strong development of the land lease market, which concerns one-third of the total acreage of the village lands in 2002; 93 estates out of 122 lease out. Almost 80% of the land cultivated in pineapple is leased in.

Most temporary transfers of use rights are realized under fixed-rent leases (Table 4). Leasing land in Djimini was initiated in the mid-sixties, when SALCI introduced pineapple cultivation. The opportunity to grow pineapple led to a demand for land. Pineapple production offered two advantages in this respect: first, it was not a perennial crop and could hence be grown by landless cultivators (a lease arrangement excludes the plantation of a perennial crop), and second, as a cash crop it provided the possibility of paying a land rent. On the other hand, the supply in the land lease market came from the ageing of coffee and cocoa plantations, which could be cut down. Originally, the emergence of a land rent had been induced more by the economic nature of pineapple production (*"There was money in it, so we had to take advantage of it"*, the landowners recalled) than by land scarcity in itself. At that time, the plots intended for food crops were just lent. Pineapple cultivation therefore induced a shift from the classic moral economy principle “any man has the right to satisfy his basic needs”, to a utilitarian economic land relationship. The monetarization of land tenancy arrangements for food crops started later, when the demand increased even more with the arrival of more immigrants.

Land lease for pineapple production started on small scattered plots. Then, from 1977 to 1985, SODEFEL¹ organized the producers into pre-cooperative groups (GVC, *groupements à vocation coopérative*), with a two-level lease system: the GVC was leasing in large plots of land (several hectares) on the basis of a 20 year contract, and sub-leased out a plot to each grower for each campaign. This type of lease system disappeared in 1985, with the collapse of the canned pineapple sector. Land leases for food crops or export-pineapple usually cover one cropping cycle: one year for cassava cultivation, from two years and half to three years for pineapple².

¹ Since 1969, small canned pineapple producers were assisted by SODEFEL, a parastatal, while SALCI was still buying the fruits.

² This period includes around six months after the harvest of the fruits, in order for the tenant to harvest the shoots that develop after the fructification and are used for a new planting.

Another type of lease arrangement is locally called *abougnon*¹. The *abougnon* contract for cassava production appeared in the village at the end of the seventies: the tenant gets access to a plot and leaves half of the production to the landowner. Since the end of the eighties, this type of share arrangement spread out to pineapple production². Three different configurations operate under the same label. In the “laborer-*abougnon*” configuration, the *abougnon* just provides his manual labor up to the harvest, and receives half of the value of the production, net of all production costs. His employer – the pineapple planter – can be a landowner or a tenant who leases in the plot under a fixed-rent arrangement. This type of arrangement has no land dimension as such. Another type of configuration is what we call “land rent-*abougnon*”: the landowner only provides the land and receives a land rent corresponding to half of the value of the production, net of all production costs. The tenant, who is the pineapple planter, takes care of all the production process, makes all the decisions and control the commercialization. In a third configuration, the “partnership-*abougnon*”, the landowner does not just provide land but contributes to the production process. Here again, the net result is shared by half.

Two other types of arrangements are found in Djimini, but with much less importance: lending a plot for the time of the cropping cycle (for food crops or pineapple), and getting access to land in return for labor (“labor-rent”), for example when by clearing a fallow, one gets access to half of the plot for one cropping cycle, or to the full plot to implement only a short-cycle crop (maize).

The following table illustrates the importance of pineapple in land tenancy arrangements, as well as the development of *abougnon* contracts for that crop.

Table 4. Types of contractual arrangements in Djimini-Koffikro

		1983		2002	
		acreage (ha)	total (ha)	acreage (ha)	total (ha)
Fixed-rent	canned pineapple	84,9		0	
	export-pineapple	43,2	172,1	277,7	293,8
	food crops	44		16,1	
<i>Abougnon</i>	pineapple*	0	22,4	51	64,1
	food crops	22,4		13,1	
Labor-rent	food crops	8,6	8,6	5,3	5,3
Loans**	food crops	30,8	30,8	11,1	19,8
	pineapple	0		8,75	
Total		233,9		383	

* Laborer-*abougnon* contracts are not taken into account here. ** Does not include intra-family loans.

On the tenancy market, the dichotomy between landowners and landless people is almost complete, as only a small group of people owning land (or whose family owns land) lease in. Due to the history of migration and land appropriation in Djimini, the tenancy market shows a clear bi-polarization between Burkinabè tenants and Ivorian landowners:

¹ In Southern Côte d’Ivoire, *abougnon* usually designates a labor arrangement through which a laborer who works in coffee or cocoa plantations gets half of the production in return for his labor.

² One notice therefore a symetric evolution in the contractual practices, from pineapple to food crops (fixed-lease) and from food crops to pineapple (*abougnon*).

Table 5. Ethnic or national origin of people leasing land in and out in Djimini-Koffikro
(number of people concerned in 2002)

		Landowners leasing out ¹	Tenants	
			Owning land ¹	Landless
Ivorian	Akan group ²	101	14	-
	Ivorian from the North ³	12	8	10
	Others ⁴	3	-	-
Foreigners	Burkinabè	5	7	125 ⁵
	Malian	2	5	15
	Others ⁶	1	-	9
Total		124	34	159

(1) Including members of families owning land (son, daughter, wife, nephew, etc. of landowners) ; (2) Baoulé, Agni, Abouré, Nzima ; (3) Tagbana, Senoufo, Malinké ; (4) Yacouba, Gban 2 ; (5) mostly Mossi (116 over 125) ; (6) Nigerian (landowner leasing out), natives from Togo and Benin (tenants).

This dichotomy stretches out much further than Djimini-Koffikro. It characterizes in fact the whole area comprised between Adiaké and the Abouré country of Bonoua.

Intra-family tensions and conflicts regarding leasing out: the land rent at stake

Tenancy practices often give rise to intra-family tensions or conflicts. These tensions can find their roots in the perception of abuses in the practice of leasing out, or can be rather the indicators of already tense relationships regarding inheritance. The land rent control is often at stake in these conflicting intra-family relations.

Some tensions appear when a family member tends to lease out too much land, as illustrated by the following case: *“I had a palabre [an argument] with my mother, who leases out a full plot. I went to Abidjan to see K.Y. [the informant’s maternal uncle who inherited the family land] and now this plot is left for the direct use of the family, it cannot any longer be leased out. My mother had to accept to stop leasing out because otherwise she would not “get an answer” if she had a problem.”* Other cases are indicators of permanent tensions between siblings, in the case of polygamous households: *“The other brothers [same father but different mothers] are watching us in all we are doing on the old man’s land [their father is bedridden and therefore never goes to the fields] and they tell it to the old man who then creates troubles. Whereas when they give plots to an abounon or under a [fixed-] lease we do not report it. So we are fed up. In the end, it will be painful for everybody because there will be retaliation. When the old man is no longer here, each one will know his place.”* Other conflicts are directly linked to inheritance. For example, after a planter died, the “board of guardians” [*conseil de famille*] designated as heir A.K., a cousin of the late owner. The heir kept one the two parcels constituting the estate, and left the remaining one to the late planter’s oldest son. The tension between the heir and the late planter’s son finds its expression around land leases: *“K.Y. leases out all the land and does not give me anything. If he receives 15 000, he should give me at least 5 000 and there would not be any problem. I sent an old villager to tell him to leave the plot. K.Y. gave half a hectare to an abounon and leased out two and half more hectares. When these people complete their contracts, I will get the land back. K.Y. tries to prohibit people from leasing in from me, but I oppose him. The problem will end when he recognizes that it is not his land. I alone am my father’s son.”* A planter who

leases out the land he inherited from his brother acknowledges that: “*My nephews are not pleased with me regarding their father’s land but they can’t tell anything because I am their uncle.*”

In a few cases, these intra-family tensions affected the tenants for some time, when after they payed the land rent to someone, another family member claimed to be the one who had the right to lease out the land and asked him to pay the rent to his profit. However, in all cases we knew of, the tenant managed to keep out from this fight over whom the rent should go to, and did not have to pay the rent twice. In other words, in Djimini-Koffikro intra-family tensions did not have noticeable repercussions on tenants. This presents striking differences with events in Bonoua in 2001.

Ethnic tensions in the land lease market: the Adiaké – Bonoua contrast

Tenancy practices in Adiaké sous-préfecture: a secured informal market

The tempory delegation of the use right in land through a given institutional arrangement (fixed-lease, sharecropping or loan) might sometimes, in some situations, involve a risk, for the owner, of seeing his property right over that plot questioned (Lyne *et al.*, 1994; Kevane, 1997). This risk is totally absent in our study area¹; the *sous-préfecture* of Adiaké does not deal with such contestations either².

All the landowners leasing out in Djimini and all tenants who live in Djimini and lease in land in Djimini or in other neighboring villages have been interviewed through a detailed survey regarding the problems they might have encountered since they lease out/in. With regard to the importance of leasing practices, the tenancy market comes out as quite secure, even if it remains informal³. The risk of opportunistic behavior from the partners in lease arrangements is often mentioned, but with regard to one’s personal experience, another picture emerges, as people develop strategies to prevent such problem (cf. *infra*). Out of 124 people leasing out land, only four problems were mentioned. In two cases, the issue was a late return of the plot, the tenant expanding the shoot harvesting period much further than the usual 6 months. This is the potential risk that arises in discussions with landowners, even if its effective incidence remains very limited. Some landowners, in order to deal with it, impose a date-to-date contract. The two other cases correspond to conflicts over the type of contract, a fixed-lease versus a land rent-*abougnon* arrangement for pineapple production. In the first case, an old Tagbana landowner died after having leased out a plot under a “land rent-*abougnon*” contract – according to his nephew who inherited the land - to a Tagbana tenant. The tenant claimed that the arrangement was a loan. As there was no written receipt or witness, the heir had to accept the tenant’s version – it might be also that the heir’s opportunistic attempt to extort some advantage from the tenant failed. In the other case, a tenant who had also taken a plot under a land rent-*abougnon* contract died and his family claimed that in fact the plot was under a fixed-lease arrangement. The claim turned short as the landowner was able to produce a receipt attesting the type of contract, as well as witnesses.

¹ It is the same regarding leaving a plot on fallow: property rights are well established and cannot be questioned if the land is not used during some time.

² Conversation with Ms. N. Ackou, *sous-préfet* (November 27, 2001).

³ The same observation emerges from the less systematic fieldwork investigations in Kongodjan and Petit-Paris.

The same picture emerges from the tenants' perspective. Over 159 landless producers leasing land in, only 15 conflicts were documented¹: it happens that a landowner leases out the same plot to two different tenants, that a tenant who had given some advance payment to keep a plot does not get access to the plot and loses his money, or that a landowner takes his plot back before the full harvest of the shoots. In two cases, the tenant also had a problem with the heirs after the death of the landowner: in one case, they had not "made a paper" and the heirs asked for 20 000 CFA F in order to accept to sign such a document to secure the tenant's use right². In the other case (also without a paper), the heir contested the transaction and got the land back - the tenant had not started to work in the plot. So some problems do indeed exist, but when compared with the number of contracts concluded by the tenants since they started to lease in, their intensity remains remarkably low³. The tenancy market in the area is then quite secure.

The formalization of the contracts through a written paper is often seen in the literature as an efficient device to facilitate their enforcement (Koné et al., 1999; Lavigne Delville and Mathieu, 1999). It is also recognized as such by both landowners and tenants in Djimini. However, "making a paper"⁴ - a practice which existed at the beginning of the eighties only for land rented in for 20 years by the GVC - is not (yet?) a general practice; it concerns mainly fixed-lease arrangements. In contrast, the presence of witnesses is almost systematic for fixed leases and *abougnon* contracts for pineapple, i.e., for monetarized arrangements or arrangements bearing a financial stake.

Table 6. The formalization of tenancy contracts in Djimini-Koffikro

	Number of contracts	% with paper	% with witnesses
Fixed-rent	351	17%	99%
<i>Abougnon</i> pineapple	101	3%	93%
<i>Abougnon</i> cassava	26	0	81%
Labor-rent	3	0	33%
Extra-family loans	56	0	27%
Total	537	11%	89%

Making a paper is considered as particularly useful to prevent conflicts in the case where one of the contracting parties dies – in such a case, just relying on witnesses is not seen as always sufficient. The fact of not making a paper, when such a practice is presented as desirable in general conversation – not indexed specifically on the informant case - can be explained by the combination of two registers whose limits remain imprecise. Firstly, a paper is considered as unnecessary when people trust each other – considering that the fact that both live in the same village is far from being considered as a

¹ We will deal later with the specific "Abouré problem" which did impact a number of pineapple growers living in Djimini and leasing some land in the Bonoua area.

² Compared to the fixed-rent which has remained stable these past years at 100 000 CFA Francs per hectare for the cropping cycle (around 150 U.S. dollars).

³ We do not have the data regarding the number of lease contract for each tenant since he started to lease in. A very rough estimation can however be presented. On average, the landless tenants have been leasing in for seven years. Each contract lasts approximately two years and half, which corresponds to 3 successive contracts within that interval. As each planter leases in two plots at the same time, the total number of contracts per tenant since his arrival in Djimini can be estimated at 6, i.e., 950 contracts for all tenants; 15 conflicts over 950 contracts is therefore quite negligible (much more problems arise with pineapple brokers).

⁴ These papers usually indicate the identity of the parties, the name of the witnesses, and the amount paid. The plot localization and the duration of the contract are almost never mentioned.

sufficient condition in this respect¹: *“I ask for a paper the first time I lease in from a landowner. Later on, if everything went well, I no longer make a paper.”* Secondly, the social relationship is such that asking for a paper is often seen as totally inappropriate. Many tenants state it that way: *“I know my landowners very well; they are old people so asking them to make a paper would be as if I do not respect them.”* Not asking for a paper does not always signify a trusting relationship, but can also reflect a concern for not creating distrust: *“I do not ask for a paper because I do not want the landowner to think that I distrust him.”* People also consider that they cannot ask for a paper when they are the ones asking for the contract: *“I do not make a paper because I am the one who is looking for these abougnon, so I cannot ask them for a paper »; « by asking for a paper the landowner will think that you do not trust him and this is not good when you are looking for something with him.”* Sometimes also the landowner refuses the production of a paper: *“With M., I wanted a paper and he said that we know each other and that there won’t be a problem. But as I know him and I mistrust him, I gave the lease money to his sister, not directly to him.”*

When people refer to trust, they refer to a relationship rooted in an interpersonal relationship based on previous interaction, or to a reputation effect. The partner is usually not an unknown person and a screening process, on the basis of personal experience of reputation, is usually seen as efficient by the actors in order to prevent conflicts. *“When I lease in, I rely on my friends to find plots and to tell me if the landowner is trustworthy.”* *“I never had a problem because I ask for information regarding the landowners before leasing in, if I do not know them personally.”* *“Now, I work by acquaintance, not in a messy way like before. If I do not know, I do not lease.”*

When a problem does occur, resorting to a formal authority is exceptional. The litigation is settled locally with the help of witnesses and sometimes with an intervention by the village chief. If the conflict cannot be settled, the injured party – usually the tenant, thus a Burkinabè – considers the case as lost: *“When there is palabre, it is not necessary to go to the police station [gendarmerie]; they would ask for identity papers and residence permit, they would ask for money. One has to swallow his tears within his heart.”* Fortunately, conflicts remain exceptional in Djimini as the partners’ screening process seems quite efficient, but such a comment is highly revealing regarding the present condition of Burkinabè in Southern Côte d’Ivoire². The lack of conflicts regarding tenancy practices does not preclude a perceptible resentment against Burkinabè tenants. This resentment found all its expression in the troubles that occurred in Bonoua in 2001.

From intra-family tensions to inter-ethnic conflict: The Abouré-Burkinabè conflict in Bonoua (2001)

In 2001, a conflict erupted in the Abouré country of Bonoua, opposing Abouré and foreigners – mostly Burkinabè. On January 16, 2001 a young Abouré had an argument in the Bonoua market with one of Burkinabè watchmen. As the Abouré ended up knocked out, the news spread out immediately and Abouré youngsters rose up and destroyed more than seventy foreigners’ shops. *“At that point, there was no longer King, we listened to nobody”* recounts one of them. In the following days, the Abouré youths organized a general meeting which culminated with a note that they handed over to the Bonoua

¹ When dealing with the issue of contractual enforcement, New Institutional Economics tends to present quite a naïve view of the « community » favorable role.

² This comment was made in June 2002, before the beginning of the war.

sous-préfecture and to the Abouré King's Court. This note pretended to establish a set of restrictive rules regarding foreigners in the Abouré country: among other things, it imposed a curfew on them, declared an Abouré monopoly over all trading and transport activities, prohibited marriage between Abouré and foreigners, and prohibited leasing out them land - all demands were rejected as illegal by the *sous-préfecture*. However, this attempt of redefining the relationship with the non-Ivorian was already on its way even before the market incident. In September 2000, a "reflection seminar" of the *Association des ressortissants de Bonoua*¹ dealt with "The evolution and adaptation of the customs to the reality of social life in Bonoua", stating that "*leasing out land directly to non-Ivorian is forbidden.*" That report was signed by the King of the Abouré, the chiefs of the age sets and neighborhoods, and by *notables*.

What happened in Bonoua finds its roots in a strong resentment against the Burkinabè – even if it took such an extreme expression solely in Bonoua. The following interview, realized in August 2001, greatly illustrates the general discourse one hears throughout the region, when discussing with young people whose families own land – Abouré in Bonoua, but also Baoulé or Agni in Djimini. That very explicit discourse expresses a boiling resentment against the Burkinabè, whose economic success is particularly hard to come to terms with. The economic success of some Burkinabè pineapple growers is quite perceptible: some have bought a tractor, a truck, a car. They employ wage annual laborers that they bring from Burkina Faso – whereas Abouré, Baoulé or Agni planters do not any longer find such type of laborer and have to contract laborers on a daighly or piece-rate base, much more expensive. The bitter observation is then "*look at this guy... when he arrived, nine years ago, I employed him to weed my fields, and now he drives a Pajero...*" "*The problem with the Burkinabè is that they have to stop pineapple work, they earn too much money! They go back home with the money; over 1000 Burkinabè in Djimini, how many have built a house here? Over all Djimini there are only two. They show no respect for us. They do not contribute to the life of the village. They have children but they send their girls back home, so they should leave our women in peace! Because they earn of lot of money, they can pay 25 000 to sleep with a girl here. As long as they behave this way and show that lack of respect, there won't be a solution to the problem. The Burkinabè do not want to work [for us as wage laborers]. If we take back the land, they will have to work...*" To the question "OK, but all this is not new, so why do you want to expel them now?" the answer was edifying: "*Ideas feed themselves... Rumors swell and blow up... Tabou*² *has been the trigger.*" A recurring comment is: "*Look, the Burkinabè earn too much money with pineapple production: they pay 100 000 for one hectare and they get millions...*"³ The connection is directly drawn between what the landowner gets as a fixed

¹ Association of people originated from Bonoua, including students or executives who live in Abidjan.

² Tabou is in the South-West of Côte d'Ivoire. In 1999, under President Bédié regime, a violent conflict erupted between the autochthonous Kroumen and Lobi from Northern Côte d'Ivoire, which induced the expulsion of a great number of strangers, Ivorian Lobi but also Burkinabè.

³ Pineapple production can indeed be lucrative, if the planter is able to secure a sufficient yield. The total production cost can be roughly estimated, in small grower conditions, to around 835 000 CFA Fr. Based on the market price that prevailed in 2002 for fruits bought by brokers (70 CFA Fr. per kilogram), the net income per hectare varies between 1,6 millions CFA Fr. for a good yield of 35 tons to 165 000 CFA Fr. for a bad yield of 14 tons. A medium result of 25 tons per hectare that one should obtain in normal conditions in Djimini ensures a net income of around 915 000 CFA Fr. (approximately 1 400 U.S. \$). These results correspond to a production cycle of two years and half. Taking into account the same length of time, in local conditions an oil palm tree plantation provides an approximate income (net of all production costs) of around 600 000 CFA Fr. (900 \$) for an average yield of 8.5 tons. Taking into account the export price (as well as the marketing costs) in the calculation of the net result for pineapple would yield even higher results (data not yet processed). Pineapple production clearly insures a higher income than the oil palm tree, but it is at the cost of incomparably higher investments in money and in time, and any technical or marketing problems can result in a loss of several hundred thousands of CFA francs. What

land rent and the tenant's income at the end – taking into account an approximation of gross income which ignores the important monetary production costs, labor and risk involved in pineapple production. Leasing out under a land rent-*abougnon* contract is perceived quite differently: the level of the land rent for the landowner is much higher¹, so leasing out becomes legitimate... In Djimini, the pressure exerted by landowners to move from fixed leases to land rent-*abougnon* is quite evident (Colin, 2004b).

Anyone familiar with the literature dealing with the autochthon – migrant relationships in Southern Côte d'Ivoire would have noticed familiar arguments in the expression of the resentment against Burkinabè in the region. The actors have just changed, the words are exactly the same. Some decades ago, or even more recently, the accusing finger was pointed in the same way at Baoulé migrants: they invest at home the money they earn locally, they do not build a house in the village, they show no interest in the village affairs... (See Dupire, 1960; Köbben, 1963; Hecht, 1985). Two central concerns were already expressed: the “lack of respect” and the feeling of dispossession and envy: “*If the strangers had remained wage laborers or traders ... the problem would not exist.*” (Dupire 1960:23) “[there is] *rancour because land which may have been disposed of for a few francs, now brings in thousands annually.*” (Köbben, 1963:257) Nowadays in the region, it is the Abouré natives in Bonoua or the descendants of the first Central or Southern Ivorian migrants in our study area - including Baoulé - the ones who express such concerns. The Baoulé have been substituted by the Burkinabè, the tension is rooted in land lease rather than in land appropriation rights, but the economic dynamism of (new) migrants remains the invariant crystallization factor of resentment.

In addition to this widely shared resentment, one has to point out an issue much more specific to the Abouré group: the question of the sharing of the land rent, i.e., the intra-family “sharing out of the pie.” A frequent complaint expressed by the young Abouré is that the elders lease out too much of the land they inherited. At first, the argument is “*we don't have enough land to work*”, but it quickly boils down to “*our old men keep the money for themselves*”. This issue is particularly exacerbated among the Abouré because of the high tensions around inheritance and the management of inherited land that characterize that society. The usual practice is to maintain the inheritance within the matrilineage, but above all it is for the heir to evict any past or potential stakeholder from the land. The control over land access is centralized on the heir and the intra-family delegation of land rights is not as common as among Baoulé or Agni. For instance, in Djimini, among Baoulé or Agni, land leased out by relatives (sons, daughters, nephews, spouses) of the person owning the land or “taking care” of a legacy represents 20% of the total acreage leased out, whereas leaving relatives to get access to part of the “land rent cake” is not so common among Abouré². In other word, the Abouré-Burkinabè conflict over

people take into account anyway is not such a calculation based on the duration of the cultivation cycle and a monetary valuation of all production costs: what they see is the total cash income that pineapple can produce at once: millions! The question of why the landowners involved in the tenancy market do not directly use their land to produce pineapple or any other crop, instead of leasing it out to tenants, is beyond the scope of this paper.

¹ The precise data we have regarding the landowner's income of such 47 contrast in Djimini show that in one case, this income was equivalent to a fixed-rent and that in all other cases it was much higher, with an average of FCFA 385 000 per hectare (approximately 530 \$), to compare with FCFA 100 000 (150 \$) for a fixed lease.

² The issue of the relationships between intra-family tensions among the Abouré and the lease market (supply-side analysis of that market, as well as tensions with the tenants) is currently under in-depth investigation.

land lease reflects to a large extent intra-family tensions among the autochthonous population and, more generally, the issue of intra-family land access and management in the Abouré society¹.

The first semester of the year 2001 was hence marked by troubles in the Bonoua region around plots of land leased in by Burkinabè pineapple growers. Recently planted shoots were pulled up in some parcels and the young Abouré stuck red flags or red sticks in plots which were being prepared for planting, when they suspected that these plots were leased in by Burkinabè planters. The message was clear: do not plant pineapple or the plantation will be destroyed². These troubles did not spread out to the Adiaké *sous-préfecture*³, i.e., outside the Abouré country, but they did affect Burkinabè planters who leased in plots in “Abouré territory” and lived in the Adiaké *sous-préfecture*. In Djimini, 27 planters were concerned: 15 got the red flag and 12 had their plantation destroyed. The largest pineapple grower in Djimini had for instance more than six hectares destroyed: *“In Alloré [an Abouré compound close to Djimini], they pulled up 3.5 hectares in April 2001, these shoots had been planted for 45 days. The landowner fought against the pulling up but with no success. There were people from his family among the 50 who came. The landowner was not happy at all and went to the King’s Court. They told him that I could resume planting. I went to the Court and they gave me a paper, and I replanted in July 2001. In Niampon [another Abouré compound], they pulled up my shoots in May, 1.5 hectares planted three months before. Later on, the landowner told me that I could replant and I did that in August. Also in Niampon, they destroyed 1.5 more hectares in June. I just finished replanting them [interview in September, 2001]. Now, they cannot pull up because there is the paper made with the King. Those who pulled up first go to the Court. If your name is on the list, they don’t pull up. I did not make a gift to the King, my landowners did.”*

As shown in this account, the situation calmed down after some months and the pineapple production resumed for most planters: 8 of the planters concerned by the red flag and 10 of those who had their plantation destroyed had already planted or replanted the same plots by the beginning of 2002 – the rent for these plots had already been paid and they did not want to lose the investment. Most often, the landowner himself came in to inform the tenant that the problem was settled and that he could continue to use the land. At that time, the implementation of the rule according to which any land lease to a foreigner by an Abouré landowner had to be registered at the Court permitted the resumption of pineapple production by Burkinabè tenants on two grounds. First, it was a way, for the landowners who knew that such a demonstration might kill the goose that lays the golden eggs, to show the Abouré youngsters that they had been heard. Second, it was a way to secure the Burkinabè tenants, otherwise reluctant to resume planting. Through interviews we had in September 2003 in Bonoua, it seems that this rule is now relinquished by the Abouré landowners who lease out. Two reasons are mentioned: the registration means the sharing of the rent with the Court (it is said that 20 000 over a 100 000 FCFA rent has to go the King’s Court), and it renders public the information concerning the

¹ G. Kouamé, current doctorate research.

² No destruction or seizure of mature pineapple plantations has been documented. The Abouré did not question the right of the Burkinabè growers over these plantations.

³ The *sous-préfecture* only heard of two cases of shoots being pulled up in the whole area (conversation with Ms. N. Ackou, *sous-préfet*, November 27, 2001).

transaction, whereas the landowner would prefer it to remain discreet, especially regarding his relatives in Bonoua¹.

The interview presented above also illustrates Abouré landowners' frequent disapproving attitude regarding these events, an attitude quite understandable when one considers the benefits they get from the tenancy market. Large Burkinabè pineapple growers are often assailed by Abouré landowners in search for cash who offer them land to lease, sometimes for several successive campaigns - these solicitations reemerged quickly after the 2001 events. Besides, the landowners found themselves in a delicate position as the tenants (or at least some of them, others preferring to sham death until the turmoil quieters down) were asking for the refund of the land rent they had paid. Several Burkinabè tenants describe how their Abouré landowner declared that the pineapple plantation was his own, or that he had an *abougnon* arrangement and not a fixed-lease contract with the Burkinabè tenant, in order to protect him. Anyway, even if the production resumed on already leased in plots, this "Burkinabè hunting" – the expression used locally to describe what happened in 2001 - left a definite mark. A great number of Burkinabè tenants declared during the course of interviews at the end of 2001 and the beginning of 2002, that they will continue to look for plots to lease in, but will avoid the "Abouré territory": *"The time of heat ["chauffement"] has gone, now order has returned but with the Abouré one never knows..."* *"Now I refuse to lease in to Abouré, except here in Djimini. Yesterday Abouré from Bonoua came to see me, they wanted to lease me seven hectares because they needed money because they had a health problem in their family. I did not accept."* Some of them also went to look for land to lease in in the Aboisso region, but this strategy to move away from the Abouré country requires financial and logistic capabilities².

The region of Adiaké, including our research area of Djimini, Kongodjan and Petit-Paris, kept out of that conflict, even if numerous Abouré own land there. Only two pulling up of shoots have been documented in the entire area, and leasing in to Abouré landowners in this region is not seen as risky. How can that contrast being explained, when compared with what happened in Bonoua and in the Abouré compounds depending upon Bonoua? The argument put forward by Burkinabè as well as by Baoulé or Agni is that *"here, it is not Abouré land, the Abouré have no strength."* This point captures in fact different ideas: the fact that there is no adhesion of non-Abouré regarding what Abouré youngsters did (which does not mean that there is empathy towards Burkinabè tenants); the fact that the Abouré are not in a position of strength, demographically and politically, in the area; the fact that the Adiaké *sous-préfecture* intervened to avoid the spread of violence in its jurisdiction, making a clear difference between Adiaké and Bonoua.

The current situation: The lull before the storm?

Since the 2001 events, no inter-ethnic conflict has been documented in the region between Ivorian and foreigners as well as between Ivorian from distinct origins. Everywhere in our research area as well as

¹ The Abouré usually live in the city of Bonoua, not directly in the place where they have land. Family members who are not directly involved in agricultural production therefore rarely go to the fields and are not aware of the heir's land management decisions.

² For example, the larger pineapple grower in Djimini leased in 26 hectares in Nzikro, with a ten-year contract, all paid in advance, with a registration of the contract in Aboisso *sous-préfecture*.

in Bonoua, a flat calm reigns¹. Whomever one speaks to, one hears at first the same discourse: “Everything here is OK, there is no problem”. Regarding the “Abouré-Burkinabè problem”, the interplay of interests at stake seems to prevail. From the Burkinabè perspective, there is no alternative source of income that could be compared with pineapple production. From the Abouré perspective, two registers of interests intervene: the land rent, regarding the landowners leasing out (cf. *supra*), and the trading margin for the cooperatives and private brokers. Cooperatives in the pineapple sector are in fact pseudo-cooperatives organized around large pineapple growers, whose financial management remains totally opaque. The Abouré from Bonoua have largely contributed to the creation of these cooperatives, or invested them. The 2001 crisis ended up in the reduction of production and delays in the production plans prejudicial to the trading margins the cooperatives or private brokers get from buying the production of Burkinabè small planters and exporting it to Europe. Huge financial interests are at stake. As commented a Mossi grower in Tchintchébé (a compound close to Bonoua) in September 2003: *“The pulling up of shoots has completely stopped. They themselves [the Abouré] want us to continue hard. If you need a plot to rent, you can find it right now everywhere. At that time it was hot, but thanks to God everybody has understood. That’s something they did not catch: we plant, they buy, they transport, they export... If we don’t work what are they going to do? Today brokers try to find fruits and they have problems, we are all behind schedule². So there is no problem with them [the Abouré].”*³ Turning to the local impact of the country socio-political situation, no single inter-ethnic conflict has occurred. The following interview, realized with a Baoulé planter in Djimini, illustrates the general first reaction of “Central and Southern Ivorian”: *“There has been no problem here. Here in Djimini we did not lay a finger on foreigners. Anyway, they did behave in a good way. No one stood up to say that the rebellion was a good thing; no Mossi had bad-tempered gesture. Really the Burkinabè behaved well.”*

What appears clearly however, when pursuing the discussions, is that the resentment against Burkinabè – mainly Mossi – expressed before the September 2002 events is stronger than ever. The idea of refusing to lease them land often crops up when discussing with youngsters whose family owns land: *“When all the old men would have died, we the youngsters we won’t lease out any longer land to Burkinabè”*. Some of them however are more realistic: *“It is said that we should not lease out land to Burkinabè but I say that it is not possible because when you lease out you have a reason. If today is the start of the new school year, if I have no money to send my children to school and if a Burkinabè comes to see me, I tell him OK, give me 100 000, and nobody can stop me.”* In another case, to the question “what if a Burkinabè offers 300 000, do you give him a plot?”, the firm answer is “no”; but one rises up the stake: “what if he offers you 500 000?”, the answer is straightforward: *“well, in that case I would betray the confidence pact!”* [I would not respect the prohibition decided collectively] This answer illustrates clearly the dilemma faced by the upholder of such views: the desire to break the basis of the economic success of the Burkinabè pineapple growers on the one hand and the short term monetary needs they want to satisfy on the other hand. Indeed, those claiming that in a near future no

¹ Last fieldwork observation made at mid-September 2003.

² November and December constitute the peak season for pineapple exports. The growers who do not export via cooperatives sell their production to brokers, who have to make anticipated deals with the planters in order to respect boat freight provisions (otherwise they have to pay for unutilized cargo capacity they have reserved).

³ We still have to investigate the current state of the youngsters versus elders issue among the Abouré.

land will be leased out to Burkinabè are themselves quite active now as suppliers on that market... One might expect such a dissonance to fuel even more the resentment against the Burkinabè.

In addition to this economic-grounded tension, a political dimension is now added, as Burkina Faso is blamed for the September 2002 rebellion and for the partition of the country that followed. Very quickly the possibility of a local open conflict and the expression of power relationships pop up: following the statement that “our strangers behave well”, one hears such discourse: *“If they didn’t, if there is a move, if we feel here that they support the rebels... well, there is a camp of marine-commandos in Adiaké. They come often here and told us to inform them in case of trouble. So they [the Mossi] behave well... If there is a move there won’t be any forgiveness. Really our strangers behaved well...”* “Since the crisis began and up to now, there is nothing to say regarding the Mossi. Maybe after the end of the rebellion, if it is proved that the rebellion came from Burkina Faso... otherwise right now it is OK. There is a feeling of revolt. When you discuss with youngsters, you see that they just wait for any spark in Djimini. They just wait for a Burkinabè to make a foolish mistake. Any spark and they start the fire. They always claim that they will do it. The young Abouré from Bonoua came here to tell that if there was any problem, we should just call them. If today there is gban gban, we call Bonoua and Adiaké. The Burkinabè know that, they understand and they do everything in order to have no fight with a young man from Djimini. They stay very calm, they refuse to have an argument. This could happen right now, suppose it is 6 p.m. and we hear that a Burkinabè head butted a Baoulé or an Agni during a football game, immediately all the Burkinabè will be attacked. It could turn bad here.” The Burkinabè we met are indeed aware of the potential risk of violent conflict and express a strong feeling of insecurity. A lot of them have repatriated their families to Burkina Faso – some had already done that during the 2001 events. The school of Tchintchébé, a compound close to Bonoua and populated by Burkinabè, will remain closed for the 2003 school year. The Burkinabè reduce their movements outside the village at a minimum, as well as contacts with Ivorian people. A wall of silence seems to surround the region.

The fact that Senoufo and Malinké from Kongodjan no longer recognize their Burkinabè or Malian origin is not a trivial matter. Anyway, they are still considered as foreigners by “Central and Southern” as well as “Northern” Ivorian from Djimini, the distinction being made explicitly between “true Northern Ivorian” and Burkinabè or Malian. However, nobody questions their rights over land; the issue remains directly linked to the current political context.

This wall of silence is also perceptible regarding the relationships between “Central or Southern” and “Northern” Ivorian in Djimini. The ethnicization of the political debate unsurprisingly turns the former into FPI or (often) PDCI supporters, and the latter into RDR supporters¹. The political positions are indeed well established, but the contradictory political debate remains a taboo. Unlike the relationship with Burkinabè tenants, the tension among Ivorian lacks any land component. “Northern Ivorian” landowners clearly do not feel insecure regarding their land rights and no “Central or Southern Ivorian” has ever questioned these rights in the numerous interviews we made.

¹ FPI : *Front Populaire Ivoirien*, President Gbagbo’s party ; PDCI : *Parti Démocratique de Côte d’Ivoire*, opposition party who presents itself as a follower of late President Houphouët-Boigny ; RDR : *Rassemblement des Républicains*, opposition party that stemmed from PDCI, which supports Alassane Ouattara (and is accused by the FPI to be the political branch of the *Forces Nouvelles*, the rebellion).

At that point, the evolution of the current situation is totally unpredictable: everything looks like if any commonplace dispute could spark off an outburst, but the status quo could as well go on and the political tension progressively fade away to nothing if the national political situation recovers. The intra-family conflicting interests and the resentment regarding the Burkinabè's economic success will remain anyway. These factors could always lead to inter-ethnic conflict as long as the land lease market reflects the dichotomy between Ivorian landowners and Burkinabè tenants, and as long as pineapple production remains largely in Burkinabè growers' hands; land relations as well as productive relations are *de facto* ethnicized. The collapse of smallholder pineapple production might be the unfortunate way through which the issue might be indirectly solved. This collapse might be already on its way, with the imminent enforcement of stricter European norms regarding the chemical residues on the imported fresh fruits. This quality screening will very likely operate as a selection process among pineapple producers, leaving on the export market only the most efficient of them, i.e., those who practice an entrepreneurial-type of production. Increasing phytosanitary problems in the region, with the current expansion of a serious shoots' disease which implies costly treatments (the "pineapple's AIDS", as say the planters) might have the same effect.

Conclusion

The development of the smallholder plantation economy in Southern Côte d'Ivoire has been structured by the autochthon – migrant relationships. Tensions or open conflicts appeared soon between natives and strangers, regarding the conditions of strangers' settlement, especially their obligations when accessing land and more broadly the rights involved in this transfer. These tensions had been documented for long in different areas of Southern Côte d'Ivoire. The conflictive interests were kept under control during the colonial period as well as during the first decades of Independence to the detriment of the autochthons, as public policies tended to favor the strangers' settlement in order to stimulate economic development, relying on the principle "the land belongs to the one that cultivates it" (Dozon, 1997; Chauveau, 2002). That issue has resurfaced openly and widely these past ten years, with natives contesting past land transfers in order to establish a "land due" or even to get the land back – i.e., often, to size productive plantations. In this process, the young autochthons who no longer have economic perspectives in the urban sector play a leading role. The political debate has taken up the question of land property rights as a major issue, in a context where the public authorities no longer support indiscriminately the migrants' interest. The post-Houphouët-Boigny era marks "the return of the autochthony". In that debate, the Ivorian – foreigner opposition prevails over the usual opposition between autochthons and Baoulé or "Dioula"¹ migrants². The 1998 land law, voted unanimously, clearly goes that way by excluding foreigners from land ownership.

The situation we studied is quite specific regarding this general context. It offers quasi-experimental conditions to develop a comparative perspective in which some of the usual ingredients of localized land issues in Southern Côte d'Ivoire are neutralized. There were no autochthonous customary control over land and therefore the issue of an initial negotiation of access to land within the framework of

¹ Dioula is a generic term to refer to muslim people from Northern Côte d'Ivoire or Mali, mostly Malinké.

² Since the seventies, the Burkinabè have taken an increasing place in the plantation economy, shifting from wage laborers to planters (often after a purchase of old unproductive plantations that they rehabilitate), traders or even money lenders (Ruf, 1988).

such an institution as the *tutorat* did not crop up. The historical analysis has shown that the lack of customary framework did not mean really an institutional vacuum, as principles (elements of any “informal” institutional environment) shared by migrants of different origins avoided to transform the pioneer phase into a chaos or a “Far west”. The condition of access to land during the pioneer phase (no “customary” land right holders, no *tutorat* institution), the lack of autochthonous land stake and the character of outright sales of land transactions explain the lack of (or the very exceptional) extra-family questioning of land rights. The inter-ethnic relationships did not intervene in the process of emergence and transfer of land rights¹ and hence did not fuel inter-ethnic tensions².

What appeared as the element structuring currently the land issue in this context is first and foremost the development of a tenancy market. This development, which occurred quite smoothly, endogenously, outside any formal institutional environment³, has several consequences. First, it broadens the range of opportunities for those owning land or those whose family owns land. In addition to the direct productive use of land, one can look now for a land rent; one can make money with land without investing his time, efforts and financial resources. Second, because it means the surge of a land rent, it exacerbates the issue of intra-family land control and it broadens also the range of potential stake holders. Many people who are not in a productive logic and would not try otherwise to activate some potential right regarding access to family land now find interest in activating this right. Third, it reintroduces the ethnic origin, or better said the national origin, as a discriminating factor in land practices: those who lease out are mostly Central or Southern Ivorian, those who lease in are mostly Burkinabè. In other terms, it builds up the arena for a potential inter-ethnic tension.

This tension does exist. It is rooted less in the tenancy transactions as such – the investigation highlighted the limited number of contractual problems – than in the Burkinabè’s economic success with pineapple production on leased land. To this factor one has to add the impact of intra-family tensions regarding land management and particularly the control of the land rent. These elements, combining with the strength of the organization of the Abouré society in Bonoua, led to the temporary attempt to evict Burkinabè tenants – while Adiaké sous-préfecture stayed out of that movement. However, the explicit temptation to create an ethnic segmentation of the tenancy market – “we will not lease out any longer to these Mossi” – collides with the weight of short-term economic interest...

Since September 2002, the national socio-political situation gave more strength to that resentment, due to the perception of the role of Burkina Faso in the Ivorian crisis. The ingredients are ready for serious troubles, but up to now the tension has not translated into any open conflict. The future of this local

¹ This does not mean that the ethnic variable is senseless regarding land issues in that context. It does play a role, especially through the differential capacity to mobilize family labor, the organization of the “households”, the individual’s conditions of access to family land, the inheritance rules and practices, i.e., more generally stated the intra-family content of land rights.

² In this context of former no man’s land, one wonders how the 1998 law would be enforced - if it is enforced one day under its original formulation - the Linas-Marcoussis agreements (January 2003) provide for an amendment (which content is not specified) aiming at securing the rights of the heirs of right-holders who do not fulfill the conditions to become legally land owners – i.e., foreigners. These agreements are not yet fully came into effect – their application is indeed at the heart of strong political tensions at this time. The more logical solution to the rule according to which foreigners cannot own land would be to immatriculate in the name of the State the land presently possessed by Burkinabè or Malian.

³ Even if it is not within the scope of this paper, one notes that this result clearly contradicts the economic or legal analyzes which postulate that a tenancy market requires, in order to develop and operate dynamically, the formalization of land property rights and of agrarian contracts.

situation largely rests on the capacity of the local administration (*sous-préfecture*) to prevent things from getting out of hand, as well as on the will and capacity of the “national reconciliation government” to solve the crisis through a political process.

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Nouvelles transactions foncières dans l'ouest du Burkina Faso : papiers, ambiguïtés et marchandises inimmables - P. Mathieu

UR 095 RÉFO

REGULATIONS FONCIERES, POLITIQUES PUBLIQUES ET LOGIQUES DES ACTEURS

Objectif général

Dans le contexte contemporain de marchandisation, de mondialisation, de mobilité des populations et de compétition accrue sur la terre et les ressources naturelles, l'objectif général du programme est de rendre compte du *processus de constitution et de régulation du foncier comme enjeu stratégique de confrontation, de négociation, de coordination et d'action collective* entre des acteurs, individuels ou collectifs, aux normes et aux intérêts divergents.

Problématique et objectifs spécifiques

Le programme mobilise *une approche de la régulation foncière focalisée sur le binôme acteurs/institutions et sa dynamique*, mise en œuvre conjointement par des économistes, des anthropologues, des géographes et des démographes.

- *L'objectif scientifique du programme* repose sur des questions de recherche empiriques dérivées de l'hypothèse générale que les acteurs produisent et utilisent une gamme variée d'arrangements institutionnels pour accéder aux ressources essentielles engagées autour de l'enjeu foncier (ressources économiques et environnementales, mais aussi ressources politiques, identitaires et symboliques) et pour les contrôler. Du point de vue des stratégies d'acteurs, la régulation foncière est le résultat changeant, non équilibré, de la confrontation/négociation /coordination d'acteurs ou groupes d'acteurs aux normes et aux intérêts divergents. Du point de vue des institutions, la régulation foncière est le résultat d'une dynamique "d'empilement/recomposition" des règles, conventions, normes et organisations (officielles ou non) relevant de trajectoires historiques particulières. Cette hypothèse intègre en particulier la prise en compte des effets des politiques et des interventions publiques dans le champ foncier et, réciproquement, des processus de médiation, d'appropriation, de contournement ou de détournement des politiques publiques par les différents acteurs impliqués dans les arènes foncières locales.
- *L'objectif d'implication du programme dans les questions de développement* vise à éclairer les implications d'une telle dynamique de changement institutionnel pour les politiques publiques nationales et pour les politiques internationales d'aide au développement, en liaison avec le contexte global du développement contemporain.

Méthode et moyens

- *Le programme mobilise et souhaite combiner des outils théoriques divers mais bien identifiés* : l'économie institutionnelle, l'anthropologie interactionniste du changement social et de l'intervention publique, l'analyse des systèmes de production et d'activités, et la démographie économique de la mobilité et de la transformation du cycle familial et intergénérationnel. L'intégration de ces outils est facilitée par un *style de recherche* particulier orienté vers l'exploration d'un problème empirique et l'élaboration de modèles interprétatifs issus du terrain et non vers la production de théories formelles, ainsi que par une *stratégie de recherche* qui privilégie la connaissance " par le bas " des logiques d'acteurs en interaction entre eux et avec leur contexte institutionnel et structurel.
- *Le programme met en œuvre une démarche comparative raisonnée sur trois chantiers* : Mexique, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso. Le choix porte sur des trajectoires et des contextes nationaux forts différents, mais en nombre limité, caractérisés chacun par des traits significatifs vis-à-vis du contexte contemporain de développement, et confrontés à une situation comparable : celle d'être fortement ancrés sur la question foncière et concernés par des politiques qui visent à " normaliser " les droits et les pratiques foncières sur le mode du régime de régulation fondé sur des titres de propriété privée. La comparaison est centrée sur la sphère des exploitations ne disposant pas d'un droit formel de propriété privée (soit environ 50 % des superficies agricoles au Mexique, et l'essentiel des terres en Côte d'Ivoire et au Burkina Faso).
- *Le programme privilégie trois axes thématiques majeurs*, souvent dissociés dans la littérature, correspondant chacun à un ensemble de questions de recherche empiriques qui envisagent la problématique générale sous des angles spécifiques mais interdépendants :
- *l'angle des institutions agraires* : description et analyse des droits, des conventions, des arrangements institutionnels et des dispositifs locaux de régulation foncière et de leurs dynamiques ;
- *l'angle des systèmes d'activités* : description et analyse des relations entre les institutions agraires, les systèmes productifs et les systèmes d'activités ;
- *l'angle des pouvoirs locaux* : description et analyse de la place de l'action publique et des stratégies d'acteurs dans les arènes socio-politiques locales.

Principaux partenaires

- *En France* : participation à l'UMR MOISA (Marchés, Organisations, Institutions et Stratégies d'Acteurs : ENSA.M., CHEAM-IAM, INRA, CIRAD, IRD) à Montpellier ; convention de collaboration avec la formation doctorale de l'Ecole des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales de Marseille ; collaboration avec le GRET et diverses universités.
- *En Europe* : collaboration forte avec l'Institut d'Etudes du Développement (Université catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve), l'International Institute for Environment and Development (London-Edinburgh), l'Institut Universitaire d'Études de Développement (Genève).
- *Partenariat au Sud* : L'UR privilégie le partenariat avec des jeunes équipes, déjà constituées (association de partenariat avec le Centre de Recherches et d'Études Supérieures en Anthropologie Sociale - CIESAS - au Mexique) ou en voie de constitution en Côte d'Ivoire (Laboratoire d'Études Foncières en partenariat avec l'Université d'Abidjan-Cocody et l'Institut d'Ethno-Sociologie) et au Burkina Faso.
- La participation de l'UR au *projet européen INCO-DEV CLAIMS* (Changes in Land Access, Institutions and Markets in West Africa) renforce le réseau de partenariat européen (IIED Londres, IED Louvain, GRET Paris) et africain (UERD Burkina Faso, GIDIS Côte d'Ivoire, LARES Bénin, CUMBU Mali).