

Community land management and farms abandonment by youth in Aboure's society in the south of Ivory Coast

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Abstract

In the locality of Bonoua, local land tenure practices are based on traditional management by lineages. However, this local balance is increasingly disrupted, leading to intergenerational conflicts. The data resulting from the guides sent to the various stakeholders show that there are two types of management: traditional and modern. However, the latter mode is predominant because of the traditional roots of the Bonoua people, who favour community management through matrilineal relations. The prism of this management leads to misunderstandings between generations with the consequence that young people abandon family farms and convert to other activities. This situation opens up the field to the increasing demand for foreign labour in the study area.

Keywords: land practices, lineages, reforms, abandonment, Abouré

Introduction

Social reproduction is an important characteristic of West African socio-economic organization and activity (Mortimore, 2003). The different activities developed have their source in land exploitation (Gafsi et al., 2007). Land tenure is therefore of paramount importance in traditional societies. The important place it occupies presents land in beliefs as a sacred and inalienable good (Delafosse, 1928), but above all a good whose management is community-based (Yelkouni, 2005).

The abouré people of Bonoua, like the other ethnic sub-groups of the Akan ethnolinguistic area whose historical roots are in ASHANTI in Ghana bases its land management system on communitarianism. This is reflected in the fashionable traditional system of inheritance. The Akan group in general has adopted the matriarchal succession system. This philosophy of

succession, whose direct socio-economic implication is the management of the land heritage by the family, is highlighted by (Bouah, 1966). He argues and develops that through the history of its passage from the Tanoe River to the present land of occupation, the Akan group as a whole have opted, in recognition of the sacrifice of the offering of the child of the king's sister to the waters, to bequeath their inheritance to their uterine nephews; sons or even children therefore of their sisters. For (Andrzej, 1963), the fundamental basic unit of Ashanti society, for example, remained the matrilineal extended family, whose members are participants in a collective land heritage whose rights of use and occupation are transmitted in the maternal line. This tradition still remains (Clignet, 1963) and constitutes the basis for determining the status of land. This excludes systematically children in the agnatic line from land management. This way of managing land shows how

sensitive is field problematic Abouré society studied in this paper is concerned. The heirs to the land are already known. It is the son of the field owner's sister. However, his sons will work in the fields without being able to inherit. The fact is that customary rights of lineage families are clearly established on the very small amount of land (Colin et al., 2004). This because Abouré's area are marked by a strong land tenure constraint.

Indeed, the indigenous land is "shared between meso-hygrophic forest and swampy formations", and reduce the opportunities to get land again for young. They understand that they could never be land owner and the intra-family redistribution of land income is often a source of conflict between them and the elders. This situation has been characterized by abandonment on family farms, leading to instability in the family and even social structure. For (Bonnecase, 2001), this exodus is all the more important since the system of collateral succession, generally in force in both matrilineal and patrilineal involves the extinction of one generation so that the next can access the earth. Bonoua's land arena, appears to be a fiercely disputed field, where the varied and divergent interests of a set of actors, as composite as the logics they pursue, and the social referents that justify their actions collide. The phenomenon is certainly not new and exclusive to this region of the country, but it is taking on worrying proportions in the locality of Bonoua. So how does community land management lead to the abandonment of family farms by abouré young people? How community land management is carried out in the abouré's society? How abandonment takes place on family farms in Bonoua? What are the impacts of abandonment of family farms on Abouré society of Bonoua?

This article analyzes the correlation between community land management and the abandonment of

family farms by young people, describes community land management among the Abouré de Bonoua, identifies the forms of abandonment on family farms, and notes the impact of abandonment on the Abouré de Bonoua society.

Materials and methods

Materials

Study zone

Located at 59 km from Abidjan, Ivory coast economical capital and at 17 km from Grand-Bassam, 57 km, the locality of Bonoua or "Obolwon" belongs to the department of Grand-Bassam and also to the South-Comoé region in the South of Ivory Coast. With a relatively flat relief surrounded by hills to the north, south and east, Bonoua remains first and foremost an Abouré village and is subdivided into three large traditional districts which are: Koumassi, Bégneri and Bronoukro.

The social and political organization of the Abouré is based on three institutions: clan families, generations and age groups, and the royal institution. Its population is estimated to 68,983 (RGPH, 2014). Its is generally Christian but remains very attached to his tradition. Indigenous people are the dominant population and the language spoken is Abouré or "Abloé". The Abouré of Bonoua are also called "Ehivé". They are an essentially agricultural people. The cultures encountered are pineapple, oil palm and rubber.

The map (Figure 1) below shows the location of the locality.

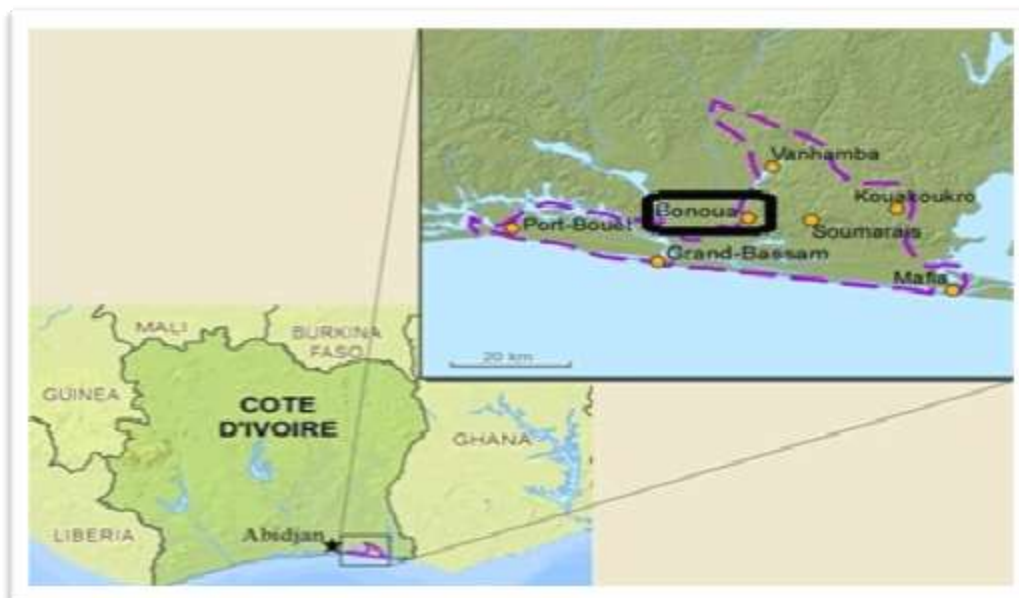


Figure 1: Localization of Bonoua Town on Ivory Coast Town occupied by Abouré
Source: Joshua projet, 2019 (Abure, eyive in cote d'ivoire)

The population studied is made up of the different Abouré's actors involved in the field of study. They are the parents, the youth, the customary authority and the customary heirs. It is from these people in a particular way that data is collected through interviews and questionnaires. Data collection took place in Bonoua in the neighbourhoods of Koumassi and Bronoukro that are most affected by the phenomenon. Although the total population of Bonoua is 68,983 inhabitants, the specific nature of the study led to the survey being conducted only among the indigenous people. Thus, key informants were selected from the database of royal complaints about land management conflicts. Thirty-three (33) people were identified and interviewed.

Investigations take place at the home of our respondents. It lasted more than six weeks. The techniques used are: the interview guide which was sent to the notables and heads of family clans of the royal court. It focused on the land management modes of the people and the consequences that emerge from them. There are six (6). Five (5) male and three (3) female parents were interviewed to understand their perception of the abandonment of family farms by youth. Then, five (5) heirs were interviewed. The aim was to capture their views on the inheritance problems that involve them. They are the beneficiaries of customary rights and their views on the subject are important. Finally, 20 young people who had abandoned farms were interviewed. They were given an interview guide to understand their motivations for abandoning family farms. A questionnaire was also sent to them in order to understand the activity they carry out after abandoning farms, their income and their marital status.

Methods

The research is intended to be qualitative, so analysis of the content of the interviews was used. It is based on an inductive analysis of the content of the discourse of parents, traditional referents and youth. For the statistical data from the questionnaires, they were processed in an excel table because of the number; just twenty (20). The analysis was synthetic and revealed two main spheres around which thought logics (Ladriere, 1983) and action strategies (Garfinkel, 1957) are developed. These spheres relate to the mode of land management and the meanings of belonging to a traditional family. They cover and break down different aspects, particularly in their social and cultural dimensions, linked to one degree or another to the context of inheritance, the abandonment of family farms. Thus, this configuration around land in a successful society leads youth thinking about what to do but above all to elaborate strategies under pragmatic constraints they are facing. They turn to activities other than farming. Thus, we are witnessing a generalization of the "decapitation" of young people's labour force, based on typical cases of victims of community land management. The argument for justifying the departure to family farms can therefore be explained by the mode of succession, the key element of which is still the land, as well as the traditional perception of the family. It is based on the traditional perception of the family, rather than on the nuclear family.

Results

Community land management in Bonoua Abouré society

The land management method

Among abouré society of Bonoua, the influence of maternal families on land management is unequivocal. Land represents for this people the basis of all wealth. It is also the basis of the very existence of the society. In a successful country, all land belongs to the clan families and its management is the responsibility of an individual chosen according to the criteria of birthright and lineage, as two of our interviewees attest.

"Here, all the land is for the family, and it is the great uncle who is currently in charge of working on it, but it remains for the family, as long as he is alive, he works on it and he can also give it to the younger brothers who are in the family" E. G., notable and accedent to the royal court of Bonoua".

In this vein, the following interviewee agrees:

"The land we owned belonged to our grandfather (elder brother of the maternal grandmother), our uncle (brother of the mother) inherited it and today it's me. If I fall at once, it is my sister's eldest son who must watch over our land and leave it to others" O. M., traditional heir".

The way land is managed in this society is still traditional and communal. To be the owner or in charge of its management, one must be an heir, i.e. have inherited from someone.

However, Bonoua no longer has any cultivable land, so heirs diversify their crops and increasingly leave the locality where the land is family property to conquer new cultivable land in the localities of Alépé, Adzopé, Aboisso and Maféré etc. Thus, in addition to family land, people through their relations or financial means have acquired land of their own. In this case, the management of the land is the responsibility of the individual himself, and the maternal family can in no way intervene in the management of this property¹. The persistence of this community management is further reinforced by the meanings of belonging to a traditional family.

The meanings of belonging to a traditional family

Among the successful people, the individual takes root in clan groups. He is linked to this entity by a bond of filiation. The unity of the clan family is based on the awareness of a common origin of the individuals. This

¹ Cf. Master's thesis University of Korhogo (2018).

belonging to the same origin creates a strong bonding factor in the community. Each individual is a member of the said family and espouses the idea that they are all descendants of the same ancestor. One of His Majesty's cane holders states the following:

"there is no one in our society (successful society) without family. Everyone is aware that they come from a family and must know their name and especially their chief who represents them at the royal court, on his chair²" Nanan A. C".

This family unit highlights the importance of fraternal relationships between individuals of the same group leading to family and even social cohesion. From generation to generation, bonds are perpetuated, values are transmitted and the family becomes a reference point in the society. The heads of families called "Mlinté"³ are the representatives of family clans. The "Mlinté" are the second pillar of the society. They are Her Majesty's notables and are appointed within their respective matriclans taking into account their wisdom and the genealogical order. Today there are thirty-nine family clans symbolized by seats at the royal court divided into five large symbolic families.

The result of this traditional form of community land management, which is embedded in the strong identification with the family, is a rigidity towards young people that leads to the abandonment of family farms.

Forms of abandonment on family farms

In Bonoua's mature society, abandonment of family farms occurs in two contexts. The first occurs after the death of the parents, especially the father, and the second during the father's lifetime. The table below shows the abandonment modalities encountered during the investigations:

² The mature society is represented at the royal court by chairs on which the chief, usually the oldest member of each large family called Mlinté, reigns. The large families are five (5), EVEVLE (Royal Family), Wlomin, Obouhivè, Adjèkèpouè et guèklè.

³ This word designates in an accomplished language the heads of families who sit at the royal court. They are the traditional representatives and guarantors of the families.

Table 1: Modalities of abandonment of the fields by youth

Abandonment modalities	Number	Percentage (%)
During father's lifetime	14	70
At the father death	06	30
Total	20	100

The data presented show that out of the 20 respondents, 14, or 70%, abandoned family farms during the father's lifetime. Only 6 or 30% leave the fields after the father's death.

The first case is the result of an action of prudence. Indeed, the children know that the father occupies family or community land, so they already know that they are excluded from inheritance. They leave to avoid humiliation on the death of their father. Thus, as one of the young people surveyed note the motivation for leaving like this:

"you have to anticipate things. I know my father doesn't have personal land. He inherited it himself. It's his nephews who will inherit after him. So I've decided to leave and start a new business before it's too late."

Thus, the 14 young people interviewed all fit into this logic. It should also be noted that 98% of young surveyed are men, as shown in the second table below. They are also all married and live in households with children.

Table 2: Gender of young surveyed

Gender	Number	Percentage (%)
Male	18	90
Female	02	10
Total	20	100

98% of the young people surveyed are men because in the distribution of domestic tasks in traditional families, it is the young men who work to the creation and the maintenance of the fields. Only 2 % of women because young women are called to marry at a very early age.

They leave the paternal home for their husband home. Only those who are not yet married, or those who are divorced or widowed stay with the father. Thus, the table below (Table 3) shows the marital status of the 18 young men surveyed.

Table 3: Matrimonial status of young men

Matrimonial Status	Number	Percentage (%)
As a couple	15	83,33
Married	2	11,11
Single	1	5,55
Total	18	100

The data reveal that almost all young men live with a girlfriend. They all face family responsibilities and have financial burdens. Their precarious land status, synonymous of poverty, pushes them to leave the family plantations. The next respondent mentions this fact:

"I'm an adult. I live with a woman for three years and we have two children. How am I going to feed them if overnight I find myself with nothing?"

This concern expressed like this is the basis for the departures from family farms, which are a springboard for seeking more solid gains.

The child, who in the past was actively involved in the work to meet the needs of the family, today renounces his ties because of the management and distribution of property after the death of the parents. Initially, the treatment of children by the customary heir is a triggering factor.

"the inheritance problem is too difficult here, you're going to work long hours with your father to get zero when he falls⁴". K. R, a young man sent away from the family farm by his father's heir".

Indeed, the child, who has no feelings from his late father's maternal family, has neither present nor future and is only subject to the assaults of the family embodied by the customary heir. Thus, as K. J, one of our interviewees puts it,

"you're on your own after years of working hard with your father. It even looks like people are waiting for him to die, they're going to tear it up and tell you to go see your maternal uncles. But if my uncle doesn't have any land, I do. So, as soon as I have some money, I'd rather go look for something else to do. Why stay for nothing in the end"

Seeing himself reduced to a second role, he sees conversion to other activities by abandoning family farms as the only alternative. This abandonment of family farms is certainly a voluntary act, but there is a need for young people to seek independence. In anticipation of the risks, young people decide on their own to leave by abandoning family farms, a good which does not accrue to them under traditional arrangements.

When asking the reasons of this youths' behavior, the answers vary, but the fault lies with the customary heirs. However, although abandonment of the family farms is relatively recent, children's concerns about their future have always remained. Strategies for parental retention of children on family farms are eroding over time.

"Today, the emotional blackmail that parents used to blackmail their children to stay and work with them all their lives on family land does not work. They live and see all the time how the heirs treat their friends once they take over, so finally the young people understand that it is no longer necessary to wear them out working in their father's fields". A. M, president of the communal youth of Bonoua".

So what do the parents think of this situation?

The inventory of land access and management in Bonoua shows that the actors have more of a right of use than a right of ownership. This is confirmed by one of the fathers interviewed:

"As long as the land you work on is for the family, you can't share it with your children". You are just there to

work on it during your lifetime, the day you are no longer there, the family gets its thing back".

When asked why children should be encouraged to invest their energy in working on land that is not theirs, the father in survey n°2 answers as follows:

"That's the way it is. While you're still alive, your children are the ones who profit. You can make things for them. Unfortunately, some time you can't do everything you planned and you die."

This overly simplistic reading of the precarious land tenure for which their offspring are destined has implications for the successful society.

The impact of abandonment on family farms on Abouré society

New economic activities of youth in Bonoua

The economic transformations and the change in attitude of young people are having an impact on their daily lives. These changes, characterized by the emergence of new economic activities, have given impetus to the emergence of the communal taxi driver, shopkeepers and others activities. It cannot be overemphasized that individualistic initiatives, which according to some young people are the main factors of transformation, are producing encouraging effects for these actors who were asking for nothing less to escape family pressure. Table 4 below gives repartition of activities:

⁴ Expression to express his death

Table 4: Reconversion activities of youth

Activities	Number	Percentage (%)
Taxi driver	13	65
shopkeepers	5	25
Others activities	2	10
Total	20	100

The 20 young people surveyed are all converted to activities after leaving the fields. The most predominant activity was taxi driving, 65%, followed by shopkeepers with 25% and other activities including miscellaneous services, 10%.

The predominance of taxi drivers is explained by the fact that it is one of the easiest activities to access in Bonoua. Vehicles are available. In addition, the platform for victims of inheritance in Bonoua has a subsidy for the purchase of second-hand vehicles. Commercial activities are more the responsibility of women, so men are more oriented towards transport.

Although most of the development initiatives undertaken by young people are informal, the better organized communal taxi-driving activity remains one of the successes. In public transport, as one respondent suggests:

"If you're not lazy, you'll make a profit even if it seems difficult. And then you can start working for someone and a little bit you can save up to buy for yourself or even get help". A. G, a young man converted to the transport industry".

In the vein of the aid received, an economy of solidarity is developing between victims of a traditional system with controversial effects. Thus for this respondent;

"With the various young people left behind in this inheritance affair, some of whom have managed to get out of it, some have managed to put money aside to help the other victims set up on their own and not suffer the effects of the worrying situation" O. J, head of a platform for traditionally underprivileged youth".

Some underprivileged people helped by friends and microfinances conduct business activities.

In addition, a large number of children who have abandoned family farms have taken up this economic activity. Often benefiting from the help and support of their relatives, these young people who have been highlighted in this sector of activity have for some of them become role models in society.

With the explanations of our respondents, we understand the importance of this activity for young people. Agreeing in the same vein, the latter adds the following:

"When you succeed in imposing yourself in a specific field of activity, you will end up accomplishing great feats in life" A. F

These various reconversions of young people away from family farms encourage parents to resort to foreign labour.

The more frequent use of foreign labour

Financing difficulties and the dispersal of most of the labour force on family farms due to internal quarrels between stakeholders have led many planters to request foreign labour to carry out work in the fields. The massive departure of children from family farms has indeed left a void in the workforce on these plantations. So to remedy this, parents are increasingly turning to new people. Thus, parent n°2 interviewed confided in these terms:

"With the departure of the children who no longer want to work with us in the fields, we have no choice but to look for strangers to help us in the fields".

On the identity of these new waves of workers, he gives the following details:

"There are people, as they know the problems we have with our children, they come to propose to send us young people from Benin and especially from Togo who come to work for periods of one (1) to two (2) years, we often pay them between 120,000 and 200,000 FCFA a year at least that helps to maintain the fields and to make new fields. We pay them directly at the end of the contract".

The phenomenon is not entirely new. At the time of the economic boom with the appearance of perennial crops, this family labour had been used, only it is taking on greater proportions because of the new situation linked to the total and systematic absence of young people alongside their parents in the fields.

"We no longer have a choice, without them in our fields, there is no more work and that's all that will collapse, especially the regional economy. They were already present but now, there, it is with these brothers that we work all the time. They even know the limits of the fields and the land better than we do". Nanan A. G, King's cane bearer.

Thus, this foreign labour force is correcting this deficiency. This new workforce is proving itself as a real physical force. What do these different readings of the phenomenon conceal?

Discussion

The data collected on community land management suggest that it is family-driven, depending on the meaning or direction of the outcomes, which are based on societal practices in that community. Indeed, in land management, the successful conception of the family is well expressed in terms of a community of persons united by ties of kinship. This reading is shared by (Toh, 2002). For him, the family in matrilineal societies is constituted at the expense of the nuclear family, which has a legal personality, a name, a home and a common heritage, and which creates a legal obligation of moral and material solidarity among its members, which is supposed to protect them and promote their social, physical and emotional development. This is also the basis for the socio-economic functioning of the achievement from the point of view of (Colin et al., 2004). Also, as indicated (Kigbafory and Gadou, 2006), in their study "allochtonie et autochtonie, rapports autour de la terre: une étude de cas à akroaba akoudjekoa et ono14 in the agni⁵ area in southern Ivory Coast, that land is essentially communal and its management is essentially based on traditional tenure, which is very strict and governed by rules of conduct. But then, what about the changes that are taking place in this area?

Abundant in the opposite direction, (Valois, 1965) thinks that with the emergence of the new social constraints as described, it is the members as individuals, and most often the father, who ensures the economic security of the family. Therefore, these heirs should be his children to guarantee his work. For (Flavigny, 2007), the new family dissipates the bond of filiation: it loses its inner framework. The bond between parents and children is often severed, and relationships between members have become more complex. In the case of this study, this complexity is the result of struggles between the traditional designated heirs and the children. This situation inevitably leads in society to abandonment on family farms.

The acceleration of children's departure from family farms seems to be mainly linked to two entities, the customary heir on the one hand and the parents on the

other. As far as the parents are concerned, this is characterized by their position in favour of the maternal family and by their silence. In a context of division of labour, the position of young people vis-à-vis their parents is to be at their service. Children constitute a family workforce that can, in principle, take over the farms.

This reading is consistent with the case study where children participate in the creation and maintenance of plantations but cannot systematically inherit "the fruit" of their labour. The register of de facto social justification for the contexts in which children may own land can be summarized in three elements.

The first relates to the fact that the father grants a plot of land that belongs to him to his sons. The second relates to the fact that the son acquires land by his own financial means. Finally, either the child becomes the manager of the land by inheritance in the mother's family. The case of interest here goes beyond these three registers which, moreover, takes place in a context of scarcity and above all of community management and enshrines the powerless vision of the parents on one of the essential points concerning the dispersion of labour on family farms (Mortimore, 2003).

These abandonments linked to this community management are part of the conflict situations that arise between children and their father's maternal families after the father's death. In fact, when fathers are asked how they react to this situation, many of them find it difficult to admit that during their lifetime the children can claim shares of inheritance that remain the property of the family, if not the community. This opens up the field of solicitation of labour other than that of the family environment (Gafsi et al., 2007). This apprehension is shared by (Dugue and Faure, 2001) in their study carried out in Benin on "Advice to family farms" for whom "the expected transition to a relatively limited (and ultimately smaller) agricultural labour force is the result of urbanisation and job diversification, which in most cases results in the dispersion of family labour in favour of expatriate labour", p. 15. In the same vein, (Snrech and Pradelle, 1996) maintains that the most interesting countries for observing the phenomenon are Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire, where it is estimated that the agricultural population, as a percentage of the total population, has already begun to decline and that, even in absolute terms, it has been stagnating since the beginning of the 1990s and, even better, the current trend in Nigeria will probably be repeated elsewhere in the future. On the other hand, according to (Clignet, 1963), the current evolution of societies should lead to a redefinition of land management modes in traditional societies still attached to the matriarchal system of inheritance. Otherwise, they will lose their lands which will remain foreign agricultural workers hands.

Conclusion

The state of play on the problem of abandonment on farms suggests a number of conflicting situations. These different situations unfortunately demonstrate that there is a real problem in the common management of land in

⁵ The agni people is the neighbour of Abouré people of Bonoua

this locality. However, even if abandonment on family farms is the major problem, other factors are also triggering this phenomenon. Moreover, whether voluntary or involuntary, the responsibility of the actors (direct or indirect) concerned is not to be dismissed. This problem, far from being fortuitous, is growing in this society as a result of the interplay of actors that is developing. The impact of its abandonment on family farms in the Bonoua locality is at the socio-economic level. While the situation varies from one individual to another, the essence of this dispersion remains the same for all individuals. It is important to be aware, however, that this crisis, like previous crises in society, has an impact on all the actors involved or concerned.

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