



HAL
open science

Access to land, the production of strangers, and governmentality in Central Benin

Pierre-Yves Le Meur, . Africa-Europe Group For Interdisciplinary Studies

► To cite this version:

Pierre-Yves Le Meur, . Africa-Europe Group For Interdisciplinary Studies. Access to land, the production of strangers, and governmentality in Central Benin. 1. European Conference of African Studies, Jun 2005, London, United Kingdom. 16 p. hal-02825536

HAL Id: hal-02825536

<https://hal.inrae.fr/hal-02825536>

Submitted on 6 Jun 2020

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Access to land, the production of strangers, and governmentality in Central Benin

*Pierre-Yves Le Meur*¹

Paper presented at the European Conference of African Studies

Organised by the School of Oriental and African Studies & the Institute of Commonwealth Studies

For the Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies (AEGIS)

London, June 29 – July 3, 2005

Panel 53 “Land governance in Africa and the social embeddedness of property”

Central Benin bears the hallmark of a long history of mobility, first as a buffer area and a refuge between slave raiding polities until the late XIXth century. Since the 1930s-40s, the nexus of local social and economic relations has been made of complex linkages between control over labour force, access to land and natural resources, and out- and in-migrations. Out-migrations to Togo and Gold Coast started by the 1920s and 1930s, first as a means to escape military conscription and forced labour. The migration turned into a more accumulative one in the 1940s-1960s, still to Gold Coast and also Ivory Coast. Migrants coming back to Ouessè invested in agriculture and trade but had to face the labour question and could do it thanks to the money earned in migration. This contributed to the starting of immigration of labour force in the 1960s. The first migrant workers arrived at that time from the Atakora hills in north-western Benin, mainly Natemba and Berba coming from the communes of Tanguieta and Materi (they are locally called “Tanguieta”). During at least 10 years, they only came as seasonal workers, having heard “there was money to earn in Ouessè”². They had already long experience as migrant workers in other parts of Benin and neighbouring countries (Togo, Ghana, Nigeria). They later settled as farmers. Migrants has continued to arrive from Atakora up to now, but newcomers has come too from the Adja plateau and Fon came from Abomey region from the 1980s onward, often following a similar sequence of wage labour and agricultural installation.

The starting point of this paper is an empirical question: describing and interpreting how these migrants have been socially integrated into local communities structured by internal frontier processes placing mobility at the centre of the societal production. The elementary relation between a stranger (*jônôn*) and an “owner” (*xweto*) will constitute the entry-point of the inquiry³.

¹ Anthropologist, GRET (Paris), research fellow at IRD, Research unit “Land regulations, public policies and actors’ logics”.

² Albert Montango, Natemba, brother of the first migrant farmer from Atakora in Gbanlin (int. 08/09/02).

³ The study is centred on the case of Gbanlin, an administrative village in the commune of Ouesse, *Département des Collines*. The first field research took place in 1993 and 1995 within of a programme on democratisation and local powers in rural Benin (Le Meur & Adjinacou 1998). I returned to Gbanlin in 2002 and 2004, this time for a INCO project funded by the European Union on “changes in land access, institutions and markets in West Africa” (CLAIMS). The work is still in progress, and will be continued until the end of 2005. A MSc student, Julien Barbier, from CNEARC (National Centre for Agronomy in the Tropics, Montpellier) did fieldwork under my supervision in 2003/04 (and together with me in January and February 2004).

I. STARTING POINT: THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS AS STRANGERS

At first sight, the actors or “strategic groups” of the interaction are defined at once by their origin (allochthonous/autochthonous groups) and their position as regards land tenure (land-owners or landholders/land users).

Three interrelated issues result from this first observation:

- ▷ Regarding access to resources, especially land and labour (with the related question of the emergence of land rights market, labour market, and agricultural commodities market).
- ▷ Regarding the distribution of the bundle of land rights. What rights are really allocated to migrants when settled by an autochthonous tutor (*xweto*) on a piece of land? What rights does the tutor hold? The land rights question is related to the legitimacy issue (if one sees belonging/citizenship in terms of rights of administration, of exclusion or inclusion – for instance the inclusion of a migrant as a stranger - *jônôn*).
- ▷ Regarding social integration and individuals’ status (community, citizenship, ethnic belonging) in a context of strong mobility (*tutorat* as a ‘frontier institution’).

These questions are at once affairs of:

1. Actors’ logic: strategy, interactions, transactions, interpretations, judgement, local knowledge and social theories.
2. Production of political and social order: institutionalising processes, inclusion/exclusion, and governance.

How the migrants are integrated into their new community: answering the question implies two complementary entry-gates. First, one can see the *tutorat* as a social relation – basically a clientelistic one - linking two persons around an exchange of goods and services, rights and duties. However, as what is at stake with this relation is not only access to resources but social integration too, the relation cannot be merely dyadic. It implies a third party, namely the moral community in which the migrant is to be socially integrated and attributed a specific status of “stranger” (*jônôn*)⁴.

One discerns here an analogy with property relations that are at first sight a relation between person and thing, and actually a relation between persons in relation to a thing (cf. Hoebel’s classical definition). And as for property relations, one must add in the case of *tutorat* a fourth dimension, the temporal one. The *tutorat* tie cannot be understood from a static point of view as it implies elements of reciprocity unfolding in time. Furthermore, these elements cannot be boiled down in a fixed exchange structure, as components of anticipation and practical sense are inherent in the relation. *Tutorat* is organised as set of “pratiques qui se définissent par leur fait que leur structure temporelle, c’est-à-dire leur orientation et leur rythme, est constitutive de leur sens” (Bourdieu 1972: 337). It is thus necessary to situate *tutorat* historical trajectory and its evolutions in relation to the conceptual pair relation (interaction)/institution.

⁴ Religious mediations as in the case of Sakpata *vodun* can also be seen as expressing the - at least implicit - presence of the community within the relation.

II. GOVERNMENTALITY

The two entry gates identified above must be broadly characterised before we can discuss what they imply in terms of land governance.

1. Patron-client relation

A patron-client relation is organised around the following features. It is a relation between two persons, thus a dyadic tie, voluntary - contrary to the slave/master tie for instance. It is based on the exchange of goods and services between two social actors unevenly endowed in resources (and social status) and each of them needing the other one (cf. Spittler 1977).

The relational definition emphasises social interactions, exchange relations, and thus the question of access to – and control over resources (Ribot & Peluso 2003). It is useful too in characterising social situations and relations in Central Benin beyond the sole land issue. Patron-client relation underlie for instance the functioning of migrants' teams who travelled to Gold Coast and Ivory Coast in the 1940s-1960s as well as the modalities of development aid and peoples' participation (Le Meur 2005a). The topic is also recurrent in local discourses on social relations.

An approach in terms of patron-client relations raises two questions:

- ▷ The identification of the resources effectively controlled and the rights effectively held by the actors involved in the relation. Land ownership can be seen as a social process and in this respect, migrants' settlements function as a 'coup de force' creating land appropriation on the tutor's side.
- ▷ The mode of access to these resources, which is not necessarily direct. It can imply various forms of mediation: religious and ritual mediation for land access, brokerage and information control.

2. Institution

I will here follow Mary Douglas, beyond the neo-institutional approach of institutions as “the rules of the game” (North 1990: 3-4)⁵. She starts with a minimal definition of an institution as a convention (elaborating on Lewis 1968). “A convention arises when all parties have a common interest in there being a rule to ensure co-ordination, none has a conflicting interest, and none will deviate lest the desired convention is lost. Thus, by definition, a convention is self-policing” (Douglas 1987: 46). She adds to this definition the notion of legitimacy neglected by the neo-institutional economy; hence her definition of an institution as a “legitimised social grouping” (*id.*). The question here revolves around how legitimacy is generated. “For a convention to turn into a legitimate social institution it needs a parallel cognitive convention to sustain it” (*id.*). She sees this cognitive device in the “naturalisation of social classifications”

⁵ “Institutions are the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interactions. (...) Institutions reduce uncertainty by providing a structure to everyday life. They are the guide to human interaction (...) Institutions include any form of constraint that human being devise to shape human interaction (and) informal constraints – such as conventions and codes of behaviour” (North 1990: 3-4).

(*ibid.*: 48), along a principle of analogy. Institutions are then “grounded at once in nature and in reason” (*ibid.*: 55).

The *tutorat* as a naturalised convention refers to principles and norms justifying mutual rights and duties. There are seen as anchored in a natural order of things, as “allant de soi” or being internalised (we are close to Bourdieu’s notion of habitus, 1972), a kind of “second nature” (Pascal).

The social working of social institutions imply to see them also as arenas of confrontation and negotiation (Lund 1998), among other around these norms and rules (for instance as regards access to, and control over land and natural resources). We come back here to the relational dimension of the *tutorat*. As we will see, the functioning of the *tutorat* as an institution is thus a matter of justifying principles, working rules, social status and actors’ resources within a given social and political order (and contributing to its maintenance or transformation).

Let us note that the term “convention” bearing a connotation of “voluntary action” is interesting in that it creates a bridge between both concepts of institution and relation. The empirical issue is here about to what extent the *tutorat* institution is internalised or naturalised in a common cognitive language and moral economy. This will influence the forms of strangers’ integration and the evolutions of their relations to the local community and as well as their room for manoeuvre as peculiar local citizens. One answer lies in a further characteristic inherent in social institutions. They “encode information” (Douglas 1987: 47). More precisely, they rework the past in a selective manner, shape memories and contribute in this way to the naturalisation of their own history. “To watch these principles establish selective principles that highlight some kinds of events and obscure others is to inspect the social order operating on individual minds” (*ibid.*: 70). Considering the link between knowledge and the past will be useful in the understanding of *tutorat* social working.

3. *Tutorat* as a unit of governmentality

At the meeting point between interaction and institution, we find the production of norms. The understanding of the issue implies to go beyond the opposition between external logic (social norm) and internal logic (rationality, strategic calculation) of institutional arrangements. As Thévenot puts it (1995: 149), it is a matter of “replacer chacune des deux notions [normes sociale et rationalité] dans un même dessein: étudier l’intégration d’actes individuels dans un ordre, un équilibre, une coordination”.

The topic can be re-framed in terms of government or governmentality viewed as a the “conducts over conducts” entailing various disciplining practices and ways of problematising social domains of life as a matter of government (Foucault 2004: 124 et sq.) and originating here in a situation of social interaction generating norms, behaviours, institutional arrangements and contributing to the production of a social and political order.

The *tutorat* as a relation and an institution can be seen here as a building block of local land governance and clientelism as an important mode of collective action. It is here relevant to differentiate governance and governmentality:

“For sociologists of governance (...), the object of investigation is understood as an emergent pattern or order of a social system, arising out of complex negotiations and exchanges between ‘intermediate’ social actors, groups, forces, organizations, public and semi-public institutions in which state organizations are only one – and not necessarily the most significant – amongst many others seeking to steer or manage these re-

lations” (Rose 1999: 21). The analytics of governmentality regards “the way in which certain aspects of the conduct of persons, individually or collectively, have come to be problematized at specific historical moments, the objects and concerns that appear here, and the forces, events or authorities that have rendered them problematic (*ibid.*: 20-21).

Rose’s distinction between governance and governmentality is useful as far as migrant-autochthon relational patterns are concerned. What is problematised in the form of the *tutorat* institution is the control over migrants (through the production of strangers) as an element of government over persons and resources.

The hypothesis here is that the model of *tutorat* plays a central role in the way of problematising this issue of government, although in terms of land governance, it is not the only institution/pattern of regulation. Let us mention here for instance the role of the chieftaincy, natural resource management project, hometown association, etc. (elements developed elsewhere, Le Meur 2005a).

III. THE TUTORAT AS RELATION AND INSTITUTION

As already mentioned, the relation between migrants and autochthons must be replaced in the long run of an history of mobility characterising central Benin and tracing back to pre-colonial times.

The end of slavery following the “colonial pacification” reduced the demographic and land pressure in refuge areas of Central Benin and generated a movement of agrarian colonisation. This reshaped local positions on and debates about autochthony (between groups claiming all autochthony) and access to land and natural resources, in the form of a new frontier dynamic. Agrarian colonisation and land clearing were led by loose groups of persons linked by kinship and friendship ties. The colonisation produced another form of mobility, namely migrations to Togo and Gold Coast to escape forced labour, military conscription and (to a lesser extent) taxation. Starting in the 1920s-1930s, this movement culminated in the 1950s-1960s. Actually, it turned to a more accumulative form of migration, inducing a commoditisation process of the local economy and a relative scarcity of labour force in agriculture.

The arrival of migrants from Atakora hills in the 1960s must be analysed in relation to this context of commoditisation of agricultural economy and then labour force. It could be interpreted in terms of a social des-embedding of the local economy and a transformation of the regime of management and control over labour. We see a shift from a control over kinsmen and dependent to wage labour (see den Ouden 1995 for south west Benin, Amanor 1999 for south Ghana)

The out-migration had other important effects on the emancipation of young men, the shaping of new patterns of patron-client relations (migrants’ teams), the invention of new models of success (the migrants chiefs or accragan), the production of a new local political and economic elite, the paradoxical strengthening of a local and regional identity feeling⁶.

⁶ The aspects developed in Le Meur (2005a) on frontier politics and Le Meur (2005b), on the intergenerational dimension of these processes.

1. The model

The following example of trajectory is significant in that it is at once rather typical of other cases and it is about a person who was to play an important role as first-comer of the “Tanguieta” migrants community.

Pascal Montango, Natemba (int. 31/08/02), left Tanguieta to go to south-western Nigeria where he worked three years in tomato fields. He then moved to Ouessè in search of work, because he remembered a visit to a relative in Odougba, near Gbanlin, when he was younger. He met a Mahi man, became his friend and the latter introduced him to Sossou Houngbade alias “Fyossi”. He worked three years on his farm with other people from Atakora, and then Fyossi gave him a piece of land not far from the village of Gbanlin. He stayed there for 3 years, worked for Fyossi (mainly weeding) without being paid, and as wage labourer on other farms, but the soil was not fertile enough, and he had to move. In the meantime, he used to return to his home region every year and returned to Gbanlin with brothers and friends. They worked for him and he presented them to Fyossi for whom they also would do agricultural work. His brother Albert Montango (int. 08/09/02) arrived only two years after him (he was still labourer for Fyossi), after a long migration as wage labourer in Ghana, clearing land for cocoa plantation, Savalou on cotton fields, and Nigeria for yam cultivation. He met Fyossi through his brother and worked for ten years as agricultural labourer for him and on other farms (in that case always “after he had finished working on Fyossi’s farm”; Fyossi was in charge of accommodations). He was then settled by Fyossi on a spot never before cultivated (*agbove*) in the newly (at that time, in the 1970s) opened area of Saagoudji, located south of Gbanlin in the direction of Ouemè river. For Pascal as well as for Albert Montango, Fyossi was a lodger and a tutor (*xwetô*, translated in “his owner” – *propriétaire* – in local French). The landholding content of the relation was not clearly defined: the new settlers did not know how far the land belonged to Fyossi or if he was speaking on behalf of a household, lineage or lineage segment. The terms of the agreement were extremely thin: there was no entrance fee (but one could say the previous years as a wage labourer acted as an entrance fee), no time limit, and the ban on planting did not need to be said. Fyossi did not control the direction of land clearing, nor did he set limits to the fields to be cultivated. There was no rent, but from time to time, settlers “spontaneously” helped Fyossi. In short it was not a classical “contract” with defined rights and duties.

One must add here that the relation is to be understood only if we take into account Fyossi own social biography.

He went to Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire as a migrant, at the beginning under the patronage of Atoyi who became one of the main traders and big men in the village. Vodunon (vodun priest) and belonging to the Ayinon lineage⁷, he has opted for a strategy of investment in agriculture through land expansion and appropriation very early (by the 1970s). He has resorted to other modalities for accessing land and agricultural inputs, such as the investment in the (rare) production co-operatives (GRVC) promoted during the Marxist-Leninist period. One must note is linguistic investment too: he is one of

⁷ Ayinon means master/owner of the soil, which does not entail that a Ayinon lineage fulfills any ritual function regarding earth in each locality where it is present. Ayinon lineage members engaged early in matrimonial relations with Gbanlin founding lineage, the Devo and are one of the main lineages in Gbanlin.

the very few in the village (if not the only one) to speak Berba (the migrants' language) (int. 20/03/95, 31/08/02, 02/09/02).

This case gives us the constitutive elements of the *tutorat* relation (Chauveau 2004). Basically, it is a dyadic clientelistic relation between a migrant and a landowner embedded in the local moral economy (Scott 1976). This institution fulfils different functions dealing simultaneously with the government of land and people. First, migrants get access to farmland through it. The allocation of a piece of land occurs mostly after a period as a wage labourer for the lodger (*xwetô*), which does not exclude the possibility of working on other farms. One can interpret this phase as an entrance fee for access to land use rights. The migrant could be settled on new lands (*agbové*), although a first settlement on fallow land (*gbexô*) near the village seems to have been frequent. It was not an absolute rule, but much more the result of the tutor's land-holding strategy.

The strategy of expansion was directed towards Saagoudji to the south in the 1970s in the case of Fyossi. Sossou Mathieu, village headman in the 1980s and trader (truck owner), the direction was to the north, to the area of Gbandjandji, an active pioneer front in the 1990s (int. 11/09/02, JB 06 & 17/02/04). A close examination of their biographies show that the balance between concerns about territorial expansion and control over a labour force evolve according to their strategies and resources.

One also observes that in the case of a movement of land clearing involving at once autochthons and migrants, the latter are placed on the outside track of clearing. His work marks a limit (an appropriation by his tutor) and his position has a protecting function (crop protection from animals) for the other fields.

At this point, access to farmland on the migrant's side meets a strategy of land appropriation on the tutor's side. It is an enactment of two principles of peasant moral economy contributing to the naturalisation of the convention: the migrant is welcome in the name of a universal right to subsistence and appropriation is created through labour (Jacob 2004).

It is important here to distinguish the migrant's and the *xweto*'s perspectives and interests as regards the institutional arrangement. It is noteworthy reasserting that this arrangement is not merely a relation about land or an exchange of land rights for labour. Its typical features are the following. There was no land rent but a gift or service of labour, experienced as "spontaneous" by both parts of the interaction. From the *xweto*'s point of view, the good stranger is the one who gives without being asked. There were seemingly no time and space limits. The migrant was shown a width and a direction for clearing land (the conception of land in terms of line and not of delimited surface is typical of frontier situations). Tree planting was forbidden. Actually, it is not clear whether the banning was as obvious for all that there was no need to be explicit, or whether trees were not at stake for the landowners too, in a context of broad land availability. Cashew nuts plantations only developed in the 1990s. The response to the question about plantation when asked to migrants revolves around this type of sentence: "I don't know, I have never asked nor tried"⁸.

Beyond access to land and associated natural resources, the relation is a matter of gifts, labour and service exchanges. As said, these exchanges are not codified and lived as spontaneous or

⁸ Zelou Tchadi, Berba recently settled by Fyossi in Saagoudji (south of Gbanlin) via Pascal Montango's mediation (03/02/04). As far as gifts to the tutor are concerned, he finds that "it is good to reward the one who gave the land". He adds that he did not have to give anything to Fyossi.

related to a specific demand. The direction of the flows is important: if labour and gifts in kind (agricultural products, alcohol) necessarily comes from the migrants, services in case of illness can go in both directions. Against the hypothesis formulated above of a social disembodiment of labour, we rather assist a “re-embedding” of labour relation through the transformation of migrant wage labourer into “semi-autonomous farmers”.

From the local community viewpoint, the conflictive subject matter is the link between land property and the right to let someone settle on a piece of land, in areas where territorial sovereignty and land property remain uncertain. The competition about peripheral areas of the village will crystallise in the 1990s around the chieftaincy resurgence as a public authority (Le Meur 2005a).

2. Producing strangers from migrants

Tutorat is not only about access to natural resources and land appropriation, nor is it a mere exchange of goods and services. This relation is also a way of transforming migrants into strangers (*jônôn*) (Shack & Skinner 1979; see Chauveau et al. 2004: 8-11). This integration process gives people defined by their external origin and who have come to sell their labour force an institutional status made of a set of rights and duties within a moral community.

This implies a tension between social integration (which is the tutor’s duty too) and the maintenance of distance (the good stranger’s attitude must be embodied both through a sound understanding of social codes allowing him to find his rightful place). In this sense, *tutorat* is not a mere dyadic tie but a social institution and an element of governmentality involving a third party, namely the moral community within which the migrant is integrated.

An important differentiation is to be noted here. In Gbanlin (more broadly in the Mahi villages of Ouessè), migrants coming from Atakora hills and the Adja plateau are typically engaged in the patron-client described above. Each migrant develop a strongly personalised relation to “his” tutor and the pattern is basically reproduced when a fellow migrant arrives (see the next section). In the case of Fon migrants whose place of origin is the overpopulated and overexploited Abomey plateau in south central Benin, the relation with the autochthons is not individual. Following a common pattern of migration – a narrowly localised origin of migrants coming from a village or a group of nearby villages linked by kinship ties -, the Fon who began to arrive in the late 1970s re-created aggregated hamlets under the leadership of the one who arrived first (*goxonôn*).

The “production of strangers” can thus be “individual” (dyadic relation between one migrant and his *tutor* – *xweto*) or collective (migrants’ hamlets with a leader or “speaker”). The difference – hypotheses to be tested - could find its origin in the social and political organisation in the migrants’ society, especially as regards residence and leadership patterns. Furthermore, we will see in the comparative conclusion that on the community, migrants deal with the community acting as a “collective tutor” and not with an individual in the case of Yoruba (Tchabe) villages and some Mahi villages too.

The modalities of migrants’ integration and strangers production I have described so far raise the question of the ethnic boundaries with local people. An a-typical case will help us to explore this border area.

Moadjo is a Fon hamlet located north of Gbanlin beyond the Gbeffa River (*gbeffagudo*) founded by Benoit Moadjo arrived in the 1970s. His mother was a Mahi born in Gbanlin.

He left the village where he was born in Abomey region because of troubles when his father died. At that time, he was already married, had children and lived of trade with Nigeria. He fell sick and Houignisso, a maternal uncle living in Gbanlin, gave him the advice to “go back” to Gbanlin. He recovered there and Danhouégnon (an important member of the Devo founding lineage) gives him a free accommodation. During six years, he lives as wage labourer, especially in his mother’s family. He lets his sons come to Gbanlin who found work as wage labourers too, and his second wife with a baby desperately ill who was “born again” in Gbanlin. Houignisso is Devo, a classificatory “brother” of Danhouégnon and one of the first to have cleared land for yams cultivation very far to the north of Gbanlin. He gives Benoit Moadjo a piece of land in the early 1980s: “Stay at the end of my yams field and clear land”. Progressively, the latter enters in a process of autochthonisation under the aegis of his maternal uncle who insists on his “good behaviour and morality”. Significantly, he will not have to pay any rent to Gbanlin chief (*axôsu*) in the 1990s when this taxation system on the migrants will be implemented.

Later on, Benoit Moadja let his wife’s brothers’ sons come. Two of them have settled beyond the river marking the border with the neighbouring village of Vossa. They pay a rent to Vossa villagers and the other matrilineal nephews too (but to Gbanlin chief), although they have taken Mahi wives in Gbanlin.

The case interesting as it shows similarities with the modalities of migrants’ integration described above, although it eventually results in an ethnic conversion⁹. We see the principles of the moral economy at work in the relation that the uncle establishes with his nephew. The case also exemplifies the distinction between lodger and landowner in the settlement process. At the same time, this close relation between a nephew and his mother’s brother is quite frequent in Mahi localities and allows optional strategies between maternal and paternal families (Le Meur & Adjinacou 1998). Furthermore, this frontier case of autochthonisation might not be independent from the cultural proximity between Fon and Mahi. However, the process does not indicate any blurring of ethnic boundaries as the difference between Benoit Moadjo and his wife’s brothers’ sons is clearly made (here through an informal taxation exclusively directed to the migrants¹⁰). Last point, the elements of governmentality – disciplining practices, conducts of conducts – strongly underlies the discourses in which this story is phrased.

3. Social and land brokerage

Immigration is part and parcel of a longer-run dynamics of settlement, narrowly related to the dynamic – or the sequence – of out-migration described above. The dyadic nature of the *tutorat* relationship was also complicated by the arrivals of the migrants’ “brothers”. This movement reflected the interests of both tutors and clients (the first migrants), the latter getting a position of tutor vis-à-vis the newcomers, thus creating a second, embedded level of *tutorat*. What was at stake was not really land in the 1970s (and in the 1980s), but much more the labour force. The flow of out-migration had re-oriented toward Nigeria during the oil boom, and it remained significant at least until the expulsion of foreigners in 1983. The

⁹ Note the similarity between this ethnic conversion and many religious conversions often linked to difficulties to cure a disease.

¹⁰ This has recently changed (in 2004) with the extension of this contribution to all farmers of the locality in order to fund a bridge allowing to reach the remote and active agrarian front located north to Gbanlin and Gbeffa River.

growth of agricultural trade (with the purchase of the first cars and later trucks in the 1970s and 1980s) also required labour (substituting those directly engaged in trading activities).

In this context, the power of settling migrants became increasingly central. Strategic bargaining between migrants, tutors and landowners was not merely a matter of who actually held land rights. Controlling knowledge about land availability and migrants' flows was equally crucial. First migrants and *xweto* worked as brokers by trying to maintain a monopoly on information and thus contributing to the constitution of a chain of dyadic ties of *tutorat*. It must be noted that when a tutor successfully plays his role of mediation between a new migrant and a landowner, this will not necessarily end his relation with the migrant, especially as regards social life, integration, and labour services.

Through these evolutions, the distinction between strangers and autochthons was maintained but complexified, and migrants' communities developed mainly according to their place of origin. Beside migrants from Atakora, others came from the Adja plateau.

The first of them was Marcellin Glodjo in the early 1970s as *sodabi* (oil palm alcohol) seller. The history of his arrival and settlement is still controversial as regards who was tutor, lodger and landowner (see especially interviews with Vigue Glodjo, his widow who married his second wife's son after he deceased, 07/09/02; Fyossi who claims landowning on a large part of Saagoudji area, 31/08/02, 02/09/02; Yelinmon Housavi who contests Fyossi's claim, 30/08/02).

Fon came from Abomey region from the 1980s onward, following a similar sequence of installation, but creating hamlets instead of living scattered as the Berba and the Adja. The localised origin of the migrants has contributed to strengthen the position of the first migrants as intermediaries in the chain of *tutorat* and as legitimate representatives of their own community. This evolution raises question about leadership within migrants' communities and the intercalate position of migrants' leaders. Actually the leadership of Atakora and Fon migrants seem rather strong, as shown by the examples of Pascal Montango for the Atakora community and of Adodjo Avoungningbé, the leader of Finangnon Fon hamlet. Access to community members is difficult and they even refuse to talk to strangers in the absence of their leaders (or without their explicit agreement).

As regards brokerage in access to resources, we find also "frontier cases" only involving local actors though reproducing modalities associated so far with migrants' integration.

Marcel and Adjis Danhouégnon, two young members of Devo lineage (Adjis is Marcel's father's brother's son), discovered fertile land while hunting in the area of Sinlignin River north of Gbanlin. They get in touch with the late Michel Houmavo who had started farming in the area three years before. He settled them at one end of his field, telling them to clear land in the opposite direction. As the area is located in the neighbouring village of Idadjo, he brings them the traditional chief's representative to negotiate the settlement. Idadjo is a Tchabe village with no individualised *tutorat* (see below). They give one litre *sodabi* (local palm alcohol), cola nuts and 5000 FCFA. There is no discussion about plantation, well, rituals. They have no rent to pay as "we belong to the same commune" (that is: Tchabé and Mahi are both autochthonous peoples in Ouessè). As regards rituals, they say the field is protected by the vodun of the family land in Kassodji (south of Gbanlin) controlled by Danhouégnon Sodji, Adjis' father and important *bokonon* (Fa diviner) and vodunon. The latter participated in the negotiation with Idadjo peoples too.

Mediations in accessing land are not contradictory with autochthonous identities of both parts. However, brokerage helps here negotiate land rights in a neighbouring village and bridge the gap between two ethnic belongings (Tchabe and Mahi). In the same process, the autochthonous status of the actors involved is recognised by both sides (no land rent).

IV. TUTORAT RECENT EVOLUTIONS

1. Intrinsic evolutions: new modalities and new actors

The emergence of the tutorat institution was response devised to deal with the related questions of labour force management and migrants arrival from the 1960s and 1970s onward. It relied on existing patterns of clientelistic ties and moral economy principles. However, it was not a mechanical answer to a new context. It partook in active strategies of land appropriation at the margins of the village territory. We have observed early trajectories of investment in migrants' settlement and territorial expansion, the south in the 1970s and later to the north.

For a few years, one has been assisting to new modalities of settlements. Among Mahi villagers, young men who often have a trajectory of migrants in Benin cities or Nigeria come back and tried to settle migrants in remote areas on the northern pioneer front, where big tutors' influence is weaker. The cases I have identified so far show a shortcut of the classical settlement pattern: migrants are allocated land rights without any period as wage labourers on local farms. Actually, the new brokers do not have big farms and thus do not know any labour shortage. The interpretation of this new trend is still open. One the hand, elder tutors say in the interviews that these young men – these “kids” – know nothing about land. They let them do however and I guess there is nothing to do against this. On the other hand, one could think that these initiatives can help strengthen Gbanlin influence on areas where land appropriation is uncertain, to say the least. One can thus analyse the situation in terms of delegation of inclusion rights (a delegation of *tutorat*) by the eldest to the youngest (without any clearly defined claims and rights on the land where migrants are settled). We are back to the question of what are the rights and resources actually held by the *xweto*: as regards these young land brokers, it is knowledge about vacant land and coming migrants and the belonging to the local community. One must note that the reference to moral economy principles is weaker in these new relations between migrants and land brokers.

These new brokers lead us to the intergenerational issue and its link to the migrants-autochthons nexus. The intergenerational transition on both migrants and autochthons sides has proved to be instrumental in re-negotiating rights and relations.

Adja migrants have recently been evicted at this stage. It is noteworthy that local justification of this rare sanction revolved around “bad behaviour” and the non-payment of the rent. It seems that they have rather been unwillingly enrolled in local conflicts between villages (Tosso and Gbanlin) and around the traditional chieftaincy in Gbanlin.

Another recent case involves Sossou Mathieu (already mentioned) as tutor and vice-president of the local hometown association. The case is not fully clarified but Mathieu Sossou would have paid young villagers to expulse migrants; they would be awarded with settlement rights where the migrants used to farm.

The number of expulsions could be higher as one thinks as expulsions are often individual and migrants do not have any resort left but going deeper in the bush. In the neighbouring village of Vossa, the intergenerational conflict has taken an openly conflictive dimension between young men accusing a small group of notables around the village chief to make money from the settlement of too many migrants at the expense of their own access to land. Two differences with Gbanlin are here the small size of the village territory and the centralisation of migrants' settlement and rent in the hand of a few elders.

Migrant's eviction is an extreme case of reopening of *tutorat* institutional arrangements. A few cases show other forms of re-negotiations. They often revolve around the tricky issue of plantation rights.

Libla Bassila, a Fon from Abomey (his nickname in Gbanlin is the pedlar), rents a room to Nonvide Atchuli Gbanlin, who is not the owner of the land he cultivates. L. Bassila knows that the latter can take his land back whenever he wants. Nevertheless, he has tried – without success – to obtain the right to plant cashew nuts trees (int. 03/02/04).

The distribution of rights to plant trees between migrants and autochthons is not self-evident anymore and migrants negotiate openly now instead of planting in the bush like some times ago (with the cutting down of the tree as concrete sanction when discovered). The facilitating work of the natural resource management project (PGRN 1993/98, PGTRN 1999/2003) was important in this respect, in organising meetings and negotiations between the actors involved in the issue. Tutors can also play a paradoxical role here, by encouraging their migrants to plant trees. Actually, they do not play against, rather around the local norms. They make the bet that the migrants will leave the region one day or the other and that they will thus get back a plantation classically functioning as a signpost for land appropriation.

One important hypothesis to test regarding *tutorat* internal evolutions is that of the social de-embedding or conventionalisation of the relation. The following case, though not representative, gives clues on the issue by showing the complexity of land access and control strategies.

Alphonse Gnanhoui (int. 03/02/04) has inherited 22 hectares from his father with his two younger brothers (Dossou and Kossi, the latter being an agnatic brother). His father had settled a "Tanguieta" ten years ago on a part of this land. The latter had first worked as wage labourer for him and was lodged by Montango (the leader of the migrants from Atakora). Later on, he built a house near Montango's. As he "fulfilled the contract clauses", A. Gnanhoui decided to keep him when his father died. The Tanguieta gives him a groundnut bag each year, renders services in labour from time to time and brings spontaneously a chicken or small game in case of feast. Each year after the harvest, he goes back to his village in the Atakora hills. He keeps A. Gnanhoui informed of his departure and return dates and sometimes brings him a gift. In return, A. Gnanhoui can advance him money if needed (if a kid is ill for instance) and could act as collateral (but "there has been no problem up to now").

A. Gnanhoui settled a new migrant from Abomey three years ago, on the same parcel, but surrounding a recent cashew nuts plantation, "to protect it from fire". He has a five-year contract and pays 5000 FCFA per year (he had been wage labourer during two years before that). As he cultivates between tree rows too, A. Gnanhoui thinks "he could stay longer if it is possible to prune trees. He also rents a plot ("675 lines") to a

woman from the Fon hamlet of Finangnon for three years (renewable) and 5000 FCFA a year on another plot of land further to the south.

When he wants to settle a migrant or to rent a plot of land, he must inform his brothers although they'd rather clear land and farm in the pioneer areas to the north (Gbandjandji, Foutoufadji) where he had also a field this year. He wants to do more next year on Idadjo, the neighbouring village. In this case, "it is the village committee that send his young man to show where to cultivate, not the individual owner".

One factor of evolution from *tutorat* to land contracts could be the strong development of cashew nuts plantations (and citrus and mango trees to a lesser extent) making time limitation of land use rights unavoidable. Another point is the co-existence of different forms of land rights delegation in the strategy of one person who at the same time gets access to land in the next village through a form of collective mediation.

2. *Tutorat*, politics and locality

The tutors' strategies I described so far are not devised in isolation from the village land governance and local politics. A few interpretative hypotheses will be briefly sketched out in this section.

The unit of governmentality constituted by the triangle stranger/autochthon/community faces other building block of land governance. Among them, the traditional chieftaincy has been playing an important role since the mid-1990s. As far as the control over migrants and natural resources is concerned, tutors seem to alternatively develop relations of competition and alliance depending on the context. A key element here is the monopoly over the knowledge about land and people, which combines knowledge of the past and of the present. The tutors act as gatekeepers by either blocking or letting flow information. One can add that the more remote the place is, the weaker the control of the traditional chief and the stronger the position of the tutor. But even the tutor's claim on land tends to fade in the external peripheries, where new brokers take over migrants' settling¹¹.

Furthermore, the *tutorat* relation is constitutive of the construction of a discourse of autochthony that arises from the interplay of two issues: controlling the migrants and interacting with nearby villages (see Le Meur 2005 on this theme).

Another impact on land governance regards current processes of crystallisation of localities on the pioneer fronts around specific figures of entrepreneurs or brokers. A new group of social actors emerges around the fulfilling of various function of mediation, in some case without any commitment in land relations. They can be autochthons or migrants (generally having settled for quite a long time) and combines in different proportions economic, social and political activities. These include small trade, agricultural product commercialisation, credit, rent collecting, representative of the small local community vis-à-vis the village authorities, but also development project (the pumps are currently a key issue) and politicians (it was clear during the 2002/03 communal elections). Thus, an hypothesis to be explored is the one of the role of patrons/brokers in the production of local sociability – of localities – through the ful-

¹¹ It is worth noting that this concentric representation of a ("topo-centred") political authority is not really original, at least since Southall and Kopytoff...

filling of intermediary functions. Governmentality rimes here with the localisation of social and power relations.

V. CONCLUSION: COMPARATIVE OUTLINE

The case studies presented in the text rely on a geographically limited empirical basis. They need to be considered from a broader comparative perspective. Different levels of comparison are relevant.

A first comparison would be restricted to Ouessè area or Central Benin, focusing on different criteria: according (1) to the tutors - old patterns of tutorat and new land brokerage, economic tutors (not involved in land relations), locality structuring on the pioneer fronts), (2) to the migrants (scattered residence or migrants hamlets), (3) to the autochthonous community (Mahi individual *tutorat* against Tchabe collective one). Other criteria must of course be taken into account, such as the pressure on land and natural resources, the importance of the flow of migrants, the structure of the local political landscape (among other the strength of traditional chiefship), the impact of development and natural resource management projects, etc.

A broader comparison would allow test evolutionary hypothesis about the social “desembedding” and the “conventionalisation” of land relations, and maybe, the disappearance or, in other contexts (Colin 2004), the absence of the figure of the tutor. I think we should link to this issue the comparative analysis of collective and individual forms of relations to migrants and “strangers’ production”. This also applies to the organisation of migrant settlements (hamlets and scattered residence): to what extent does this organisation reproduce original residence patterns? What does this “say” about the possibility of integrating migrants (cf. for instance the case of the Mossi migrants in Burkina Faso)?

Finally, considering the triangle stranger/autochthon/community as a unit of governmentality and a building block of land governance appears to offer interesting perspectives to explore the issue of institutional and normative production, moral economy and the production of social and political order.

VI. BIBLIOGRAPHIE

Boissevain, J. 1974. *Friends of Friends. Networks, Manipulators and Coalitions*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Bourdieu, P. 1972. *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique*. Genève: Droz.

Chauveau J.-P. à paraître. “How does an institution evolve? Land, politics, intra-household relations and the institution of the ‘tutorat’ amongst autochthons and migrant farmers in the Gban region of Côte d'Ivoire”. In: Kuba, R. & C. Lentz (eds.) *Landrights and the politics of belonging in West Africa*, Ohio University Press.

Chauveau, Jean-Pierre, Jacob, Jean-Pierre & Pierre-Yves Le Meur 2004. “L'organisation de la mobilité dans les sociétés rurales du Sud”. In: Chauveau, J.-P., Jacob, J.-P. & P.-Y. Le Meur (eds.) *Gouverner les hommes et les ressources: dynamiques de la frontière interne*, Autrepart 30: 3-23.

- Colin, J.-P. 2004. "Lorsque le Far East n'était pas le Far West. La dynamique de l'appropriation foncière dans ancien no man's land de Basse Côte d'Ivoire". In: Chauveau, J.-P., Jacob, J.-P. & P.-Y. Le Meur (eds.) *Dynamiques de la frontière interne: gouverner les hommes et les ressources*, Autrepars 30: 45-62.
- Comaroff, J. & S. Roberts 1981. *Rules and Processes. The Cultural Logic of Dispute in an African Context*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Doevenspeck, M. 2004. "Migrations rurales, accès au foncier et rapports interethniques au sud du Borgou (Bénin). Une approche méthodologique plurielle". *Afrika Spectrum* 39 (3): 359-380.
- Douglas, M. 1987. *How Institutions Think*. London: Routledge & Keegan Paul.
- Edja, Honorat 1999. *Colonisation agricole spontanée et milieux sociaux nouveaux: la migration rurale dans le Zou-Nord au Bénin*. Kiel : Wissenschaftsverlag Vauk Kiel KG.
- Foucault, M. 2004. Sécurité, territoire, population. Cours au Collège de France, 1977-1978. Paris: Seuil-Gallimard.
- Kopytoff, I. (ed.) 1987. *The African Frontier. The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Jacob, J.-P. 2004. "Gouvernement de la nature et gouvernement des hommes dans le Gwendégué (centre-ouest du Burkina Faso)". In: Chauveau, J.-P., Jacob, J.-P. & P.-Y. Le Meur (eds.) *Dynamiques de la frontière interne: gouverner les hommes et les ressources*, Autrepars 30: 25-43.
- Le Meur, P.-Y. 2005a. "Statemaking and the Politics of Frontier in Central Benin". *Development & Change* (Lund, C. & K. Juul (eds.) *Twilight Institutions and Local Politics in Developing Societies*) (forthcoming).
- Le Meur, P.-Y. 2005b. "L'émergence des 'jeunes' comme groupe stratégique et catégorie politique dans la commune de Ouessè (Bénin) ». *Afrique contemporaine* (forthcoming).
- Le Meur, P.-Y. & C. Adjinacou 1998. "Les pouvoirs locaux à Gbanlin (Zou) entre migration, commerce et religion". In: Bierschenk, T. & J.-P. Olivier de Sardan (eds.) *Les pouvoirs au village. Le Bénin rural entre démocratisation et décentralisation*, Paris, Karthala: 121-169.
- Lund, C. 1998. *Land, Power and Politics. Land Struggles and the Rural Code*. Hamburg : APAD-Lit Verlag.
- Ouden, J.H.B. den 1995. "Who's for Work? The Management of Labour in the Process of Accumulation in three Adja Villages, Benin" *Africa* 65 (1): 1-35.
- Ribot, J. & N. Peluso 2003. "A Theory of Access". *Rural Sociology* 68 (2): 153-181.
- Rose, Nikolas 1999. *Powers of Freedom. Reframing Political Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shack, W.A. & E.P. Skinner (eds.) 1979. *Strangers in African Societies*. University of California Press: Berkeley & Los Angeles.
- Scott, J. 1976. *The Moral Economy of the Peasant. Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Spittler, G. 1977. « Staat und Klientelstruktur in Entwicklungsländern. Zum Problem der politischen Organisation von Bauern ». *Europäisches Archiv für Soziologie* 18: 57-83.
- Thévenot, L. 1995. "Rationalité ou normes sociales: une opposition dépassée?". In: Gérard-Varet, L.-A. & J.-L. Passeron (dir.) *Le modèle et l'enquête. Les usages du principe de rationalité dans les sciences sociales*, Paris, Editions de l'EHESS: 149-189.

