

11/22/01

Isaie Dougnon

Peasant Migration, Redefinition of the Concept of Work and Social Relationships Between “Workers” and “Settlers” at the Office du Niger, 1930-1980 ¹

1. Introduction

For several decades now, the historiography of migration and labor in Africa has been dominated by the South African paradigms based on a “kraal to compound” model. This model has been influenced by the materialist interpretation of modes of production (Thaddeus, 1996).

Magassa (1978) applied the same interpretation to the Office du Niger in his book, *Papa, commandant a jeté un grand filet devant nous*.

In West Africa, research has concentrated primarily on zones such as Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Côte-d'Ivoire [E.g., the migration of Malians and Burkinabes to cultivate cocoa and coffee in Côte-d'Ivoire and the groundnut in Senegal (John A. Arthur, 1991; Lakroum, 1985; Amin, 1974)].

Although much anthropological work has been done in this area, it has remained at the level of the description and documentation of models and migration trends (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997). All of these studies have sidelined specifically cultural issues that are the focus of migrants' discourse. It is only very recently that historians and anthropologists have begun to explore the conscience, culture and identity of migrant workers (Harries, 1994; Atkins, 1993; Moodie, 1994).

The following article analyzes the experiences of migrant workers based on what they say and their concepts. To that end, archival and oral sources have been combined. Several trips were made into the field to directly observe certain aspects of the workers' and the settlers' (*les colons* in French) lifestyles. Interviews were sometimes recorded on audiocassette and sometimes transcribed directly. The working languages were simultaneously Dogon, French and Bamana. Beyond the farming villages, surveys were also conducted in Markala, Thio and Ségou, in the company towns of Molodo, Diabaly, N'Debougou, Niono and Kolongo, where women and men willing to speak of the work they did for the Office du Niger live. Many were pleased to discuss this topic because their current work situation contrasts so much with their past work. They demonstrated a concern to recall their experiences while engaged in “white man's work” in minute detail for the researcher, and also how their work began, developed and ended.

The Office du Niger is the largest economic farming concern ever realized in West Africa by a colonial power, with 60,000 ha of land irrigated in 1960 and approximately 80,000 ha in 2000 compared to 1,105,00 ha originally planned.

Essentially four ethnic groups were recruited to work on the irrigated surfaces, namely the Bamana and Minianka of Sudan (now Mali), and the Samo and Mossi of Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso). Added to this population was a large number of peasant families from the Dogon, Peulh, Bozo, Marka, and Bella ethnic groups, who opted for the Office du Niger during the drought years of 1972 and 1984.

¹ This work was realized based on field research conducted at the Office du Niger from 1998 to 2000.

A number young migrants were employed in the major development works to build such structures as the Markala Dam, the navigation canal, the feeder canal, the Sahel canal and the Macina canal, which required the excavation of more than 17 million cubic meters of earth. (*Afrique Nouvelle*, N° 1340, 1975).

The fact that some workers might be involved in mechanical work and others in the rice fields could seem to be a simple division of labor. Careful analysis of the Office du Niger migrants' accounts reveals, however, that the latter developed a new perception and definition of labor ² **as expressed by the concepts of "settler" and "worker."**

2. The "Settler" and the "Worker"

Whoever conducts work on the Office du Niger is confronted with two key terms designating two groups of migrants: "settlers" and "workers."

According to the peasants, the settler is the cultivator, "*dugukolo bara ba kela*", "the one who does lots of work on the land." This complies with the *Petit Robert dictionary's* definition. *Colon*, the French word for settler, comes from the Latin word "*colonus*," which originates from "*colore*", meaning "to cultivate." In legal terms, the settler is a cultivator of a plot of land whose rent is paid in kind. (*Robert 1*, 1985) It is easy to see here that the migrant peasants have kept the term set by European administrators.

For the migrants, a worker is anyone employed to do *anasara bire* in Dogon or *tubabu bara* in Bamana, i.e., "white man's work." If we take the word "work" defined by the *Webster International Dictionary*, and described by Neff (1977) it means:

Exertion of strength or faculties for the accomplishment of something;
physical or mental effort directed to an end.

The definition of work as a physical or mental activity as defined above explicitly includes the cultivator in the worker category. But paradoxically, at the Office du Niger, a settler was not perceived as well as a worker. Even worse, rice cultivation was viewed as a degrading and servile activity. Why? As we can see, the new definition of the work concept was derived not only from the type of work, but also by several determinants: social (the whites' power and status); technical (machines) and cultural (monetary remuneration, modern objects).

The purpose of this study is to analyze how in a working context different from that of their home villages, each category of migrants, i.e., the settlers and the workers, thought and perceived their work and that of the others. How did this vision influence social relations between the two groups?

Relations between settler/worker were wrought with conflictual because of the meaning associated with the term "settler." The settler was the "slave" who exercised a degrading activity: in contrast, the worker was the one who engaged in a respectable and noble activity. Why were these two activities introduced by the same colonial system defined in such contradictory terms? Were these meanings intrinsic to the activities in question?

² This study covers 1930 to 1980 because it was in 1932 that the Office du Niger was born, with the start of the major development works, while it was in 1980 that reorganization began, followed by the shutdown of the workshops. And it was at that time that all the migrants turned to rice growing.

3. We Migrate For “Work,” Not to “Scratch” In The Dirt

When one attempts to understand why the immigrant peasant at the Office du Niger distinguishes between “working” and “being a colon,” semantic difficulties arise. However, based on the following account, the content of these terms is clear:

If we left Dogon Country to settle in the Office du Niger territory, it's because we wanted a trade, some work (*my underlining- ID*). It was so we wouldn't have to scratch in the dirt like we did at home over there.

I am Dogon. I (was farming) land in Bandiagara (when) I learned that there was work here. If I dropped everything there in order to work at the Office du Niger, it was to earn a steady wage. The wage earner with his bike and his clothes was better viewed than others. Bikes were rare (then). I had to work for years to get a bike – I ordered it from France. In 1943, my bike arrived in a big crate. The postman told me that I had received a coffin. I immediately understood that he was talking about my bike. I picked up the crate, took it to the garage and gave it to a European mechanic, who assembled it. When I came out on my bike, the children ran up to me to admire it. I rode it to Bandiagara and everyone came out to look at it.

We can retain from this account that: 1) work is essentially an activity that brings in a salary; 2) a settler is a cultivator or peasant, he who scratches the soil; 3) work has acquired a positive connotation by what it procures (bicycles and clothing), which attracts the curiosity of one's neighbors and raises the owner's standing; and 4) activity linked to the land is denigrated because the migrant is doing the same thing he is used to doing in his native village.

In reality, the servile nature of agricultural activity stems from the settlement policy set up for African peasants at the Office du Niger. The management forced Sudanese and Voltarians to grow rice. From that point on, being a cultivator was equated with being a slave.

Several testimonials show that the forced recruitment systems, supervisory methods and land ownership standards indubitably contributed to downgrading farm work.

3.1. Settlers Forcefully Transferred from Their Homeland to the Office du Niger

The transferal of populations to work on the Office du Niger lands raised bitter controversy about the development of the Central Delta (Viguié, 1949). The promoters quickly realized that their propaganda about the technical and economic advantages of irrigated cultivation was not sufficient in itself to draw peasants.

The colonial administration applying the mandatory labor law forced populations in these regions to move into the Office du Niger domain. One former worker from that era describes a scene involving coercive recruitment:

For more than six years I would go into Upper Volta with the European agent in charge of recruiting settlers, a Frenchman named Mr. Delan. We visited villages like Dedougou, Nouna and Tougan in Samo country and Ouahigoua and Ouagadougou in Mossi country. In Sudan we traveled mainly to Koutiala, a Minianka village. Usually, whenever we arrived in these areas, we would go to the village or canton chief, who would order a bell to be rung. Everyone in the town would rush out and come to his place. He would then begin to call out the names of the heads of family

who had to leave and work at the Office du Niger. Mr. Delan would write their names in a notebook. Women and children would be crying, throwing themselves on the ground, smearing themselves with mud and lamenting, saying that they did not want to become slaves.

In terms of method, colonization could be assimilated to slave practices. The first settlers went to the Office du Niger with the feeling that they were slaves. “The expression ‘going to Bamako’ was synonymous with recruitment for the Office du Niger; for the Mossi, this was tantamount to punishment because once established there, they could not return to their native land (Shreyger, 1984: 126).”

The farmer of a family that was forcefully transferred from Mossi land stated:

I can say that at that time, when you said ‘settler,’ it was as though you were being called a slave – yes, a slave. They made you believe that slaves cultivated the land. So, those of us who came to the Office du Niger as settlers were perceived as those who worked like slaves. Some understood even at that time that farming was an activity of the future. Despite that perspective on farming, people would say, ‘Man, I do not want to be a settler, because if you are a settler, you work like a dog. You must answer to superiors; you are not free; you don’t earn anything,’ and so on and so on.

Faced with such scorn and denigration of their occupations, many Mossi and Samo families in the Kolongotomo wanted to return home at all cost.

One Mossi man whose father was the first inhabitant of Ratenga, a rice-growing village in the Kouroumari, offered the following comment on this matter:

During the early years of independence, the Mossi settlers cleared out of our village. The reason for that was that socialism was not properly explained. It was said that socialism meant that nothing belonged to you. Your wife, your children and your fields were forevermore common property. People said they would never accept that. These people returned to Burkina Faso between 1960 and 1962. The second wave of departures occurred during the armed conflict between Mali and Burkina Faso. Out of thirty-three families, thirty went back home. The Bamana and Minianka came in to settle on the land abandoned by the Mossi.

Many people ran away after 1947. Between 1946 and 1950 2,453 Kokry alone lost 2453 farmers. In 1945, 5,564 left and 4,531 in 1948.³

3.2. The “Strong Arm” Supervisory Methods

Supervisors covered several functions. They collected and sold the harvest, and collected taxes. The “water price,” as the peasants called it, was one of the biggest problems for farmers. In less than ten years, land tax rose from 26,000 CFA F to 28,000 CFA F reaching 56,000 F in 1999. The constant threat of eviction should one fall behind payments, raised doubts among farmers about their future and that of their children with the Office du Niger.

One of the practices the settlers complained about the most was harassment by the

³ Notes et Etudes Documentaires de l’Office du Niger N° 2. 240. *Archives de Ségou*, 1956 p. 13

“economic police,” who were assigned to make sure the Office du Niger maintained its monopoly on the marketing of rice. The principal task of the economic police was to check on vehicles transporting rice out of the area without the proper authorization. But instead of the vehicles, the police confiscated the farmers’ calabashes (Coulibaly, 1997: 101). This transformed the business into a prison. Following is the account of an old farmer from the village of Medina Coura:

After Modibo Keïta’s fall, the farmers ran into problems. Soldiers had invaded the entire Office du Niger domain. We felt like we were in prison. We were working the Motherland, but didn’t have anything ourselves. It was known that the economic police were confiscating rice in large quantities; none of the peasants knew where it went. One thing was sure: that rice was not going into the state warehouses. The guards and soldiers kept it. We had become the victims. We were tired and our name was ruined. That is why the government got rid of the economic police and gave more freedom to the peasants.

The lack of freedom in managing their production was one of the problems frequently raised by the farmers. The landownership policy also worsened their situation. According to one migrant, “The settlers spent all their time with their feet in cold water and then at harvest time had to share what they had produced with the Office du Niger management (Cf. Diawara and Dougnon, 2000).”

3.3. The Landownership Standard and Settler’s Status

The Office du Niger promoters had drafted a contract for farming irrigated land which they deemed to align with the spirit of the local landownership customs. The migrants’ accounts prove the opposite, and in fact show that the contract was far removed from local practices. It was used to cajole them and never enforced. A former minister who has turned to farming bears testimony:

Our problem is connected with landownership. There are peasants who have been on this land since the Office du Niger was established. Some have spent thirty years here and others forty years. For forty years they have paid taxes on the land, but if ever they should be remiss one year for whatever reason, the Office du Niger reserves the right to evict them. For example, how can you explain it when a farmer who has settled on Office du Niger land since 1950, cultivates seven hectares and pays his taxes regularly, can be kicked off that Office du Niger land because he can’t pay rent for one hectare? That is one problem for which we would like to find a solution.

It is impossible in just one article cover all the parameters that contributed to moving rice cultivation beyond the work concept. Only the most important were listed. An analysis of the factors which influenced the emergence of a new definition of labor will edify the reader. One of the most important was young rural people’s contact with shop work, or “white man’s work.”

4. Colonialism and the Redefinition of the Work Concept

What were the colonial conditions that favored the redefinition of the work concept? These conditions can be grouped into three categories: working means, salary and social aspects.

4.1. Working Means

The migrant peasants emphasized the impact of giant machines brought in by the colonizers. The first steam shovels, known as “63” and “64” and of German origin, which the Office du Niger used to start construction of the Markala Dam, actually became legends. Many curious peasants who came just to admire them regaled in watching their assembly.

Old workers told exactly how the giant machines replaced the picks and shovels. The two famous machine models described by workers were called “Bishiris,” which were used to dig a channel to link the dried-up branch of the Niger River known as the *falla*, and “BKs,” which replaced the Bichiris. These BKs were used to excavate canals up to Diabaly.

“In the beginning,” one migrant told us, “we worked with shovels and picks and later on, we started operating the TD 24 and W29 French caterpillars, as well as the Russian MPZs, SUPER 50s, TD 54s, DT 75s and MP 7s.

While some migrants were drawn to the zone for other reasons, they eventually chose “white man’s work” because of the modern equipment, which they were seeing for the first time. “It was the first time we had seen so many machines in Sudan,” declared Sorry Guindo, a retired log keeper who worked on the Markala Dam.

Some migrants were so familiar with the machines that they were invited to visit the factories that manufactured them in France. One illustration of how well the African migrants had mastered white man’s work was the manufacture of a harvester called “ONAD” (after the Office du Niger Diabaly Workshop).

It was a great source of pride to master the machines and motors. In the workers’ eyes, that was the major difference between them and the settlers, who only knew how to till and retill the earth. Some even challenged their white overseers at work. Following is the account of a worker from Dogon land, a former shop foreman:

One day, I was assembling an American DT36 when an assistant foreman named Martin said to me: ‘Aly, that’s bad! If you do it that way, the motor will never run!’

I retorted, ‘It’s your way of doing that will block the motor.’

He promised to quit if what I said was true. In the meantime, Mr. Robert, the head engineer, who was listening to our discussion, intervened.

He said, and I quote: ‘Whoever loses will be fired.’

My machine ran smoothly after I assembled it, but the other guy’s motor made a big noise and stopped. The next day, he turned in his resignation, because my machine had started up, and I told him: ‘I have never been to France, but I’m a better mechanic than you.’

From that day on, I was designated to test new recruits.

The old workers who constructed the ONAD harvester often mention another name in connection with “white man’s work.” That man was Bocar Guindo. He was the best repairman in the Diabaly and N’Debougou workshops. He could repair any part of that harvester. Migrants emphasized his dexterity and the esteem granted to him by whites and by Issa Ongoïba, former Director of the Office du Niger.

4.2. Salary

Money was an important element of work. Many migrants admitted that they left their villages in search of ‘something’ – in other words money - and all that it enabled them to acquire. The importance of money in matrimonial compensation among the migrants is at the crux of their discourse regarding work.

Moore and Vaughan (1994) have attempted to penetrate the notion of work among the Bemba by analyzing matrimonial compensation. They revealed why the bride price, which previously was paid in local products such as copper bracelets and bark clothing, came to be paid in cash or with European objects. At the Office du Niger, the bride price paid in cash assumed such importance that poor migrants returned home to marry in their native villages.

Migrants liked to repeat to us that workers' wives dressed well. Every month their husbands, who worked for the whites, would buy them new clothes. For these women, the fact that they could go to the little market every morning to buy condiments proved that their husbands were wage earners. It also set them apart from the settlers' wives.

Season workers in the dry zones who came to the Office du Niger often worked in the homes of employees working for whites. They would return home with cash in hand. Relatives coming to visit them in the domain would return with a few gifts for those who had remained in the village. These exchanges between the workers and their village relatives reinforced the salaried worker's personal sense of responsibility and remodeled his concept of work.

Women living in workers' housing developments were able to liberate themselves from the conditions of their home village. They played a major role in bringing income into the home from the beginning. Their economic role increased substantially, especially after they became involved in market gardening or petty trade after their spouses were laid off or went into retirement beginning in the 1980s (Dougnon, 2000).

4.3. Social Considerations: Working with Whites and Living in the Company Towns

Our material gathered in the field refutes the idea purporting that relations between white employers and black workers in Africa were characterized by simple adversity and constant conflict (Amin, 1974). At the Office du Niger, many migrants dreamed of working freely with whites.

For the migrants their supervisors were an important factor in raising the prestige of their work. They compared the difference in the managerial styles of black supervisors and white supervisors. Having a white boss was the surest path to succeeding in one's work. In contrast, the black assistant supervisor did everything in his power to block his employees. A retired worker had the following to say about this situation:

It's true that the white supervisors were better than the black supervisors. During the European days, if the workers were supposed to be reclassified, the whites would note exactly what a worker deserved, while the blacks graded based on bonds of kinship, friendship and other relations after that... [...]. In our group, no one judged you by your work, but by bonds of kinship.

Social and professional advancement was a primary objective for migrant workers. Based on their accounts, workers only got ahead when their direct supervisor was white.

In Diabaly, a former worker describes his case:

Once, the day before he left for France, my white boss, Mr. Lecomte, told the black assistant supervisor to raise my salary, for I had done a good job. But instead of doing so for me, he gave the raise to one of his relatives. That's the way it always went; the black assistant supervisors

ruined some good workers at the Office du Niger.

According to M. Diarra, a former messenger who was promoted to assistant supervisor, "Europeans showed workers exactly what should and should not be done. They always checked on their work and told them what was good or what wasn't good. If they did something incorrectly, they would show how it should be done again properly. As for the Africans supervisors, they would tell them impatiently, 'Come on, hurry up! Do this work.' They never checked to see what was done for ten to twenty days. A month later, they would come to inspect and say, 'That's good,' when in fact it was just the opposite.

Life for workers in the company towns, which most often had electricity, is an important parameter in the redefinition of labor. Housing developments like Diabaly, Molodo and Niono were structured just like the modern towns. Moreover, some were more modern than the towns in dry zones. Before these towns were constructed, workers lived in camps that were displaced as the construction sites moved on. "The Great Niono Tent" was the most famous. Peasants from the dry or irrigated zones came looking for jobs in the families of these "itinerant" workers.

The white man's skill in teaching them the work, his objectivity in grading workers, the social life in the company towns and the salaries all constituted variables that reinforced the migrants' perception by which respectable work was work done for the whites. Since whites were on the top of the social totem pole, their employees considered themselves above the others who were chained to the land.

Conflicting relations between settlers and workers were rooted in this work hierarchy for more than forty years.

5. Social Relations Between Workers and Settlers

In this section, settler/worker relations will be analyzed in two areas: marriage and landownership. For the entire time that "white man's work" was available between 1930 and 1980, workers refused to give their daughters in marriage to settlers. The latter were considered to be poor folk and subhuman.

The settlers, on the other hand, refused to allow workers who were retired or laid off from their jobs starting in the 1980s to farm on irrigated plots

5.1. Marriage: One Does Not Give One's Daughter to A Miserable Wretch

At that time, when a young man sought the hand of a girl living in the workers' city, the first question asked of his intermediaries was whether he claimed to be a worker or a settler. Here is what Mansa Zerbo of Diabaly had to say on this subject:

During the time of 'white man's work,' workers lived better. If someone came in search of a daughter's hand, people would gather information about his activities. They would ask '*Kolo den do ya, bara kela den do? Abe bara la ya wali kolon do?*' - literally, 'Is he the son of a settler or of a worker? Does he work or is he a settler?' If it was learned that he was the a settler's son, his cause would be lost before he started. Before the girl's parents would tell him no, she would tell him herself, 'I cannot stand *kolon bara – settler work.*' But if they were told that the young man was a worker, he would be accepted unconditionally.

During the "white man's work" era, workers' wives only did housework. In contrast, in the settlements, women slaved in the fields as much as the men. The town women would

mock settler women when the latter came to market to sell their rice. "When our mothers set out to sell their rice at the Diabaly market, the workers' wives would pick some up and sniff it to see if it was new or old rice. That proves that at the time, everyone disdained the settlers," said a farmer from Ratenga.

According to a former monitor, it was the tradesmen and townspeople who were the hardest on farmers. In the town of Niono, some would insult the settlers by calling them "*kolon den, drain jugu ji mina den*" - literally meaning "settler's son, son of the dirty drain water drinker." It was said that if a girl wanted to get cracks in her feet from cold water, she could just marry a settler.

Some former workers claim that the settlers viewed the former as "*famas*," – bosses. Settlers envied the workers because they earned money, while they only had the land.

5.2. The End of "Work" and the Return to the Land

Conflicts between settlers and workers were especially exacerbated when the latter returned to the land beginning in the 1980s. According to a retired worker, the settlers were convinced that the workers had come to colonize and dominate them. Settlers sabotaged workers' fields, the most widespread *modus operandi* being to flood their rice paddies.

A settler from Diabaly reported to us what settlers would tell workers who wanted to work the irrigated land:

'You have done your work and eaten your wages and now you come into our fields to tell us that you want to help us – we do not agree to that.

The workers retorted: 'We've become settlers now. Don't we pay the same taxes as you? Don't we suffered as many problems as you from the Office du Niger?'

We told them, 'Lend us a hand and the work with the rice will go well. You want to harm us because of the fields. You say that the fields belong to you. But aren't we the ones who prepared them? We are the ones who have turned this land into fields so that you might cultivate them.'

According to workers' testimonies, the drop in labor demands at the Office du Niger can be divided into two important periods: from independence to 1968, when Issa Ongoïba came in, and starting in the 1980s, when he left.

Under Samba Lamine Traoré, the first director after the whites pulled out, the workers threw in the towel. This was the time of the "Big Departure;" many workers were laid off. In 1968, after the overthrow of Modibo Keïta's regime, Issa Ongoïba put people back to work. The best workers were rewarded, and he visited the worksites in person, encouraging employees. The employees took their jobs seriously.

Mamadou Fofana followed Issa Ongoïba from 1980 to 1984. He was known as Madou *Sumalin* or Madou the Cold One. Workers refused to work for him and several even resigned from the Office du Niger.

With the rise in staple prices, the workers' salaries could no longer feed their families. Consequently, some workers began to steal little bits of iron, wood and materials and sell them in the housing areas. Pilfering of little items at the Office du Niger got so bad that the workshops were totally liquidated.

Bakary Traoré offers his opinion of this issue:

If I go to the centers and see the state they are in now, tears come to my eyes. Why are people stealing sheet metal in those shops? Couldn't these buildings be useful to the Office du Niger one day? What is management doing now? It's self-interest against the Nation. The whites taught us the work. When they left, bad management spoiled everything.

The national directors were all held responsible, with the exception of Issa Ongoïba. Some of those who served after Issa Ongoïba said they had graduated from important Western schools to mark their difference from Mr. M.Ongoïba, whom they said was just a soldier. The peasants countered that did not need anyone who held impressive diplomas; they wanted workers.

With the reorganization of the Office du Niger (1993-1996), the workshops and work centers were permanently liquidated and the rice fields closed. "White man's work" had ended. What happened next was not that the migrants returned to their villages, but that they sought out irrigated land or little plots of land for market gardening activities.

6. Conclusion: Rice Cultivation Has the Last Laugh

The redefinition of labor at the Office du Niger seems to be determined by a certain number of factors, which are: social (power and status of employer), techniques (Western technologies) and cultural (money and modern objects).

Our analyses prove that it was not rice-growing in itself that was degrading, but the conditions under which it was carried out: forced displacement of populations, strong-arm methods of supervision, a landownership standard unfavorable to peasants.

Rice-growing was not considered to be respectable work until very recently, beginning in the 1980s, when the opportunities for salaried labor petered out at the Office du Niger, but especially when rice production "revolutionized" the settlers. The accounts borne by farmers in the ARPON villages of the Niono zone attest to rice's revenge over salaried labor:

The liberalization of rice prices and transplanting made us kings. Before, being a settler or the son of a settler rhymed with being miserable [...] Today, thanks to our rice production, we are very welcome in Niono, Segou and in all the big towns [...] Nowadays, we consider ourselves to be developed. Can't you see the livestock and the big motorcycles all over the village? Can't you hear the purring of the rice hullers in every part of the village? (Cf. La Restructuration de l'Office du Niger, 1997).

The negative connotation of the term "settler" only lasted as long as "white man's work" was available. With the close of the workshops starting in the 1980s, the settler became a respectable worker and rice cultivation became the most sought-after activity in the Office du Niger domain. It is this historical, changing configuration of the work concept, constructed and reconstructed by the African immigrants at the Office du Niger, that is at the heart of our analysis.

As shown by Karen Leonard's 1997 study on Japanese and Indians from the Punjab Province who immigrated to California, the Africans employed in mechanized farming in the Office du Niger designed a new representation of their work. But that would not take long to

Dougnon, Isaie

fade in light of the new work situation in the Office du Niger zone.

Since 1990, all of the populations in the Office du Niger have switched over to rice-growing and market gardening. This new context for the Office du Niger has given birth to yet another definition of work related to the land. However, social relations remain tense.

Bibliography

Coulibaly, Cheibane

1997 *Politiques agricoles and stratégies paysannes au Mali 1910-1985, le règne des mythes à l'Office du Niger*. Le Cauri d'or

Diawara, Mamadou; Dougnon, Isaie

2000 Du 'travail du Noir' au 'travail du Blanc': concepts and conceptions des peuples du pays Dogon émigrés à l'Office du Niger à partir des années 1930. In *International Congress of Historical Sciences, 6-13 August 2000, Oslo, Norway. Changing Boundaries and Definition of Work over Time and Space*.

Dougnon, Isaie

2000 "L'introduction du maraîchage du Plateau Dogon à l'Office du Niger: du rejet à la reconnaissance, le cas de Diabaly." In *"Savoir universel", "savoir paysans"*. Ed. Mamadou Diawara (Forthcoming).

Gupta, Akhil; Ferguson, James

1997 *Culture Power Place*. Duke University Press, London.

John, A. Arthur

1991 "International Labor Migration Patterns in West Africa." In *African Studies Review* 34 (3): 66-84

Karen, Leonard

1997 "Finding One's Own Place: Asian Landscapes Re-visioned in Rural California ." In *Culture Power Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*. Ed. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, 118-136. London: Duke University Press.

Magassa, Hamidu

1978 *Papa, commandant a jeté un grand filet devant nous: les exploits de la rive gauche du Niger*, Paris, Maspéro

Moore, L. Henrietta; Vaughan

1994 *Cutting Down Trees: Gender, Nutrition, and Agricultural Change in the Northern Province of Zambia, 1890-1990* Oxford.

Neff, Walter, S. 1977 *Work and Human Behavior*. Chicago.

Toure, Abdrahaman; Zanen, Sjoerd; Koné, N'Fagnanama

1997 *La restructuration de l'Office du Niger*. Bamako.

Thadeus, Sunseri

1996 "Labour Migration in Colonial Tanzania and the Hegemony of South African Historiography." In *African Affairs* 95 (381): 581-598

Dougnon, Isaie

Schreyger, Emil

1984 *L'Office du Niger au Mali : la problématique d'une grande entreprise agricole dans la zone du Sahel*. Steiner.

Viguiet, Pierre

1950 *Note sur la mise en valeur par la colonisation africaine des terres irriguées du Delta Central Nigérien*. Archives de Ségou.