The relationship between the Migrants and the Departure families In the migration in côte d'Ivoire: An Analysis of Social Intra-Family Relationships of Méagui's Burkinabe Immigrants

Abou Kouame N'dri, Raphael Kouadio Oura
Péléforo Gon Coulibaly University of KorhogoCenter for Research for Development (CRD) - University of Bouaké

Abstract:- As they have come in search of a family wellness, the Burkinabe migrants have settled in the forest area of Méagui, a town located in the southwest Côte d'Ivoire. For years, they have become mostly big farmers after having acquired the land through a gift or a purchase from Bacoue natives. In this way, the relationships with their original country experience changes. This paper therefore intends to analyze the socioeconomic factors that contributed to the upheavals of the relationship between the Burkinabe migrants of Méagui and their families in Burkina Faso, their original country. Out or not, these relationships may sometimes have implications for the education of the children of the Burkinabe settled in Méagui. What is more, the change in these relationships has ultimately led to identity crises in this locality
.

Keywords: *migrant identity crisis, modifying reports, family wellness*

Resume Venus à la recherche d'un mieux-être familial, les migrants burkinabè se sont établis dans la zone forestière de Méagui, une localité du sud-ouest ivoirien. Des années durant, ils sont devenus pour la plupart de grands agriculteurs après avoir acquis la terre par don ou par achat auprès des autochtones Bacoué. De la sorte, les rapports avec leur pays d'origine connaissent des modifications. Ce papier se propose donc d'analyser les facteurs socioéconomiques qui ont participé aux bouleversements des rapports entre les migrants burkinabè de Méagui et leurs familles du Burkina-Faso, leur pays d'origine. Rupture ou non, ces rapports ont parfois des implications sur la scolarisation des enfants burkinabè de Méagui. Aussi, la modification de ces rapports ont-ils en fin de compte provoqué des crises identitaires dans cette localité.

Mots clés : **migrant, crise identitaire, modification de rapports, mieux-être familial**

I. INTRODUCTION

Migratory movements are a central topic of study in understanding the logics of development in Côte d'Ivoire and generally in West Africa (Mamadou, 2003). Most Burkinabe migrants first settled in the southeast of Côte d'Ivoire. Later, they followed the agricultural pioneer areas towards the west (Balac, 1997; Dozon 1997). So since the decades 70, the west of Côte d'Ivoire has become the great zone of Burkinabe migration due to the Southeastern deforestation. Today, the country has more than 24% foreigners (RGHP, 2014). Among the foreigners, 56.6% are Burkina Faso nationals, that is to say 14.56% of the total population (DRSP, 2008). Therefore, the Burkinabe are the largest foreign community in Côte d'Ivoire. Since the independences, the number of Burkinabe migrants has increased, and their length of stay has increased. In fact, the agricultural colonization is for them, the main source of employment (Mamadou, 2003).

This sustained migratory flow was not fundamentally a major problem in the host country; it was rather encouraged by the policy of liberal access to land. This migration is all the more important that the first rulers have appointed agriculture as the basis of development. Thus, the forest area of Méagui (map 1), one of the cocoa producing regions, is subject to large waves of migrants. In fact, in search of arable land for this crop of big income, the Burkinabe immigrants settled in this locality, leaving behind them whole families. Guided by the desire to assure their family wellness, they come to work, to have a stable financial situation and go back to their homeland. During their stay in Côte d'Ivoire, they must also provide assistance to their relatives living in the homeland (Oura, 2013). However, it often happens that once on the ground, the migrants adopt behaviours that do not respect the first logic after their integration into the host society. For years, they socially rebuilt their lives, sometimes forgetting their original links despite the promises to their relatives in their homeland. It is therefore the socio-economic factors accounting for the change in these migrants' behaviour during their stays in Ivory Coast that are at stake. What are the key factors of the Burkinabe migration to Côte d'Ivoire? And what are their implications for their social environment? This study therefore aims to identify the causes of migration,

analyzing the socioeconomic factors involved in the change in the social relations between the Burkinabe migrants and their families of origin and the implications on their social environment.

Map 1: **subprefecture of Méagui**
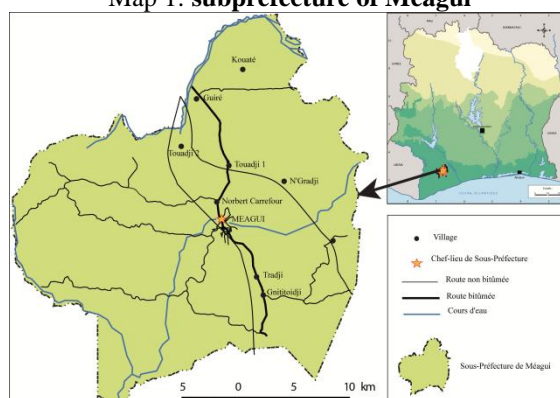
II. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The data collection has adopted both the qualitative and quantitative approach. The qualitative phase has mainly focused on semi-structured interviews from a maintenance guide and a focus group of 6 people. As for the interviews, 46 stakeholders including Burkinabe immigrants and Bacoue natives were interviewed. The interviews were recorded using a voice recorder and transcribed according to the structure of the interview guides. This collection phase was completed with the documentation and observation. Thus, the content analysis was chosen as collected information processing technique for this purpose.

The quantitative survey was done from a questionnaire. It targeted a sample of 100 people chosen on the basis of reasoned choice. Only individuals aged more than 20 years and having spent at least five years in Méagui were concerned by the investigation. The respondents are mainly Burkinabe immigrants of Méagui and Gniti-Toualy (a village from the subprefecture). The choice of these actors was motivated by the concern to account for the level of relationships between the immigrants and their families of origin, the migrants and the immigrants, and the immigrants and the natives. The analysis of the quantitative approach was based on the descriptive statistics. The counting was done with the sphinx software. The comprehensive method was mobilized to the data analysis. And all this being done to understand the meaning that the stakeholders give to their attitude vis-à-vis their country of origin and the host country.

1. Findings and Discussion

The Burkinabe migration in Côte d'Ivoire is so important that it raises many questions within the Ivorian population as well as in the political class. If the reason for this migration is the quest for a family wellness, the change in the relationships between the migrants and their original country is sometimes related to endogenous and exogenous factors. Maintaining or not, these relationships have implications not only on the host country but also on the families of the migrants.

1.1. Burkinabe migration to Côte d'Ivoire: a concerted decision

The Burkinabe migration is a family development. Therefore, the decision to migrate is sometimes a decision that is discussed among the family members. Far from being a strategy to escape the control of elders as maintained by Mamadou (2003), migration is an investment for the families of migrants. Under this perspective, migration is a response to poverty and the youth who left school will be the most affected by this phenomenon.

1.1.1. Leaving schooling and poverty as key factors in the Burkinabe migration to Côte d'Ivoire

The families' situation is lackluster in Burkina Faso as in many other African countries. So, to educate a child is a burden that a great number of families cannot afford. On this account, not to leave the child to himself, families gather and take the decision to encourage the children who decide to go on an adventure so that later, they come to "save" their respective families. On this point, the *future adventurer* is for his family, a safe investment. This is also what is conveyed by one of the persons in charge of Méagui's Burkinabe: *"We are the hope of an entire family in our homeland. Here, we have come to look for money and get our parents out of poverty because we suffered a lot in that country."* This means that every departure of a migrant towards Côte d'Ivoire is a hope for the family, hoping that he will come back later to change their social status. Aware of this fact, the migrant swears to hold his promises vis-à-vis his family. Among many other promises stands

maintaining the relationships during his stay in Côte d'Ivoire. Unfortunately, these commitments are not always respected, their attention being instead focused on the search for cultivable land.

1.1.2.   A migration guided by a search for a farmland

The Burkinabe migration towards Méagui is guided by the search for arable land for their family wellness. The findings of the study indicate that over 70% of the migrants are peasants settled in rural areas. Really, the migrants are mostly established in the rural areas due to land availability. Moreover, one should mention the solidarity and mutual aid which characterize this place. In the countryside, sometimes indigenous give land to foreigners free of charge for the sake of hospitality and also expecting them to contribute to the development of the village. As argued by one respondent: *"Here, our foreigners are kings. They must have the land to grow and feed their families."* These statements reflect the quality of the relationships around the land between the Bacoue natives and the Burkinabe in Méagui. As for female migration, it is motivated by marriage. In fact, in the traditional Burkinabe societies, female migration is of value only when the woman moves with the spouse, meets or follows a family member (Comoé, 2004). This means that the migration of women is subject to family constraints. Needless to say that the migration pattern differs according to the gender. Nevertheless, the relations between the migrants and the original country are usually not maintained.

2.2. Socioeconomic factors of maintaining or not the relationships between the Burkinabe migrants and their original country

Various factors account for the change of the relationships between the migrants and their country of origin is explained as revealed by the findings of this study.

2.2.1. The marital status of the migrants and their return to the original country

The unmarried migrants maintain have fewer contacts with their original country. In fact, once in the host country, this category of migrants seeks to rebuild socially by marrying Ivorian women to qualify for the nationality or to enjoy favours over land. Getting married with an Ivorian allows them to have the prerogatives of citizenship. Therefore, the concern for an absolute integration with the marriage bond, drives them away from their cultural realities. One respondent explained: *"I love this country. I do not have a woman in Burkina. My dream is to have an Ivorian woman to bear my children. In so doing, my children will be Ivorians and I also shall."*

Unlike the latter, the married migrants are compelled to maintain the contact with the family because of the marriage bond. They leave Burkina Faso leaving behind their wives and children. Therefore, taking time before returning to the country would repel them from their wives. The latter are therefore exposed to infidelity due to the lack of contact with their husbands. A respondent from Gniti-Toualy confirmed these sayings: *"Because of my family, I cannot spend years without going back to the country. My family means a lot to me. If I do not go, one never knows, my wife can seek a man to replace me."* The behaviour of the migrants according to their marital status is showed in the graph below.

**Chart 1: Marital status and return to the country**
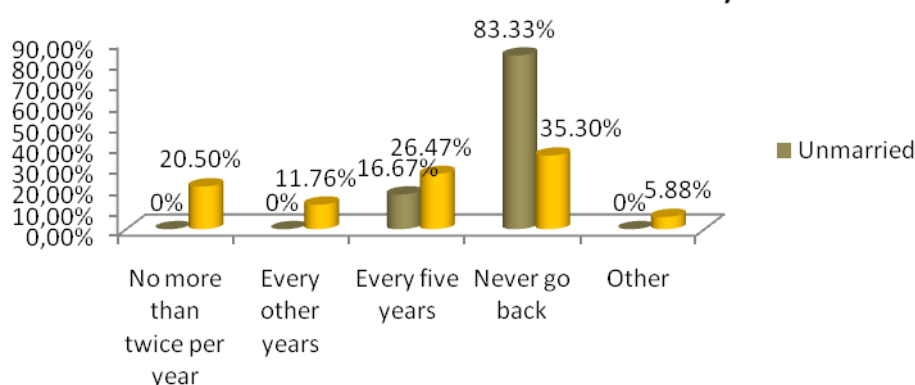
Source: Data from our survey, 2015

The proportion of unmarried migrants who said they have never return home is 83.33% against 35.30% among the married. These percentages indicate the importance of the marital status in the relationships between the migrants and Burkina Faso. As a matter of fact, by the bond of marriage, the migrants maintain their relationship with the homeland (CSR Report, 2007). If the bond of marriage is a cause accounting for the change in the relationships between the migrants and their country of origin, what about the economic activity?

2.2.2. From the economic activity to the change in the relationships with the original country

The break of the ties with the original country is well observed at the level of the traders. Living for the majority in the city, the Burkinabe traders of Méagui are guided by the concern for the daily gain. As their activity keeps them regularly at the market, the Burkinabe nationals do not lose any workday. Thus, the economic activity negatively impacts on the relationships with their families back home, for the simple reason that they do not give themselves time to visit them. One trader explains: *"Due to the lack of time, we are no longer able to visit our parents. You see, we came to seek, so you should not play with the work. If we had the money, we shall leave. As for now, we are in Côte d'Ivoire to work hard."* For the merchants, the priority is given to work. This is not the case among farmers. This is the category of Burkinabe migrants moving more towards Burkina Faso (Chart 2).

Chart 2: Economic activity and return to the country
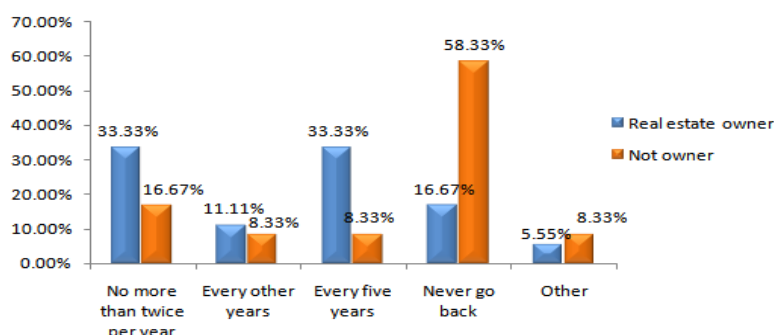

Source: **Data from our survey, 2015**
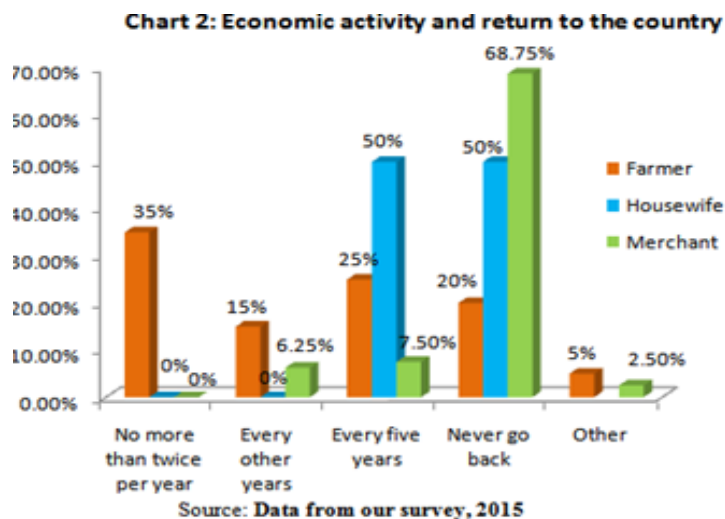
Over 68% of traders have stopped to visit the country against only 20% of farmers. Unlike the traders, the farmers have specific harvest periods. This is for instance, the case of cocoa which lasts from October to January. They are able to move during the periods where the agricultural activity is less intense. At the end of the harvest, those who wish to visit their parents, organize their return, as stated by another respondent from Gniti Toualy: *"I am a farmer. When we finish the harvest, we take a rest. And so we organized to greet the parents in our country, the years when the harvest is good. Convoys are organized."* This is not the case for the merchants whose keeping ties with their country could be an obstacle to their economic activity. To this end, a respondent from Méagui said: *"We have some expenses here and we are working on credit at times. If every time, we must be informed of the news of our country, we would always be forced to leave or send money."*
The economic activity that determines the time of the actors is essential in the change of the relationships between the migrants and Burkina Faso. In the specific case of farmers, the land is a factor determining the choice to move to Burkina Faso.

2.2.3. Land ownership and the probability for Burkinabe migrants to return home
Land ownership is a pledge of land stability for the migrants. So the link between land ownership and maintaining relationships with their home country depends on it. Thus, the migrants who have no land are out of connection with their family of origin. On the contrary, those who possess a land, maintain the ties with their families at home (Chart 3).

Chart 3: Relation between land and tenure and return to homeland

Source: Data from our survey, 2015

The proportion of the migrants who have no land and who do not go back to the country is 58.33%. On the other hand, those who are landowners keep more ties with Burkina Faso. Only 16.67% of them never go home. The question of land ownership intervenes in the nature of the relationships between the migrants and the original country. The land, once acquired, allows the migrants to create plantations that transform him into a planter. This position will bring them closer to their country to meet the requirements demanded by farms, the quest for an abundant family labour, more controllable and cheaper (Chauveau, 2002). In fact, given the high cost of local labour, the migrants appeal to their brothers and friends back home as labour in their plantations as corroborated by one respondent: *"I was given the land to work. I have some brothers and friends in the country who want to come here. I pay their transport fees to come and help me and if possible have a cultivable land. When they come and find their own land, I shall release them and I bring others."*

The need for farm labour is all the more important that planters are sometimes forced to sacrifice the education of their children. Both girls and boys are used on family farms, despite the fact that they do not ignore the importance of school, as reported by one of the peasants: *"I came to work in the field. But, can I work alone? When I have nobody to help me and that I have a child, what shall I do? So my child shall do what I do. Schooling is good but it is very slow in my opinion."* Ultimately, the agricultural activity is involved in the establishment of a vast network of migrants but also in getting children out of school. Unlike the natives, the Burkinabe migrants have not opted for the exit strategy of getting out of the rural economy through a massive education of their children (Mamadou, 2003). These Burkinabe migrants therefore prioritize farming at the expense of the school as they say, *we need labour to work in our plantations*. Hence, a great number of the migrants' children out of school, about 60% (ground survey, 2015). What is more, the change in the relationship between the migrants and the original country has had some implications on the social ties in the host country.

2.3. Changing relationships and social environment

Changing social links between migrants and countries of origin is now a real social problem in the host country. These changes are at different levels of social life.

2.3.1. Early marriage and leaving the school system as a daily experience of the Burkinabe migrants' children

The proportion of girls who go to the country every five years is higher than that of boys. There is a link between the frequency of visits of parents at home and that of children. When the parents are in contact with the country of origin, their children, specifically the girls are. Indeed, girls are sent back to the country for weddings. Therefore, the issue of education of the Burkinabe girl in Méagui is acute among the migrant families. The results of the survey indicate that 1/5 of children are still at school (ground survey, 2015). In fact, to meet the cultural needs of the ethnic group, the girls are driven out of school at the age of 15 years to avoid pregnancies which are a disgrace to the family. This can be backed up by the sayings of one respondent: *"In Burkina, a girl must be married at the age of 15. Sometimes a girl can be married at the age of 13. It depends on her biological evolution. When the girl reaches that age, we arrange her marriage."* As for the boys, they rarely return to the country; they assist their parents in the farm work. These *future heirs* are more attached to the possessions of their parents acquired in Méagui. And all this being done to prevent the monopolization of the legacy of their father by the uncles, aunts or nephews of the latter. *"I'm not going home because I do not know anybody there. I will not go there not to let them know me. I prefer to stay with my father to learn what he is doing here. In so doing, no one shall ask anything of my father, "*said one respondent. If it is easier for parents to send girls, it is not the case for boys who are ultimately cut from the cultural realities of their country.

The findings of the study reveal that the proportion of boys who do not go back to the country is (83.3%). As for girls, only (20%) break the relationships with their relatives in the homeland. The girls who return to Burkina Faso are aged generally between 15 and 18, that is to say a proportion of 80% of the girls. So it is an age that coincides with their school leaving, that is to say from the end of primary school to junior high school. This is also the age where girls can be pregnant. One must then prevent them from being in this state before arriving in Burkina Faso as says one of the planters from Gniti-Toualy: *"For us, when a girl gets pregnant, it's a disgrace to the family. To prevent this from happening, there are parents who, from the CM 2, manage to send the girls."* While sending them to the country, the girls are compelled to leave school, unlike boys who are less subject to the marriage bond.

2.3.1. Modification of the ties between the migrants and the original country and social cohesion in Méagui

The majority of Burkinabe prefer to give their daughters in marriage to their Burkinabe brothers. Not being sure that while staying in Côte d'Ivoire, the young girls may have Burkinabe husbands, the parents are in a logic of sending them to the homeland. In such a case, the probability of meet their concerns will be great. But this is not well received by the Bacoue natives who consider the act of the Burkinabe as a lack of integration as put forward by a native: *"They tell us that they came to get their money only. But in fact, our sisters as well. They can woo our sisters but we can never do it. How can we agree if they say we are not like them? But they love our land."* Intercultural relationships deteriorate from this marriage. In fact, the Burkinabe hardly find no disadvantages that their boys should marry native girls. Through this link, they hope undoubtedly to enjoy the benefits around the land. While initially, indigenous have had to transfer their land to their in-laws, it is less and less accepted now in large native families. The natives cannot figure out how the Burkinabe refuse to give their daughters in marriage to them while they are almost tempted to encourage the union of their boys with the native girls or Baoule immigrants. As for the rare case where the Burkinabe girls contract relations with the Ivorians, the parents of the latter are in a position of being misjudged by their community. They are accused of not having paid sufficient attention to the education of their daughters. This will lead to a breakdown of the ties between the migrants and their original country.

III.   CONCLUSION

The migrants have moved to the locality of Méagui in search for a family wellness and then to return home. But under the influence of several parameters, the first intent has undergone changes over time. Thus, the relationships between the migrants and the original country have evolved. In fact, the socio-economic factors that have influenced these relations are among many others land ownership status, the marital status as well as the economic activity. The behaviour of migrants has led many children to leave the school system. In addition, the relationships between the migrants themselves on the one hand, and between the migrants and the natives on the other hand have deteriorated in the locality of Méagui and jeopardized the social cohesion.

REFERENCES

[1]   Balac R., (2000), « Achèvement de l'économie ivoirienne, un blocage structurel : Analyse d'une crise », in B. Contamin et H. Memel Fotê (dir), le modèle ivoirien en question-crises, ajustement, recompositions, Paris, Karthala, collection (Homme et Société), 1997
[2]   Bauchemin C., (2000), « La migration ville-campagne en Côte d'Ivoire », une circulation inversée, communication aux journées scientifiques de L'APAD, Saint-Louis, Sénégal
[3]   Bredeloup S., (2003), « La Côte d'Ivoire ou l'étrange destin de l'étranger », revue européenne de migration, vol, 19, n 2.
[4]   Chauveau J.-P., (2002), « The Institution of the « tutorat » between Locals and Migrants, and
[5]   its Evolution. The Moral Economy, State, Inter-ethnic Relations and Land Rights (Gban
[6]   Region, Côte d'Ivoire) », provisional paper, Workshop in Frankfurt/M.: Land Rights and the Politics of Belonging in West Africa
[7]   Document Stratégique de la Réduction de la Pauvreté, (2008), rapport annuel, Ministère du Plan
[8]   Dozon J-P., (1997), « Etranger et allochtone en Côte d'Ivoire », in Bernard Cotamin et Harris
[9]   Comoé F. E., (2004), « Femme et migration en Côte d'Ivoire », étude de la population africaine, vol. 20, n 1.
[10]   Mahamadou Z., (2003), « La diaspora burkinabè en Côte d'Ivoire, recomposition des dynamiques migratoires et rapport avec le pays d'origine », politique africaine, N 90.
[11]   Omar M., (2006), « Terme de références pour une étude sur le profil migratoire en Côte d'Ivoire », rapport final.
[12]   Oura R., (2013), « Mutation des rapports entre migrants burkinabé et leur famille d'origine dans le contexte de la crise de l'ananas à Bonoua », revue internationale de la recherche et d'étude pluridisciplinaire, Abidjan
[13]   Recensement Général de la Population et de L'Habitat, (2014)