

CHAPTER 3: SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

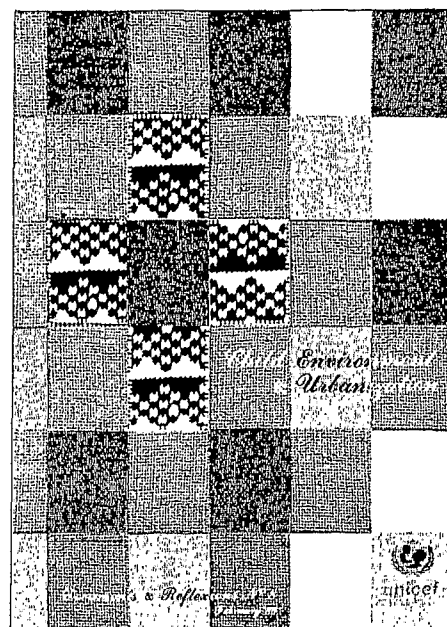
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FOSTERED AND ENTRUSTED CHILDREN (1)

Some facts

Children's mobility within the family circle is a common trend in West Africa today. Results of the delegation of parental roles, for short or long periods, from the biological parents to others, the importance of this parental delegation is very variable according to the population concerned. Certain societies almost totally exclude this practice, for instance, the Tallensi in Ghana, where in the 1940's, only 2% of the children did not live with their real parents (Fortes, 1949). Comparable statistics have been compiled for the Konkamba, the Tiv and the Ibo. In direct contrast, other ethnic groups have developed, and even institutionalised, this practice of "parental" roles, for example, amongst the Kron, but also regularly by wider social exchanges with unrelated people, as found amongst the Ashanti, Ewe and Yoruba tribes (Goody, 1978).

If we study national or regional statistics which have been collected, in those

societies where this practice is followed, placing children outside the nucleus of their immediate family circle is a common enough occurrence. The following figures can be cited for children under eleven years of age: 18% in Ghana in 1971 (Isuigo-Abanike, 1983); 18-26% in Gonja, North Ghana in 1955 and 1964 (Goody, 1982; and 18% in South-East Togo in 1976 (Locoh, 1984).

Reasons for this Mobility

In traditional African societies, depending on the system, a child belongs to his father's or mother's lineage. This belonging to a lineage is the principle which underlies the mobility of children. Upbringing of young children is, in fact, the collective responsibility of the extended family and not just that of their parents. The everyday carrying out of this responsibility may be attributed to a family or an individual belonging to the same lineage.

(1) This study was carried out with the collaboration of the Ecole Nationale de Statistique de d'Economie Appliquée d'Abidjan (ENSEA) and the Institut Français de Recherche Scientifique pour le Développement en Coopération (ORSTOM).

This principle is realized first of all through the crucial role played by the mother in the education of children, with all the expenditure in time and money that weighs her down. The overall burdens on the mother often exceed her available means at any one point in her family life cycle, and she is forced momentarily to entrust those children she cannot take care of to other women. (FRANK, 1986). This principle is then reactivated by the need to balance the numbers of producers and consumers in each domestic group, and this leads to a redistribution of youth among family units.

These facts are backed by others which are more circumstantial. First of all, matrimonial mobility, which is sometimes frequent. This breaks up the family cell and causes a redistribution of children according to age and sex, to different households: the father's, the mother's or other relatives' (Quesnel, Vimard, 2988). Secondly, the increasing impact of the geographical location of health and training structures in West African states can be noted. Thus, in order for children, particularly those from rural areas, to continue their schooling, they must be placed in families living close to schools and professional training and educational institutions (2). Likewise, women, usually accompanied by their children, leave their homes to be nearer health services, i.e. maternities, health centres, traditional therapy centres..., and are taken in to live with relatives residing near these institutions.

The Future of this Traditional Form of Mobility

Children's mobility constitutes a type of economic and social organization and management within the clan and is linked to environmental constraints.

Highlighting the different causes of children's mobility between families allows us to note, in passing, the role that the inequalities (demographic and economic) between families, social groups and residential areas plays in individual child mobility which does not escape the determinism characteristic of various migratory movements. Thus, we can also verify to what extent these changes between families generate, immediately

or in the long-term, a spatial and social mobility for the children concerned.

What is the future of this well-established and codified mobility within traditional societies? What are the consequences on this placing of children, given the integration of these populations into a world more and more marked by demographical growth, urbanization, monetarization of production, and new modalities of social stratification, which are all inter-linked? Will the transformation of family models and behaviour, with the accompanying weakening of lineage structures, the emergence of the nuclear cell as an autonomous institution, and the individualization of relations between people within the family circle, modify this form of exchange and this inter-family link?

Faced with these questions, two lines of thought are in direct confrontation. One envisages an intensification of the practice in "complex hierarchical system" societies, within an internal network outside direct parental control, and with transfers involving monetary terms (Goody, op. cit.). The other (D.K. Fiawoo, 1978) claims that the progressive disappearance of the traditional extended family and the nuclearization of homes, particularly in urban communities lead to the emergence of substitutive practices to this inter-family mobility (nannies, servants, kindergartens...) in order to meet children's schooling and education norms, especially in cases where both parents work.

In order to define the present evolution of this practice of children's mobility within the family circles, and its real influence on the intensity of spatial mobility of young people, we shall elaborate on some case studies from amongst the Ivoirian population. These examples will permit an appreciation of the permanence of these practices to be made according to different models, depending on cultural background peculiar to each human group, and the new characteristics of their environment.

CHILDREN MOBILITY IN THE COTE D'IVOIRE

In the Cote d'Ivoire, placing children outside the parental family cell is relati-

(2) This form of "placing" children, often orientated towards city life, also corresponds to economic and social promotion as far as the biological parents are concerned. The latter hope for the integration of their progeny into modern life and the transfer of later wealth, which they, as guardians, may receive through their children, who are recognized as comfortably-off city dwellers.

vely frequent, if one judges by statistical data supplied. In 1978, 19% of children under fifteen years old in Abidjan, were "fostered" outside the parental home (Antoine, Guillaume, 1986), and 16% in the rest of the country (Vimard, N'Cho, 1988).

Over and above general figures, we are privileged to be able to use three groups of people of diverse cultural backgrounds and activities for our analysis (3). The first group is the population of Memni and Montezo villages, about fifty kilometres from Abidjan and populated mainly by the Akye – who belong to the Akan lagoon area. Initiated into plantation growing very early on, the Akye suffered when the recession came to this eastern part of the Cote d'Ivoire. The Akye families have an old tradition of urban-rural bipolarization and it is particularly because of this that children are moved around within these circles (Vimard, 1987). The crisis contributed to the intensifying of solidarity practices between cities (essentially Abidjan) and villages, orienting these practices towards family or more general strategies of assistance from urban milieus to village groups (Faussey, Vimard, 1988).

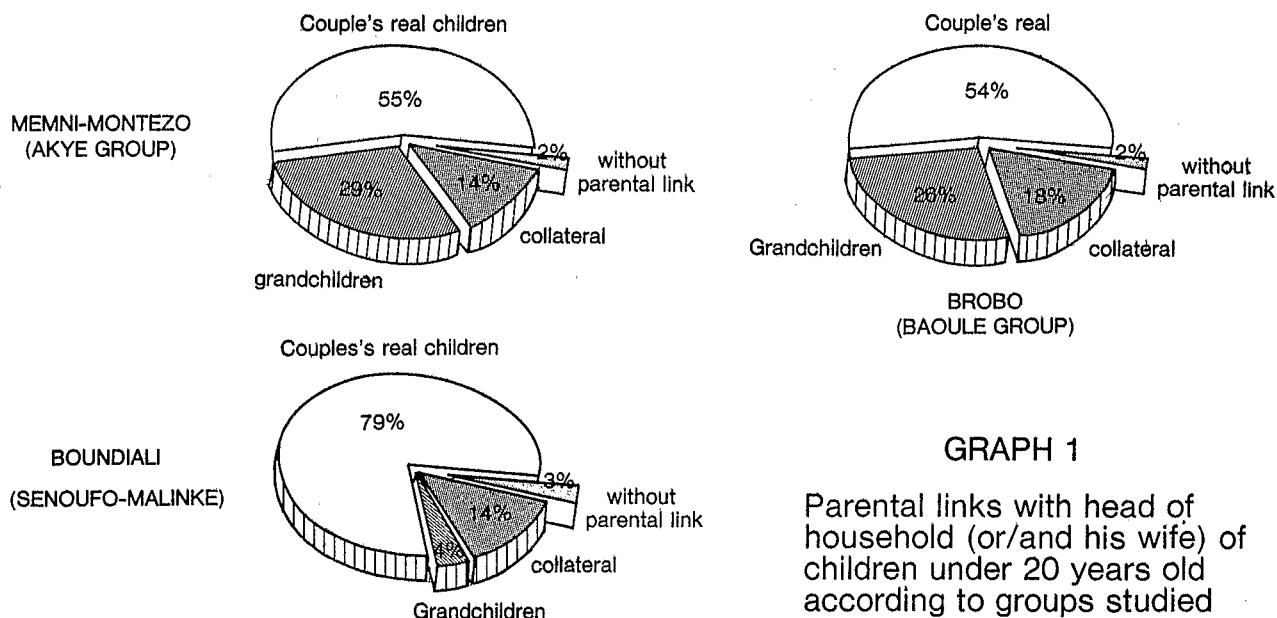
Our second point of reference is in the sub-prefecture of Brobo, to the east of Bouake the Cote d'Ivoire's second city. The Baoule, also belonging to the Akan group, are clearly in the majority. A

self-sufficient agricultural economy is dominant, but a proportion of the population is integrated into, and hold administrative and commercial posts within the sub-prefectures head offices. Out of season or in season, this population is continually in movement mostly towards the centre-western and south-western parts of the Cote d'Ivoire where, for the last ten years or so, new plantation zones have been developed. (Adou, Koffi, 1987; Vimard, Op. Cit.).

Boundiali commune, in the north of the Cote d'Ivoire, is our third case study. This region is mainly inhabited by: Senoufo agriculturists oriented towards food-crops cultures and more recently, to cotton; Malinke traders; and, a minority of civil servants from different Ivorian ethnic groups. Due to its advantageous location in a savannah zone between Sahelian countries and forestry regions, Boundiali is relatively well situated at a crossroads (Coulibay et Al. 1987).

Intensity of Family Mobility

Depending on the population studied, family mobility has different relative characteristics, particularly as to the intensity of this mobility, the relationship with privileged relatives and the ages of the children concerned (4). Two models can be drawn up from this. In



(3) The Akye and Baoule are the first two communities in our study and are of matriarchal lineage. The Senoufo and Malinke, dominant in the third area of study, are patriarche societies.

(4) Our study only concerns the mobility of single children under 20 years old. The nomenclatures: "natural children" – biological descendants of the head of household and/or his spouse, "entrusted children" – children welcomed into a couples' household who are not theirs, "children placed in family care" the couples' children who are transferred to other family units. As for the term "dependant children" this represents all children living in a household or brought up by a woman regardless of parental links. The findings are results of a census and survey carried out by ENSEA, Abidjan, with the collaboration of ORSTOM.

rural Akan mileus of the Akye and the Baoule, "entrusted children" represent an important proportion of the total number of resident children (around 40%) below the age of 20. Most dominant are the relationships grandparents/grandchildren. Sixty percent of those "entrusted" are grandchildren of the head of household or his wife (see Graph 1 and Table 1) and these children are very often rather young (70%

below the age of 10).

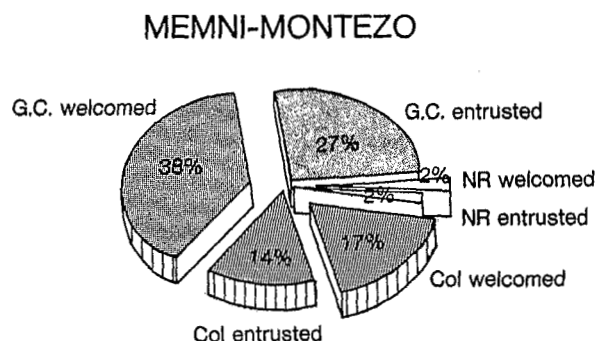
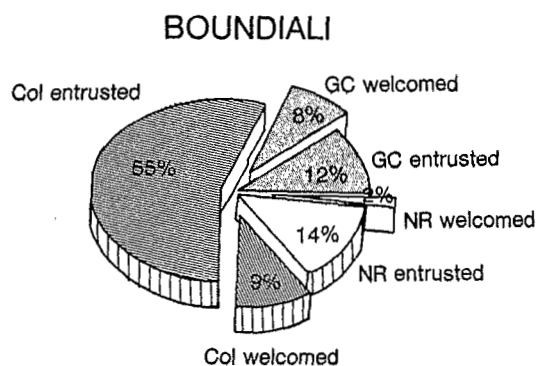
In direct contrast, in Boundiali commune (essentially made up of Senoufo and Malinke ethnic groups), "entrusted" children "only" represent a little more than 20% of the total number of children; 65% of them are not directly descended from the head of household, or from his wife, and in 60% of the cases, are over 10 years old (5).

Table 1 : Data according to study of Family Home Environment (in totals).

	Memni-Montezo	Brobo	Boundiali
Total population (Legal resident)	9975	6682	22380
Unmarried and under 20 years old	4455	3495	12837
"Entrusted" children of which:	1999	1624	2756
directly "entrusted"	845		2232
"placed in family care"	1154		524

In the Memni-Montezo and Boundiali contexts, it is possible to further clarify the broad term "entrusted" children according to the integration of these children into their "adopted households". A first group, easily distinguishable, is composed of children "entrusted" directly to the head of household or his wife who happen to be their closest relatives. This entails the taking on of total responsibility for the children on social, family and economic planes (even if the biological parents are contributing in part, to the education and upkeep of their children); here delegation of parental roles is very extensive. A second group concerns children who are "placed in family care", which means

integrated into a household belonging to one of their direct ascendants, more often on their mother's side, perhaps a sister, a niece or the daughter of the head of household. In these cases, the responsibility has more of a social and economic character (particularly if the child's mother does not exercise an independent activity and has a home-help role within the family group), but differs in that daily parental education continues to be principally assumed by one of the biological parents especially when young children are concerned. The distinction between these two environments is particularly marked on this point. (Graph N° 2)



GRAPH N° 2

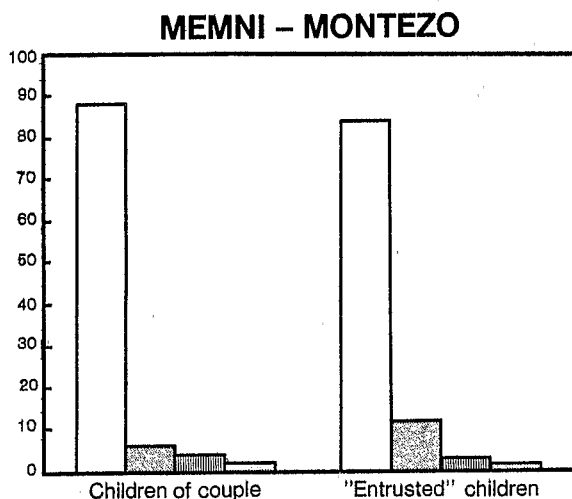
Reception status of "entrusted" children parental link with head of household and integration methods of entrusted children in Akye and Senoufo-Malinke groups.

(5) If we take an average of two or more persons per household, "entrusted" children have a mean average of 1.63 per household in Brobo and represent 1/4 of its total number; on the contrary, in Boundiali, on an average, householders welcome only 0.84 of "entrusted" children - which is 13% of its total.

The largest proportion of "entrusted" children (58%) are those who are taken into Memni and Montezo households with one of their biological parents. On the other hand, in Boundiali, children who are "entrusted" directly to the head of household are in the majority and represent more than 80% of "entrusted" children. This gap between these two ethnic groups is particularly clear-cut if one considers the status of relationship and welcome most representative amongst these children: in Memni-Montezo - grandchildren are welcomed along with one of their direct ascendants into their grandparents homes (38% of cases), whereas in Boundiali, 55% of "entrusted" children are collaterals of the head of household or of his wife, (young brothers, cousin or nephews) integrated directly into their elder relatives' family.

Geographical Areas of Family Mobility

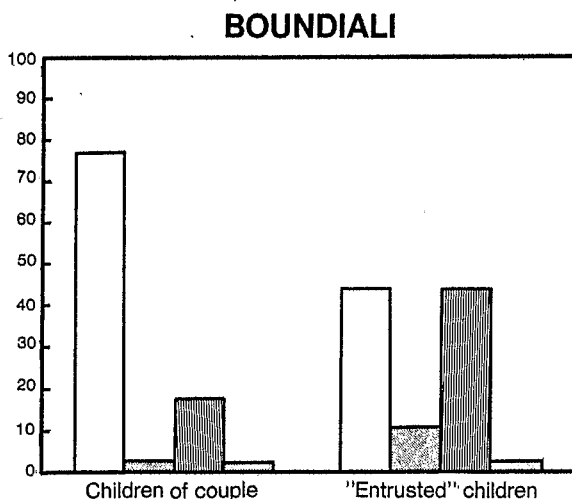
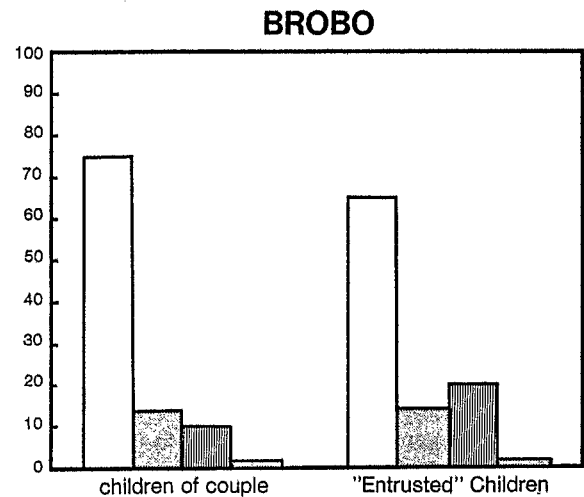
For each of these populations, we



retain the children's place of birth, according to four modalities concerning their places of origin: an absence of spatial mobility vis-a-vis the case study (6) the department they belong to, the whole country (excepted the department of origin), and foreign countries (7).

Another notable difference between the Akan and the Boundiali ethnic groups is the geographical mobility of children as a whole, and the disparity between the mobility of children of heads of households and their wives, and that of "entrusted" children. (Graph N° 3)

In Akye country geographical mobility is very insignificant as is the gap between the two different groups of children: 12% of "entrusted" children are not originally from the villages in which they live, as against 6% for children belonging to the couple. In Baoule country, general mobility and differences are more marked: the proportions are 35% and 25% respectively. This difference in



GRAPH 3

GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS OF FAMILY MOBILITY

Birth places of children belonging to the couple and of "entrusted" children

- Residence
- ▨ Cote d'Ivoire
- ▩ Department
- Foreign

(6) For Memni and Montezo, this refers to the villages themselves, for Brobo the sub-prefecture, and for Boundiali the commune.

(7) One would think that for Boundiali, situated so close to Mali and marked by the Malinke people belonging to both sides of the border, the term "foreigner" would not have the same social and geographical significance. For this reason, the analysis of figures does not allow for a real difference to be distinguished, and "foreigners" are marginally represented.

Boundiali is of great importance because the mobility of "entrusted" children is particularly high: 56% as against 23% for children belonging to the couple, i.e. a mobility of about 2.5 times more important

The mobility of children of Memni and Montezo seem to represent simply an exchange between households and are essentially of a family nature (8). In Brobo, in a context where geographical movements are more intense, family mobility has a particular spatial content. As for Boundiali, the link is obvious: for more than half the children, family mobility means a displacement of a relatively large distance because it passes the limits of the department.

CHILDREN'S MOBILITY IN INTER-URBAN-RURAL-RELATIONS

Since 1978, in Abidjan, a slight inversion in the flux of children previously oriented from the country towards cities has been observed. This is due to the effects of the economic crisis which has

made education of the young more difficult in urban zones because of it being more costly in time and money (Antoine, Guillaume). The intensity of exchanges of all kinds between Memni and Montezo villages and their environments – essentially polarized towards Abidjan due to the proximity and political, administrative and economic importance of this city – give us a unique occasion to measure children's mobility within a rural framework strongly marked by its ties to the urban world.

Family and Geographical Components of Children's Mobility

Previously, a relatively low mobility of children from Memni and Montezo was recorded when considering their life span, i.e. by comparison between their birthplace and their residence. But if one observes their migratory movements for a short period, taking into account the changes in places of residence between 1983 and 1985, the overall picture is slightly different as a particularly intense mobility is observed (Table N° 2).

Table N° 2 Indications of Children's Mobility at Memni and Montezo from 1983 – 1985.

	The couple's own children directly	"Entrusted" children	Children "placed in care" "welcomed"	Total children
% migrants *	6	12	6	8
% immigrants **	6	16	10	13
Remainder *** migratory	46	70	74	144

- * Expressed in relation to residents in 1983
- ** Expressed in relation to residents in 1985
- *** In total numbers

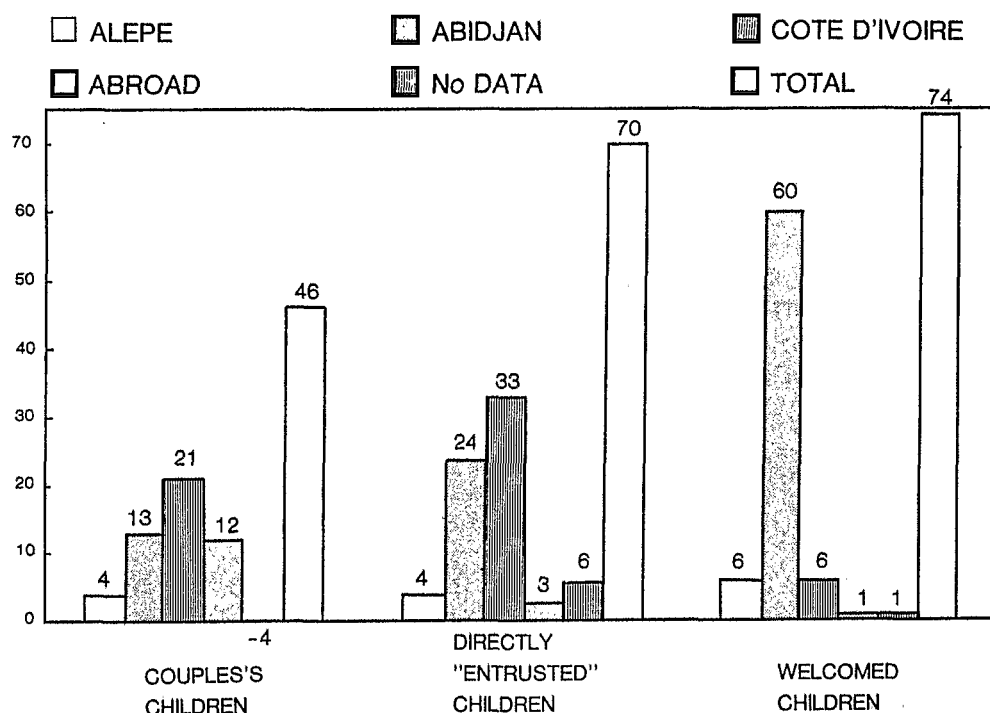
The proportion of children resident in 1983 and emigrated two years later was 7%, and in 1985, 9% of the children had been residing there for less than two years. A lower mobility of children belonging to couples can be noted here, and it is mostly the movements of children "entrusted" directly to the head of household which appear to have much higher figures. Of these various migratory fluxes a positive remainder of 190 children is left, a little more than 4% of the total number of resident children (9). Once again, the importance of "en-

trusted" children's mobility is responsible for more than 3/4 of this positive migratory balance, although they are only representative of 45% of the total number of single children under 20. Relations with Abidjan are favoured: more than 50% of the total are due to these children, and they represent 55% of immigrations and 65% of emigrations. Exchanges between the whole of the Cote d'Ivoire are also important (almost 1/3 of the total), but those within the sub-prefecture of Alepe (7% of the total) are relatively restricted (Graph N° 4).

(8) This assertion is relatively simple in that we are considering mobility in relation to place of birth, and not the last place of residence, which could indicate a very real spatial mobility within the general alternating movements between different residences/milieus of the large Akye families. We shall further develop this aspect in the following pages.

(9) If one takes the overall indicators studied, the difference in behaviour according to sex is insignificant.

GRAPH N° 4:
MIGRATORY TOTALS IN MEMNI AND MONTEZO
ACCORDING TO MIGRATION PLACES (1983 - 1985)



The origins of immigrant children corroborates the preceding data on the low mobility of children when measured over their life-span: in fact, 50% of these "immigrants" were born in Memni or Montezo, and 25% are originally from Abidjan. This further confirms the favoured orientation of these migratory movements. In conclusion, four distinctive traits characterize children's mobility: numerical importance of flux, their reversibility, their orientation, particularly towards Abidjan, and finally, the importance of the movements of children from one household to another within the intensification of these migratory movements.

Reasons for migration of "entrusted" children

Schooling is the major reason for children's migration which brings reciprocal exchanges between rural and urban areas. In fact, 43% of "entrusted" children in Memni and Montezo, and 58% of children "placed in family care" outside the family circle, are there for this reason. The importance of this

phenomenon is due, not only to the imbalanced development of educational institutions between regions (Saint Vil, 1981), but also to the possibilities of, and access conditions to these infrastructures (possibility of living with relatives, boarding out, etc.) This migration for "educational" reasons concerns more boys (47% and 73% respectively for "entrusted" and "placed in care" children) than girls (40% and 46% respectively). The difference is due to the generally lower levels of schooling for girls in rural and urban areas (10). This imbalance becomes more pronounced with age as boys move up to higher education: 80% of boys between the ages of 10 and 13 migrate for educational reasons, as against only 45% of girls. Exchanges of an educational nature are obviously mainly with Abidjan. 41% of children "placed in care" outside their villages for schooling reasons are in Abidjan (13% for other towns in the interior, 17% at Alepe sub-prefecture). In Memni and Montezo, 33% of the "entrusted" children for schooling are from Abidjan, 21% from other regions in the Cote d'Ivoire, and 8% from Alepe.

(10) In Memni and Montezo, 46% of girls under 20 can neither read nor write as opposed to 34% amongst boys.

The second reason for transfers between families, is the placing of children as "home-help; this accounts for the massive departure of 31% of young girls, as against 12% among boys. In fact, the placing of young girls as "little maids", generally with their grandparents, an uncle or an aunt, is a very frequent phenomenon in Abidjan, where these girls constitute very cheap labour for the families concerned. (Antoine and Guillaume, op. cit.). This sort of migration has the same percentages of movements converging towards the villages studied (31% for girls, 13% for boys). In these cases, immigration corresponds to the villagers' needs for domestic labour; agricultural activities for boys in order to compensate the lack of labour due to departures for schooling purposes, or, in the case of young girls, to help in household tasks. (11).

Dependant Children and "Entrusted" Children

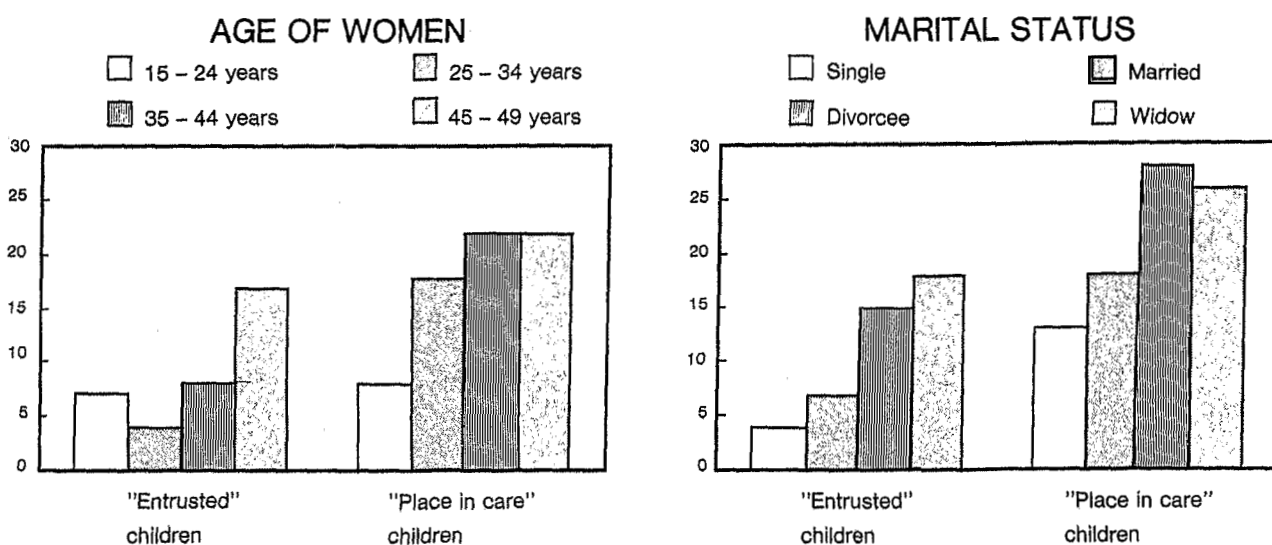
"Entrusted" children represent 22% of the total residents in Memni and Montezo, and 45% of single children under 20 years old. The percentages of "entrusted" children with respect to the

total of dependant children, increases with the woman's age, 6% from 35 to 39; 11% from 40 to 44, and 17% from 45 to 49 years old. Widows and divorcees now living alone, are more likely to have dependant "entrusted" children (15% and 18% respectively) as they are more in need of help for household and agricultural tasks than a married woman living with her husband (7% of "entrusted" children) and particularly, if their own children live with their father or with his family (Graph 5). (12).

Women "place" some of their children out of the household in a increasing proportion according to their age: 6% at 20 to 24 years, 20% at 40 to 44 years. These older women have a larger family, therefore, more possibilities of entrusting their children who are anyway of an age to migrate for educational or professional reasons. Divorcees or widows delegate their parental roles to someone other than the father for a quarter or a fifth of their offspring. Married or single women often keep their own children as they are usually less numerous: only 15% and 7% respectively for children who do not live with their mothers. (13).

GRAPH 5 DEMOGRAPHIC IMPORTANCE OF ENTRUSTED CHILDREN

Proportion of children "entrusted" and "placed in care" (in %) according to age and marital status of women in Memni and Montezo



(11) According to our results, apprenticeship does not constitute a motive for this population's mobility. Actually, artisanal activities are very restricted in the villages and the insertion of young people into this type of employment does not seem to be part of the professional strategies of the Akye. However, for other societies, placing children in apprenticeships can lead to an important spatial and family mobility.

(12) 27% of children who do not live with their mother, live with their father, and 6% of children living in their father's families are children of a previous union. These figures show an intense mobility amongst couples, but in our analysis, the Akye children are not considered as either "entrusted" or "placed" in care.

(13) The closer the parental link between children and their guardians, the more children are "entrusted" to them very young. Grandparents usually take in children around three years of age, uncles and aunts at 6, and other guardians when they are more than seven years old.

Women of childbearing age, in general, place more children "in care" than they take into their families: 0.40 children as against 0.22 on an average. Thus, insofar as the villages are concerned, they are short of 292 children, the exchanges with Abidjan accounting for half this negative number. This "deficit" in children, pertaining to a particular group of women but corresponding to a positive balance on the whole, seems to confirm that childbearing age women tend to redistribute their children to much older women, or to salary earning relatives in Abidjan, who can afford to keep them and bring them up.

SPATIAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC COMPONENTS OF FAMILY MOBILITY

The Diversity of Family Mobility: leading to diverging models

The socio-economic evolution of these last few decades has not slackened the intensity of this type of family behaviour particularly children's mobility. One can almost put forward the hypothesis that the economic depression has driven the most underprivileged families to "place" more of their children, temporarily or for longer duration, with families who have less precarious living conditions. Whatever the case may be, the intense flux between city and village seems to have been affected.

Although children's mobility within families is widespread and intensifies their spatial mobility, different populations adopt certain characteristic forms which seem to be distinctive modes. Let us consider the purely familial aspect of this mobility. This shows the contrast on one hand, the rural Akan people who place numerous children primarily with their grandparents (14), and on the other, Boundiali district where children are "entrusted" less frequently, but according to privileged exchanges between collaterals.

The perception of inter-relationships between familial and spatial mobility also shows a clear distinction amongst the population studied. In Memni and Montezo, mobility is either within vil-

lages, exclusively in a family context, or it is the return of migrants in the general flux between Abidjan or other Ivorian cities and the rural world. Although family mobility in Brobo is often linked to geographical movement, this only slightly affects children's spatial mobility. As for Boundiali, a socio-economic context inserted into modern administrative and economic spheres, family mobility is of less importance, but it greatly increases the intensity of general immigration of children, and contributes directly to the demographic growth of the city.

New logic for Familial Mobility

Within a domestic production mode related to self-sufficient economies, and characterized by the absence of accumulation of exchangeable goods and possessions on the part of social units, the mobility of individuals or the redistribution of dependants, particularly children, between households give a better balance between productive and unproductive individuals within a domestic group. This also leads to a more equalized repartition of children to be brought up between the women.

The adoption of children favoured the permanence of the links between production and reproduction "by a manipulation of parental relationships". Thus, the reassigning of individuals became customary practice in function of the requirements in agricultural production and domestic consumption (Meillassoux, 1975, p. 194). This mobility used to occur in a confined social circle which was spatially restricted and resulted in a very low socio-economic mobility.

When these societies found themselves confronted by, then integrated into a commercial economy rural or urban, the assigning of agricultural labour became less of a worry as it was possible to get hold of non-local labour, particularly during the development of cash crop farming. But schooling and the opening of these societies towards modern activities reactivated family mobility, which then acquired a more marked spatial and socio-economic component (Quesnel, Vimard, op. cit.). Particularly whilst directing the flux of

(14) This is a particularly innovative practice compared to a traditional society in which children were most commonly entrusted to uncles. The influence of the lowering of mortality can be seen, which in prolonging life spans of older people, allows children to benefit from the presence of their grandparents during a large part of their growing-up years. However, a certain weakening in traditional links between collaterals seems to emerge here; of particular note is that the close family's possessions have a tendency to be handed down more and more in direct line (from father to son), and no longer from uncle to nephew, as is the case in the Akan traditional matriarchal society.

children from rural areas towards the cities, this mobility became a force of economic and social promotion for children moving from one sphere to another. This type of phenomenon particularly influenced the evolution of the Akye society of Memni and Montezo; a large proportion of the population was able to integrate itself into modern activities and many of its number rose to high positions in the town and Public Administration. This promotion had repercussions on both biological and foster parents. This entire mobility of individuals and families intervened directly upon the reproduction of the society in that it obstructed the creation of barriers between classes or, at least, identical reproduction from one generation to the following; despite everything, and whilst allowing for the overexploitation of some young individuals, this practice contributed to a new and growing differentiation amongst social groups (Etienne, 1979).

Today, in the African societies most integrated into merchant economies, we witness, a total transformation of production and reproduction relationships; and a modification of social structures with, in particular, a differential accumulation of labour forces, of landed property, which has become a means of production, and of economic and political powers among families as well as among different social groups. Thus, not only does the movement of children occur within a larger area, but is also more fragmented and hierarchical among families bound by economic restraints and a growing social stratification. These transfers of children are an integral part of a general system of rights and obligations, but even if this

system is one of the building blocks of African societies, it has however been weakened during this period of prolonged deflation and structural adjustment which characterize African economies today (Mathieu, 1988).

This system has, in fact, reached its limits, because more and more households live above their means (costs induced by obligations are higher than actual salary revenues), and have had to adopt stringent measures which restrict possibilities of taking in persons not belonging to the close family circle (Le Pape, Vidal, 1986). The equitable repartition between producer and consumer is especially important for families living in precarious conditions. As class barriers have become more rigid socio-economic mobility is more limited and therefore, a less powerful incentive for children's mobility as well (Etienne, 1987). Today, this definitely depends more on external pressures: on one hand, the concentration of economic activities and infrastructures in certain localities in the country, and on the other, the growing inequality among social groups, which provokes an increasing instability of family organization in certain populations. Consequently, one can consider, more and more, that the requirements for future "placing" of children in different spheres of activities geographically and economically defined; reorientated to interdependency between cities and country and to the emergence of new modes of family structures - in response to the destabilization of families today - will orient the exchange of children in different areas: these phenomena being able to act simultaneously.

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