Family values, land sales and agricultural commodification in Ghana

Valeurs familiales, ventes de terre et marchandisation de l'agriculture au Ghana

Kojo Sebastian Amanor

Institute of African Studies

University of Ghana

Legon

Abstract

This paper examines the impact of recent structural changes within the agricultural economy on youth. It is argued that an understanding of the position of youth in the farm economy requires a historical analysis of the incorporation of agriculture into the world economy, the various political alliances in the context of rural administration, and labour policies. Inability to guarantee youth land in exchange for their labour contribution to the family farm, and processes of expropriation to further accumulation have resulted in a perilous state for many youth. They have no secure access to land or a livelihood.

Résumé

Cette analyse se concentre sur le processus de changement structurel dernier dans l'économie agrarie parmi la jeuneusse. La comprehésion de la position de la jeunesse dans l'économie agarie demande un analyse historique de l'incorporation de l'agriculture dans l'économie mondialle, des diverses alliances politiques dans le contexte de l'administration rurale, et la politique de travail. L'incapacité de guarantir a la jeunesse de la terre en échange pour leur travail dans les fermiers familiales, en plus les processus d'expropriation et accumulation ont amenés une situatione périlleuse pour beaucoup de jeunes qui n'ont pas l'accès a la terre ou le moyens d'existence.

Keywords   Family relations – youth -social differentiation - land alienation – conflicts – sharecropping – labour -agricultural commodification – land markets

In much of the literature on land in Africa, land is viewed as a sacred commodity, which is tied up with people's communal identity. Land is seen as communal property administered by chiefs on behalf of the whole community, including the interests of ancestors and of the unborn. In reality, in contemporary Africa, the young generation is increasingly finding it difficult to gain access to land and a right to land within their families. Land becomes increasingly commodified as a result of scarcity value, but more importantly as a result of the commodification of agriculture which results in social life becoming mediated by a number of transactions, including the purchase of seedlings and inputs and the hiring of labour. This paper examines the impact of the commodification of agriculture on land and the family, and the ways in which family relations are embedded within broader economic and socio-political processes.

In contrast with the idyllic view of land tenure, land transactions and the commodification of agriculture have a long history in many areas of West Africa. They became more common in the early part of the nineteenth century, when a number of agricultural commodities, such as groundnuts and palm oil began to be produced for European markets (Amanor, 1994; Manchuelle, 1997). This often involved movements of people into new frontier areas, the transaction of land, and complex labour arrangements - including slave and dependent labour - and evolving forms of metayage. These developments had considerable impact in the ways in which land was managed, controlled and transmitted to the next generation. To understand contemporary land relations, this paper places them within a historical context which traces the evolution of the modern forms. It focuses on the ways in which intergenerational relations are mediated by social differentiation, and the ways in which land is used to attract and control labour.

The export crop frontier

The export crop frontier began in the early nineteenth century in southeast Ghana, among the Krobo and Akuapem people. The nobility within these areas had extensive plantations of oil palm, which they farmed with slave labour (Amanor 1994). However, the slaves were incorporated into the families as family dependent labour, as junior lines of the lineage who worked the family land within rural areas. Among the Krobo, the wealthy oil palm producers emerged as secular chiefs replacing a theocratic ruling class in the nineteenth century. In the early nineteenth century the Krobo acquired land for expansion of palm cultivation through military means. By the mid century both Krobo and Akuapem were purchasing land from neighbouring Akyem chiefs, and gradually moving into adjacent land through land purchases arranged between chiefs and military generals (Amanor 1994).

In the late nineteenth century the export palm oil market collapsed. Petroleum had replaced palm oil as a flux in industrial production in Western Europe and West African palm oil had to compete against state estate production of palm oil in southeast Asia. Oil palm producers on the Gold coast looked for alternative agricultural export crops. Cocoa emerged as the most promising option and by the end of the century a major expansion into cocoa began. The enterprising farmers did not convert their old oil palm plantations into cocoa, since cocoa thrives in a moister environment, but purchased new lands in the moist forest areas of Akyem. The largest cocoa farmers in these early days were from the Aburi section of Akuapem (Hill 1993). The land purchasers had already accumulated considerable profits in their previous investments in oil palm and then in rubber collection and they used these profits to acquire land. The opening up of new frontier lands for cocoa often involved purchase of considerable tracts of land. The areas transacted were often situated in largely uninhabited wilderness areas (Hill 1993).

The land purchasers frequently consisted of a small number of business associates, who clubbed together to purchase the land. They were often related through marriage to sisters, which in a matrilineal system meant that the wife's children would inherit their brother (Hill 1963). The lands were subsequently divided among their relatives, including matrilineal kin and children. Sometimes labourers who had served them well in other areas were presented with a plot of land. However, the distribution of land was not equitable. The associates retained the larger portion of the land for themselves, and many matrilineal kin were awarded very small portions of land (Hill 1963). In the early days of cocoa farming, labour was a major constraint. The opening up of a new frontier required major investments in labour in forest clearance and creating the infrastructure of a new settlement. Rallying around a large pool of indigent labour served to create a labour force which the large land purchasers could be used in developing their plantations. The gift of small plots of land would have made the recipients dependent upon those who bestowed the land upon them. The large farmers could request help on their farms from those they had given land. The small plot farmers would also be forced to supplement their income by hiring out their labour. Several studies on cocoa farming reveal a marked differentiation in holdings. Using records of the Farmers Council for the 1963/64 season Beckman (1976) estimates that 10 percent of farmers marketed 50 percent of cocoa and that 50 percent of farmers only marketed 12 percent of the total cocoa. Similarly, using sales records of the cooperative societies. Hill (1956) shows that 18 percent of farmers marketed 43 percent of cocoa, while 53 percent of the farmers produced a total of 24 percent of the cocoa. Hill (1963) identifies a small class of "large farmer-creditors" who played an important part in financing cocoa and taking over second-hand lands or farms from farmers whose poverty forced them to pledge or sell their land
By the 1920s cocoa cultivation was flourishing and labourers began to migrate into the cocoa producing regions in Akyem. The first labourers were paid in cash. By the early decades of the twentieth century the most prevalent form of labour contract was the *nkotokoano* (sack filled to the brim) system, in which the migrant cocoa labourer was paid a fixed sum for every bag of cocoa harvested at the end of the season. During the 1920s the *abusa* caretaker or labourer system became popular, in which the labourer was paid one third of the harvested cocoa or one third of the proceeds

from the sale of the cocoa (Hill 1956). From the 1920s to the 1970s the dominant systems of remuneration for cocoa farm labour was the *abusa* labourer system and the annual labourer system. The annual labourer was paid a fixed amount at the end of the harvest season. During the farm season they were provided with land on which they could grow food, food, pocket money and clothes by the farm owner. In addition to farm work they carried out several errands around the house for the farmer, such as fetching water (Adomako-Sarfoh, 1974; Addo, 1972).

The early cocoa farmers who had invested in land where followed by migrants from the same areas in the southeast who did not have sufficient money to purchase land. They entered into share contacts with the landholding chiefs in Akyem. Prior to their migration into the Akyem area, the Akyem chiefs lacked the labour with which to enter into cocoa farming. Recognising the value to be gained in cocoa, they entered into share contracts with these less wealthy migrants. The migrants were allocated land to transform into cocoa plantation. The cocoa plantations they created were shared between the tenants and the chiefs, with the tenants taking a third share of the plantation as their own and the chiefs retaining a two thirds share. Alternatively, the contract would involve the migrant creating a plantations and maintaining it afterwards in which case the tenant would receive two thirds of the proceeds and give one third of the proceeds to the chiefs. Chiefs became heavily involved in cocoa production.

During the 1920s there was an influx of long distance migrant labourers, mainly from Upper Volta (Burkina Faso), Niger and Mali, who were forced to migrate to meet tax obligations. The Gold Coast cocoa industry became a magnate for these migrants, since the remuneration for labour was often higher than in the French colonies (Skinner, 1965). These migrants usually came for a minimum of a year before returning home. Others remained working in the cocoa economy. These migrants were associated with the rise of the *abusa* caretaker system and the annual labourer. The northern migrant usually started off as an annual migrant. When they became settled within the cocoa district they began to work as *abusa* tenants.

The rise of migrant labour into the cocoa belt facilitated the rapid alienation of land and accumulation of cocoa plantations. Migrant farmers reinvested their profits in farm expansion and the purchase of new land within the forest zone. The frontier swiftly moved throughout the high forest zone into Asante, the Ahafo area and the Western Region, until no new frontier districts remained. Land was rapidly alienated to migrant farmers or placed under sharecrop tenancies. Hunter (1963) estimated that 98 percent of the land in the New Suhum district was worked by migrant farmers who had either purchased the land or were working it on share tenancies. A similar phenomenon has been reproduced in the Western Region where migrant cocoa farmers are dominant in the rural settlements (Boni, 2005).

The rapid expansion of cocoa farming led to a distinct organisation of the expansionary farm enterprise. The family deployed most of its young men in the new frontier districts where they were involved in the heavy work of converting forest into cocoa plantation. Wealthy land purchasers would place sons and nephews in these new frontier areas. For the efforts they would be awarded with cocoa farms in the future which could be presented to them as gifts or as an inheritance. Cocoa farmers supplemented the labour of their kin with hired migrant labour. The old established plantations, where work was much less intensive, were placed under elderly *abusa* caretakers and old family dependent labour to work. The farmers concentrated their main family labour force in the new frontier zones were they were establishing new cocoa plantations and supplemented their work with hired labour. This strategy minimised the capital outlays of cocoa farmers in production and enabled profits to be rapidly reinvested in new land and the creation of new plantations.

Migrant expansionary farmers, who Hill (1963) identifies as capitalist farmers, were the dominant social force influencing the evolution of the cocoa industry. However, they were not the only type of cocoa farmers. In many settlements cocoa was taken up by peasant farmers who farmed on the small-scale and who did not move in search of land. The migrant frontier transformed the lives of these farmers, since it resulted in processes of rapid land alienation to migrants within adjacent lands to their settlements, which subsequently created land hunger for the local citizens who could no longer expand into uncultivated land.

The declining frontier

By the late 1970s and early 1980s the process of frontier development began to decline as uncultivated frontiers became exhausted. This transformed the nature of production and the involvement of family members. In the expansionary phase of pioneer development land was readily available and labour was scarce. Land was used to attract labour, and labour rewarded with future grants of land. However, as land became increasingly scarce family members could no longer be guaranteed access to land, and close kin began to compete for land. Among the matrilineal Akan, land purchasing cocoa farmers had frequently allocated cocoa farms to their sons, nephews, and wives in recognition of services rendered in creating cocoa farms. From fieldwork based in the 1920s and 1930s, Field (1948) records that fathers regularly provided sons, daughters and wives with farms. The heirs of the local cocoa farmer were:

> usually nephews belonging to his own *abusua* [matrilineage], but he can and is expected to give cleared land to his sons, daughters and wife. Such gifts must be sealed with rum in the presence of witnesses, and then remain the property of the recipients and their successors or legatees (Field 1948:72).

One of Field's informants described the process through which land was allocated to wives:

> A husband may give his wife a farm for herself and then the profits are hers entirely, but when he gives her the farm she must give him rum before witnesses as a sign that the farm is now hers. Then, even if there is a divorce, the farm remains hers. But if there is no rum put on the gift the farm is the husband's to farm and it stays with him if there is a divorce (Field 1948:69).

This institution is known as the gift (*akyede*), and represents a mode of transferring land to close non-matrilineal relatives, who have helped or "served" the farmer.

By the 1950s the situation seems to have been transformed, and the right of women to farm land from their husbands was no longer assured. In interviews with women cocoa farmers at Asafo and Maase in Akyem, conducted by Hill (1959) the women were insistent that they had made the cocoa farms in their own right and that their husbands had not given them any help in acquiring land and coco farms.

By the 1970s Okali (1983) records bitter disputes between wives, children and their husband's matrikin over land. She describes how wives frequently worked on the cocoa farms of their husbands with the implicit understanding that they will be rewarded in future with a gift of cocoa plantation. This frequently involved a relationship based on long term reciprocity, since cocoa plantation development is a slow and long term process. The cocoa farmers were often much older than their wives. There were several cases where they died before the cocoa plantations had been fully established, and before they had made a formal gift of some of the farm to their wives and children. This often results in bitter disputes between children, wives and matrikin, and those who have invested their labour in cocoa development often found their rights to land usurped by matrikin. Okali (1983) records that wives would frequently make demands on husbands to grant them farms, and when this was rejected divorce could ensue. One son, who had managed his father's cocoa plantations only to find himself displaced by his father's matrilineal heir, bitterly declared: "If you follow your father you are a fool" (Okali 1983: 107). Wary of working for their fathers only to be displaced by matrilineal kin, many sons abandon their father's cocoa farms when they see other relatives treated more favourably than them. However, the same fate may also befall nephews, who worked on their uncle's plantations only to find themselves displaced from inheriting the land by junior brothers of their maternal uncle.

In this situation, youth increasingly withdrew their labour from their family farms. However, other avenues for participation in the farm economy were blocked by the large number of migrant labourers who worked as annual labourers and sharecrop tenants. Thus, threat of withdrawal of labour merely ended in the replacement of family youth by migrant tenants. If the youth sought to gain income by working as wage labour or as sharecrop tenants, they had to compete against migrant labourers who were usually more willing to accept lower remuneration and bear lower standards of living. This led to increasing enmity between the local youth and migrant labour that became manifest in the late 1960s.

The decline of the cocoa frontier in Ghana in the late 1960s was reflected in a slump within the cocoa sector which affected the whole economy. In government circles this economic crisis was increasingly blamed on the large number of West African migrants within the Ghanaian economy, many of whom had originally migrated into the cocoa sector but had since moved into petty trading. In a wave of xenophobia an Aliens Compliance Order was declared in 1969 which gave migrants without work permits two weeks within which to leave Ghana. While the expulsions were largely directed at the informal sector and petty traders, they spread into the rural areas. In a *Daily Graphic* report of 28th January 1970, the MP for Atwima Amansie, Mr Kofi Gyemfi, reported that the Aliens Compliance Act was:

> being misapplied by some unscrupulous people in the rural areas….. Mr Gyemfi said he had received complaints from some farmers that there were people going around the villages asking farm labourers to leave the country. As a result many labourers have left for their countries and this has put some farmers in a difficult position (Daily Graphic 28 January 1970 "Police probe Aliens Bribe Report).

Adomako-Sarfoh (1974) further reports that following the overthrow of the Busia government, there were attempts by the National Redemption Council to encourage migrant Sahelian labour back into the country. However, these moves were rejected by rural youth who demonstrated against the return of the migrant labourers.

These desperate policies inflamed the crisis within the cocoa economy. The decline of the cocoa frontier in Ghana and the problems of rehabilitating old cocoa resulted in increasing reluctance of migrant labour to work within old frontier districts. Many of the migrants within Ghana thus looked for alternative opportunities to the declining cocoa sector, which had once been the magnate for migration. Those working within the cocoa industry were more attracted to the Côte d'Ivoire where new frontier land remained and policies were introduced by the government to give migrants access to land on favourable terms, which was more attractive than sharecrop labourer - which was often the lot of the Sahelian migrant within Ghana. Thus, by the early 1970s Sahelien migrants had relocated to Côte d'Ivoire, which now became the largest cocoa producer in the world.

The ejection of Sahelian migrant labour opened up new avenues for youth to work as farm labourers and as sharecroppers. Without access to migrant labour, cocoa farmers became increasingly dependent upon local youth, who replaced migrant labour as the dominant farm labour during the 1970s. Within old cocoa producing districts there were often shortfalls of labour for cocoa rehabilitation, which requires much labour. During the 1970s labour became a major problem in old cocoa districts. Writing in this period Boateng comments (1974;202):

> The problem of weeding old cocoa farms could be solved if labour was readily available, in the old cocoa area. Since most farms are small and do not yield much, share crop labourers are rarely attracted. Most of the farmers, in addition, do not feel that they can afford to pay annual labourers because of the low yield. A few of the rich farmers who employ annual labourers in the pioneer areas draft some of them to clear the old farms, but the percentage of such farmers according to the survey is small. The problem of labour hinges on the fact that the youth in the area are not interested in farming and cannot be absorbed into the rehabilitation programme. It is disturbing to see many able-bodied young men roaming about in the settlements while farmers cry for labour.

By the 1970s the pioneer phase of cocoa had exhausted itself. Cocoa farmers found it increasingly difficult to reward children and other dependents who worked for them with land or farms. The major work which existed in cocoa was rehabilitating old cocoa plantations. However, this was an arduous, expensive and risky undertaking. Cocoa rehabilitation was often painfully slow, since there was a high rate of failure in replanting. International prices for cocoa were often low in this period, since production in Côte D'Ivoire and Malaysia was still expanding on new frontier land. The prices paid for coca did not reflect the cost of production and farm maintenance in old pioneer zones. In many cases farms were converted from cocoa into food crops. The decline of the pioneer frontier had undermined the strategies for accumulation within the cocoa belt.

With lack of access to family youth labour and increasing scarcity of migrant labour, farmers found it increasingly expensive to meet the labour demands of farm maintenance. Those farmers who could not afford to hire sufficient labour were forced to release their land to sharecroppers. Increasingly a large proportion of youth gained their land through sharecropping rather than through their families. The potential returns from sharecropping also influenced farmers in allocating land to children. In many instances the returns from sharecropping were valued more highly than giving out land to children. In one instance, out of sight, I overheard the following exchange between a Krobo father and son.

> **Son**: Papa, the land you have given me to farm is useless. It is not fertile at all. Its all covered with *Jus* [a problem weed which indicates poor soil] .
>
> **Father**: Yes, but you never think to send me anything better. How many years have you be farming here? And what crops have you sent to me? Don't you know that I also have to eat from the land? Because of that I have been forced to look for someone to come and farm the land on a sharecrop contract. If you want another plot then you will have to take it on a share basis.

Son: Papa, that is not right. I am your son, so how can you give me a land on sharecrop basis.

Father: Yes and I am your father so you should have been sending me something, which you never did.

Son: It's not right. If that is the case then I am leaving and going to my mother's people.

The conversion of land from cocoa to annual food crops has the effect of devaluing land. A cocoa plantation is regarded as a capital asset, which can be used as collateral or as a form of inheritance (*agyapade*), which attracts labour to work within the lineage in return for future remuneration in cocoa farms. A cocoa plantation brings security of land ownership, since the capital and labour invested in creating it cannot be disputed. An annual farm creates no such value and stores no capital value for future generations and for the lineage. Thus, with the conversion of cocoa plantations into food farms, the lineage elders become concerned with finding individuals who will continue to invest in the creation of capital in the form of plantation on the land. Within the matrilineal system, wealthy individuals are concerned that their children should also be able to benefit from their investments, particularly when they help them in farming. They want to be able to make secure promises of land in future, both as a matter of pride and as a way of encouraging their children to be with them and help them in their farming ventures. These concerns lead to farmers gaining land from their matrilineage for their children on a sharecrop basis, rather than trying to "gift" the land to their children. The matrilineage may also offer land on a sharecropping basis to wealthy sons of matrilineal members to develop. The sharecropping terms offered are usually more favourable than the normal "market" arrangement. Thus, the dominant sharecropping arrangement is based on a half share between landlord and tenant, but sons of matrilineal relatives may be offered a two thirds share for themselves.

Sharecropping tenants can often be wealthy farmers. For instance, in the Akyem settlement of Ntoronang, Nana Frimpong Manso, is the *abusuahene* (land administrator) of his matrilineage. He controls over 100 acres of matrilineal land which he shares with his three sisters. His father also left him 40 acres of land at Kodobeda. But this land is farmed on a crop share basis, since he has no direct right to the land in the matrilineal system. He has planted 30 acres of cocoa and 2.5 acres of oil palm on this land. After 10 years of establishing the plantation he will begin to pay a third share to his father's matrilineage. He intends to pass on the plantation to his sons who will continue to pay the third share to the landowners. On his matrilineal land he has given out 60 acres, 40 acres, and two 10 acres plots to tenants on a half share crop basis. He has chosen to develop most of his plantations on his father's land under a sharecrop arrangement and give out his matrilineal land to tenants. Such arrangements are likely to be common, since individuals are more likely to gain sharecropping land when young and accede to family head with control over land latter in life. As a result, the plantations they develop are more likely to be on the sharecropped land than on family land. The sharecropped land is also more secure and less open to conflicts than the family property (Amanor 1991).

The impact of agricultural modernisation

The cocoa frontier has expended itself, but new opportunities for other crops have opened up. Most notably, has been the development of agribusiness during the 1970s. In the forest zone the most significant agribusiness crop has been palm oil. In the 1960s a technical infrastructure for modern hybrid oil palm cultivation was created in the Akyem area, focused on the Oil Palm Research Institute at Kusi. State oil palm plantations were also developed in the area.

In 1975, the Ghana Oil Palm Development Corporation was created, a joint government and World Bank agribusiness scheme with outgrowers. The site selected for the project was in the Kwae area and involved the expropriation of 9,000 hectares of land which were being farmed by about 7,000 farmers. The government approached the Okyenhene, the paramount chiefs of Akyem Abuakwa, and the Okyenhene identified the Kwae area as a suitable site under his jurisdiction for the development of the oil palm project. Having gained the support of the local chiefs in the areas the government preceded with expropriating the land. The farmers were only to be paid compensation for the crops on the land, since according to customary land law they only had rights of usufruct to the land. Only farmers who could produce land title deeds were paid compensation for their land. Since farmers were not in the habit of registering their land this in effect meant that no farmers got compensation for land. No provisions were made to provide the expropriated with alternative land. However, 200 farmers were incorporated into the project as "smallholders". The smallholders were provided with 20 acres (8 hectares of land) of which they had to place 7 hectares under oil palm, which they had to produce according to conditions laid down by the company and sell to the company. The smallholders have been resettled on 1,051 hectares of land. A nuclear plantation with a processing mill occupies 3,500 hectares. The project has not been able to use 4,400 hectares of the concession, since several of the communities have refused to vacate their land (Amanor 1999). The project also encourages outgrowers to take up oil palm production, and currently outgrowers provide the company with palm fruits from around 13,000 hectares of their own land. Since 1994 the project has been privatised and CIAT of Belgium owns 60 percent of equity.

Outgrowers are provided with loans in kind, seeds, inputs and money for the hiring of labour. Compound interest is charged on these loans and taken from the farmers in fruits. The deductions from the harvest can account for about 20 percent of the farmer's harvest over a 20 year period. This is largely viewed by farmers as a variant of a share contract, in which the company takes a share for its provision of seedlings. The outgrower contracts give GOPDC the right to purchase the whole oil palm harvest from farmers at prices it determines, and the right to take over the farm and manage it until it recovers its loans if the outgrower fails to honour the contract. Farmers wishing to use some of the oil palm fruits for domestic consumption are supposed to apply for a permit. The price paid by GOPDC to farmers is often below the local market price for palm oil. As a result of this many of the outgrowers are unhappy with the outgrower contract and often divert supplies of oil to the local market. Many farmers are now reluctant to become outgrowers and look for ways of establishing their own independent plantations. The capital for acquiring seeds and inputs are often the major constraint.

The creation of GOPDC has radically transformed the agrarian landscape in Akyem. The appropriation of land has created a large dispossessed class. Within the towns immediately surrounding the plantation many of the youth are unemployed and disaffected. Many of them make their living by raiding the nuclear estate of palm fruits during the night, and women folk who no longer have access to land for food production often process the palm fruits into oil. Youth also work as farm labourers or hire sharecrop land.

This availability of labour has transformed farm production. It enables farm owners with capital to hire labour to work their land, or give out their land to sharecrop tenants. In many of the settlements around the plantations many farms are now been developed into independent palm plantations. Farm owners without capital give out land on a sharecrop basis to tenants who lack land but have capital to invest in plantation. The plantation that the tenant creates is usually divided into half, and the landlords choose the half they prefer. Each works their plantation individually. The tenant retains the plantation for as long as the trees continue to bear fruit, which with oil palm can be up to about 30 years.

Children wishing to create oil palm plantations on matrilineal family land or the land of their fathers are usually denied land freely. The elders argue that since the plantations take land out of the family pool for cultivation it is unfair for family land to be used for tree crop production. Those wishing to produce tree crops thus are forced to negotiate with their extended family, to provide the family elders with a share of the proceeds of the plantation or to seek to establish their oil palm plantations on sharecrop land.

Growing demand for plantations has resulted in a heavy demand for sharecropping land in the Kwae area. In a survey carried out at Mamanso (Amanor, 2001) 65 percent of plots were leased on sharecrop arrangements. Nearly 70 percent of farmers had land they had acquired on a sharecrop arrangement. Sharecropping is thus becoming the dominant land relationship. There is intense competition for sharecrop land and it is increasingly becoming difficult to acquire sharecrop land. In this situation family members are now requesting sharecrop land from close kin, because they cannot get access to land elsewhere. To ensure that sharecropping land goes to the wealthy farmers who can invest in plantation development, the transaction costs for acquiring sharecropping land have increased. Before a sharecrop arrangement can be concluded, the prospective tenant has to present some drink and make an *aseda* payment to the landowner or the family head (*abusuahene*). This has to be made in front of witnesses who also collect a witness fee. This fee frequently cannot be met by the poor. At Mamanso, we met a woman who had recently returned with her husband. They left many years ago but encountered many problems and were having difficulty in making ends meet. They decided to return home and take up food crop farming. The woman approached her family head for land, but was not given any land. She appealed to her father, who approached his lineage head. Her father's family offered to give her some land on *abunu* (half share) basis. But before she can be given the land she has to make an *aseda* payment of ¢150,000. She and her husband could not raise the money. As a consequence they cannot get access to land from their relatives, *even* on a sharecrop basis. Thus, the present generation is in danger of losing its rights to land and a livelihood, and these rights are now being mediated by market forces. The *aseda* payment seeks to exclude the rural poor from agriculture, and attempts to ensure that those engaging in agriculture are investing in the process of wealth accumulation. It ensures that the tenant farmer is not going to produce subsistence crops for division with the landlord, but that landlords and family elders will get their hands on a share of valuable plantation. New investments in agriculture are redefining the family, its land, social solidarity and the redistribution of wealth. As one farmer summed up these developments: "All idle land is being put to good use."

Conclusion

The transformation of agriculture and development of agricultural modernisation is resulting in a complex process of social differentiation, in which land is increasingly finding its way into the hands of a wealthier stratum of middle income farmers, and the rural poor are increasingly excluded from participation in agriculture and falling into an underclass with an extremely uncertain future. This process of expropriation and accumulation is largely invisible since it is being carried out within the structures of families and lineages, which are responding to the increasing commodification of agriculture and life which result from contemporary policies. This process of accumulation and appropriation is often promoted by neoliberal policy analysts as the successful face of smallholder agriculture, and these processes are heralded as successful examples of equitable development. However, there is a dark and disturbing side to these currents, which creates a lot of misery and insecurity for a large section of the youth of today who have a very uncertain future in the rural areas.

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