

30 March 2011

Dear members of the Board of Directors of AEGIS,

The sub-committee for the selection of the Gerti Hesseling prize winner 2011 is pleased to inform you that the following article was chosen:

Amanor, Kojo Sebastian, 'Family values, land sales and agricultural commodification in south-eastern Ghana', *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 80(1), 2010, pp. 104–125

This article analyses the expansion of export agriculture over southern Ghana (then Gold Coast), with regard to long-term changes within the family structures and networks involved. The author offers a model of the effects that the availability of land had on families over the past 150 years. His interpretation sheds light on the contradictions between the employment of family members during this process and the settlement of workers on dependent farms; the conflict, in the Akyem case, between a matrilineal family structure and the attempts of fathers to organise the access to heritage for their own sons, daughters, or brothers; finally, the complexities of intergenerational struggles that had their own dynamics in this context. While Amanor demonstrates a process of commodification, he holds, against the dominant thrust of neo-liberal economic analyses, that this process relies more on sharecropping and a redefinition of the use of agricultural labour, and less on an intensification of private land ownership.

The author makes an important theoretical contribution to scholarly analyses of agricultural expansion. The paper is grounded in the relevant academic literature, and draws on long-term fieldwork in addition to being historically informed. The theoretical points made on the role of social relationships in the dynamics of agricultural expansion and land tenure are applicable in broader contexts. This study therefore delivers an outstanding contribution to current debates on land, land-holding and access, and the broader issues of rural development.

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