

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-56683

Title: Customary land system and security modes in the communes of Nikki and Tchaorou in Northern Benin

Recommendation:

Accept as it is
Accept after minor revision.....
 Accept after major revision
 Do not accept (*Reasons below*)

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓,		
Techn. Quality		✓,		
Clarity	✓,			
Significance	✓,			

Reviewer Name: Dr Abdul Haseeb Mir

Detailed Reviewer's Report

The article titled "Customary land system and security modes in the communes of Nikki and Tchaorou in Northern Benin" provides a sophisticated and timely empirical analysis of the shifting paradigms of land governance in a region defined by high demographic pressure and evolving agricultural practices. The manuscript is well-positioned to contribute to the broader discourse on West African land tenure by bridging the gap between traditional lineage-based structures and the emerging "contractualization" of land rights. The author's use of the Collective Survey Method for Identifying Strategic Groups and Conflicts (ECRIS) is a methodological strength, allowing for a nuanced exploration of the lived experiences of 160 diverse stakeholders, including indigenous leaders, migrant farmers, and women. This qualitative depth, reinforced by quantitative binary logistic regression, provides a holistic view of how social variables like age and gender continue to dictate land security despite the presence of formal legal frameworks.

A primary contribution of this work is the documentation of the "silent reshaping" of land rights among younger generations. The data effectively demonstrates a significant demographic transition: while inheritance remains the dominant mode of access for those over 60, younger farmers under 40 are increasingly pushed toward precarious lending or rental arrangements. This finding is crucial for understanding the future of agricultural productivity and social stability in Benin. Furthermore, the analysis of "social proofs"—such as tree planting and symbolic

International Journal of Advanced Research

Publisher's Name: Jana Publication and Research LLP

www.journalijar.com

REVIEWER'S REPORT

construction as informal security strategies—offers a fascinating look at how rural actors navigate the gap between customary legitimacy and formal law. These "plant signatures" represent a form of hybrid tenure that is often overlooked in purely legalistic studies of land reform.

However, several areas require refinement to meet the rigorous standards of an academic journal. The manuscript would benefit from a more explicit connection between the empirical data and the broader theoretical debates regarding "top-down" versus "bottom-up" land formalization. While the author cites established scholars like Le Roy and Lavigne Delville, the discussion would be strengthened by an integrated analysis of how the findings in Nikki and Tchaorou specifically challenge or support existing models of hybrid land systems. For instance, the author should clarify whether the observed "social proofs" act as a functional bridge to formalization or as a defensive mechanism against it.

The statistical presentation also necessitates minor technical adjustments for better clarity. In the regression results, certain variables like "Instruction level" and "Exploitation level" show high p-values, indicating a lack of statistical significance. While the text acknowledges this, the summary tables should be more clearly labeled to distinguish between factors that have a statistically significant influence versus those that do not. Additionally, the binary logistic regression results would be more informative if they included Odds Ratios to provide a clearer picture of the magnitude of influence that gender and age have on access modes. Some of the verbatim excerpts, while highly illustrative, are somewhat repetitive; selecting the most impactful quotes and integrating them more fluidly into the narrative would enhance the professional tone of the manuscript.

The discussion of land conflicts between sociocultural groups, specifically the Bariba, Gando, and Fulani, is a compelling aspect of the paper that feels slightly underdeveloped. The manuscript notes that the proliferation of agricultural fences is endangering pastoral mobility and leading to the "privatization" of communal lands. Expanding on the specific role of the National Estate and Land Code or the Rural Land Plans in either mitigating or exacerbating these ethnic tensions would provide much-needed policy relevance. The conclusion correctly identifies that these tensions pose challenges to social cohesion, but it could be more

International Journal of Advanced Research

Publisher's Name: Jana Publication and Research LLP

www.journalijar.com

REVIEWER'S REPORT

prescriptive in suggesting how formal mediation mechanisms might better incorporate the "social legitimacy" identified in the study.

Finally, a thorough proofreading is required to correct minor typographical errors and ensure consistent formatting of citations. There are some inconsistencies in the years cited for certain authors and minor spelling issues in the figure captions. Ensuring that all figures and tables are sequentially numbered and clearly referred to in the text will improve the manuscript's overall quality. In summary, this article makes a significant contribution to the literature on land tenure by providing fresh empirical evidence from a region undergoing rapid change. It successfully captures the tension between deep-rooted customary practices and the inevitable shift toward contractual relations. Once the issues regarding statistical clarity, theoretical integration, and editorial precision are addressed, the manuscript will be an excellent addition to the journal.

I recommend the article for publication subject to these minor revisions.