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## **Marriage migrations, moral demands and natural resources in northwestern Benin**

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### **Abstract:**

This paper uses archival documents and interviews (held in 2012-13 with local farmers and migrants) to explain historical and current cross-border migrations of people from neighboring countries to North Benin. It then explains the types of historical and current social practices (conjugal desertions, exchanges, marriages, etc.) which are very often linked to the search for land; but which have largely dominated societies in this part of Benin and which are still developed by certain families because of tradition. Then the paper looks at the current social control mechanisms used by young girls (pregnancy, refusal to emigrate, etc.) in order to combat the practices of exchange, kidnapping and fugues which separate members of the 'the same family'. Finally, it shows that social and moral demands are sometimes at the heart of the issue of natural resources distributive justice before exploring how young women exercise social control over marriage practices by fighting against certain constraints (exile to have happiness) and defying social domination (the order pre-established by customs).