

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-55892

Title: Pratiques magiques et extraction de l'or sur le site artisanal de M'banga au Niger : quand le symbolisme guide les orpailleurs

Recommendation:

Accept after minor revision.....

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

Reviewer Name: Faheem Abdul Muneeb

Reviewer's Comment

This manuscript presents a detailed socio-anthropological study of magical and symbolic practices associated with artisanal gold mining at the M'banga site in Niger. Drawing on a mixed-methods approach combining questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and visual documentation, the paper analyses how symbolic systems, ritual practices, and beliefs structure the behaviour of gold panners in their pursuit of wealth and social prestige. The topic is highly relevant to African anthropology, mining studies, and development research, and the manuscript makes a valuable contribution by foregrounding the cultural logics that underpin artisanal mining beyond purely economic explanations.

Scholarly Contribution and Analytical Strength

A major strength of the manuscript lies in its rich empirical material and fine-grained description of ritual practices, including amulets, sacrifices, divinatory consultations, sexual rituals, and pacts with occult forces. The categorisation of actors (financeurs, creuseurs, manoeuvres, customary authorities) and their differentiated engagement with esoteric knowledge is analytically convincing. The study effectively demonstrates how gold functions not only as an economic resource but also as a powerful symbolic object associated with prestige, risk, morality, and social mobility. The integration of direct quotations and photographic evidence enhances authenticity and ethnographic depth.

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Methodology and Use of Data

The mixed methodological design is appropriate and well justified. The sample construction, combining quantitative surveys (131 respondents) with qualitative interviews and observation until data saturation, reflects methodological seriousness. The explicit calculation of sample size and the use of multiple theoretical lenses (actantial, hermeneutic, functional) strengthen the analytical framework. However, the manuscript devotes considerable space to methodological exposition and descriptive statistics. Some consolidation of tables, graphs, and repetitive explanations would improve clarity and analytical focus.

Discussion, Ethics, and Environmental Dimension

The discussion section is well supported by regional and comparative literature and successfully situates the findings within broader West African scholarship on orpaillage. The analysis of practices deemed contrary to social ethics, including sorcery, human sacrifice narratives, and exploitative sexual relations, raises important ethical and human rights concerns. The section on environmental impacts is particularly relevant, showing how ritual practices contribute to deforestation, pollution, and degradation of fragile Sahelian ecosystems. This dimension aligns the study with sustainable development and environmental governance debates.

Writing, Structure, and Presentation

While the manuscript is empirically strong, it is overly long and at times repetitive, particularly across the results and discussion sections. Several arguments and examples are reiterated with limited analytical progression. Language and formatting issues, including long paragraphs and minor grammatical inconsistencies, reduce readability. Editorial tightening and clearer signposting of core arguments would substantially strengthen the manuscript.

Final Recommendation

Overall, this is a rich, original, and methodologically sound study that makes a significant contribution to the understanding of artisanal gold mining as a socio-cultural phenomenon. With minor revisions focusing on condensation, analytical synthesis, and language refinement, the manuscript will be well suited for publication.

Decision: Accepted with minor revisions.

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