

When Women Defend the Patriarchal Family. An Historical Anthropology of Couple Relationships among Gécamines Workers, D.R.C.

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Based on ethnographic research, this paper aims at analyzing the history of gender relationship among Gécamines' workers in the Congolese copperbelt. This mining company is known for having imposed, during the colonial period, the model of the patriarchal monogamous family on its personnel. How the African men and women living in the company buildings re-appropriated this model? And how did their power relationship change with the dramatic decline of their living conditions in the last decades? As my data will show, women seem to have played a major role in the promotion, and then in the defence, of the patriarchal family. To put light on this apparent paradox, comparison will be drawn from the literature about gender, domesticity, and family dynamics in the Zambian copperbelt.