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male fields female agencies

An analysis of women's strategies in the demasculinization of cocoa fields in Cameroon

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Top left: Cocoa pods from Rachel's farm, Emini, Ayos, Cameroon.
Bottom right: Authentique, in her cocoa farm, Biwo, Ayos, Cameroon.

Any views expressed in this thesis are those of the authoress. They do not necessarily represent the views of Utrecht University or the institutions that collaborated in the research.

To my *boan, boan be bekal,* and *boan be bebedjan,*

with the hope that this will contribute to a fairer and more equitable world.

MALE FIELDS, FEMALE AGENCIES:

An Analysis Of Women's Strategies In The Demasculinization Of Cocoa Plantations In Cameroon.

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Abstract

Cocoa trees, a colonial crop nowadays very much embedded in global markets, is one of the very many hermaphrodite vegetable species. Ironically, the sociology around this cash crop has been very much shaped by gendered norms and power structures. Both economically and symbolically, cocoa farms have for a long time belonged to men—either European colonizers, or local men—while women provided their labor force. But recent changes in the global market, development policies, and understandings of gender systems are facilitating a flip in gender roles in the production and ownership of cocoa. This phenomenon has been observed in Cameroon, among other countries. However, some questions have not been explored enough in this new scenario. The questions this investigation seeks to explore are: How are Cameroonian women specifically managing to gain greater importance and stronger decision-making capacities in the production of cocoa? What can this process tell us about their agency in the demasculinization of cocoa fields? And how can we conceptualize this phenomenon without returning to the binary of resistance versus subordination? This research project aims at answering these questions on the basis of ethnographic research in conducted the commune of Ayos in Cameroon.

Keywords

Women's studies, Feminist theory, Postcolonial studies, Agency, Performativity, Intersectionality, Patriarchal bargains, Cocoa plantations, Cash crops, Forestland, Cameroon, Ethnography

Resumen (abstract in Spanish)

El cacao, un cultivo colonial hoy en día muy embebido en los mercados globales, es una de tantas especies vegetales hermafroditas. Irónicamente, la sociología entorno a este cultivo comercial está muy influenciada por las normas de género y las estructuras de poder. Tanto desde el punto de vista económico como simbólico, las plantaciones de cacao han pertenecido durante mucho tiempo a los hombres — ya sean los colonizadores europeos o los hombres locales — mientras que las mujeres proporcionaban su fuerza de trabajo. Pero los recientes cambios en el mercado global, las políticas de desarrollo y la comprensión de los sistemas de género están facilitando un cambio en los roles de género en la producción y propiedad del cacao. Este fenómeno se ha observado en Camerún, entre otros países. Sin embargo, en este nuevo escenario, muchas preguntas siguen sin responder. Esta investigación pretender dar respuesta a las siguientes preguntas: ¿Cómo están logrando específicamente las mujeres camerunesas ganar mayor importancia y mayores capacidades de toma de decisiones en la producción de cacao? ¿Qué nos puede decir este proceso sobre su agencia en la de-masculinización de los campos de cacao? ¿Y cómo podemos conceptualizar este fenómeno sin hacer uso da distinción binaria de resistencia versus subordinación? Este proyecto de investigación pretende responder a estas preguntas sobre la base de la investigación etnográfica realizada en la comuna de Ayos en Camerún.

Palabras clave

Estudios de las mujeres, Teoría feminista, Estudios postcoloniales, Capacidad de acción, Performatividad, Interseccionalidad, Negociaciones patriarcales, Plantaciones de cacao, Cultivos comerciales, Tierras forestales, Camerún, Etnografía.

Acknowledgements

> "But what is *nego-feminism*? First, *nego-feminism* is the feminism of negotiation; second, *nego-feminism* stands for 'no ego' feminism. In the foundation of shared values in many African cultures are the principles of negotiation, give and take, compromise, and balance. Here, negotiation has the double meaning of 'give and take/exchange' and 'cope with successfully/go around'."
> (Nnaemeka, Obioma 2004, 377-378)

A master thesis, or any research for that matter, is never a project for which we can claim to be the unique authors and creators. So, besides the fact that institutional requirements in the current world of knowledge production demand the research projects to be associated to a main author, the one who will take responsibility for the written words while benefiting from those results, it would be artificial for me to claim that this is *my* project. As a project that started in 2014 and, I hope, has not yet finished, I have given, taken, and exchanged with many people to get to this point. Whereas I would have preferred to include the names of all those people that have participated, I would need several pages; for the sake of form and brevity I include only an abridged list.

First of all, this research would not have been possible without the main actors, the women of Ayos, who let me discuss with them for hours and ask them numerous "*minsili*"[1]. I hope that this research will eventually also be useful for them. I would like to say thank you to IITA facilitators for guiding me, hosting me, and understanding that as a human being I also had my limitations. I am also grateful to local authorities and village leaders in Ayos for the assistance provided during my stay. I also thank IITA for the collaboration; Utrecht University, and the University of Granada for creating a space for feminist debates; and the European Commission for believing in such a project. I wish to thank both of my supervisors and all the other professors in Utrecht and Granada, as well as to my classmates and former colleagues, who reminded me once again that research is not a top-down process, but a process in which your peers are one of the pillars of knowledge production. Thank you to my friends and family, not only in Cameroon and Spain, but also those who are scattered over this globalized planet. Last but not least, I am indebted to all the feminist thinkers from different genders, races, nationalities, ages and historical periods, who have been fighting for and imagining the new world in which I was born.

[1] "Minsili" is the Yebekolo word for "question", something that I became known for, as I was constantly asking questions about everything.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1. Situating the research topic

Authors such as Emma Robertson (2009) and Stephanie Barrientos (2013) have exposed the recurring invisibilization of women's participation in the cocoa industry. Even if in recent years the amount of literature on women and cocoa has increased, most studies almost invariably invoke the figure of the female farmer as marginalized. There has nevertheless been an incipient attempt to provide a different perspective by authors such as Jean Marie Allman and Victoria B. Tashjian (2000), but many more studies are still needed from the perspective of women as active agents. In fact, the lack of documentation of women's involvement in cocoa production contributes to a collective imagination that reinforces the very marginalization that they supposedly experience. Furthermore, since cocoa is produced in countries of the Global South, both the existent available literature and the absence of studies with a focus on women's agency contribute to a representation of non-western women as "sexually constrained, (…), ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, religious, domesticated, family-oriented [and] victimized", as Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1988, 65) critiqued three decades ago. As Mohanty's work shows, this partial representation is not a new phenomenon, which makes the current gap an even more necessary focus for research.

This neglect of women's experiences both in western and southern-produced narratives inspired me to conduct my own research on the experiences of Cameroonian women. Given the apparent masculinity of cocoa in Cameroon, this study intends to provide an answer to three main questions: **how are Cameroonian women specifically managing to gain greater importance and stronger decision-making capacities in the production of cocoa? What can this process tell us about their agency in the demasculinization of cocoa fields? And how can we conceptualize this phenomenon without returning to the binary of resistance versus subordination?** In order to answer these main questions a number of sub-questions emerged during the research. Following Deniz Kandiyoti's (1988) argument that an understanding of women's bargaining needs to be situated within a temporally and geographically concrete patriarchal system, this thesis also has the purpose of clarifying: **what is the existent patriarchal system in Ayos? How and why was it constructed as such?** And **how and why has**

the ownership of cocoa been constructed as a masculine domain within that patriarchal system? This contextualization will allow me to describe a point of reference from which to explore a women's agency that has developed through time by seeking to answer the following sub-questions: **what have been the first cracks in the system, i.e. women who planted cocoa? How did the crack expand, i.e. how was the imaginary of a woman who can be a cocoa producer cited and transmitted? What is the current typology of women's cocoa ownership?** After giving an overview of the diverse bargaining strategies that appeared during the research I will concentrate on answering **how did women use the instruments of their oppression to access the masculine spaces that constitute the cocoa fields?** The understanding of their bargaining process will allow me to propose some ideas on elements that need to be emphasized in intersectionality debates as well as subject formations in Sub-Saharan Africa.

This thesis is presented in six chapters. *Chapter one* presents the research question and epistemological positioning of the research. This chapter also provides some background to the topic in the Cameroonian context. *Chapter two* explores previous studies on women and cocoa and the various theoretical positions with regards to the conceptualization of human agency from feminist perspectives. It then continues with a delimitation of the theoretical framework used in this research. In *chapter three, Telling tales,* I elaborate on the methodology, with a description of the ethnographical tools and protocol that I followed. Furthermore, I include some remarks on the writing style as well as a questioning of my own situatedness with regards to the research process, two points that have been recognized as important in feminist research. In *chapter four*, *Crafting Patriarchy*, I present Ayos' patriarchal system from the perspective of its dynamism and how it mediated in the construction of cocoa plantations as something pertaining to the masculine domain. This chapter pays attention both to the inner dynamics of ethnic groups in Ayos, as well as their contacts with the colonizing countries. *Chapter five*, *Cracking Patriarchy,* explores the stories of women's ownership of cocoa plantations from the colonial period to present. The chapter makes particular emphasis on the role that the first generation female planters had in buffering a complete masculinization of the cocoa plantations, building on Judith Butler's idea of the performative aspect of agency as something that implies "citationality" and repetition (Butler, Judith[2] 1993, 12). In this chapter, I will also explore some of the external elements that seem to have mediated in the proliferation of women-owners in

[2] I have decided to include the given name, at least at first appearance and in the end bibliography, in order to increase the visibility of female researchers. For more details consult the methodological chapter.

more recent decades. Finally, in *chapter six, Decolonial perspectives on agency,* after giving an overview of the diversity of women's practices, I summarize four specific contemporary cases that illustrate how women bargain with the very "instruments of their oppression" at the intra-household level (Boddy, Janice Patricia [1989] 2014, 345) to grant their access to the plantations. Furthermore, in this chapter I propose two angles from which to look at agency from a decolonial perspective by moving away from the binaries of resistance versus subordination, and autonomy versus dependency. For this, I consider some of the debates on intersectionality and subjectivity from the Sub-Saharan African perspective.

I show that the phenomenon of women owning cocoa plantations, as an alternative discourse to patriarchy, is not new and was present in Ayos since the 1930s. Such alternative discourse is increasingly common in Ayos, and whether markets and development institutions have mediated in that expansion, it would not have been possible without women's intra-household negotiations. The stories that I concentrate on focus on four patriarchal elements often critiqued as oppressive: polygamy, patrilocality, dowry and increased women's fertility. I discuss that women bargain with these aspects through an expression of agency that does not look either for subordination, resistance, autonomy nor co-dependence, but a combination of the four.

2. The cocoa landscape in Cameroon

Theobroma cacao is an evergreen tree species, commonly known as the "cocoa tree", that can only grow 20° north and south of the equator, with the greatest proportion of trees growing within 10°. Most of the production occurs from 30 to 300 meters above the sea level, although it is possible to find it up to 1200 meters (Cook, Leon Russell 1963). Because of its biological requirements, it is best produced in the lower canopy of tropical forests, which has made it the current dominant agricultural system of the forest margins (Mbile, Peter *et al.* 2009). Originally from Central America, it is now planted in Asia and Africa due to its expansion during colonization in the eighteenth century and a liberalization of the markets at the end of the twentieth century (Bagal, Monique *et al.* 2013, Moss and Badenoch 2009). Diverse studies indicate that the crop was introduced in Cameroon by the Germans during the nineteenth century, a few decades after the independence of most of Latin America when new land was needed for its farming, with the first production registered in 1890 (Binet, Jacques 1954, Delpech, Bernard 1980, Fule,

Chi Bemieh 2014). Currently, Cameroon is the fourth largest grower of cocoa in Africa and fifth largest worldwide (Afoakwa 2014), with cocoa representing its third main export.

In Cameroon, the crop is produced both in extensive systems and family farms, with the latter being the most common (Alt 1985, Bagal, *et al.* 2013). As of 2005, cocoa remained the main cash crop from which more than 75% of the population obtain their income (Nfinn, Tcharbuahbokengo 2005). Although generally managed by men, women have started playing a key role in recent years, constituting a "crack" in the status quo, and therefore a good setting for the study of women's agency and participation in masculinized places. This trend could be related to changes in the global markets, either as a result of international regulations that require gender-sensitive social standards or new marketing strategies[3], or as a result of the decrease in interest by men that followed the drop in cocoa prices. In the 1980s, the liberalization of international markets of staple commodities and the arrival of private companies on a global scale and the uprising of Asian production, caused a decrease in global cocoa prices (Alt 1985, Bopda, Athanase 1993). This decrease added to the already destabilized country due to internal crises (Santoir, Christian 1994). Prices dropped a second time in the 1990s in Cameroon in line with the liberalization process induced through the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs)[4] (Fonchingong, Charles 1999, Pedelahore, Philippe 2014). Although these SAPs were purportedly applied in response to the 1980s crises, they negatively affected the African smallholders producing cocoa according to Stephanie Barrientos (2014). Since then, the Cameroonian government has opted for a liberalization and minimal control of production prices and commercialization, as well as an association-based approach (Courade, Georges 2000, Bagal, *et al.* 2013). An increase of male migrants towards urban areas as a coping mechanism vis-à-vis the economic crisis opportunities could also be leaving a niche for women's activities in rural areas (Lele, Uma 1991). In either case, international dynamics seem to mediate in local patterns related to the involvement of women in agricultural production (Fonchingong 1999). In addition, several local and international organizations, like the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) are implementing activities that favor the implication of women along the cocoa value chain.

[3] See for example Barrientos (2014).

[4] According to Christina Gladwin (1991) SAPs were sets of economic policies designed to change the economic structure—i.e., the relative percentage of each sector—by a reduction of the role played by the state through a liberalization of the economies, an increase the food prices and interest rates and a devaluation of currencies.

Because of the particularities of cocoa production in Cameroon—namely, a crop grown in family owned smallholdings of forestland—numerous laws may mediate in the access that women might have to this type of cash-cropping. These include laws regulating access to land, forest resources and family relations within the civil and penal codes, among others. This overlapping is further complicated by the existence of international, national and customary laws, which in a landscape of continuous legislative changes may lead to legal inconsistencies among different laws (Cavalier, Georges 2007). Traditionally, the populations were more or less dynamic in their settlements and used rotational systems of land exploitation that included open-access systems and common property in the center, south and east of Cameroon (Weber, Jacques 1977, Diaw, Chimère 1997, Belobo Belibi, Marguerite *et al.* 2015). Both the expansion of cocoa and the infrastructural development during the colonial German regime perennially tied people to their lands, increasing the feeling of ownership (Weber 1977, Belobo Belibi *et al.* 2015). This ownership, rather than being distributed among the members of the family became highly masculinized. Currently, land property is regulated by government laws, customary rights and religious laws (Fonjong, Lotsmart et al 2010, Fonjong 2012). In general, land rights are very restricted for women, limiting their opportunities for cash crop productions, which they generally access through their male relatives. Nevertheless traditions vary across the more than 250 ethnic groups in Cameroon (Cavalier 2007). According to Fonjong (2012) and Fonchingong (1999), whereas statutory laws are gender neutral, its enforcement is highly biased towards male privilege and therefore in detriment of women's opportunities. As a result, women own only 10% of the land in Cameroon (Chan, Man-Kwun and Barrientos, Stephanie 2010). In addition, the government of Cameroon developed a Forest Law in 1994 as part of the SAPs, which further reduced the access to forestland privileging only a small educated male elite at the expense of women and other marginalized groups (Belobo Belibi *et al.* 2015, Tiani, Anne Marie *et al.* 2016).

In terms of women's rights in the public and private spaces, the Government of Cameroon has signed a series of international conventions among which the "Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women" (CEDAW), ratified in 1994 (Az, Jérémie 2011), and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (OP-CEDAW), ratified in 2005. Some of these conventions paralleled the emergence of a more active women's movement during the 1990s (Tripp, Aili Mari *et al.* 2009). Although the National Constitution does include a clause against the discriminations on the basis of gender, numerous laws remain either

gender-blind or gender-discriminative. Among other aspects, polygamy is recognized only in its polygynous[5] version (Atangana-Malongue, Thérèse 2006). Furthermore, the law on family organization establishes the husband as the family chief that "exerts his *power*" among other aspects in the choice of the family place of residence or even against the professional occupation of the wife (Atangana-Malongue 2006, 839, my translation; emphasis added). More importantly, although the wife does enjoy certain freedoms such as having her own profession and bank account, the family chief manages the properties of the family (Atangana-Malongue 2006). These legal disposition can be eased but can also be made more complicated by the coexistence of recognized customary law and state legislation. Inheritance, one of the main factors mediating access to cocoa plantations, varies according to gender, birth-order, and relation to the family chief, whether you are the widow, a child born within the marriage, outside the marriage or as a result of incest. Although there seems to be increasing recognition of girls' rights to inheritance in formal law (Atangana-Malongue 2006), customary rights oftentimes dominate in practice (Cavalier 2007). There have been, however, some initial changes towards more egalitarian regulations with the creation of a Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Family in 1997[6] (Az 2011), the celebration of International Women's Day since 1985, the preparation of a draft civil code (Atangana-Malongue 2006), and the approval of a new penal code in 2016.

All of these factors, including ecosystemic pre-requisites, colonial history, market trends and changes in legislation, have mediated in the opportunities for women's access to cocoa plantations. However, these elements cannot explain why the strategies that women elaborate are diverse and unique to each woman. Only an exploration of women's histories and discourses can elucidate the specific formations of agency and subjectivity that have led to the demasculinization of these spaces.

3. Epistemological positioning and significance

> "So we see Africans receiving, we see Africans who are limp with gratitude or limp with hunger, but we do not see Africans who act, although there are many who do." (Adichie, Chimamanda 2008, 45)

[5] Polygamy, which stands for "multiple marriages", comprises polygyny, the marriage of one man with several women, and polyandry, the marriage of one woman with several men.
[6] The ministry was first created as the "Ministry of the Feminine Condition" in 1997; its name was changed in 2005.

Since the 1980s, non-western, feminists of color and western feminist researchers and professionals have produced a considerable amount of literature on the need for a different epistemological and practical approach for feminist research in, and from, the Global South (Mohanty, Chandra Talpade 1988, Moser, Caroline 1993, Rahnema, Majid and Bawtree, Victoria 1997, Nussbaum, Martha 2000, Oyěwùmí, Oyèrónkẹ́ 2002, Mahmood, Saba 2004, Trinh, Minh Ha 1989, Kim, Hyun Sook 2007). As an example of this concern, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie wrote on her Transition article (2008) that "we see Africans receiving, we see Africans who are limp with gratitude or limp with hunger, but *we do not see Africans who act*, although there are many who do" (Adichie 2008, 45, my emphasis). With these lines, she intended to bring into attention a problem of representation of the African peoples in written production. She was not the first scholar to highlight this issue; two decades earlier Mohanty had also problematized the issue of analysis and representation of women in the Global South within the academic sphere:

> "It is in the production of this 'third-world difference' that western feminisms appropriate and colonize the constitutive complexities which characterize the lives of women in these countries. It is in this process of discursive homogenization and systematization of the oppression of women in the third world that power is exercised in much of recent western feminist writing, and this power needs to be defined and named" (Mohanty 1988, 63).

Even after forty years of debates, words such as "victim", "oppressed", "vulnerable", and "marginalized" continue dominating the discourse, especially when talking about African women not only in journal articles but also in NGO handbooks, briefs, and the mass media. This is not to say that these reports should be suppressed, as I am sure they bring necessary attention to important topics. However, the weight that these images have in our collective imagination need to be balanced with representations of another reality that also exists—that of the women who are agents of History, who make decisions, who inspire and who can act as role models and create new symbolic spaces. In other words, we need to use the potential of knowledge production as a tool for de-colonization (Loomba, Ania [1998] 2015, Grosfoguel, Ramón and Cervantes-Rodríguez, Ana María 2002, Kim 2007).

Studies like this contribute not only to the visibility of an existent presence of women in the cocoa sector, but due to the specific history of cocoa production this study speaks of a changing patriarchal system in which women have an *active* role. Furthermore, making this

reality visible might contribute not only to the decolonization of the cocoa plantations as such —since colonization played a role in the construction of cocoa plantations as masculine domains, as will be shown in chapter four—but also to the decolonization of an academic production that portrays a version of Sub-Saharan African women as backwards and in perpetual need of being saved from oppression. According Edward Said, the Western academy, far from being neutral, has often acted as a piece of the colonizing machine through a construction of the Orient—Global South in my case—as the feminine Other, read: different, eccentric, backwards, penetrable and in need for "Western attention, reconstruction, even redemption" (Said 1979, 206). Whilst my research certainly does not constitute a representative survey of women in Cameroon, it will put women at the forefront of its analysis. In portraying these women from the perspective of a situated sameness, and not as the Other, and as those who have the capacity to construct themselves without the necessary intervention of the West, I aim at contributing to Said's critique in a constructive manner. Furthermore, to the extent possible I have established a dialogue with female feminist authors who either have close links or are original from the Global South.

However, when approaching women's experiences from their creative and agential facet it is not uncommon to receive questions such as the one I was asked by one of my colleagues during my stay in Cameroon: "What is the *robustness* of a research that concentrates only on women's strengths [thus leaving aside their weaknesses]?[i][7]" (Fieldnotes, Yaounde, April 2017). To this kind of objection I have two replies. First, I do not intend by any means to leave the analysis of women's vulnerability aside. However, this vulnerability does not constitute my starting point of analysis. Instead I start from women's capacities to find solutions to problems that concern them in a particular social context. Within such an investigation, the analysis of vulnerabilities will necessarily emerge then as the flip side of women's strengths. Furthermore, rather than claiming to perform the "God-trick"—the capacity to see everything from every angle, or actually from no angle at all—(Harding, Sandra 1993, 57) I acknowledge that insofar as I am concerned with very specific case-studies from the perspective that I have described above, the knowledge here produced remains situated and objective.

[7] I have included the original of every direct quotation from interviews and fieldnotes in annex 2. Every quote can be tracked following the roman numbers.

Second, I agree with Sandra Harding's idea that a research is only robust enough—to retake my colleague's term—when it ensures a "strong objectivity", which is generally not achieved in traditional scientific research[8]. For Harding (1993, 69) "strong objectivity requires that the subject of knowledge be placed on the same critical, causal plane as the objects of knowledge". According to Harding this is achieved through a systematic scrutiny not only of the context of justification, but also of the context of discovery—which in my particular case I have described in the above paragraphs. Furthermore, Harding highlights that strong objectivity "requires what we can think of as 'strong reflexivity'" (ibid. 1993, 69). In my particular case this strong reflexivity implies thinking of how my positionality as a transnational feminist has mediated in the research process—task which I aim to tackle, at least in part, in the methodological section covered in chapter three. I would like thus to finalize by re-emphasizing that insofar as I have put all methodological proceedings within my reach to situate my own process of knowledge production, this research is indeed robust and strongly objective.

[8] According to Harding (1993, 54) "knowledge claims are always socially situated, and the failure by dominant groups critically and systematically to interrogate their advantaged social situation and the effect of such advantages on their beliefs leaves their social situation a scientifically and epistemologically disadvantaged one for generating knowledge".

Chapter Two: Debates on women in the cocoa sector and human agency

Literature review & theoretical framework

The following chapter is an exploration of how different studies have approached the participation of women in the cocoa sector, principally in Cameroon, but also in other countries among which Ghana stands out. Departing from the limited amount of studies that focus on women's agency in cocoa production, I further elaborate on a perspective of agency that can be useful for the case I am concerned with. For this I build on previous theories of agency, with the help of an intersectional understanding of the subject and a definition of what constitutes strategies in this context. The three elements of the theoretical framework: agency, intersectionality and women's bargains, are very much influenced by postcolonial theories.

1. Women and cocoa production

Despite the Central-American origins of cocoa, the first literature on women's participation in cocoa production was produced with a focus on Cameroon and Ghana around the 1960s (Binet 1956, Binet and Deschamps 1956, Binet 1959, Hill, Polly 1958). This first wave of studies paid attention to the productive and reproductive roles of women within the economy. From this perspective women were regarded more as potential elements of economic development than as subjects embedded in networks of power within which they had to negotiate. Nevertheless, there was an incipient interest in the understanding of the constraints and cultural environments in which women from the cocoa production area lived (see Binet 1956). Most likely such studies were triggered more by the interest that both Ghana and Cameroon played in the economy of the Metropolis, than by a concern with the wellbeing of Cameroonian and Ghanaian women. It is also perhaps because of this that we can appreciate a break in the studies during the first decade of the post-independence period in the 1970s.

The last decades of the twentieth century witnessed a series of political movements and actions that may be behind the second and third waves of studies focusing on women in the cocoa sector during the 1980s and 2000s. During the 1980s, a number of African countries applied SAPs, purportedly to tackle their economic crises, with direct implications in the livelihoods of women (Gladwin, Christina 1991). Concurrently, political

and theoretical feminist movements that were highly productive during the 1970s seemed to start witnessing their fruits across the Globe[9]. It is probably in view of this fertile environment that the study of women in the cocoa sector gained a renewed interest, albeit still highly centered on the economy. During this second wave of studies, a series of authors started alluding to issues of property rights and time allocation, as well as intersectionality by including axes such as class and ethnicity, even if not in overwhelming numbers[10]. In Cameroon, Jane Guyer started writing on the gender division of cocoa plantations, and how colonization mediated in its development (Jane Guyer 1980a, b). The third wave of studies at the turn of the century may have been fostered by the debate surrounding the Millennium Development Goals[11] during the 2000s with an emphasis on the promotion of gender "equality" and "empowerment". During this period we see not only that new studies appeared, but also that they did so exponentially and covering a larger variety of geographical areas. As such, we find new studies in Ghana, Ecuador, Nigeria, Brazil, and Cameroon, among the most frequently studied countries, and India, Ivory Coast, Venezuela, Burkina Faso, Trinidad, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Indonesia, with fewer studies[12].

It is remarkable that most studies analyze mainly the gendered distribution of roles in cocoa production or the influence of gender on cocoa productivity, and therefore on the national economies. One of such examples is the study of Wokia-azi Kumase *et al.* (2010, 16), conducted in Cameroon, which includes a policy recommendation according to which "with equal opportunities, women could even be more productive". Similarly Fondo Sikod (2007, 59) had earlier indicated in a study of Cameroonian women farmers that "the traditional division of labour leads to inefficient allocation of resources that retard development". Such statements reflect precisely the Women in Development approach that had been earlier criticized by post-development authors according to whom "many economists believed that women's productivity was being 'wasted' because [it was] unexploited by the world market" (Simons, Pam 1997, 245).

[9] Among other indicators we observe the four world conferences on women organized by the United Nations since 1975.
[10] For further studies produced in the 1980s and 1990s refer to annex 5.
[11] The Millennium Development Goals were eight goals agreed in 2000 by United Nations members, that would help increase human development, including gender equality.
[12] For a detailed list of publications since 1980 by country please refer to annex 5. Due to the language bias, perhaps countries such as Indonesia, the third producer of cocoa globally, appear underrepresented.

Next to the concern for market productivity, these studies touched upon women's wellbeing and empowerment as a useful policy intervention for the increase of a more holistic social wellbeing. However, in so doing, these studies failed to theorize the conflict that may emerge among both the community and women's wellbeing, and how women negotiate within that conflict. This approach had been earlier criticized by Bina Agarwal (1994, 54) who highlighted the "need for a very different conceptualization of the household [that could take] account of (…) conflicting preferences and interests". In other words, the existing studies seem to imply that social wellbeing is synonymous with women's wellbeing, and lack a theorization of not only how both could be conflictive, but, moreover, how women could strategize to solve such conflict for their benefit, albeit at the expense of the larger community's wellbeing. Kumase *et al.* (2010, 16) speak for example of "the impact this [lack of women's control over cocoa marketing] has on household decisions and family welfare" where, by impact, they mean positive impact, but not the cases in which for women to improve their status other members of the household need to lose privileges (Kumase *et al.* 2010, 16). Fondo Sikod (2007) does make a bashful reference to the conflict that the change in women's position in cash cropping generates for men's power and privileges, especially in terms of their decision-making capacity. However, Sikod does not analyze how such a process occurs or what the inner motivations of women are to bargain with their community or household. Quite the opposite, Sikod (2007), Kumase *et al.* (2010) and Banerjee *et al.* (2014) all attribute the change in women's participation not to the women's intra-household bargains but rather to the opportunities created by external factors such as economic crises or availability of assets like land or training. Only Debosree Banerjee *et al.* (2014) make some reference to the actual negotiations within cocoa production, in terms of marketing of proceeds, but not in terms of how these women have accessed those plantations. Both Sikod (2007) and Kumase *et al.* (2010) make reference to the typology of women's land ownership, such as whether it was acquired land or marital land, but they do not dive into the actual negotiations and daily decisions that these women had to make in order access the land for cultivation. In other words, we read about categories of women and categories of properties in cocoa production, but we do not see women's voices retelling their inner motivations and personal processes. For this, we need to turn to the ethno-historic study of Asante women in Ghana by Jeanne Marie Allman and Victoria Tashjian (2000), in which they explain how and why women decide to divorce, separate, seduce, negotiate through their offspring and inheritance, access colonial or native courts, create their own fields, or engage in trading, in order to ensure their own

independence. As Allman and Tashjian (2000, xxxiv), indicate "many Asante women had managed to successfully negotiate their own places within the expanding colonial [cocoa] economy (…) and to challenge in both direct and indirect ways the shifting terrain of patriarchal power". Emma Robertson (2009), also made an effort to retell women's experiences in cocoa production in Nigeria to make visible their implication, without however devoting much time to their actual negotiations. Furthermore, when speaking of barriers Sikod (2007) and Kumase *et al.* (2010) refer to lack of assets such as land, education or economic power, but they do not dive into the actual processes through which these barriers are enacted. In other words, they do not elaborate on the material and symbolic devices of violence, such as vituperations or physical aggressions through which women are prevented from entering this masculine space. This information is essential if we want to analyze how women resignify or resist these barriers.

Globally, we can appreciate a number of gaps in the way women's participation in cocoa is approached, including the covered areas, the conceptualization of women's positioning, the depth of analysis of women's decisions, and the use of feminist theories. First of all, from all the studies conducted in Cameroon none has been conducted in Ayos district (Kumase *et al.* 2010, Banerjee *et al.* 2014). Secondly, the victimization approach and passive understanding of female subjectivities seems to be paramount in most of these studies. Female farmers are portrayed either as oppressed subjects of the patriarchal cocoa system, or as the ultimate beneficiaries of development policies that manage to save them from this oppression. Only certain studies seem to have changed the thematic focus towards the study of women as resistors and meaning makers who, as in the case of Allman and Tashjian (2000), refuse to "eat stone", or the case presented by Robertson (2009). Finally, the use of intersectional feminist theories to understand these cases is conspicuous by its absence. Only Barrientos (2013), who analyses the invisibilization of women's labor in cocoa production in Ghana and India makes explicit use of feminist economic literatures. However, even in this case, the emphasis seems to remain on understanding the roles of women so that they can produce better cocoa.

I consider that referring to the idea of human agency, and more specifically women's agency, can be useful to fill the gaps that remain in the available literature. This idea can help both to understand and to theorize the inner motivations and negotiations that women undertake to participate in cocoa production, and indirectly contribute to the demasculinization of the sector. For this, it is necessary to elaborate on a concept of agency

that can be a fruitful conceptualization of the decisions women make in the context of Ayos. The next section explores previous debates to demarcate a conceptualization of women's agency, decisions, and subjectivity.

2. Feminisms and agency

The debate on agency, understood as a theory of "the human capacity to act" (Ahearn, Laura M. 1999, 12), has been incredibly prolific. Popularized by Anthony Giddens in the 1970s, it has been covered in many disciplines from philosophy to anthropology, sociology, geography or economics. While it first emerged as a reaction "against structuralism's failure to take into account the actions of individuals" (Ahearn 1999, 12), the epistemological and methodological approaches, as well as the questions to which different authors have sought answers, have exploded and mutated. Because of the vast amount of bibliographic material, and in view of the school of thought within which this thesis has been developed, I am focusing here mainly on the feminist debates surrounding the issue of agency.

According to Linda Zerilli (2005, 12), "agency is the paramount problem for feminism after identity problems", and even after so many debates—or perhaps, precisely because of those very many debates—it remains an "urgent problem" (Lucas, Sarah Drews 2016, 59). As in other disciplines, the creation of theories of agency within feminism has not happened in isolation, but as a result of the permanent dialogue and osmotic processes both within different feminist perspectives and with other disciplines. It is rather difficult to organize the evolution of these debates according to a single criterion, since authors have written from many locations and perspectives, and have often retaken former debates anachronically. Still, several authors seem to agree on a set of *momentums*.

2.1. Changing perspectives

The concept of agency emerged from structuralist views that conceptualized agency as resistance. From the perspective of structuralism, a social system would determine the limits within which the individuals can act. Within this perspective, resistance was conceptualized as the power that the oppressed, the pre-existing subject, could exert against macro-structures, as part of their autonomy, independent of those structures. Whereas the first studies concentrated on heroic figures and privileged subjects, Sarah Ghabrial (2016, 561) indicates that a *first turn* emerged from the attention that subaltern

studies brought to "more subtle, daily forms of subversion". Such a turn was also highlighted by authors like Lynn Bolles *et al.* (2016) and Lila Abu-Lughod (1990). Both of these approaches, either on privileged subjects or abject individuals, focused mainly on how the individuals *expressed their* agency. As Abu-Lughod (1990, 41) puts it, these studies were "more concerned with finding resistors and explaining resistance than with examining power", a concern that would be the focus of the *second turn*.

A *second turn* was observed with the advent of poststructuralist views of power, with authors like Michel Foucault and Judith Butler enabling a different focus that would turn to the *processes of internalization* of power. This poststructuralist perspective initially understood the subject as being formed through power relations, instead of a subject that exerts power against the system. Early poststructuralist analyses looked at either the effects power on the formation of subjects or at the manners through which macro-structures regulated those subjects (Ghabrial 2016). According to Sue Clegg (2006) the very epistemological and ontological assumptions at the heart of poststructuralism, with its emphasis on discourse and the negation of a pre-discursive subject, made poststructuralism incompatible with the very notion of agency. Clegg describes how late poststructuralism, and Foucault in particular, out of the need to explain acts of resistance, conceptualized how "power acts on some form of pre-given subject" therefore "[reinstating] a version of agency" (Clegg 2006, 315). This turn enabled the study of agency through a "reworking [of] that very matrix of power by which we are constituted, (…) and of working against each other those processes of regulation that can destabilize existing power regimes" (Butler 1995, 47).

Whereas both the initial structuralist and poststructuralist approaches seemed to conceptualize agency as the *resistance* of the *individual*, further contributions mainly coming from postcolonial southern theoretical positions helped to reconfigure this perspective. This idea of an autonomous monolithic subject was critiqued as a masculinist approach of western philosophies that focused on a liberal understanding of agency (Lucas 2016). Liberal feminism concentrated on a view of the subject whose ultimate will is the need for autonomy and freedom within a secular system of unlimited possibilities in which reason is the most valued aspect. In contrast, Saba Mahmood (2004) proposed an *affirmative* understanding of agency, that would not only provide a different approach to that of resistance or *opposition,* but also that would take into account *non-secular*, or *post-secular* values, such as spiritual self-realization that considers not only the mind but also the body. Mahmood highlights that in order to understand a richer complexity of agency we need to

pay attention to "the variety of ways in which norms are lived and inhabited, aspired to, reached for, and consummated", which she understands as *the agential capacities* (Mahmood 2004, 23). She, together with other authors preoccupied with analyzing Muslim women in the Middle East and Northern Africa, further pointed to the complex intermingling of different oppression systems, which would be a key argument in the different modes of inhabiting societal norms (see Abu-Lughod 1990).

In her article "The Subject of Freedom" Mahmood exposed the examples of two authors, Janice Body and Lila Abu-Lughod, to illustrate how acts of resistance could be understood as acts of oppression, and vice versa, in the complexity of a globalized world. Janice Boddy ([1989] 2014, 345) elucidated how women reshape the "instruments of [traditional] oppression" to execute subtle forms of agency that "[re]assert their [women's] value" in the community. Globally, this postsecular turn signified a *third turn* in the understanding of agency that brought about three important ideas. First, that agency can be *affirmative*. Second, that whether we see acts as resistance or as affirmation depends on the angle of analysis. And third, that we need to pay attention to the causes for which individuals inhabit certain norms. These ideas were not only relevant to the dichotomy of secular versus post-secular, in which women that accepted religious norms had often been looked as oppressed, but also for the debate of modern versus traditional, in which women who are part of subsistence forestry and agriculture systems were seen as oppressed, as has been criticized by authors like Majid Rahnema and Victoria Bawtree (1997).

Another important point brought about by these authors was in line with the debates on intersectionality from Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) to Hyun Sook Kim (2007). The debates on intersectionality lead to an understanding of an "alternative subject position which is multi-layered (…), interrelational and intersectional, [and] split within itself" (Braidotti 2011, 113). To understand this multi-positionality, they pointed out at the necessary move from the analysis of a single oppression system, Patriarchy, to "the ways in which intersecting and often conflicting structures of power [worked] together (…) in communities that [were] gradually becoming more tied to multiple and often nonlocal systems" (Abu-Lughod 1990, 42). This plurality of the subject and its imbrication in complex systems enabled the idea that one did not need to be portrayed as either oppressed or liberated, agential or non-agential (Mahmood 2004), but that subjects could play with their identity to bargain with multiple systems of oppression. Among the authors that pointed at these multiple angles of analysis we find Deniz Kandiyoti (1988) and Bina

Agarwal (1994). It is this idea of negotiations, of equilibrium, that I distinguish as a *fifth turn*, which I see as the most useful in understanding women in cocoa production.

2.2. Changing questions

Different disciplines within feminist studies have navigated differently through all these approaches, generating different types of questions. As an example, feminist philosophers have been concerned more with the origin, nature, and location of agency as we can see in the study of Lucas (2016), whereas feminist anthropology has been more concerned with the expression of this agency. Globally there seem to have emerged at least five types of questions that authors have tried to answer, which I indicate here in no particular order. First, *questions regarding the nature and location*: does agency belong to an individual that pre-exists the society? In other words, is agency an immanent and universal value of human beings? Or is it the expression of power structures that subjetivize the individual, in which case agency would be located outside the individual, who, in turn, does not pre-exist the society but is a formation of it, and is the process through which this individual is formed? (Lucas 2016). Secondly, *questions of scale:* "Can agency only be the property of an individual" or can we also observe collective and sub-individual agencies? (Ahearn 1999, 13). Thirdly, questions of its *reactivity vis-à-vis the power system*: Is agency expressed as reactive and oppositional, as affirmative (Seyla Benhabib *et al.* 1995, Mahmood 2004), or as a bargaining/negotiation (Deniz Kandiyoti 1988)? Fourth, *questions of awareness:* "What sorts of actions are truly 'agentive'? Must an act be fully, consciously intentional in order to be agentive? How could a scholar ever know?" (Ahearn 1999, 13). And finally, *questions of conceptualization*: How do people conceptualize it and word it in different cultures and locations? (Ahearn 1999, Agarwal 1994, Mahmood 2004).

2.3. Changing locations and strategies

Geographically speaking most of the studies focusing on women's agency in the Global South have focused on agency as oppositional, with words like resistance, empowerment or emancipation, particularly in the Middle East. The fact that most of the critique on women's subordination, and a reformulation on women's agency came from the Middle East was perhaps precisely because this had been one of the areas that was particularly orientalized and portrayed as backward and patriarchal (Bolles *et al.* 2016, 14). This led to

many studies that reacted against the oppressive portrayal of non-western women centered around issues of religion and politics, to underscore their agency.

A different approach to this type of epistemic violence has been brought by authors like Kandiyoti (1988), who in her study of Muslim and Northern-African women, has focused on agency as negotiations, rather than sticking to the binary of resistance versus subordination. Similarly, although without the explicit use of the concept of agency, Bina Agarwal (1994) has also presented an account of bargaining with patriarchal dictates in her study of women in South Asia. Interestingly, these studies do not necessarily concentrate on the study of spirituality but rather the negotiations around work load, spaces, and material assets and traditions. Whereas Kandiyoti has referred to negotiations around rice cultivation, Bina Agarwal, who also speaks of rice, has included tea and coffee, all of them plantations of relative importance to her area of analysis. In Sub-Saharan Africa both coffee and rice have been subject to the analysis of women's resistance and bargaining. Roser Manzanera Ruiz (2009), for example, describes how women in Tanzania stole coffee and hid their revenues from their husbands as a way to bargain with the conditions imposed by the liberalization of markets and patriarchy. Henry Kam Kah (2015) elaborates on how women in Western Cameroon resisted the changes introduced by German colonization both through symbolic actions and by regaining control of rice cultivation. In terms of cocoa, only Allman and Tashjian (2000) have approached the resistance of female cocoa farmers in Ghana through strategies such as divorcing. However, no study of this type has been conducted for the case of women cocoa farmers in Cameroon.

3. Defining agency, subjects, and strategies in complex systems

As I have shown the debates on human agency have been approached from many locations and perspectives. These debates, although important, have not been applied to the study women's actions within the cocoa sector. In this section I try to demarcate and clarify my own take on agency, as well as how I see it interplaying with the poststructuralist understanding of the subject as multiple and fragmented, as well as different modes of expression of that agency which I name "strategies".

3.1. Agency in complex systems

I have been looking for agency in the crossroads of three dualities that stay in dynamic equilibrium. The first pair is that of matter and discourse, which are connected to each other in a circle in which the matter limits the discourse, and the discourse shapes the matter (Butler 1993). The second pair is that between resistance and subordination. As such, subjects negotiate their positions within the available possibilities, therefore possibly giving the appearance of affirming the status quo. The third pair is between autonomy and co-dependence. This thesis attempts thus to answer the modes of expression of agency along these tensions. As such I intend to argue that agency can be understood through the concept of bargaining, which Deniz Kandiyoti (1988, 275) conceptualizes as how "women strategize within a set of concrete constraints (…) of any given society, which may exhibit variations according to class, caste, and ethnicity." Both for Kandiyoti (1988) and Agarwal (1994) these constraints depend on a specific formation of patriarchy that is time and place specific. I see this definition as a possibility to rework and integrate, rather than confront, previous understandings of agency which have included affirmation of the normative powers and resistance against the *status quo*.

Since I do not enter into the analysis of the nature or location of agency I wish to clarify here that I understand agency as traveling both ways between the subject and the social system. In this sense, I embrace Sarah Lucas' perspective in which agency is:

> "not the capacity of a doer with a set identity who makes a sovereign decision to impose her will on the world; it is, rather, the *capacity* of a situated, non-sovereign, *variously identified* subject to appear as a unique being in the world" (Lucas 2016, 58, my emphasis).

I find that Lucas' definition recognizes the positionality of a multi-located subject in a system that exerts power, and enables or limits the possibilities for agency, while leaving space for the uniqueness of her decision-making.

Secondly, I consider that agency can be seen from different scales that go from the subject to collectives of subjects. This collective aspect is an important part of what I frame as the performative aspect of agency. In Butler's words "performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate 'act', but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (Butler 1993, 2). In my perspective, it is the accumulation and saturation of acts by a multitude of women in a society, even when

acting individually, that can generate an effect; with the decision of some women to emulate and repeat the acts of other women being one of these possible generated effects.

3.2. Intersectional subjectivities in complex systems

This thesis builds on the idea that "the plurality of the self is characteristic of the heterogeneous nature of reality itself" (Clegg 2006, 314). Rosi Braidotti (2011, 113) has explained this idea in the following terms: "this alternative subject position which is multi-layered and implicated with complex sites of articulation of its complexities (…), interrelational and intersectional, [and] split within itself, in a myriad of internal self-differentiations and discrepancies". This definition has two important aspects, first that the self is plural and intersectional, and second that it is interrelational.

The idea of intersectionality is not a new one. First coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), it intended to complexify the sites of oppression in which individuals are located by including race and class to the already existing debates on gender. However, it has been later criticized that "it is the difference of *African American women* that *dominates* this genealogy" (Puar 2012, 52, my emphasis). As such, the debate on intersectionality seems up to be date still too focused on what seemed to be relevant in the United States of the 1980s: race, class, and gender. Other authors like Hyun Sook Kim have emphasized that since the idea of intersectionality, among other concepts, had been developed in a specific context, i.e. the United States, "when 'Western' and African scholars apply such categories and concepts to Africa, they 'explain not very much'" (Kim 2007, 109). It is for this reason that even if acknowledging the idea of intersectionality I make use of theories that have emerged from the Global South in order to complete it with relevant elements. These elements include among others: seniority, ethnicity, endogeneity, and position in the marriage cycle (Agarwal 1994, Warner *et al.* 1997, Oyěwùmí 2002). This pluralization of axes allows for a better understanding of the agential capacity of the subject by eschewing rigid categories such as "women" in which they have been often portrayed as oppressed and passive. This added complexity of the subject allows for an understanding in which a woman can be simultaneously oppressed and privileged, who can play with that complexity to exert her agency.

The second aspect of Braidotti's conceptualization refers to the interrelationality of the subject. I link this to the idea of how a subject is positioned within a social system; a system

that contains in itself multilayered realities that include economic, political, cultural and environmental structures and assets, where individuals navigate (Abu-Lughod 1990). Thinking of socio-environmental systems in this way takes into consideration their physical, environmental and social capitals, which enable individuals to make decisions. Authors from several disciplines have accounted for these multiple assets, however rather than using these frameworks, I turn to recognizing that agency has not only a discursive facet, but also a material basis, with which the discursive facet remains in dialogue (Butler 1993). In Butler's words:

> "There is an 'outside' to what is constructed by discourse, but this is not an absolute 'outside', an ontological there-ness that exceeds or counters the boundaries of discourse; as a constitutive 'outside', it is that which can only be thought—when it can—in relation to that discourse, at and as its most tenuous borders" (Butler 1993, 8).

Butler refers to the idea that whereas matter enables discourses, at the same times those very discourses shape and fix the matter they name. In other words "matter [is] not as site or surface, but a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter" (Butler 1993, 9). Furthermore, "these regulatory schemas are not timeless structures, but historically revisable criteria of intelligibility which produce and vanquish [spaces] that matter" (Butler 1993, 14). In my re-interpretation of Butler I move the focus from bodies to spaces, to be able to refer the material conditions in which female cocoa farmers make decisions. As a process of discourse which is also historical, I claim that whereas material conditions have been there—be they climatic, ecosystemic, or infrastructural—the extent to which they have 'mattered' for the history of these women have changed over time.

As subjects embedded in complex systems, women express their agency by either accepting, rejecting, or modifying the norms of such as system, on the basis of what their intersectional identity permits them. In other words, by considering the larger settings I try to escape from a liberal understanding of the human capacity in which the subject has absolute power and everything depends on her decisions, what Butler calls "the voluntarist subject of humanism" (Butler 1993, 7). As such, the agency would be the capacity of individuals to develop particular strategies within a set of constrains, which Deniz Kandiyoti (1988) identifies as "patriarchal bargains".

3.3. Bargaining strategies of access, control, and property

Cocoa fields constitute spaces that have both symbolically and materially been associated with masculinity (Barrientos 2013). However, women, like those who participated in this research, are contributing consciously and unconsciously to the demasculinization of these spaces. I use the word demasculinization to refer to the process by which these spaces are been physically occupied and symbolically associated with women. In other words, the process through which the figure of the female owner of cocoa is entering the collective imagination. I take this process as an indicator of the more holistic dynamic of confronting patriarchy. It is then this confrontation, through women's negotiations, which I analyze as an expression of women's agency.

When I speak of strategies or negotiations, I mean actions and decisions to either access, control, and own these spaces and the products derived from them. As Bina Agarwal (1994) describes, these bargains can vary in *form*, *content,* and *arenas*. By form she refers to whether they are individual or collective, overt or covert; by content, to whether they are political, economic, or social, among others; and by arenas, to the space, be it familial, communal, or at the level of the state. As symbolic and material spaces, strategies can be found in both realms. Previous authors have identified economic decisions, such as purchasing or renting a piece of land; gender-based strategiess such as the resignification of traditional structures including polygamy, bride-price, widowhood or sisterhood; negotiations of time allocation or even stealing and violent resistance; or symbolic actions, including theatrical resignification of traditional taboos (Kandiyoti 1988, Agarwal 1994, Allman and Tashjian 2000, Manzanera Ruiz 2009, Boserup, Ester 2010, Kam Kah 2015).

In my specific case, most of the bargains are individual bargains in the private space. Most times this private space meant the household or the family, although it also related to some communal spaces or activities, like common work of fields, community meetings during the festivities like the International Women's Day, or meetings in associations like the *tontines*[13]. However, for the purpose of this thesis I have only concentrated on those negotiations around key elements of patriarchy, leaving other cases which involved, for example, economic purchases, aside. Whereas the debate on access, control and ownership has also been very prolific (Agarwal 1994), I tend to use both terms interchangeably. Even if a woman only accesses the land and controls some of its aspects, whether she is legally

[13] Which is the French name for community-based money-saving systems.

entitled to or not, it is this reality on the ground that is relevant to this study and which reflects the demasculinization of cocoa.

Chapter Three: Telling tales

Methods & reflexivity

"There are many tales of the field to be told." (John Van Maanen in Reinharz 1992, 54)

In this chapter, I expose the methodology used in this research. The first part of the chapter focuses on explaining why I engaged in an ethnographic mode of research for this particular topic. I further describe how I chose the location of the research and how I worked with the research participants in the villages. After this, I continue with a short description of how I made sense of the incredible amount of information that emerged during my trip to be able to deliver a clear message in this thesis. Perhaps because of this it is important to remember that "there are many tales of the field to be told" (John Van Maanen in Reinharz 1992, 54) and that my tale constitutes one possibility among very many. In the third part of the chapter, I include some notes regarding the writing style that I consider important, to stay on the same page as my readers. In the final section, I engage in a thorough analysis of my own positionality within this research and how it enables and obstructs possibilities. Although each step of the methodology speaks to feminism, the very last part is particularly important to feminist debates given the very many differences, commonalities, and relations of power and empathy that happened between me and the research participants.

1. Ethnography

According to Shulamit Reinharz (1992, 48), feminist ethnography is a methodology that has strong potential to make "women's lives visible"; for this reason it seemed to perfectly fit my purpose of retelling the actions of women within the cocoa sector in Cameroon from their own perspective. Reinharz describes contemporary feminist ethnography as a "multimethod research [that] usually includes observation, participation, archival analysis, and interviewing, thus combining the assets and weaknesses of each method", and she continues: "these 'alternative' methods focus on interpretation, rely on the researcher's immersion in social settings, and aim for intersubjective understanding between researchers and the person(s) studied" (Reinharz 1992, 46). In my case I decided to use a combination of semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, with participant observation and literature review. Whereas the first two would give the possibility to the research participants to explain their lived experiences in their own words, the last two

would allow me to access more tacit knowledge through careful reading, observation, and informal talks. Literature review included mostly agricultural-environmental research and historical-ethnographic material produced in Cameroon that would help me triangulating and completing some of the information regarding historical facts, traditions, international markets, and legislation.

As Reinharz (1992, 53) indicates, ethnography allows "to interpret women's behavior as shaped by social context rather than as context-free or rooted in anatomy, personality, or social class". This was particularly important for me since I was trying to understand a concept of agency that would be specific to a social context; in particular a patriarchal context within which these women were developing their "bargaining strategies" (Kandiyoti 1988, 274-275).

1.1. Ayos, my home for two months

When this project was in gestation in 2015 I contacted one of my former colleagues from the "Institute of Tropical Agriculture" (IITA)[14], Lilian Nkengla-Asi. Lilian explained to me that they had been implementing several agricultural extension projects on cocoa production—of which the most recent is ProCISA[15]—in four districts in Cameroon: Ayos and Ngomedzap in the Central Region; and Konye and Muyuka in the Southwest Region. According to Lilian, IITA had observed how women were planting cocoa, something that *seemed* to be a new phenomenon[16] and Lilian and I found that the topic could be very informative for both gender studies, development studies, and agricultural programs. Taking into account the experience that IITA had with farmers in the villages, we thought that our collaboration could be beneficial both for IITA and myself. Working with IITA would enable me both to work through the network of contacts that they had established in the villages, as well as to reinforce the very work that IITA was doing[17].

[14] I had been working with the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) since 2013; that shared the research space–both physical location and research topics—with other institutions among which was IITA. Both IITA and CIFOR are members of the "Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research" (CGIAR), which is why linkages exist among both institutions.

[15] ProCISA stands for "Green Innovation Centre for the Agriculture and Food Sector" in English—funded by the German cooperation (GIZ) and co-implemented by IITA and SNV.

[16] I remembered from my own experience in the villages that cocoa was often described as a male crop.

[17] As I will later describe, the presence of a European foreigner can, at times, be very influential in the villages. Whether we channel this influence in one direction or another is one of the responsibilities that the researcher needs to take into consideration during the whole research process.

Out of the four districts I finally decided to work in Ayos, based on six criteria. First, located in the Central Region, 138 km away from Yaounde—Cameroon's capital—Ayos was more accessible than the districts in the Southwest Region. Second, the Southwest Region was experiencing a tense political situation during the time of research. Third, people in the Central region spoke French, a language that I speak with a more Cameroonian accent that my western-sounding English. As such, I thought that my broken accent would help me to connect with the research participants through a certain degree of a shared identity. Fourth, Ngomedzap, the other district located in the Center, was the home-district of some of my in-laws, and I was concerned with the power relations that this would involve during the research. Fifth, Ayos seemed to be hatching a women's network that was increasingly interested in cocoa—the "Network of Women's Associations from Ayos" (RAFAYOS). Finally, the commune of Ayos had not been studied in previous research on women and cocoa in Cameroon, unlike Ngomezdap (Kumase *et al.* 2010, Banerjee *et al.* 2014).

Ayos commune—located in Nyong-et-Mfoumou department in the Central Region—extends across 1250 square kilometers, and hosts an estimated 23,000 inhabitants, with women constituting 53% of adults (PNDP 2012). Located in the coordinate range 3.831305°-4.392274° N, 12.268111°-12.831849° E with a mean temperature of 21.1°C, the commune is situated in Cameroon's cocoa producing belt. The land cover includes evergreen forests (85%), cropland-forest mosaic (12%) and flooded forests (2%) (WRI 2013). It is surrounded by Nyong river to the South and Mfoumou river to the East. The commune is traversed by the national road N-10, the main road connecting the capital with the East and North of the country, and thus Cameroon's capital and ports with Central African Republic, Chad and northern Nigeria. Whereas the main ethnic groups are Yebekolo, Omvang, Sso and Maka, the accessibility through the road has facilitated the presence of other ethnic group from Cameroon and other African countries, most of whom reside in Ayos city. The 58 villages and neighborhoods that it comprises are nevertheless not equally accessible from the main road, depending on a network of lateritic and mud tracks[18]—with some being quite isolated, especially through the rainy season. Inhabitants in Ayos practice subsistence agriculture: groundnuts, cassava, new cocoyam, banana-plantain, corn and horticulture; cash cropping: cocoa and coffee; fishing, animal husbandry, and trade (PNDP 2012). The contribution of each activity for revenues and

[18] Some of these tracks had been developed during the German colonization (1884-1918) and have not been paved yet.

subsistence has been changing however, in line with the macro-economic changes in Cameroon (Courade 1994). The research participants nevertheless indicated that cocoa production can generate up to 80% of their revenues, although this of course varies according to several factors, including age, gender, and location in the commune, among others. For example inhabitants living closer to the rivers depend much more on fishing than those in the hinterland (PNDP 2012). Several international and national development institutions have been present in the commune, including: IITA, SNV, GIZ, and the National Program of Participatory Development (PNDP).

During my stay in Ayos I resided in four locations—Ayos, Emini, Nsan and Nyamvoudou—where I made most of my observations. From there I commuted to another sixteen villages for interviews, visiting twenty villages in total (see map below). Most of the people that guided me in the villages were farmers that had been collaborating with IITA for the projects in the commune, known as "the facilitators", some of whom also hosted me. The facilitators had set farmer field-schools in several villages, and were well known by the community. Furthermore, they had access to motorbikes provided by IITA's project that we could use to move around. In total I spent one and a half months in the villages and two weeks in Yaounde, before and after my trip to Ayos. I decided to go in February, taking into account the academic constrains from the University as well as to avoid the start of the rainy season. The rain would not only make the commuting among villages more difficult, but would also signify the start of agricultural activities, and thus less time to discuss with women. More by chance than by careful planning, this period of fieldwork also allowed me to participate in the celebration of the International Women's Day in rural areas; it is a day of great importance in the country in which women mobilize for political and recreational reasons, and that often boosts debates both on the mass media and within families (Tripp *et al.* 2009).

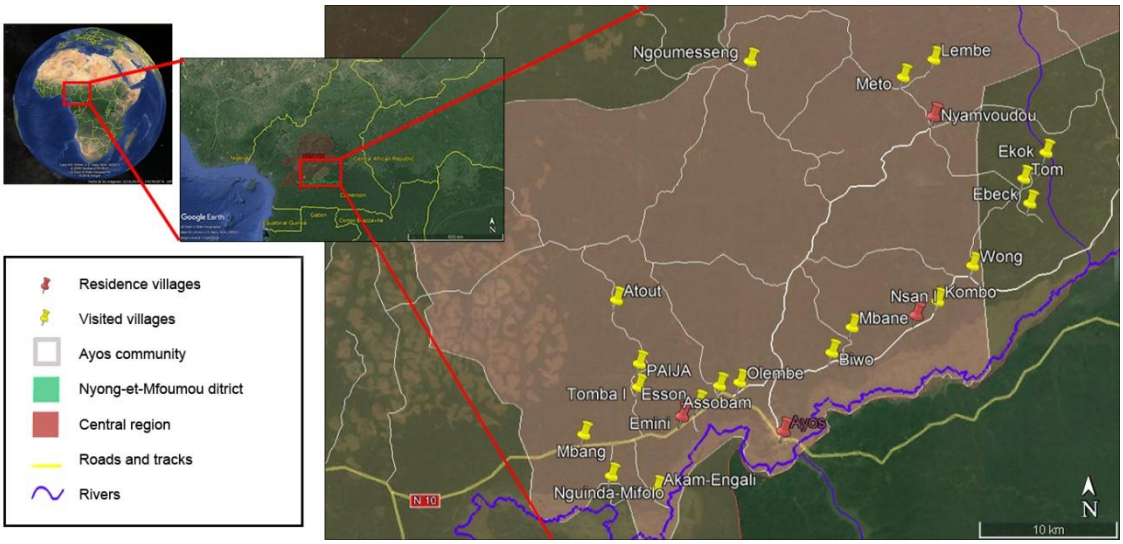

Figure 1. Visited villages [N=20] in Ayos (Nyong-et-Moumou Department, Central Region, Cameroon). Source: author from GPS points collected by myself and data from the Institut National de Cartographie (INC).

1.2. Interviews

I decided to use semi-structured interviews for the possibilities they offer in creating a more balanced relationship (Harding 1993) between myself, as a researcher, and the research participants, for two reasons. First of all, interviews include opportunities for clarification and discussion (Reinharz 1992). Secondly, since my questions were open-ended, I could listen to the interviewees' explanation of their life events, moments of decision, and ideas in their own words rather than in mine (Reinharz 1992). Finally, they would allow me to include new topics as they emerged during the conversation. In all, interviews offered the opportunity to see women from Ayos as "rounded individuals rather than as numbers in boxes" (Susan Yeandle in Reinharz 1992, 24).

Whereas I had initially decided to interview mainly women who were cocoa producers, I ended up including some members of the private sector, cooperative representatives and local authorities such as village leaders or staff from Ayos' city hall. In total I interviewed 72 women, with interviews varying in length from half an hour to three hours, with a modal length of about one hour. The interview started with a presentation of the research objectives and of the discussion dynamic that I was proposing the research participants during the interview. I then followed with a series of questions covering some basic data of the participant such as age, education, ethnicity, etc., and a number of questions regarding the women's livelihoods. After this introduction, we would engage in the woman's history

in cocoa production, including the year and reason for starting, the problems that they had faced as women, the solutions they had found, the selling strategies, control over proceeds, and some questions regarding inheritance of their fields.

As Reinharz (1992, 21) indicates "careful listening allows the interviewer to introduce new questions as the interview proceeds (…) when unanticipated patterns emerge". In my case, as the interviews kept on going new topics appeared such as dowry, polygamy, or witchcraft. Besides semi-structured interviews being considered as a methodology that "[avoids] control over others" (Reinharz 1992, 20), I still feel that I maintained a certain level of control since I was the one stopping their daily activities and the one to be received in their houses—interviews would normally take place in their houses or fields, in a place where we could enjoy some privacy, so that they could speak freely. Furthermore, we were communicating in a language—French—that even if it is not my mother tongue, it is not theirs either. Nevertheless, since French is the language used in schools, government documents and the media, most of the participants were very fluent and it did not form a barrier. I only used Yebekolo—one of the local languages—for specific concepts, like witchcraft, certain swearwords, or proverbs of name of family relation, since I knew from experience that the meaning in French could be very different. Interviews were conducted in Yebekolo with the help of an interpreter only in two of the interviews with two women that had been born during the pre-independence period, around the 1940s. In these two cases, I worked with the help of two young women, to maintain the atmosphere of woman-to-woman talk had existed in the rest of interviews. Other translations of words and proverbs I discussed with the interviewees, facilitators and even some colleagues back in Yaounde who would help me translating.

1.3. Participant selection

My intention was to record information-packed stories that would tell me how women were negotiating with patriarchy, rather than getting a representative sample of Cameroon or Ayos area. As such, I drafted a set of criteria that I had obtained through literature review and colleagues that know the area. These included their location in the commune in terms of ecosystems, access to urban areas, marriage status and type, mode of access to the cocoa plantation (e.g., inheritance from relatives, in-laws, renting, buying, share-cropping, etc.), and access to cocoa proceeds that do not involve land ownership (e.g. borrowing and lending cocoa, trading, transformation of cocoa into different products). Although class has

been described by Agarwal (1995, 459) as an important variable, most of the women that I interviewed were peasants, with only a few of them being better off, this being one of the limitations of this research.

Through a careful collaboration with IITA facilitators and other members of the community I would contact with different women, who would then leed me to other women using the snowball technique. Besides some of the criteria being set at the beginning, I adapted to what I found in the villages, day after day. The initial idea was to interview twenty women to obtain at least ten stories. But after realizing that there were hundreds of women involved in cocoa production and the enthusiasm that people showed for the research, I gathered strength to conduct seventy-two interviews, even though it was very energy consuming at times. The fact that while expecting to find one or two dozen women I found more than an overwhelming hundred is for me in itself an indicator of the mistaken image that is commonly protrayed of cocoa and cash cropping as a solely masculine endeavor — a perception that both Barrientos (2013) and Robertson (2009) have also criticized.

When I initially went to Ayos I only wanted to know what women were doing in recent decades to gain greater power and control[19] within cocoa. Furthermore, this included understanding how and why they had started planting *fields of their own* to use Bina Awargal's reinterpretations of Virginia Woolf (Agarwal 1994). But soon my very interlocutors made me realize that I had to look at three different generations, that had lived in different periods, and that spoke of a change that had started during the colonial period in Cameroon. These included a first generation of "first cracks" who buffered a complete masculinization of cocoa at the time of its arrival and expansion in Cameroon; they were born around the 1920s and they planted cocoa around the 1940s. I call this generation *the grandmothers*. A second generation, that I refer to as *the mothers* planted cocoa after Cameroon's independence, either in a first wave in the time of SAPs and increasing cocoa prices in the 1980s and 1990s, or in a second wave of International Cooperation and promotion of farmer cooperatives during the 2010s. Finally, a third generation of those who are still to inherit the fruits of the second generation in the near or mid-term, that I refer to as *the daughters*[20]. Most of the first-hand stories that I listened to belonged to the

[19] Bina Agarwal (1994) denotes a difference between the two terms that I will not investigate here.
[20] With this terminology "*grandmothers, mothers, and daughters*" I try to keep a way of thinking similar to that of the Yebekolo (or even Beti), in which it is not just your age but your relative position in the family that sets your status. This status is in fact emphasized by the practice of the "*mbombo*"—namesake—in which you

second generation, the mothers, although I had the chance to meet two women from the first one. These two were precisely the only interviews that I had to conduct in Yebekolo with the help of an interpreter. The other stories about the first generation were transmitted through the voices of female farmers and village elders, many of them male. The stories of the last generation, the daughters, were also transmitted through the second, their mothers.

1.4. Focus group discussions

I had not initially planned to do focus group discussions (FGDs), although it was a possibility that I kept in mind. However, the insistence of some of the participants on the information that this research would produce, and the need for clarifying some of the information that emerged during the interviews (Reinharz 1992), led me to organizing five FGDs, which I facilitated with the aid of Prisca Abojeh Ojukache, an IITA intern. Three of them took place in Ayos, one with women representing female associations, another with IITA facilitators — all men — and another with representatives from the cocoa cooperatives—also all male. I decided to separate men and women in different groups for two reasons. First, because "women tend to discuss their feelings about their lives, their roles, and their marriages more freely when men are not present" (Judy Wajcman in Reinharz 1992, 41). Second, because these groups represented different people in the villages. The other two meetings were organized in Yaounde to discuss with other researchers and development agents from national and international organizations.

2. Data analysis

In total, I had three different sources of information. First of all the primary data, either as audio files recorded during the interviews and FGDs—a total of 110 audio files—or as field notes from observations and informal discussions. Secondly, the secondary data from previous ethnographies and studies. I ended up having a huge amount of interviews which I would not be able to transcribe for this thesis. Instead, I listened to each of them carefully

receive the surname of someone in the family inheriting their status. In actual life, this can lead to situations in which a girl that is 2 years old is considered your mother, or even your husband (Fieldnotes, Ayos, February 2017). This means that sometimes a "daughter" can be older than "a mother" in their relative histories. In my case however, it is just symbolic with regards to the history of cracking the masculinization of cocoa.

to code sections of the audios and transcribed only the parts that were relevant to the particular analysis that is central to this thesis[21].

Among all the topics that emerged during the interviews I specifically focused on those that would elucidate on the specific ways in which women negotiate with patriarchy through the very elements of patriarchy itself. Furthermore, during the analysis I tried to look not only at the topics that emerge and type of answers, but also at the specific ways the participants were talking about them (Reinharz 1992). The fact that, for example, women spoke about orphans living in their maternal uncles' villages, i.e. the village of their mother's brothers, instead of talking about their mother's villages, was an indicator of patrilocality and gender-based decision making.

3. On writing as a method of inquiry and style

As I mentioned earlier "there are many tales of the field to be told" (John Van Maanen in Reinharz 1992, 54); as such, this piece of writing serves rather as an "introduction of meaning" (Spivak in Richardson 2000, 968), than as the only way to see reality. One of my colleagues put it very nicely during one of the meetings that I held in Yaounde towards the end: "in fact, when you do a study on women's vulnerability it remains likewise an incomplete story"[ii] (Fieldnotes, Yaounde, April 2017). That this thesis is one of multiple possible perspectives, and in a way, a bit of "faction" (Richardson 2000, 961), became evident to me not only when writing this final text, but also during the data gathering itself. Living 24 hours a day in the communities confronted me with an incredible amount of experiences that I had to summarize every day. In fact, writing helped me to think not only about the connections (Richardson 2000, 970), but also made me realize that I was reorganizing the information not as an exact copy of what happened every day, but as a slightly digested version that would help me, as a reader of my own text, better understand. As Elizabeth St Pierre puts it "data collection and data analysis cannot be separated when writing is a method of inquiry" (St Pierre in Richardson 2000, 971). Furthermore, the fact that I lived my experiences in French, wrote my personal field notes in Spanish, and rewrote the story in English, gives an idea of the amount of re-interpretation involved in retelling the story.

[21] I had to leave many topics aside, which I hope will materialize in a book in the coming years.

What language to use was one of the decisions that I had to make. Although including Spanish would have helped bringing attention to the reader of how even a "western writer" undergoes a certain level of colonization (Grosfoguel and Cervantes-Rodríguez 2002, xiii), I decided to reduce my presence and highlight that of the research participants by including Yebekolo or French when possible. When the translated version of a participant's quote appears, I have made the original available in annex 2 using roman numbers. However, even when using their own languages the written will never be an exact copy of all the feelings that their words carried that made me burst with laughter or even shed tears. Even the recorded audio files represent but a version of the story, since they could not capture the gestures, the gaze, the complicity, and so on. It is because of this that the reader might from time to time sense the feeling from which I am writing, sometimes irony, sometimes joy and amazement. I take these emotions, rather than as a handicap to access the data, as data themselves (Abu-Lughod [1987] 2000, 34).

Last but not least, I decided to increase the visibility of women in general, and Global South female writers in particular, in several ways: First, when theories had been developed both by men and women I decided to give preference to the woman, to counterbalance the trend of "men [citing] each other" that has contributed to the invisibilization of women writers (Lutz in Bolles *et al.* 2016). This can be seen for example in my decision to refer to Bina Agarwal (1994) "A Field of One's Own" instead of her co-worker Amartya Sen—both of whom used to work together—when talking about cooperative conflicts. Second, I tried to involve as much as possible theories from the Global South that can help me better interpret the data, such as the idea of a different type of intersectionality from Oyěwùmí (2002) or a different understanding of agency. Third, I use a modified version of a reference style, Chicago 16th author-date, that exposes the gender of the authors to help increase the visibility specially of women writers. This is possible through the use of their first names next to the family names when first cited[22] and in the bibliography. When the first appearance occurred in brackets I have used the same system used in certain journals to differentiate two authors with the same surname, with the following formula: (Surname, Given name Year). Even if it is not a perfect solution, since some gender non-conforming authors might feel that their given names do not represent them, I consider this a political act that can help correcting the subconscious idea—which I have recognized in myself numerous times—that the texts that we read have been written by white male authors. As

[22] This part is not required by the referencing style, but I decided to include it.

Ellen Damschen *et al.* (2005, 217) indicate "if the gender of 'a scientist' is not specified, students assume that the scientist is male". Furthermore, hiding the name was one of the strategies used by female authors to get published (Rosser, Sue Vilhauer 1990), which encouraged me even more to make them visible.

4. Self-positioning

Cross-cultural and transnational feminist theories and praxis have been central in feminist studies since the 1980s. Authors like Shulamit Reinharz (1992) and Hyun Sook Kim (2007) have raised questions and theorized about what constitutes and what are potentials and dangers of these transnational feminisms. Studying women who produce cocoa is inherently transnational both because cocoa is a colonial crop nowadays produced in environments which are extrinsic to its origin, and because it is sold in global markets that influence the local dynamics. But this particular research has one more transnational aspect: it seeks to produce theories of women's resistance understood in a particular geography (Kim 2007, 116), while being carried by a researcher who is not native to the area. It is this last aspect, the researcher's embodiment of transnationality, together with other factors of sameness and difference vis-à-vis de research participants that I wish to address in this last section, to explore "how that influences methods, interpretations, and knowledge production" (Kobayashi in Sultana 2007, 376).

"Identity is not a bunch of little cubbyholes stuffed respectively with intellect, race, sex, class, vocation, gender. Identity flows between, over, aspects of a person. Identity is a river—a process" (Anzaldúa, Gloria 2009, 166). Identity in my case is not about being white *and* a woman *and* Spanish, is about being a white Spanish woman that has lived abroad and actively interacted in multicultural environments that constantly molded her. It is because of this particular position that to bluntly position myself as a western white feminist producing *outsider* knowledge about Cameroonian women would be to neglect the "educational and lived experiences [that have] changed the way [I] speak, hear, read, and write" (Anzaldúa 2009, 171). For this reason I prefer to define myself as a transnational feminist. I refuse to use the word western, not only because in my case using a monolithic definition of western-ness would be to neglect the historic past that has situated my country within the global order (Grosfoguel and Cervantes-Rodríguez 2002, xiii), but also because the last ten years that I have spent between Asia, Africa and Europe have shaped the way I understand the world.

If I have learnt something after living in at least six countries different from my own, it is that "how one is inserted in grids of power relations" is a double process, from the outside towards the self, and from the self towards the outside (Sultana 2007, 376). Writing the self as Gloria Anzaldúa (2009, 169) would say, is "a collaborative, communal activity not done in a room of one's own". In Cameroon "people placed me in certain categories" (Sultana 2007, 378) that I sometimes found alienating, such as that of the international cooperation expat that comes in with an unlimited budget to economically develop a village (Fieldnotes, Ebeck, March 2017). At the same time "many commonalities enabled me to bridge gaps and become more accepted over time" (Sultana 2007, 378), such as having a Cameroonian family or being a woman that has to confront sexist attitudes.

At first, people perceived me as a white expat that had come to deliver agricultural supplies and per diems, probably as a consequence of working in an area where other NGOs had been working before (Sultana 2007, 381). It took me a while to explain to them that I was not an employee, neither a funded student. Being seen as foreigner however, was not implicitly negative besides the economic expectations, as it would open doors for me to meet local authorities and people's homes who wanted to receive *the foreigner* at home. This marker of difference became even more evident when another Cameroonian student, Prisca Abojeh Ojukache, came to spend some days with me. We would often comment how I was being treated with more respect regardless of our many common factors. Sometimes I felt rather like a token of privilege for those who received me in their homes. One of the facilitators I worked with, Medjo, used to make fun of the situation by shouting from the motorbike "I found the white on the internet, go find your own!"[iii] (Fieldnotes, Nsan, March 2017).

Gradually, however, as they listened to my broken French, and as I ate with them, drank palm wine, and the more I "self-disclosed" (Reinharz 1992, 32-34), they started perceiving me more as an insider. In fact this was not only because I had been living and working in Cameroon for three years, but also because, through my Cameroonian in-laws, I passed from being the white student to be daughter in law or even wife. Breaking this family/work, private/public divide, however, confronted me in a way to a difficult distinction between what constituted field-work and what constituted home (Sultana 2007, 377). Even though this made me feel more at ease and helped accessing some information, for example regarding problems with witchcraft in the village, internal disputes regarding powerful positions, or family problems related with rape; I felt as if somehow they were

explaining less things to me because as their wife—how they perceive their male relatives' spouses—I was supposed to know about their culture.

Playing with sameness versus difference was something that I had to constantly negotiate, as each would give me some powers while removing others (Sultana 2007). Eventually I felt that even those with whom I was working more closely were modifying my identity to others depending on the situation. Several times I was asked by the facilitators to give public speeches or talk to the local authorities, as it happened during the International Women's Day in Nyamvoudou when I was asked to talk about women's involvement in cocoa. Even though Remy, my host and facilitator at that time, knew about my Cameroonian family, he emphasized my educational and foreign aspect because he thought it would have a bigger positive impact on women. As Remy explained to me using a traditional proverb in Yebekolo, "*Fulasi ene mbeng eso'o anyu ntagan emien"*—French is good when it comes from the white herself (Fieldnotes, Nyamvoudou, MArch 2017). To him, people would listen to me more than himself because I was an educated western white foreigner.

Being a woman also had its pros and cons. On one hand it was less suspicious when I wanted to meet women in private. Furthermore, in line with Reinharz (1992), it helped talking about certain issues like marital rape or infidelity. Being a young woman would also give me a certain level of protection both from women and men (Reinharz 1992). In part because of taking this role, and mixed with my higher economical class that would cover transport expenses, I was most of the time chaperoned by an elder male, if not an elder woman (Reinharz 1992, Sultana 2007). This turned to be very necessary especially under certain situations of distress when I had to confront sexual harassment. Foreseeing situations like this, and having lived in Cameroon in the past, I had decided to wear a wedding ring as I knew it would save me much trouble. In a way I had to "bargain with patriarchy" as this is something that I would not have done in my native Spain (Kandiyoti 1988). This however would only reduce but not remove the risk of sexual harassment. Oftentimes I had to confront jokes and comments like "*Mininga abelé abeng falak*"—that woman has a good butt—which Mechama, another of the facilitators, translated to me after seeing everyone laughing (Fieldnotes, Atout, March 2017). I was lucky that in extreme situations I could count on the support of local men and women, who often disapproved this kind of behavior. To me however, this would turn into an additional source of knowledge, since as a woman I could experience some of the things women experience

(Reinharz 1992). Furthermore, it was in these kinds of situations that it became more evident that "no matter how 'inside' an ethnographer might be, she always had the privilege of movement or departure, and multiple choices for defining her identity" (Bolles *et al.* 2016, 13). If harassed I could easily move to another place or contact the institutions that were supporting me.

The issue of nonpartisanship was also something that I had to constantly negotiate. Whereas I would often try to reduce the hierarchy and distance between the participants and myself (Sprague and Zimmerman in Hesse-Biber 2011, 8) by, for example, downplaying my academic status, or defining myself as a learner of their stories (Reinharz 1992, 29), people would often give me the best sitting places or even ask me for advice. Such an experience has also been recounted by both Sultana (2007) and Reinharz (1992, 30). As a woman, it was difficult to remain neutral as some of the critiques would directly address me. The more the research period advanced in time, the more I realized that I could not stay neutral under stories of extreme abuse and injustice. It would be inaccurate to say that when I was giving advice to the facilitators on how to better involve women in their farmer fieldschools; when I was convincing the mayor that women had the right to be happy on their own even if this had to pass by dedicating less time to subsistence farming; or when I was explaining to people how I had both my mother's and father's surname, I have been neutral. But I think, the important aspect here is to remain accountable for the decisions that I made and their possible implications. Furthermore, I consider that it is particularly important to at least mention it here since the "personal activism [of the feminist ethnographer] is rarely written about or analyzed (…) [and] it has been rarely reported as part of the research process" (Bolles *et al.* 2016, 54). Moreover, I realized that carrying this project involved an ethic of commitment to these women, not in the sense of saving them, but in the sense of respecting and caressing their memories; and to constantly ask myself "do I really need to ask these questions?".

Chapter Four: Crafting Patriarchy

Historical contextualization of cocoa fields as masculine spaces

"Gender relations are neither uniform across societies nor historically static."
(Agarwal 1994, 51)

"A focus on more narrowly defined patriarchal bargains, rather than on an unqualified notion of patriarchy, offers better prospects for the detailed analysis of processes of transformation."
(Kandiyoti 1988, 285)

Social systems are in constant change, relentlessly being crafted and cracked to adapt to new situations. Patriarchy does not elude this reality, it differs from society to society and varies from time to time, constantly reconstructing itself (Abu-Lughod 1990). Both Abu-Lughod (1990) and Deniz Kandiyoti (1988) have argued that patriarchy needs to be understood in context and not on the basis of universalizations, or to use Haraway's (1988) term, un-situated knowledges. However, whereas Kandiyoti uses women's strategies as an innovate "point of entry for the identification of different forms of patriarchy" (Kandiyoti 1988, 275), I would like in this section to do the reverse. To concretize the specific manifestations of patriarchy in Ayos on the basis of the discourses and observations I made in the field which come to confirm some of the elements that previous authors have also discussed. This chapter is divided in two sections. First a description of how patriarchy evolved to its current state in Ayos; and second, how the fusion of the local expression of patriarchy with that of the colonizers gave way to the masculinization of cocoa for our specific location.

1. Ayos' Patriarchal System

It would be inaccurate to say that I started understanding Ayos' social organization only when I came out of the car on February 22nd, 2017. Although I had never paid as much attention to details and conversations, I had been living in Cameroon's Central Region since 2012 both for work and personal reasons. It was back then when, in my attempt to reveal the unfairness—or at least, so I thought at the time—of patriarchy in Cameroon, I was advised to read "The *Lords* of the forest"[iv] (Philippe Laburthe-Tolra [1981] 2009, my translation; emphasis added) to better understand the social organization of the Beti ethnic group. I wonder if the man who recommended the book to me had actually read it himself, or had just selected the parts that were supportive of his argument just like I am about to

do. Whereas Laburthe-Tolra described a society that is currently clearly patriarchal, it also delved slightly into its progressive crafting and dynamism. To my surprise Laburthe-Tolra came to confirm some of the things that I found during my last trip, such as the existence of a matrilineal past.

Ayos hosts an array of Beti tribes among which the Yebekolo and the Omvang are the most represented. Whereas most of these groups were originally nomadic and did not belong to a specific place, their own dynamics and confrontation with a more or less violent process of colonization, have not only fixed their place of residence but equated their names with geographical zones. In fact, as Jane Guyer (1980b) describes, a concatenation of decisions during the colonial period under Germany and France resulted in a traditional elite that was far from being traditional, as well as a change from *jus sanguinis* to *jus solis during the* colonial periods that would continue after independence (Binet 1956). As the village leader of Nguinda explained to me, a government mandate in 1974 that changed the tax-collection system from a more clan-based approach to a geographical based one, resulted in Ayos being divided in two administrative zones: the Yebekolo grouping to the east, and the Omvang grouping to the west (Nguinda-Minfolo's village leader, Fieldnotes, Nguinda-Minfolo, March 2017). Such a change was in fact driven by the progressive belief that everything should be organized around the geographical and economic logic of the nation state (Loomba [1998] 2015). However, in many villages, be it western or eastern, we find people of both tribes, in addition to other ethnicities from across and outside Cameroon.

These migrations are not new. In fact, Ayos' society has always been in constant transition and today's main ethnic groups have not always dominated the area. Several of my interlocutors told me a story that I would later on rediscover in Laburthe-Tolra's writings regarding the arrival of the Yebekolo to Ayos:

> "Yebekolo's epopee corresponds in fact to a displacement through the forest of several hundred kilometers. Originally from the right bank of the Sanaga river near Yambassa, a group of conquerors (...) decides one fine day to go east because *they are short of women* [*sic!*]. After a foundation ceremony at the Ate hill, these young men advance to Mengeme-asi by *jostling the Omvang*, taking an emphatic name, Emvazik (the invaders who fall like the foliage of a cut-down tree) and begin to 'shout', hence their nickname of Yebekolo. They cross the Nyong to Ayos and some of

them, split under the leadership of two brothers, Amba and Ngo Mendomo, *thrust into the south of the Maka country*. The first subdues the Bikele, the second the Badjue ... *from whom they take women* [*sic!*]. (...) This extreme advance of the Yebekolo will be without tomorrow and they will eventually have to retreat to Maka (Akok) country"[v] (Laburthe-Tolra [1981] 2009, 82—4, my translation and emphasis).

This dynamic could explain the feeling of marginalization expressed by some of the Omvang that I met. But more importantly, this might be at the root of some matrilineal aspects that came up during several conversations in the field regarding certain traditions and expressions. In fact some of the clans of the area where this migration originated, namely Vute, Tikar, Tumu and Yalongo, on the right bank of the Sanaga river, seemed to have practiced matriliny themselves and could indicate that so did the Yebekolo (Laburthe-Tolra [1981] 2009). I remember the day that I heard of Mbengono Elise, a female family chief, during my interview with Valerie in Nyamvoudou (Interview with Valerie 50); I could only but beg her to take me to her house, which luckily for me was right in front the place where I was interviewing Valerie. During our meeting with Elise I was thrilled to ask her how it was possible that she had become a chief, a '*nkunkuma*', in Yebekolo. After explaining that this was her natal village and that because of her personality people had started asking her for advice she added that "I am the cherished niece (...) here the nephews have a bigger mouth than the children"[vi] (Interview with Elise 51). Later on I would also discover that even my host in Nyamvoudou, Ebolo Remy, was facing some problems with the village leader, his maternal uncle, because he was eligible to take up the chieftaincy and replace him as a leader. He had been accused of using witchcraft to provoke some of the recent problems and illnesses of village leader's family in a supposed attempt to overthrow him. How is it possible, I wondered, that being a father-less kid in a patrilineal culture he represented a threat? The importance of the niece and nephew is explored by Laburte-Tolra, who has described the strong link between the nephew, "particularly if the *'moan kal'* [the nephew] is a boy"[vii], and his maternal uncle, from whom he obtains specific rights and inheritance (Laburthe-Tolra [1981] 2009, 214, my translation). Such a relationship can only be explained on the basis of a former matrilineal organization. As IITA facilitators would explain during the meeting when I brought up this issue, "it's because we are always sure that our sister's kid is a natural kid"[viii], explaining to me that it's always certain that the nephew has the same blood because we are certain of the mother, but we can never be sure that we are the father to our own kid (FGD, Fieldnotes, Ayos, March 2017). In either case this matrilineal reminiscence currently affects only the inheritance of some decision-

making positions within the chieftaincy, whereas the inheritance of properties, lineage and other aspects have adopted a patrilineal fashion over the last century. According to Laburthe-Tolra, the Yebekolo migration that was led by men who were travelling "without their sisters" could have been behind the change from matriliny to patriliny as the only way to maintain their identity (Laburthe-Tolra [1981] 2009, 123—4, my translation). However, I would not hesitate much in affirming that colonization also played a role if we look at the histories of other matrilineal places in Cameroon such as the Northwest Region or Mbam in the Central Region (Barbier, Jean-Claude 1985b, Kam Kah 2015). And even though not all processes of colonization had an identical pattern, it would not be surprising to find that the colonial powers systematically removed women from decision-making and traditional political positions in Ayos, similarly to what was done in Ghana (Allman and Tashjian 2000).

Regardless of the matrilineal past, nowadays Ayos' society is very similar to what Deniz Kandiyoti has described as "classic patriarchy" even though it is located outside the main areas that she classifies as such, namely North-Africa, the Muslim Middle East and South and East Asia (Kandiyoti 1988, 278). Both Agarwal (1994) and Kandiyoti (1988) seem to agree on several elements of patriarchal societies, namely three-generational patrilineal households, variable degrees of bride isolation associated with patrilocality, dowry-mediated polygamous and monogamous marriages, and the practice of the purdah.

1.1. Patrilocality and female seclusion

"My village"[ix] was the expression that everyone in Ayos used to refer to their natal village which under normal conditions coincides with their father's natal village, and their paternal grandfather's natal village (Fieldnotes, PAIJA, March 2017). The custom indicates that women "must leave for marriage"[x] to their husband's village to live, therefore giving birth to the couple's descendants and ultimately being buried there (Interview with Pauline 73). In cases where one has been born "out of wedlock"[xi] they would not share the natal village with the father, but would still do so with their maternal grandfather, rarely with the grandmother. What is interesting is that in cases of an unknown fatherhood people do not usually talk about their mother's village, but about the village of their maternal uncles as I came to understand after several interviews. Such naming seems to occur since villages are not associated with women from the family but with men:

"*Authentique*: Yes, we decided… He is a nephew in his hometown, *in his maternal uncles' hometown.* He doesn't have any land… that's why he decided that we have to live here.

Alba: 'He is a nephew,' does that mean that he was not recognized by his father?

Authentique: Yes, his mother got pregnant when she was at school… but his father lives, but… *his uncles have refused*!

Alba: His paternal uncles?

Authentique E: Maternal! Maternal!...

Alba:… they refused him to leave his mother's village?

Authentique: Aham, that he has to stay there, in his mother's village, even though the doesn't have any land."[xii]

(Interview with Authentique 98)

Authentique's first reaction was to talk about her husband's village as that of his maternal uncles. She was probably surprised to have to explain to me that it is the maternal family, since in case of being born in wedlock she would have referred directly to the father and not to the uncles. It is only after I described the village as the mother's village that she started referring to it as such, probably to help my outsider-self understand. What can also seen is that the decision about the relocation of her husband depended on his uncles and not on his mother, confirming the male authority that Kandiyoti (1988) and Agarwal (1994) make reference to.

With the practice of exogamic patrilocality women end up living in a certain level of isolation from their family, unlike the men. This isolation can be seen through the concept of the purdah, or female seclusion, that has been claimed to be one of the classic elements of patriarchy both by Kandiyoti (1988), Agarwal (1994), Abu-Lughod (1990) and Mahmood (2004). This practice, however, can be practiced and inhabited in different ways,

from corporeal practices like veiling, to the organization of spaces[23]. Whereas one of its most known forms of expression is the practice of veiling[24], here I would like to examine female seclusion at the *village* and *household* levels, which are not only more common in Ayos, but also strongly influence the issue of cocoa ownership.

At the village level, as mentioned earlier, women usually migrate to their husband's village. Even if they maintain regular contact with their natal families, it is less frequent and of a different nature than that which they maintain with their in-laws. This isolation was in fact enforced by tradition. As one of the elders in Nguinda told me, the village's name meant "the house" *(nda)* of the "gorilla"(*ngui*). Such a gorilla represented a totem that would not only protect them from invaders, but that would attack those women that having come through marriage wanted to leave (Fieldnotes, Nguinda-Minfolo, March 2017). In fact, of all the women I interviewed 65% where living in a place different from their natal place, with different degrees of separation from their natal origins. Those whom I found living in their place of birth where generally single, separated or widowed, and only four of the married women had remained in their villages, either because they had married someone from the village (N=2) or because the husband had come to live to their places (N=2), known as the "*ntobo*" (the client). Furthermore, none of the migrant[25] women defined themselves as single.

Whereas the purdah stipulates that women are separated from the male members of the family, in this case, it works to isolate them from their biological family. This isolation entails a relative loss of power, which became more evident during our conversations in Ayos when we analyzed the place of the "*ntobo*", the husband that migrates to the wife's village. As Sita explained to me:

> "Aham[affirming]! He [the *ntobo*] will have many problems, because you were not born here. (…) It is perhaps, more or less like a slave. Because when I use

[23] Seen in this wider conception female seclusion is thus not unique to countries of the Global South, since we can also see some expressions of it in Western countries.

[24] In Ayos the practice of veiling is limited only to Muslim women who are generally descendants of the Northern part of the country, and certain church services in which women are asked to wear a skirt and a headscarf (see photograph 1 in annex 3) (Fieldnotes, Nyamvoudou, March 2017).

[25] I use a definition of migrant here that is differently from the commonly used by United Nations the national migration profile of Cameroon by the International Organization for Migration (OIM 2009). The fact that most of these migrants are described on the basis of transnationalism and economic practices, suggests a neo-liberal and masculinist understanding of migration in which the displacement that women have to practice on the basis of customary norms remains invisibilized and normalized.

> [sic] a *mintobo* he does not even have the mouth to say[26] 'I don't do that!' I ask him to do something, and if he refuses I tell him '*akie* [expressing surprise], go out!' It is more or less like a slave."[xiii]
>
> (Interview with Sita 79)

Such isolation thus leads to a loss of relative power in their new community, similar to what has been described by Oyěwùmí (2002) and Agarwal (1994). The fact that this loss of power becomes more evident to people in the field when analyzing the men who migrate that when speaking about women, can serve as an indicator of to the extent to which the position of women has been normalized.

A second form of female seclusion also happens at the household level. For example, men and women often cultivate separate fields for which they are accountable, confirming Jane Guyer's (1980a) and Peter Geschière's (1982) analysis, even if collaboration can happen during key moments of the season (Fieldnotes, several villages, March 2017). Also, physical spaces in the house are also symbolically and physically associated with genders. As such each house includes normally a separate kitchen, to which many of the research participants referred as "my kitchen"[xiv], when it was a woman, and "my wife's, mother's, grandmother's kitchen, etc."[xv], when it was a man; something that Laburthe-Tolra ([1981] 2009) had also described (Fieldnotes, several villages, March 2017; and Interviews: Lea 45; Lizbeth 102). However, although isolated, we will see later on how women have worked to resignify these spaces, as in the case of Narsapur's women in Simons' re-reading of Maria Mies (María Mies in Pam Simons 1997), e.g. by planting cocoa without the need to ask to their husbands, as it was their field; and by maximizing the time they spent in the kitchen to generate economic activities such as the production of "*odontol*", a product that requires a slow and time-consuming process, or cocoa products (see photograph 2 in annex 3).

1.2. Marriage, dowry and male offspring

The institution of marriage constitutes also one of the central elements of patriarchy in Ayos. In particular, three elements are important: marriage as a *process*, *dowry* and *male descendants*. It is the aspect of having male descendants that would come up often during the discussions that we had in the villages. As an example, this is what Virginie told me when

[26] "Avoir la bouche" means to have the capacity to speak and is a common expression used among the Beti, as described by (Laburthe-Tolra [1981] 2009)

we were sitting behind her house on the way to the cocoa field talking about her discomfort with polygamy after explaining why she did not have an official marriage certificate:

"*Alba*: … did they give dowry for you?

Virginie: Aham, *ekie* [exclaiming surprise]! A marriage of forty something… thirty something… perhaps twenty something? The marriage was in 1988.

Alba: Okay, because I was going to ask with regards to the fields that you are preparing, since you said that your marriage is not *official*, if that wouldn't cause problems if something ever happens to your husband, or to yourself, with regards to the children.

Virginie: Hm, hm [as saying no, no]. That does not cause problems, that does not cause problems. The field that I work on is the field of my husband. Aham. So, it is not a problem, because in addition to the certificate, the children. That's how it is here! So the certificate is a guarantee. *But when you have children here that's your certificate.*

Alba: Okay, so it's like a guarantee?

Virginie: Aham, it's like a guarantee…

Alba: And how about the dowry?

Virginie: And dowry as well. They have to give dowry for you. Definition: it's the certificate; and the children. Because even if whatever, if I die now here with these children, you can't leave your place to come here and do, like what's the problem? That, no…the field belongs always to the children, even if there is no certificate.

Alba: Okay, even your co-wife has received dowry as well?

Virginie: She hasn't received dowry yet.

Alba: Is there is no dowry yet? I thought that since you were talking about her [marriage] certificate, I thought that it was already arranged on that side. Aham…"[xvi]

(Interview with Virginie 60)

We see from Virginie's words the importance of dowry and offspring in establishing herself within the lineage and guaranteeing access to property. However, even if in this case she did not refer to the children's gender, it is normally the male children who count to the point that in some cases giving birth to only females can be a cause of divorce (Fieldnotes, Ayos, March 2017). In fact, sometimes female children count somehow less than male children, as one of the facilitators once (unconsciously) told Prisca and myself on the motorbike the story of a friend: "He did not have any children, only girls"[xvii] (Informal discussion with IITA Facilitator III, Informal chat, fieldnotes, village C, March 2017). Furthermore, in some cases male offspring serves the bride not only to establish herself within the lineage, but specifically within cocoa, as Fleur explained to me when I asked her why she had started cocoa planting: "since I have three boys (…) Here in our place the daughter does not inherit, you [the daughter] will come to encumber the others (…) Daughters are born to go away"[xviii] (Interview with Salomé 64). In fact, it is so important to ensure offspring, to the point that one kid does not count as a kid according to a Yebekolo proverb "*abia moan wia e ne ekom*", which means "if you only have one child, have you even given birth?" (Interview with Patience 63).Furthermore, it is a common practice that barren women adopt children, as we will later see. Both the practice of dowry and the importance of having male descendants to claim the bride's place have been highlighted as central elements of classic patriarchy by Agarwal (1994) and Kandiyoti (1988): "dowry (…) [does] not take the form of productive property, such as land (…) [therefore] the young bride enters her husband's household as an effectively dispossessed individual who can establish her place in the patriliny only by producing male offspring" (Kandiyoti 1988, 279).

What is also interesting about these different elements of marriage, namely co-habitation, dowry, offspring, official certificate, and in some cases religious certificate, is that marriage is not seen as a moment or an act, but more as a process, similar to what Allman and Tashjian (2000) indicates for the Asante in Ghana. This has two important implications. First, even though according to an outsider legalist definition of marriage many of the women I interviewed would be defined as single, they defined themselves as married, which is why I opted for their point of view because it was more relevant to the dynamics in which they live. This means that for them what tradition says is sometimes more

important than what legislation says, even in terms of securing access to natural resources. So while, outsider approaches tend to focus on obtaining land certificates to protect women's rights, perhaps this is not so much the issue, as Kumase *et al.* (2010, 7) mention when showing that in their districts of study only 15.5% of women and men were in possession of a land title. Secondly, it also implies that as a process, every step of marriage sequentially entitle women to several degrees of within the family and larger society, deconstructing the idea of women as the universally oppressed, as Agarwal (1994), Warner *et al.* (1997) Oyěwùmí (2002) have criticized. As we will see in the following chapter, women were playing with these differentials of power to negotiate their access to cocoa.

Among the common and accepted forms of marriage we find monogamous and polygamous marriages, in their polygynous version. While both exist the tendency seems to indicate that polygamy is becoming less common. Most of the women that I interviewed told me stories about how they were begging their children not to be in a polygamous marriage: "I asked them [my children] to swear that they wouldn't go into polygamy. There are too many problems in polygamy"[xix] (Interview with Virginie 60). Only one of the cases that I found seemed to be happy with polygamy, which was the case of a woman that had entered the marriage being very young, and precisely one in which the degree of common management of resources and participation among co-wives was the highest. "We often make groups to work in the fields (…) They are like my sisters and mothers"[xx] (Interview with Assolo 88). So whereas Kandiyoti indicates that in the "broadly defined Afro-Caribbean pattern we find some of the clearest instances of non-corporatedness of the conjugal family," this certainly happens to varying degrees (Kandiyoti 1988, 277) Agarwal (1994, 54) has precisely described how the households often function through "cooperative conflicts" rather than as perfectly harmonic units. Although many men indicate that polygamy is decreasing because "they cannot afford more wives" this is probably more related to the initial dowry that is provided to the bride's family than the actual care of the wife during her life, which in a situation of subsistence agriculture seems to be more the other way around, although this reality remains invisibilized (Fieldnotes, Yaounde, April, 2017). It is interesting as we will see in the next chapter that even though some women are strategizing within polygamy, they still advise their children not to engage in that type of marriage, something that comes to confirm Kandiyoti's (1988) idea of the "temporality" of patriarchal bargains. It also seems that the decrease in polygamy is accompanied by a decrease in women's independence in marriage, which seemed to be one of the reasons behind women opting for polygamy during the interviews.

2. Masculinity of cocoa's control and ownership

"Cocoa production is a sector that continues to be deemed a 'male crop' in many countries" (Barrientos, Stephanie 2013, 3). Many times this claim is justified by a naturalized understanding of a supposedly superior physical force in (all) male bodies that would associate them with cocoa production. This common understanding was exactly the answer that the facilitators gave me during one of the FGDs, "it is because cocoa activities are arduous"[xxi] they said. When I asked them if they could describe which activities they were referring to they said "chopping down trees, spraying the insecticides…"[xxii], to which I replied: "But is it not the same trees that are chopped down for the creation of [women's] groundnut fields? Why then do you consider them women's fields when it is still the same men chopping the same trees in the same way, and why is it then not possible that it happens with cocoa fields?" I further added: " there were not atomizers[27] in the nineteenth century, when cocoa arrived to the African continent". After that we engaged in a deconstructive discussion of why cocoa was a masculine crop (FGDs, Fieldnotes, Ayos, March 2017). I would like to argue in this section that cocoa became masculinized because of three main features: it is perennial, it is colonial and it is mainly produced for economic purposes. When I speak of masculinity of cocoa, I refer to its ownership, and not to the people involved in planting. Women were often involved in their relatives' plantations, often their husband's, but they did not own or control the plantations, or planted them on their own right.

Just like the understanding of the patriarchal system in Ayos as the product of a locally situated historical development, we need to understand the masculinization of cocoa in the same terms, as a dynamic process that has happened on the basis of factors which are site specific. It is difficult to dissect each of these elements in different sections, just as what happens with intersectional approaches of identity in feminist studies; it is not just a matter of adding up elements, but the specific combination of these. However it would perhaps be wise to start from one of its particular elements: its colonial aspect, that makes it different from crops that are either also perennial, like banana-plantains, or economic, like rice; crops in which women have also strategized to gain control over as is shown by Kam Kah (2015).

[27] the machine used to spray pesticides and fertilizers

Cocoa is claimed to have been introduced by the Germans through large plantations in Cameroon towards the end to the nineteenth century (Delpech 1980). However, it would be the French who developed a policy of agricultural extension during the 1920s-1930s with the intent of increasing its production by the locals (Jane Guyer 1980b). Whereas Guyer centers her analysis on the masculinization of cocoa on the political economy during French colonization, I take into account also the German period as it connects to some of the stories that people told me in the villages. It seems that some of the first introductions of cocoa to the villages were done by male slaves that managed to escape from the plantations: "Our grandparents used to swallow cocoa to come here when they could escape from the plantations,"[xxiii] explained Moïse, to later describe how they would then take medicinal plants to eject the seeds and plant them in their villages. "They said that it was [also] the rats that brought the beans over there (…) rats are the best planters"[xxiv] added Victor (Mechama Moïse, farmer fieldschool facilitator, and Victor Nono, cocoa trader, Fieldnotes, Ayos, March 2017). Other testimonies refer to men that being traders were paid in cocoa beans (Fieldnotes, Ekok, March 2017). This coincides not only with the research undertook by Weber and Manga (1977) and Gockowski and Dury (1999) but is also in line with the colonial policies that promoted the mobility of men and reduced that of women (Kam Kah 2015). In either case these testimonies seemed to agree with the fact that it was men bringing the seeds to the villages that emphasized their sense of male ownership. But this feeling of ownership seems to have developed through more intricate changes.

First of all, according to Jane Guyer (1980b) it seems that the agricultural extension policy of the French colony focused on promoting cocoa through the farms of the administrative chiefs, first through the creation of demonstration plots whose expansion would later on be restricted, resulting in a "source of personal enrichment"[28]. It is worth noting that the already patriarchal facet of those traditional elites had been reinforced through a colonization that actively fought female leaders (Barbier 1985a) and avoided including women in lists of traditional elites (Kam Kah 2015). Whereas demonstrations plots perhaps pretended to be gender neutral, they were very much masculinizing the crop already by

[28] Even though this part of Cameroon was not under British rule it seems that the British side followed a similar trend. According to Kam Kah (2015, 210): "Any individual who hindered or molested an Agricultural Officer or other person charged with implementing the law and who failed to furnish the required information was liable to either a fine of one hundred pounds or to six months imprisonment or both". This is clear example of Aimé Césaire (2000, 43) critique of how the whole administrative machinery of colonial powers, including an "agricultural development oriented solely toward the benefit of the metropolitan countries ", was put at the service of colonizers.

relying on gendered governing structures. However, as we will later see in chapter five, this arrival through the administrative chiefs offered already some opportunities for women's agency. In either case, this idea of the chieftaincy coincides precisely with the story that people in several villages told me, which, however, on the other hand I only came acquainted with after all my questions about the first women who planted cocoa. Unsurprisingly all of the first women were linked to the chieftaincy, probably because the chiefs' farms where the places where cocoa was officially first planted in the villages. The case of Nguinda-Minfolo seems to be particularly representative: "It was Mvomo-Fils grandmother (…) She was engaged with a trader that came from Mbaka, where the chief had plantations and had sent him to plant in Nguinda. After that he left with another woman and the grandmother kept them because it was her land"[xxv] (Fieldnotes, Nguinda-Minfolo, March 2017). Mbaka[29], or Mbeka'a, is precisely the chieftaincy of second degree of second biggest ethnic group, the Omvang .

This already incipient masculinization would be further enforced through a taxing system that not only put men as the official tax payers, but who were made responsible for paying not on behalf of their wives but for actually "having wives", even more if these wives had less than five children (Guyer 1980b). Putting men at the center of the tax system was actually a common feature of colonial rule across Africa (Kam Kah 2015). Not only did it get men more interested in cash crops for the responsibilities that were being forced on them, but women's work load also diverted them from income generating activities, as they were requested to contribute to "food requisitions, porterage, road-building and maintenance, (…) and street cleansing" (Guyer 1980b, 318-319). Examples from other African countries seem to indicate that even when women did generate income, they were encouraged by the colonial powers to give it to their husbands (Kam Kah 2015). Furthermore in previous years, the German authorities had developed specific laws in Cameroon that prevented women from leaving the rural areas, while male labor was being subtracted, further putting the burden of food production on women's shoulders (Kam Kah 2015). So globally, women's role in reproduction, both of human bodies and their actual maintaining throughout life, increased through the colonial process. This is a perfect example of María Lugones' assessment that colonization "introduced many genders and gender itself as a colonial concept and mode of organization of relations of production, property relations, of cosmologies and ways of knowing" (Lugones 2007, 186). This social

[29] Villages and cities appear with different transcriptions in different documents.

order instead of being horizontal "[encompassed] the subordination of females in every aspect of life" (ibid. 2007, 196).

However, blaming gender relations on colonialism alone would imply denying the agency that pre-colonial societies had in contributing to these relations. "Colonialism did not inscribe itself on a clean slate, and it cannot therefore account for everything that exists in 'postcolonial' societies "(Loomba [1998] 2015, chapter one, section one). Furthermore, it would also imply erasing the "internal heterogeneity" of the societies that underwent colonization, and would not be able to provide a valid explanation of why similar colonizing countries induced different effects in different places" (Kandiyoti in Abu-Lughod 2001, 112). This is precisely the view that Jane Guyer (1980a) takes when looking at the specificities of why cocoa became the responsibility of men; this time rather than paying attention to the socioeconomic factors of the colonizer, looking at the nature of the crop and socio-economic organization and metaphysical vision of the local inhabitants. When comparing the Beti group to the Yoruba, she explains that Beti men—which encompass the Yébekolo and the Omvang—would have adopted cocoa because they were responsible for clearing the forest following their metaphysical association with wood and metal. So contrary to Boserup's understanding of African farming systems as essentially female, Guyer (1980a, 364) argues that although cocoa was masculinized in both places, the reasons diverted: "Among the Yoruba, cocoa cultivation was an extension of men's role in cultivation, while among the Beti, its technical characteristics as a crop meant that it was planted in newly cleared forest fields using men's agricultural techniques". While lands were managed as common property in a the pre-colonial system, the disruptions in social organization introduced by the reallocations of populations (Weber 1977), and the successive modification of traditional authorities (Guyer 1980b), together with the introduction of plantations like cocoa itself, contributed to a more individualized sedentary system. An already patrilocal system was transformed into a patrilineal society, now interested in keeping property in the long term, reducing the access that women had to land and therefore to perennial resources like cocoa. All of this confirms Kandiyoti's (1988, 277) critique of a "colonization [that] eroded the material basis for women's relative autonomy (such as usufructuary access to communal land or traditional craft production)".

"Why did women not get interested in cocoa before?"[xxvi] I asked once more to one of the patriarchs in Nyamvoudou that I could only see thanks to the moonlight that pierced the trees around us. "Women were like slaves before"[xxvii], replied Remy, as participative

as usual. The patriarch, who waited patiently until Remy finished, added "women were nomads before (…) who could even change marriages ten times!"[xxviii] (Informal chat with patriarch and Remy, IITA facilitator, Fieldnotes, Nyamvoudou, March 2017). I listened to them keeping in mind the advice that an old Cameroonian friend of mine had given me once "In Cameroon, there is always a tendency to exaggerate"[xxix]. They went on to explain to me that because women could leave anytime they did not want to invest themselves in something that took years to produce economic benefits. Furthermore, men preferred women to work for them which men could enforce since they were the ultimate land owners. "Have you brought land here [to this marriage]?"[xxx] seemed to be the common retort that women received when conflict arose; something that many women recall (FGD and Interviews with Sita 79).

Altogether we see how the masculinity of cocoa has a palpable material basis that developed through the interweaving of societies during colonization. However, many times Ayos' society forgets this history in order to justify that cocoa belongs to a specific gender on the basis of their material bodies. "Culturally there is a natural division of labor" said one participant during the last meeting I hold in Yaounde. "The division is either natural or cultural", I replied to him, "if it was actually natural I would not have found a woman like Pelagie, who was chopping down the trees by herself", to which I added, with a touch of humor, "if the division was actually based on nature perhaps we should go back to the villages and say that every man that is shorter than 1.70 [meters] wouldn't be allowed to produce cocoa", after which everyone in the room burst with laughter (Filednotes, Yaounde, April 2017). Like Pelagie, many women in Ayos have broken the prejudices of women participation in cocoa production, not only by chopping the trees themselves (Interviews: Pelagie 82; Sita 79) but through many more strategies. To them I devote the next chapter.

Chapter Five: Cracking Patriarchy: grandmother's tales and inter-generational citations

Describing the appearance and transmission of a subversive practice

> "New strategies and forms of consciousness do not simply emerge from the ruins of the old and smoothly produce a new consensus, but are created through personal and political struggles, which are often complex and contradictory."
> (Kandiyoti 1988, 286)

This chapter explores the early testimonies of women who owned cocoa farms in Ayos to show that the current practices of women have their origin in colonial times, to confront the idea that female cultivators are the sole result of the development policies at the turn of the 21st century. I further analyze how these practices were transmitted from woman to woman, through both discourse and the very physical plantations that acted as symbolic—materialized, to use Butler's (1993) idea—reminders. Analyzing women's decisions through this temporal and contextual perspective allows presenting agency as a performative practice of multiple individuals who use the very instabilities of the system so that "the force of the regulatory law can be turned against itself to spawn rearticulations that call into question the hegemonic force of that very regulatory law" (Butler 1993, 2). In this sense, performativity is understood as a "reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (Butler 1993, 2); each reiteration is never "self-identical" (Butler 1993, 190) and differs not only at every instance or from individual to individual, but also from one generation to the next (Kandiyoti 1988). In the final section I examine the explosion of testimonies of female farmers at a time in which the "bases of patriarchy crumble under the impact of market forces" (Kandiyoti 1988, 281) in Cameroon. An idea that has also been suggested by Abu-Lughod (1995) and Agarwal (1994).

1. Grandmothers and first cracks

As I said in the methodology chapter, at first I was only concentrating on female farmers that I could directly interview, but after hearing the story of one of the women in the village of Ekok an idea struck me: what if what women are doing now is not just a matter of current macroeconomic and political forces and social systems, but part of a collective agency that has been constructing itself through a "reiterative and citational practice"

(Butler 1993, 2)? A similar reflection was noted by Robertson (2009) during her fieldwork in Nigeria[30]. If this was the case, how had it started? And how did it extend in time?

I was interviewing Pauline in her living room in the village of Ekok. I remember feeling the moisture in the air that the nearby river was constantly creating. A moisture that was coming to us through the breath of the cocoa leaves and roots. Cocoa does not smell as much as coffee plantations do, but we would still smell the damp earth around us, something that would later on give me a clue of why it was here that I found some of the earliest testimonies. When I asked Pauline why she had started planting, she explained that she was following the example of another woman in the village:

> "*Pauline*: Well, the thing that triggered me when I was here… Because before, when I was in my village, I did not even know the money. When I came here the first time I saw women often. They were often planting cocoa. They take cocoa, they sell it. They take cocoa, they sell it. They take… it was back then that I said to myself that I could also plant, and do a lot of fields like that. (…)
>
> *Alba*: So in 2003, or even before you left the village, were there a lot of women doing it?
>
> *Pauline*: Aham [affirming], there were many women, like… the wife of my father-in-law. She had planted a field nearby. It was back then that I had seen it. I said, shit, if she does like that I can also do it."[xxxi]
>
> (Interview with Pauline 73)

It was interesting to see that Pauline not only referred to a previous woman behind her choice, but the specific way and rhythm in which she explained it: "[Women] take cocoa, they sell it. They take cocoa, they sell it. They take…". It is this reiteration, this citation, that speaks of something that develops through repetition, first by one woman, then by a group of women, extending in time and space; something that had come all the way to 2017 through discourse—stories about what women were doing—and matter—the plantations that they had left. Luckily for me, I met Maman Sita, the woman that had inspired Pauline, the next day in Nyamvoudou; she told me about the first woman who planted cocoa in Ekok:

[30] Roberson writes that "the fact that the mothers of some of the women interviewed had had their own cocoa farms places the active and independent involvement of Nigerian women still further back in the chronology" (Robertson 2009, 108).

"*Sita*: There were only the elder women that I found there [in Ekok] (…) I found that the chief's wife, that two of the chief's wives had planted cocoa. It is that which gave me a lesson. But they were dead when I was there… they had left their fields (…) I didn't find them [the women] (…). We were told stories, that 'That one left that field, the other one left that field. It belongs to their sons'. When there were problems with their fields, people threatened that they belonged to their sons. (…) Because the story of the plantation of the first woman was that the woman was a daughter from Ekok. So, she married the chief, and her people gave her land to work, so she planted cocoa. That 'This land here belongs to me, I can do what I want'. She then planted cocoa for the first time. That's what they told me. It was her people's land. (…) It was the first wife of the chief, the '*ekomba minga*'[31]. It was herself who started doing the fields. (…) So we can say that the second [wife] took the example from her co-wife.

Alba: Probably… and I was thinking also that since she was the '*ekomba minga*' she had a power in the marriage that the other women did not have.

Sita: Aham [affirming], and she also had a lot of children!

Alba: So, when a woman has a lot of children she earns power in the marriage?

Sita: Yes, specially the sons!"[xxxii]

(Interview with Sita 79)

It is after this encounter that I decided to start enquiring[32] about the first women in the villages, and also the other elements of the past that would complete some of the observations that I was already making about the crafting of patriarchy, described in the previous chapter. By asking both women and elders in the villages, specially chiefs and patriarchs, I found three women in a total of three villages: Ekok, Nguinda-Minfolo and Kombo (see map in chapter three). All of them shared common elements. First of all, they belonged to the village in which they had started the plantations, or as some people

[31] *Ekomba minga* is the Yebekolo expression to refer to the first wife of a polygamous marriage.
[32] It is perhaps because of this that it is even more important to call the women I interviewed research participants, and not just objects of study. If it were not for of the reflection of these women I would not have included some of the questions, even if they did not directly ask me to; something that Allman and Tashjian (2000) have also reflected on.

expressed they were "children of the villages"[xxxiii] (Fieldnotes, Ayos, March 2017). Second, all of these villages where situated in the humid forest along Nyong and Mfoumou rivers or their tributaries (Interviews: Sabine 80; Pauline 73). Third, the villages were all, in a way, well connected either to the actual road that links Ayos with Yaounde, or with the previous path that had been developed during the colonial period (Fieldnotes, Wong, March 2017). Fourth, these women were in one way or another related to the chieftaincy. In the case of Ekok, she was married to the village chief, whereas in the case of Kombo, she was one of the chief's daughters (Interviews Sita 79; Marceline 95). In the case of the woman from Nguinda-Minfolo, she had in fact started a relationship with a trader that had been sent by the Omvang grouping chief[33] in Mbaka. It was after their separation that she kept the land with the plantations, since it was her family's land. Finally, we see that at least one of them—the woman in Ekok—was the *ekomba minga* and had many children. In addition to these women who owned fields, people told stories about women who used to sell the "*bibolo*"—cocoa beans of lower quality that had rotten in the fields and were sold for lower prices in the markets—a strategy that I will not be able to explore here.

From the discussions in the field it seems that these women started selling cocoa beans around the 1940s or 1950s. Given that the varieties of cocoa used back then used to take around seven years to produce, it is quite likely that they had either planted these fields in the 1930s or inherited those of their ancestors. These stories coincide then with the testimony of Jean Binet (1956), who already identified women who were producing cocoa in the 1950s. Moreover, the fact that these women were all in one way or another linked to the chieftaincies, seems to coincide with Jane Guyer's (1980b) analysis of the expansion of cocoa in the late 1920s. As I mentioned in chapter three, the French political economy during the colonial period promoted tree crops, including cocoa, "on the farms of the administrative chiefs and indigenous notables during the early years of French rule" (Guyer 1980b, 319).

Unfortunately, all of these women were already dead in 2017, making it impossible to get their testimonies first-hand. These stories thus do not allow us to theorize about the specific motives that could tell us about their agency as individuals, but these stories are useful otherwise. These stories speak, in line with Butler (1993), about the co-construction of a cultural discourse and the importance of materiliality in shaping women's agency. No matter where we start the loop of these co-constructions, we will see how the different

[33] With a higher status that a village chief.

elements connect. First, these practices were enabled because of the physical space, the gallery forest[34] of the Nyong and Mfoumou rivers and tributaries, that ensure the ideal temperature, humidity and shade conditions necessary for the growth of cocoa trees. The practices would thus have never happened for example in the Northern desert of Cameroon. At the same time, they were enabled by a discourse that said that cocoa production was an element of power, and that it was not just men, but different powerful women in the community who had the possibility of creating the fields. Secondly, these practices produced effects, both material and symbolic. Materially we see the cocoa fields, the physical spaces that were created, which were one of the elements that Sita and other women found in the villages. Discursively, we see the stories that were retold from generation to generation. And both the physical places and oral stories were related. The existence of a physical location acted as a constantly sedimented and materialized reminder, "a kind of citationality", thus reinforcing the very discourse (Butler 1993, 15). At the same time, these spaces were the very consequence of this discourse, letting us think of a "materiality (…) as the effect of power, as power's most productive effect" (Butler 1993, 2). These stories thus had an impact on the material and cultural imaginary. It is precisely this material and cultural imaginary, this "struggle over *resources* and a struggle over *meanings*" (Agarwal 1994, 421, her emphasis), that had been taken to the next generation, the mothers, as the possibility of a new existing individual yet to be normativized as a group.

2. Expanding the crack: citing the practice

I have described in the previous section how Pauline had taken the idea from Sita, who had heard the story of the village chief's wife who had created the cocoa plantation. Whereas women expressed in many ways why they had started planting cocoa, the idea of citing each other's practices seemed to come up frequently during our conversations. As Butler (1993) says, it is because this practice is reiterated over time, and because each reiteration adds something different to the previous one, that the new norm crystallizes. These micro changes and repetition, a collective repetition, in time and space, generates the performative effect.

This citational practice however did not refer only to women from previous generations, but also to women of the current generation. Here is how Virginie explains it:

[34] Gallery forest is a type of forest that forms as a corridor along the river.

"*Virginie:* Five years that it has changed… From the moment you go to ask [for money] you start blaming yourself… Shit, I cannot stay like this… Because when you have your *[female] friends, you have your co-wives and your sisters-in-law* that start showing you that a woman should not live like that; because if you always have problems with your husband… it is him that manages everything. It is not good when the man manages everything, so we started little by little… But for the moment each of us manages. You have your part… but… if he is constrained by something you take some money to help him. (…) Myself, since I was the first one [first wife] it was him that managed everything. I cannot conceive that you work and he manages it. So, I did not even have an idea that the woman can manage the money… but to my big surprise! I was doing it because I was alone. Well, and there you had the second [wife]… I have also started to live like that. He also wanted to manage everything by himself, but when the second wife arrived. Him in his position of wise man… She was a bit awake… Well, when she arrived with her eyes open [she said] 'Me, myself, over here to do the joint property, I don't do that.' There you have the wife, who will say something? She started to have her own things, she had her own money that she managed by herself. Well, I had my money… but then the second one arrived. I see that, I see that, I tell my husband that I will also do the same because I am suffering, because 'I earn my money so that you can take care of the family, but the second wife manages her money alone.' So we discussed [and he said] 'My wife, I see that but...' Because my husband says that I am his right arm, aren't I? Since I already had the thought he said 'This wife over here, with the habits of the second wife over there… There you go, my wife is going to change!' I then said that 'I will do as the other one does.' So he said 'I cannot hurt you.' Well, everyone manages, but in managing my money like that… but… it hurts my heart, so I take always something and I give him to manage, even if he uses it with his in-laws, with his second wife, with his daughters and their children… aham [affirming], it's like that."[xxxiv]

(Interview with Virginie 60)

We see in Virginie's discourse how it was not so much women from the past, but her friends, sisters-in-law and even her co-wife, what gave her the idea. In fact, Virginie retells a story in which being the first wife of a polygamous marriage, the *ekomba minga*, she starts

seeing how upon the arrival of the second wife she starts her own cocoa field as well as the management of her own funds. As in the case of Pauline, she expresses this experience in a very repetitive and reiterative pattern. When she repeats "I see this, I see that", meaning that she saw the same gesture over and over, her perception seems to fit Butler's idea of reiterated performance (Butler 1993). Furthermore, it is also interesting that even the husband realized that the practice is going to be transmitted from one woman to another, and that he cannot do anything to avoid the citational practice: "This wife over here, with the habits of the second wife over there… There you go, my wife is going to change!" To which Pauline replies "I will do as the other one does." (Interview with Pauline 73).

A similar discourse and conflict between the expectations of the husband and what the woman sees in other women is explained by Fleur when I asked her whether she was registered at the cocoa cooperative: "I am not yet registered. I will do it. It was my husband who told me to try only for one year [to be registered in his name]. And when I see that other women have already adhered [to the cooperative with her own names], I will also go adhere myself"[xxxv] (Interview with Fleur 105). Later on she would add again: "As you see as well that the other ones advance, is it going to be me who will stay behind? You are also obliged to plunge into it!"[xxxvi]

It is seems then that the practice is cited from one generation to another, and sometimes in very conscious ways, as Lizbeth, another of the farmers expressed: "I always tell my daughters that 'I don't have anything to say to you, know only that I am just a model that you have to copy' (…) I do that for… the children to remember me"[xxxvii] (Interview with Lizbeth 102). However, there is a change in the relation from the first generation with the second, and from second with the third, coinciding with Kandiyoti's (1988) idea of bargains that change over time. In listening how they speak about their daughters, we see that in every reiteration the change "is never quite complete, that [practices] never quite comply with the norms by which their [crystallization] is impelled" (Butler 1993, 2). The way that Lizbeth perceives herself as someone that *produces cocoa* is different from the way she perceives her children, and this was common to many of the interviews. Whereas she conceptualizes her male children as those who *will and must plant cocoa*, she seems to think of her daughters as those *who might plant cocoa* when she says:

> *Alba*: Before you said that 'it [the field] was for your sons'?

Lizbeth: It is for the sons… Even the daughters, those who want to come work on it, they can come. Because even these spaces; here, these spaces. The plantain here is for the other one that just called [on the phone]. Since the daughters got married… even if they don't get married, here in the middle until over there [she explains pointing at the fields]. The girls, the one that wants to build here, builds. Here it's my home [pointing at the house]. I don't need anything more than that. Even if she leaves, if she wants a space here, I say it [to her husband]. He [the husband] is not against. He is not complicated with that kind of thing, that I propose something and he refuses. He knows that. Yes, he accepts, even if sulking a little. He knows that it is true that it is like that that it needs to happen.

Alba: And if the daughter comes back, is it not going to create an unbalance?

Lizbeth: No, my children are strongly attached to each other.

Alba: What I wanted to say is that, since you have already started the cocoa plantation, that means that when the boy takes over it has already a certain level [of production]. The girl, you say that 'she can do it', which means that if she starts the cocoa plantation she will start from zero. Is that not going to, you know, [create] a small difference between them, that he already starts with something?

Lizbeth: Like this one [one of the children]. Everything… This one, the second one that just called me. When he does something and he does not have any means it is this other one that helps… And he even says that the cocoa plantations are not so much for him because over there where he works, he is not too diminished [he has enough economic resources]."[xxxviii]

(Interview with Lizbeth 102)

Her discourse suggests three things. First, the idea that the new norm of women planting cocoa has begun to exist but is not yet completely consolidated. Second, that this gap in the consolidation of the citational practice is mediated through two different conceptions of agency, one expressed through "negative freedom"—the removal of barriers—the other one through "positive freedom"—the establishing of measures to grant an action (Mahmood 2004, 11). For Lizbeth, her sons seem to be those for whom she needs to

ensure positive freedom, "the capacity to realize an autonomous will, one generally fashioned in accord with the dictates of 'universal reason' (…)" (Mahmood 2004, 11). "Traditionally" cocoa was for men, and therefore the mother must assure that this tradition is kept. However, her own acts, and the benefits that she sees from them, encourage her to grant at least a negative freedom to her daughters, an "absence of external obstacles to self-guided choice and action, whether imposed by the state, corporations, or private individuals" (Mahmood 2004, 11).

Last but not least, her discourse tell us that perhaps this dual and gendered conception of freedom as a bargaining strategy also indicates that it is done precisely in this way, taking into account the possibilities of the system. If we compare to the Ghanaian context in which, based on its matrilineal past, male and female farmers had come to transmit their properties separately, and thus "the females who began to acquire and control farmland after 1920 considered it their property [thus female property] and desired to pass it on to daughters and sisters" (Mikell, Gwendolyn 1984, 209). The difference between Asante and women from Ayos is perhaps due to the specific configuration of the patriarchal system in which they have to bargain in consonance with Kandiyoti's (1988) analysis. Whereas Ghanaian women were ensuring positive freedom to their daughters, which some of the women in Ayos also did, others were ensuring their daughters' access to land through negative freedom, namely the removal of barriers; in other words, "if my daughter asks, I am not going to say no". It is in this way, by offering freedoms of a different type to their children—the generation of the daughters—that many of the women seemed to be negotiating with tradition.

3. From cracks to chasms

During the interviews I asked women when they had started cultivating fields of their own. Figure 2, below, shows the number of women that declared to have started their fields at a specific year, which I have grouped by decade for clarity. Even though some women copied the idea directly from the grandmothers, most of the women started in the 1990s, increasing exponentially through the 2000s and 2010s. Although the starting year should be

taken as an approximation[35], it is interesting to see how the bigger change starts precisely in the 1990s, and grows exponentially towards the present.

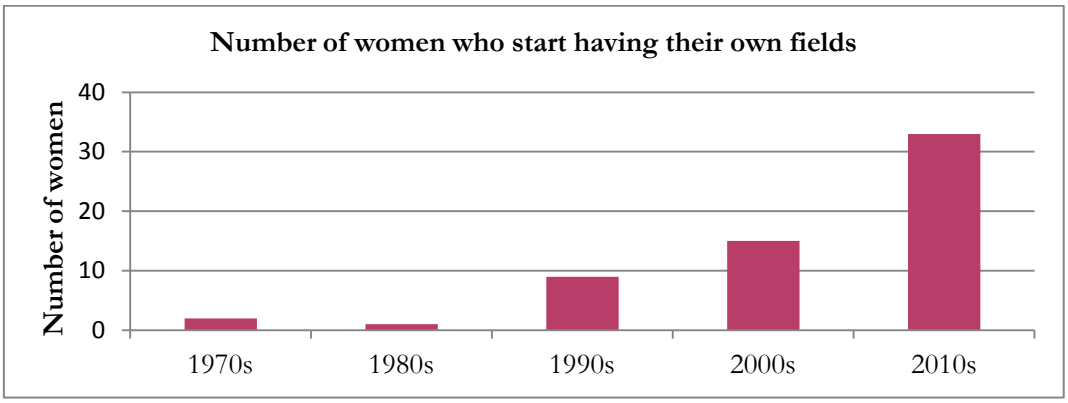

Figure 2: Number of women according to the decade they declare to start having their own fields, out of 72 responses. Source: interviews.

When asking women for reasons for this increase they made reference to different factors. Some made reference to a changing awareness of women regarding their own rights, through a change in the education or a change in laws. Many others, as in the case of Sita, referred to the economic crises that Cameroon went through in the 1980s-1990s, with particular emphasis on the coffee and cocoa sectors:

> "It was in 1989. There were a lot of people who stored the coffee in their houses [to see if the prices would raise]. And it [the coffee] found people in their houses, believing that it would raise. It is then that people abandoned their [coffee] plantations and started planting cocoa, because it was cocoa that gained weight that year."[xxxix]
>
> (Interview with Sita 79)

Other authors have also spoken about the abandonment of cash crops in view of the crises, to search for other livelihoods. Commenting on how farmers in Ayos faced the economic crisis Georges Courade (1994, 311, my translation) highlights: "in order to face the decrease in their yearly income, the farmers increasingly dedicate to fishing which turns out to be more profitable than agriculture."[xl] However, whereas both women's discourses and

[35] Whereas the age of the interviewees could have an influence on this chart, with older women starting earlier than younger women, there are clearly other factors (marriage, first child, death of a relative, and external factors like market forces or government policies). In fact, the age at which they started planting varies from eighteen to fifty-eight years old, with some old women who started while they were young, other that had recently started, and other women starting in their thirties or forties.

Courarde's analysis explain how farmers' relation to cash crops changed, they do not explain how this dynamic was gendered. According to Miriam Goheen (1991, 240), during the crisis lived in Cameroon during the 1980s[36] "women have borne the brunt of the economic crisis; it is they who have had to find the means for families to survive" (Goheen 1991, 240). Furthermore, Goheen describes how the crisis "increased dramatically as have demands on female time and labor" (Goheen 1991, 239). But understanding the increase in the number of women through an increase in their burden would be once again to bring that image of victimization and subordination. This analysis needs to be approached more holistically.

The effect of the political and economic crisis in Cameroon seemed to be twofold. First, the decrease in the economic capacity of male relatives—husbands in particular—in relation to their decreasing income at a time of increasing cost of living, reduced their bargaining power in the households and families (Agarwal 1994). And second, the increase and diversification of women's labor, as Goheen (1991) indicates. This meant that while women were increasingly looking for new sources of income, their husbands and other male relatives were probably less reluctant to these new occupations as their own wellbeing depended on them. The specificity of the household in Cameroon, as a place of "cooperative conflict" (Agarwal 1994, 54), further points in this direction. According to Guyer (1980a, 370) "the need in bad times and the opportunity in good times for a woman to earn an independent income originate in a domestic organisation with limited income sharing." Some women pointed precisely at the unfair distribution of joint resources within the household, which became more evident during the crisis: "you worked the whole year in his field, and even if he made 800,000 [francs] he would give you 30,000 [francs]. It was better to spend the same time on your own field and you would receive more benefice" (Fieldnotes, Ayos, March 2017).

The economic shock seems thus to have contributed to blurring the lines of gendered roles and responsibilities. Not only did men abandon the crops and shifted to fishing, but in order to cope with the economic crisis women entered cash cropping[37] and men started participating in subsistence agriculture (Fonchingong 1999). Furthermore, the aging of the plantations (Courade 1994), in combination with the aging of their owners (Delpech 1980)

[36] The crisis in Cameroon is argued to have had two origins: First, Cameroon's dependency on oil exports made it vulnerable to the global oil crisis of the late 1970s (Courade 1994). Secondly, the approach of market liberalization through SAPs proposed by the World Bank reduced government spending on subsidies and farm support thus impacting reduced the earnings of small farmers (Fule 2014).
[37] Maria Prats Ferret (1996) found a similar process of cocoa feminization in São Tomé & Principe

could also have provoked the reduction in the benefits that men were getting from them. As a result, new niches, roles, and opportunities were created for women, either through the creation of their own plantations or through renting agreements. During the interviews some women in fact indicated how they had first started renting before they had "*pris le goût*", that is, developed a taste for cocoa plantations. All in all, this whole process exemplifies how "the material bases of classic patriarchy crumble under the impact of new market forces, capital penetration in rural areas or processes of chronic immiseration" (Kandiyoti 1988, 281). In such a changing scenario "women [seem to] take advantage of these contradictions in their society to assert themselves and to resist" (Abu-Lughod 1990, 47).

The second impulse for women's involvement in cocoa seem to have camo through a series of governmental programs and projects from international development and research organizations that were launched during the 2000s (Fule 2014). In Ayos there were two important developments; in 2009 the Ministry of Agriculture established the project "Support Program for Young Farmers (PAIJA)", through which some women received plantations and support; and in 2014 in which IITA and SNV started implementing projects for cocoa production (Fieldnotes, Yaounde, February 2017). Although some of the activities of these projects did target women through "leadership activities", the main emphasis was still on men which is why all the facilitators and cooperative representatives that I worked with were men. One of the reasons I was given for this emphasis on men was that, firstly, they were more recognized by the community, and secondly, they had fewer responsibilities in terms of family care. Furthermore, RAFAYOS, the women's network, had been more active in the last five years which seems to have likewise boosted the increase in women planting cocoa (Interviews: Fleur 105; Sarah 55). In addition, increasing debates on including women's rights, girls' inheritance rights and women's control over property within the legislative framework, seemed to be further boosting the increase of female farmers. Some women talked about this fertile environment during the interviews:

> "*Fleur:* We [women] are already in the issue of cocoa. It is now said that five over five [fifty/fifty]. Everything that the man does you need to have five [fifty percent] there as well. If it's fifty here, then it is fifty there. That's what we are taught now. If there are fifty men, we should have fifty women as well.
>
> *Alba*: Where do they teach you that?

> *Fleur:* In our women's festivity. The 8th of March that we just celebrated. We are told that we should not let it go anymore. As we are women, we should be combatant women. Thus, equality of sexes. We should do that. That's what they are telling us, and *what we were already doing anyway*."[xli]
>
> (Interview with Fleur 105, my emphasis)

In sum, this whole process might be understood from Butler's perspective of agency as performativity. Rather than considering the change as the result of the actions from macro-actors in the system, it would be the existence of these new norms, a new discourse and material conditions, that would have opened the possibilities for women to enact them, resignify them, and mold them: "agency, it is to be found, paradoxically, in the possibilities opened up in and by that constrained appropriation of the regulatory law, by the materialization of that law, the compulsory appropriation and identification with those normative demands" (Butler 1993, 12). When Fleur says in the above excerpt that "we were already doing [it] anyway", she precisely refers to a change that could be attributed to women's agential capacity itself, rather than as the sole success of economic and development policies. This suggests that it was not the outer discourse, but their own agency within that wider discourse and material possibilities that created the expansion. However, to better understand the very way in which each woman enacted these norms we need to refer to their specific position in the grid of power. It is in dialogue with Kandiyoti (1988), Agarwal (1994), Wekker (1997) and Mahmood (2004), and a comparison with specific studies on female cocoa farmers, that we can understand why not all women accessed cocoa spaces in the same manner or at the same moment in their lives. To this I devote the next chapter.

Chapter Six: Bargaining with cocoa

Contemporary testimonies and lessons on agency

Whereas external opportunities like markets, government laws, and international NGOs enabled a fertile change, women expressed their reasons for starting cocoa plantations in very many different and personal ways, with personal suffering[38] emerging as the main reason both during the interviews and the FGD (Fieldnotes, Ayos, March 2017). Globally, women accessed cocoa production in many diverse ways. They participated in the production of cocoa by setting up plantations, trading, and processing cocoa beans. In order to achieve this they used a series of strategies ranging from accessing land through different family members—either through marriage or inheritance—renting barren land or existing plantations, buying land, establishing cocoa-beans based credit systems[39], working as middlewomen[40], or processing the beans. Whereas most of the plantations were done individually in family land, some steps did involve working in groups during the pruning or in market participation through the cooperatives. I found women from Ayos participating in every stage of the cocoa business, from tree felling during land preparation to engaging in cocoa trading in big cities such as Douala[41]. In sum, similar to the women interviewed in Ondo state in Nigeria by Emma Robertson "there is no operation involved with cocoa that [they] didn't do" (Robertson 2009, 91). Furthermore, they involved other women in different ways: they organized labor both through family and hired employees—mostly men—and managed the inheritance of their fields differently, with some granting land to all children and others only to some, either on the basis of gender, their close relation or an increased trust.

Overall, having interviewed seventy-two women, I came across many stories and thus many formations of agency. Whilst discussing all the strategies mentioned by women more in depth would be of interest, it is not my purpose for this thesis. Instead, for this chapter I have selected a very specific set of cases which show how women bargain with key elements of patriarchy. Not only have these types of negotiations not yet been covered in depth in studies of the most researched regions, namely Ghana and Nigeria (Allman and Tashjian 2000, Robertson 2009), but they can also help to produce valuable theoretical

[38] The FGD of women, as well as women in the interviews, mentioned "personal suffering", whereas the men's group pointed at laws and NGOs.
[39] Women lent money to neighbors and were reimbursed in cocoa beans which they could usually sell for a higher value than the loan.
[40] Acting as brokers for cocoa companies buying directly from the producers.
[41] The main port of export in Cameroon.

standpoints. In other words, similarly to the approach taken by Kandiyoti (1988, 283), my selection "does not by any means exhaust the range of possible responses available to women. It is merely intended to demonstrate the place of a particular strategy within the internal logic of a given system". Section one of this chapter will present the four cases and section two will lay down a debate on agency.

What I want to highlight here is, first, that external influences such as laws, development projects, and markets, were fertile because of women's personal stories. Second, that women's decisions involved negotiations, or bargains—as they have been named both by Kandiyoti (1988) and Agarwal (1994)—rather than radical oppositions or complete submissions. Third, that these cases exhibit variations in which women make use of different elements of their intersectional identities (Kandiyoti 1988, 275), with women who belong to the same categories not necessarily sharing the same strategy, contrary to what Agarwal (1994) has suggested. For me, the observation that women developed different strategies within the same milieu of external influences serves as one of the arguments in favor of their inner agency.

Finally, while these strategies might be criticized as not being inherently feminist, or as the result of a "false consciousness" (Agarwal 1994, 433), I suggest that they can be theorized as feminist from two perspectives. First, women might be making these decisions to improve their wellbeing even through an appearance of compliance with oppressive norms (Kandiyoti 1988, Agarwal 1994, Mahmood 2004). However, in order to understand how this improvement acts as a feminist decision and not as the result of oppression we need to both "penetrate the surface of behavior, taking cognizance of covert acts of resistance and probing the obstacles to overt resistance" (Agarwal 1994, 430)—an approach with which Kandiyoti (1988) seems to coincide—and redefine their own understanding of wellbeing and personal achievement (Agarwal 1994, Mahmood 2004). Second, the actions of these women could also be defended from the view point of feminism because, either consciously or unconsciously, they might be managing to change the perceived masculinity of a space—cocoa plantations—that, as a symbol of power, had been reserved for men—emulating some of the consequences of the women's mosque movement (Mahmood 2004).

1. Negotiating key elements of patriarchy in Ayos

The four cases I have selected speak of four ways in which women bargain with the impositions of patriarchy. Namely, they speak of how women resignify the practices of

patrilocality, polygamy, dowry, and the importance of male offspring. Whereas I highlighted female seclusion as another important element of patriarchy in Ayos, I take it here as a cross-cutting topic which participates in women's bargains, rather than as a case-study in its own. The particularity of this seclusion is that, in contrast to the separation of religious or domestic spaces (María Mies in Simons 1997, Mahmood 2004), in Ayos it becomes apparent through the separation of agricultural spaces. Since in many of these cases men's and women's plantations were physically separated, sometimes by more than one hour's walk[42], women might have enjoyed more control over their activities. This separation is of course not absolute, as men might collaborate sometimes in agricultural activities, help in preparing the land for planting (for instance chopping down trees), and visit the land from time to time; however their presence is not always helpful, as becomes evident through some of the stories women retell about husbands or fathers-in-law removing their cocoa stems[43] to prevent them from planting (Interviews: Pauline 73; Jeannette 33).

1.1. Case one: patrilocality and, seduction and divorce

The story of Pauline is a story of how she constructed her possibilities through the very practice of patrilocality. Pauline told me how when she arrived to her marital village she intended to plant cocoa as soon as she saw other women. But after several years of struggles against her father-in-law, who would prevent her from planting, she decided to leave to her natal village. Once in this village, her brothers would not allow her to plant either. It is then that she decided to take on a second marriage in a different village. This second husband was at first not interested in cocoa, but upon her initiative they both started planting—a discourse that was repeated in several interviews. However, soon Pauline found herself in a particular situation. First, she was experiencing problems in the second marriage and was being pressed by her previous children to come back. Secondly, the land in the village of her second marriage did not produce as much cocoa as the first one. Third, probably the factor that had the strongest influence, the father-in-law of her first marriage had been imprisoned after committing a crime, quite likely encouraging her to go back to the first and more productive village:

[42] This might be due, on the one hand, to the division of agricultural crops, with women devoting more to subsistence cropping, often in new fields further from the house; and on the other hand, to men taking care of inherited cocoa farms often closer to the house.
[43] Small trees.

> "When I left this place, I wanted to do that [plant cocoa] back at home in Ndamwo'o. But, you know, that for a woman it is difficult to invest in her home with her brothers, to discuss the land. They say that 'you were not even born here that you intend to die here? You can leave for marriage, you have to…' It was because of that that I had that idea. So when I left my home [again] to arrive to the other marriage over there. It was because of that that I started planting. When I look closely, the burden [of her children] was enormous. When I plant peanuts there that year, the second year I can sell cocoa perhaps at 10,000 [francs], that could help me with the children in school."[xlii]
>
> (Interview with Pauline 73)

Allman and Tashjian (2000) have described similar strategies which they have called "seduction and divorce" for Asante women in Ghana: "the idea that women would and should actively look for good care was not of recent invention. It was central to the long recognized art of seduction" (Allman and Tashjian 2000, 136). And they continue, "While this strategy did not result in any compensation for the time and effort a woman had already put into a husband's cocoa farm, it did allow her to cut her losses. Thus, a wife's power lay in her ability to easily remove herself and her labor power from her husband's control" (Allman and Tashjian 2000, 140). Kandiyoti had also identified "women's refusal to allow the total appropriation of their production by their husbands," one of the examples being that "wives commonly deserted their husband" (Kandiyoti 1988, 276). We can thus conceptualize Pauline's case through this act of seduction and divorce.

What is interesting about her story is that it reflects the two-to-three generational patrilineal households that have also been observed by Kandiyoti (1988) and Agarwal (1994). When Pauline left her marriage, she seemed to point out that her father-in-law, rather than her husband, was the one appropriating her labor. Pauline describes how when she started the first plantation her father-in-law removed the cocoa stems: "He told us that here in his house he does not even want that, because if you do your own plantation, when he wants you to work for him, you won't, you understand? That's why he didn't want"[xliii] (Interview with Pauline 73). However, the very specificity of Pauline's strategy stems from its reiteration and temporality. Whereas in the cases described by other authors, women seem to opt for permanent divorce, Pauline divorced twice and eventually came back to her

first marriage. Since tradition deemed that Pauline could not plant in her natal village, she maximized the outputs in the lands from her first and second marriages.

1.2. Case two: negotiating with polygamy

Fleur told me the story of how when she first found out that her husband had started a relationship with a second woman she had left the marriage. However, this had also reduced her access to her cash cropping, which comprised coffee first, and cocoa later. Fleur and her husband had transitioned from coffee to cocoa, as several other women indicated, when the prices in cocoa markets had made it more valuable than cocoa during the 1990s. However, it was only in 2011 that she gained control of her own plantation. When she found out that her husband was planning to officially marry the second wife, she and her family rapidly organized their own official marriage with the husband, even if he would refuse to sign for monogamy. If Fleur was planning to come back to maintain her access to her former plantation she had to make sure she could keep her position of power as the *ekomba minga*; that is why, contrary to the custom, she paid for many of the things of her own wedding:

> "I had first started with coffee. But after we started speaking, since the story was long, the story of polygamy… I had abandoned the coffee. You know that when… when there are problems all the time, problems all the time… you don't even feel okay, because, 'am I going to stay, or am I going to leave?' I had abandoned. Afterwards, when the time passed by, I had decided to come back anyway. I had started to do coffee again, and even pay [buy beans]. The same way I paid cocoa, I paid coffee. My own little field, if I have two bags from there, then I pay [more] outside."[xliv]
>
> (Interview with Fleur 105)

Fleur's story speaks of three key moments of decision: First, the decision to leave; second, the decision to come back; third, the decision to diversify her agricultural activities —by keeping both cocoa and coffee as well as combining planting with landless strategies—and fourth the decision to establish her own independent plantation. Kandiyoti (1988) has referred to these aspects as ways in which women resignify polygamy: "the insecurities of African polygyny for women are matched by areas of relative autonomy that they clearly strive to maximize" (Kandiyoti 1988, 277). Fleur follows a similar pattern to Pauline by

taking the decision to leave and to come back. But Fleur seems to have gone a step further; she ensured that she was coming back through the powerful position of the first wife, which in the context of polygamy would help her ensuring her independent production.

1.3. Case three: negotiating with dowry

I met Rachel at the beginning of my stay in Ayos. As with the other women I asked her if she had a field of her own. When she replied that she was planting with her husband, I asked her to clarify, as I wanted to make sure that we were talking about her field and not her husband's field:

> "When I do it, he is there, he comes with me and so on. But it was my idea. But since this is his land, we do it together. You know that, well… he came to ask for my hand but we are not yet officially married. So he cannot sell me [expose me] like that if I say that I want to do a plantation. Family things are weird. People will ask: 'what's going on? Someone that comes from another place and you just give [the land] to her?' So, we are obliged to do it together."[xlv]
>
> (Interview with Rachel I).

As I mentioned earlier (Interview with Sita 79), marriage in Ayos seems to be similar to that of the Asante women; it is more a cycle than a moment in time (Allman and Tashjian 2000). Rather than being unique to ethnic groups in Ayos and the Asante in Ghana, authors like Oyěwùmí (2002) and Warner *et al.* (1997) have pointed out the same for other sub-Saharan African societies. In such a cycle, the fact that through patrilocality and dowry "the young bride enters her husband's household as an effectively dispossessed individual" (Kandiyoti 1988, 279) means that she has to find ways to negotiate her place, and thus position of power, in the family. In the case of Rachel, she decided to make visible that she was entitled to use the land of her in-laws, besides the fact that she had not yet received dowry—an element that she could not directly control—by ensuring the physical presence of her husband in the cocoa plantations. She had thus managed to negotiate around the pre-condition of dowry as an entitlement to land through the physical "male mediation" of her husband (Agarwal 1994, 268). In other words, she had used the presupposed submission to male authority often present in patriarchal societies, as a way of ensuring her own access to the plantation. Whereas initially it could seem that her husband was

appropriating her wife's labor, listening to her explanation made it possible to understand how she had been the agent behind these decisions. In fact, she insisted that before she arrived to the village, her husband did not plant cocoa, and that it was after she had started that "he had developed a taste for it"[xlvi] and he was now planning to create his own plantation.

1.4. Case four: negotiating with offspring

Several women that I found had talked about their infertility as a source of conflict, and even divorce in their marriages (Interviews: Authentique 98; Lydie 97; Marceline 95). In a society in which offspring is highly valued on the basis of reproduction, these women faced practices of marginalization. Whereas in at least two of these cases this had been a cause of divorce, they had decided to adopt other children from the family while remaining single. Adoption is a common practice in Ayos, even for couples that are not infertile. It is often backed up by the practice of name giving, through which a person has a "*mbombo*", a namesake, a child that carries the name of the person that she or he represents next to the family surname, or sometimes in substitution. Authentique explained it in the following way:

> "*Alba*: So you told me you have not given birth…
>
> *Authentique*: I haven't given birth.
>
> *Alba*: But how many children do you keep?
>
> *Authentique*: I take care of eleven children
>
> *Alba*: Okay. Are are you married?
>
> *Authentique:* Yes, I am married, but my husband abandoned me a longtime ago. We separated in 2009 because of the problems with giving birth.
>
> *Alba*: How so?
>
> *Authentique:* He abandoned me because I don't give birth. His family says that… they advised him to leave me, to find another woman. (…) My brothers know that since I did not give birth, right? They are going to inherit my things and will expel their nephews. I said 'no, dad gave birth to my little sister, and

my little sister had children. You cannot expel them.' It is there that there was anger, but it is over now."[xlvii]

(Interview with Authentique 98)

Authentique had decided to take care of her sister's children, among other children of the family, since the sister had been diagnosed with mental illness. Whereas Authentique was ensuring her access to land through a complex mode of negotiation, it is the aspect of bargaining through offspring that I find interesting here. First of all, Authentique had managed to access the land in her natal village, proving herself to be more reliable than the inheriting brothers. Whereas this had caused her accusation of witchcraft and even preventive imprisonment, she had managed to win the case and made herself reliable in the community. Furthermore, she had not only used family land, but she had bought additional parcels, and had hired labor to work on it. Whereas her own work would probably grant her a certain level of access to the land, taking responsibility for eleven children supposed a bargain on three different levels: First of all, the fact of having taken the social responsibility for eleven children, some of whom, being male, who could traditionally inherit, buffered the social pressure of a barren woman cultivating a perennial crop in a place where she was not expected to remain. Secondly, this nurturing aspect vis-à-vis her adopted children ensured that as long as they were dependents she would have the control of the cocoa proceeds. Third, once in her old age, she would indirectly benefit from the plantations through the work of her children, who would take care of her.

The practice of women taking responsibility of others' children, as a potential way of having access to land was mentioned in several interviews (Interviews: Authentique 98, Lydie 97, Jacqueline 44). Not only Kandiyoti (1988) has made reference to the importance of offspring in bargaining with patriarchy, but both Agarwal (1994) and Allman and Tashjian (2000) have made links between the women's wellbeing and that of their descendants. Both Agarwal (1994) and Allman and Tashjian (2000) indicate that women invest in their children, not out of a lack of perception of their own wellbeing, but as a way to strengthen links, gain their support in negotiations and also with regards to old age. Furthermore, Allman and Tashjian (2000) seem to point at a link between who is taking care of the children and the sense of ownership of women over cocoa farming. So, whereas from a different perspective it could be seen as if women in Ayos were victims of the social pressure of having children as according to their naturalized facet of motherhood, in their cases we could easily argue they were ensuring their wellbeing and access to land.

2. Decolonial perspectives on agency

Similar to the case study of Saba Mahmood (2004, 2) in which for the first time in history "such a large number of women had held public meetings (…) thereby altering historically male-centered" religious spaces in Egypt, the case of female farmers seems to be creating a similar scenario for cocoa plantations in Cameroon. This demasculinization has been observed in West Africa only in Ghana, at least in the available literature (Allman and Tashjian 2000). However, whereas the case presented by Mahmood concerns an organized group of women, which according to Agarwal (1994) is the ultimate step in the struggle for women's rights, the case of women in Ayos comprises mainly women acting individually. The fact that, at least in the everyday struggle, women act individually, can imply some differences with the cases presented by Mahmood (2004), letting us however start a dialogue with the review of Kandiyoti (1988), and some of the experiences recounted by Agarwal (1994) and Allman and Tashjian (2000).

Similar to the cases of Mahmood (2004) and Abu-Lughod (1990), women's participation in cocoa plantations presents in itself elements that could be questionable with regards to women's wellbeing for two reasons. First, cocoa is part of a globalized market in which most of the value stays in Northern countries (Barrientos 2014). Post-development critiques of women's involvement in global markets have pointed at the negative effects that these markets can have for women in countries of the Global South (Simons 1997), thus constituting an additional source of oppression as Abu-Lughod (1990) had previously criticized. Second, since cocoa in Cameroon is produced mostly at the smallholder level, like most of the cocoa produced in West Africa and parts of Asia (Barrientos 2014), most of the strategies developed are of an intra-household nature—as shown in the previous section—and imply negotiations and/or acceptance of some patriarchal traditions to a certain extent. Similar to the case of Mahmood (2004) in which the doctrine promoted by the women's mosque movement in Egypt implies a certain level of subordination to male-authority[44], thus questioning women's agency, strategies developed by women in Ayos could also be subject to criticism for the same reason.

While it would be a worthy task to dissect the negative impacts of a liberal market on women, this is not my purpose in this thesis. Here I want to argue instead that women's

[44] According to Mahmood: "women's religious participation within such public arenas of Islamic pedagogy is critically structured by, and serves to uphold, a discursive tradition that regards subordination to a transcendent will (and thus, in many instances, to male authority) as its coveted goal" (Mahmood 2004, 2-3).

adherence to certain patriarchal norms could be part of a strategy for an enhanced wellbeing, which, for some women was understood from a different perspective from that of secular-liberal feminist movements—centered around a supposedly universal "desire (…) to be free from relations of subordination and, for women, from structures of male domination" (Mahmood 2004, 10). What is interesting in these cases is that whereas autonomy *per se* and the demasculinization of cocoa spaces do not seem to be the ultimate declared goal, they do seem to constitute two of the consequences of women's strategies. The actions of these women could thus, consciously or unconsciously, constitute part a "political subjectivity or agency [that] consists of multiple micro-political practices of daily activism or interventions in and on the world we inhabit for ourselves and for future generations" (Braidotti 2008, 16).

In order to analyze the specific formation of agency that emerges in these cases, I depart from the specific conditions in which these women are negotiating and the specific expression of these negotiations at two specific moments: before engaging and within the practice. In this way I aim to move away from the binary of resistance versus subordination on the one hand, and that of autonomy versus co-dependence on the other, to show that most of the actions fall in between these categories. Furthermore, I want to argue here that these different strategies were enabled precisely because of their intersectional subjectivities which helped them to negotiate within their context. In other words, I want to highlight that these women enacted the "complex sites of articulation of [their internal] complexities" (Braidotti 2011, 113) to adapt to the changing structures of power by "taking advantage of these contradictions in their society to assert themselves and to resist" (Abu-Lughod 1990, 47). In such a changing context "power relations take many forms, have many aspects, and interweave (…) these forms may actually be working simultaneously, in concert or at cross-purposes" (Abu-Lughod 1990, 48). It is precisely because in a perpetually changing context the norm is "never quite complete" that new possibilities are opened in those contradictions and that "the regulatory law can be turned against itself to spawn rearticulations that call into question the hegemonic force of that very regulatory law" (Butler 1993, 2).

Looking at the different aspects of their subjectivities helps arguing in three different directions. First, it helps us argue against a monolithic collective identity, among themselves, that has been critiqued by Mohanty (1988), who question the idea of a pre-existing sisterhood, and Adichie (2008), who warned us about the danger of a single story.

Second, it helps seeing that even if subjected to similar axes of power, they might enact them in different ways. I believe that this particular idea, of women behaving differently even if living in the same context and being exposed to the same external factors—for example, changes in market prices or development programs—serves to enlighten their individual agency. Finally, looking closely at these particular intersections helps us to move away from an excessive focus on the context in which the very concept of intersectionality was first coined—read: the US—in line with the critiques of Jasbir Puar (2012, 52) and Hyun Sook Kim (2007, 109), and produce theoretical positions with regards to both agency and intersectionality that could be better adapted to sub-Saharan African contexts.

2.1. From resistance/subordination to bargains

Like the pious subjects of the women's mosque movement, some women engaging in cocoa production in Ayos "occupy an uncomfortable place in feminist scholarship because they pursue practices and ideals embedded within a tradition that has historically accorded women a subordinate status" (Mahmood 2004, 4-5). However, I concur with Agarwal (1994, 430) that "the appearance of compliance need not mean that women lack a correct perception of their best interests; rather it can reflect a survival strategy stemming from the constraints on their ability to act overtly in pursuit of those interests". The fact that women engage in strategies that, seen from the outside, could resemble situations of oppression can be deconstructed from two points. First, these strategies can be understood from the perspective of bargaining and use of the instruments of their oppression, as it has been indicated by Kandiyoti (1988) and Boddy ([1989] 2014). Secondly, the strategies can be understood from a different type of subject formation, as it has been indicated by Mahmood (2004), with the difference that in this case their ultimate goal could be an increase of their social place and co-dependence, rather than spiritual virtues. I will discuss the first point here, and leave the latter for the following section.

I have gone through some of the testimonies of the women that I discussed with in the villages. This was not only in an attempt to deconstruct and shorten the "subject-object" gap (Harding 1993, 64) that has been criticized within the feminist theory and practice, but also because without these voices we risk making assumptions that can obscure and pervert the understanding of their actions (Abu-Lughod 1990, Wekker 1997). In their stories, several women explained how they had bargained with some of the norms that are part of the current patriarchal formation in Ayos, as described in chapter four. Whereas these

bargains were numerous and diverse, I have decided to concentrate only on those women who *apparently* had decided to align with some of the patriarchal traditions. I argue that increasing their access to cocoa plantations was one of the reasons behind the decisions taken by these women.

I suggest looking at the expression of their agency as a two wave process with a *first momentum,* prior to their engagement in the traditional practice by taking the decision to be part of it; and a *second momentum* through a resignification of the practice once they have already engaged in it. Let me begin with the *first momentum*: If we look back at the four examples that I have presented as cases of polygamy, patrilocality, acceptance of dowry, and extensive offspring, we see how they all mention their possibility of having taken a different decision from the one they eventually took. Fleur had already abandoned her marriage. Pauline had gone back to her natal village. Rachel had not yet signed an official marriage certificate and, with her family being in the cocoa business and herself being responsible of her brother's son, she could have gone back to her natal village. And Authentique had not had any biological child in her 54 years of life and had separated from her husband. However, after considering the available opportunities within the very instruments of their oppression, these women had eventually decided to "use [them], perhaps unconsciously, perhaps strategically (…), in the context of their marriages" (Boddy [1989] 2014, 345). Fleur had come back to her marriage in spite of the fact that she knew that her husband would not accept a monogamous marriage: "[Fleur, remembering the words of the husband] 'well, if it's monogamy I can't do that. If it's monogamy I can't do that. I can sign, but polygamy.' So I said 'well, let's go!'" (Interview with Fleur 105). As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, Fleur had estimated that she could invest in the coffee and cocoa plantations that she had already started in her husband's village. On a similar account, Pauline, who had not only left the first marriage for her natal village, but had started a second marriage in which she had several children, had eventually decided to come back to the first marriage. Although the primary concern seemed to be that she could not access the land in her natal village and was thus, in a way, forced to move around patrilocally, her second marriage would have already granted her access to land. However, she was well aware that the soil fertility of the first village was higher than in the second village, and thus, after several years when her first father-in-law left, took the chance to come back. Similarly, Rachel had agreed to eventually receiving a dowry, a practice that several other women had described as oppressive (Interviews with Salomé 64; Jacqueline

44). Finally, Authentique had decided to adopt not one but eleven children, some of whom belonged to her sister while others belonged to other family members.

Once these women had engaged in these practices they continued modifying them from the inside, in what I suggested calling the *second momentum* of the expression of their agency. The fact that they agree with some of the aspects by which their subjectivity is formed within that community does not mean that they agree with every aspect. In the case of Fleur, she had not only decided to remain in the polygamous marriage to which she had come back to, but she had arranged everything so that she could keep her place as the first wife, the *ekomba minga*. Furthermore, Fleur had decided to split the production with her husband after seeing how he was not only appropriating her labor through her economic investment in the plantation, but also the benefits from the cooperative:

> "*Alba*: Does he not come to give you back some of the bags [with fertilizers]?
>
> *Fleur:* Ekie! [exclaiming], that's already for him [speaking ironically]!
>
> *Alba:* But those are your bags, aren't they?
>
> *Fleur:* That's already for him! At that point everything is blurred, everything is blurred! [we laugh] (…) It is not okay! (…) Before, I used to give him everything. We rent a field, I give [money], I give 75,000 [francs], I give 50,000 [francs]. I see another field over there… We had a lot of fields like that. After some time I said to myself that (…) 'As soon as you see another field, take it for yourself. Because you keep giving and you don't even profit [from it]' (…) Before I used to give him [the money]. I knew that it was a business that we could manage together. But the guy [referring to her husband]… that's why he is so advanced [having so many plantations]. He's so advanced thanks to me!"[xlviii]
>
> (Interview with Fleur 105)

In the case of Pauline, we can clearly see how although she had agreed to a patrilocal residence, she had specifically chosen one in which her possibilities for cultivation were increased, first because the specific land, was closer to the river and therefore more fertile, secondly, because the number and age of male children she had had in that village was higher, and third, because the male authority that she perceived as the most oppressive had finally left. The case of Rachel also speaks to this case. Whilst agreeing to receive dowry in her future marriage—and thus risking to be perceived more as a property (Laburthe-Tolra

[1981] 2009)—she had decided to change the type of agriculture that she practiced in her marriage, not only by choosing cocoa, but by choosing a specific variety that her husband disapproved, known as *Katango*[45], and convinced her husband-to-be to start planting with her. An outsider argument could have pointed at the fact that she was working with—and probably for—her husband. But after a close look at her explanation we can see how she describes that it was because of her initiative that the husband had started, and it was because of the lack of dowry, and to avoid problems with the community, that she had requested her husband to join her, to the point that her husband had finally "developed a taste for cocoa cultivations"[xlix] (Interview Rachel 25) and wanted to plant his own. Finally, Authentique had decided to grant land to her adopted daughters as well as to her sons, contrary to the tradition of male inheritance.

While all of these women bargained with tradition, they chose different elements and did it in different ways. Seeing this variance from an intersectional perspective can perhaps help to understand their differences. A first comparison could be possible with regards to what Warner *et al.* (1997) has called the marriage cycle, which involves, not only marriage, but the specific mode of engaging it—polygamous, monogamous, with or without dowry—along with the number of children and the relative seniority vis-à-vis other household members. These three elements emerged in the cases examined above.

In such a conceptualization of marriage, the position of *ekomba minga*, or first wife, thus provides a particular position of power from which to negotiate. This was the case of at least one of the grandmothers, and came up during the discussion with women from the second generation, including Fleur:

> "You know that among all of them here, those [wives] that are behind me don't even confront me a little. And then he [the husband] wants to bring the issue of polygamy 'have I given anything to this or that wife?' *Ekie*! [she exclaims] It's me the supplier here, you come and tell me about the others, what the heck?!"[l]
>
> (Interview with Fleur 105)

Fleur probably knew that if she managed to keep her position of first wife, her chances in negotiating and thus maximizing the areas of relative autonomy that, according to

[45] Modified cocoa hybrid variety that produces earlier than traditional varieties, thus having a shorter life cycle.

Kandityoti (1988) come along with polygamy, would increase. Whereas there were certainly cases in which other second and third wives found ways to negotiate their position, using other elements such as number of children, or economic assets, being the first wife seemed to be a common denominator of power, in line with Laburthe-Tolra[46] ([1981] 2009). Even though the study of Laburthe-Tolra was conducted four decades ago with regards to pre-colonial and colonial practices, and serves clearly to understand the generation of the grandmothers, it seems to keep some of its validity for the current generation. Warner *et al.* (1997) and Oyěwùmí (2002) have conceptualized this hierarchy not only with regards to the process of marriage itself, but also as something in which seniority plays a role.

Whereas this hierarchy can be seen as the result of intersections among these three elements: gender, age and marriage status; Agarwal (1995) conceptualizes it as an inherent aspect of gender hierarchies themselves. According to her, "how two women of the same household relate to one another is affected by the gendered character of their relations with the household men" (Agarwal 1995, 52). Whether we see it as un-detachable elements or malleable intersections, this relation of power beyond gender seems to be mediating in the decisions that women take and how they enact them. Kandityoti (1988, 277) sees this distance among spouses as a key "bargaining element in the relationship", to which I would add the very relative position of each spouse.

Several women pointed at these hierarchies being enabled not only by their age, but also by the amount children—and "specially sons!"[li] as Sita had exclaimed (Interview with Sita 79). Offspring is for Warner *et al.* (1997) one of the key elements of the marriage cycle. Whereas I do agree that it seems to constitute a key element, I would suggest from these cases, that it can act as an element of power *beyond* marriage, as the cases of Authentique and the others that remained single, show. In fact, Oyěwùmí (2002) has pointed at the idea of womb-units in African extended families, as something that is yet to be included in what she calls the "eurocentric" conception of gender. Thus whereas high fertility has often been used as an indicator of women's oppression and lack of agency, it seems quite likely that in Ayos women were actually negotiating their place through a "strategy of voluntary motherhood as part of a broader calculus to improve women's situation" (Kandiyoti 1988, 283). This seemed to be in fact one of the bargaining elements that Authentique and Pauline were using, either by adopting children, or by living closer to them. In fact,

[46] Laburthe-Tolra ([1981] 2009) establishes in decreasing order of power the following positions among the Beti ethnic group: mother of the husband, *ekomba minga* or first wife, the second wife, and other successive wives respectively. Laburthe-Tolra also speaks of a "favorite wife" that enjoys a particular position, and although her position is not that clear, she is chosen with the consent of the *ekomba minga*.

motherhood has also been highlighted by Agarwal (1994) and Allmans and Tashjian (2000) not only as a direct medium to increase their position of power, but as the potential benefit that women might derive from investing having and taking care of those children, which I will cover in the next section.

In a second line of analysis, we can see that women's endogeneity, or lack of it—with regards to their place of residence—also played a key role, coinciding with the analysis of Oyěwùmí (2002), Agarwal (1994) and Kandiyoti (1988). In this sense, the very idea of nationality as an element of power/oppression could be seen represented at the micro-scale through the status of migrants endowed to women by the very practice of patrilocality. Oyěwùmí (2002) has described this factor among the Igbo as the tension between the "*oko*", a member of the family by birth, and the "*iyawo*", a member of the family by marriage. In Ayos we would also appreciate this tension, with members belonging to the village, be it children of the village or nephews and nieces, having more power, or "a bigger mouth", as they express it themselves. This seems to be true for many aspects of decision-making in the villages, but when it comes to immovable property such as land, the analysis has to be done carefully. Whereas we do see examples of women who managed to make use of their endogeneity to gain power in their communities, some testimonies prove the contrary in terms of access to land. The cases of Authentique in Biwo and some of the other women from the first generation seem to support the first idea, and so do Sita's words when she exclaimed "this land here belongs to me, I can do what I want." However, numerous women were unable to plant in their own land, as the case of Pauline, which is why she decided to marry and leave the place. We see then how women had to play, with their very endogenous status depending on other elements of their positionality—such as marriage status and number of children—thus being a key element that is not often taken into account in more theoretical analyses.

Explaining all of these decisions through mere compliance with oppressive norms would mean erasing the complexity of their positionality and life-stories. As Robbertson (2009, 107) has indicated, "Wives are indeed exploited as a source of labour in such situation but they also have a degree of agency and power within the relationship". Women were not only accepting or rejecting these practices from their positionality and from the opportunities available to them, but were modifying them and resignifying them from within. Both of these decisive moments, the *before*, and the *within*, have been highlighted by Kandityoti (1988) and Abu-Lughod (1990). Not only were they striving to maximize the

areas of "relative autonomy" within their marriages (Kandiyoti 1988, 277), but they were doing so by playing with the very patriarchal norm that expects them to be more mobile than men, to have separate fields, or to act as caretakers and family reproducers. Furthermore, both in line with Agarwal (1994) and Kandiyoti (1988), they had managed to negotiate the appropriation of their labor and resources. As I have shown, these negotiations did not take place only with the husband, but with members of the extended family, in line with Kandiyoti's (1988) idea of three-generational patrilineal households. Like women in Nigeria (Robertson 2009) and Ghana (Allmand and Tashjian 2000), women negotiated with intra-household relations, quite likely because cocoa is produced in family plantations. By not only simultaneously accepting these practices and resignifying them, but also opposing one another—for example, increasing offspring while refusing patrilocal migrations, accepting dowry but making use of agricultural female seclusion, or accepting patrilocal residence but concatenating successive marriages and divorces—these women cannot be simply understood as oppressed or as resistors. However, one needs to beware of romanticizing resistance, as Abu-Lughod (1990) had indicated. Women could simply be engaging in these strategies not because they want to confront patriarchy, although some openly claimed they did, but because their subjectivity is built around a different set of interests. To this I devote the next section.

2.2. Between autonomy and co-dependence

> "One possible fruitful way to open windows to local conceptions of personhood is to listen carefully to what people have to say about themselves and what terms they use to make these statements."
> (Wekker 1997, 333)

Wekker has denounced that the very concept of agency is "heavily fingerprinted with Western assumptions about what it means to be a person" (Wekker 1997, 333). According to her, this personhood has often been developed around the idea of masculinity, individualism and belonging to a middle or upper class. Furthermore, it is often based on a person that has a longing for freedom, that prioritizes the rational mind (Mahmood 2004), and that constitutes a "true, authentic, coherent, static, inviolable self that stands in opposition to society" (Wekker 1997, 333). Such a conceptualization has often mediated in the idea that women, and in particular, women from the Global South, have no agency.

I have tried to show the dynamism, through the crafting and cracking of patriarchy, in which feminine and masculine subjectivities—and I insist on using the term in plural—have developed. The modern subject, understood in its masculine, individualistic facet, might somehow have appeared in the frame of cocoa plantations between the start of colonization and the present, although it has never constituted the only possible subject. As I mentioned in chapter four, cocoa developed as a primarily—although never fully—masculine domain in its quality of a crop that produced economic benefit, that seemed to mediate in the individualization of societies through a process of sedentarization and increased feeling of private property anchored around the idea of the male heir, as Diaw (1997) and Depelch (1980) seem to indicate. However, I concur with Gloria Wekker that besides the appearance of an existent economically-independent individualistic masculine subject, "we need to realize that the "modem subject" may never have been alive in some Third-World contexts" (Wekker 1997, 333). As I showed in chapter five, the development of an individualistic masculine modern subject was never fully achieved, since from the very arrival of cocoa to Cameroon there have always been cracks. Not only did the men who owned these plantations not completely fit the definition of this modern subject, but women were present in those spaces from the very beginning, despite their invisibility in much of the produced literature. Following Butler's understanding of agency, I have attempted to disclose how through the very citational practices of women, these cracks seem to have achieved a certain crystallization of a new marginal subjectivity, that is increasingly less marginal. This crystallization nevertheless occurred within a set of available opportunities, or, in other words "in con-junction with the *possibility* to act" (Wekker 1997, 332, my emphasis). I am speaking of a subjectivity of a woman that can behave as an agent besides the relentless need of patriarchy to make her silent, and that in her agency she needs neither to confront patriarchal norms, nor to assume them; neither to be economically autonomous, nor completely dependent. I have discussed the first binary—that of resistance versus subordination—in the previous section, so I will concentrate on the second binary in this section.

In many of the quotes that I gathered from women in Ayos we could read the following idea: "I planted cocoa for my children". Western-liberal feminisms would read this expression as the claim of a woman trapped in a normative comprehension of the mother-wife. According to Oyewumi, "the [western] nuclear family is a gendered family par excellence. As a single-family household, it is *centered on a subordinated wife*, a patriarchal husband, and children" (Oyěwùmí 2002, 2, my emphasis). Oyweumi further indicates, in

her attempt to deconstruct the Eurocentric foundations of gender and the family, that extended families enclose womb-units of support and relationality, in which the mother is a focal point and not necessarily oppressed. In a similar line of debate, Caroline Moser has indicated how in the conceptual division of the private versus the public, western feminists have failed to account for a third space that is often observed in Sub-Saharan African communities, the one pertaining to "community management" (Moser 1993, 34-36). This communitarian sphere could account for the "socially embedded character of people, particularly women" that has also been highlighted by Mahmood (2004, 13).

In line with this alternative communitarian dimension, we could argue that the subject behind the decisions taken in cocoa plantations, among others, is not an isolated-mother-wife of a nuclear family, but a representation of a more collective subject, either in the extended family or in the larger community. This collectivity could actually be observed not only with regards to cocoa plantations, but in almost every aspect of women's participation[47] in life. For example, women participate in life events like dowries, marriages, births, and burials, and very often belong to one or several associations or "*tontines*" as they are known in French. I remember a specific moment during my stay in Ayos that caught my attention and can serve to clarify this particular aspect. During International Women's Day women spent a long time deciding how they were going to march. Women had come dressed either in the tissue of that specific year[48], or in the one representing their association, showing the spirit of common belonging, and had spent almost an hour to decide whether they would march according to the color of their clothes, or to their belonging to an association (See photographs 3 and 4 in annex 3). The debate was thus which link to prioritize rather than ignoring social links altogether by marching in rows or in a big group (Fieldnotes, Nyamvoudou, March 2017).

Thus, in such a community-centered context considering the wellbeing of their children in order to make decisions might be understood from a different angle. Considering the wellbeing of children has sometimes been described as the result of "false consciousness" (Agarwal 1994, 57), or even as the product of "authoritative discursive traditions whose logic and power far exceeds the consciousness of the subjects they enable" (Mahmood 2004, 32). It has furthermore been pointed to as one of the potential elements through

[47] I concentrate on women's subjectivity here, not with the aim of essentializing the communitarian experience, but because they constituted the majority of participants during the interviews and I can thus not speak for men's experiences.
[48] It is already a tradition in Cameroon that all women wear a fabric produced by the Government of Cameroon with messages linked to the International Women's Day (see photographs 3, 4 and 5 in annex 3).

which women lose bargaining power, since considering the wellbeing of others could imply attaching less value to their own wellbeing (Agarwal 1994, 56). While not attempting to neglect these elements, I propose adding a different perspective in a similar methodological exercise to what Janice Boddy ([1989] 2014) and Abu-Lughod (1990) did for their case studies. By taking a different perspective I aim at proposing that "to the extent that women do seek to maximize 'family' welfare, this could still be consistent with their long-term self-interest (even if it is at the cost of their immediate wellbeing), insofar as women are more dependent on the family for their survival than are men" (Agarwal 1994, 57).

With this analysis in mind we can go back to some of the statements women made during the interviews. Pauline mentioned during the interview that "in case of trouble your children will come to protect you"[lii] (Interview with Pauline 73). Lizbeth on her side had indicated that "[My children] are very linked. I have shown to them that they have all the same blood, they came all from the same uterus"[liii] while she was explaining to me that she educated them to support each other in case of trouble (Interview with Lizbeth 102). Thinking of offspring along these lines seems to confirm some of the analyses that other studies have highlighted. Both Kandiyoti (1988) and Warner *et al.* (1997) pointed at the importance of offspring to "establish [the woman's] place in the patriliny" thus increasing her voice and power (Kandiyoti 1988, 279). This is achieved, quite logically, not only by giving birth, but by ensuring their opportunities for development and survival. Furthermore, Agarwal (1994) has indicated how male children in particular can act as an element of negotiation in the community. Moreover, we could consider this womb-link, of which both Oyěwùmí (2002) and Kandityoti (1988) have also spoken, as an additional way to increase the survival of these children even in the absence of the mother. With this in mind, it seems no surprise that "the 'family' for whose wellbeing women may be willing to make sacrifices may include only their children, on whose behalf women may still seek to strike a hard bargain" (Agarwal 1994, 58).

Other authors have also pointed at the link between cocoa farming and motherhood. As Emma Robertson indicated, "labour on the [cocoa] farms was not perceived by Caribbean women as detached from their other duties in terms of childcare or housework. Furthermore, as Barrow describes, 'income generation is an essential component of being a mother, grandmother, wife or daughter'" (Robertson 2009, 97). On a similar account Penelope Roberts has also made reference to this: "wives do have material interests and claims upon such household/male enterprises including and exceeding those of personal

consumption, notably the interest of their children" (Roberts 1988, 104-105). Taking into account that children contribute many times, not only to the cocoa production in the short-term, but take care of their mothers in the long term, it would seem very logical that mothers are willing to invest in them through cocoa farming, and consider them in the decision-making process.

Whereas the decision to plant cocoa along these lines could be explained through a liberal understanding of the autonomous subject, when considered concurrently with the affirmations of women engaging in cocoa *for their children*, or sharing part of the benefits back with their husbands and other members of the household, the liberal framework seems to fail to fully conceptualize the motivations of these women. As Saba Mahmood has indicated the problem with the secular liberal comprehension of agency is that it strongly links "the notion of self-realization with *individual* autonomy" (Mahmood 2004, 11, my emphasis). However there can be other kinds of self-realization than a sole desire for autonomy. Whereas Mahmood's alternative for self-realization emanates from a "task of realizing piety" (Mahmood 2004, 15), in the case of women in Ayos self-realization seems to be achieved through the performance of their responsibilities in their community; these responsibilities being fulfilled through the strengthening of their co-dependence vis-à-vis their children and other family members.

I do not wish with this to essentialize a feminine subject that is inherently more collective or care-taker by nature, but rather to highlight how, the very social "constraints" (Kandiyoti 1988, 285) have an important impact in women's subject formation and mediate thus in the modes of bargaining, by, in this case, thinking more collectively. The interesting thing here is that in thinking collectively their acts still partly benefit their own interests. Fleur, among several women, claimed that they had started their own fields because when they used to work in their husbands' fields they were receiving a very small share of the earnings, and wanted to increase their benefits. This seems to imply the conscious decision of refusing the valuation of their work by authors as sufficiently just (Agarwal 1994), and reducing the very appropriation of their labor (Kandiyoti 1988). This, which has clear elements of a consciousness of the very idea of autonomy, could be argued as never completely autonomous since they might want to have a better valuation of their labor so that they can take better care of their immediate family and community, and in turn have a better place of respect and power in that very community. It could be seen thus as a circularity in which autonomy leads to co-dependence which acts as the means to achieving higher autonomy,

and the other way around. For this reason, frameworks considering either autonomy or co-dependence separately, might fail to fully conceptualize the process of decision-making of women planting cocoa in Ayos.

Conclusion

Cocoa plantations have often been presented as a space pertaining to the masculine domain as a consequence of its quality of perennial and economic crop of colonial origin. However, the testimonies of male and female elders and some of the available literature shows that women in Ayos owned plantations already during the expansion of cocoa in the 1930s. While the very early testimonies occurred in villages closer to the fertile zone along the river, and quite often among women who were in a position of power, the economic changes in the 1990s seemed to witness a multiplication of cases. Whereas changes in policies, development programs and markets seemed to enable these transformations, women often evoked the example given by other women as the reason behind their initiative to plant cocoa. In order for women to have access to their own plantations they have engaged in a series of bargains with the community. Out of all the women I interviewed, I concentrated in those who had used the very instruments of their oppression to grant that access, namely, the institution of polygamy, and the practices of patrilocality, dowry and extensive offspring.

Altogether, the testimonies of the research participants speak of an understanding of agency that is performative, transmitted both through discourse and matter, through micro-repetitions of an individual through time, and from individual to individual. Furthermore, the specific set of strategies that I focused on give an idea of how agency can sometimes also be conceptualized through the idea of bargaining, instead of the idea of resistance and submission. This different approach, which helps to provide a different perspective of the one central to western liberal feminisms, is further completed by the motivations that these women indicated. Among these, there is the sense of a balance between a need for autonomy and investment in co-dependence, which seem to be linked to each other. With this I have wanted to offer an alternative perspective that could be used as a decolonial practice of academic production, since women from the Global South have often been represented as oppressed. Furthermore, in the cases that they have been presented as empowered it has often been done from a specific understanding of agency that failed to fully conceptualize their experiences. Although not all women took these decisions to actively confront patriarchy, their actions seem to be achieving at least the demasculinization of the very important spaces of power that cocoa plantations represent.

For the sake of form and brevity I have not been able to cover many of the issues that emerged during the interviews, of which I only include an abridged list here. Women spoke

for example, of bargains in which they used their economic and political facets; of how they deconstructed gendered prejudices and expectations; and, of how patriarchy developed mechanisms to counteract their efforts to establish cocoa plantations. Some women also seemed to evoke the idea that among the Beti there could exist an understanding of four existing genders instead of two, something that would be of particular interest for the field of decolonial gender studies. Next to these further studies could cover: women bargaining with non-family-owned land; women occupying different positions of the value chain; the position of women in cooperatives and in collective initiatives; the impacts of women's bargains for their own well-being and that of their households, and the impacts in masculinities; and a comparison of bargaining strategies between different sites in Cameroon, or different countries.

To the question "what practical recommendations do theorist like us—who confront different modes of subjectification and agency—have to give for the transformation of oppressive practices?", Saba Mahmood responds that "[it is] on the one hand, impossible to answer and, on the other hand, not ours to ask" (Mahmood 2004, 36). I do agree that recommendations should not be imposed or designed in a top-down manner. However, I think that studies like this, that try to learn in a bottom-up approach, do have recommendations to give, especially for scholars and professionals that work with these communities. In terms of a recommendation for the international organizations, this thesis advances an idea. Many times the interventions concentrate on making use of conventional power structures like city halls, village leaders, cooperative directors, or elders recognized in the society on the basis of their bigger impact and capacity. Yet this often has the risk of reinforcing the current power structures that oppress individuals, something that I have not had the time to discuss here. However, many of the women with whom I discussed spoke first of the example they had followed from other women. So while international NGOs and development organisms might sometimes be reluctant to include more women leaders, their programs could benefit from an increased effort on working directly with women who will act as role models in light of the testimonies compiled in this research.

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Annex 1: List of interviews

Acronym	*Full data*
Assolo 88	Assolo Oumarou, cocoa farmer, 45 years old, polygamous marriage, Interview nº 88, Meto, March 2017.
Authentique 98	Authentique, cocoa farmer, 54 years old, divorced, Interview nº 98, Biwo, March 2017.
Brigitte 62	Nyangono Brigitte, cocoa farmer, 50 years old, married, Interview nº 62, Tom, March 2017.
Elise 51	Mbengono Elise, female elder, unknown age, interview nº 51, Nyamvoudou, March 2017.
Emilie 90	Emilie Wong, cocoa farmer, 34 years old, widow, Interview nº 90, PAIJA, March 2017.
Fleur 105	Fleur, cocoa farmer, 45 years old, polygamous marriage, Interview nº 105, Village Y, March 2017.
Francine 58	Ze Francine, cocoa farmer, 49 years old, widow, Interview nº 58, Nyamvoudou, March 2017.
Geneviève 81	Geneviève, cocoa farmer, 28 years old, polygamous marriage, Interview nº 81, Village W, March 2017.
Jeannette 33	Marie Jeannette Ekassie Mdame Obundie, farmer, 55 years old, married, Interview nº 33, Emini, February 2017.
Jacqueline 44	ABENG Jacqueline, cocoa farmer, 68 years old, widow, Interview nº 44, Nyamvoudou, March 2017.
Lea 45	Ze Lea, cocoa farmer, 60 years old, married, Interview nº 45, Nyamvoudou, March 2017.
Lizbeth 102	Lizbeth, cocoa farmer, 66 years old, married, Interview nº 102, Village X, March 2017.
Lucie 42	Nanga (Meke) Lucie, cocoa farmer and trader, 33 years old, married, Interview nº 42, Ayos, February 2017 .
Lydie 97	Nlang Lydie, cocoa farmer, 67 years old, single, Interview nº 97; Biwo, March 2017.
Marceline 95	Beti Beti Marceline, cocoa farmer, 78 years old, married, Interview nº 95, Kombo, March 2017.
Patience 63	Nanga Patience, cocoa farmer, 25 years old, married, Interview nº 63, Tom,

March 2017.

Paulette 46 — Paulette Afana Beti, cocoa farmer, 74 years old, widow, Interview nº 46, Nyamvoudou, March 2017.

Pauline 73 — Mbengono Pauline, cocoa farmer, 36 years old, married, Interview nº 73, Ekok, March 2017.

Pelagie 82 — NANGA Salomé Pelagie, cocoa farmer, 35 years old, married, Interview nº 82, Ebeck, March 2017.

Rachel 25 — Rachel Mendouga Evelyn, cocoa farmer, 36 years old, engaged, Interview nº 25, Emini, February 2017.

Sabine 80 — Sabine Adaba, cocoa farmer, 45 years old, widow, Interview nº 80, Ebeck, March 2017.

Salomé 64 — Mendouga Salomé Hortense, cocoa farmer, 46 years old, widow, Interview nº 64, Tom, March 7th, 2017.

Sarah 55 — Sarah, cocoa farmer, 41 years old, polygamous marriage, Interview nº 55, Village V, March 4th, 2017.

Sita 79 — Mama Sita, cocoa farmer, 50 years old, divorced, Interview nº 79, Nyamvoudou, March 2017.

Valerie 50 — Ndabissa Valerie, cocoa farmer, 35 years old, interview nº 50, Nyamvoudou, March 2017.

Virginie 60 — Avama Virginie, cocoa farmer, 44 years old, polygamous marriage, Interview nº 60, Nyamvoudou, March 2017.

Annex 2: Original quotes

Chapter one

[i] Quelle est la *robustesse* d'une recherche qui se concentre rien que sur les points forts?

Chapter three

[ii] En fait, quand tu fais une étude sur la vulnérabilité des femmes ça demeure aussi une histoire incomplète.

[iii] J'ai trouvé la blanche sur le net, va trouver ta part!

Chapter four

[iv] Les *seigneurs* de la forêt.

[v] L'épopée Yébekolo correspond en effet à un déplacement en forêt de plusieurs centaines de kilomètres. Originaire de la rive droite de la Sanaga près de Yambassa, un groupe de conquérants (…) se décide un beau jour a partir vers l'est *parce qu'il se trouve a court de femmes* [*sic!*]. Après une cérémonie de fondation à la colline Até, les jeunes hommes avancent jusqu'à Mengeme-asi en *bousculant les Omvang*, prennent un nom emphatique, Emvazik (les envahisseurs qui s'abattent comme une frondaison d'arbre coupé) et commencent a 'faire les grandes gueules'; d'où leur surnom de Yébekolo. Ils traversent le Nyong à Ayos et certains d'entre eux, se divisant sous la conduite de deux frères, Amba et Ngo Mendomo, s'enfoncent au sud du pays Maka. Le premier soumet les Bikele, le second les Badjue ... *chez qui ils prennent femmes* [*sic!*]. (…) Cette avancée extrême des Yébekolo sera sans lendemain et *ils devront par la suite se replier en pays maka (Akok).*

[vi] Je suis la nièce chérie (…) chez nous les neveux ont plus de bouche que les enfants.

[vii] Surtout si le *'moan kal'* est un garçon.

[viii] C'est parce qu'on est toujours sûr que l'enfant de notre sœur est un enfant naturel.

[ix] Mon village.

[x] Les femmes doivent partir en mariage.

[xi] Hors mariage.

[xii] *Authentique*: Oui, on s'est entendus... Il est neveu chez lui, *chez ses oncles maternelles*. Il n'a pas des terrains... c'est par rapport à cela qu'il a décidé qu'on doit vivre ici.

Alba: 'Il est neveu', ça veut dire que son père ne lui a pas reconnu?

Authentique: Oui, sa maman a pris sa grossesse quand elle fréquentait... Mais son père vit, mais... *Ses oncles ont refusé!*

Alba: Ses oncles paternels?

Authentique: *Maternelles! Maternelles!...*

Alba: …ont refusé qu'il quitte le village de sa mère?

Authentique: Aham, qu'il doit rester là, dans le village de sa mère et pourtant il n'avait pas assez des terrains.

[xiii] *Sita:* Aham, il aura aussi beaucoup des problèmes, puis que tu n'est pas natal d'ici. (…) C'est peut-être, à peu près comme un esclave. Parce que quand j'utilise un *mintobo* il n'a même pas la bouche pour dire que 'je ne fais pas ça'. Je dis 'fais!' Je demande de faire et s'il refuse je dis que 'akie, dehors!' C'est à peu près comme un esclave!

[xiv] Ma cuisine.

[xv] La cuisine de ma femme, mère, grand-mère, etc.

[xvi] *Alba:* …on t'a doté?

Virginie: Aham, ekie! Un mariage de quarante combien… de trente combien… peut-être si c'est vingt combien? Le mariage était en 1988.

Alba: Okay, parce que j'allais demander par rapport aux terrains que tu es en train de faire, comme tu as dis que il n'y a pas de mariage officiel, si ça ne devait pas créer des problèmes si jamais quelque chose arrive à ton mari, ou à toi-même, par rapport à tes enfants.

Virginie: Hm, hm. Ça ne fait pas des problèmes, ça ne cause pas problème. Le terrain que je travaille c'est le terrain de mon mari. Aham. Donc, ça ne cause pas problème, parce qu'en dehors de l'acte, les enfants. C'est ça chez nous! Donc l'acte c'est un garantie. *Mais quand tu as les enfants chez nous ici c'est l'acte.*

Alba: Okay, c'est comme une garantie?

Virginie: Aham, c'est comme une garantie…

Alba: Et la dot?

Virginie: Et la dot aussi. On doit te doter. Définition: c'est l'acte; et les enfants. Parce que même si c'est comment, si je meurs maintenant là avec les enfants ci, tu ne peux pas quitter de là-bas pour venir faire que, il y a quoi? Que, non... le terrain appartient toujours à les enfants [sic], même s'il n'y a pas l'acte.

Alba: Okay, même ta coépouse a eu la dot aussi?

Virginie: On n'a pas encore doté.

Alba: …pas encore doté? Je pensais que comme vous parliez d'acte là, je pensais que c'était déjà arrangé de ce côté là. Aham.

[xvii] Il n'a pas fait des enfants, rien que les filles.

[xviii] Comme j'ai trois garçons (…) Ici chez nous la fille n'hérite pas, tu vas venir encombrer les autres (…) Les filles sont nées pour aller ailleurs.

[xix] Je leur ai fait jurer qu'ils n'allaient pas entrer dans la polygamie. Il y a trop des problèmes dans la polygamie.

[xx] On fait souvent des groupes pour faire les champs (…) Ce sont comme mes sœurs et mes mamans.

[xxi] C'est parce que les travaux du cacao sont pénibles.

[xxii] Abattre les arbres, pulvériser les insecticides…

[xxiii] Nos grands-parents avalaient le cacao pour venir ici quand ils pouvaient échapper des plantations.

[xxiv] On disait que c'étaient les rats qui amenait les fèves là-bas (…) les rats sont les meilleurs planteurs.

[xxv] C'est la grand-mère de Mvomo-Fils (…) Elle s'était fiancée avec un commerçant qui venait de la chefferie de Mbaka où le chef avait des plantations et lui avait envoyé planter à Nguinda. Puis il parta avec une autre femme et la grand-mère resta avec parce que c'étaient ses terres.

[xxvi] Pourquoi est-ce que les femmes ne s'intéressaient pas au cacao avant?

[xxvii] Les femmes étaient comme des esclaves avant.

[xxviii] Les femmes étaient des nomades (…) pouvant changer de mariage même dix fois!

[xxix] Au Cameroun il y a toujours le sens de l'exagération.

[xxx] Est-ce que tu as amené la terre ici?

Chapter five

[xxxi] *Pauline*: Bon, c'est qui m'a poussé quand j'étais ici... Parce que j'étais d'abord chez moi, je ne connaissais même pas encore l'argent. Quand je viens d'abord arriver ici, je vois souvent les femmes. Ils [*sic*] plantaient souvent le cacao beaucoup. Ils prend [*sic*] le cacao ils vendent. Ils prend le cacao ils vend. Ils prend... c'est en ce temps que je dis que je peux moi même planter. Et faire beaucoup des champs comme ça. (…)

Alba: Donc en 2003, ou avant même que tu ne partes du village, il y avait beaucoup des femmes qui le faisaient?

Pauline: Aham, il y avait beaucoup des femmes, comme le... la femme de mon beau-père là. Elle avait planté une plantation ici à côté. C'est en ce temps là que j'avais vu. J'avais dis que, merde, comme il fait comme ça moi même je peux faire.

[xxxii] *Sita*: Il y avait seulement les grandes femmes que j'ai trouvé là-bas (…) J'ai trouvé que la femme du chef, les deux femmes du chef avaient fait du cacao. C'est ça qui m'a donné même la leçon… Mais elles étaient mortes quand j'étais là-bas... on a laissé leur propre champs. (…) Je ne les ai pas trouvé! (…) On nous racontait les histoires, que 'Telle a laissé le champ. Telle femme a laissé le champ. Ça appartient à leur fils'. Quand on faisait les problèmes sur les champs là, les gens menaçaient que ça appartient aux fils. (…) Parce l'histoire de sa première femme, pour sa plantation, était que la femme là était aussi la fille d'Ekok là-bas. Donc, elle a épousé le chef. Et, et, ses gens, on l'a donné le terrain, pour travailler sur ça, et elle a donc mis le cacao. Que 'Le terrain ci m'appartient, je dois faire comme je veux.' Elle a donc mis le cacao pour la première fois. On m'a raconté comme ça. C'était le terrain de ses gens.(…) C'est la première femme du chef même, *'ekomba minga'*. C'est elle qui a commencé aussi a faire les champs. (…) Donc si je peux dire, je peux dire que la deuxième a pris son exemple chez ça coépouse.

Alba: Probablement... et je me disais aussi que comme elle était *l'ekomba minga* elle avait un pouvoir dans le mariage que les autres femmes peut être n'avait pas.

Sita: Aham, et elle a fait beaucoup des enfant aussi!

Alba: Donc, quand une femme fait beaucoup des enfants elle gagne en pouvoir? dans le mariage?

Sita: Oui! et surtout les fils!

[xxxiii] Les enfants du village.

[xxxiv] Cinq ans que ça a changé.... Dès que tu pars demander tu commences même a blâmer... Merde, je ne peux pas rester comme ça... Parce que quand tu as tes amies, tu as tes coépouses et tes belles sœurs qui commencent donc a te montrer que la femme ne doit pas vivre comme ça; parce que si tu as les problèmes toujours avec ton mari... c'est lui que gère tout. Donc ce n'est pas bien quand l'homme gère tout, donc on a commencé petit à petit... Mais pour le moment chacun gère. Tu as ta part... mais... si… s'il est bloqué dans quelque chose tu prends alors l'argent, tu l'aides. (…) Moi comme ça, comme j'était la première c'est lui qui gérait tout. Moi je ne conçois que tu travailles, c'est lui qui gère. Donc, je n'avais même pas une idée que la femme gère l'argent... à ma grande surprise! Je faisais ça parce que je suis seule là. Bon, voilà alors la deuxième... J'ai aussi commencé qu'on vivait comme ça. Lui aussi il voulait que c'est lui qui gère, mais quand la deuxième femme arrive. Lui en tant que sage... qu'elle ait un peu éveillée... Bon quand elle arrive avec ses yeux ouverts, 'moi ici là pour faire les biens communs, je ne fais pas ça.' Voilà alors la femme qui doit alors dire quoi? Elle commence a avoir ses trucs, elle a son argent elle gère elle-même. Bon, moi j'ai mon argent... mais la deuxième arrive. Je vois ça, je vois ça, je dis à mon mari que moi aussi je vais commencer ça parce que c'est moi qui souffre, parce que 'moi je travaille de l'argent pour que tu gères ta famille, mais la deuxième, elle gère sont argent seule.' Alors on s'est dialogués. Il dit que 'Ma femme, je vois mais...' Parce que mon mari vois que je suis son bras droit non? Comme j'ai déjà les pensées et il se dit que 'bon, ma femme ci, avec les habitudes de ma deuxième femme ci, voilà alors ma femme va changer' J'ai dis donc que 'Je fais comme l'autre a fait.' Il a dit que 'Je ne peux pas te faire du mal.' Bon, chacun gère, mais

en gérant mon argent comme ça… mais… ça me fait toujours mal au cœur. Je prends toujours une part, je lui donne qu'il gère, même s'il gère avec sa belle... sa deuxième, et sa fille et ses enfants... Aham, c'est comme ça.

[xxxv] Je ne suis pas enregistrée. Je vais m'enregistrer. C'est mon mari qui m'avait dit que faisons seulement un an. Et quand je vois que des autres femmes sont déjà adhérées là-bas, donc, moi aussi je vais aller m'adhérer.

[xxxvi] Comme toi aussi tu vois que les autres s'avancent, est-ce que c'est moi qui va rester en arrière? Toi aussi tu es obligée de plonger.

[xxxvii] Je dis toujours à mes filles que 'Je n'ai rien a vous dire, sachez seulement que je suis seulement un modèle que vous devez copier. (…) Je fais ça pour... les enfants vont se souvenir de moi.

[xxxviii] *Alba*: Tout à l'heure tu as dit que 'c'est pour les garçons'?

Lizbeth: C'est pour les garçons... Même le files, celles qui veulent venir faire, elles viennent faire. Parce que même les espaces ci; ici, les espaces. Le plantain ci, c'est pour l'autre qui vient de m'appeler. Comme les filles ce sont mariées... même si elles ne elle ne sont pas mariées, ici au milieu jusqu'a là-bas. Les filles, celle qui veut construire ici, construit. Ici c'est chez moi. Je n'ai pas besoin plus que ça. Même si elle partie, si elle veut un espace ici, je dis. Lui il n'est pas contre, il n'est pas difficile dans ce genre des choses, que je propose les choses, il refuse. Il sait que ... Oui, il accepte, même en boudant un peu. Il sais que c'est vrai qu'il faut, que c'est comme ça qu'il faut que ça se passe.

Alba: Et si ta fille revient, ça ne va pas faire un petit déséquilibre?

Lizbeth: Non, mes enfants sont très liés.

Alba: Ce que je voulais dire c'est que comme tu as commencé la cacaoyère, ça veut dire que quand le garçon va prendre ça sera déjà a un niveau. La fille, tu dis qu'elle peut faire, ça veut donc dire qu'elle, si elle commence la cacaoyère ça va commencer à zéro. Ça ne va pas faire... tu comprends? ...une petite différence entre eux, que lui il commence déjà avec...

Lizbeth: Comme celui-ci. Tout… Celui ci, le deuxième qui vient d'appeler. Quand il fait là il n'a même pas des moyens, c'est celui ci qui soutient... Et il dit même que les cacaoyères là ce n'est pas trop pour lui parce que la où il travaille il n'est pas trop diminué.

[xxxix] C'était en 1989. Il y a beaucoup des gens qui ont gardé le café dans les maisons. Et ça a trouvé les gens dans ses maisons croyant que le prix devait monter. C'est là que les gens ont abandonné les plantations et commencé à semer le cacao parce que c'est le cacao qui a pris le poids cette année la.

[xl] Pour faire face à la baisse de leurs revenus annuels, les paysans se consacrent donc de plus en plus à la pêche qui s'avère plus rentable que l'agriculture.

[xli] *Fleur:* Nous sommes déjà sur le métier du cacao là. On dit que cinq sur cinq. Tout ce que l'homme fait il faut avoir cinq là-bas aussi. Si c'est cinquante là-bas, cinquante là-bas.

C'est ça qu'on nous apprends maintenant. S'il y a cinquante hommes, il doit avoir aussi cinquante femmes.

Alba: On vous apprend ça o?

Fleur: À notre fête des femmes là. Le 8 Mars qu'on vient de fêter là. On nous dit qu'on ne doit même plus se laisser. Comme nous sommes des femmes il faut être des femmes combattantes. Donc, égalité des sexes. On doit faire cela. C'est ça qu'on est en train de nous dire, et que nous faisions même déjà.

Chapter six

[xlii] Quand j'ai donc quittée ici [*sic*], je voulais faire ça là-bas chez moi à Ndamwo'o. Donc, comme tu connais que la femme pour investir chez lui [*sic*] c'est un peu difficile avec tes frères, pour discuter les terrains. On dit que 'Tu n'as même pas née ici que tu vas mourir ici? Donc il faut que tu partes en mariage, il faut…' C'est pour cela que j'avais cette idée. Donc quand j'avais donc quittée là-bas chez moi pour arriver dans l'autre mariage là-bas. C'est pour cela que j'avais commencé à planter. Quand je regarde même bien, le charge [*sic*] est déjà beaucoup. Quand je travaille les arachides là-bas cette année, la deuxième année je peux même vendre le cacao soit à 10.000. Ça pouvait m'aider pour les enfants à l'école.

[xliii] Il nous a dit qu'ici chez lui il ne veut même pas. Parce que si tu fais ta plantation, quand il veut que tu vas travailler chez lui, tu ne vas même pas, tu comprends un peu? C'est pour cela qu'il ne voulait pas.

[xliv] J'avais d'abord commencé avec le café. Apres avoir commencé, comme l'histoire était longue, l'histoire de la polygamie là… J'avais abandonné le café. Tu sais que quand tu... quand il y a les problèmes chaque fois, les problèmes chaque fois... tu ne te sens même pas, que 'Est-ce que je vais rester, est-ce que je vais partir?' J'avais encore abandonné. Après quand... comme le temps passe, je suis quand même revenue. J'ai commencé à faire le café, et je paie aussi. Comme je paie aussi le cacao, je paie le café aussi. Ma petite parcelle, que si j'ai deux sac là-bas, je paie dehors.

[xlv] Quand je fais, il est là, il m'accompagne, machin. L'idée venait de moi. C'était mon idée. Maintenant alors comme ce sont ses terrains, on fait ça ensemble. Tu sais que bon, nous... il est allé demander ma main mais nous nous sommes pas encore mariés officiellement. Il ne peut pas aussi me vendre en m'exposant comme ça, que je dis que si je fais un champs. Les trucs de famille c'est un genre. Les gens vont dire que 'c'est comment? Quelqu'un qui vient d'ailleurs, toi tu viens déjà lui donner? 'Donc, nous sommes obligés de faire ensemble.

[xlvi] Il a pris le goût.

[xvlii] *Alba*: Et tu m'a dis que tu n'as pas accouché...

Authentique: Je n'ai pas accouché.

Alba: Mais tu gardes combien des enfants?

Authentique: J'ai onze enfants à ma charge.

Alba: Okay. Tu es mariée?

Authentique: Oui, je suis mariée, oui, mais mon mari m'a abandonné depuis. On s'est séparés en 2009 pour les problèmes d'accouchement.

Alba: Comment ça?

Authentique: Il m'a abandonné que je n'accouche pas. Ça famille a dit que... on lui a conseillé de me laisser, qu'il trouve une autre femme. (…) Mes frères savaient que comme je n'accouche pas, eh? Ils vont hériter de mes choses et ils vont chasser leurs neveux là. J'ai dit que 'Non, papa a accouché ma petite sœur et ma petite sœur a fait des enfants. Vous ne pouvez pas les chasser.' C'est là qu'il y a eu la haine, et c'est déjà fini.

[xlviii] *Alba*: Il ne vient pas te remettre une partie des sacs?

Fleur: Ekie! C'est déjà pour lui!

Alba: Mais, ce sont tes sacs, non?

Fleur: C'est déjà pour lui! Là-bas c'est déjà le flou, c'est le flou là-bas. Lui il veut seulement s'avancer. (…) Ce n'est pas bien! (…) Aham, je lui donnais comme ça. On prends en location, je donne, je donne 75.000, je donne 50.000. J'ai vu le champs là-bas… On avait beaucoup des champs. Après un temps là je me suis dis que... 'Non, ce que tu es en train de faire là ce n'est pas normale, fais de ton côté aussi. Dès que tu vois encore les champs, prends toi même. Parce que toi tu donnes, tu ne profites même pas.' (…) Avant je donnais. (…) Je sais que c'est le business qu'on va traiter à deux. Que quand on va récolter il va me donner aussi ma part. Le type... c'est pour cela qu'il est même déjà lancé comme ça. Il est déjà lancé par moi.

[xlix] Il avait pris le goût du cacao.

[l] Tu sais que parmi eux tous là, ici... Celles qui sont derrière moi ne m'affrontent même pas un peu. Alors, il voudrait amener les choses de la polygamie: 'Est-ce que j'ai donné à telle, ou telle, ou telle?' Ekie! C'est moi la fournisseuse ici là. Tu viens me parler des autres, que c'est comment?

[li] Sourtout les fils.

[lii] En cas des problèmes, les enfants te protègent.

[liii] Ils sont très liés. Je leur ai montré qu'ils ont tous le même sang, ils sont tous du même utérus.

Annex 3: Photographs

Photograph 3: Women from the choir after Adventist service in Nsan I. I was asked to put a skirt over my trousers and cover my hair with a scarf in order to participate in the service.

Photograph 4: Woman making "*odontol*" in her kitchen.

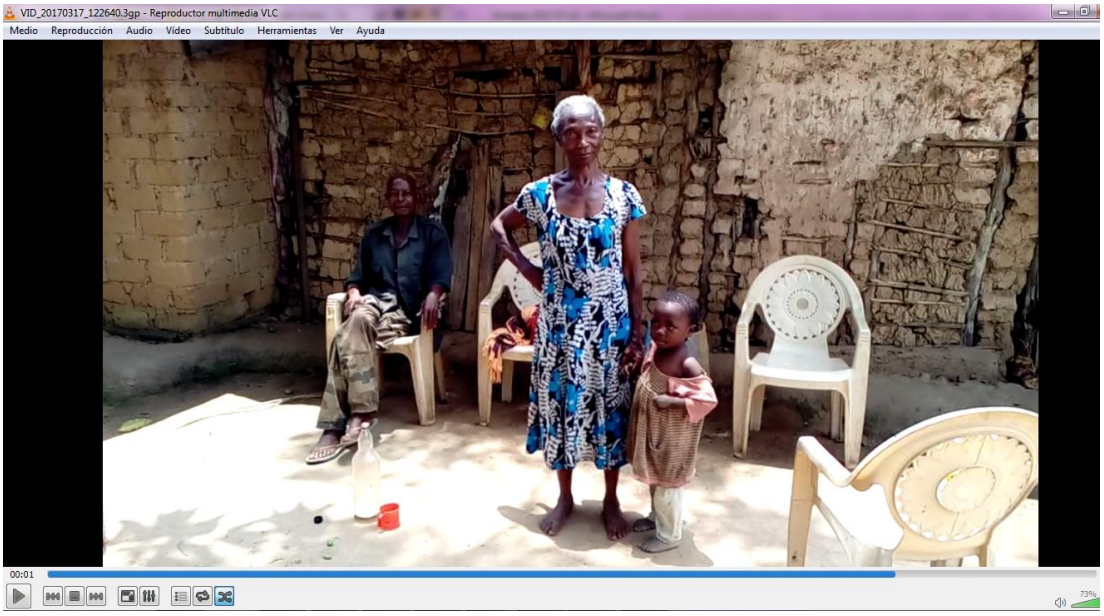
Photograph 5: "ONAPROVO" national organization for the promotion of widows and orphans, sub-section of Nyamvoudou. On the right women dressed in ONAPROVO's fabric, Photograph taken during the celebration of International Women's Day in Nyamvoudou.

Photograph 6: Women's association marching during International Women's Day in Nyamvoudou. Women wear the fabric of Women's Day from different years.

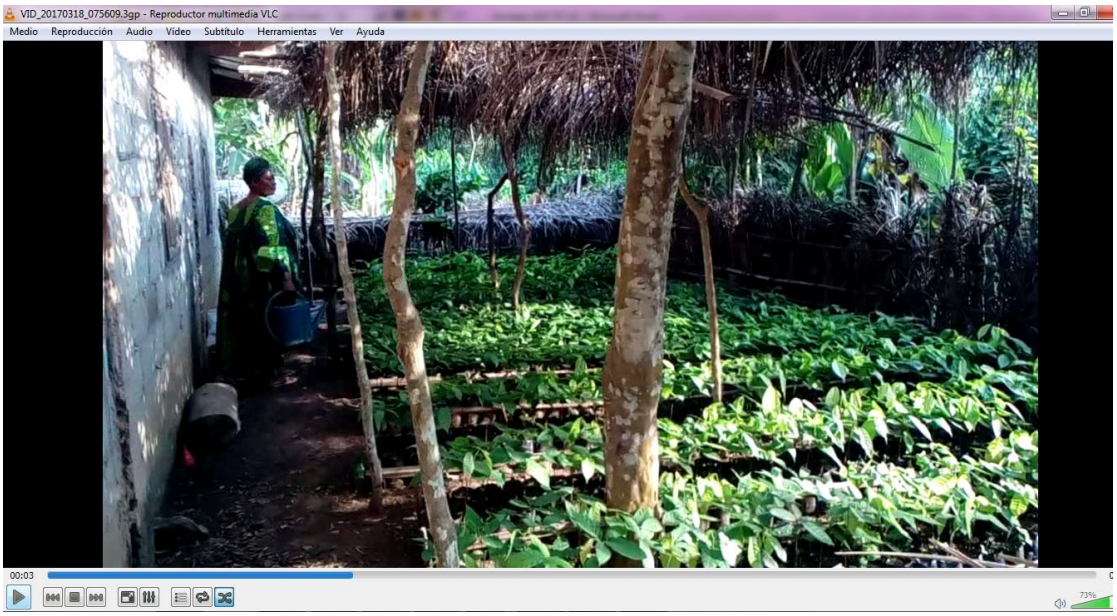
Photograph 7: Close up of one of the messages used in the design of Women's Day fabric for the year 2017.

Annex 4: Screenshots of video-interviews

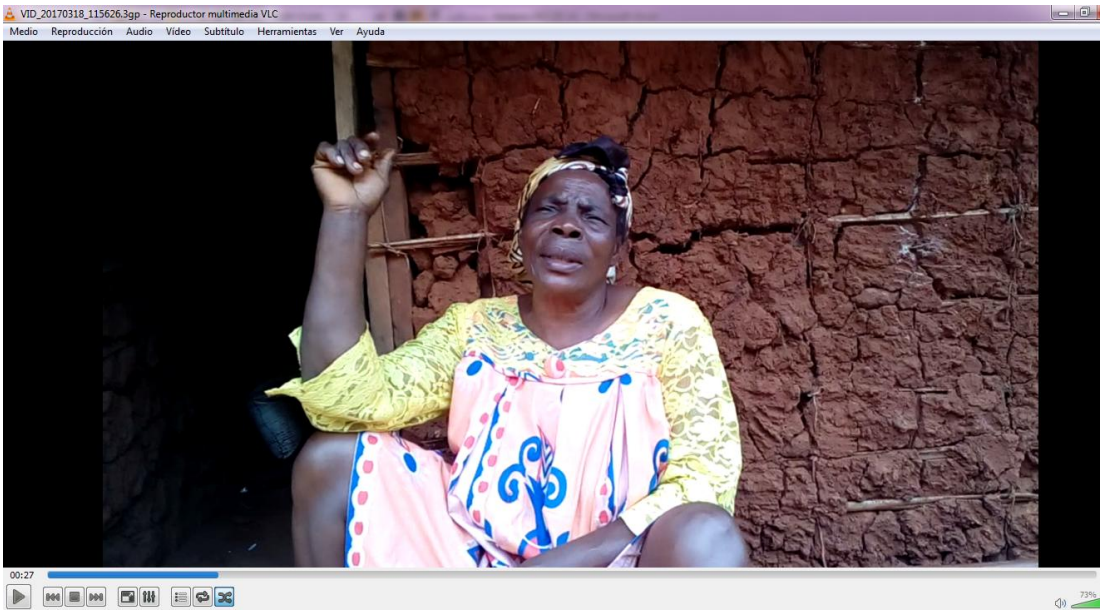
Screenshot 1: Video recorded during the celebration of International Women's Day 2017 in Nyamvoudou.



Screenshot 2: Video of Beti Beti Marceline. At her 78 years, she is one of the oldest women planting cocoa nowadays in Ayos.



Screenshot 3: Video of Maman Salomé showing her cocoa nursery in Nsan I.



Screenshot 4: Video interview with Nlang Lydie in front of her shop in Biwo.

Annex 5: Studies on women and cocoa since the 1980s

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