

SOCIAL CHANGES AND FEMALE MOBILITY IN THE CITY FROM ABONG-MBANG TO EAST CAMEROON

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Abstract: *Thanks to a set of institutional mechanisms, changes in mentalities and mores and changes in socio-economic realities, women have burst onto the Cameroonian labor market. It is undeniable that today there are strong disparities in the labor market. Aka Kouame, notes in this regard that women are less represented in rewarding professions and more present in the subsistence sector. However, what interests us here is less discrimination, but the massive increase in female activity and the process of gender inversion underway in the labor market. This diversity at work through the feminization of male professions on the one hand and the masculinization of female professions is an expression of the modification of patriarchal values and practices, but above all the delegitimization of what Luc Sindjoun called phallogocratic civilization following the perceptible changes in African society since colonization. We are more tempted to speak exclusively of female mobility in analyzes of the evolution of the labor market, whereas this process of change in traditional social roles is the opposite, that is to say that it affects both male and female statuses.*

Keywords: Social Changes, Mobility, Feminine, Abong-Mbang, East-Cameroon

The social changes that occurred in Africa with colonization, in particular the monetarization of the economy, industrialization and above all urbanization, caused major upheavals on the economic level, and also on the part of economic agents, strategies for adapting to the new environment resulting from this context. The phenomenon of urbanization will bring change for women. Indeed, the city appears as the crucible of new social dynamics. It must be remembered, in fact, that in Africa as well as in Europe, traditional rural societies are essentially homogeneous, closed in on themselves. Social control is strong and change is very slow. On the other hand, urban societies are characterized by the heterogeneity of their population, and therefore innovate more willingly.

Among these changes is the accession of women to “in an outside hitherto taboo and reserved for men” to quote Alya Baffoun. The city thus appears as a place that offers women several possibilities, including that of carrying out an activity that generates monetary income. They do not hesitate, moreover, to invest in these areas which were closed to them until then. Therese Locoh speaks of a “silent revolution” in this regard. In fact, there is a massive increase in female activity which, for about two decades, has been a structural trend in the Cameroonian labor market. More and more, women are taking over fields of extra-domestic activities traditionally reserved for men in Abong-Mbang.

We can note in passing that: A real discrimination seems to be exercised against them since from 1990 to 1993; more than 80% of the rare public jobs created were attributed to men, which justifies their massive recourse to the informal sector. This downsizing pushes many women to engage in informal activities, because their husbands find themselves unemployed and can no longer really take care of their families. Furthermore, the concentration of female jobs in a limited number of occupations and sectors of activity remains a major characteristic of the world of work. However, the persistence of these mechanisms of concentration and segregation according to sex goes hand in hand with the mixing of a certain number of professional groups. This situation therefore raises questions about the transgression of

discriminatory practices which is manifested by an influx of women into certain traditionally male occupations. In other words, it is a question of questioning the diversity at work, through the prism of the feminization of certain traditionally male professional groups. Therefore, the question arises: What are the determinants of the dynamics of "gender inversion" observed in professional choices and how does such an influx of women towards traditionally male occupations affect social relations? of gender in Abong-Mbang? through the prism of the feminization of certain traditionally male professional groups. Therefore, the question arises : What are the determinants of the dynamics of "gender inversion" observed in professional choices and how does such an influx of women towards traditionally male occupations affect social relations ? of gender in Abong-Mbang? Through the prism of the feminization of certain traditionally male professional groups. Therefore, the question arises: What are the determinants of the dynamics of "gender inversion" observed in professional choices and how does such an influx of women towards traditionally male occupations affect social relations? Of gender in Abong-Mbang?

1. Urbanization and schooling

Urbanization and schooling have been, since colonization, the causes of important dynamics in the traditional social organization. These phenomena have introduced the African into wage labor and capitalism, an expression of individual autonomy.

1.1. Urbanization and the breakdown of social transformations

Urbanization is a relatively recent phenomenon in Africa. According to Valentin Nga Ndongo, the current agglomerations only date from the colonial period, from which they are moreover the emanations (Nga Ndongo, 1999, p.11.). Urbanization involves ruptures and transformations that affect lifestyles, mentalities, behaviors and activities. By its speed and magnitude, it is aggravating the economic problems of global society. According to Jean-Marc Ela: It seems difficult to approach the problems of daily life in Africa without taking into account the impact of the city (Ela, 1983:14). Because, the city constitutes the mound, the crucible where the civilization of tomorrow is worked out, and appears according to Valentin Nga Ndongo (Nga Ndongo, 1975:4), like: cause of the degradation of the structures and traditional values. Thereby, 1960 brought about change for women. City life with its multiple constraints has called into question, in many areas, patriarchal systems based on unequal relations between the sexes. "Urbanization leads to a decline in traditional systems" as Dominique Tabutin points out (Agbessi-Dos Santos, 1981: 116). Similarly, in the city, the exercise of a liberal profession or not, of an economic activity by a woman is taking precedence over marriage, hitherto defined as the main condition for the integration of women into the society. By giving her more independence, work today makes it possible to compensate for the failure of a union and also gives women the opportunity to flourish, to play a publicly recognized role, to be useful to society. ,

1.2. Urbanization and the emergence of a new type of relationship between men and women in Abong-Mbang

Urbanization has been accompanied by the emergence of a new type of relationship between men and women. Formerly considered as "ministers of the interior" and confined to their traditional roles as mothers and wives, women in the urban context are led to carry out activities outside the domestic sphere (Kouame, 2000: 4). Because indeed, the changes which followed the phenomenon of urbanization, in particular the rise in the cost of living in town, the woman is brought to leave her hearth in order to carry out an activity generating monetary incomes. With the economic crisis and the application by the government of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP), with its multiple socio-economic consequences, when the man lost his job or experienced a significant reduction in his salary, the economic support of the housekeeping is provided, in town, by the woman. This is how Simon David Yana points out: When times are hard, necessity rules, women are allowed out of their usual space, whereas in

the past some men feared that their wives would carry out an activity outside the household that could expose them to lust for other men (Locoh, 1996: 469).

Similarly, with the crisis, men and women engage in unfair competition in various areas of economic activity without taking into account the sexist stereotypes traditionally assigned to each sex in social life either by presupposed human nature or by habits and customs, religious values. It is this desexualization of identities at work that accompanies the process of urbanization. More than in the past, we find men in sewing, catering, etc. It is sometimes surprising to note that women prefer to seek benefits from men in areas which were traditionally granted exclusively to them.

By way of illustration, the women are dressed by the men; feeds on the roadside or in restaurants run by men. Conversely, women assume command and are gradually breaking into sectors of economic and political life that were once reserved for men. This is particularly the case in the armed forces and the police, transport, administration, etc. Moreover, the city appears according to Gerti Hesselting and Therese Locoh, as: A privileged place for learning new family, professional and social roles. The city gives women opportunities (...) and girls have a better chance of going to school. We can therefore think that urbanization has called into question previous relations between men and women, and even, in certain cases,

1.3. Education: a factor of change

Like urbanization, schooling has been a factor of change and above all of promotion for women. According to Therese Locoh, schooling was one of the factors favoring female autonomy (Locoh, 1996: 469). Indeed, the massive increase in schooling following independence has contributed to a large extent to the erosion of sexist prejudices which constituted an obstacle to the advancement of women. Although these prejudices are still prevalent in African societies, it should be noted that women who have benefited from schooling have been able to evolve in society, to enter the traditional strongholds of men. It is thus the relationships between men and women that have been modified thanks to this schooling movement. The massive education of women produced a very large female workforce after independence. Similarly, it has been at the heart of the changes observed in gender mores. The new education introduced with colonization has given rise to the emergence of gendered values that are often contradictory with previous ideologies. It follows a change in behavior, mental representations, as well as a redefinition of values around female identities which contributes to the advancement of women. In this regard, Simon David Yana writes: The new education introduced with colonization has given rise to the emergence of gendered values that are often contradictory with previous ideologies. It follows a change in behavior, mental representations, as well as a redefinition of values around female identities which contributes to the advancement of women. In this regard, Simon David Yana writes: The new education introduced with colonization has given rise to the emergence of gendered values that are often contradictory with previous ideologies. It follows a change in behavior, mental representations, as well as a redefinition of values around female identities which contributes to the advancement of women. In this regard, Simon David Yana writes:

The education of girls structurally influences their age at marriage, but this effect is also accompanied by a change in the perception of female roles, with less priority given to the role of wife: in Cameroon, the age at first union is 20 years for women who have completed secondary education or more, 15 years for those with no schooling and 17.6 years for those with primary education (Yana, 1997: 37).

Similarly, with the education of women, we can note the progress of voluntary control of procreation, through the increase in the levels of knowledge and practice of modern methods of contraception. Moreover, under the effect of schooling, the autonomy of women in the choice of their spouse is in progress. All these changes lead to greater autonomy for women, just as they open up the labor market to them (Muel-Dreyfus, 1996: 7). Regardless of when the professions were opened up to women, the mode of recruitment appears to be decisive in their

effective entry into higher professions. The transition from recruitment by profession to recruitment based on school performance favors the entry of girls. This is for example the case of the judiciary,

When in 1958 a school was created which was accessed by competition; magistrates, a minority until the 1960s, now make up half of the workforce. In another profession, journalism, formerly open to women, the renewal of the profession combines significant feminization and the holding of a university degree among the younger generations, a characteristic that is even more accentuated among women than among men. Engineers, a profession still largely male, the opening of the most prestigious schools to girls did not take place until nearly two centuries after their foundation, ranging from the 1960s to the 1970s, 1972 for the *École Polytechnique*. The proportion of girls has increased in these “*grandes écoles*” streams, but modestly girls represented 14% of entrants to Polytechnique in 1999 (Martin, 1998: 4). On the other hand, they have benefited from the development of engineering schools within universities, more mixed and less selective, but leading to recognized and not devalued diplomas. Compared to other countries, the existence in France of an education based on the primacy of general scientific knowledge over technical knowledge has favored the access of girls to fields long reserved for men. The idea that the entry of women into a profession rhymes with its social depreciation is strongly rooted in mentalities. they have benefited from the development of engineering schools within universities, more mixed and less selective, but leading to recognized and not devalued diplomas. Compared to other countries, the existence in France of an education based on the primacy of general scientific knowledge over technical knowledge has favored the access of girls to fields long reserved for men. The idea that the entry of women into a profession rhymes with its social depreciation is strongly rooted in mentalities. they have benefited from the development of engineering schools within universities, more mixed and less selective, but leading to recognized and not devalued diplomas. Compared to other countries, the existence in France of an education based on the primacy of general scientific knowledge over technical knowledge has favored the access of girls to fields long reserved for men. The idea that the entry of women into a profession rhymes with its social depreciation is strongly rooted in mentalities.

More than a reality, it manifests the resistance opposed by men to the opening up to the other sex of prestigious sectors of activity that they alone dominate. Less than their professional skills, it is characteristics specific to the female sex that are invoked: emotionality, lack of self-control, inability to exercise authority... Also, the pioneers imposed themselves with difficulty and often at the cost of neutralizing their femininity. Shaking up the habits of a male environment, the presence of women contributes to desacralizing professions based on virile virtues, incorporated during training and reinforced during the exercise of the profession. The significant presence of women in certain professions, such as that of teacher or magistrate, invalidates the rhetoric about women's abilities. But there continues to be a specific discourse on feminization, deemed excessive with regard to public service, should the teaching function or judicial exercise be mainly in the hands of women (Guillemot, 1996: 17).

The mixing of professions, however, tends to be accepted and even desired. But it is far from signifying lack of differentiation between trades and functions. While men “reserve” professional spaces for themselves, women occupy niches within the professions, where their presence is tolerated, even encouraged in the name of skills which they would by nature possess. They perform functions where they remain in the shadows while enhancing their capital of knowledge. Thus, women engineers are concentrated in study and research functions and invest in IT. The magistrates mainly occupy functions of the so-called pure seat where they implement their theoretical legal knowledge.

They are also overrepresented among children's judges where the social side, mobilizing the real or supposed skills of women in the field of the family and childhood, supplants the purely legal side. A logic that can also be seen at work in the choice of specialties by female doctors, or even in the most feminine sections of newspapers, centered on social

problems or practical and domestic life, emphasizing ordinary lives. These few examples. Show the joint action of two social mechanisms: on the one hand, the assignment of women to determined spheres of social action testifies to the internalization during the process of socialization of cultural models, of habitus which translate in terms of taste and choice; but these choices also come true, in a specific professional environment, based on the exclusion of other positions or the high price to be paid to occupy positions monopolized by men. In the professions mentioned, these are functions where relationships of power or authority are exercised in the first place, requiring great availability. What magistrates designate as the sacerdotal aspect of the profession, the dedication and investment it requires, or journalists the militant aspect of the profession. The concentration of women in office functions means that the public prosecutor's office, involving numerous contacts with litigants as well as with justice partners and the implementation of a criminal policy, remains closed to them. In journalism, and in another way among executives, access to the highest hierarchical positions is barred to women by the organization of the most daily late-hour work, travel. The male model of competitive professional success that requires ever more investment excludes a majority of women, who jointly manage their careers and the lives of their families.

1.4. The education of women and the increase in the level of knowledge

The differentiated socialization of girls and boys gives rise to stereotypes about the education of children. These stereotypes are widely shared by parents, early childhood professionals and by society in general. One of the major problems is the absence of the issue of the gendered socialization of children in the training of early childhood and education professionals despite the many institutional and legal texts that condemn and combat inequalities due to gender stereotypes. The accent is however placed on the development of the child's autonomy, but almost no training questions issues related to gender and stereotypes. The fight against stereotypes is a fight for equality but also contributes to the well-being of the child in his quest to explore the possible. Once we look at the question of stereotypes in society, their significance appears to be so strong that opposing them seems impossible. It therefore seems important to take this dimension into account from early childhood. Education is one of the fields where the weight of stereotypes is most profound, but other sectors also suffer from gendered strategies that bring about inequalities: urban planning policies and even the algorithms of the major search engines contribute to the propagation of these prejudices which undermine the evolution of society by categorizing and prioritizing individuals. Otherwise, the notion of hidden curriculum is central to understanding the processes of reproduction of gender stereotypes in primary school: girls and boys grasp what is expected of them throughout their schooling. The example of mathematics is characteristic of the way in which a discipline associated with skills can lead girls to depreciate and gradually disappear in sectors with high professional prestige. Mathematics is not made accessible or valued equally depending on whether you are a girl or a boy. Differences do not appear as inequalities, as long as they are not hierarchized in a value system, which defines everything that refers to the masculine as systematically superior. Girls move towards sectors that are less valued socially and economically on the labor market. The modes of transmission, the values, the behaviors implicitly transmitted at school contribute to the reproduction of unequal gender relations, which are reflected first in the orientation of girls and later in the job market. Some courses appear to girls as incompatible with the idea they have and have been given of the place and role of women in society, and in particular the fact of becoming a mother.

The academic results of girls and boys would be correlated to their position in relation to stereotyped models of femininity and masculinity, according to a Quebec survey: the more they adhere to the ideas conveyed by these models, the lower their results. Those who, on the contrary, do not join the codes linked to these stereotypes obtain better results. It would seem that boys are more conformist in relation to these gendered models who advocate male dominance, which would explain their greater school failure. It is the boys from the most

disadvantaged backgrounds and whose parents have a low level of education, which are strongly affected by the consequences of these stereotypes. They are kept out of the school system, are more likely to drop out and have difficulty finding work. There are combinations of the dominated/dominant model depending on the social origin of the pupils which complicates the construction of masculine identity and intensifies the academic failure of boys from the working classes. Young girls from underprivileged backgrounds are also affected, and even more devalued in the labor market. In short, it is their socialization based on gender that traps boys (and some girls too) in these classes in academic failure. Several studies have shown how much the family, the media, the social environment as a whole and therefore the school participates in the construction and reproduction of gender norms and roles, because they themselves are impregnated and shaped by the separation of roles and competences according to biological sex. Taking gender into account has led to a re-examination of all the data from sociology and mainly those on schooling, focusing in particular on the progression and success of female and male schooling in a mixed universe.

2-Social mobility and status of women in Abong-Mbang

In African societies, relations between men and women have entered a phase of rapid transformation, due to the rise of women in extra-domestic spheres formerly reserved for men. Quietly, the "social cadets" have burst into an "outside" traditionally reserved for men. Therese Locoh wrote on this subject that: The women themselves, aware of what they were questioning, preferred to advance quietly in the new areas they were investing (Locoh: 28).

2.1. The acquisition of a new status by women: the edifice of relations between men and women in mutation

Following the upheavals caused by the rapid evolution of the phenomena of urbanization and schooling, the whole edifice of relations between men and women is changing. Indeed, the acquired positions are shaken. According to Therese Locoh, the statuses traditionally devolved to men and women according to their age, their family position, come into contradiction with the real situations. The status of men is questioned. The rights and obligations of each sex, prescribed status are questioned openly or not. This situation generates a confrontation between prescribed statuses and acquired statuses. Because, better educated than their mothers and living in town for some as Therese Locoh points out, women have acquired a new status, which leads them to openly or not openly question, the rights and obligations of each sex. Therese Locoh speaks of a "silent revolution" in this regard. The First World War did not upset the relationship between the sexes, but the disruption of the marriage market, the erosion of fortunes and the erosion of rents encouraged the families of the petty, even of the upper middle class, to provide their daughter of a school background allowing them to possibly exercise a professional activity. The education of girls is mainly in higher primary schools, but an increase in aspirations is emerging, concretized by the Bérard decree of 1924, authorizing girls to prepare for the baccalaureate in the same way as boys and the increase in the number of female students. . With the opening of sectors of activity to women, more compatible than working-class conditions with the bourgeois image of femininity, few young girls then remained without professional experience. Most stop working when they start a family, but this change is notable because it is an indication that work is now part of the horizon of possibilities for a majority of women.

Assistance to families is subject to two criteria: the professional activity or inactivity of the mother and the progressiveness of benefits from the second child. This policy had a certain effect of encouraging the withdrawal of the labor market on mothers; it also contributed to crystallize a social norm that of the mother at home. What has been perceived as a specificity of the female workforce, its discontinuity, thus appears as the product of a social construction.

Paradoxically, this "specificity" of the female labor force is dissolving as the employment crisis begins to make itself felt: in the generations born during the 1950s, who

enter the labor market in the 1970, the increase in female activity rates continues at all ages, resulting in an increasingly significant contribution of women to the active population: almost half of active workers are now active and, between 25 and 50 years old, 80% of women are present on the labor market. As if progressive evolutions engendered a shift in social norms, a model of behavior is thus imposed which implies the accumulation of professional activity and family activity. The strength of this model is confirmed when we disaggregate the category of inactive or students, nor retirees in which women largely dominate. If the position of "houseman" does not exist, can we consider the inactive as "housewives", having cut all ties with the labor market and exercising their activity within the domestic sphere? For the family? Activity, inactivity, unemployment represent so many categories of classification of the population which have their history and their conventions. With the development of precariousness and mass unemployment, the boundaries between these categories tend to blur and are formed at the margins of gray areas, particularly occupied by women. These margins are all the greater in that the definition of unemployment most frequently used in State statistics is particularly restrictive. The population of inactive people thus feeds on those of discouraged unemployed women who have suspended their unsuccessful efforts to find a job and on that of unemployed women found to be inactive wishing to work but unavailable at short notice, mainly for family reasons. They are in fact constrained inactive workers or, in other words, potentially active workers, ready to look for a job if the situation improves or if their living conditions allow it (Maruani, 2000:18).

Since 1994, social policies such as the parental education allowance, encouraging mothers of two children to withdraw from the labor market, have contributed to inflating the number of inactive women to the detriment of active and unemployed women. Looking closely at the beneficiaries of this measure, we see that a large proportion of them have experienced professional trajectories particularly marked by precariousness and unemployment. In the name of universalism, in Cameroon there are no employment policies specially intended for women; these are in fact family policies which, regulating women's access to the labor market, function as employment policies. But, if these women are temporarily unavailable for employment, have abandoned costly but unsuccessful procedures, seized the opportunity of parental leave, they most often want to "go back to work", and their connection to employment remains strong. Not considering their future "at home", they cannot be purely and simply assimilated to the housewives of past generations. Also, more and more, inactivity ceases to describe the situation of women who devote themselves to their household to encompass various situations at the margins of activity, inactivity and unemployment, resulting from various forms of eviction part of the labor market population. they cannot be purely and simply equated with the housewives of past generations. Also, more and more, inactivity ceases to describe the situation of women who devote themselves to their household to encompass various situations at the margins of activity, inactivity and unemployment, resulting from various forms of eviction part of the labor market population. they cannot be purely and simply equated with the housewives of past generations. Also, more and more, inactivity ceases to describe the situation of women who devote themselves to their household to encompass various situations at the margins of activity, inactivity and unemployment, resulting from various forms of eviction part of the labor market population.

The link between women and professional activity is rooted in the long trends of salarization of the female population (Cacouault-Bitaud, 2001:115) in an expanding tertiary sector. Raising the level of education has played an essential role in this movement: in all European countries, the activity rates of women are correlated with their level of education. However, since the end of the 1960s, girls have outperformed boys, whether in obtaining the baccalaureate or pursuing higher education, even if the school courses taken remain differentiated according to sex. More than ever, the possession of a diploma constitutes a sesame for employment and career. Professional trajectories (Boigeol, 1996, p. 107-129). Women who have pursued studies beyond the baccalaureate tend to approach those of their

male counterparts. Conversely, women with few qualifications are the most exposed to the forms of job insecurity that are developing in favor of unemployment and changes in the forms of labor management.

The woman, by her mobility, is the instigator of new social relationships. They now appear, to quote Jean Claude Barbier, as : Free women, leading women whom men easily treat as rebels simply because they no longer obey them, because they no longer control (Barbier, 1985: 18) . Thus it is not uncommon to meet more and more women who find themselves in fact head of their family, in the broad sense of the term. Indeed, the economic situation helping, women thanks to their purchasing power, result of their accession to paid employment, are sometimes the main purveyors of economic resources, of the family. This situation is not without generating misunderstandings between men and women. For many men still, the woman remains a social cadet,

2.2. Profound changes in the relationship between men and women: the social cadets and the economic sphere

The entry of the "social cadets" into the extra-domestic economic sphere generating monetary income has led to a redefinition of roles. Therese Locoh speaks of a rapid, but not very apparent, change in gender status and roles. Indeed, as Jean Claude Barbier points out, where traditional societies have not provided for the advancement of women, they have taken the initiative (Barbier: 18). Fatherhood responsibilities are increasingly assumed by women. Because carrying out income-generating activities, women in Abong-Mbang are increasingly required to supplement their husbands. This situation is not without consequences for men. Writes in this regard that: The paternal status is seriously undermined since the children are increasingly dependent on the mothers who assume the costs of schooling and health, two traditional responsibilities of fathers. Although theoretically the holders of power, men play an increasingly sporadic role when their wives carry out an activity that generates monetary income. This situation has the consequence of leading to conflicts between "prescribed statuses", that is to say what was traditionally reserved, and the role actually played. Moreover, the exercise of a monetary income-generating activity by women frees the man from some of his obligations as head of the family, without necessarily resulting in a reversal of the relationship between men and women. Even if working women are more often listened to by their husbands, it remains according to Velghe-Scherpereel and Van de Wouwer-Leunda that:

2.3. Evolution of the discourse on women and the rise of movements of thought on women

The upward mobility of women which led to their irruption on the labor market, and consequently to changes in their traditional roles, cannot be understood and explained independently of the international environment which favored it. The movement of thought on women finds its expression in what is called "feminism". Feminism dates from the 19th century. According to Madeleine Grawitz, feminism is: A social and political movement which claims for women the same freedoms and the same political rights, "economic, cultural and social etc.

Feminism is a doctrine that advocates the extension of rights, of the role of women in society. This movement was accompanied by demands such as equal rights between men and women, recognition of women's rights to education, employment and equal status with men. Feminism has contributed to denouncing certain facts, in particular, the distinction of power between men and women. Because, considered as the "weaker sex", women were excluded from decision-making spheres. Feminist struggles have led to the visibility of women's work that was invisible until then. This evolution of the discourse on women has been concretized through international conventions directly affecting the status of women and aimed at improving the status of women throughout the world.

2.4. National policy for the advancement of women in Cameroon

Defined according to MINCOF as being: The creation of an incentive environment aimed at integrating women into the socio-economic and cultural development of Cameroon through: the improvement and facilitation of their status; the implementation of mechanisms for self-made women and a better humanization of their living conditions. The national policy for the promotion of women in Cameroon is underpinned by the will of the Head of State and the Cameroonian government to work for the increased promotion of Cameroonian women. Indeed, as Luc Sindjoun and Mathias-Eric Owona Nguini point out: Before 1975, it appears that no specific place was offered to women in the development process and only a few dispersed actions were carried out in different ministries. It is in this context that the field of intervention of the policy in favor of women will be the subject of new regulations with the advent of the Ministry for the Status of Women (MINCOF) as a new mechanism for coordinating actions relating to the situation of women; as an autonomous ministerial department created in 1984. The objectives targeted by the Cameroonian State in creating this ministry are clearly reflected in the reference document on government planning: The creation of a ministry in charge of the status of women materializes the firm will of the public authorities to emphasize and implement the concept of the advancement of women. It is indeed a question of promoting and applying the measures intended to ensure respect for the rights of Cameroonian women in society,

In this perspective, structures will be put in place across the country, in particular the PMI (Maternal and Infant Promotion) ... This will of the Cameroonian State to work for the promotion of women was reaffirmed by the head of the State in March 1997 in these terms: As for Cameroonian women, enterprising, they know the esteem that I have for them. They must occupy a more important place in our society, whether in politics, administration or business. I have a special thought for those millions of women who; in rural areas ensure the daily subsistence of their families. I affirm that I will continue to work tirelessly for the emancipation of women, as well as the improvement of their working and living conditions. This desire of the Head of State to facilitate the advancement of women is clearly reflected in the new strong evocative name (Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the Family) of the ministerial department in charge of women's specific issues. Alongside these institutional mechanisms set up by the Cameroonian State to facilitate the advancement of women, many conventions directly affecting the status of women and aimed at improving the status of women throughout the world have been ratified. Through these mechanisms, the Cameroonian State has undoubtedly favored the accession of Cameroonian women to the extra-domestic sphere.

3. Female work: changes and permanence in the labor market in Abong-Mbang

Certain spheres of social, family and community life have long been considered 'the undisputed domain of women', notably those relating to reproductive life and education. This is underlined by Simon David Yana, when he writes: Everything related to procreation and the biological reproduction of the group is the reserved domain of women. This is what makes Christine Opong say that African women are essentially "wives and mothers", that is to say confined to the roles of marriage and reproduction, childbirth, breastfeeding and education of children. On the other hand, extra-domestic activities fell under the exclusive competence of men.

3.1. Changes

Thanks to a set of factors of social change that have modified gender mores and the traditional division of labor within families, a dynamic of gender inversion is occurring. Beyond the growing importance of women's contribution to family life (Boserup, 1983: 2), it is in public life that we have been experiencing for about two decades this "silent revolution" characterized by a massive increase in female activity on the labor market. The activity rate of women outside their labor force is increasing, despite the permanence of male domination. If on the statistical

level, this revolution is sometimes not significant, on the sociological level, it is a phenomenon of precious symbolism at the level of social gender relations, because it is above all a revolution in sexual and gender mores, in the trajectories of schooling - socialization of children within families; especially since it is through the triptych socialization-education-schooling that reproduces on the labor market what Aka Kouame called "masculine exclusivity". This co-presence of the sexes is also marked by the mobility of women, to the point where "we no longer only find men in certain major positions" to quote our interlocutor.

There are more and more women in transport (bus and taxi driving), the judiciary, the army, the high ranks of medicine, construction and public works, engineering, higher education, technical education... Thus patiently and without beating drums, women have seen the opening up to them of several fields of activity hitherto reserved for men.

3.2. The permanence of segregation despite everything with segregated sectors

Inequalities between men and women in the labor market persist despite everything, and this in practically all areas. The unequal situation observed between men and women is the result of a long process built up by male domination. The analysis of families' educational strategies shows that the sex of the child still influences educational orientation and the professional choices of parents (Mimche, 2005: 258). Rachel-Claire Okani opportunely points out that: The place of women in the labor market is still largely dependent on a certain traditional vision which has repercussions on the division of labor (Okani: 286). Moreover, women are still victims of the "deskilling of their work" to quote Robert Cabanes (Cabanes, 1995, pp. 103-119), resulting from the persistence of some sexist prejudices among employers and employees. Despite this mixing of the labor market, it is common to find an abundant female labor force in certain spheres of economic life such as nursing, social security, primary and nursery education. We can, in this sense, understand why women remain secretaries and receptionists in the services. Similarly, sewing, nursing, social security remains the preserve of women. These inequalities are also found in public administration. By way of illustration writes Suzanne-Beatrice Etoga Eyili: In the Cameroonian public service, the percentage of women working in the civil engineering, mining or IT sectors is respectively 1.8%, 4.5%, and 18%.

Even in areas where the vast majority of women work on a daily basis, strong disparities persists. This is particularly the case of agriculture, which made Rachel Efova Zengue say that we are witnessing in Cameroon: % of women work on a daily basis, only 03.44% of women occupying positions of responsibility.

In view of the above and with reference to the percentages from the table above, we note a low female representation in the technical fields. On the other hand, women are better represented in areas related to social and health affairs. This situation is partly due to the low percentage of female graduates in technical fields. Because, writes Albertine Tshibilondi Ngoyi: "For a long time, girls who went to higher education were mainly oriented towards literary careers, science and technology were then fields reserved for the male sex. This explains the low percentage of girls in science schools" (Tshibilondi Ngoyi, 120-121).

These inequalities also appear at the level of the categories of civil servants. In the private sector, it appears that the feminization of certain bodies remains underpinned by logic of marketing. In the opinion of our interlocutor, companies whose activities are reputed to be "masculine" and which do not hesitate to call on women, do so with a view to attracting the attention of users or better still of the population. on their business.

3.3. A tendency for women to be confined to certain sectors in large numbers

The feminization of certain strata is remarkable. Despite female mobility, certain spheres of public life have hitherto been dominated by women, with a tendency to find them in the majority in certain grades, steps, etc. Kindergarten teachers, servants in snack bars and restaurants, managers of cybercafés, midwives, cashiers in services and commerce, social workers, infirmaries and social services of the armies and the police, secretarial services in the

administration, marketing agent social worker, program assistant, etc. This trend towards the feminization of certain sectors of professional groups is justified by the permanence in the collective imagination of biological differences reproducing the inequalities between men and women. The entry of women into the world of work is accompanied by a reproduction of sexually segregated sectors, due to the fact that certain sexual stereotypes have been modeled and made normal in professional life. The words of our interlocutor suggest this, when she declares, speaking of her case, that she expected to work everywhere as a security guard, but she found herself performing office tasks in the company guard who employs him (Songue, et al, 1997: 3). We are still tempted to find it normal for a woman to adopt as a profession the profession of teacher, nurse, seamstress, as well as the insertion of men in the sector of command or their maintenance in positions of responsibility. It is this attitude that Paulette Beat Songue notes when she states: It is a question of mentality in Cameroonian society, the idea of a woman evolving in a workshop or between the machines of a factory does not pass yet. At a pinch, it is accepted in front of a sewing machine in a clothing company (Cabbre: 12).

Similarly, female occupations still influence matrimonial choices, which inversely influence women's behavior in the labor market. As Brigitte Cabbre observed, the female strata and the stereotypes assigned to them acquire a normative dimension and take on the value of a model, of examples to imitate. On the other hand, when a woman decides to make the command, she sometimes ceases to be considered as such, but is perceived under the image of the man.

The sexualization of work is a process that changes over time and adapts to the circumstances that arise. By way of illustration, the entry of women into the army was accompanied by a reproduction of biological differences. They still dominate the sectors requiring great maternal skills: nursing, social service, and also accounting, secretarial work, where they tend to orient themselves much more. On the other hand, the sectors subject to harsh physical conditions are the exclusive property of men (artillery, infantry, transmission, military engineering, etc.). During our interview with a senior member of the armed forces, he said that it was very difficult to admit women into certain strategic areas. Even when they enter areas considered masculine, gender reversal is not always accompanied by gender equality since inequalities are observed in accessing and maintaining positions of responsibility. This is what can also be observed for women working in security companies. They appear as second secretaries or receptionists in the places where they work. "...they are only security guards in name" to quote our interlocutor. Distinctions between men and women and social gender relations still organize the division of labor between men and women. They appear as second secretaries or receptionists in the places where they work. "...they are only security guards in name" to quote our interlocutor. Distinctions between men and women and social gender relations still organize the division of labor between men and women. They appear as second secretaries or receptionists in the places where they work. "...they are only security guards in name" to quote our interlocutor. Distinctions between men and women and social gender relations still organize the division of labor between men and women.

Ultimately, many women still believe that certain jobs are for men. This is what emerges from the words of our interlocutor, when she declares: The army is a profession for men; I cannot join this profession because you have to be strong. Similarly, in the distribution of tasks, there is always the idea that we are facing a woman or a man. Thus, the distribution of tasks will be done according to sex, as evidenced by these words of a respondent: when you have a difficult job, for example a very delicate operation to be carried out which will last, you cannot entrust it to a woman. Besides, in surgery you only have men, because that requires prolonged standing. Which is not good for a woman who still has maternity wards to do?

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