

## ***Background***

In the past, being in couple meant being married and the marriage was considered as the only one framework of procreation. However, since sometimes, we assist to the formation of couples without custom marriage, without religious marriage, without civil marriage. These kinds of couples are called consensual unions, visiting unions, cohabitation without marriage, paperless marriage or non-marital couples. Consensual unions are more common in Cameroon and particularly into some ethnic groups like Bantu and semi-Bantu. With the regard to the marital status of Bamiléké-Bamounes (semi-Bantu) women and Beti-Bassa-Mbamoises (Bantu) women in union, we observe a matrimonial phenomenon worthy of to be analyzed: the greater proportion of consensual unions among Bamiléké-Bamounes women and Beti-Bassa-Mbamoises (Bantu) women in union, either 40, 6%.

Bantu and semi-Bantu cultures are different. The cultural and matrimonial patterns of Bantu people are based on exogamy, equality, freedom in the choice of the partner and the type of union. Here, traditional rulers are permissive with a certain degree of openness. On the other hand, concerning semi-Bantu people, despite modernization, traditional rural remain strong, community is hierarchical, endogamy is the ruler and the conjugal choices are widely influenced by the family or the community.

Urbanization, education, access to work, financial autonomy and weakness of traditional rulers are considered as the factors of the adoption of consensual unions (Brunborg, 1979; Thiriart, 1999; Thomas & Younoussi, 2009). For instance, when we look at the entry into consensual unions according some cultural, economic and educational characteristics, it appears the important differences.

Among Beti-Bassa-Mbamoises women in unions, 62% are in consensual unions. Similarly, among the Bamiléké-Bamounes women in unions, 25% are in consensual unions and this proportion reaches 43% for those below 25 years of age. Furthermore, according educational level, the proportion of consensual unions represents 41% for couples with higher educational level and just 25% for those of primary educational level. On the other hand, concerning the relationship between demographic variables and the choice of consensual unions; firstly, among women at their first unions, 34% are in consensual unions whereas this figure is multiplied by two for those who are at the second or at more than two unions, either 64%. Secondly, concerning the link between fertility and consensual union, it appears that, for women who do not have children, 74% are in consensual unions whereas this number just represents 30% for those who have giving birth to two or more than two children. Thus, it seems that, the entry in consensual unions may be influenced both by cultural, social, economic and demographic factors.

## ***Main question***

With the regard to the differential entry in consensual unions, our main question is the next: what leads Bamiléké-Bamounes women and Beti-Bassa-Mbamoises women to choice consensual unions versus marriages?

## ***Objective***

Our main objective here is to model the choice of the union type for finding out the factors and their interactions in their effects on the choice of the consensual union.

## ***Data***

Ours data are issued of the Demographic and health survey (DHS, 2011), women file. We have extracted a sample formed only by Bantu and semi-Bantu (married or in consensual unions).

## ***Methods***

We will proceed by log linear model contingency table for finding out the factors and theirs interactions in the choice of consensual unions.

## ***Variables***

***Dependent variable:*** type of union (consensual union, marriage).

***Explanatory variables:*** place of residence (urban, rural); education level (primary, mixed, secondary, higher); ethnic and religious group (Bamiléké-Bamoune not Muslim, Muslim Bamoune, Beti-Bassa-Mbamoise), occupational status (mixed, trade-service, agriculture); age group (15-24 years, 25-34 years, 35-49 years); reached parity (no children, on children, two children or more); rank of union of the woman (first union, from two unions); form of union (monogamy, polygamy); form of cohabitation (permanent, not permanent).

## ***Hypothesis***

1. Consensual unions are more common in urban areas;
2. Beti-Bassa-Mbamoises women are choosing consensual unions more than Bamiléké-Bamounes women;
3. Financial autonomy of women is favorable to consensual unions;
4. Education of women is favorable to consensual unions;
5. Lower fertility is a factor of the adoption of consensual unions;
6. Consensual unions are more common for women who have known a divorce or separation than for those who are at their first unions.

## Findings (table 1)

### *Culture and consensual unions*

#### *Gap of religion and the adoption of consensual unions*

Among Bamiléké-Bamounes women, the chances to be in consensual unions versus to be married are 3 times stronger for Christian and others religions women than for Muslim women. Into the Muslim religion, marriage and fertility constitute the factors of social integration of the woman in the community. A woman has value if she is married. When the woman is not married, she is considered as a prostitute. Thus, the conception of the woman is associated to “mother and spouse”. From the puberty, young girls begin to undergo the pressure in the perspective of the marriage. One explanation here, is to avoid non-marital births. For the Muslim Bamoun community, a woman who wants to proof his dignity or responsibility has to get married. Furthermore, polygamous is valued and the steps of the matrimonial ceremony are very simplified, the marital compensation is cheap.

On the other hand, generally Christian religions are less strong in matter of marriage. There is more often dialogue between Parents and children concerning the choice of the partner or again of the union type. These tolerances are favorable to the adoption of consensual unions.

#### *Difference of traditions, marital customs and the entry into consensual unions*

The chance to be into consensual unions rather than to be married are 5 times strong for the Beti-Bassa-Mbamoises women than for Bamiléké-Bamounes who are not Muslim. This difference is due to the difference of culture, mainly matrimonial culture. Among Beti-Bassa-Mbamoises, the social control is too weak in matter of nuptiality and fertility. Non-marital birth is accepted and valued. The influence of the community on the individual decisions is weak. The choice of the consensual is done freely without any representation. Here, there is a spirit of free choice. Furthermore, there is not pressure about marriage.

On the other hand, among Bamiléké-Bamounes not Muslim, the control about nuptiality and fertility remains strong despite the modernization. The community and the family have an influence on matrimonial behaviors; non-marital birth is less accepted. The choice of the consensual is in consequence less accepted.

### *Demographic characteristics and the adoption of consensual unions*

Equally, the break-up of unions is a factor of the adoption of consensual unions and the same thing goes for lower-fertility.

The table 2 shows that, the relationship between some variables and the choice of consensual unions depends on the ethnic and religious group of the woman. This fact is expressing the importance of log linear modeling table.

**Table 1: estimated Odds Ratio of the choice of consensual unions**

Variables-modalities										
	M0	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9
<b>Ethnic and religious group</b>	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***
<b>Bamiléké-Bamoune not muslim</b>	Réf	Réf	Réf	Réf	Réf	Réf	Réf	Réf	Réf	Réf
<b>Muslim Bamoune</b>	0,4017***	0,4017***	0,413***	0,487***	0,432***	0,2627***	0,264***	0,234***	0,254***	0,26***
<b>Beti-Bassa-Mbamoise</b>	4,481***	4,481***	4,564***	4,539***	4,692***	5,435***	4,575***	4,75***	5,18***	5,85***
<b>Place of residence</b>	ns		ns	ns	***	+	ns	+		ns
<b>Rural</b>	Réf		Réf	Réf	Réf	Réf	Réf	Réf	Réf	Réf
<b>Urban</b>	0,9017ns		1,086ns	0,892ns	0,685***	0,827+	0,887ns	0,805+	0,893ns	0,96ns
<b>Educational level</b>	***			***	***	**	*	+	*	*
<b>Lower homogamy</b>	Réf			Réf	Réf	Réf	Réf	Réf	Réf	Réf
<b>Mixed</b>	2,066***			2,035***	1,866**	1,529**	1,41*	1,311*	1,31*	1,076ns
<b>Middle homogamy</b>	2,451***			2,148***	1,777***	1,267+	1,22ns	1,12ns	1,18ns	1,076ns
<b>Higher homogamy</b>	2,005***			1,986***	1,617*	1,333ns	1,35ns	0,94ns	1,10ns	0,578*
<b>Occupational status</b>	***				***	*	*	+	+	ns
<b>Agriculture</b>	Réf				Réf	Réf	Réf	Réf	Réf	Réf
<b>Service-Trade</b>	1,19*				1,431**	1,199ns	1,31+	1,280+	1,231ns	1,072ns
<b>Unemployed-others jobs</b>	2,04 ***				2,742***	1,391*	1,493*	1,336*	1,274+	1,15ns
<b>Age group</b>	***					***	***	***	***	***
<b>15-24</b>	2,764***					3,4682***	4,052***	2,44***	2,575***	2,415***
<b>25-34</b>	Réf					Réf	Réf	Réf	Réf	Réf
<b>35-49</b>	0,422***					0,365***	0,292***	0,303***	0,297***	0,288***
<b>Rank of the union</b>	***						***	***	***	***
<b>One union</b>	Réf						Réf	Réf	Réf	Réf
<b>Two unions or more</b>	3,38***						4,86***	4,94***	4,48***	4,08***

Variables-Modalities	M0	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9
<b>Fertility</b>	***							***	***	***
<b>No child</b>	1,974***							1,85**	1,615*	1,32ns
<b>One child</b>	Réf							Réf	Réf	Réf
<b>Two children or more</b>	0,291***							0,385***	0,37***	0,42***
<b>Form of union</b>	*								***	***
<b>Monogamy</b>	Réf								Réf	Réf
<b>Polygamy</b>	0,825*								1,62***	1,10ns
<b>Form of cohabitation</b>	***									***
<b>Permanent</b>	Réf									Réf
<b>Not permanent</b>										5,39***
<b>Value Chi2</b>				89.566	147.5103	315.0706	545.6512	876.7547	979.293	1105.932
<b>Significance</b>			***	***	***	***	***	ns	ns	ns
<b>L-squared</b>			48.8478 (0.000)	91.282 (0.000)	155.748 (0.0000)	294.5059 (0.0000)	489 (0.0107)	803.9616 (1.000)	921.651 (1.000)	1064.9 (1.000)
<b>Pseudo R squared</b>			0.1194	0.1287	0.1486	0.2369	0.2819	0.3118	0.3061	0.3625
<b>Indice of dissimilarity</b>			0.0425	0.0579	0.0665	0.0781	0.0970	0.1260	0.1452	0.1559
<b>BIC</b>			32.3750	-48.070	-358.021	-1377.28	-2929.0	-9644.56	-19825.	-40508
<b>Sample</b>			3116	3116	3116	3116	3116	3116	3116	3116

Source: analysis DHS, 2011, women file.

Degree of significance + 0,1 \* 0,05 \*\* 0,01 \*\*\* 0,001 ns not significant

**Table 2 : Tests of models.**

Variable in interaction with the ethnic and religious group of the woman	Interactions models between the ethnic and religious group of the woman , an independent variable and the consensual union		Partial Associations models between Independent variables and the consensual union		Differenciations		Significance of the test
	L squared	dof	L squared	dof	≠L squared	≠dof	
<b>Place of residence</b>	993.3292	5166	1064.949	5168	71.6202	2	0.0000 (***)
<b>Educational level of the couple</b>	1041.7043	5162	1064.949	5168	23.2451	6	0.0007 (***)
<b>Occupational status of couple</b>	1036.6557	5164	1064.949	5168	28.2937	4	0.0000 (***)
<b>Age group of the woman</b>	1049.3361	5164	1064.949	5168	15.6133	4	0.0036 (**)
<b>Rank of union of the woman</b>	1045.4557	5166	1064.949	5168	19.4937	2	0.0001 (***)
<b>fertility</b>	1061.1261	5164	1064.949	5168	3.8233	4	0.4304 (ns)
<b>Form of union</b>	1063.2822	5166	1064.949	5168	1.6672	2	0.4345 (ns)
<b>Form of cohabitation</b>	1050.8926	5166	1064.949	5168	14.0568	2	0.00009 (***)

Dof: degree of freedom

Degree of significance + 0,1 \* 0,05 \*\* 0,01 \*\*\* 0,001 ns not significant

### Findings (Table 3)

The table 3 is expressing a contradiction between Beti-Bassa-Mbamoises women and Bamiléké-Bamounes women.

Financial autonomy, urbanization, higher educational level is factors of consensual unions among Bamiléké-Bamounes women, while all these factors are favorable to marriages among Beti-Bassa-Mbamoises women.

The explanation to this reality remains in traditional rulers. In fact, because of the full power of the husband, the influence of the community and the family in the married life lead Bamiléké-Bamounes women to choice consensual unions versus marriages for preserving their autonomy.

But like there is freedom, certain equilibrium between the wife and the husband in the Beti-Bassa-Mbamois traditional rulers, the marriage constitutes for them the factors of emancipation. They attach importance in marriage, which give rights and acknowledgment.

Thus, hypothesis H1, H2, H3, H4 depend of the ethnic group of the woman.

Hypothesis H4, H5 are more general.

Tableau 5.11 : estimated conditional odds ratio.

Variables	Ethnic group of the woman			
	Modalities	Muslim Bamoune	Bamiléké-Bamoune not muslim	Beti-Bassa-Mbamoise
Milieu de résidence		***	***	***
	Rural	Reference	Reference	Reference
	Urban	3.7514***	2.744***	0.444***
Educational level		*	ns	**
	Lower homogamy	Reference	Reference	Reference
	Mixed	2+	2*	0.674*
	Middle homogamy	3,21*	1.7402*	0.723+
Occupational status	Higher homogamy	-----	1.437ns	0.2504***
		**	*	*
	Agriculture	Reference	Reference	Reference
	Service-Trade	8.876**	1.645*	0.6774*
Age group	Unemployed-others jobs	6.667*	1.552ns	0.869ns
		***	***	***
	15-24	2.511*	2.0336**	2.932***
	25-34	Reference	Reference	Reference
Rank of the union	35-49	0.253*	0.4638***	0.225***
		ns	***	***
	one union	Reference	Reference	Reference
	two unions or more	1.618ns	8.181***	3.0926***



		Groupe ethnique et religieux de la femme		
Variables	Modalities	Muslim Bamoune	Bamiléké-Bamoune not muslim	Beti-Bassa-Mbamoise
<b>Parité atteinte</b>		*	***	***
	No child	0.719ns	1.63+	1.131ns
	One child	Reference	Reference	Reference
<b>Forme of the unions</b>	Two children or more	0.329*	0.389***	0.465***
		ns	ns	ns
<b>Form of the cohabitation</b>	Monogamy	Reference	Reference	Reference
	Polygamy	1.069ns	1.260ns	1.069ns
		***	***	***
	Permanent	Reference	Reference	Reference
	Not permanent	5.712***	8.0014***	3.287**

Degree of significance + 0,1 \* 0,05 \*\* 0,01 \*\*\* 0,001 ns not significant

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