

‘HOT MONEY’: GENDER AND THE POLITICS OF NEGOTIATION AND CONTROL OVER INCOME IN WEST AFRICAN SMALLHOLDER HOUSEHOLDS

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The ample documentation on family budget separation in Africa (Guyer 1980a, 1980b, 1984; Whitehead 1981; Somé 2010) clearly confirms the weaknesses of a unitary perception of the African household. In revisiting analyses that approach the household as a unit of production where all members hold the same collective goals and invest altruistically in their common interest, the literature points to sharper, though sometimes subtle, internal divisions. This article aims to add to the ‘divided household’ analysis by extending the concept of ‘control’. It builds on ‘resource control’ – over land, labour and tools, for example – and ‘income control’ (Meillassoux 1964, 1978, 1981; Geschiere 1985) to include ‘spiritual control’ of the dangers of money coming from different farm products, activities and people. The article therefore explores the spiritual power added to power over productive resources and money-income streams within the domestic economy.

In cotton-producing south-west Burkina Faso, where household budgets are separate, incomes generated from a specific set of activities are considered ‘hot’, that is, dangerous if spent without or before a given spiritual protocol at the ancestral shrine. An income thus labelled needs to be ‘cooled’ by the male head of the household or a senior male of the domestic group through a spiritual performance that includes pouring ash at an ancestral shrine or sacrificing a chicken to it. The role of status and gender identity involved in the cooling process raises issues of power as household members in lower positions, including women and junior males, sometimes end up in a losing situation, when they fail to manipulate the ‘politics of domesticity’ skilfully (Saul 1989b). As the ‘hotness’ of the money depends on the agricultural activity it is derived from, most women now strategize to engage in and practise on-farm autonomous activities deemed less spiritually dangerous, in an attempt to curtail their husband’s control over hard-earned incomes. As revenue derived from cotton is one such ‘hot’ income, issues are raised about the potential for an organic fair-trade cotton farming project, targeting women primarily, to reach its gender equity objectives. In this article, I present a synopsis of the social organization and the importance of agriculture that contextualizes our understanding of gender roles in farming, the notion of ‘hot money’, and the way women strategize to control their income.

The data for this article were collected as part of an extended ethnography of the rural household for my dissertation research on cotton farming, gender

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relations, and rural development in Burkina Faso. I conducted preliminary research for three months in 2005, from May through to August, followed by a longer round of ten months from August 2007 to May 2008, and subsequent short-time follow-up visits in 2009 and 2010. The methods used included a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative information included household surveys, farm groups' production and production resources, issues about land and labour access, the sources of income, and the gender of household wealth ownership. The qualitative methods comprised participant observation in the form of on-site visits and work participation, semi-structured interviews, conversations, focus group discussions, 'hanging out' with key informants and participation in social events.

For the current article, I used data from interviews, site visits, conversations and follow-ups with eight men and twelve women in south-west Burkina Faso villages, namely in Yabogane, Tambirpkere, Doboh, Kpai and Mebar. Despite the inherent weaknesses of being a 'native' researcher and the so-called 'limits of auto-anthropology' (Strathern 1987; Narayan 1993), my familiarity with the subtleties of the cultural landscape facilitated data access and enhanced data quality and analysis tremendously. All people interviewed belong to the Dagara ethnic group, whose ideology and symbolism inform the actors' economic behaviours in more or less explicit ways – as is shown in the next sections.

First, an understanding of the rural Dagara's relationships to the ancestors and land allows us to grasp the notion of hot money and its various implications.

ASPECTS OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AMONG THE DAGARA

The population of the Dano area is predominantly Dagara-speaking. Most Dagara practise subsistence agriculture and develop pastoralism to some degree. This zone is part of the country's 'food basket' and the western 'cotton zone' of Burkina Faso, which produces 82 per cent of the country's exportable cotton. Each Dagara person claims membership of a patriclan, a large group of females and males who assert common descent from a mythological male ancestor (whose name they usually do not recall). Each patriclan is made up of a plurality of 'houses' (*yie*, or *yir* in the singular), to which the individual feels closely related. Though the word *yir* evokes the physical house or an aggregate of houses, what is more important is its social dimension. *Yir* is a patrilineage and refers to all the male and female inhabitants of the building, or related blocks of buildings, who are offspring of a male parent who traces his relationship of descent to the original male ancestor and founder of the 'house'.

The lineage is typically known for its unity and segmentation. At a lower stratum, the various segments of lineage cohere around one lineage shrine called *nyiuur* or *danyiuur*, the root. In addition to the *nyiuur*, there are also other important shrines, among them the *kpîî* (pl. *kpîme*), usually a small stone-topped block of mud on the ground at a corner of the shrine house. *Kpîî*, which stands literally for 'ghost', is the representation of the spirits of the dead male adults of the lineage or segment of lineage – the ancestors. Each male member of the segment who builds a house away from the initial segment's compound can decide to build a *kpîî*, if he plays the role of father in the new unit, and if his father, the genitor, is dead. The physical proximity to the *kpîî* allows the person to access the spirit of

his dead father easily to invoke the intercession of the founding ancestors and God on his behalf. Other possible individual shrines less central to understanding the current study of household relations include *saankuma*, *mwin*, *kòntòmòn* and *kiere*. Contrary to Lobnibe's observation concerning the weakening effect of ancestral spiritual practices among Dagara women and men of northern Ghana (Lobnibe 2005: 577–8), ancestral worship is pervasive in people's ideologies and actions, and plays a major role in their economic life despite the prevalence of conversion to the Roman Catholic religion in the area. Only the male members of the patrilineage claim collective rights over their given land domain as 'our space' (*ti zîé*), and senior males administer farmland used by other members.

Despite constant shifts that challenge Fortes's static view more and more, the 'domestic domains as well as the politico-jural, economic and religious domains are made up of relations of husband and wife, parent and child, sibling and sibling' (Fortes 1969), though this view may be extended to include individuals affiliated in other ways (Saul 1989a: 350). Polygyny is widespread and practised by men who can afford to make multiple bridewealth payments. Married women are viewed as outsiders within their husband's group – and pretty much so within their own patrilineage: they have no claims to privileges such as inheritance or land from either patrilineage. Most men under thirty have one wife but they marry a second wife if their assets increase. In the case of a household headed by an adult male, the produce of his main farm belongs to him, with the provision that he meet the requirements of his dependants. Together with their wives, children and other dependants – who constitute major labour providers – men grow sorghum, millet and maize primarily as food for the family. However, these food crops can be sold, normally if they are in excess of the needs of the household, but also depending on the head's wishes or the household's cash needs. Heads of household also produce other cash crops such as rice, pepper or peanuts. Horticulture is also proving a considerable source of income to some farmers during the dry season, whenever water is available, but the impact of these crops and activities on farmers' budgets is small. Since the 1990s, the dominant cash crop has been cotton. A man may delegate a senior wife to manage a portion of the acreage, especially if it is under a staple crop. He is responsible, however, for taking decisions on expenditures. It is also common for heads of households to allocate plots of land to members for small personal farms. The returns from such productions normally belong to the individual. The main farm managed by the head is the priority, and its labour schedules take precedence over any work that needs to be done on individual farms.

Levirate – the practice that consists in inheriting the widow(s) of a patrilineal (classificatory) brother – is also common. However, a widow has the right to reject a leviratic union; and many widows do so. A widow who chooses to reject the levirate option can still stay in her husband's house, and farm as much of his land as her resources allow, as long as she does not remarry. But once she decides to remarry or to move from the marital residence, she loses her prerogative to the farm. Some widows, thus, cleave to this rare prerogative for access and control over productive assets to attain their economic autonomy goals by engaging in farming. Unmarried women can be granted access to farming plots by their fathers or brothers. However, this piece of land is returned once the woman gets married. Married women may also have access to small plots through their husbands or friends for temporary exploitation. Such plots, which are given

following the consent of their husbands, are generally meant for growing small cash crops or garden produce to be used in cooking.

HOT MONEY AND THE NOTION OF THE ‘HOE-HANDLE’

Hot money should be understood in relation to the broader framework of the ‘hoe-handle’, on which Jack Goody (1962, 1967) provided an extended commentary. Traditional Dagara view the economy as originally rooted in agriculture, which is made possible by the farming hoe, *kuur*, the primordial tool for agricultural practice passed down by the ancestors through the patrilineage. Consequently, Dagara see any sector of activity as derived from the original farming hoe of the patrilineal segment, also referred to as the hoe-handle, *kukur*. However, if the actor is a married woman, her achievements fall under the hoe-handle of her husband, once the latter has transferred bridewealth to her family to compensate for her relocation to the patrilocal residence. From a traditional Dagara perspective, the original hoe, which the founding ancestor of the lineage used, allowed agricultural production, and the survival and reproduction of the descent group. Since agricultural production used to provide the goods for any exchange as well, it was believed that only through farming could one diversify economically – by acquiring cattle or livestock, for example. Part of the cattle or livestock could later be used in sacrifices to the ancestors and other divinities, or to marry more wives and increase the size of the family. This is the reason why farming and small-scale animal husbandry are so intertwined in the economic life of rural Dagara.

Income from a hot stream needs to be cooled before safe use. However, in some rare circumstances, a person might invest (non-cooled) hot income in a money-generating activity, and would then need to cool the final returns derived from the initial hot revenue. The infringer of the rule of cooling supposedly attracts, at the very least, bad luck in his/her later production, but the repercussion of such transgression is believed to have the potential to entail further consequences, including death. The following experience of Maata illustrates the potential risk of failing to honour a requirement relating to hot money. Maata is one of the research participants in Tambirkpere and a widow. She relocated to her patrilocal residence after declining to enter into a leviratic relationship with one of her late husband’s relatives. She lamented the loss of the plough ox that she acquired from non-cooled money derived from her organic cotton sale. After the animal fell in a ravine and broke its hind leg she took the painful decision to sell it. She recounted the problem in a mournful tone:

The diviner said the ancestors are mad at me. They blamed me for having failed to cool the money from the cotton. I am a Catholic and am not familiar with performing sacrifices at shrines. When we got the money two years ago, the farming season was about to start. So I contacted my maternal uncle in Yabogane to help me with a pair of oxen. He first took the money and showed me an ox in return. Later on, he showed me a second ox and said that one was a loan, since the money I presented was not substantial enough to buy two oxen. Now it is my ox that is gone. Wicked ancestors, I wish you had warned me about that. (Maata, 18 March 2008)

Beyond the symbolism of production, the evocation of the hoe-handle, which is interchangeably used as the ‘father’s hoe’, in the socio-cultural setting of the

study, also suggests some kind of fear, especially for household members who are non-members of the patrilineage. The 'father's hoe' emphasizes the predominance of the role of the patrilineal ancestors of the male household head and the potential danger they can constitute. Moreover, it suggests potential for quick retribution by the father – and, by extension, the patrilineal ancestors – if one engages in spiritually reprehensible behaviour. This perceived or actual danger increases the fear of the ancestors felt by dependent members of the household; this, in turn, increases the male household head's or patriarch's power of control over the other members' hot incomes.

Every economic achievement of the traditional Dagara is viewed literally as a 'produce of the hoe' (*kuur bo'on*, pl. *kuur bomo*), that is, of farming; because production is conceived as rooted in that original ancestral resource, the hoe, which is believed to be the essential means of production and reproduction of the economy. For this reason, it is recommended that income from any activity yielding cold money be presented at the ancestral shrine. However, cooling an income derived from hot-money products is mandatory. In terms of farm produce, crops such as sorghum, millet, tobacco, white beans (black-eyed beans), Bambara nuts, yams and pepper are of paramount symbolic importance. (Cotton does not figure among them; I explain this further below.) The staple crops in this category used to be exclusively grown for subsistence purposes. Even today, approval is seldom extended to a villager who sells certain food grains during early post-harvest periods. Besides indicating lack of restraint on behalf of the person or family who is selling, such a transgression also hints at their level of poverty and high potential for engendering food shortage in the family during the hard season. Conversely, selling food grains during the wet season – which usually also coincides with the bottleneck periods and food scarcity for villagers – sends a message about the seller's material worth and adds to his/her respectability and symbolic capital.

FROM HOT TO COOL MONEY: PROCESS, MEANING AND DYNAMICS

The obligation to cool hot incomes applies to all members of the household, including the head. The difference, however, is that since the latter is the person cooling his own money, there is no risk of his losing any portion of it. The fear of supernatural reprisals felt by dependants – women and juniors – when engaging in hot-money-generating activities increases the authority of the household head, and guarantees the relative subordination of dependants who engage in such an activity. Cooling a hot income is a quasi-solemn and open ceremony. The amount of the money to cool partly defines the process. For a small amount, the cooling consists of simply pouring ash at relevant shrines as a means of asking for authorization to use the money without any spiritual retribution, while expressing gratitude and subordination to the spirits. In this case, the patriarch alone can perform the cooling with ash. But, for the sake of transparency, most officiators would prefer to be accompanied by at least one other person. During the ash-pouring process, the officiator displays the revenue on the floor close to the shrine and engages in a low-pitched litany of incantations and entreaties to the shrine's spirit, begging for intercession by the ancestors to allow use of the money without

unwanted consequences. The symbol of the ash mirrors the hot-cold binary. Ash is indeed the final state of most physical substances when they cool down after being transformed by heat. Thus, using ash to appeal to the ancestors, beg for their mercy, or appease their wrath about a specific issue, tacitly acknowledges the people's confidence that no matter the level of spiritual danger or risk surrounding the money, the utilization will eventually be safe, just as the blazing fire eventually turns into cold ash. On the other hand, the cooling of larger amounts requires a more formal process materialized by chicken sacrifice. This involves two or more people, including the revenue owner and the ritual officiator. If the revenue owner is a woman, she can and probably would decline to participate in the process after submitting the money to be cooled.

When a chicken sacrifice applies, the ritual still includes a series of ash-pouring rituals at the relevant shrines, such as the earth shrine (*tenbaalu*), the rain shrine (*beru*) and the lineage root shrine (*nyiur*). The process is actually a replay of the ash-pouring protocol described above, but it concludes with the actual chicken sacrifice at the ancestral shrine. The explanation for including various shrines, in addition to focusing on the main one, is that the production success of a lineage member is the result of the coordinated effort of the entities represented by the various shrines. Each entity's role is acknowledged with the ash poured at its relevant shrine. Simultaneously it is asked to intercede before the targeted recipient of the sacrifice – the ancestors – for acceptance. Upon completing the ash-pouring phase, the people then proceed to the ancestral shrine, which is usually seated in the domestic group's main byre. This is where the actual sacrifice occurs. Prior to slitting the chicken's throat, the patriarch repeats, almost verbatim, the incantations and pleas to the ancestors heard during the ash pouring. Failure to pour ash at one of the relevant shrines may result in the ancestors' refusal of the sacrifice. A refused sacrifice is symbolized by the sacrificed chicken ending its death throes lying on its stomach. Conversely, when the chicken falls on its back, everybody is relieved because it indicates that the ancestors have accepted.

Once ritually cooled, the hot money is normally returned to its owner after the household head has deducted a nominal amount. Nevertheless, some greedy household heads retain an amount of money that dependants consider excessive. Such cupidity can spoil future relations between the dependant and the senior man, although heads of households are usually less covetous when they cool the money of male dependants, and more extractive when dealing with married women. The reason why they act with more restraint towards their sons and other male dependants is perhaps the fear of rebellion. Junior males can decide to migrate to urban places or secede from the household or domestic group, and build their own – which ultimately results in weakening labour for the senior or head of household. Married women are not in the same situation because they have comparatively limited options. Because of the bridewealth that the husband or head of household pays for the marriage, there is the common and lingering – and perhaps unconscious – belief that marrying a wife is an economic investment that should yield returns, most importantly in childbearing and labour. In this same line of reasoning, when women earn money with their own activity, the head of household feels entitled to part of it. However, since the spouses keep separate budgets, husbands can rarely reach the goal of controlling their wives' monetary incomes. Even so, some women willingly share some of

their personal earnings with their husbands. Showing the money to the husband, and sharing some of it with him, is a strategy some married women use to pursue greater harmony in the household, and to get leeway in other respects; but no social norm compels a married woman to show her income to her husband. However, if a married woman sells cotton or beans, the only hot-income-yielding crops that they currently grow on their personal plots, she would be obliged to have the income 'cooled'.

If a greedy head of household withholds too much of the money that a woman has to disclose to him so that he may 'cool' it, the woman would seldom resort to open confrontation, though confrontation is not always excluded when the woman feels she has enough support from her husband's relatives, and her own relatives and acquaintances. Instead, the woman's resistance more frequently takes the form of opting not to engage in hot money yielding activities, such as raising cattle and sheep. This is clearly seen in the response to the organic cotton farming project promoted by the Swiss non-government organization Helvetas, which proposes a premium price and, especially, targets women. After the trial period, and the inroads that men made into the returns, most women hesitated to take it up. In addition, most women who did decide to farm cotton did so as a proxy for their husbands. The few women who do grow organic cotton – now referred to as 'women's cotton' in the area – and fully control the proceeds have enhanced household negotiation strategies that others do not possess. Most other women prefer not to engage in 'risky activities' as one woman I interviewed called it – and turn to safer personal projects such as small-scale poultry and pig raising, selling fast food, brewing sorghum beer, distilling alcohol (*zonzon*), gathering shea nuts, and selling shea butter when possible.

HOT MONEY AND SPHERES OF HOT MONEY

In the community which is the focus of this study, people view money in various ways: good, bad, evil, or risky, depending on locally informed rules and factors of understanding. The local perception of money also recalls views and terms used to describe alternative categories of income and income streams in other parts of Africa. Such ethnographic accounts from Africa report the sensory modifiers, mainly gustative and olfactory, as local codes to convey such perceptions of money. Thus Shipton (1989) reports that the Luo of Kenya use the expression 'bitter money' when referring to incomes from particular sources. They include money earned from the sale of land and some specific crops, or from activities considered immoral or illegal. Shipton notes that men and women have differential access to such commodities. Similarly, in his metaphorical title, *Money Has No Smell*, Paul Stoller (2002) borrows a catchword from one of his New York-based informants from Niger to show the internal conflict that pulls an immigrant between the religious prescription against selling art objects deemed idolatrous, and his honest struggle to survive and provide for his transnational family. Behind the modifiers the two authors use, there is an implication of a moral view of money. This also reminds us of the kind of bitter money Fiéloux (1980) described through her ethnography among the Lobi of Burkina Faso. However, there is no suggestion of immorality underpinning the concept in her account. Rather, she reveals how the Lobi view bitter money, as well as the

exclusive conditions of production of bitter crops and the resulting prescribed spheres of exchange.

The Dagara of south-west Burkina Faso also share a semantically and symbolically close notion expressing a category of income similar but not identical to Fiéloux's bitter money: hot money. We have seen that hot money is an income the spending of which results in supernatural retribution, if the money is not 'cooled' ritually by the head of household or the male senior of the domestic group through pouring ashes at the ancestors' shrine (*kpîî*) or sacrificing a chicken to it. A set of economic activities produce hot money, and understanding the notion is central for grasping some of the structural constraints binding women and junior dependants in their endeavours towards autonomy and empowerment. In the next section, we link the notion to the concept of the hoe-handle in order to contextualize our comprehension of people's attitudes towards incomes that derive from a specific category of sources.

MAJOR ON-FARM INCOME SOURCES: TENTATIVE CLASSIFICATION

Before proceeding further in this section, a tentative historical review of the penetration of some of the major crops in the area of study is in order. Peanuts, a crop which was introduced in West Africa in the sixteenth century, spread to the heartland of the continent from the Upper Guinea Coast (Brooks 1975: 31). It might have penetrated the area of this study during the same era or slightly later. Similarly, the origin of the introduction of maize in tropical Africa is traced back to the Portuguese in the same historical period – even if some historical and linguistic evidence tends to challenge this origin of the staple (Miracle 1965). Sorghum is said to have been domesticated in Africa before the third millennium BC (Doggett 1965). It spread to the rest of the world during subsequent millennia. Millet, Bambara nuts and yams are also granted an African origin (Africa Online News 2012). Bambara nuts are even believed to have originated from West Africa. Those last four crops have very high symbolic value in the cultural setting. Similarly, incomes derived from them, like incomes from animals such as oxen and sheep, are hot. I speculate that the hot money yielding farm products are those that were endogenous to the reality of the founding ancestors. I call them *pre-ancestral* products. All other products that entered the socio-cultural space at a later period – including maize, peanuts, and sweet potatoes – can be included in a *post-ancestral* product portfolio.

Like the crops, domestic animals and livestock are branded in terms of income stream among the Dagara. They are also categorized in two groups: black animals and white animals, and whether an animal is 'black' or 'white' determines its income stream. Black animals (cattle, sheep, and guinea fowls) have very high local symbolic and economic value. They serve in paramount sacrifices and payment of bridewealth. Black animals yield hot money. White animals (goats and chickens) are also important and are used to pay for bridewealth, but they are of lesser value compared to the former set. Pigs, turkeys and ducks – which entered the local animal husbandry habits at relatively recent periods – do not figure in this classification. They do not have any symbolic value in the local ideology and are therefore not used in ritual and sacrifices. Apart from the meat

TABLE 1 Sources yielding hot money or cold money

<i>Hot money</i>	<i>Cold money</i>		
<i>Crop</i>	<i>Black animals</i>	<i>Crops</i>	<i>White animals</i>
Sorghum	Cattle	Rice	Chicken
Tobacco	Sheep	Yellow corn	Goats
Pepper	Guinea-fowl	Sesame	Pigs**
Millet		Soybeans	Ducks**
White beans		<i>Niebe</i> beans (cowpeas)	
Bambara beans (<i>voandzou</i>)		Shea nuts*	
Yams		Locust beans*	
Cotton		Peanuts	

* These crops are harvested from trees that grow naturally on the farm.

** These animals are not even normally counted as such from a local cultural perspective.

and sale income they provide, they are animals scarcely referred to when assessing a person's wealth. Like the other *post-ancestral* farm products, they are not even labelled in the nomenclature.

It has not proved possible to provide a precise historical narrative of which income sources have been incorporated into the framework of hot versus cold money. At this stage, cotton is the only source of income reported to have experienced a switch from cold to hot money. Local oral history reports that cotton in the current form was introduced only recently in the area; this is perhaps the reason why it has no reported symbolic value in the local belief system. Interviews with village elders suggested that the Dagara of the region adopted cotton farming during a relatively recent era, after they discovered cotton-made cloth through Moosé peddlers travelling to the Gold Coast, now Ghana. In terms of timeframe, this may have been in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Esther and Jack Goody's comparison of the sartorial habits of the Dagara and the Gonja (1996: 86) seems to support the oral testimonies. Cotton production is said to have been the exclusive prerogative of a selected number of elders in the early period, prior to its being forcibly transformed into an export cash crop in the early 1920s. If this claim for the adoption period in local agricultural practices is verified, cotton would have entered the area far later than maize and rice, two cold money yielding sources. Paradoxically, cotton, a *post-ancestral* crop that we would thus expect to yield cold money, is currently considered hot. This stark contradiction raises questions as to why income derived from it is hot while income from rice and maize is not.

Another crucial question that arises is why some farm products are hot and others are not. Is it possible to generate a model that enhances our understanding of hot income streams? What are the general properties of the domain of dangerous income among the Dagara, if we want to reach an understanding comparable to what Fiéloux (1980) offered for the Lobi and Shipton (1989) for the Luo? At first sight, there is an indication that hot incomes are derived from any produce of the land and returns from animal husbandry. But a closer look at Table 1 shows that hot and non-hot farm products share many characteristics. This complicates our attempt at a model that successfully explains the basis for

the categorization. Asked about the inconsistency of the transition of cotton from a cold to a hot income stream, a village elder from Mebar responded: 'Well, . . . er, yes, cotton is normally cold money yielding. But, you see, it can be a source of considerable amounts of money, that's why it became hot. Yes, it is hot because it can yield much money.'¹ One might conjecture that labelling some activities as producing hot money seems consistent with the attempt by senior males to perpetuate power and authority in the lineage mode of production. In this mode the non-productive members, mainly the elders, strategize to create some kind of balance between them and the productive members represented by women and juniors whose income they endeavour to control (Meillassoux 1964). They do so by tapping into the fear of ancestor displeasure in order to control the income of dependent juniors and women.

The rural Dagara typically earn on-farm money from sales of farm products – crops and animals. The earnings are classified into hot or cold categories depending on their source (see Table 1). For instance, though peanuts, rice, maize and the other cold money yielding crops are farmed and edible as well, they are not viewed with the same special regard as sorghum and white beans, and may even be regarded as part of household members' personal farm activities and budgets. These crops seem to have entered the local economy at a later period, just as pigs and ducks did. The adoption of these crops, clearly, coincided with the people's voluntary or coerced engagement in farming for cash, as is the case of cotton – and certainly long after what we may call the 'ancestral' classification of local crops and animals. In the contemporary context, an examination of hot money yielding crops, and especially the historical and economic trajectory of cotton, suggests that these crops are commodities with high exchange value in the local and now the global context. Wealth in agricultural products and cattle used to be more of a source of symbolic capital. In today's cash economy, this wealth is invested in prestige goods and other activities such as trading, building zinc-roofed houses (for rent), and schooling, including paying for children's advanced education. As a result, any direct or indirect outcome of an investment is viewed as rooted in the hoe-handle of the lineage. This understanding has also categorized income from crops and domestic animals in hot versus non-hot (as in Table 1). Thus, earnings derived from sales of sorghum, millet, tobacco, pepper, cotton, cowpeas, cattle and sheep are hot. They are ideologically different from the cool income streams that comprise revenues from petty trading, returns from sale of yellow corn, or pigs, goats, chicken, peanuts, soybeans, shea nuts, horticultural products and sauce condiments grown in the homestead garden.

GENDER AND AGRICULTURE: COPING WITH NOVELTY

Despite responses to economic mutations that cause the rural Dagara to diversify, they typically practise subsistence agriculture and develop small-scale poultry and livestock raising. Many Dagara people also earn a living in the secondary or tertiary sectors in urban areas, as they have acquired school education as a result

¹Dera, Mebar, 27 February 2009.

of and in the aftermath of the colonial encounter. Until recently, women's main produce used to include peanuts or soybeans, meant to generate income for procuring ingredients that enrich the woman's 'cooking pot'. However, with the introduction of an organic cotton farming project, some women now successfully engage in cotton farming on small plots, also referred to locally as 'women's cotton'. The introduction of the women-friendly organic cotton production became a boon for those with a sufficient labour supply.

THE NGO'S READING OF THE SOCIAL LANDSCAPE

From the year 2004, the Swiss NGO Helvetas took the opportunity then provided by the success of export cotton farming in Burkina Faso to promote small-plot organic cotton farming alongside the pre-existing and predominant conventional cotton production. The specificity of that pilot project is that it mostly targeted women, who were encouraged to grow cotton on 1–2 acres of land. The idea of small plots in itself provided an incentive for growing, as most men would not object to giving their wives a couple of acres out of the considerable area under the control of a typical family. An additional reason for allowing women's involvement was that this would not affect their labour participation in the family farm and other activities.

From the NGO's perspective, women of the area—in opposition to their husbands who have large conventional cotton farms—would finally engage actively in cotton, both in production and also in the marketing and control of the sales returns, while engaging in environmentally sustainable agriculture. Thus most men—growing conventional cotton on farm surfaces from one to eight or even sixteen hectares—welcomed the organic cotton project with some disdain, at least during the first year. They could not understand that the new type of cotton was supposed to be farmed on a maximum of a half-hectare. To show their lack of interest, they dubbed this new development 'women's cotton'. However, by the first harvest, the 'women's cotton' received a premium price of 272 CFA francs (about \$0.55) per kilogram, plus an additional three cents bonus per kilogram in 2008. Meanwhile, conventional 'men's cotton' was receiving 155 CFA francs a kilogram (slightly over \$0.31). The differential in the price of women's cotton caused shifts at various levels of the social landscape by the second year of production. It appeared obvious that the NGO had misread the socio-cultural landscape and other intra-household dynamics, despite its legitimate and philanthropic ambition. Lured by the attractive prices of the organic 'women's cotton', most men made inroads into the economic space that initially they had left open to the women. One man who downsized his conventional cotton farm in favour of the organic one said to me: 'When my wife brought back the money from... the three fifty-kilo bags of her harvest, I was shocked. I decided that I would take care of the production of this cotton personally and more earnestly.'² This man's reaction was typical. Many men simply turned the organic cotton farming into a 'family project', which meant sidelining women's central role as actors in the production and control of the income. Some less scrupulous male

²François, Yabogane, 12 October 2007.

household heads increased the organic cotton farm size but kept the wife's name only as a proxy for the family. This strategy served to circumvent the NGO's requirement for strong female participation in and ownership of the programme. Another interesting development was the shift in the renaming of 'women's cotton'; now the men called it *coton-bio*, French for organic cotton. Though the NGO suspected that the women were not necessarily controlling the cotton money, there is little indication that it grasped the socio-cultural root of the problem. Instead it tried to encourage further women's participation by instituting attractive awards to some of the best female producers of organic cotton. But, unsurprisingly, these awards of time-saving farm equipment are mostly won by women from male-headed households, who are only proxies for their husbands. In plain terms, the NGO seems powerless to withstand the twist of events to women's disadvantage, but its endeavour would have further merits besides the obvious positive impact on the livelihoods of a few women, including widows, if it were to grasp the cultural subtleties constraining women's control of returns on farm product sales. This, added to the fact that the money (even when owned) needed cooling, was a red flag forcing most women – with no control over land – to understand their vulnerable position and reassess the options left in their social and economic field. Small-scale pig raising, which became a women's business in the locality, proved to be their most reliable alternative source of 'cold' income.

CIRCUMVENTING THE HOT MONEY

Because pigs are animals that generate cold income, pig breeding is now becoming the most popular non-farming activity for women in the Dano area. Since pigs are omnivorous animals, feeding them in the wet season is easy because of the abundance of fresh grass. It is also complementary to another common women's activity, brewing sorghum beer, as women use the mash residue to feed the pigs. The pigs are kept in the pen for five months (usually from June to October) and are left free to forage in the open during the dry season. Each woman feeds her pigs twice a day, whether they are in the pen or left to wander. Pork is consumed in significant quantity in the area. Around Christmas, women will normally sell many of the male pigs that they raise. Around Easter, they sell another set, leaving only one boar and a few females in the pen for raising. The sales provide women with money to care for personal needs, invest in other activities or acquire equipment. Unlike in Bohannan's case study (Bohannan 1959), the various spheres of money are mutually convertible (Guyer 2004), even though many dependants would prefer to navigate safely on the cold money streams. When money from one cold-money-yielding activity is invested in another one, the derived returns remain non-hot, since the sphere of the activity is the same (see Table 2). But if a person invests their cold money into a hot-money-generating activity, the returns now fall into the sphere of hot money. On the other hand, the outcome when investing resources from a hot money yielding activity into a cold one will depend on whether the invested hot money has been cooled prior to investment. If it has, all subsequently derived income is cold. Female dependants are usually very careful about swapping spheres, especially treading from the cold income stream into the hot one, except when

TABLE 2 The nature of money as it is invested from one income stream to another

<i>Money category</i>		<i>Invested in cold money generating activity yields</i>	<i>Invested in hot money generating activity yields</i>
Hot	Cooled	Cold money	Hot money
	Not cooled	Hot money	Hot money
Cold		Cold money	Hot money

they aim to increase their own social capital and their status within their husband’s lineage.

A woman typically owns five pigs. In the research area under consideration, a village woman who does not own a pigpen with pigs is looked down upon by villagers. It is perhaps not an exaggeration to say that pig raising has become the barometer for assessing a woman’s economic worth and symbolic capital in the area. Moreover, while the two activities are not automatically related, pig raising gives women an additional motive to brew sorghum beer, and an additional source of income (Saul 1981), in view of the residue mash mentioned earlier. At Easter, a woman can sell her remaining pigs for about 30,000 CFA francs (about US\$60), which is a considerable amount by local standards. A long-distance phone conversation with Dera,³ a farmer and one of my field research contacts who owns a cellular phone, indicated that his wife earned 43,000 CFA francs (about US\$90) from a recent sale of six young pigs. This is a lot of money earned with little risk and not too much effort, from the local point of view. What makes this income a more attractive prospect is that it is not hot money. So its totality belongs to Dera’s wife, though she may choose to share part of it with household members. In her case, she reportedly planned to invest the money in buying sorghum, which sells cheaply during the post-harvest period between October and December. She would then store the sorghum for beer brews, opportunely timed. Selling fast food after supplying daily labour on the common farm, brewing sorghum beer, and selling distilled alcohol, shea nuts or shea butter, and *sumala* (processed African locust beans) are all activities that generate cold incomes, and in which women engage with success.

One may wonder whether in the event of a downturn men will not attempt to include these successful and rewarding activities of women into the hot category, as happened in the similar situation of Gambian women’s swamp rice cultivation – where men, supported by development agencies, took advantage of women’s economic successes (Schroeder 1999). Though other scholars focusing on gender and agriculture in Gambia report women’s vulnerable positions as a result of commercial farming (Carney and Watts 1989; Carney 1994), I speculate that a similar re-categorization of the pig-raising income is impossible as long as the activity does not involve land and remains small-scale. What pig farming, chicken raising and other income-generating endeavours demand is the personal investment of the woman so engaged. Therefore, as long as she fulfils the normal requirement for her daily labour on the common household farm, she should be

³Telephone conversation with Dera, 17 October 2009.

able to retain her activity as a private concern and manage the returns in her private budget portfolio. The non-hot activities that do not involve land are perceived as not only 'post-ancestral' but also non-ancestral; and no spiritual basis exists for making such a case.

It is apparent, therefore, that women's participation in pig raising is their response to men's occupation of the cotton terrain as the major source of income. In fact, despite their full and active participation in the cotton production process, women and other dependants are usually sidelined after their men's cotton sale, especially as regards income control. Although household heads give their wives and dependants presents or a nominal fee, the decision to give – what and how much to give – is still at the men's discretion. But to be fair, only reckless household heads would decide not to give at all, for a failure to share the cotton revenue with household members would be likely to result in failure to reach production goals during subsequent years. To some extent, women's pig raising proved to be their response to men's cotton farming. It yields sufficient income to them and, more importantly, it is an income that they control. Conversely, rather than a 'pig/cotton mystique' *à la* Ferguson's Lesotho work (Ferguson 1985), the men's apparent distance *vis-à-vis* pig farming is due to their inability to produce it, mainly because of their lack of access to the productive and somewhat technological resources controlled by women, the sorghum beer production and the derived mash, as well as residues from home-processed foods. In addition, pigs and other animals such as ducks, donkeys and horses are said to have come into the local economy at a relatively recent period. For this reason none of these animals are used for sacrifices in family shrines. They could be categorized as post-ancestral animals.

Furthermore, the women's strategy, which recalls that of early-twentieth-century US women in relation to money as analysed by Zelizer, may be read as rural Dagara women's version of avoiding the surrender of hard-earned money – derived from the few options available – to the family's money pool, which is controlled by the head of household. Zelizer applies 'the concept of special money to the modern world and examine[s] in what ways culture and social structure mark modern money by introducing control restrictions' (Zelizer 1989: 350). In our case, once the women succeed in pulling their equivalent of 'pin money' out of the 'hot zone', that money is no longer viewed in a derogatory light; that is, it is neither 'collectivized' nor 'trivialized' (Zelizer 1989: 369). Its expenditure is at the earner's discretion.

SPACES OF NEGOTIABILITY

An important issue to be addressed now is the way various household members manoeuvre without encroaching crudely into the other members' spaces. While the male household heads know the various income streams and the relevant prerogatives, women navigate skilfully to accomplish all their personal activities and family farm requirements without causing disagreement in the household. For example, women would normally meet the labour demands on the common family farm before engaging in their personal activities. In fact, labour diversion is one nodal cause of conflict during bottleneck periods. This is one domain where a woman's personal negotiation skills become crucial. A woman who shares some

of her money with her husband sets a record straight and compels the husband's sympathy when, opportunely, she diverts some of her time to her own personal activities. Depending on their position and wealth, some women will even hire one or several labourers, when they are available, to do their share of the work on the common farm – freeing them to devote more time to their lucrative personal activities.

Since most women normally join men on the farm in the mid-morning, after taking care of house chores that include processing food, they can also feed their pigs and finish other personal business before leaving for the family farm. It is now common to hear men complain that their wives are more concerned about their pigs than their family members, a complaint whose relevance a woman acknowledged partially by saying defensively: 'Our pigs are all we have, but we don't forget our family. The problem is that our family members don't assist us in any activity related to the pigs.' Pointing to a pigpen she was building, she added: 'Look, is that a woman's work? They [the men] say we don't give them our money. How can you give your money to somebody who won't help you?'⁴ This point reminds us of labour organization within the household and the way it affects the nature of household budgets.

In a cotton-producing household, the greater labour demand is compensated for by the greater abundance of food, because these farmers are also able to produce more food grains. In this vein, it is locally observed that 'he who grows cotton grows food'. Conversely, most women in non-cotton households have more off-farm time for their autonomous activities. The downside is that they often face the consequence of underproduction of food crops in their household, and therefore resort to gains from their autonomous activities to supplement any food deficiency. The advantage of surplus time they enjoy is diminished by their inability to spare the surplus income they make from their activities. The head of the household who cannot provide enough food for the members keeps a low profile, and his wife can have more visibility, though she is normally careful not to overstep and be branded 'the man of the house', a stigma that very few women would want to carry in this social setting.

As we notice, women and junior dependants mainly strategize to keep their money beyond the elders' control. There seems to be no intent to unsettle the status quo surrounding hot incomes. One might point to a deep-seated belief in the destructive effect of ancestral retribution regarding the utilization of non-cooled income. Circumventing the hot money thus turns out to be a relatively mild form of resistance rather than an approach likely to create a new and openly fair structure of income control. It requires from women a lot of personal planning and refined negotiation skills. Three advantages emerge as a distinguishing pattern among the women I observed as manoeuvring with success: they have to do with age, marital status, and personal capability. Women below their forties, particularly, show a spirit of independence, and do not seem to have any problem dodging the hot money disadvantage. As highlighted earlier in the article, widows who remain in their deceased husbands' residence also normally use the produce of the farm on the land of their late husband to their best advantage, even if they refuse to enter a leviratic relation with a classificatory

⁴Bebe, a woman from Mébar, 14 March 2008.

brother of their deceased husband. Married women with skills in marital negotiation also experience less difficulty in enjoying their cooled hot money.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Overall, this analysis suggests that policy makers and development practitioners need to understand that a gender-transformative intervention should not only emphasize the potential for income generation or the amount of the income generated. It must consider further qualitative information that specifically explores gender dynamics in terms of actual control of the income generated. The 'hot money' concept and its implications for the everyday life of rural women provides at least two useful tools. At a theoretical level, it draws attention to another strand of the power wielded by senior males in attempting to control dependants in the lineage mode of production. It also arouses our awareness of the embedded and subtle constraints that may mar women's autonomous opportunities and gender equity goals. At a practical level, the understanding of 'hot money' provides a tool for efficient choices in development intervention and policy action targeting gender and women's economic empowerment. An intervention that consciously integrates possible cultural constraints on women in a given social structure offers better chances for empowerment. It allows women to access, own and control their incomes, as well as to improve their household livelihoods. This understanding is mostly obtained through the use of comprehensive methodological approaches that allow us to capture the multi-faceted aspects of people's lives at all stages of the development project – planning, design and implementation – including the most subtle ones that are only likely to be captured qualitatively.

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ABSTRACT

Most development interventions targeting rural women's economic empowerment measure success through returns from women's on-farm or off-farm activities and the income they generate. This article suggests that special emphasis needs to be laid on income control, not just its generation, in order to take account of the more or less subtle socio-cultural obstacles and other structures of constraint hindering women in this regard. The article draws from ethnographic case studies conducted for a doctoral dissertation project in south-west Burkina Faso to show how women in cotton-farming zones strategize to circumvent customary rules and control their on-farm incomes. The context is an organic cotton-farming project targeting women. I argue that understanding these constraints and strategies provides policy makers and development practitioners

with tools for a better grasp of the social landscape – and that this, in turn, enables them to reach empowerment goals.

RÉSUMÉ

La plupart des interventions de développement en faveur de l'autonomisation économique des femmes rurales mesurent leur succès à l'aune des gains que les femmes tirent de leurs activités agricoles et non agricoles, et du revenu qu'elles génèrent. Cet article suggère la nécessité de mettre un accent particulier sur le contrôle du revenu, et pas seulement sur sa génération, afin de prendre en compte les obstacles socioculturels plus ou moins perceptibles et autres structures de contrainte qui gênent les femmes à cet égard. Cet article s'inspire d'études de cas ethnographiques menées dans le cadre d'un projet de thèse de doctorat dans la région sud-ouest du Burkina Faso pour montrer comment les femmes, dans les zones de culture du coton, élaborent des stratégies pour se soustraire aux règles coutumières et contrôler leurs revenus agricoles. Ces études ont pour cadre un projet de culture biologique du coton favorisant les femmes. L'auteur affirme qu'en comprenant ces contraintes et stratégies, les décideurs et acteurs du développement disposent d'outils pour mieux appréhender le paysage social et, par là-même, atteindre leurs objectifs en matière d'autonomisation.