

Acknowledgements

Many people and institutions have contributed immensely to the success of this work. It is difficult to mention all of them by name here, but I am particularly indebted to the following:

Prof. Dr Marc J.J. Janssens, my first supervisor, who allowed me to register at the University of Bonn and provided me more than scientific support during the study. With his wife Ingrid Janssens, they tried to recreate a family atmosphere here, enabling me to feel at home during my stay in Germany.

Prof. Dr Mathias Becker, my second supervisor, who provided useful scientific support for the fieldwork and for the writing of the thesis. Prof Dr Noga Georg, Director of the Institute of Horticulture, and Dr A. Ulbrich (Director of Marhof research station) provided me free working space at the University. Pr Hindorf and Mrs Suzanne Hermes have always given advice and moral support for better integration in the university and the city of Bonn.

Prof. Dr. Paul Vlek, Director ZEF c – (Centre for Development Research - Department of Ecology and Natural Resource Management) despite his multiple occupations has given some time to chair the examination of this study.

Dr Stephan F. Weise, my IITA supervisor, who provided more than PhD supervision. He tried to make me a young scientist with a wide understanding of the multidisciplinary and multi institutional approach. He helped me to attend many scientific meetings, expose the preliminary findings of my work and get a feedback. Under his supervision, I have succeeded in obtaining an IITA fellowship that allowed me to register at the University of Bonn.

M. Sayer Jeffrey who understood my will to work on forest resource management, and directed me toward the CGIAR system. Dr Adesina Akin accepted me in the socio-economic team of IITA. After his departure, Dr Weise accepted my integration in the Weed and Vegetation team in which the major part of the work has been done.

Several scientists were involved in the supervision of the fieldwork. Household survey was done under the direct supervision of Dr Adesina. Dr Ouseynou Ndoeye and Ousmane Coulibaly provided additional scientific support. Vegetation survey was done under the supervision of Pr Nkongmenck (University of Yaounde I). Dr Tchataat (IRAD) provided scientific support at the earlier stage of this part of the fieldwork. The cocoa production, litter fall and analysis of the vegetation data were directly supervised by Dr Weise. Dr Jim Gockowski, Dr Hauser and Dr Lindsey provided useful comment prior to the fieldwork related to these parts. Dr Zapfack provided more than scientific support during the fieldwork and particularly during the vegetation part.

Several scientists of IITA (Dr Nolte, Dr Tindo, Dr Tenkouano and Mrs Robiglio), ICRAF (Dr Tchoundjeu, Ms Ann Degrande and Mrs. Avana Marie Louise), CIFOR (Dr Diaw and Mr. Oyono) and IRAD (Mr. Bidzanga, Dr Nyasse, Mr. Tondje, Dr Birang, Dr Dibog, Dr Nyem, Dr Nounamo, Mr. Tchinkoua and Dr Tonye) on various occasions tried to give scientific advice and/or moral support before and during the fieldwork in Cameroon. Mrs Munoh Florence (of CIFOR) provided additional administrative support, help in maintaining the link with the University of Bonn during the fieldwork. She was like a sister helping to avoid some administrative constraints.

IITA and DAAD provided financial support for the work. Mr. Aboubakar and the administrative staff gave very useful logistic support. Messrs. Tabbi, Ndi Adolphe and Dong Dieudonné monitored experiments in the village daily. Mveng Ferdinand, Obono Pauline and Etoundi Solange were responsible for drying, weighing and storing plant and soil samples at the IITA Mbalmayo station. Mrs Rose Ndango and her lab team made chemical analysis of plant and soil material. Mr. Zebaze Innocent provided useful comments on the preparation of the experiments and statistical analysis. Farmers availed us of their time and cocoa field during this study.

Some lecturers of the University of Yaounde were responsible for our training prior to registration in Bonn. Those mainly concerned are Pr Nkongmeneck, Pr Amougou, Dr Atangana, Dr Bell, Dr Nwaga, Dr Youmbi, Dr Tsoata, Dr Ngouo and Dr Mbarga.

Some of our former university friends (Mr Nzooh, Dr Guedge, Dr Nyemenack, Mr Defo, Ms Magwe Tindo Jacqueline, and Mr Tchiengue) have always been ready to help make comments and share experiences.

Colleagues of the weed and vegetation team (Dr Ngobo, Mr. Kekeunou, Mr. Nguenkam, Mr. Basanaga, Mr Langwa and Mr. Tchamou) and the socio-economic team (Mr. Endamana, Mr. Mve Mve and Dr Nkamleu) of IITA were always available for help or discussion during the fieldwork in Cameroon.

Messrs. Mezili Paul and Koufani Anacletus, technicians of the National Herbarium, helped in the species determination. Dr Achoundong Gaston (the director of the National Herbarium) gave us free access. Dr Sonke Bonaventure of the Higher Teacher Training School helped in the determination of rubiaceae

Work at the Institute of horticulture was facilitated through the easy cooperation of Deng Zhixien, Valens Mulindabigwi, Sandra Guimaraes Callado and Bertram Hakim Kuol. Chryso Djoufack, Merlin Fotsin, Jean Pierre Bognonkpe, Diwani Thuweba, Dilys K. Sefakor and Maurice Ouko made university life easy. Florence Kiringa took care of us and provided the necessary moral support during all the stay in Germany.

My chaplains at the Catholic University Centre (CCU) in Yaoundé Cameroon (Fathers Alain Renard, Damien Kono and Boniface Tonye) and in Germany (Abbé Joseph Ndi Okalla of the "Missionsinstitut, Sankt-Augustin/Bonn" and Father Osowiecki Janusz of the "Aumônerie Catholique Francophone de Bonn" provided spiritual help during the work. Relatives of the CCU and International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS) in Cameroon (particularly Eddy Nono, Thomas Fondjo, Beatrice Tsopfack, Modeste Yobang, Leonie Nana Kwamou, Liliane Nguedjuig Tiam, Richard Amassana, Desiree Magang Amassana, Gilles Nougéag, Pelagie Nougéag, Arnod Djeugou, Nkem Florence, Evelyne Tsague, Leopold Fotso, Hans Takougoum, and Isidore NGuye) provided moral and spiritual support during the fieldwork in Cameroon.

Some relatives, friends, elders and parents such as Dr Koutika Lydie Stella, Pr Ngadjui Bonaventure, Dr Ngouado Innocent, Mr. Tchio André, Mr. Kom Romuald, Mr. Nindjom Pierre, Mrs Ngoumkoue Tamo Agathe, Mrs Lucie Tchou, Mr. Tsapi Robert, Mrs Bopda Magne Marthe, Mrs Bopda Djuikou Brigitte, M. Djiala Paul, Mrs Magne Djialla Teclair, Mrs Dezo Tido Sidonie, M. Meli Adolphe, Mrs Tigmene Marceline, always urged us to complete the hard work.

Mr. Kenne Gabriel, Mrs Kenne Lydie, Mr. Tateu Maurice, Mrs Tateu Josephine and their sons offered an enjoyable family atmosphere during the fieldwork.

My cousins Kenne Jules Pierre, Djiokeng Romain, Maurice Songwa and Thierry Kenne provided tremendous moral support by encouraging me to take this PhD. My mother Kenfack Tsotie Christine, brothers and sisters Galbert, Hypolite, Elvis, Olivier, Annette and Dorian, and friend Njiki Njiki Hélène Napoleonne have been very patient and with their moral support, family love and affection during the conduct of this work.

Many thanks to all of them for the support, but also to those who in one way or another provided help during the realisation of my thesis. Words are not enough to express my gratitude; Only God knows how to reward each of you.

May God bless you all.