

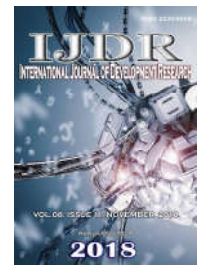


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THE INVISIBILITY OF WOMEN WORK: WORK RELATIONS IN THE COCOA FARMING

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ABSTRACT

This article has as objective present the analyses of the strategies of capitalist accumulation to make women work unviable, women rural workers in cocoa nuts producing farms organized historically in masculine hierarchical structure. The analysis of the visibility or invisibility of women workers aims the understanding of their lives course using as mediator means their memories, as well as memories of workers through open and semi-structured interviews. The temporal space elements constructed around the cocoa production ascension and decline in the municipality of Camacan, Bahia, between the 1970 decades and today. Cocoa nuts were and are the source of wealth and the deep difference between social classes (the holders of the land property in contradiction with the holders of workforce), the genres (demarcating the wages in the basis of gender) and “race” (at the time where brownish and black represent women workers majority). The conclusion is that the female job is invisible and inserted in a working force exploration net and that class relations are not the only ones prevailing in the cocoa production agriculture space, but that there also exist sexual division working relations that reinforce the differences.

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INTRODUCTION

This article is part of the investigation findings regarding women rural workers in cocoa nuts producing farms in the municipality of Camacã, Bahia, Brazil. The investigation had as objective the analysis of the strategies of capitalist accumulation to make women rural workers unviable within farm work, hierarchically managed by men. Based on the analysis of the trajectories of these women's lives, using their memories as a mediator, it was sought to understand the invisibility of productive work carried out by them.

The mediation of memories according to Cury,

expressa as relações concretas e vincula mútua e dialeticamente momentos diferentes de um todo. Nesse todo, os fenômenos ou o conjunto de fenômenos que o constituem [...] trava uma teia de relações contraditórias, que se imbricam mutuamente. (1986, p. 43).

The memories of these subjects, used as mediation in the research process, allowed to draw a discursive line about the appropriation of the female labor force to obtain profit in the cocoa production, giving meaning to the analyzes about the work. It was observed the existence of a network of distribution of tasks that began with the appropriation of this work force and deepened with the sexual division of labor, hidden by written records, but present in the composition of the memories of women and men when carried out. The claims that the local rural society give assurance that the work in the cocoa crop was heavy and therefore demanded male labor, given the physical strength have proved effective for decades. Gender, race and social class have become important concepts in the discussion of the levels of invisibility and exploitation of female labor associated with the masculine point of view in the rural world. Historically, society has built a way of seeing female work and rurality as a cut of men's work. The research sought in the work of women the space occupied by them in the production of cocoa beans, as well as the answer to an important question: what do the memories of men and women,

workers, reveal about the visibility or invisibility of work by them carried out in the cocoa plantations in the municipality of Camacan?

Throughout the investigation, the workers reconstituted their memories based on the composition of the activities developed in the farms where they worked. The memories were organized according to a conception of greater relevance for themselves or for the coexistence group. The spatial order connects the temporal order to carry out the anchoring of memories. The social memory, adopted as the conception that underlies the relationship between the workers and the agrarian capitalists, is the experience of the past of each subject who participated in this research, integrating the present dialectically into a continuous process of correlations. Through the memoirs of the workers, and especially of women workers, the forms of camouflage of the exploitative relations of the labor force, both feminine and masculine, were analyzed dialectically, and Kosik (1976: 49) emphasizes a dual function: "On the one hand, defining oneself, and on the other, defining the whole; be both producer and product [...]" of his memories. These relations may have determined antagonisms between classes and reinforced the oppression of sex and race.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The interviews involved 19 workers, 12 being women and 5 men, aged between forty and ninety-six years old in seven different farms. It was used an open and semi-structured script, according to Minayo (2010). The rise and fall of the production of cocoa beans between the 1970s and 2000s formed the timeframe. The interview script was organized in order to "obtain the most comprehensive information possible" (MINAYO, 2010) without, however, hampering the freedom of speech of interviewees taking into consideration that memories need time and instigation to be accessed. The empirical field of research consisted of six (6) cocoa-producing farms, places where workers live and are important reminder elements for the subjects.

Study Area: Camacan, is the Municipality chosen as the empirical and spatial element of this investigation. Its name, of indigenous origin (Kamakã) means "high lands"¹. It is geographically located in the Microregion 31 to the South of the State of Bahia and has as limits: Arataca, Jussari and Itajú do Colônia, to the North; Mascote and Potiraguá, to the south; Santa Luzia to the East and PauBrasil to the West. The municipality of Camacãis located in an area of influence (Hinterland) inland and, like the other municipalities of this hinterland was distinguished by the great production of cocoa and had its political emancipation, based on the production of this fruit as economic support. The lands on which the municipality of Camacã is based were part of the Captaincy of Ilhéus, belonging to the Municipality of Canavieiras until August 31, 1961, the year of its political emancipation (COSTA, 2007, 38). This region is commonly known as Cocoa Region as a result of cocoa productivity² for over a century.

¹Source: Instituto Socioambiental, p. 1-19, 2006 (apud GRAMACHO et al, 2009, p. 177).

²Between 1978/1979, according to Alves, F. (et al, 1980, 10-12), Camacã occupied the first place in production, with 1,258,165 arrobas harvested in this period, representing a production of 7.80% of the total of 32,365 hectare, which represents 7.41% of the total area of cocoa in the microregion 7, which in turn occupied the third place in number of properties, 657 producing farms. In this period, it was only behind Ilhéus when the production area for the

Gramacho (2009, pp. 193, 196) points out that "to enter the Atlantic Forest, opening paths through the entanglement of trees and vines, ax and machete, descending and rising rivers, circling waterfall, looking for the ideal land, would welcome the golden fruit", at the same time. According to Baiardi (1984, p. 53), "primitive accumulation", for in expropriating by force the natives, 'the 'pioneer', originally Brazilian and extractor of wood, used wage labor dissociated from the means of production, in their expeditions destined to consolidate the occupation and to implant *cacauais*³". Cocoa farming became a unique element of the local economy owned by the capitalist, which triggered its expansion through the lands of southern Bahia and characterized it as a monoculture.

DISCUSSION

It was verified that the productive work carried out by the women in the cocoa culture was intense, it was always carried out in all times and places of the municipality and that it was in all stages of production, as well as the work of men without, however, ascending in the administrative sphere or to have recognized as part of the local economic activity. The sexual division of labor in rural production does not only apply to the division of labor, it is not limited to carrying out light or heavy work, but "in asymmetrical relations at the level of hierarchy, qualification or wages." (LOBO, 1991). This division is explained by the workers' recollection of the hierarchy of labor relations in the cocoa plantations, at the height of their productivity, between the 1970s and the late 1980s. In the hierarchy, what is observed with some clarity is the female absence in the occupation of the positions. None of the interviewees worked on farms with female owners. According to reports, the women reached the function of corporal of class in the hierarchical scale of the administration of the farm. However, they were called "female-males", so classified due to the commitment to perform tasks with equality. However, the wage parity did not correspond to the tasks performed and was kept tied to gender: to women the lowest wages. Another differentiation was related to the lack of access to command positions within the farms. Although "they seemed men in the deal with the workers", the subjects affirmed that they did not know women like fiscals or pointers. This hierarchy differentiated the salaries and the power of command before the workers, besides not allowing to the women the mobility between functions with some ascension in the race. The hierarchical organization in the farms was structured from the owner, in descent and with centralization in the masculine figure. The sexual division of labor occurred and occurs at the base of the hierarchy, because in the subjects' memories there is no record of women in the other command functions. According to the interviewees, the work initially offered was always related to "light and easy" activities, a women's service that could also be performed by children and adolescents. Taking limo from the stems of the cocoa trees was cited by all as initial tasks. Brushing the stems was situated in the adequacy of domestic work to the crop. Hands accustomed to the brush when washing the family clothes were used to increase the cocoa production. Among the Workers in general there was a division of their own, defined by tasks. Below, we

entire producing region increased: Ilhéus with 1,348,758 arrobas, representing 8.36%, with 21,628 hectares planted. According to Alves, F., the 10 largest cocoa producing municipalities in this period, in descending order, are: Ilhéus, Camacã, Itabuna, Una, Canavieiras, Itajuípe, Uruçuca, Coaraci, Ibirataia and Ibirapitanga, producing 44.78% of the volume of the cocoa region of Bahia.

³ Cocoa plantation.

present some of the functions that exist in the cocoa farms of the studied Municipality. According to the subjects' reports, this organization varied as a result of the size of the property - from which the volume of production was verified, and therefore the quantity of workers and the division of labor, as well as their internal hierarchy. On farms some of these functions were suppressed as a "job" but performed by workers in general where "everyone did everything." The General Work was intended to integrate all the works resulting from the cocoa production that is not integrated into the job functions. One can then emphasize as general work: rubbing or thinning of the cover forest (Cabruca system⁴) - shading control - in this case, the Atlantic Forest; application of herbicide and fertilizer; pasture preparation; building fence; search and dismantle of dry wood (with ax or chainsaw) to supply the dryer; opening of internal roads of the farm, inside the cocoa plantations, harvesting the fruits - cutting the fruits with the use of the trimming; etc. The female labor force is part of the army of workers in the rural reserve, mobilized to the extent that it was necessary, since they were there, in the farmhouses with the whole family, and excluded hiring difficulties. When it was necessary, it was enough to talk to one of the women so that the women's solidarity could go ahead and invite the others to work.

The contracts were commonly organized by women to perform with other women and children, so they performed faster and divided the money paid for the work. Work considered "light" or "women" provided gains to the owner since the amounts paid to women were lower than the paid to men Saffioti (2013) explains that women cooperate not only as a labor force in general, but as a special labor force that, more than the male labor force, suffers economic fluctuations and is subject to the perception of wages corresponding to jobs subsidiaries under not only of less technical qualification, but also of less development in the feminine personality of the traits characteristic of the worker adjusted to the capitalist system of production.

Paulilo also points out that the

trabalho leve além de desagradável pode ser nocivo à saúde e, tão pouco está relacionado à pouca produtividade como resultado final, ao contrário, sem ele os lucros são reduzidos na cadeia produtiva (1987).

The lack of knowledge of the entire production process, alienated from the primary works of chocolate production on a world scale, highlights the fact that the inexistence of raw material processing industries, with a high sales value, left the workers with a very small range of possibilities of insertion in the labor market. The large monoculture property and exploitation of the labor force form the basis of almond production to which the owners of the farms have set up cocoa production limited to farming, transportation and marketing. A short sequence in the agro-export mode of production that was defined in the owner-worker relationship, owner-buyer of

⁴As cocoa farming is a hybrid activity, Cabruca production system with large, medium and small trees (defended as an agroforestry system by CEPLAC - Executive Committee of Cocoa Planning) used since the first almonds in the Region. This system requires a permanent pruning activity of the trees, scrubbing or control of small plants with herbicides - much used by cocoa growers. The word Cabruca is a regional term derived from the verb "brocar, which comes from the phrase "come and brocar" the forest to plant cocoa. Hence (the term derived to cabocar, cabrocamento, cabroca and cabruca." (GUIDE TO BENEFITING CACAU DE QUALIDADE, 2007).

almonds, buyer-exporter. The almond is, therefore, in the whole of the cocoa monoculture, "a fetishized commodity", since the worker does not know its value of use and of exchange, as well as its process of transformation (MARX, 2013). One of the contradictions produced by capitalism is to mask the productive chain by alienating the worker to his niche in the chain. Thus, the reason for their work insynthesizes is the receipt of the daily to supply with the function of maintaining the first needs that relate to their own survival and their family. The ranchers' relationship ended with the loading of the trucks that carried the almonds to the warehouses of the cities. They were the recruited, "rented"⁵ who developed the whole phase production: from deforestation and land preparation to the bagging and delivery of the almonds. The discrimination, obstacles, instability and sporadic nature of contracts of the female labor force in the rural area of the municipality in question differs substantially from that in the urban area, given the "protection of the fences" from isolation, "compadrio" and power that the owners exercised over the workers. The conditions unfavorable to the hiring of women are in the field of work processes that impose restrictions on gender, when masculinization of tasks, as one of the "impressions of distinct qualities of the female and male workforce." (LOBO, 1991).

There were several indications of gender that pointed directly to being a woman: menstruated; are pregnant: "there is a woman who has one belly a year"; "Has female illnesses" (cramps, migraines, etc.). It is observed in these conditions that in both contents, the nature imposed on the sexual division of labor, in the cocoa rurality, is located in a social construction of gender and class, when delivering a task, to the family, in the system of enterprise, not there was a distinction of tasks. The work the woman would do would not matter to the contractor. What really mattered was the delivery of the area with the contracted service, carried out. Pruning, scrubbing, fencing, transport, etc. all tasks could be performed by contract, and underpinning the word "engage" was the work of women and children. A distortion in the system of contracting women's work, in a temporary and guaranteed quality, since the "quadras"⁶ used for the job were measured and supervised. Workers who did not perform could not receive the agreed pay. A strategy used so that the family living in the farm house, would take collective tasks for the price of one worker.

São as regras da dominação de gênero que se produzem e reproduzem nas várias esferas da atividade social [...]. Ou seja, as condições de negociação da força de trabalho não são as mesmas, o que nos permite concluir pela sexualização da força de trabalho e, consequentemente, das relações e práticas de trabalho. (LOBO, 1991).

Such practices have been crystallized and are still present in labor relations, at present time. Workers (man and woman)

⁵Jorge Amado applies the term "rented" in the book *Cocoa*:

- You are rented from the Colonel.

I wondered the term: "We rent machines, donkeys, everything, but not people."

Well, in these lands in the South, people also rent out.

The term humiliated me.

Rented ... I was reduced to much less than man ... (AMADO, 1987, pp. 30-31).

(Free translation of authors).

⁶According to interviewees, the blocks were portions of land, measured by the employee hired from the farm and given in the company. They could vary in size depending on the work, the amount of people to get the job done.

confirm in their memory reports that little has changed in the last four decades.

Conclusion

Thus, female labor diluted in the work of man through the hierarchy of gender, class, and race, and is made invisible. Dilution strengthened by relations of power and customs forged between the agrarian capitalist and the organized network in its surroundings that reverberated in the local society. With changes in the forms of hiring and / or forming partnerships, where the "head" of the family signs the Partnership contract, the invisibility of women's work has increased. Women who continue to work as wage earners (day laborers) are fewer in number and less seen or recognized. Women "alone", "heads" of family, cannot get partnership contracts. The structural crises of capitalism that float the prices of almonds of cocoa, allied with fungal attacks and other diseases of cocoa, camouflage the lack of interest of the owners in the workforce of women and exclude them from the world of work in the fields. Thus, the entire contribution of women workers in the municipality's economy for decades is still invisible to society, since work on the plantations is seen as performed only by men. Invisibility that made it impossible for working women to have the social role they had deserved and deserve.

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