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'Ī gīt abong ia di līk bi'. This Gbigbil proverb, which literally means 'the elbow never disregards the back', denotes a sense of connection, support, and reciprocity that is so important in the Eastern Cameroonian village where I did research. Used as it is to remind people of their indebtedness to the pillars and social networks supporting their personal projects, it is also applicable to me now that I have finished the long and collaborative project that my Ph.D. trajectory has been. Indeed, many people have served as that back that kept my elbow writing, and without them this thesis would never have been accomplished. In order not to disregard them but rather, in line with the proverb, give them the honour that they deserve, I would like to explicitly acknowledge the indispensable contribution and support of several groups of people.

In the first place, I would like to express my gratitude to all my informants who are mentioned in this thesis, though under the guise of pseudonyms. Until today, I am impressed by the openness, trust, and readiness to help with which you have received me and tried to enrich my understandings; *osoko boulá!* I hope this thesis, along with your children to whom you have given my name, will keep our close connection alive. In a similar vein, I would like to thank the personnel of the health centres in Asung and its surroundings, as well as informal health practitioners in the region and the missionary clergy in Kamandjom, for their willingness to involve me in their activities. You allowed me to witness and discuss matters that should normally remain unseen or untold. Many thanks also to all other inhabitants of Asung and the surrounding villages, who always welcomed me with great hospitality and made my stay, as well as the visit of my mother and friend, into unforgettable experiences. I am particularly beholden to Baktala Patrice, Mekindawape Sother, Ebanga Frédéric, and the *chef du village* for providing me with access to the site and its wonderful inhabitants.

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My collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health in Yaoundé, and its Provincial Delegation in Bertoua, was equally fruitful and instructive. Not only did our discussions offer me insight into the perspectives of Cameroonian biomedical experts, but I also learned a lot from all research reports and documents in the archives of the Ministry that were made available to me. I would like to thank in particular the three provincial delegates with whom I worked in Bertoua, Dr. Doaw Menkanda Jean Blaise, Dr. Roger Belinga Banga, and Dr. Nsom Mba Charles. The *chef du district* Dr. Tedjouka, as well as Dr. Njiki Dounou Rostand and Dr. Anjembe from the *Sous-Programme Santé de la Reproduction* provided me with useful statistics regarding the health area of Asung and reproductive health issues respectively.

Several other institutes provided me with access to sources and information that I would probably never have found elsewhere. I am grateful for the permission to search for, and copy, relevant documents in the National Archives and the libraries of the Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation, the *Institut de Recherche pour le Développement* (IRD), the *Institut pour la Recherche, le Développement Socio-économique*

et la Communication (IRESCO), the University of Yaoundé I, the Catholic University of Central Africa (UCAC), and the municipality of Bélabo. Quite to my surprise, I found many written and (first-hand) oral histories on Eastern Cameroon in the beautiful fortress of the Fathers of the Holy Ghost (Paters van de Heilige Geest) in Gemert, the Netherlands. Especially Father Martin van Moorsel, so at home in the Gbigbil area, and Father Martin Wilson, so at home in the congregation's archives, were of great help during the preparatory phase of this research. I would also like to thank the Dutch 'Monseigneur van Heijgen' and 'Frère Martin' in Bertoua and Diang for elaborating upon this historical information and sharing their personal experiences with me.

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Specific insight into the incidence of pregnancy interruptions in the region, as well as the role of biomedical care in women's health-seeking itinerary, could only be gained through access to the numerous hospital records that I was allowed to examine. I was lucky that, despite the incompleteness and privacy of these registers, the staff of health centres in Asung, Bélabo, Mokolo I, and the Provincial Hospital in Bertoua were always willing to offer me access to these data and help to digest them. I thank in particular Dr. Hamalamo Zaoro, Dr. Mvondo Severin, Dr. Meli Hervé, madame Moussa, Dr. Lono Serge, and the gynaecologists Dr. N'nang Guy-Michel, Dr. Adamo Bongoe, and Dr. Nguelé for their kind cooperation and patience while manually checking the registers with me.

A similar readiness and persistence to help was encountered in the courthouse in Bertoua, where I searched in vain for cases of convicted induced abortion. Thanks to President Moïse Kotcholi, Magistrate Ngnie Kamdemga Bertin, and Chief Actuary Louis Elouma Nke, the enormous and rather disorganized piles of court cases were ransacked for matters related to pregnancy interruption. I am happy that Judges Mr. Bugue Joseph and Mr. Louis Tenzong were willing to provide me with a better understanding of Cameroonian law and jurisprudence before I delved into this complicated issue.

Learning the local Gbigbil language was challenging for me, because the language had never been documented. I would like to thank Teresa Heath at the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) in Yaoundé for explaining some general linguistic patterns to me and providing me with access to the rich SIL library. It was great to hear that, some time after

I left the field, she invited my Gbigbil friends, who had expressed a wish to be assisted in their attempts to document their language, to participate in a translation training course of the institute.

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