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The Heyday of the Odrysian Kingdom: Cotys I, his Foreign Policy Towards Athens and the Inevitable War for the Thracian Chersonese

Asen Bondzhev

New Bulgarian University, Department of History, Sofia, BULGARIA

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Abstract

Beyond the seemingly close relations with Athens, Cotys' foreign policy was deeply marked by duplicity. His main goal was the conquest of the Thracian Chersonese. He therefore sought to ensure the security of the kingdom from the north, maintaining close relations with the Triballians, the Krobyzoi and the Getae. The lack of sufficient written records suggests that Cotys I may not have been as active outside the borders of his kingdom in the 380s and 370s BC, preferring instead to stabilize his internal affairs. In the early 370s BC, Athens managed to restore its influence through the Second Athenian League, but at the beginning and towards the middle of the 360s BC the situation in the Thracian Chersonese became more complicated, because of the actions of the satraps from Asia Minor who broke away from the Persian Empire. It is then when Cotys I started his war for the strategic peninsula, needed for true political and military power.

Keywords: Odrysian kingdom, Cotys I, Thracian Chersonese.

1. Cotys I and his Foreign Policy Towards Athens

There are not much written sources about the early years of Cotys' rule. It is not clear whether he was the son of his predecessor Hebryzelmis or a Thracian aristocrat.¹ According to Harpocration (s.v. Cotys), he ruled for 24 years, which places his reign between 384/383 and 360 BC.² The beginning of his reign was marked by his being granted Athenian citizenship and "decorated with golden crowns" (Dem. 23.118), a sign of a treaty and alliance between him and Athens.³ The *close relations* (see below) between Cotys and Athens are confirmed by the marriage of his daughter to the Athenian *strategos* Iphicrates, with whose help he presumably succeeded in

¹ Porozhanov (2021: 263) suggests that Cotys might be connected to the royal house of Teres I because Cotys' grandson, Teres, was the son of Cersobleptes. Tacheva (2006: 146) thinks he might have been a paradynast (co-ruler or a governor controlling separate regions of the kingdom), without necessarily being a descendant of Teres.

² According to the only precisely datable account in Demosthenes' speech *Against Aristocrates* (163), the Athenian *strategos* Cephisodotus was sent with a fleet to the Hellespont in the autumn of 360 BC, where he learned of the king's assassination. Therefore the dating of Cotys' rule is between 384/383 and 360 BC (Tacheva, 2006: 141).

³ Fol 1975: 146; Popov, 2009: 101; Porozhanov, 2021: 263.

establishing himself as the heir of Hebryzelmis.⁴ Athenaeus (4.7) vividly describes the scene as follows:

Over the market-place were spread purple rugs down to where his pinnace lay. At the dinner were your butter-eating gentry, with unkempt hair and in countless numbers.⁵ The kettles were bronze and bigger than cellars containing a dozen beds. Cotys himself had an apron on, and brought the soup in a gold pitcher . . . And the groom, 'twas said, received as dower two droves of chestnut mares, a herd of goats, a golden sack and a wastrel cup, a pitcher of snow, a pot of millet, a bin of bulbs, twelve cubits deep, and a hecatomb of octopuses.⁶

Upon receiving Athenian citizenship, Cotys reacted so:

. . . as he understood that the Athenians had given him citizenship, made answer, that he would give them the rights of his nation. Thereby he equalled Thrace to Athens, lest by accounting himself unable to reciprocate such a benefit, he should have been considered to have thought too meanly of his origin.⁷ (Valer. Maxim. 3.7e.7)

Undoubtedly his self-confidence had reason to be so high, for he was a king of a powerful and rich Odrysian kingdom and he was not just ruling over other Thracian tribes, but was also receiving tribute from many Hellenic *poleis* on the coasts of the Thracian Sea, Sea of Marmara, and possibly Black Sea.



Figure 1. The Odrysian kingdom during the reign of Teres I and Cotys I

⁴ Fol, 1981: 223; Popov, 2011: 106; Zahrnt, 2015: 44; V. Fol, 2017: 209. Tacheva (2006: 146) does not agree that Iphicrates was involved in Cotys' ascension to power. The son of this marriage, Menestheus, became a *strategos* in 356/355 BC (Cornelius Nepos *Iphicr.* 3.4), meaning he should have been at least 30 years old at that time, according to Tacheva (2006: 143). According to Buck (1998: 155 ff), Iphicrates arrived in the Hellespont in 390 BC and in 387 BC he was not in Thrace anymore. These are the arguments why the marriage should have been prior 387 BC.

⁵ Long hair tied at the back of the head was a traditional Thracian aristocratic hairstyle. Consumption of butter distinguished "the rich from the lower orders" (Pliny 28.35).

⁶ Much of Iphicrates' prestige derived from a stunning victory at Corinth's port of Lechaenum in 390 BC, where he led a force of mercenary peltasts that destroyed an entire division of Spartan hoplites. For Iphicrates' importance as a general and his success in skillfully marshaling Thracian peltasts see Sears 2013: 273-286.

⁷ See also Plutarch (*Sayings*, 174d): "when one gave him [to Cotys] a leopard, gave him a lion for it".

But beyond the seemingly *close relations* with Athens, Cotys' foreign policy was deeply marked by duplicity. He inherited the need to maintain at least seemingly good relations with the Athenians, because from them would come the support he so lacked at crucial moments.⁸ His main wish, however, was to fulfill the great goal of the Odrysian kings before him – the conquest of the Thracian Chersonese, which would bring true political and military power. The Athenians could not allow this, as the Hellespont secured the vital for Athens's grain supply from the northern Black Sea region.⁹ One of the reasons the Athenians gave Cotys citizenship and golden crowns was probably to ensure that he would not endanger the Thracian Chersonese, and the other – to help them against Sparta. In return, the king received the right to collect tribute from the *poleis* and *emporía*.¹⁰

The lack of sufficient written records, due to the disinterest of Greek authors, could be taken as an indication that in the 380s and 370s BC Cotys was not so active outside the borders of his kingdom and preferred to stabilize the internal affairs of the state. Apparently, he had domestic enemies and challenges, because he had to suppress an uprising of one Adamas, a prominent aristocrat, who rioted because he had been mutilated by Cotys when a boy (Arist. *Pol.* 1311b); but the riot was local and quickly put down.¹¹

2. Preparations for a future war

It could be assumed that Cotys made preparations for a future war with Athens from the very first years of his rule. He therefore sought to ensure the security of the kingdom from the north, maintaining close relations with the Triballians, the Krobyzoi and the Getae. This is attested by the royal gifts, *phiales*, with the name of Cotys inscribed on them, found in three different locations hundreds of kilometers apart: in Vratsa (Bulgaria) – territory of the Triballians; Aleksandrovo (Lovetch) – the Krobyzoi; Adzhigiyol (Tulcea, Romania) – the Getae.¹² Once his rear was secured, he could have advanced to the south.

⁸ Fol, 1981: 222.

⁹ See Worthington, 2014: 57.

¹⁰ Popov, 2009: 106. Despite the lack of direct sources indicating the amount of tribute collected by Cotys, Kalin Porozhanov (2021: 278-280) tried to calculate it. It is known from Demosthenes (23.110) that Cotys' son Cersobleptes received as tribute 30 talents (1 talent = c. 26 kg of pure silver) from Chersonese and 200 talents from the ports. But that amount did not include all other *poleis* and *emporía* (i.e. on the Black Sea coast), neither the tribute from the subjugated Thracians and would not be indicative for the whole territory of the Odrysian kingdom during the reign of Sitalces (444–424 BC), Seuthes I (424–405 BC), etc. until Cotys I, but for only 1/3 to 1/2 of the divided into three unequal parts Odrysian state. This information allows a reasonable speculation of the amount of tribute received by Cotys: if 200 talents is multiplied by 2 or 3, that would equal 400 or 600 talents. The minimum sum of 400 talents, received as tribute from Seuthes I, is well known from Thucydides (2.97.3). However, this sum includes taxes from the subjugated Thracians. If to these 400 or 600 talents we add the 30 talents from Chersonese, add the tribute from the larger *poleis* and the Thracian tribes, the amount received by Cotys I would likely significantly exceed 1000 talents. The thousand talents reported by Diodorus (12.50.2) represent the tribute collected by Sitalces from both the *poleis* and the Thracians. But under Cotys I the power and the role of his kingdom in international political life were even greater and more crucial for Athens and its interests in the Thracian southeastern territories and the Hellespont, so it would be reasonable to expect this amount to be higher.

¹¹ Popov, 2009: 107.

¹² Venedikov, 1972: 1-2. Porozhanov, 2021: 269.



Figure 2. Phiale with the name of Cotys I, produced in his residence in Beos.
Found in the Mogilan(ska) mound, Vratsa

In 376/375 BC, 30 000 Triballians attacked Abdera:

... and after seizing a large quantity of booty they were making their way homeward in a contemptuous and disorderly fashion when the inhabitants of Abdera took the field in full force against them and slew more than two thousand of them as they straggled in disorder homewards. The barbarians then, enraged at what had happened and wishing to avenge themselves upon the Abderites, again invaded their land. The victors in the earlier conflict, being elated by their success and aided by the presence of the *Thracians of the neighboring region*, who had sent out a body of men to assist them, drew up their lines opposite to the barbarians. A stubborn battle took place, and since the Thracians suddenly changed sides, the Abderites, now left to fight alone and surrounded by the superior number of the barbarians, were butchered almost to a man, as many as took part in the fight. (Diod. 15.36.1-3)

According to A. Höck, the *Thracians of the neighboring region* could have been none other than Cotys' Odrysians.¹³ And although not sure whether this event was pre-planned, it weakened an important *polis* in Cotys' expansionistic plan.

¹³ Höck, 1904: 266-268. Porozhanov, 2021: 268.

of Samothrace and Thasos with their mainland territories, Elaios, Selymbria, Neapolis, etc. But the political situation changed in 371 BC when Thebes defeated Sparta in the Battle of Leuctra and challenged Athens. Benefiting from the weakness and disorder in the Greek world, Cotys used deception against Perinthus, which was among the members of the League:

Cotys of Thrace asked the people of Perinthus for a loan to enable him to raise an army. On their refusing, he begged them at any rate to let him have some of their citizens to garrison certain fortresses, and release for active service the men who were there on duty. They readily complied, thinking thus to obtain control of the fortresses. But Cotys placed in custody the men they sent, and told the citizens that they might have them back when they had sent him the amount of the loan he desired. ([Ps.] Arist. *Econ.* 1351a)

Apparently Cotys had no scruples about taking forcibly, if denied a voluntary “loan”, which he needed for his forthcoming military campaign.

3. The war for the Thracian Chersonese

At the beginning and towards the middle of the 360s BC the situation in the Thracian Chersonese became more complicated, because of the actions of the satraps from Asia Minor who broke away from the Persian Empire. In 367 BC Ariobarzanes, the Persian satrap of Phrygia (368–362 BC), occupied Sestos. Following Ariobarzanes’ revolt against the Persian king Artaxerxes II in 365 BC, Cotys tried to use the situation and invaded the Thracian Chersonese, violating the his agreements with Athens. He conquered Kardia,¹⁶ but the siege of Sestos failed. Unable to overcome the joint Persian and Athenian forces, he marched west towards the Chalcidice Peninsula to expand his kingdom’s boundaries. The likelihood of success of that initiative was not slim due to the disagreements and struggles for the Macedonian throne. Cotys was joined by his son-in-law, the dismissed Athenian general Iphicrates, who most probably informed him about the current political events in the Macedonian royal court. In Chalcidice, the Odrysian king declared himself an ally of Olynthus and the local *poleis* against Athens, joining forces with a new ally – the mercenary commander Charidemus, a pupil of Iphicrates, who married another daughter of Cotys. The details of the war are unfortunately not well known. Eventually neither side could get advantage and Cotys stepped back.

In 362 BC Cotys conquered the majority of the Thracian Chersonese without Elaeus, Sestos and Crithote, owned by Athens (Dem. 23.158). At the same time Miltokythes, probably his treasurer, revolted and conquered Hieron Oros, where the royal treasury was and offered Athens to “restore the Chersonese” (Dem. 23.104; 50.5). In 362/361 BC Athens decided to help him by sending the *strategos* Autocles. Parallel to Miltokythes’ plea, a letter from Cotys arrived (Dem. 23.115). Its contents are unknown, but it can be assumed that, like Miltokythes, the king also proposed some solution to the conflict in Chersonese. This seems to have been the reason for the dual policy of Athens, trying both to support Miltokythes but not to oppose Cotys directly. Apparently Athens took a decision that was interpreted by the rebel as a refusal to support him, and he surrendered to Cotys in the spring of 361 BC.¹⁷

After the suppression of the rebellion, Cotys’ continued his full-scale attacks in the Chersonese. The subsequent *strategoi* in the Hellespont, Menon (only for a few weeks after Autocles) and Timomachus in 361/360 BC, were put on trial, for gross mistakes during their command (Dem. 19.180, 36.53, Dem. 50.12, 14). In late 361 – early 360 BC Cotys conquered Sestos

¹⁶ Dem. 23.149-152; Tzvetkova, 2008: 197; Porozhanov, 2021: 270-271.

¹⁷ Dem. 23.104. Fol, 1974: 1005; Heskell, 1997: 77; Tzvetkova, 2008: 200.

with the help of the opposite Asia Minor city of Abydos and Iphicrates.¹⁸ Iphicrates, however, refused to attack the last two Athenian strongholds, Crithote and Elaeus, and withdrew to the island of Lesbos, and later to Drys.

In September 360 BC Iphicrates was replaced by Charidemus, who besieged Crithote and Elaeus, and, according to the letters of their governors, it was only a matter of time before they fell.¹⁹ Athens dispatched to the Hellespont a new *strategos*, Charidemus' friend Cephisodotus. By the time he arrived in the last week of September 360 BC, Cotys had been murdered by two brothers from Ainos, Python and Heraclides.²⁰ Thought previously to be close to the king, they murdered him during a feast in his palace, in order to avenge their father.²¹ Upon their return to Athens, they were granted citizenship and rewarded with gold wreaths. When Python was admired and honored by the Athenians for slaying Cotys, he said "God did this, borrowing from me the hand that did the deed" (Plut. *Precepts of Statecraft*, 20.816e).²²

The death of Cotys marked the beginning of the kingdom's downfall. The Odrysian state was divided among three competing kings (Dem. 23.8). Cersobleptes, the son of Cotys, ruled the easternmost parts beyond the lower Hebros and Tonzos. Amadocus II, perhaps a son of Amadocus I, took the mountainous hinterland of Maroneia. Berisades established himself in the area around the lower Nestos.²³ The division of Odrysian Thrace was exploited by Philip II of Macedon to impose his control over the area.

4. Conclusion

Cotys I ruled for 24 years. Initially a friend of Athens, he later turned into its most dangerous enemy and will be remembered as a tireless military commander, a hypocritical diplomat and a severe ruler.²⁴ Athens' goal was to keep its both Balkan adversaries, Thrace and Macedonia, weak, but achieved that only with Thrace. Demosthenes formulated the Athenian policy regarding the Thracian Chersonese – the peninsula would be best defended by having weak Thracian kings with constant conflicts with each other. The assassination of Cotys not only

¹⁸ Dem. 23.158-160. Tzvetkova, 2008: 201.

¹⁹ Dem. 23.132, 152-162. Fol, 1975: 157; Tzvetkova, 2008: 201-202.

²⁰ The death of Cotys has been placed in 359 BC by those who interpret Theopompus' (Fr. 31 = Athen. 12.42) account as a meeting between Philip II and Cotys in the Thracian royal residence Onocarsis (Höck, 1891: 99-100; Fol, 1975: 159; Ellis, 1976: 49; Yordanov, 1998: 14-15), preceding by a letter of Cotys to Philip (6.53). But more convincing seems to be the dating in 360 BC, before the arrival of Cephisodotus in the Hellespont (Dem. 23.163; Tonev, 1942: 200; Danov, 1970: 45; Badian, 1983: 52; Heskell, 1997: 56-60; Tacheva, 2006: 141; Tzvetkova, 2008: 193).

²¹ The reason provided by Aristotle (*Pol.* 1311b 21-22), vengeance, is accepted as historical by Höck, 1904: 269; Kahrstedt, 1922: 1552; Wörle, 1981: 156-157; Trampedach, 1994: 90-92; Schütrumpf and Gehrke 1996: 560. An involvement of Athens is supposed by Fol, 1974: 1005; Dušanić, 1980: 122; Jordanov, 1996: 224-225; Delev, 1997: 7; Archibald, 1998: 221; Tzvetkova, 2008: 202; Popov, 2011: 112; V. Fol, 2017: 221; Porozhanov, 2021: 276. *Contra* Wörle, 1981: 156-157; Trampedach, 1994: 90-92; Schütrumpf and Gehrke 1996: 560; Tacheva, 2006: 159. See Zaccaria, 2019: 77-78. A possibility of Miltokythes' involvement in the assassination is expressed by Badian (1983: 54, n. 10).

²² Plutarch (*Laud.* 11.542e-f, *Col.* 32.1126c) and Philostratus (*Life of Apol.* 7.2-3) even interpreted Python's and Heraclides' heroic deed in the light of their Academic education (a particular which is absent in the most ancient sources). Wörle 1981: 157-158; Trampedach 1994: 90-92; Schütrumpf & Gehrke 1996: 560 assume that the philosophical motivation and the brothers' affiliation with the Academy may have been later constructions. See Zaccaria 2019: 78.

²³ Cf. Worthington, 2014: 40.

²⁴ On the personality of Cotys in ancient sources see Kotova, 2014.

accomplished it, but strengthened Philip's position and that was one of the main factors that prepared and facilitated his later victories.

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Endogenous Knowledge and Natural Conservation of Agricultural Products in West Cameroon

Djiope Popadem Maroti

*University of Yaoundé, Yaoundé, CAMEROON
Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences*

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Abstract

This article deals with the contribution of endogenous knowledge in the process of conservation of food products in West Cameroon. Endogenous knowledge is deepest in West Cameroon. In recent decades, the modernization of farming techniques has disrupted the realities and habits of populations. It is clear that despite this surge in modernism, many populations in West Cameroon have remained attached to their ancestral realities. However, crops that are perishable foods face numerous risks of rot. It is in this sense that this article aims to explore some mechanisms for the conservation of food products in West Cameroon, in an endogenous and cultural context. The postulate that emerges from this initiative is that rural populations have developed resilience strategies in the face of the problem of product conservation. To achieve such a result, it was important to use varied methodologies, both through documentary collection, field data collection, and verification and validation of the extracted information. Thus, it appears from the analyzes carried out that there are several endogenous strategies for preserving food products in West Cameroon, including drying, smoking and exposure to sunlight.

Keywords: conservation, endogenous knowledge, food products, globalization.

1. Introduction

1.1 *Context and rationale*

Food production has always been an essential income-generating activity. The construction of the Bamilékés or West Cameroonian society is based on manual activities, trade, breeding, but even more on agriculture. Agriculture is the primary supplier of foodstuffs in the region, but the problem that arises remains that of preserving the products resulting from this agriculture. In a simplified way, the populations of the region have thought up techniques for preserving foodstuffs based on drying, smoking, sunshine, etc. The writing of this article involves a careful reading of the documents, supported by oral, archaeological, anthropological collections, etc.

The problem raised in the present study is of a practical nature. Indeed, it aims to demonstrate the implications of local traditional knowledge in the process of protecting biodiversity in West Cameroon. In addition, the study seeks to answer a central question which is to know the degree of involvement of tradition and local agricultural knowledge in methods of nature conservation in West Cameroon?

1.2 Methodology

To resolve the problem posed by this research theme, we had to explore sites in the region and use specific techniques ranging from direct field studies to thematic studies.

To provide an interesting and objective result to this problem, a combination of methods was required both in the collection and processing of the data collected.

1.2.1 Presentation of the study area

With an area of 13,890 km² and culminating at approximately 2,000 m altitude (Kuate & Dikoume, 2000), the West Cameroon highlands region includes both the Bamiléké country and the Bamoun country. It is a region where a very interesting diversity of flora, fauna and landscape (natural) abounds (Djiopé, 2022). As for the Bamiléké country, it is a block of land which, located in the very center of the western region of Cameroon, is rich in cultural diversity and whose unique history and the dynamism of its peoples is imposing (Dongmo et al., 1972).

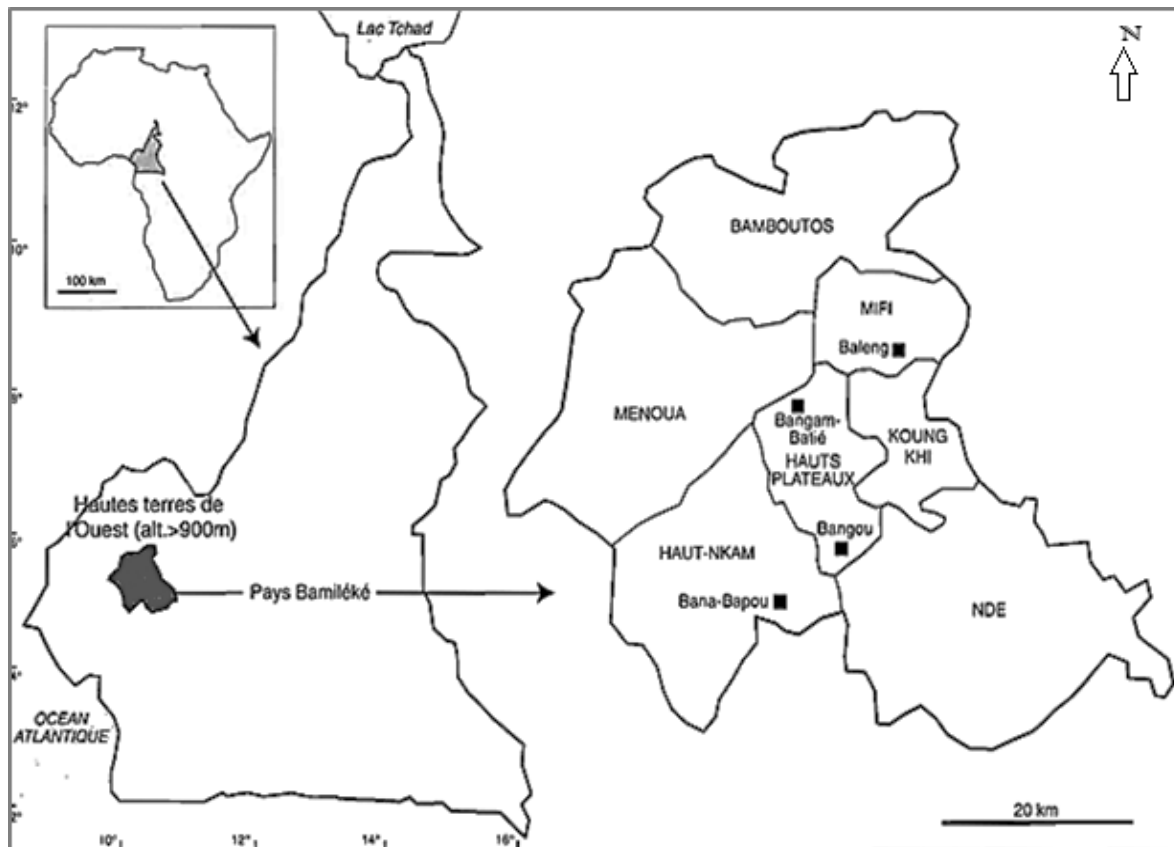


Figure 1. Location map of the West Cameroon region

The Bamiléké region presents itself as a rich wooded savannah, reigning with a good number of botanical zoo individuals who are an integral part of the cultural life of the people who live there. The Bamiléké are found in five (five) zones of the western Cameroonian region, namely: Menoua, Mifi, Ndé, Koung-Khi, Hauts-plateaux, Haut-Nkam and Bamboutos. It is in this region of Cameroon that the Bamiléké originate, who are included in the Grass-Fields region.

1.2.2 Data collection and processing

To carry out this work, we consulted archives of various kinds including written and iconographic archives from the Ministry of Wildlife and Forestry, Wildlife and the Environment in Cameroon; we also carried out interviews with ecological and environmental leaders in Cameroon, without forgetting environmental agents and Cameroonian public opinion regarding environmental issues and precisely that of the State, the future and the protection of forests in Cameroon.

Given that written sources alone are not enough to write history, we have carried out field trips taking advantage of all kinds of sources of information available to us in order to reveal the historical truth that underlies tends our subject. We carried out a careful investigation and by collecting information from various sources including oral by a sampling of informants according to the different regions studied, which are seen as being the living museum of all the socio-cultural productions capitalized by people without writings (Gormo, 2004: 17), written, iconographic, etc., which will lead us to specific information whose analysis and interpretation would be likely to produce concrete results. Claiming to be historical, our research will be focused on consulting written, oral, iconographic and multimedia sources. On this subject, we will consult various schools of thought. Concerning the iconographic sources, they will mainly consist of photos, results of our various field trips, as well as maps, plans and other image sources which would allow us to better understand the context in which our research takes place.

A systemic approach to the management of natural resources and the problem of hunger is also envisaged. After collecting this data, it will go through a rigorous selection. We will analyze and sift through the selection the data collected in the field. The comparison of the data collected will allow us to produce true and rich work. This work will allow us to bring out the data necessary to develop our memory. Writing a complete history can only be done with written sources. The diversification of sources will allow us to better understand the question of our research. Data collection was also done through the collection of coordinates and GPS tracks.

From then on, we organized our ideas into four (04) main articulations, namely: the presentation of some (agricultural) cultures of the geographical location of sacred forests cultures as a geopolitical and strategic element; and finally, the cosmogony of the divine and modes of transmission of endogenous cultural knowledge through the natural environment.

2. Results

The work carried out allowed us to arrive at a certain number of observations which serve as results. It is clear that in the West Cameroon region, the main androgenic strategies for preserving food products are essentially drying, smoking and rotation.

2.1 Drying: Innovation in practice

Drying is an activity which consists of spreading the harvested products in such a way as to empty them of the water molecules they contain. This activity makes it possible to limit the action of water which, with humidity, more quickly alters the resources which then enter into a situation of putrefaction.



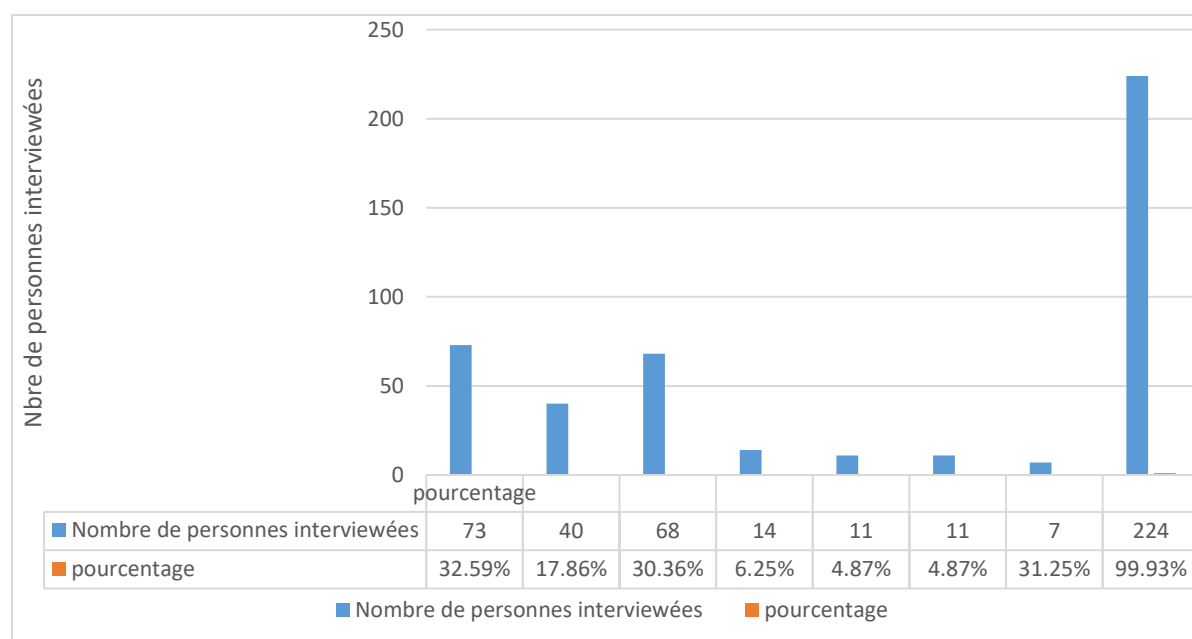
Figure 2. Some granaries set up for the conservation of corn in Bafoussam

Source: Maroti Djiopé, for the ERAIFT-UNESCO Project, 2022

Drying as we know it in endogenous practices in West Cameroon has evolved considerably. From simple display to the creation of traditional warehouses, drying techniques now include devices to optimize the mass conservation of food products. We thus move from small chimney attics (nking), to attics built according to certain standards, larger, wider and more sophisticated. We note that despite the creation of modern granaries (Fofiri, 2016), traditional practices remain the order of the day given that in most village households, traditional drying and preservation techniques remain prominent due to their accessibility and ease of execution. Despite its various advantages, it is clear that this endogenous drying technique is gradually declining, hence the need for the resurgence of its popularization.

Figure 3. Percentage of people interviewed who agree with the preponderance of drying as a local knowledge of food preservation, West Cameroon

Source: Field data



Drying is carried out by the use of converted attics. These granaries, the fruit of local endogenous knowledge, are excellent means of preserving cereals and legumes. Food leaves thereby dried and stored in attics. Still other foods, especially of animal origin, are smoked in order to increase the life expectancy of the items tenfold. Drying is carried out following specific steps. First, it is done when the seeds are harvested, i.e. during the period covering the end of November until January-February. Drying represents a widespread resource conservation technique here. For the populations, drying cannot be excluded from agrarian practices. Natural drying keeps the food with a natural flavor (Kengfack, 2023). Alongside this conservation practice, it must be said that drying warehouses are most often converted attics, built in an artisanal manner (See the figures above). Legumes are not left out in this process. Indeed, to slow down the rotting of the latter, local knowledge encourages the cutting and drying of vegetables. This strategy makes it possible to increase the life of a vegetable and thus facilitates its preservation. Drying lofts are even more cost effective and simplify physical expenses. Indeed, drying strategies based on the construction of traditional drying granaries are done in open fields. Most of the time, this technique is a solution to the sometimes very expensive transport of fresh products. Drying lofts are made with temporary materials and on piles. This construction on stilts avoids the risk of flooding of attics, but also of attacks by small rodents. The suspension of the conservation attic therefore presents itself as an ingenious idea emanating from local knowledge. Not far away, local populations also use smoking techniques as a means of preserving food resources.

2.2 Smoking: Between “old” and “new” practice

Smoking is the action of drying food by flames. This strategy is used much more for lipid foods (meat, fish, etc.). Smoking is very widespread in West Cameroon, and particularly in the Menoua department. In the district of Dschang by Bafou for example, baskets woven from bamboo are most often hung on top of the wood fire in the kitchen. This basket allows you to store and dry food. The construction of the procedure for conserving food resources therefore presents itself as an empirical art, transmitted generationally. Smoking is therefore a significant asset in the process of preserving food products (Fofiri, 2014). A practice that continues to this day and whose use still seems as effective. Not far from these practices there is also the making of grains with wood fire ash.

2.3 Conservation by “sunshine”: An adaptation strategy in periods of high temperature

“Insolation” is seen in the context of this work as the process of burying foods (especially tubers) in the ground in order to maintain their freshness. In West Cameroon, insolation has become a very widespread conservation strategy in the most isolated regions, which are those which have mastered this practice the most. It comes from the experiences of everyone who observed that, in the absence of technologies for preserving food products (fridges, freezers, refrigerators, etc.), it is imperative to think of natural and less expensive alternatives. It must be said that in the past, the possession of such devices was impossible. Thus, the products (food crops) harvested and in particular the tubers, are directly released into moist and dry soil if there is no need to use them directly. This conservation strategy cannot, however, be applied for a long period of time, otherwise the product will either rot or germinate.

Local techniques present insolation as a process for preserving agricultural products. “Insolation” keeps the product at natural temperature, suitable for conservation. In this way, the putrefaction process is delayed. The only drawback is that the product that is placed in the ground risks, in the long run, germinating. The “sunshine” process is therefore considered a firewall against periods of extreme heat. Preserved foods are intended for consumption in a relatively short

time (between 5 and 7 days). The exposure process takes into consideration certain requirements regarding the products to be preserved. Firstly, the products are mostly tubers, then you have to be reassured that these products have not already started the germination process; secondly, you must reassure yourself that the product has not been scratched or injured; thirdly, the food must not be wet, and finally, it is important to bury it in dry but fresh soil.

In reality, this strategy is a form of resilience in the face of global warming. The populations of West Cameroon have therefore developed quite specific knowledge about the climate. In this way, the sunning processes make it possible to keep food fresh, due to the temperature of the soil which remains cool at a certain depth, regardless of the season.

3. Discussion and conclusion

Querbes and Vittoz (1967) highlight drying as the most common means of preservation, particularly in the northern part of Cameroon. This logic of thought is shared by many other authors, who reveal that this practice is also applicable in other regions of the country. Therefore, Fofiri (2016) points out that strategies based on storage infrastructures are means of (dry) preservation of cereals. Food products are part of the daily diet of rural populations. The UN (1998) reviews local means of conserving food resources in order to limit waste.

In West Cameroon, these products are widely requested and cultivated. However, their use poses a problem due to their rapid rotting for the most part, or their destruction by insects and pests. To limit these actions, endogenous strategies have been used for this purpose. Local endogenous knowledge sometimes opts for drying, smoking, basking, etc. endogenous practices are therefore an asset in the fight against food waste and loss, but are only increasingly overtaken by modernization which offers more sophisticated methods (fridges, freezers, etc.) of conservation, although the latter represent dangers for the environment through the greenhouse effects they emit.

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