

Cultural Identities and Food Habits in Adjoukrou Country in the Department of Dabou, Ivory Coast

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to learn about the cultural identities and dietary habits of the Adjoukrou people in the department of Dabou. It is based on a mixed-method approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods, using direct observations in the field, a questionnaire survey, and individual semi-directive interviews.

The Adjoukrou are identified by their social organization as reflected in the generation festival and the yam festival, by their modes of inheritance (matrilineal) and mode of dress (loincloth on the shoulder, hat on the head, cane in hand), their religious practices (Christianity) and their socio-economic activities (agriculture, fishing, hunting, production of attiéké and palm oil).

The eating habits of the Adjoukrou are characterized by attiéké, banana and yam foutou and banana foutou mixed with cassava and attiéké foutou, accompanied by clear sauces, white sauce, mamissou leaf sauce (*Talinum paniculatum*) and akplemicth (sauce made from palm seeds) with bush meat and local fish (carp, pike, captain, machoiron). The Adjoukrou have two obligatory meals per day: lunches and dinners. Breakfast is optional. They also consume traditional drinks such as palm wine and koutoukou.

Keywords: Cultural identities; eating habits; Adjoukrou.

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1. Introduction

There are various mutations in the elements of culture and food habits of people around the world. These mutations or evolutions are due to modernity, technology, urbanization, various crises, climate change, etc. [1-3].

Yet, culture has an intrinsic value that, when reinforced and valued at the individual and community level, contributes to personal fulfillment, integral human development, societal structuring and social cohesion [4]. Determining the cultural identities and dietary habits of peoples contributes to the enhancement of the culture of that people. On the contrary, the loss of a people's identity or food habits contributes to the dislocation of that people.

Cultural identity is understood as the set of cultural elements by which a person or group defines itself, manifests itself and wishes to be recognized [5]. It takes into account its socio-economic activities [6]. Moreover, to eat, the individual must make choices: which ingredient? how to season a certain dish? at what time to eat it? etc. These choices, for the most part, are dictated or guided by the community from which they come. In a recent publication on the eating habits of rural people in Côte d'Ivoire, we emphasized that the eating habits of each people are influenced by social traditions and cultures [7].

In Ivory Coast, there are more than sixty ethnic groups grouped into four major groups, including the Akan, Mandé, Krou and Gour. Each large group is composed of several ethnocultural groups characterized by their specific or particular cultural identities. For example, the Akan group consists of the Central Akan, Eastern Akan, and Lagoon Akan [8] from which the Adjoukrou subjects of this study are drawn. The Adjoukrou are a lagoon people located in southeastern Ivory Coast, along the Ebrié lagoon. A people characterized by particular cultural practices but not too well known by the general public. In terms of food, the Adjoukrou are generally known to be attiéké eaters. However, in addition to attiéké, the Adjoukrou are characterized by several other foods that they enjoy and that are typical of them. Therefore, what are the cultural identities and eating habits of the Adjoukrou?

The realization of this work is part of our doctoral thesis whose theme is "cultural identities and food habits in the context of climate change in Adjoukrou country".

The objective of this publication is to know the cultural identities and eating habits of the Adjoukrou. To do this, we will present (1) the cultural identities of Adjoukrou and (2) their eating habits.

1.1 Methodology

Study area: This study was conducted among the Adjoukrou people, who belong to the large Akan ethnocultural group. They are located in the south of Côte d'Ivoire and are the inhabitants of the department of Dabou, whose capital is Dabou. The department of Dabou has three sub-prefectures, including Dabou, Lopou and Toupah, where the surveys took place, specifically in the villages of Agneby, Lopou, Débrimou, Mopoyem, Toupah and Nouvelle Ousrou. The "Adjoukrou" terroir lies between longitudes 4°20'28.62" and 4°43'28.65"

West and latitudes 5°14'11.65" and 5°28'44.11" North [9]. It is bounded to the south by the Ebrié Lagoon, to the east by the Agneby River, to the west by the Ira River, and to the north by tributaries of the Agneby and Ira Rivers. The department of Dabou is located 27 km from Abidjan.

Data collection: This study is based on a mixed qualitative and quantitative approach. Thus, a questionnaire was administered to respondents on the cultural practices and dietary habits of the Adjoukrou. The study population was composed of heads of households, housewives, nannies, and the general population. This gives a sample of 261 people chosen according to the reasoned choice technique. The data analysis was carried out using the Excel 2019 spreadsheet. The semi-structured interviews involved matrons, old men, notables and village chiefs. The semi-structured interviews allowed us to discover the social organization, religious practices, socio-economic activities, and to identify the different dishes or preparations and drinks of the Adjoukrou. The interviews were recorded with a Dictaphone and subjected to a thematic content analysis.

Direct observation was done through a camera to see the Adjoukrou dishes or foods and socio-economic activities.

2. Results

2.1 Adjoukrou cultural identities

The language spoken by the Adjoukrou people is Adjoukrou. They are part of the Akan group, more precisely the Akan lagoons. After interviews, it appears that the Adjoukrou are characterized by their cultural and societal practices, their religious practices and their socio-economic activities.

2.2 Societal cultural organization

- Age groups, generations and federations among the Adjoukrou

At the end of our interviews, it appears that the Adjoukrou peoples are recognized by their social organization. Depending on the period of birth of the individual, he or she will be registered in one of the three or four age classes that each of the seven generations duly constituted in any village counts. Thus, like all lagoon peoples, the Adjoukrou social, political and military organization is based on the age class system.

In Adjoukrou country, there are two large federations, the Dibrime lok and Boborr Lok, into which the generations are divided.

There are seven generations in total: (1) Nigbessi, (2) Bodjle, (3) Sete, (4) N'djourman, (5) Abriman, (6) M'bedie and (7) M'borman. Each of these generations is subdivided into four (04) age groups (Dibrime Lok Federation) and three (03) age groups (Boborr Lok Federation).

The age groups are as follows: Odjogba, the seniors; Bago, the juniors; Kata, the cadets; and Boman, the last age group specific to the Dibrime Lok federation. This was originally an age group created to integrate assimilated

fighters, i.e. descendants of slaves or foreigners. Generations and age groups include men and women.

Indeed, according to the results of our various interviews, the people are organized into generations. There are age classes and within each age class are generations. Thus, in the age class of the patriarchs, every two years, a generation holds its festival. After eight years, all the generations in the age group are supposed to have celebrated their festivals. It is this age group that is now in charge of running the village, i.e. the Ebebu. They are the rulers, they hold the executive power and have the right of veto.

Apart from the Ebebu, there are the Niridi Ekm. This is the intermediate generation that holds the legislative power. It is the village parliament. The Niridi Ekm propose laws for the management of the village, but it is the Ebebu who make the final decisions.

There is a third power represented by the third generation called the Mabre Essel. They are the chiefs of works. They are in charge of civil and military operations and the maintenance of order.

It should be noted that all these powers are under the responsibility of the Ebebu.

- Choice of chief and governance among the Adjoukrou

Like the neighboring peoples of the department of Dabou, the Ebriés, the Alladjan, the Avikam, the Adjoukrou peoples have the chieftaincy as their mode of governance. The results of our interviews reveal that Adjoukrou villages are governed by a chief chosen by consensus according to certain criteria. Among the Adjoukrou, the person who is to be the village chief is first and foremost someone of integrity and honesty, capable of managing the village's assets without misappropriating them. Secondly, he must be capable of bringing the village together, capable of settling disputes between people in order to create harmony, the guarantee of the village's development. Among the Adjoukrou, the character and behavior of each individual are observed by everyone in the village. Thus, it is the experience of the individual that speaks in his favor. Moreover, they say, in reality, the chosen chief is there to manage the administrative affairs of the village, since a village representative is needed. He is considered the intermediary between the administration and the village. He is the mouthpiece of the Ebebu. The chief is chosen from among the nobles, men of integrity, who are role models in the village. He applies the policy determined by them. Otherwise, for all decisions that must be taken in the village, affecting the life of the village, the latter cannot do it alone. All decisions are made following consultation and with the agreement of all members of the ruling class. Among the Adjoukrou, one person cannot govern alone; it is the entire age group that governs.

- Mode of succession or inheritance among the Adjoukrou

In terms of family succession or inheritance, the customary authorities admit that in their parents' time, the mode of succession or inheritance was matrilineal. At that time, children inherited from their maternal uncles. At a certain age, the child would leave his parents to go to his maternal uncle's house to help him in his work in the fields, to pick the palm seed for the production of red oil. This commercialized product allowed the uncle not only to pay taxes but also to meet the needs of the family. Thus, the nephew having worked with his uncle all

these years, after the death of this uncle, was entitled to inherit the goods and even the lands of the latter, to succeed him. The Adjoukrou belongs, through his male ancestors, to a paternal lineage (eb) and through his female ancestors, to a maternal lineage (bosou sougon). The role of the patrilineage appears more in political and social life. The matrilineage is an economic unit. However, this mode of operation will undergo an upheaval after the 1964 law on succession in its article 8, which stipulates that "Inheritance is deferred to the children and descendants of the deceased, to his ascendants, to his collateral relatives and to his surviving spouse, in the order...and according to the rules determined hereafter. According to the customary authorities interviewed, as soon as this law came into force, the matrilineal mode switched to patrilineal. Today, children inherit from their father after his death. Nevertheless, some people, out of generosity, while they are still alive, offer property to a nephew who has been entrusted to them for years and who has worked with them all this time. Thus, in order not to be ungrateful to the nephew and not to create an atmosphere of conflict after his death, the father already gives part of his field to his nephew during his lifetime, while informing his children of the act.

- Marriage among the Adjoukrou

Among the Adjoukrou, marriage is of great importance. Thus, in the past, the individual of marriageable age does not allow himself to choose the woman he wants to marry. According to our interviews, the marriage engages the honor of the family. Therefore, the uncle with whom the nephew has been working all this time is responsible for finding a woman from a noble family, trustworthy and able to keep the secrets of the host family and even to cover up the mistakes and weaknesses of this family. Thus, he pays the dowry requested by the in-laws and then marries his nephew. Thus, the mode of marriage is monogamy. However, nowadays, every individual of marriageable age can choose himself the woman he wants to marry. And there are some who allow themselves to marry two women according to their financial capacity. Although it has a festive aspect, marriage in Adjoukrou country still retains its sacred character despite the advent of modernism and foreign religions. Any young girl who has reached the age of 18 may aspire to marriage. However, she will be authorized to marry once she has undergone the initiation ceremony of Dediakp. Thus, the marriage is done through a dowry ceremony where the suitor brings the gifts requested by the family in law. Once the dowry ceremony is over, the newly married girl goes to her husband's home, accompanied by her mother who stays there for a while.

Only the paternal family of the courted girl receives the largest share of the dowry. All these purchases are recorded in order to be claimed in case of divorce.

The ceremony must be celebrated by both families, namely that of the bride and that of the suitor.

- Adjoukrou initiation celebrations

The double entry into an age group and a generation is the conservative act of accession to identity and citizenship. It is materialized by an initiation ceremony called Low for the young man and Dediakp for the young girl. The age group system is the fundamental social organization. It has a social, political, economic and military role. Each Adjoukrou citizen belongs to a specific age group for the duration of his or her life. One enters the age groups after an initiation ceremony called low. Each age group and each sub-group is headed by a

leader called milow.

The Low is the moment that prepares the young teenager to enter the adult world. The Low is prepared in two (02) years. In the first year, the heads of the impetrants or young people in initiation are shaved and they must let their hair grow, because it will be braided afterwards. The impetrants are prepared for war. They are initiated to bravery by confrontations between the impetrants of the different districts. The second year is considered the year of trials. However, the impetrants, who could not leave the village or do field work, were given special attention. They are well fed and considered as untouchables. The celebration of the Low, itself lasts three (03) weeks. It is subdivided into several stages. There is the stage of the procession in ceremonial dress during two days where the young initiates are richly dressed and adorned with the most beautiful family jewels. Then, comes the test where the impetrants must run around the village. While running, they are sometimes flogged, but they must not fall, otherwise their life will be shortened. This is an ordeal that gives the parents a lot of concern. Afterwards, the young initiates are equipped with bells and pass through each concession to introduce themselves and greet. It is a form of quest, they are given money and they have the obligation not to spend it but to give it to the parents. At the end, there is a last step which aims at evaluating the number of warriors. The young impetrants are then shaved. They are draped in a noble loincloth, adorned with jewels and can, for the first and only time before the Ebeb, wear the hat. It should be noted that the Low, nowadays, does not take place as in the past, following the growing urbanization of the Adjoukrou villages, but also because of the schooling of the young. After the Low, it is the Angbandji. It is the festival of nobility, sharing, solidarity and recognition. Angbandji is falsely called the festival of wealth because of the gold displayed during its celebration, and the valuable loincloths worn by the Angbandji Ess. Throughout the festival, the Angbandji Ess gives food and drink to all those who visit him. Yesterday he received from everyone across the Low, today he gives, not in repayment, but in recognition of everyone's generosity towards him. This is the meaning of this celebration which is a festive ceremony. In addition, this the purpose of the ceremony is to encourage young people to work, as they will one day be called upon to present their assets to society and enter another age group.

Finally, comes the Ebeb. The Ebeb is a ritual which, through the transmission of power, entrusts society to a small number to lead it. It is therefore a political investiture. The Ebeb is a sign of Adjoukrou cultural identification that makes its candidates Ebebu or rulers. It takes place at the age of 60 to 70. This ceremony is celebrated every eight (08) years. It is the crowning of an accomplished life after the low. Every eight years, a new generation of men and women of the village receives the command. The Dediakp is for the girls what is the Low for the boys. It is a ritual that consecrates the physiological maturity of the young girl in Adjoukrou country: puberty. It is an individual and not a collective ritual. But it is part of a process that leads the young woman from engagement to marriage. It is a question of linking the family of a young suitor to that of a coveted young girl. Before this ritual of the dediakp, the young girls must absolutely preserve themselves from pregnancy in order not to bring opprobrium on their respective families.

- The yam festival among the Adjoukrou

Among the Adjoukrou, there is also the yam festival. Under the term "yam festival" are found all the festivals aiming at the regeneration of the society by purification rites that evacuate all that is negative in the village

while attracting the blessing of the ancestors. This festival concerns the whole Leboutou country and has different names according to the villages. It is called Kpol in the villages of Oussrou, Yassap, Orbaf, Makpeign Obidj in Lopou, Ayob in Debrimou and Aforka Fêtr in Kpass etc...

It is a festival of rejoicing, reunion, purification and reconciliation that takes place every year. It takes place from July to December with nuances according to the villages but keeps a common framework for all. Problems between families and individuals must be settled before the ceremony begins. Meals are cooked in the large family courtyard or sometimes in front of the concessions since they are community meals, meals to be shared. The meal is based on an ox or a sheep, depending on the financial strength of the family. The meal is based on fufu yam.

The yam festival is organized by neighborhood and takes place in turn. On the day of the event, the neighborhoods, through the intermediary of the men, challenge each other to songs and warlike dances (Yaye) often punctuated by demonstrations of mystical powers. In the morning, the women go around the village with songs accompanied by the Kpakpatcha (traditional musical instrument). Sometimes, on the eve of the ceremony, in some villages, the women go out naked at night, dancing to chase away the evil spirits.

However, nowadays, not all Adjoukrou villages continue to celebrate the yam festival, according to our interviews. The term used today for this festival is the festival of saints. Like the Easter festival or paquinou celebrated by the Baule people (a time for the Baule to gather in their respective villages). The feast of the saints is, for the Adjoukrou, a moment of reunion. It is the occasion to commemorate their dead ancestors. Thus, no matter where the individual is, he makes every effort to return to the village. This ceremony usually takes place in the month of November, specifically on the first of November.

- Clothing among the Adjoukrou

Adjoukrou men have their own way of dressing. Indeed, the individual in the society dresses according to his age class. The one from low does not have the same way of dressing as the one from agbandji. In the same way, the one of the agbandji does not have the same accoutrement as the one of the ebeb. In general, these differences can be seen during the assemblies. The Low has a loincloth tied at the waist, the agbandji has a loincloth thrown over his shoulder and the ebebu, apart from the loincloth thrown over his shoulder, wears a hat on his head, a cane in his hand and a fly swatter, all of which symbolize the attributes of their power.

In an assembly, to speak, the agbandji must remove the loincloth from his shoulder. No one can dress in a certain way for a certain age group unless he belongs to that group. Women, on the other hand, do not differ much in the way they dress. However, old women are generally well dressed compared to young women.

2.3 Religious practices

Like many societies, the Adjoukrou people believe, in a hierarchical way, in the existence of supernatural forces at the origin of things. If the modern context leads them to be monotheistic, it must be said that at the beginning, these peoples were polytheistic. And there is still today, a survival of ancient beliefs and a mixture of religious

practices (syncretism). At the first level of belief, the Adjoukrou peoples believe in the existence of a supreme being, Nyam, who is the origin of the genesis of the universe (afr'nunu), and of all that it contains. To this being, homage is paid most often during ceremonies, by evoking that he created the sky, afr, and the earth, ous.

At the second level of belief, the Adjoukrou believe in the existence of small deities, the genies, who animate and inhabit the elements of the universe. Thus, we have the genies of the forest, of the water, of the rivers, of the tree... These supernatural entities have dialectical functions. The genies protect society against the enemy and sanction it in the event of a breach of balance or transgression. In the conception of the Adjoukrou, it is the genies that are the basis of the fertility of the soil, fertility, the success of fishing or hunting and security. In case of wrath, depending on whether the fault was committed by an individual, a family or the village, the genies punish the guilty parties by depriving them of their benefits. For example, the genie of fertility, in case of transgression, can inflict sterility.

At the third level of belief, we find among the Adjoukrou, the spirits of the ancestors. Indeed, the Adjoukrou believe that their dead relatives live again in another world. Thus, they maintain links with them through the cult of the dead, which is materialized by the exhibition of photos of deceased relatives, and members of the age group who celebrate their ebeb, the offering of meals on the graves. In return, they receive blessings and protection from their ancestors.

At all levels, worship services are presided over exclusively by the social elders of the community or the family, depending on whether the service concerns the whole village or just the family. Finally, there is the existence of sorcerers, ag'nu, in people's consciousness. Sorcerers are individuals, members of society, who possess supernatural powers. There are two types of sorcerers. On the one hand, there are the evil sorcerers who consume "souls", cause terrible diseases, slow down the social ascension of individuals, create conflicts, and prevent abundant harvests. In a word, they disturb the social order. On the other hand, there are the white sorcerers, ag'mann, who, according to the imagination, protect the members of the group and hinder the projects of evil supernatural forces.

According to our interviews or discussions with dignitaries, the Adjoukrou people are very religious. The geographical position of the department favored the presence of settlers in Adjoukrou country very early on. Christian missionaries quickly introduced the Christian religion into the department. This explains the presence of several colonial buildings that served as places of worship throughout Adjoukrou country. It is then that little by little the Adjoukrou turned to Christianity. Today, the Adjoukrou people are mostly dominated by the Christian religion. Rare are those who practice other religions such as Islam, Buddhism and some who are animists.

2.4 Socio-economic activities

Each region in Côte d'Ivoire is characterized by peoples and certain socio-economic activities to which they are attached.

Our survey results revealed that in the department of Dabou, in Adjoukrou country, for most of the respondents

(83%), agriculture is the primary socioeconomic activity of the department. The majority of farmers (62%) have been farming for more than 15 years. It is an activity that they have inherited from their ancestors. However, there is a minority who have been farming for less than 10 years, i.e., 16% of this farming population. According to the results of our interviews with Adjoukrou dignitaries, nowadays with the advent of rubber farming, agriculture is more focused on cash crops with a predominance of rubber farming. Cocoa and coffee were once abundant and dominant in the department. Indeed, according to our interviews, cocoa and coffee were the first cash crops developed in the department, beyond palm groves, which were natural plants. The interviewees affirm that rubber farming makes them civil servants. At the end of each month they have a salary with a very high profit that allows them to realize and to meet all their needs. Thus, cash crops in the department occupy almost all the cultivable land. In the past, the ancestors climbed the natural palm tree that they came to find when they arrived in the department to pick the seed that they used to produce artisanal red oil. They sold the red oil produced, which allowed them to pay taxes and solve the problems of the large family, it was their socio-economic activity. They go on to say that it was later that the white people came with the selected palm tree, and it was then that little by little the villagers became interested in this crop until they occupied the majority of the village plots. Years later came the rubber cultivation, when they saw the gain that the rubber tree brings compared to the oil palm, cocoa and coffee, everyone proceeded to the destruction of the cocoa and coffee fields for the benefit of the rubber cultivation. Thus today, rubber cultivation dominates in the department. In terms of food crops, our interviews with chiefs show that food crops are grown in the department, notably cassava, yams, bananas, taro, maize, eggplant, okra, chili peppers, tomatoes, and peanuts, with only rice not being grown in the department. However, more emphasis is placed on the cultivation of cassava than any other crop.

In the past, fishing was the second most important socio-economic activity of Adjoukrou, but the production of attiéké is now the second most important socio-economic activity of Adjoukrou, according to 67% of the population surveyed. In fact, today, attiéké is produced in almost all of the courtyards in Adjoukrou villages for family consumption, but even more so for sale, according to our observations. 77% of this population has been producing attiéké for more than 15 years, while only 33% did so less than 15 years ago. Attike production has become an increasingly powerful economic activity. Although the majority of women producers do it in the traditional way, it is tending to be modernized and industrialized, as we observed in Débrimou. According to our interviews with women producers and dignitaries, most of the time, this activity is underestimated because it is mainly practiced by women. On the other hand, it generates large financial resources for women in the department. It is an empowerment activity for Adjoukrou women in the department. The production of attiéké was initially a meal for family consumption. Everything was cooked like foutou or any other food for the small family. But as time went by, it was noticed that it is a food that is loved by all and the demand became stronger and stronger, that's why this activity is going to be more important until today.

As for fishing, it ranks third among the socio-economic activities of the Adjoukrou people, according to the results of our surveys of the elderly (50% of them). Our interviews reveal that it is an activity that is practiced mainly by young people who, nowadays, are turning to other socio-economic activities. With the installation of several companies in the department, several young people abandon the fishing activity to find a place in a company. In addition, many of them are in school, and it is only during the vacations that they engage in fishing.

The traditional authorities reveal that nowadays, young people are more interested in agriculture than in fishing. Thus, fishing is still practiced, but not as it was in the past.

Our interviews revealed that hunting and oil production, which were once an integral part of Adjoukrou culture, are being abandoned.

2.4 Adjoukrou eating habits

2.4.1 General information on Adjoukrou eating habits

- Attiéké, the "king" food

Attiéké, a steamed cassava semolina, was prepared and consumed exclusively within the restricted ethnocultural framework of the Adjoukrou. It is composed of ground cassava mixed with a small amount of cassava-based ferment or yeast and palm oil that has been overheated and slightly degraded before grinding. This home-made ferment is called lorngan'n in Adjoukrou. It is a valuable food in Adjoukrou country. It is their staple food. It is automatically served at all major ceremonies in Adjoukrou country. Among the Adjoukrou, attiéké is consumed in two forms. On the one hand, it can be eaten white, as it is after cooking. On the other hand, it can be tinted with artisanal red oil. The latter is consumed. It is generally eaten on special occasions and also to receive a foreigner of mark. It is also consumed in the form of foutou.

It is a meal that they consume every day without disgust. According to them, there are people who no matter what they have eaten, if they do not eat attiéké, they remain dissatisfied. It is a food that is consumed at any time and at any ceremony. For the housewives interviewed, it is a dish that ensures the serenity of the mother at home. Indeed, they say that when there is no attiéké at home, they are not at peace with themselves because of the children. Because at any time the children can come to say that they are hungry. And when there is attiéké, they can easily serve them food. So even when there is no cassava to make attiéké, they go where they have to go to get cassava to make attiéké.

- Foutou, a food appreciated by the Adjoukrou

According to the dignitaries, there is a second food that is much appreciated by the Adjoukrou. It is the foutou called n'foutou in Adjoukrou language. Foutou is an edible paste, solid or soft, depending on the consumer's taste, made from yam or plantain tubers. It is composed of plantain or yam mixed with artisanal red oil. It is a valuable food appreciated by all Adjoukrou.

It is part of the dishes cooked at all the great ceremonies such as the celebrations of generations, funerals, marriages and births. Only that nowadays, there is not enough banana and yam. In addition, our interviews allowed us to know that there is a typical meal for the Adjoukrou people: foutou d'attiéké. It is made from dried or spoiled attiéké. They also eat banana foutou mixed with cassava.

The interviewees specify that attiéké, foutou (n'foutou) and foutou d'attiéké are usually accompanied by clear

saucers (egmirédi) composed of tomatoes, akpi, peppers, eggplants, onions, red oil, smoked pike fish, captain, herring, crabs, snails; white sauce (mirédiffou) composed of akpi (the fruit of an oleaginous tree from the tropical forests), Ricinodendron heuden, and other ingredients: Ricinodendron heudelotti), chillies, onions, red oil, smoked fish (preferably smoked pike) and the vegetable leaf sauce (mamissou) composed of mamissou leaves (*Talinum paniculatum*), spinach leaves, kplahala leaves (*cortea potagere*), fresh okra, dried okra, fresh chillies, onions, akpi, red oil, tomato, rotten shark (I'num), smoked pike.

Vegetable leaf sauce (mamissou) is greatly appreciated by the Adjoukrou and is eaten especially on special occasions with oiled attiéké (attiéké with homemade red oil). They also consume other sauces such as akplemitch. This is a sauce made from palm seeds, composed of palm seeds, peppers, tomatoes, onions, bush meat and smoked fish; the peanut sauce is composed of peanuts, peppers, onions, fish, meat and chicken. According to the interviews, the sources of protein in the diet of the Adjoukrou people are generally the different fish that they have in the waters of the department, namely the machoïron, carp, pike, captain, catfish, etc. It should be noted that on special occasions, valuable fish such as captain, pike and shark are purchased and consumed. Apart from fish, the Adjoukrou also eat bush meat such as agouti, gazelle, hind, rat, etc., but also meat from farm animals such as beef (on special occasions), mutton, goat and chicken.

In addition to these different meals, the Adjoukrou have meals that are specially prepared for sick people. First of all, there is bitô prepared with manioc paste (attiéké granules), palm seed juice, dried fish, chili pepper and salt. The bitô is prepared in the following way: put the palm seed juice in a pot on the fire; then add chilli, dried fish, attiéké granules and a pinch of salt. Let it cook for about thirty minutes, stirring it from time to time. This dish is served hot.

Then, we have the mampopori made of manioc paste (attiéké granules), dried herring fish (crushed or ground), crabs, chilli and salt.

The mampopori is cooked as follows: put water in a pot and add the dried herring (crushed or ground), crabs (if possible), and let it boil; then, add in small doses, the cassava paste (attiéké granules), while stirring; finally, add the chili peppers and a pinch of salt and turn until it is cooked or ready. This dish is served hot, the bitô.

In addition to the dishes, the Adjoukrou have cassava fritters (n'gatô or akrarô), made from cassava paste and oil. To make these fritters, the cassava paste is kneaded, divided into several pieces and flattened. Then, in a bowl, pour the oil and wait until it is hot. Then put the flattened cassava pieces in the oil and fry them. When they are golden and crispy, remove them from the oil and drain them before serving. Cassava fritters (n'gatô or akrarô) are usually eaten with pieces of coconut.

The traditional drink usually consumed by 60.37% of Adjoukrou is Koutoukou. It is a traditional liqueur made from fermented palm wine or sugar and water. For the survey population, it is a liqueur that allows them to eat well. For some people, it is taken most of the time before a meal. The second traditional drink consumed by the Adjoukrou is palm wine (39.62%). Palm wine is the oldest drink in the Adjoukrou tradition. It is an integral part of the Adjoukrou people. It is even the basis of all ceremonies in Adjoukrou country. It is this drink that is used

for libations during great ceremonies and is even one of the elements requested during the dowry ceremony among the Adjoukrou. In addition to these traditional drinks, the drink most consumed by all respondents is water. This water comes from taps and wells. It is consumed at any time of the day and on any occasion.

The adjoukrou eat breakfast, but it is not a mandatory meal. On the other hand, lunch and dinner are mandatory. These meals are made up of my dishes such as attiéké, banana or yam foutou, banana foutou mixed with manioc or attiéké foutou.

2.4.2 Meals for pregnant or nursing women in Adjoukrou

In Adjoukrou country, the woman who has just given birth is of great importance. According to our interviews with the Adjoukrou customary authorities, during the period of pregnancy, the woman is between life and death; she makes enough effort to stay alive, both herself and the baby. She therefore deserves special care after she gives birth. Thus, as soon as she gives birth, she is subject to special treatment. She is well fed for three months on the meals of her choice. She is not allowed to do any work except to eat in abundance, nurse the newborn and sleep. She eats abundantly during her three months of rest in order to regain the strength she lost during pregnancy and to gain weight. The results of our surveys reveal that the nurse or breastfeeding mother consumes most of the time, banana foutou (36%), then oiled attiéké (32%), banana foutou mixed with manioc (29%) and then foutou yam (3%). All of these meals are accompanied in most cases by clear sauce (44%), spinach or mamissou vegetable leaf sauce (41%). In these sauces, there is shark (27%), captain (24%) pike (22%) and herring (22%). However, it should be noted that these are not conventional dishes that are imposed on nursing mothers in Adjoukrou country. Any breastfeeding woman can ask for the meal she wants to eat, according to her desires.

2.4.3 Taboos, prohibitions and/or food totems of the Adjoukrou people

- In general, among the Adjoukrou

According to our interviews, the Adjoukrou people do not have any food taboos to which they are truly subject. The results of the survey revealed that for 87% of our respondents, there is no food ban, totem or taboo among the Adjoukrou. On the other hand, some respondents (13%) claim to have food taboos. However, these food prohibitions, taboos or totems are specific to each family. There are families in which it is forbidden to eat foods such as black snail, gazelle, pork, monkey, squirrel, snake and catfish. The results of our interviews showed that there are food prohibitions specific to certain villages. This is the case in the village of Mopoyem, for example, where, according to the dignitaries, it was forbidden to introduce animals such as the caiman, the crocodile, the varan and the python into the entire village. In Débrimou, it is the live deer that is forbidden. However, nowadays, these practices are practically non-existent because of Christianity. Today, many of the forbidden animals are consumed by everyone and there is no problem, except for a minority of the inhabitants who continue to respect the tradition, in terms of taboo or totem.

- Especially among pregnant and lactating women among the Adjoukrou

According to the older women with whom we spoke, there are no dietary restrictions for pregnant or nursing women. On the other hand, there are women who, when they are pregnant, decide not to eat a certain meal because it is not good for them. But after giving birth, they resume the consumption of that meal without any problem. Also, there are families in which there are many food prohibitions. This is the case of one family where eating fresh meat during pregnancy causes bleeding in the mother after delivery. For some families, the consumption of turtle meat during pregnancy complicates the delivery of the baby when it is full term. For other families, eating pork causes pimples on the child's body after birth. In addition, these practices are less and less practiced because of the Christian religion that dominates the department. Thus, for one respondent, in the past a woman could not eat black snails during her pregnancy, but this practice no longer exists today.

3. Discussion

3.1 Cultural identities of the people

At the societal level, our results show that the Adjoukrou are organized into age groups, including the low, agbandji and ebeb groups. The village is governed by the age group of patriarchs, who are the ebeb with a chief. The chief is the intermediary between the administration and the village.

Our results are similar to those of [10-12]. Dugast argues that among the Adjoukrou, each age group covers a period of eight years. Each is subdivided into three or four sub-classes, formed in principle every two years during an initiation rite. The age classes have an essential political function, not only because they define the seven politically active echelons, but also because they determine the way in which village power is devolved: it is held, for a limited time, by an entire class, precisely the one that occupies the appropriate echelon. According to [11], the age-class system is the fundamental social organization. It has a social, political, economic and military. Each Adjoukrou citizen belongs, for the duration of his life, to a specific age group. The age groups are accessed after an initiation ceremony called "low". Each age group and each sub-group is headed by a chief called "milow". For [12], once initiated, young people become ipso facto citizens of their societies and assume the functions mentioned above. But the supreme power (the government of the village), eb-eb, among the Adjoukrou, is assumed cyclically by the age groups, every eight years. The assumption of power by the older generation gives them what is called the "collective chieftaincy of the age groups". This old-style chieftaincy will later give way to the "village chieftaincy" initiated by the colonizer.

3.2 Adjoukrou and their way of dressing

We have shown that the Adjoukrou are distinguished by their way of dressing. The individual in society dresses according to his or her age class. In the same vein, Gadou and Djédjé (2006) noted that all Ivorian ethno-cultural groups have possessed and still possess a traditional clothing heritage that sets them apart. Thus, it is the Senufo woven loincloth in Gur country, the Baule loincloth, eponymous with the ethnic group that makes it, and the Kita loincloth with its different varieties among the Akan. Among the Mande of the north, there is the woven loincloth and the bazin. In the southern Mande group, there is the dan loincloth. In the Kru group, there is the Dida godê loincloth. Among the Akan, these garments are worn with crowns stitched with gold motifs, or caps

with woven motifs (among the Gur and the Mandé). Necklaces, bracelets, beads, rings, earrings, chains, usually gold or white silver pendants, etc., accompany their clothing. On the cultural level, our research has shown that the yam festival in Adjoukrou country is a festival of rejoicing, reunion, purification and reconciliation that takes place every year. Our results are consistent with those of [13,14]. and Allé and his colleagues [13] studies reveal that the yam festival marks the beginning of the new year. Its purpose is to rid the country of all kinds of filth, to make the land fertile, the fields prosperous, and the women and animals fertile. According to the work of [14] on the yam festival in Benin, cultural identity is affirmed, among other things, in the eating and consumption of yams around a celebration. Thus, during the yam festival, the offering of the new harvest is a central aspect. It is done annually and is perceived by the communities as an act of purification allowing the dignitaries of traditional cults to atone for their sins and those of their populations. The yam festival corresponds to the release of the first tubers, and its consumption is the object of rituals dedicated to men and deities. According to [15], in the past, the beginning of the year was marked by the ceremonies of the yam festival, which ensured the fertility of the soil and the game and corresponded to the beginning of agricultural work. In the past, the year began after the harvest festival of the first yams.

3.3 Several socio-economic activities characterize the Adjoukrou

Socioeconomically, the Adjoukrou peoples are characterized by socioeconomic activities favored by the environmental and climatic conditions that allow them to carry them out. According to [6], in addition to cultural products that include the most visible characteristics of cultural identity such as fashion, habitat, architecture, rhythms of life, festivals and ceremonies, there are artistic, industrial and agricultural productions, etc. Thus, the practice of these socio-economic activities can be explained from an ecological, food and economic perspective. The "Atenean" climate to which Adjoukrou country is subjected includes four seasons, none of which is totally rain-free, and the degree of humidity remains high all year round. The relief is free of any major accident, the climate is marked by good rainfall with intensity and regularity, the dense hydrographic network offers good drainage capacity, and the favorable, fertile soils, which are highly desaturated in the forest zone or hydromorphic in the low-lying areas, are undoubtedly decisive elements in the department's agricultural development [15,16]. In terms of fishing, the presence of the Ebrié Lagoon and other rivers in the department have allowed the Adjoukrou to be fishermen. In general, the people living along the rivers are fishermen. According to [17], on the Agneby River, the Adjoukrou hold the monopoly on fishing and do this activity throughout the year. According to [18], the Adjoukrou have retained the tradition of fishing. This can be explained by the absence of the influence of the city on the villages near the lagoon. The "fishing tradition" of Adjoukrou has resulted in limiting access to the lagoon to outsiders. The number of foreigners in the Adjoukrou villages near the lagoon is very small. Thus, except for the village of Layo, where a community of foreigners is recorded, the others have almost none. In Kpass, only one Beninese fisherman was recorded, in that of Mopoyem, no foreigners were counted [18]. Furthermore, our results revealed that the Adjoukrou are producers of attiéké. According to [19], the processing of cassava (*Manihot esculenta* Crantz) into attiéké is carried out on an artisanal scale by certain lagoon peoples (Ebrié, Adjoukrou, Avikam, Alladjan, Ahizi, and Abidji), who essentially produce fresh attiéké of very high quality, and by semi-industrial units that produce fresh attiéké for the local market and also dehydrated attiéké generally destined for export. Atike, a food derived from cassava, is a specific dish of the southern lagoon peoples, especially those who live on the coast. These are the Ebriés, the

Allandjan, the Abidji, the Adjoukrou, the Avikam and the Ehotilé [19].

3.4 Food Habits of Peoples

The types of foods that make up a population's diet and the manner in which these foods are prepared, presented, and consumed are all elements that carry traditions, embodying the values of each culture, and in some contexts, of a religion [20,21]. Our results showed that the staple food of the Adjoukrou peoples is attiéké. It is a meal that they consume every day without disgust. It is a meal that is part of all their ceremonies. In Adjoukrou country, the dietary importance of cassava-based attiéké among the populations is attested by [22]. Indeed, before and during all age-grade ceremonies such as low, agbandji, Ebeb, the bulk of the dishes is based on cassava, particularly cassava-based foods are consumed [22]. Our results also showed that there is a second meal that is much appreciated by the Adjoukrou. This is the fougou called n'fougou in the Adjoukrou language. The n'fougou can be made with plantain or yam. It is part of the dishes cooked at all major ceremonies such as generational celebrations, funerals, weddings and births. These meals are usually accompanied by clear sauces (egmirédi) composed of tomatoes, akpi, peppers, eggplant, onions, red oil, smoked pike fish, captain, herring, crabs, snails; white sauce (mirédifougou) composed of akpi, peppers, onions, red oil, smoked fish (preferably smoked pike) and vegetable leaf sauce (mamissou) composed of mamissou leaves (*talinum paniculatum*), spinach leaves, klahala leaves, fresh okra, dry okra, fresh peppers, onions, akpi, red oil, tomato, rotten shark (I'num), smoked pike. In addition to these foods, the Adjoukrou also eat fougou made from plantain and cassava, but also from attiéké. According to [23], the people of southern Côte d'Ivoire regularly eat ripe banana fougou mixed with cassava, unripe banana fougou mixed with cassava, plantain fougou, attiéké, attiéké with red oil, rice and placali as starchy main courses. The accompanying sauces are seed sauce, eggplant sauce, chètchra sauce (banana-based), biokosseu sauce (spicy sauce), dry okra sauce, fresh okra sauce, clear sauce, midichelé sauce potato leaf sauce, peanut sauce and other sauces made from edible planted or spontaneous leaves such as cassava leaves, spinach leaves, mamissou leaves (*talinum paniculatum*). Meat, fish and snails are their main sources of protein. They also regularly eat starchy main courses such as konkodé (dry cassava flour cooked in water over a fire), maize tôh and cassava paste [23]. As for the diet of Adjoukrou nannies, our data corroborate those of [24]. According to Nomel, among the Adjoukrou (Akan people of the Dabou department in the southern coast), the nanny or "wawôryow" in the Adjoukrou language is subject to special treatment. In the care of her family, she is fed with the mythical Adjoukrou dishes: (1) fougou (or cooked plantain paste, coarsely pounded) in red oil with well-spiced sauce and shark and (2) "mamissou" (vegetable leaf sauce), accompanied by attiéké in red oil [24].

4. Conclusion

The objective of this study was to learn about the cultural identities and dietary habits of the Adjoukrou people in the department of Dabou.

At the societal level, the Adjoukrou are organized into age groups, generations and federations. Thus, each individual becomes a member of society by entering an age group, the first of which is the Low, then the Angbandji and finally the Ebeb. Accession to each age group is achieved through initiation festivals. Moreover,

the accession to the last age group confers on all the members of this group the power to rule the village for eight years. And from this group a chief is chosen by consensus to represent the village. Thus, the formerly matriarchal mode of succession has become patriarchal. In addition, the Adjoukrou are recognized by the yam festival.

At the religious level, the Adjoukrou used to be polytheistic but are now monotheistic with the Christian religion dominating at 94%.

Socio-economically, the Adjoukrou are first and foremost farmers (83%), then producers of attiéké (67%) and fishermen (50%). Formerly producers of red oil and hunters, red oil production and hunting are being abandoned.

In addition, the Adjoukrou are accustomed to eating certain foods specific to them, such as attiéké, fofou banana or yam, and fofou d'attiéké. Most of these meals are accompanied by clear sauce, vegetable leaf sauce (mamissou or *Talinum paniculatum*), eggplant sauce, etc. In their sauces, there are fish (machoirou, pike, captain, carp) and bush meat or game.

The Adjoukrou have three types of meals: breakfast (optional), lunch and dinner. They drink palm wine and koutoukou, which are traditional drinks.

Finally, the Adjoukrou have food prohibitions. The most common are black snail, gazelle, pig, monkey, squirrel, snake and catfish.

In the future, it is planned to study the impact of climate change on the cultural identities and dietary habits of the Adjoukrou people.

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