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Original Research Article

Promoting Some of Chad's Forgotten or Disappearing Traditional Foods

Barnabas Kayalto[1*], Abdelsalam Doutoum[2], Doloum Goumoung[3], Abdelsalam Tidjani[4]

[1]Department of Life and Earth Sciences, Bongor Teachers' Training Higher School, Bongor, Chad
[2]Université Adam Barka d'Abéché, Chad
[3]Université de Sarh, Chad
[4]Food Science and Nutrition Research Laboratory (FSNRL), faculty of Human Health Sciences, University of N'Djamena, Chad

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Abstract: Chad has a varied, nutritious and delicious range of traditional dishes. In the face of modernity, some of these dishes are disappearing or have been forgotten. The aim of this project was to draw up production diagrams for two endangered traditional dishes so that they could be made available to present generations who know little or nothing about them. *Goubloum* is a moist bread that keeps for several days and is used mainly by travellers on long journeys. It is also a type of war bread used by men. As for '*soom poddah'*, this is a sweet couscous made from flour mixed with powdered sugar, cut into small pieces and fried in oil. It is eaten during festivals or when travelling. Children love it. A survey of around twenty of the oldest people in the village of Kolobo, men and women with lucid memories, identified five women who mastered the technologies used to produce these foods, and who were unanimously supported by those interviewed. These two foods were then produced in our presence, with photos and explanations of each unit operation. Finally, we drew up the technological diagrams for making 'goubloum' and 'soom poddah'.

Keyword: Traditional Foods, Forgotten, Chad, Food Preparation Diagram.

INTRODUCTION

Millets have been important staple foods in tropical and semi-arid regions of Asia and Africa for centuries (Goron and Raizada, 2015). They are used in the preparation of a variety of more or less fermented traditional food products (Barro *et al*., 2002a; Lestienne *et al*., 2005; Dossou *et al*., 2011; Nguessan *et al*., 2014; N'goran-Aw *et al*., 2017; UNESCO, 2021; Dabo *et al*., 2023): couscous, doughnuts, bread, alcoholic drinks... Food is one of the most important elements of every nation's traditional culture. Food traditions play a central role in society and also human behaviour (UNESCO, 2021).

In Chad, particularly in the Province of Mayo-Kebbi Est, Department of Mayo-Boneye, Sub-Prefecture of Koyom, in the Kim villages, *Digitaria exilis stapf* (fonio) was the main cereal consumed and the source of several foods before rice was introduced by colonization. According to Cabot (1953), the compulsory cultivation of cotton preceded that of rice. It was introduced in 1934. It was during the Second World War that rice cultivation was imposed. Young people adopted rice fairly easily, with rice porridge replacing millet or eleusine porridge. Eleusine (fonio) is a traditional crop grown by the Kossob people who live in the Kim villages. Rice-growing areas are closely linked to the areas flooded by the Logone River between Lai and Katoa (Cabot, 1953). *Goubloum*, a type of moist bread, *soom poddah* couscous, *morndom* non-alcoholic fermented drinks and *tabuska* millet fritters were all prepared from fonio.

Goubloum, or wet war bread, is a foodstuff produced using traditional technology and used until 1979, when, as far as we know, means of transport were scarce, schools were far apart and it was eaten by pupils who left their parents to go to their schools in Bongor. The *goubloum* was carried in a traditional shoulder bag called a *Kèkèling*. It also contained grilled or fried fish.

Until 1979, Kolobo was on the left bank of the River Logone. In those years, Berliet hand-cranked vehicles were used to serve the villages once a week. Pupils who missed this vehicle as the new school year approached in October and could not wait until the following week, or whose parents did not have the financial means to pay for their transport, walked the 60 km to Bongor, eating *goubloum* and drinking water from the Logone River. The carriage road ran alongside the

***Corresponding Author:** Barnabas Kayalto
Department of Life and Earth Sciences, Bongor Teachers' Training Higher School, Bongor, Chad

River Logone. According to our paternal uncle Brahim BABOU, who was born around 1926 and has just passed away this Sunday 22 December 2024 at the age of 98, this food was used as war bread by men in ancient times, when villages were at war with each other; may his soul rest in peace.

Soom poddah is a couscous eaten on a variety of occasions. Children love it. It is eaten during the end-of-year festivities and is also used when travelling, as it can be kept for several days.

The aim of this study is to gain a better understanding of the traditional processes used to make *goubloum* and *soom poddah*, and to promote them so that they are not forgotten by future generations.

1. MATERIALS AND METHODS

1.1. Zone of Study

The study was based on a survey in the village of Kolobo, 60 km south of Bongor, to identify and draw up food preparation diagrams of *goubloum* and *soom poddah*.

1.2. Questionnaire or Guide

The survey was conducted among around twenty of the oldest people in the village of Kolobo, both men and women, who still have a lucid memory, in the *Beindap*, *Dorop*, *Komondah*, *Amsoh*, *Mbirip*, *Koboy* and *Bongoh* neighbourhoods of the village of Kolobo. The survey data were collected using an interview guide covering knowledge of production technology, the nature and description of unit operations, aspects of production, raw materials used, type of equipment and production parameters, and the socio-cultural uses of these foods. The survey identified five women who mastered the technologies used to produce these foods, and who were unanimously supported by the respondents. These two foods were then produced in our presence, with photos and explanations of each unit operation. The *goubloum* and *soom poddah* were produced successively, under conditions of good hygiene practice (GHP). Finally, we drew up technological diagrams for the preparation of *goubloum* and *soom poddah*.

1.3. Material

Traditionally, *goubloum* and *soom poddah* were produced from fonio (*Digitaria exilis stapf*), ground by women on a hand-grinding stone, while singing; sometimes with babies on their backs. We used red sorghum (*Sorghum bicolor* L.) to reproduce the food preparation process and powdered sugar obtained from the Bongor market. The sorghum flour was produced by a miller in the market, then the *goubloum* and *soom poddah* preparation stages were carried out in the village, in Kolobo.

The endangered fonio, known in the local language as *so mbèling* or *So zinyel*, was cultivated manually by men using a hoe, from January to March. The women followed the men to make the furrows. They then set fire to the grass on which they had piled the soil with broken gourds. In April, the grass around the furrows was cleaned. The earth was scattered into planks in which the fonio seeds were scattered. The earth was tamped down with the feet to keep out the ants and birds that would take away the seeds. In May, it was time to weed. When the green leaves were high, in June-July, known as the lean season, the granaries were empty; the upper parts of the very sweet leaves, *mbaan*, could be cut off, and people ate and drank water to appease their hunger. Fonio was harvested in August, in dugout canoes, when the river Logone flooded.

1.4. Preparation of Food

The choice of women was made on the basis of converging testimonies from women in the village towards those who have kept ancestral knowledge and mastered the technologies for making these foods.

1.4.1. Preparation of *Goubloum*

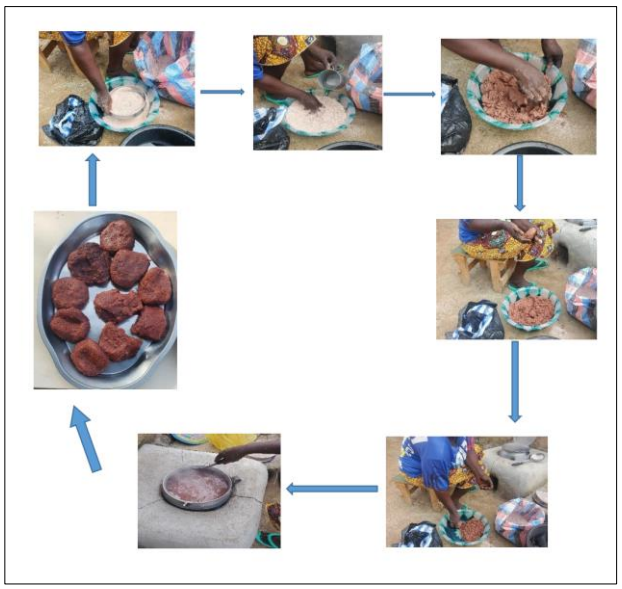

Figure 1: Preparation of *goubloum* using the technology of Silas GOGNE's wife born Helya

1.4.2. Preparation of *Soom Poddah*

Figure 2: Preparation of *soom poddah* using the technology of Silas GOGNE's wife born Helya

1.4.3. Ready-to-Use *Morndom*

Figure 3: *Morndom* in bottle and ready-to-drink glasses

RESULTS

1. Description of Production Process

These are the results of our survey of elderly, still-lucid women in the village of Kolobo.

1.1. "Goubloum"

This food is prepared in the proportions of one kilogram of red sorghum flour to two (2) glasses of 200 ml powdered sugar. The flour is sifted into a clean cup (see Figure 1). Weigh out the required quantity. Add the quantity of powdered sugar mentioned above, according to the quantity of finished product you wish to obtain. Stir small quantities of drinking water into the mixture. The result is a non-liquid dough (Figure 1). She forms small balls of flour. In the meantime, she puts the clean water in a pot on the stove. As soon as the water starts to boil, she throws in the balls and leaves them to cook for about 1 hour 30 minutes. Stirring from time to time with a ladle, she ensures that all sides are cooked through.

Remove from the heat and leave to cool. Our cakes are ready to eat. Depending on taste, some women fry the cakes in oil after baking to preserve them for longer. These cakes are intended for travelers, pupils and students who leave their parents to study elsewhere, and men going off to war. You should take some water with you. It makes you want to drink water.

1.2. Soom Poddah

Weigh one kilogram of sifted red sorghum flour and two (2) glasses of powdered sugar. Add small quantities of drinking water to the flour and shake each time. Small and large lumps of flour will form. Remove them by hand and place in another clean cup (Figure 2). Repeat the operation until all the flour has been turned into chunks. Fry the flour chunks in oil on the frying pan until cooked. Children love it. You can also eat it with friends while chatting, or take it with you on a travel.

1.3. Morndom

There are two technological variants for the production of *morndom*, which is a fermented millet drink: the original process using leftover millet that was not eaten the day before, which has been left overnight or forgotten for a few days and fermented. In popular

parlance, this is the ball that has rotted. So as not to throw away the millet, as the saying goes, this fermented ball is used to make this drink.

The other, slightly modernized process, described below, involves using fonio or finger millet + sprouted grains of rice + sweet potatoes + powdered sugar + ginger + cloves, depending on taste. This fermented drink is prepared as follows: prepare a paste of *Digitaria exilis stapf*, *Pennisetum typhoïdes* or rice flour over a fire. Remove the paste from the pot and spread it out on a clean plastic sheet to cool. Scoop the cooled dough into a clean bowl and cut into small pieces. Buy the sprouted rice seeds. Mash Peel the shower potatoes, cut into small pieces and leave to dry. Then mash the dried potatoes. Mix the cooled paste with the sprouted rice and potato powder with a little fresh drinking water. Close the lid and leave overnight until the morning. In the morning, filter through a light cloth. Mash the residue left in the filter cloth, knead in the water and filter. Add water and powdered sugar at a rate of half a kilo per ten liters. Crushed ginger or cloves can also be added for a distinctive flavour.

2. Food Preparation Diagram for These Foods

2.1. Preparation Diagram of *Goubloum*

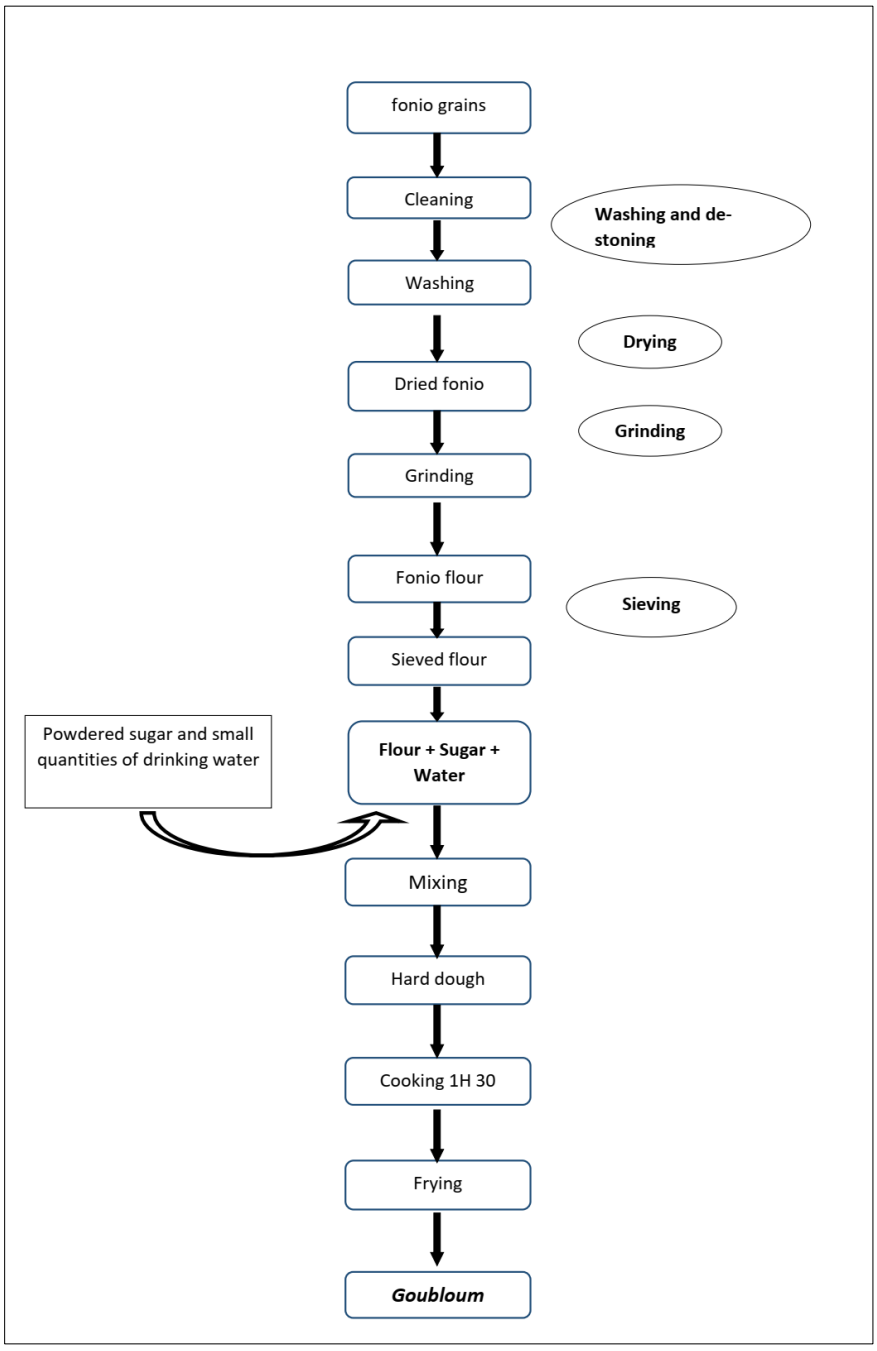

Figure 4: Preparation diagram of *goubloum*

1.2. Preparation Diagram of *Soom Poddah*

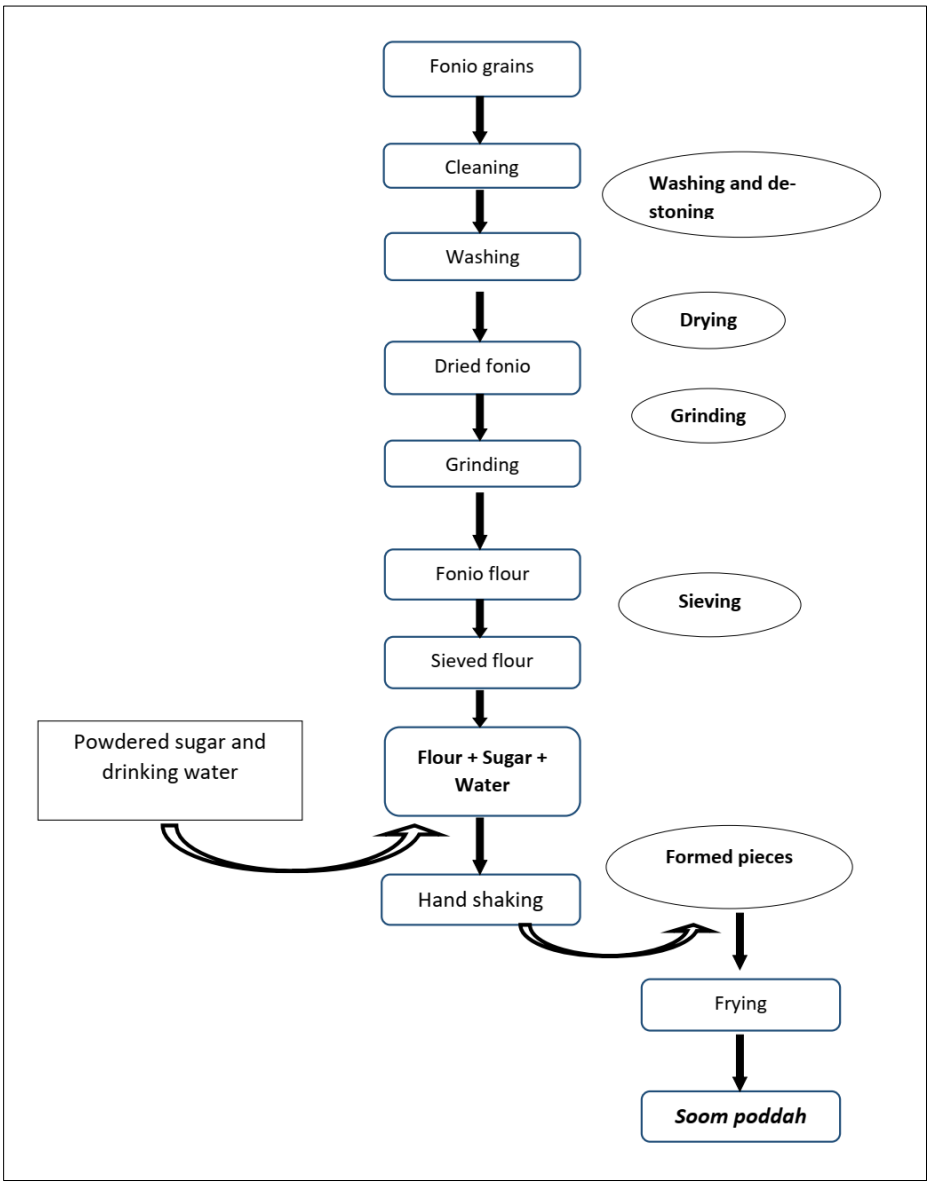

Figure 5: Preparation diagram of *soom poddah*

DISCUSSIONS

Goubloum is a moist bread traditionally made from fonio. As we were unable to obtain this flour or Fonio grains, which has become very rare, we used red sorghum flour. The preparation of goubloum is based on traditional know-how that is purely empirical and part of the local cultural heritage. These are domestic techniques, passed on and perpetuated through family education (Hofmann and Marius-Gnanou, 2006). The production of goubloum is an exclusively female activity. In developing countries, the organization of household tasks is based on gender-specific allocations. As a result, all food processing activities are the responsibility of women, who are the only ones with valuable knowledge of techniques and adaptations to traditional equipment (Cerdan *et al*., 2004).

Similar studies report that steps such as washing and milling require relatively long times (Kouakou, 2008) and a great deal of effort for millet and fonio compared to rice and maize. According to Cruz (2012), this processing difficulty is due to the small size of millet and fonio. Attempts to mechanize unit operations have only concerned milling and do not take into account washing or winnowing of these cereals.

Some authors (Lestienne *et al*., 2005; Dossou *et al*., 2011) have shown that in Africa, unlike wheat flour, which is sold commercially, most flours (fonio, sorghum, maize, rice, etc.) used in cooking are not available in advance. The flour is prepared a few hours before the dishes are made.

During festivals, food in the form of drinks and resistance dishes are consumed (Dabo *et al*., 2023). Some old food generally are consumed at the time of the soudure periods, when there was not enough cereal to support the needs of the families until the harvests (Tarnagda *et al*., 2018). Our foods, *soom poddah* and *goubloum*, can also be eaten during the soudure periods of June and July, as they keep for several days and are also eaten during festivals.

CONCLUSION

Goubloum and *soom poddah* are traditional fonio-based foods that are very popular in Kim villages in Chad. These traditional foods have been forgotten or are in danger of disappearing. It was an exclusively feminine and family activity that helped to supply pupils or students who travelled far from their parents to study or, in the hostile days of yore, supplied the men who went to war. The preparation of fonio with small grains is tedious and empirical. The aim of this project was to draw up production diagrams for these two endangered traditional dishes so that they could be made available to current generations who know little or nothing about them. The *goubloum* and soom *poddah* were reproduced by women who mastered these ancestral technologies, with photos to back them up. We think we've achieved our objectives.

Acknowledgements

At the end of this study, we would like to thank the men and women we interviewed, who gladly agreed to take part in this study and give back some of this traditional knowledge that is on the verge of disappearing. We would particularly like to thank, posthumously, our late uncle Brahim BABOU who used to call himself, in the field, the old Cedi sleeps under the trees and, towards the end of his days, used to say to us, the old man now guards the house. He was a multilingual pastor who spoke the Fulani, Massa and Mossy languages fluently. Every time I came to the village to visit him in his room, he would happily get up from his bed and say, my son, who likes to write things down, is coming. He liked to repeat, write my son; our generation of 1926 is rare now. You won't get that any more. He never complained and told us that it's our age, we thank God. He knew how to direct us towards women who mastered these technologies. We would like to thank Silas Gogne and his wife Helya, who patiently worked with us for hours to prepare these food. Silas GOGNE, nicknamed Jojo in the village, was always available to accompany us to the elderly people who were the repositories of ancestral knowledge. Our sincere thanks go to all of them, even those we did not mention by name.

Outlook

These foods were traditionally produced from fonio, which has become very rare in our villages and has been replaced by rice. We plan to acquire fonio at the right time, produce these foods, characterize the physico-chemical and microbiological parameters of these foods under artisanal production conditions close to the traditional process, and study their shelf life. We also plan to draw up a more exhaustive list of traditional foods.

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