

An Eighteenth Century African Habitat: Preliminary Archaeological Data of Ndor

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Abstract

Archaeological excavation done in Nde Division continues to reveal new sites with new types of material remains. The discovery of potsherds, grinding stones and handles in Ndor has provided new knowledge on the lifestyle of the eighteenth century population of the Nde Division. The discovery of the archaeological remains, especially the grinding stones served as evidence of prolonged settlement, social and cultural interactions on this historical site. Based on a variety of primary and secondary sources, this paper relied on the interdisciplinary theory to reconstitute the lifestyle of this ancient population. This paper further exposes some aspects of the daily life of the Ndor people based on knowledge provided by oral tradition and other scientific disciplines.

Key words: *Eighteenth century, African habitat, archaeological data, Ndor, socio-cultural representation*

Introduction

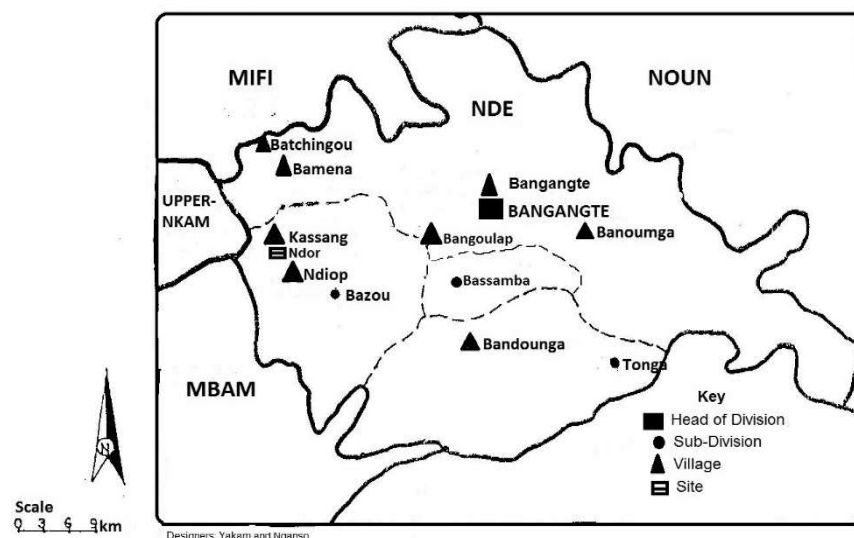
In the eighteenth century, the population of Ndor produced tools that helped them to cope with their daily needs. Archaeological research at Ndor in Nde Division permitted us to collect potsherds, charcoal, grinding stones, handles and other material remains for exploitation. For instance, the grinding stone served as evidence that this population successfully produced plants or grains for food and survival. In order to gain knowledge on their way of life, we adopted a methodology that made use of the location and the study of the site by excavating and collecting material remains. The study further exploited the morphological, typological and technological analysis as well as a proposal of the chronology of the site. These analyses, completed by the primary sources, rendered more pertinent and effective the interpretation of the whole archaeological data for a better understanding of the lifestyle of the people who lived in Ndor. What were their activities? How did they use the different artifacts? How did they acquire them? These are some questions that guided us during the research that started by the location of the site of Ndor.

Location of the Site and Research Activities

With the following geographic coordinates: Latitude 5° 07 ' North and longitude 10° 30' East, the Ndor site is located between the village Kassang and the village Ndiop (see figure 1), about 150 m from the river that bears the same name. Located in a tropical zone with two seasons, a long rainy season

and a short dry season, the site is cultivated annually by local populations, the Balengou people.³²

Figure 1: Location of the Site of Ndor



Designers: Yakam and Nganso, 2019

The site of Ndor falls under a tropical climate characterized by lower temperatures and significant rains. Because of that fact, we chose to conduct a thorough study of the site during the dry season. We began by collecting on surface material remains scattered over an area of 4 square meters.

The plant landscape of the region of Ndor is both a result of climate and the presence of man who transformed almost the general vegetation. We noted *Pennisetum purpureum*, *Imperata cylindrica* and carpets of *Hyparrhenia*. On the site where material remains were collected, men had planted tubers (*Dioscorea abyssinia*, *Dioscorea rotundata*), plantains (*Musa*), wild mango (*Irvingia*) and grasses like corn (*Zea mays*).

Ndor is located on a flat land beside a slight slope that descends to a river which bears the name of Ndor. It is one of the tributaries of Mbam, descended from uplands, which "contributes to 37% of the total flow of the Sanaga".³³ The ground surface is made of a grey humus layer (5 Y 3 / 1) presenting a grainy

³²The first survey we conducted there revealed the presence of material remains on the surface. This convinced us to come back later on and make a careful research of the site. We made archaeological excavation of the site and this helped us to collect more archaeological remains. See A. J. Y. Yakam. "Introduction à la recherche archéologique dans le Ndé et étude de la culture matérielle ancienne". (Maîtrise Dissertation : Université de Yaoundé I, 2001).

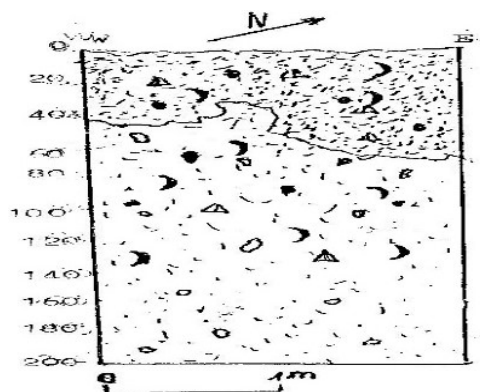
³³D. Schwartz, R. Lanfranchi. " Les paysages de l'Afrique Centrale pendant le quaternaire ". In Lanfranchi, R. Clist, B. (eds). *Aux origines de l'Afrique centrale*. (Paris : Sépia, 1991), 41.

structure.³⁴ By observing the dispersion of the material remains on the ground, we noticed that there was an area of high concentration of broken pottery. It is in this area located north-east of the site that a surface of 2 square meters was demarcated with iron stakes and white string. The two ridges in the area bounded by stakes and string were flattened and we collected the material remains.

Once the flat surface reached, the excavation of the soil took place following a scale of 20 cm to 20 cm. As the excavation was going on, material remains were collected and bagged after written with a pen-felt the stratigraphic level on the plastic. Each type of remain had a distinctive bag. The excavation continued until a depth of -200 cm. From -120 cm, no material remain was observed. All remains were put in bags and transported to Kassang, the place where we lived. From the surface to -40 cm of the sub-soil, it was in a grey colour (5 Y 3 / 1) soil that we picked up first material remains. The texture of the soil was fine with tiny elements, brittle under fingers. The organic matter formed on roots of *Imperata cylindrica*, *Zea maize* and *Phaseolus sp* were also in that layer.

The second layer was made up of lateritic rocks with medium sizes (between 2 and 8 cm in diameter). This layer had a single colour changing as we descended in depth. Thus, from -40 to -100 cm, the soil was red (2.5 YR 3 / 6). From -100 to -200 cm it was dark red (2.5 YR 3 / 2) with a few shades of black. In the humus layer, we observed a large concentration of potsherds, stone tools and charcoal. The fine texture of the soil materials could explain this concentration. The constant tilling of soil of the site by the owner for farming may also be the reason for the large number of archaeological remains in this layer. The dust did not stick hardly on the samples collected.

Figure 2: Stratigraphic Layers of Ndor



³⁴Anne Mego, Age 91. Interviewed 30 February 2019. She is one of the granddaughters of the site.

Soil layers



Humus gray soil (5 Y 3 / 1)



Pottery sherds



Red lateritic soil (2, 5 Y R 3 / 6)



Charcoal



Lithic artifacts.

Source: Yakam Yola, fieldwork, 2019.

The traces of alteration left by tools used for crops, like hoes and machetes, were clearly visible on the external and internal walls of some sherds of pottery in the form of hatching bright and sharp. The dispersion of remains throughout the layer could also be the result of human action completed by climate action, particularly the fall of raindrops on the ground. Because of these constant actions of Man and climate, charcoal collected on this ground was not taken into account because the risk of pollution of samples was very high.

In the following lateritic layers, material remains decreased gradually and finally disappeared to 120 cm deep. The alteration of this layer was marked on the material remains by a series of tiny scratches visible on both surfaces, which are the result of ferruginous rocks. It is the charcoal of this stratigraphic level that was collected for laboratory analysis. It was collected from 20 to 40 cm of the sub-soil. The red soil was a little stickier and covered on archaeological remains at the point of forming small balls. The remains showed, sometimes during excavation, groups of 8 to 13 elements on one side of the ground without being objects belonging to the same type or having a common morphology. We can propose the hypothesis of a phenomenon resulting from the geological movements of the sub-soil over years.

Table: The Material Remains Collected at Ndor

Level (cm)	Material Remains	Quantity	General remarks
Surface	Pottery	311 sherds	Rim,body, base
	charcoal	3 g	
	lithic	1	Grinding stone
0 - 20	lithic	2	Grinding stone
	pottery	313 sherds	rim; body, base
	charcoal	7g	
-20 - 40	pottery	289 sherds	rim; body, base
	charcoal	9 g	collected
- 40 - 60	Pottery	210 sherds	rim; body, base
	charcoal	3 g	

- 60 - 80	pottery	153 sherds	body, base
- 80 -100	pottery	47 sherds	rim; body, base
-100 -120	pottery	37 sherds	rim; body, base
-120 -200	0	0	

Source: Yakam Yola, fieldwork, 2019

The collected Archaeological Data of Ndor

The collected material remains were counted and described. This work helped to isolate 3 stone tools and 1,360 potsherds, identifiable by fragments of rims, body and base. For a better analysis of the material remains, we decided to study them separately, according to each type collected. We analyzed them morphologically, technologically and typologically. The technological analysis focused on the raw materials used by craftsmen in order to shape tools and techniques used to mould clay. We also propose a chronology of the site, based on the primary sources and a comparison with the works of historians, archaeologists and ethnologists.

Lithic Artefact

It was 3 grinding stones altered on one edge (see figure 3). They measured generally 10 cm length, 5.5 cm width and 7.2 cm thick. These tools were shaped from granite and quartz rocks. The tools, which had undergone a polishing, showed some traces of use on their surface. It was difficult to determine with certainty elements that acted on them. Two artifacts were broken and left half of the artifacts. It is not excluded that it is due to this alteration that the users abandoned the artifacts. We have not found other part that was removed. We also think that the stones were spoilt gradually before being totally broken.

Figure 3: Grinding Stones of Ndor



Source: Yakam Yola, fieldwork, 2019

Only one type of lithic artifact was collected, muller or grinding stone. Even though one among them was much more round than others, it is clear that the tool was shaped to grind something. The deteriorated nature of others did not impede us to guess the final form they had. We are convinced that they had an oval form. In fact, the remaining part we have collected showed a half aspect of an oval tool. We have not seen the second stone on which elements were grinded. Generally it should be a huge stone with a large surface. This helped to spread grains, plants or any other material in order to grind it in big quantity. An observation with binocular glass, completed by an analysis on the thin blades of elements at the Laboratory of Earth Sciences of the University of

Yaounde I, revealed amphiboles, plagioclase crystals and quartz. All these elements have characteristics of a grained rock, intermediate between granite which is an acid rock and gabbro which is a basic rock. The artifact was shaped in diorite. The place of the collection of raw material was probably regional but the exact site was difficult to determine. The Nde Division has many areas where diorite can be collected.³⁵ It was therefore very likely that the tool was shaped in Nde.

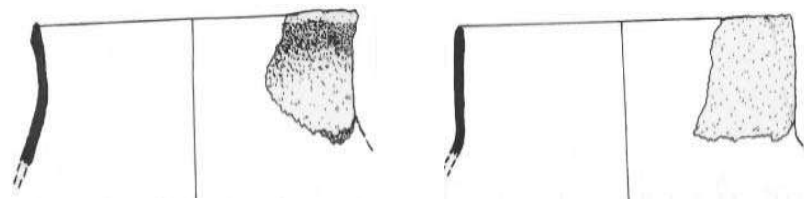
The production stages for shaping stone tools was deduced and guided by accounts of experimental archaeology done by prehistorians on stone tools and literature. Even if this approach does not allow us to say with certainty what really happened on the site, it gives an opportunity to formulate hypotheses based on the works of several researchers. The stone blocks were divided into pieces by either hitting it against another piece of harder stone or using a stone as a hammer to obtain the necessary pieces which were then reshaped. Another series of flaking was carried out on the rock to obtain the desired edges of the required stone tool. The rough surfaces were leveled by polishing. A polisher composed of a fix base or fairly soft sandstone or wood for example, was used to rub and polish the stone by interposing a layer of sand with hard grains generally moistened.

Pottery Sherds

The 1,360 potsherds collected had 311 sherds of rim, 613 body sherds, 399 base sherds, 431 decorated potsherds and 37 handles. There were 1,200 damaged potsherds and 310 were undefined. The thicknesses of the wall were: 0.7 cm for the small, 0.9 for the medium and 2 cm for the large.

Among the 311 rims collected, three types were observable. The first type showed a slightly concave neck and a sharpened edge (see figure 4, 1). The second type of rims had a straight neck and a sharpened edge (see figure 4, 2). The third type had no neck, with an internal and external thicker edge and a flat lip (see figure 4, 3). The fourth type had a straight neck and a pointed lip (see figure 4, 4). All the 613 body sherds had a spherical profile (see figure 5). We counted 399 base sherds with spherical forms (see figure 6). The 37 handles showed an arc of circle or half moon form. Some were still stuck on the body of the pots while others were separated from the objects they were stuck on (see figure 7).

Figure 4: Sample of Rims of Ndor



³⁵ P. Giresse. "Esquisse géologique de l'Afrique Centrale Occidentale ". In Lanfranchi, R. Schwartz, D (Eds). *Paysages quaternaires de l'Afrique Centrale atlantique*. (Paris: ORSTOM, 1990), 15.

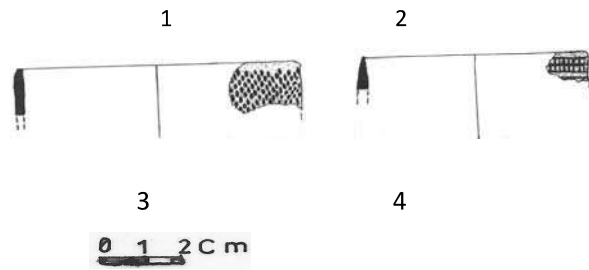


Figure 5: Sample of Body Sherds of Ndor

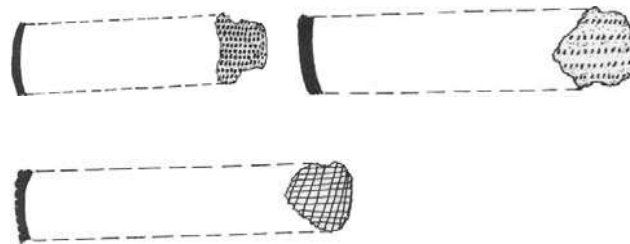


Figure 6: Sample of Base Sherd of Ndor

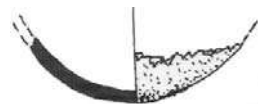
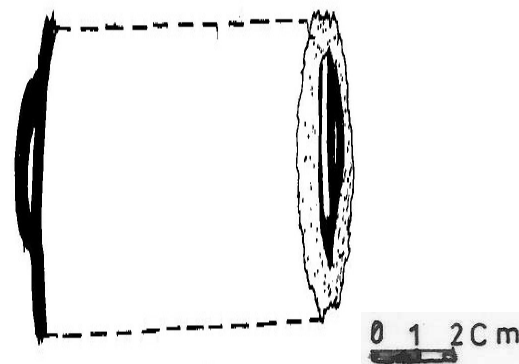


Figure 7: Sample of Handle of Ndor



Designer: Y. Yola

Decoration

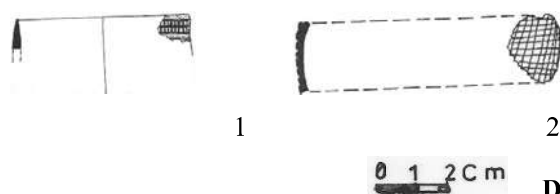
It took into consideration both motifs observed on the potsherds and colours. Thus, 276 potsherds with decorations obtained by stamping and 155 potsherds with incised motifs were collected. The stamped motifs were granules of various sizes made in horizontal lines near the edge of the potsherd (see figure

8, 1). They were obtained by stamping grains of corn or braided cord on the dry clay. We also noticed a motif showing grains of rice size (see figure 8, 2). These motifs were made with comb. Regarding incisions, we noted the existence of a combined motif made of square and line (see figure 9, 1), square and grooves (see figure 9, 2). The potsherds showed the following colours: brown, 7.5 YR 5 / 2 (143 potsherds), dark brown, 7.5 YR 4 / 4 (504 potsherds) and gray very dark, 2.5 Y 3 / 0 (713 potsherds).

Figure 8: Stamped Motifs of Ndor



Figure 9: Incised Motifs of Ndor



Designer: Y. Yola

There were many undefined fragments. We have collected 357 potsherds with undefined forms because of their large alteration. Indeed, internal and external surfaces were completely shredded. The only visible elements were some of the mineral or soil constituents. The factors that caused deterioration were the lateritic rocks. An attempt to refit pots by putting together potsherds was done. This operation was successful on a few sherds of rim, body and base.

Although it was difficult to define the real function of potteries, we noticed that objects with neck were more used. However, with regards to body sherds, they all showed a spherical shape as well as the bottoms collected. The material remains with similar characteristics were also identified by Christophe Mbida³⁶ in the Southern Cameroon, as well as in other regions of Central Africa like Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon³⁷ and Central African Republic.³⁸

The observation of these same types of remains in other regions could assume a phenomenon of diffusion. However, the absence of absolute dating and

³⁶ M. C. Mbida. "L'émergence de communautés villageoises", 466.

³⁷ R. Lanfranchi. " Synthèse régionale de l'Age de la Pierre Récent ". In Lanfranchi, R. Clist, B. (eds). *Aux origines de l'Afrique centrale*. (Paris : Sèpia, 1991), 127.

³⁸ E. Zangato. *Les occupations néolithiques dans le Nord-Ouest de la République centrafricaine*. (Paris : Monique Mergoïl, 2000), 38.

archaeological research in complementary areas between these different regions make the assumption of diffusion delicate. The ethnographic work was favourable for a regional knowledge.³⁹ In fact, according to the knowledge gathered from the current potters⁴⁰ and completed with the oral tradition collected from the informants mentioned in this article, pots or other containers were produced to meet their daily needs.⁴¹ So, from the above knowledge with concluded that pots produced and used comprised pots, vases, and rarely jars.

The analysis of potsherds revealed quartz in the form of coarse sand, feldspath with joined crystals, black mica into strips and amphibole. The raw material used by potters was granitic clay. A brief exploration of the immediate area of the site proved that raw material was not collected there. It came perhaps from the village of Bakong⁴² or another village of the West Region.⁴³

The ethnographic investigations conducted by Huysecom in Niger,⁴⁴ Kenyatta at the Kikuyu, Kenya,⁴⁵ Claes in the region of Southern Cameroon,⁴⁶ Notué⁴⁷ in Mifi in West Cameroon and our own observations at Bakong, showed that the production of pottery was a female activity.⁴⁸ This can be explained by the fact that usually in most ancient societies, it was women who were designated to cook food.⁴⁹ However, when it concerned ritual jars, it was men's work.⁵⁰ Because the research area was not yet fully excavated, it was difficult to determine the exact place of extraction of clay used by potters. We can assume, from the observation made in Bakong⁵¹ that potters had dug the deposit and proceeded with the collection for several days, suspending the operation once the quantity of clay sought was sufficient. Loaded in bags or other containers, it was transported to the home or workshop of the artisan. At the potter's workshop clay, was pounded to remove debris made of large stones or roots of plants that could interfere with the moulding. Once the pounded clay was elastic enough for moulding of pottery, the quantity needed was measured and soaked in water before moulding proper took place without adding any other element.

³⁹P. Claes. "A propos des céramiques ". 227.

⁴⁰M. Tchakounte, Age 37. Interviewed 20 february 2019 at Bakong. She is a potter who was trained by her mother.

⁴¹J. Garanger (ed.) *La préhistoire*, 194.

⁴²A J. Y. Yakam. "Introduction à la recherche archéologique", 73.

⁴³J. P. Notué. "La symbolique des arts bamileké (Ouest-Cameroun), Approche historique et anthropologique". (Thesis, Paris : Université de Paris I, Vol. I, 1988), 191.

⁴⁴E. Huysecom. "Vers une ethnoarchéologie appliquée : exemples africains", in *Ethnoarchéologie : justification, problèmes, limites*. (Juan-les-Pins : Ed. APDCA, 1992), 94.

⁴⁵J. Kenyatta. " Au pied du Mont Kenya ". In Gauthier, C. *Lecture et expression 3^e*. (Paris : Hatier, 1974), 182.

⁴⁶P. Claes. "A propos des céramiques de Mimboman et d'Okolo, Premières analyses ". In Essomba, J.M. (ed.). *L'Archéologie au Cameroun*. (Paris : Karthala, 1992), 215.

⁴⁷J. P. Notué. "La symbolique", 190.

⁴⁸H. Tchoumkeu. Age 87. Interviewed 20 february 2020 at Bakong. She is one of the oldest potter of the area.

⁴⁹J. Hurault. *La structure sociale des Bamileké*. (Paris : Berger-Levrault, 1970), 18.

⁵⁰J. P. Notué. "La symbolique", 191.

⁵¹We were authorized to observe the potters during their production activity from the 20th to 23rd February 2019.

The craftman got good plasticity of clay by varying the quantity of water within it.

The moulding started by first, forming the base of the vessel on a broken piece of pot sherd. Using her hands, the potter shaped it to her desired taste after which she started raising the walls or body to the desired height. This operation ended with smoothening and polishing of the body of the vessel with the aid of pebbles, pieces of bamboo and banana leaves.⁵² It was from a ball of clay that potters moulded the handles and stuck them on the main pot.

After this, the pots were placed to dry before decorations were done with pointed sticks⁵³ for incision, comb gouge,⁵⁴ corn cob, leaves and braided cord for pressing.⁵⁵ In order to solidify the pots, potters fired them. This operation took place perhaps within a pit or on an open area.⁵⁶ However, from colours observed on the surfaces of sherds, we have tried to guess the degrees of firing. Thus, the importance of very dark gray (5 Y 3 / 0) sherds indicated a reductive firing or charring after use.⁵⁷ The brown colour noticed on the rims of objects means that they were not in contact with flames.

By observing with binocular glass of some potsherds, we found traces of a red varnish (7.5 R 5 / 6). This lubricant comes perhaps from a plant whose sap of leaves was heated to boiling point. After cooling, the product obtained, oily and red was applied on the external walls of some or all of the potteries.⁵⁸

Chronology

During the study of the site, we noticed that it was disturbed by the current farmers. The constant tilling of the ground scattered material remains as well as charcoal that were present in the soil. The second observation was the layer in which the samples of charcoal were found. The combination of those two factors convinced us that charcoal visible in the spot where research was done was polluted and therefore, cannot provide an accurate date of the site. This hypothesis was also reinforced by most of the informants and the descendants of the family that lived there. They insisted on the fact that they knew the people who were living there. They abandoned that place during the civil war that opposed UPC nationalists to Ahidjo's neocolonial forces in the 1960s.⁵⁹ We also relied on the historian's works who provided the origin of most of the Bamileke chiefdoms. However, this dating should be taken with caution

⁵² A. J. Y. Yakam. "Introduction à la recherche", 75.

⁵³ P. Claes. "A propos des céramiques", 218.

⁵⁴ J. Garanger, J. (ed.) *La préhistoire dans le monde*. (Paris : P.U.F., 1992), 201.

⁵⁵ B. Clist. "Le Néolithique en Centrafrique". In Lanfranchi, R. Clist, B. (eds) *Paysages quaternaires de l'Afrique centrale atlantique*. (Paris : ORSTOM. 1991), 157.

⁵⁶ P. G. Metinhoue, B. A. A. Adand. "Recherches sur les productions céramiques artisanales d'hier à aujourd'hui en République populaire du Bénin". (Abomey-Calvi : Université Nationale du Bénin, 1982), 383.

⁵⁷ M. C. Mbida. "L'émergence de communautés villageoises au Cameroun méridional. Etude archéologique des sites de Nkang et de Ndindan". (PhD. Thesis, Bruxelles : Université Libre de Bruxelles, 1996), 108.

⁵⁸ P. G. Metinhoue, B. A. A. Adandé. "Recherches sur les productions céramiques", 387.

⁵⁹ J. L. Dongmo. *Le dynamisme bamiléké (Ouest-Cameroun), la maîtrise de l'espace agraire*. Vol I, (Yaoundé : CEPER, 1981), 153-155.

because most archaeological data place the occupation of the High plateaus of West Cameroon to about 6000 years⁶⁰ and historians do agree that the Bamileke who migrated from areas like Sudan or Egypt⁶¹ found populations on the spots.⁶² Historical data put the founding of chiefdoms in the region to the 15th century, based on information collected from the dynastic reign of Chiefs.⁶³

In so doing, the chiefdom of Balengou in which the site of Ndor is located was created in the 18th century.⁶⁴ It is likely that it was around that time that objects that have become potsherds were produced. This assumption is more plausible because it is when the Europeans came with their utensils around 1903 in Nde⁶⁵ that objects produced by the local populations was gradually abandoned. It is only the objects of worship made with clay which was henceforth used until now. These ritual objects have never been abandoned in the sites⁶⁶. While waiting to collect charcoal or any other material remains that can be dated in laboratory and provide another period of the occupation of the site of Ndor, we propose the 18th century as the probable period of the use of the collected tools.

Interpretation of Data

The interpretation of data collected was done by relying on the works of archaeologists, ethnologists, anthropologists and historians. We used the interdisciplinary theory to interpret the data. According to this theory, the reconstitution of a given ancient society is more effective if we study it from the different scientific disciplines.⁶⁷ In fact, people living on a particular place will use their environment to meet their different needs. This involves geography, geology, pedology, climate, as well as symbolic approach known through ethnology or anthropology.

People who lived in Ndor site had settled there for a long time. The collection of data from the soil testified that they established themselves there from the 18th century. This means that they found there favourable conditions which helped them to cope with the daily difficulties. According to Lanfranchi and Clist, from the Late Stone Age until now, it was a tropical climate that was observed in the whole of Central Africa. This climate is characterized by a rainy season and a dry season. The presence of these seasons permitted the growth of grass that can be used to feed animals and human being.

As mentioned above, the charcoal collected was not analyzed to determine the dating when the site was occupied. But we studied it to know the trees that grew

⁶⁰ J. P. Warnier. " Archéologie et peuplement ancien ", 339.

⁶¹ E. Ghomsi. "Les Bamiléké du Cameroun", 229.

⁶² E. Mveng, N. D. Beling. Manuel d'histoire du Cameroun. (Yaoundé : CEPMAE, 1969), 71

⁶³ E. Ghomsi. "Les Bamiléké du Cameroun", 75.

⁶⁴ J. Champaud. *Villes et campagnes du Cameroun de l'Ouest*. (Paris : ORSTOM, 1983), 138.

⁶⁵ E. Ghomsi. "Les Bamiléké du Cameroun", 229.

⁶⁶ A J. Y. Yakam. "Introduction à la recherche", 77.

⁶⁷ B. D. Nizesete. *Apports de l'Archéologie à l'Histoire du Cameroun. Le sol pour Mémoire*. (Paris : L'Harmattan, 2013), 53.

there and were used by the Ndor people. Laboratory Science revealed that the different trees growing there were *Anogeissus leicarpus*, *Ficus platyphylla* and *Lophira lanceolata*, savanna tree species.⁶⁸ The last type was present in big quantity than others. Stems of grasses noticed on the site were those of the plants cultivated by the current population. In stratigraphy, we have not found any stem of ancient grass. It is then impossible to make a proposal about what was cultivated.

However we are convinced that they were doing farm activities first of all because the soil and the sub-soil had chemical properties favourable to grow plants. In fact, the first layer of the soil is the humus layer. It is very fertile for the roots of plants. The relief also helped in the settlement of the populations as far as plants are concerned. The relief is almost flat and so can allow the tilling of the ground. We have not collected any bone. This does not mean that they did not breed any animal. We believe that the lateritic nature of the soil is one of the factors that have destroyed the bones of the animals eaten by the populations.

The area is not rocky. This means that grinding stones collected were not shaped in Ndor. But it proves that people living there spent many years. They acquired those tools from other communities, as well as pots. These are evidences that Ndor people were living in contact with other populations.

The population of Ndor was not isolated. People had contacts with others. As mentioned above, the collection of grinding stones and potsherds show that Ndor people had developed a network of relationship with other people living around the same area or far from them. It is from those contacts that they obtained pots and lithic artifacts. It is not possible at the current state of our research to know the term of exchange between people who were involved in the trading activities.

Even though it is delicate to propose the nature of the relationship between the Ndor people, we are thinking that they were living peacefully. We have not yet found human bones that show any trace of a violent death. It means that they developed a social organization where any person was integrated to the daily activities. The tentative date places Ndor in the 17th century. According to historians, the population living there was the Bamileke. This name was proposed by the Germans during their annexation of Cameroon. The general characteristics of this African group include a political organization where a chief, *Fo*, is ruling, assisted by a council of nine notables called *Kamveu*. A series of secret societies such as *Madjong* (in charge of war), *Djong* (spies), *Ku'gang* (witchcraft) were also present to take care of the population. They controlled the chief's power to avoid dictatorship.⁶⁹ That political system

⁶⁸

Ibid. 115

⁶⁹J. P. Notué, L. Perrois. *Contribution à l'étude des sociétés secrètes chez les Bamiléké (Ouest-Cameroun)*. (Yaoundé : ISH/ORSTOM, 1984).

permitted the movement of people, therefore allowing material objects to be purchased.

From the social approach, we noticed that the population was involved in many activities such as agriculture, breeding, craft, art and commerce. The fact that we have not collected any cultivation stone tool is a proof that the site was occupied by iron tools people. Generally, in case of migration, they usually moved with their tools because it was not easy to purchase them.⁷⁰ Part of the cultivated products was ground to transform it into edible food. The latter was cooked in the pots that had many sizes produced for different purposes. We think that people were eating in small pots. Some were used to store water and others for religious goals.

In fact, pottery played very important cultural role in ancient African societies. Most of the rituals were done with containers in which plants, rocks, water or oil were mixed to obtain products necessary for religious activities. In the African Traditional Religion (ATR), when somebody died, after many years, his skull was exhumed and placed inside a clay pot.⁷¹ It was deposited in a particular house and the descendants were doing several rites inside.⁷² Still, we remain convinced that none of the potsherds collected came from a religious object. First because we have not found any human bone, and secondly because the sacredness of those materials made people to always move with them.

Conclusion

From the 18th century, people settled in Ndor and developed a specific way of life to cope with their environment as well as with each other. They built houses, cultivated plants and bred animals. Archaeological data collected there revealed that they used different types of clay pots for their various activities, used grinding stones to grind plants that are not yet defined because of the current local population that are constantly polluting the ground with their agricultural works. The different forms of the rims of pots showed that many vessels were used. The material remains were not produced on the site. In fact, no raw material necessary to produce either stone tool or grinding stone was noticed. The population of Ndor moved elsewhere to purchase artifacts or perhaps people from other areas came to supply them. This is evidence that the Ndor people were connected with others. They also have a social life which used some vessels for religious purposes. Further research is needed to complete some unknown aspects of the activities done by the population of Ndor.

⁷⁰ B. D. Nizesete. *Apports de l'Archéologie*. 222.

⁷¹ A. J. Y. Yakam. "Introduction à la recherche archéologique". 77.

⁷² M. Edjenguele. *Morts et vivants en négro-culture. Culte ou entraide*. (Yaoundé : Presses Universitaires de Yaoundé, 2006).

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