

# Nature herself invented it

*The fruit of the **Parkia biglobosa***



*From Senegal to Sudan,  
"to a good friend you give..." something of the  
**Parkia biglobosa** tree, the tree with pollen and fruit as  
a double ball (bi- / glob-), named after the  
Scottish African explorer Mungo Park (1771 - 1806)*

*Photos de **Parkia Biglobosa**:  
Senckenberg, African Plants*

**D**uring our conversations about African medicinal plants, my wife and I came to talk about *Parkia biglobosa*, known in Affiniam as buniyek, its fruit as eniyek. My wife's mouth was brimming with memories, because with this tree, nature had already come up with something special, very, very long before a now world-famous Piedmontese family started to fill our Christmas tables with their "bigloben" chocolate.



1

**N**o sooner have the red, spherical heads hanging on long shafts laid down their fine filaments of stamens with the anthers when light green pods (1) sprout from the second, white ball, in which a kind of yellow flour ripens. The ripe pods, now grey on the outside, can be opened to harvest the flour (2). As a surprise, they contain individually packed kernels. Separated from the husk and the flour (3) and then cooked, they are fermented - a popular ingredient for many African dishes.



2



3



4





*Parkia biglobosa* in the Jemberëng Ecopark, Casamance ©HGT 2016

**A**t markets they are sold under the resounding name Netetou. This is how we arrive at a recipe for a very nutritious dish: Peanut sauce (triglycerides of *Arachis hypogaea*) on rice (carbohydrates, minerals, vitamins, amino acids of *Oryza sativa* L.) and single seeds (proteins) of *Parkia*, which have a strong smell but taste very good to many people. And the yellow flour? Another surprise: mixed with honey and water, *Parkia biglobosa* also provides the children with a delicious breakfast. If you are curious, you might ask about the weaved basket at (3). Good question! It is woven by skilful hands from fibres of *Borassus aethiopum* - another highly useful tree from Mother Nature's supermarket with an even longer history.

Not surprisingly, *Parkia* also provides useful medicine. At the "Hôpital Traditionnel de Keur Massar", just a half hour walk from our home near the capital

Dakar, it is praised as a medicine against constipation, gingivitis (inflammation of the gums), malaria, fever and loss of appetite. The Prelude database even lists 83 references for the legume and 101 symptoms. In return, the huge scientific database Researchgate (15 million researchers, 118 million publications) leads us back to the kitchen, because one of the numerous entries on *Parkia* represents the "optimal conditions and procedures for developing the maximum yield of protein from fermented seeds of *Parkia biglobosa*". On our website we have presented the field of traditional African medicinal plants with a couple of examples. The plants shown were found in the Jemberëng Ecopark, among other places.

**N**ot to use and not to care for the infinitely rich supermarket of Mother Nature cannot really occur to anyone. But *Homo sapiens*, carved from "crooked wood", needs admonitions again and again despite his decorative epithet. In Affiniam, a number of people have meanwhile admonished the village, not least members of the aptly named group "Anafa" (the farmer). Our decision was to let the village itself solve its social difficulties as a preliminary work before we be-



*Borassus aethiopum*, the tree  
of the 1000 utilities ©HGT2016





*Casamance ecosystem: river, mangrove and forest ©HGT 2016*

came involved again in the medical botanical garden gureng gaha ubun. A good example of peaceful cooperation were certainly the joint prayers of Muslims and Christians on the occasion of the start of adaptation work on the Affiniam dam under Chinese leadership. The two responsible mayors who had travelled there had correctly assessed the explosiveness of the situation. About thirty years ago, the dam had been built by Chinese against the will of the population and had led to the loss of large areas for rice cultivation and the disappearance of many mangroves, which are indispensable as a vital component of the ecosystem in the Casamance.

**O**il had also been poured into the long smouldering fire of discontent among the local population shortly before work began, as criminals shot the spokesman of the main local protest group from their mo-

torbike. This raised the alarm because, after many years of unfair treatment, the people of Casamance still feel that they are not respected, even though federal elements were implanted in the Republic of Senegal some time ago.

**T**he fact that Muslims and Christians from Affiniam and the surrounding area have prayed together on such an important issue cannot therefore be valued highly enough.

*Affiniam, November 2019*

*Christians and Muslims pray for peaceful cooperation  
during the work on the Affiniam dam*

