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*French-Côte d'Ivoire Cultural Orientation*

# *French-Côte d'Ivoire Cultural Orientation: Contents*

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*Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire  
Flickr / eutrophication&hypoxia*

## Chapter 1: Profile

### Introduction

Côte d'Ivoire lies in Western Africa and borders the North Atlantic Ocean. It shares borders with five neighbors: Liberia, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Ghana. Its southern-facing coastline is approximately 500 km (311 mi) north of the equator. Although little of its ancient history can be substantiated, there is evidence that a Neolithic culture existed. Ivoirian people first came into contact with the French in the 17th century when missionaries landed at Assini in present-day Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>1</sup> French colonial rule lasted from 1893 until 1960. Internationally known as Côte d'Ivoire (a name derived from the 17th-century ivory trade), the nation officially became the République de Côte d'Ivoire in 1986.

During its first three decades of independence, Côte d'Ivoire was associated with religious and ethnic harmony as well as integration into the world economy.<sup>2</sup> The fast pace of growth from 1960 into the early 1980s was called the "Ivoirian miracle." Over the following two decades, accumulated resource depletion and declining productivity turned the miracle into stagnation.<sup>3</sup> A 1999 coup eventually led to a division of the country in 2002 and to years of violent conflict, largely between the predominantly Muslim north and the Christian south. Long-delayed elections, held in October 2010, delivered a measure of stability, but dissension remains.



*River border with Liberia  
Flickr / DFID - UK*

## Area and Borders

The total area of Côte d'Ivoire, which is slightly larger than New Mexico, is 322,463 sq km (124,504 sq mi). The nation borders Liberia (716 km/445 mi), Guinea (610 km/379 mi), Mali (532 km/331 mi), Burkina Faso (584 km/363 mi), and Ghana (668 km/415 mi).



*A flooded street  
Flickr / BBC World Service*

## Climate

Côte d'Ivoire is warm and humid, with greater precipitation in the south, nearer the equator, and a tropical climate prevailing in the north. The seasons are defined by rainfall and wind direction rather than by temperature.

During the first half of year, maritime air masses push northward, bringing warm air, wind, and rain. At midyear the pattern reverses, and a dry, dusty wind, known as the harmattan, blows from the north. The alternating wind patterns create

climatic zones in the north and the south. The north experiences two seasons, one dry and the other characterized by heavy rain from June–October, averaging 110 cm (43 in) annually. The coastal region experiences four seasons, even though some rain falls every month, for an average of 200 cm (79 in) annually. The two rainy seasons are from May–July (heavy) and August–September (light).<sup>4</sup>

In the north, daytime temperature ranges from the low 20s°C (low 70s°F) to the mid-30s°C (mid-90s°F). The warmer but more variable south ranges from the mid-10s°C (upper 50s°F) to the upper 30s°C (low 100s°F).<sup>5</sup>





*Lagoon region  
Flickr / eutrophication&hypoxia*

## Topography

Côte d'Ivoire has three principal geographic regions (from south to north): the lagoon region, the forest region, and the savanna.

The lagoon region (zone lagunaire) is a coastal belt, no more than 64 km (40 mi) wide, extending across the eastern two-thirds of Côte d'Ivoire's Gulf of Guinea coast, from the mouth of the Sassandra River to the Ghana border. Ocean currents and strong surf combine to create a strip of sandy islands and sandbars (the cordon littoral).

The sand barriers block the flow of rivers into the gulf, resulting in a series of lagoons that range in width from 100 m (328 ft) to 7–8 km (4–5 mi). The sandy soil supports coconut palms and salt-resistant coastal shrubs.<sup>6</sup> Above-average rainfall and flooding, believed by some residents to be related to global warming, have caused severe coastal erosion, threatening coastal towns. The country has been slow to institute mitigation strategies, such as erosion barriers.<sup>7</sup>

The forest region covers the southern third of Côte d'Ivoire. Dense rain forest was once the country's most abundant resource, extending to the edge of the gulf. Since independence, severe deforestation—a result of logging, conversion of land for agriculture, and uncontrolled fires—has decimated the old growth forest, little of which remains. Although secondary growth has been substituted, overall forest area has dropped since 1960 from 16 million hectares (39.5 million acres) to 10 million hectares (24.7 million acres). Since 1990, the government has made forest preservation a priority; only 1.8% of the forest cover was lost between 1990 and 2005.<sup>8, 9</sup>

Sparsely populated savanna makes up the northern half of the nation, where the rising plateau reaches 300 m (984 ft) above sea level. The land features rolling hills, with a variety of woodlands and grasslands. The southern part of the savanna is a transition zone (zone de transition) to the forest region. Although not generally mountainous, the savanna has several peaks in the northwest that exceed 800 m (2,625 ft) in elevation. Bordering Guinea, Mount Nimba is the country's highest peak at 1,752 m (5,748 ft).<sup>10</sup>

## Rivers

The country has four major river systems. All flow from north to south into the Gulf of Guinea. Because all the rivers are interrupted by waterfalls and rapids, they are only navigable for approximately 50–80 km (31–50 mi) upstream from the gulf.<sup>11</sup>

### *Cavally*

The Cavally River flows from Guinea, north of the Nimba Mountains. More than half of its southern extent defines the Liberia-Côte d'Ivoire border.



*Sassandra River*  
*Flickr / boundiali82*

### *Sassandra*

The Sassandra River flows from the high ground of the north, joining the sea at the Port of Sassandra. Approximately 200 km (124 mi) upstream, the Buyo Dam on the Sassandra creates Lake Buyo (Lac de Buyo). The dam is a source of hydroelectric power.

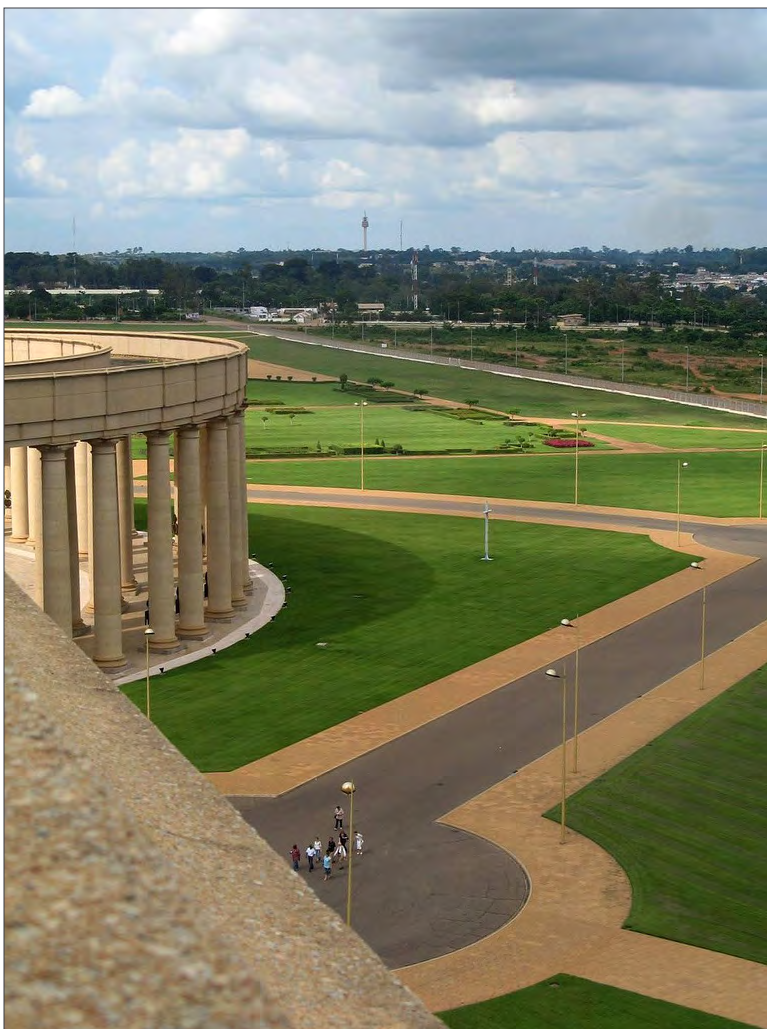
### *Bandama*

Flowing for 800 km (497 mi), the Bandama is Côte d'Ivoire's longest river. Centrally located, its system drains half the country's surface area, meeting the ocean at Tagba Lagoon. Approximately 250 km (155 mi) upstream, the Kossou Dam is another

source of hydroelectric power; Lake Kossou (Lac de Kossou) is the country's largest inland body of water.

### *Comoé*

The Comoé originates in the Sikasso Plateau of Burkina Faso. It flows for 750 km (466 mi) before emptying into the Ebrié Lagoon near the old French colonial capital of Grand-Bassam. A northern section of the river forms the western half of the Côte d'Ivoire-Burkina Faso boundary.



*Yamoussoukro from the Basilica  
Flickr / Felix Krohn*

## Major Cities

### *Yamoussoukro*

**Y**amoussoukro is the administrative capital of Côte d'Ivoire and the hometown of former president Félix Houphouët-Boigny, who ruled from 1960 to 1993. He transformed his birthplace from a remote village into a city in which opulent edifices dot the skyline and four-lane highways lead into the surrounding jungle. The extravagant city features one of the world's largest churches, a replica of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, built at a cost of USD 300 million. The amount of stained glass in the windows exceeds the amount in all the cathedrals in France.<sup>12</sup>

### *Abidjan*

Abidjan, or "Paris with palms," is Côte d'Ivoire's largest city, chief port, and former capital. Its colonial roots and cosmopolitan ambience, strengthened by large numbers of French and Lebanese residents, help it maintain its place as the country's cultural capital. It enjoys a reputation for vibrant nightlife and bustling atmosphere. Built around the Ébrié Lagoon, its skyline is etched with

modern high-rises. Its landmark cathedral, St. Paul's, was built in 1985 and consecrated by the Pope.<sup>13</sup>

### *Bouaké*

Located in the geographic center of Côte d'Ivoire, Bouaké was a crossroads for the caravan trade. In 1899 it was established as a French military post. Today it is a transportation hub for the roads and railroad that connect Abidjan to Burkina Faso. Bouaké remains the commercial center of the interior.<sup>14</sup>

### *Korhogo*

Korhogo is an agricultural trade center in north central Côte d'Ivoire. The city is located on a traditional trade route from the mountains to the Atlantic coast. Muslim Fulani herdsman from the north helped establish Korhogo as a trading center for sheep, goats, and other livestock. It is now the primary market for Senufo farmers of the savanna, who grow corn, kapok, rice, millet, peanuts, and yams.<sup>15</sup>



## Man

Tree-covered mountains and scenic waterfalls surround the city of Man, a trade and tourist center located in a cocoa-rich region.



*French-Colonial home  
Wikimedia / Joker-x*

## History

### Ancient History

Scant knowledge exists about the first inhabitants of Côte d'Ivoire. Most of these people were likely displaced or assimilated among the ancestors of modern-day Ivoirians. The earliest written records come from North African traders, whose trade routes traversed the Sahara from early Roman times. North African traders introduced Islam into the region. A variety of Islamic empires, oriented to the trade routes, rose and fell. The key terminals were Djenné, Gao, and Timbuktu.<sup>16</sup>

### The Colonial Era

Portuguese navigators who sailed down the West African coast in the 15th century ignored what is today Côte d'Ivoire because of its inhospitable landings. In the 17th century, unsubstantiated rumors of gold and a lucrative trade in the hinterland sparked French interest in the area. The name Côte d'Ivoire, referring to the trade in valued elephant tusks, was applied to the area.

During the European quest for territory in Africa in the late 19th century, the French explored the interior of Côte d'Ivoire, making it a colony in 1893. Most of the boundaries were established in treaties with Britain and Liberia. The French imposed taxation and other burdens on the inhabitants, and resorted to oppressive measures of pacification when they resisted. The protracted harsh rule extended to the closing years of World War II, when Africans were granted independent political rights within the nation.<sup>17</sup>

Félix Houphouët-Boigny was a leading activist in the French decolonization movement of the postwar period. By the late 1950s, the French colonial empire had devolved into the French Community, with France the senior partner in an association of autonomous republics, which included Côte d'Ivoire. The new nation became truly independent in August 1960, with Houphouët-Boigny its first head of state. By this time, over a half-century of assimilation into French culture, particularly among Côte d'Ivoire's elites, guaranteed that strong links with France would continue.<sup>18</sup>



*Houphouët-Boigny, 1977  
Romanian National Archives #LA415*

## *Independence*

Houphouët-Boigny, along with other members of the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), drafted a constitution, which was adopted by the National Assembly in 1960. The document, based on established democratic principles, instituted separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. But election rules hindered the creation of rival political parties, resulting in a one-party state. With Houphouët-Boigny president of both the government and his party, the one-party state became a one-man state. Other key positions

in the government, including in the National Assembly, went to Houphouët-Boigny loyalists. Potential rivals were purged from the government; dissenters were stifled with arrest, secret judicial procedures, and imprisonment. Houphouët-Boigny ingratiated himself with the public by speaking out against the failures of government officials. The outcome was a dictatorship with the superficial appearance of democracy. Houphouët-Boigny ruled Côte d'Ivoire until his death in 1993.<sup>19</sup>

Despite his authoritarian rule, Houphouët-Boigny was attentive to the nation's economic welfare. Successful government policies allowed Côte d'Ivoire to outperform other African countries with similar resources. In the 1960s and 1970s, the country enjoyed an impressive average growth rate of 7.3%, unique in Africa for a non oil-producing nation; this circumstance was dubbed the "Ivoirian miracle." Successful policies included retaining an elite of French technocrats from the colonial era; importing cheap labor from neighboring countries; concentrating on the lucrative export crops of cocoa, coffee, and, to a lesser degree, timber; and diversifying agricultural production among many small-scale farmers.

In the late 1970s, the "miracle" began to evaporate. Cocoa and coffee prices both peaked in 1977, before beginning long declines, which cut the national growth rate to 3%. Some of the success in farming had been built on the clearing of the rain forest, with the predictable effect on timber production. The overall loss of income exposed underlying problems. Houphouët-Boigny had bolstered his position with indulgent public works projects—architectural excesses in a poor country—which resulted in a large public debt. Additionally, investments in alternative crops proved expensive and could not compensate for the declines in key products.<sup>20, 21, 22</sup>

### *Internal Conflict*

With the slumping economy, and increasing popular discontent, voices of protest grew louder. An issue in the post-“miracle” era was the question of who would succeed the elderly Houphouët-Boigny. Although Houphouët-Boigny never conceded any powers, the Constitution was amended to transfer power to the president of the National Assembly if the president of the republic were to die or become incapacitated. Because of this change, Henri Konan Bédié became acting president in 1993, for the remaining two years of the deceased Houphouët-Boigny’s term. This set up a 1995 election fight with Bédié’s rival, former prime minister Alassane Ouattara.

The influx of foreign workers during the period of economic prosperity gave birth to the concept of *ivoirité*, the state of being truly Ivoirian. During the 1995 campaign, Bédié elevated the idea to exclude Ouattara from the election. Ouattara was from the Muslim-dominated north, where most foreigners settled. Bédié’s party (the dominant PDCI) revised the electoral code, extending the requirement of Ivoirian birth (which applied to the candidate) to the candidate’s parents. When Ouattara produced valid documents for his family, Bédié labeled them forgeries. Indeed, Bédié’s own parentage proved problematic. At any rate, Ouattara was excluded from the election and Bédié remained in power. *Ivoirité* became an excuse for disenfranchising northerners in multiple ways, creating a serious schism between the Christian south and the Muslim north.<sup>23, 24, 25, 26</sup>



*Laurent Gbagbo*  
Wikimedia / Zenman

### *Recent Events*

Despite undercurrents of discontent, Côte d'Ivoire remained relatively peaceful through its first four decades of independence. This changed in 1999 when General Robert Guéï led the country's first coup, toppling Henri Bédié. After first declaring *ivoirité* divisive, Guéï banned Alassane Ouattara from the 2000 presidential election, disputing his nationality, as Bédié had in 1995. Guéï declared himself winner of the flawed election, but was deposed in a popular uprising. Laurent Gbagbo, a former history professor and founder of the Ivoirian Popular Front (FPI) in 1982, became the president. Ouattara called for new elections and, when Gbagbo refused, fighting erupted between Gbagbo and Ouattara supporters, with Gbagbo prevailing. Gbagbo drew upon *ivoirité* to stir up ethnic divisions. In September 2002, civil war broke out, seemingly started by junior officers from the Guéï era and anti-Gbagbo exiles. Muslim discontent led to revolts in the major northern cities. Gbagbo tried to portray his actions against the rebellion as part of the post-9/11 "war on

terror." Thousands were killed, and the country was split between north and south. The worst fighting ended in 2004. French and UN peacekeepers patrolled a buffer zone that separated the north, held by the rebel New Forces, and the government-controlled south.<sup>27, 28</sup>

Several years of stalemate led to a 2007 peace accord signed by the government and the New Forces. Long-postponed elections, intended to end the conflict, were held in 2010. Ouattara, finally a candidate, defeated Gbagbo, who refused to concede. In April 2011, Ouattara's forces overran the south, capturing Gbagbo. In November, Gbagbo was transferred to the International Criminal Court in The Hague to stand trial for crimes against humanity, stemming from actions taken after the 2010 election.<sup>29, 30</sup>



## Media

Despite a constitution guaranteeing freedom of speech, Côte d'Ivoire lacks a tradition of independent journalism. Under President Houphouët-Boigny's leadership, media outlets were strictly controlled.<sup>31</sup> During the civil war of 2002–04, President Gbagbo turned the state-controlled media against his northern enemies with attacks so vicious that observers feared another Rwanda-like genocide.<sup>32</sup> Reforms intended to strengthen the rights of the media against repression were passed in 2004, with limited effect. Still, periodicals have multiplied. Most are published in Abidjan, in French.

Radio is the dominant form of media. Côte d'Ivoire has two state-run radio stations and several private stations. The official state broadcaster, Radio Télévision Ivoirienne, has a legal monopoly on reporting domestic news. Its output is favorable to the government, and it rarely broadcasts opposition viewpoints.<sup>33</sup>

Africa is the lowest-ranked continent for internet activity, and Côte d'Ivoire follows the pattern. The country has an estimated 967,300 internet users (2009 est.), ranking it 103rd in the world despite its ranking of 55th in the world in terms of population (22 million).<sup>34</sup>

During the turbulence surrounding the 2010 election, abuses of the media were prevalent, with offenses committed by both Gbagbo and Ouattara supporters.<sup>35</sup> Each side used its own media outlets to agitate against opponents. Journalists today in Côte d'Ivoire are harassed and subjected to violence, including murder.<sup>36</sup> They have been arrested, detained, and charged with crimes against the state.<sup>37</sup> Newspaper offices have been ransacked or occupied. Even in the absence of Gbagbo, the Ouattara regime has kept up the pressure against pro-Gbagbo (FPI) outlets.<sup>38</sup>



*Cocoa harvest  
Flickr / Nestlé*

## Economy

### *Historic*

During the first two decades of President Houphouët-Boigny's rule, the "Ivoirian miracle" made Côte d'Ivoire a model for developing Africa. The so-called miracle was largely based on world-market prices for cocoa and coffee, which peaked in 1977, then entered a long period of decline and instability that directly affected the country's fortunes.

The boom of the 1970s led to widespread investment, especially from the French, which was then badly undercut by falling export

earnings. In the 1980s, the unsteady export market, high debt, and high population growth contributed to economic decline and falling living standards. A sharp spike upward in cocoa and coffee prices during 1983–86 allowed a brief respite. Thereafter, prices fell precipitously, and 7 years of recession occurred from 1987 to 1993.

During the recession, the Central African Franc (CFA), widely used in West Africa, including Côte d'Ivoire, became unstable. Per capita income declined and unemployment rose. Another source of instability resulted from the death of Houphouët-Boigny in 1993, ending 3-plus decades of autocratic rule. The CFA was devalued by 50% (vis-à-vis the French franc) in January 1994 to allow participating nations to increase exports, pay down debt, and become more attractive to foreign investment. Côte d'Ivoire returned to a period of rapid growth. But despite diversification into other sectors, the country never escaped its dependence on cocoa and coffee prices. In the late 1990s, both commodities began a multi-year decline in value, which overlapped another stretch of adverse history, the 1999 coup and the 2002 civil war.<sup>39, 40</sup>

Côte d'Ivoire has sustained long-term damage from the civil war. Economic growth has been slow or recessionary, foreign investment has dwindled, tourism has decreased, debt has risen, and income has continued to fall. Corruption and government mismanagement have contributed. But rising oil production has reversed the downward trend; by 2004, production finally surpassed consumption, increasing the country's valuable exports.<sup>41</sup> Cocoa and coffee prices, which rose during the post-civil-war era, both counteracted decline. The 2010 election was a step toward greater stability, but serious challenges remain.



*Bleeding sap from a rubber tree  
Flickr / BBC World Service*

## Contemporary

Approximately two-thirds of the workforce are engaged in agriculture and related services. The country remains the world's leading producer of cocoa, with a third of the market. In coffee production, it ranks 14th. Additional agricultural products include bananas, palm oil, corn, rice, rubber, and timber. Industrial activity includes oil refining, gold mining, truck assembly, textiles, and, another net export, electricity. Leading export partners include the United States, Western Europe, and African neighbors. Principal imports from the United States include agricultural chemicals, plastics, oil and gas equipment, and telecommunications. The infrastructure is reasonably good, with two active ports; 6,500 km (4,039 mi) of paved roads; telecommunications, and modern real estate development for commercial use.

After modest gains during 2009–11, the Côte d'Ivoire GDP (gross domestic product) contracted 5.8% in 2011. Positives include government commitment to reform, renewed international support, a recovery in the manufacturing sector, increased gold production, and higher cocoa exports (offsetting recent falling prices). A robust rebound is projected for 2012, leading to 8–9% growth in GDP. Negatives include the continuing possibility of internal tensions, still smoldering after a decade of virulent conflict; the impact of

a rising population, exacerbated by any rebound in the economy, which would attract more immigrant labor; and the circumstances of a poor nation in which 42% (2006 est.) live below the poverty line.<sup>42, 43, 44</sup>





*Ivorians*

*Flickr / DFID - UK*

## Ethnic Groups

Most of Africa's borders were drawn by European colonial powers in the late 19th century, without respect to native ethnic groups. Thus, Côte d'Ivoire, like its neighbors, includes many groups that cross national boundaries. Many Ivoirians have long-standing cultural and kinship ties (considered more important than nationality) with people in neighboring countries.<sup>45</sup>

The broadest category of ethnic identity in Côte d'Ivoire is the Niger-Congo language family, whose area of influence sweeps across West

Africa, south of the Sahara, to most of the continent below the equator. Within the Niger-Congo family in Côte d'Ivoire, there are four main cultural/language regions that roughly correspond to the geographic quadrants of the country: 1) Mandé cultures (northwest); 2) Voltaic Gur languages (northeast); 3) West Atlantic (southwest) Kru languages; and 4) East Atlantic (southeast) Kwa languages. Within the four groups are major ethnically distinct subgroups, as well as borderline groups that are a blend of two neighbors. All told, there are about 60 ethno-linguistic groups, although, with the passage of time, internal migration and intermarriage are breaking down traditional boundaries.<sup>46, 47</sup>

French is the language of education, publishing, and commerce. None of the multitude of African languages is spoken by a majority of Ivoirians, most of whom are fluent in two languages. Many Ivoirians understand English to some degree, although it is not popular. Arabic is taught in some northern schools and is spoken by Middle Eastern immigrants.<sup>48</sup>

### *Mandé Cultures*

The Mandé dominate northwestern Côte d'Ivoire. They speak variants of a common language and share many cultural traits. Religious beliefs, which can include a hybrid of Islamic and local influences, vary within the group. The Mandé have been important in the development of West African agriculture. One subgroup, the Malinké, gives the nation of Mali its name; the Mandé extend into Guinea. The Peripheral Mandé occupy a belt bordering the West Atlantic region; their language comes more from the north, while their cultural traits come from the south.<sup>49</sup>

### *Voltaic Cultures*

The Voltaic peoples occupy a broad northeastern swath of the country; they are also found in the neighboring regions of Burkina Faso and northern Ghana. The Senufo is the largest subgroup, occupying north central Côte d'Ivoire. They are primarily agricultural. Language unifies them culturally, but the Senufo hold different religious beliefs. Smaller Voltaic groups occupy the relatively undeveloped northeast corner of the country.<sup>50</sup>



*Bété tribal mask*  
*Flickr / David Monniaux*

### *West Atlantic Cultures*

The West Atlantic region lies west of the Bandama River, between the ocean and the forest belt. It spreads into Liberia. The people of the region speak Kru, a subgroup of the East Atlantic Kwa language. The oldest of Côte d'Ivoire's current ethnic groups, the Kru have traditionally derived their livelihood from farming on communal village land and from hunting in the forest. The largest subgroup is the Bété, who occupy a centrally located pocket in the region. Christianity has become widespread among the Bété.<sup>51</sup>

### *East Atlantic Cultures*

The East Atlantic region, east of the Bandama River, is dominated by the Akan peoples, who speak the Kwa language. Many of them are descended from migrants from the Ashanti Empire (in present-day Ghana). They continue to be kinto Akan peoples in Ghana and in its neighbor to the east, Togo. They are known for their complex social organization. Agriculture is the dominant form of livelihood. The largest subgroup of the East Atlantic and of the country is the Baoulé, who make up at least 15% of the national population. President Houphouët-Boigny was a Baoulé. Smaller subgroups include the lagoon cultures along the coast, whose livelihoods derive from fishing and trade.<sup>52</sup>

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## Overview: Chapter 1 Assessment

1. The Cavally River is the longest river in Côte d'Ivoire.

**FALSE**

The Bandama River is the longest river in Côte d'Ivoire.

2. The name Côte d'Ivoire, or Ivory Coast, refers to trade in elephant tusks.

**TRUE**

Elephant tusks were a sought-after commodity by European explorers, who found them in abundance in Côte d'Ivoire. The name Côte d'Ivoire derives from the ivory trade.

3. After independence, the Ivoirian government encouraged French technical experts to stay in the country.

**TRUE**

The country was successful in retaining an elite of French technocrats from the colonial era.

4. The Ivoirian media remained neutral during the turbulent 2010 election.

**FALSE**

Each side used the media under its control to attack the other.

5. Productivity gains have been responsible for Ivoirian economic growth.

**FALSE**

Economic growth has been based on continuously expanding the resource base.

## Chapter 2: Religion

### Introduction

The Constitution of Côte d'Ivoire provides for freedom of religion and a secular government. National law requires religious groups to register with the Ministry of Interior's Department of Faith-Based Organizations. The Ministry of Interior then investigates the sect or church. A key goal is vetting the backgrounds of the founding members to determine whether the group is politically subversive.<sup>1</sup>

### Diverse Faiths

Côte d'Ivoire is known for its diverse faiths, which have arisen from mixed historic influences. Indigenous religions in Côte d'Ivoire have similarities with native religions throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Local beliefs and practices vary not only regionally, but even among the country's 60 distinct ethnic groups. Islam, introduced by North African traders, has been practiced in the northern savanna region of the country for about seven centuries. Christianity arrived in conjunction with European exploration and colonization: because Europeans arrived by sea, Christianity came to dominate the lagoon region. Missionaries introduced Christianity in the 17th century, but significant conversion did not occur until the 19th-century scramble by European powers to establish territorial rights in Africa. Because Côte d'Ivoire was colonized by the Catholic-majority French, Roman Catholicism became the leading Christian denomination.<sup>2</sup> Protestantism was not introduced until after World War I.<sup>3</sup>

Estimates related to the breakdown of the



*St. Paul's Cathedral  
Flickr / Felix Krohn*



population by religious faith vary widely. According to some sources, Islam is the leading religion, with about 40% of the population adhering to the faith. Christianity ranks second with about 33%. The US State Department estimates Christians and Muslims both having roughly 40% of the population. Practitioners of indigenous religions constitute from 25% to more than 50% of the population. About 1% of the people adhere to other beliefs.<sup>4, 5</sup> Because Côte d'Ivoire has lacked a single dominant religion, religious tolerance has been instilled both traditionally and officially, a factor that leads to confusion in the above percentages. For example, many families include both Muslim and Christian members, which can make classification difficult. Furthermore, the country has a tradition of syncretic religion; that is, a blend of unlike faiths, such as Christianity and a native belief.<sup>6</sup>



*Carved wooden mask  
Flickr / escalepade*

### *Indigenous Religions*

Traditional African religions have three fundamental elements: an all-powerful God; spirits who inhabit the natural world (trees, rocks, etc.) and influence events; and spiritual ancestors who watch over their descendants. The universe, therefore, is full of spirit forces who are responsible for events, thus influencing the lives and fortunes of the living. The living strive to remain in the good graces of the spirits through the use of rituals and mystical objects.<sup>7, 8</sup>

Rituals include offering the first harvest of the season to God and acts of purification meant to ward off evil influences. Other rituals involve ceremonial dancing, ancestor veneration, and animal sacrifice. Leaders include *akomfos* (priests),

family heads, and village chieftains. Special attention is given to funerals because, when people die, their souls join the spirit world. Even though Islamic and Christian holy days are observed in Côte d'Ivoire, no native rituals are given national holiday status.

Carved masks are used to communicate with the spirits. The masks, representing individual spirits, are sacred objects and may only be owned and used by trained individuals, always male. During a mask ceremony, the wearer dances to traditional music and enters a trance under which communication with the spirits takes place. The (often unintelligible) words that the mask-wearer speaks are the spirits' messages. In some areas, mask ceremonies are restricted to secret societies.

Jujus are magical objects that can be used to drive away evil spirits. They are created by juju priests (witch doctors). The term *juju* can apply to the object or the spirit that inhabits the object. Almost any small object can be a juju: bones, rocks, articles of

jewelry. Good juju has healing power; bad juju can cause bad luck. Gris-gris is a charm necklace given away by witch doctors to keep evil at bay.<sup>9</sup>

### *Catholicism*

In 1895, the French governor of Côte d'Ivoire invited missionaries to the region. By 1900, 200 had been sent. Although many succumbed to yellow fever, the process of erecting schools and churches and of converting Ivoirians had begun.<sup>10, 11</sup> The first native priests were ordained in 1934, and the church hierarchy was established in 1955. The first native cardinal was named in 1983.<sup>12</sup> There are four archdioceses in the country, located in Abidjan, Bouaké, Gagnoa, and Korhogo.. Today, approximately 17–19% of the country is Roman Catholic.

#### **Exchange 1: What religion do you practice?**

Soldier:	What religion do you practice?	kel REleeji/o/ pRateekey-voo?
Local:	I am a Catholic.	jE swee dE Reet katoleek

For educated Ivoirians, conversion to Catholicism became a way of integrating with their French colonizers.<sup>13</sup> The Baoulé, the country's largest ethnic group, are largely Catholic, mixing the religion with native beliefs. Mingling religion and politics, the Baoulé dominated the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), which governed the country for four decades (1960–1999).<sup>14</sup> Côte d'Ivoire's influential first president, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, was a Catholic Baoulé.

#### **Exchange 2: What time is mass today?**

Soldier:	What time is mass today?	a kel ER sety/i/ la mes?
Local:	It is at 10:00 AM.	a dee zER dU mat/i/



*William Wadé Harris  
Courtesy Wikimedia*

## Harrism

The Harrist Church is considered Côte d'Ivoire's largest Protestant denomination. William Wadé Harris (1865–1929) was born in Liberia, a member of the Grebo people. He grew up in a Methodist household and was educated in both English and the Grebo language. Confirmed an Episcopalian in 1888, he spent many years as a bible teacher for the church. He was an outspoken critic of the Liberian state, which had become a refuge for African Americans, a group who had taken control of the nation. While imprisoned during an uprising in 1910, Harris claimed to have been visited by the Archangel Gabriel and made a prophet. Experiencing increasing alienation in Liberia, he crossed the Cavally River into Côte d'Ivoire in 1913; he was barefoot, dressed in white robes and a white turban, and carried a gourd rattle and a 6-foot bamboo cross. He traversed the lagoon region, preaching his brand of Africanized Christianity. He believed in one Christian God as well as the spirit world

of traditional African religion. Still, he railed against the belief in witch doctors and fetishes (magic-possessed objects). He was a powerful orator and is believed to have baptized more than 100,000 converts in a single year, often baptizing entire villages at once. French colonial authorities, preoccupied with World War I and fearing an uprising, expelled him in January 1915. He returned to Liberia and died in poverty.<sup>15, 16</sup>

In his absence, loyal followers formed the Harrist Church; some eventually migrated into Catholicism and later into Methodism. Harris is now regarded as the father of Christianity in Côte d'Ivoire. According to some interpretations, his experience shows that a black man preaching Christianity was more influential than a multitude of French missionaries. In 1964, the Harrist Church was officially recognized as one of the four national religions. Estimates of membership range widely, from a peak of 376,000 (unspecified date) to a current membership of 100,000 (2010). Although the Harrist Church is an active institution, it represents a minority religion and ranks far behind Islam and Roman Catholicism in numbers of believers.<sup>17</sup>

### Exchange 3: May I take photographs?

Soldier:	May I take photographs?	jE pE pR/e/dR Une foto?
Local:	Yes.	wee



*Ivory Coast Mosque  
Flickr / Moustafa Cheaiteli*

## Islam

The historical growth of Islam in Côte d'Ivoire is best understood in a regional context. As early as the late first millennium C.E., and then with the spread of the Almoravid Empire from Morocco in the 11th century, trade routes crossed the Sahel (the transition zone on the African continent between the Sahara and the savanna), bringing Arab traders in contact with the indigenous peoples of West Africa. In addition to gold, ivory, and slaves, religious ideas were traded, leading to a melding of Islam and native customs. In the wake of the traders, wandering holy men spread the word of Islam. The movement of nomadic groups also spread ideas. Literacy in Arabic,

which grew in trading centers like Timbuktu, contributed to Islamic conversion. Conversion by the sword in sub-Saharan Africa is considered a minor factor.<sup>18, 19</sup>

### Exchange 4: May I enter the mosque?

Soldier:	May I enter the mosque?	Je pU entRe le moskey ?
Local:	Yes.	wee

The Mandé, a West African people whose area of influence spreads into northwest Côte d'Ivoire, were notable traders who converted to Islam beginning in the 12th century. They established settlements along the caravan routes, including Kong in north central Côte d'Ivoire. Kong became a center of Islamic learning.

### Exchange 5: Do I need to cover my head?

Soldier:	Do I need to cover my head?	dwa-a-jE koovReeR ma tet?
Local:	Yes.	wee

At the start of French occupation in the late 19th century, Muslims constituted less than 10% of the population of Côte d'Ivoire. Paradoxically, the predominantly Catholic French colonizers accelerated the growth of Islam in West Africa. They regarded Muslims as educationally advanced compared to non-Muslim Africans, which gave Muslims easier entry into elite classes. Colonization promoted peace and stimulated trade, thereby fostering the spread of Islam. During World War II, the French recruited West African troops to serve in North Africa, furthering exposure to Islam. By 1960, the Muslim population of Côte d'Ivoire had more than doubled.<sup>20, 21</sup>



### Exchange 6: What time do you pray?

Soldier:	What time do you pray?	a kel ER tU pRee?
Local:	I pray at noon.	jE pRee ah meedee

Under President Houphouët-Boigny's rule, importing workers (most of whom were Muslim) from neighboring countries boosted the country's economy. Islam remains the dominant religion of Côte d'Ivoire's northern savanna, although Abidjan, on the coast, is a spiritual center and has a large Muslim population.

### Exchange 7: Should I remove my shoes?

Soldier:	Should I remove my shoes?	dwaa-jE oteR mey shosUR?
Local:	Yes.	wee

From the 1980s into the new century, friction developed between Côte d'Ivoire Muslims and the Catholic ruling class. Muslim immigrant laborers, welcomed during prosperous times, were spurned when falling commodity prices led to economic distress. *Ivoirité*—the concept of being truly Ivoirian—became a wedge issue between Christians and Muslims.



*Church elders  
Flickr / Sunset Parkerpix*

## Gender and Religion

The major religions practiced in Côte d'Ivoire are based on patriarchal values, with women relegated to secondary roles. Following its universal doctrine, the Catholic Church bars women from the clergy. Women, often nuns, are put in charge of social services. One nun, an Italian, Mother Eugenia Elisabetta Ravasio, established a center for leprosy care at Azopte in Côte d'Ivoire.

Followers of William Wadé Harris eventually split from the Methodists partly because of the Harrist tolerance for polygamy, which is common in Islam and traditional African religions. Polygamy

was banned in Côte d'Ivoire by the 1964 Civil Code, but the law goes unenforced, and polygamy continues to be practiced. In 1984, the Methodists became more inclusive to women by opening up the ministry to them.<sup>22</sup>



*A torched UN vehicle  
Flickr / Stefan Meisel*

## Religious Violence

The 2002 civil war largely pitted the Muslim north against the Christian south. Most of the fighting ended in 2004, with the conflicting sides buffered by UN peacekeepers. With the October 2010 elections, and the subsequent expulsion of former president Gbagbo to the International Criminal Court, tensions began to relax. Recently, the UN Security Council, while renewing an arms embargo in existence since 2004, praised Côte d'Ivoire's progress in restoring stability since the fractious 2010 elections. The Council also expressed concerns about the challenge

of disarming and reintegrating former combatants. Incidents of violence have continued to occur, but they are more overtly political than religious.<sup>23</sup>

## Religion in Public Life

Constitutionally, Côte d'Ivoire has no state religion. In practice, though, Catholics have tended to be the best-educated citizens and have dominated the ruling class, filling most of the top government posts, including the presidency from 1960–2010. During that period, the government favored Roman Catholics and Catholic institutions, but was not heavily biased against other religions. Government officials appeared at religious events, and made a point of inclusiveness.<sup>24</sup>

Relations between Christians and Muslims changed during this time but did not always progress. The government, which began to recognize Muslim holy days in 1974, recognized them all by 1994. The use of *ivoirité* as a political issue in the 1990s was a setback to civic harmony and greatly added to feelings of disenfranchisement by Muslims. Other actions, such as granting radio broadcasting licenses to Catholics while denying them to Muslims, further inflamed divisions. The 2002 civil war—as much ethnic as it was religion based—and its consequences, amplified divisions, disturbing the country's tradition of religious tolerance. The 2010 election resulted in the election of Alassane Ouattara, the country's first Muslim president. His progress in healing divisions and correcting past injustices remains to be seen.

The Ministry of Education allows religious instruction in both public and private schools. All major religions operate schools, giving each a powerful tool for influencing the religious life of the country.<sup>25</sup>

## Places of Worship

Côte d'Ivoire has several Catholic and Protestant churches as well as Islamic mosques. Traditional African religion varies widely, even from village to village; rural churches often reflect the poverty of the surroundings. In the cities, French is the standard language of church services; sometimes, separate Sunday services are held in the local language. In rural areas, local languages prevail.<sup>26</sup> Foreigners, if respectful, are welcome to participate in religious ceremonies.



*Basilica in Yamoussoukro*  
*Flickr / Felix Krohn*

### *Basilica of Our Lady of Peace*

President Houphouët-Boigny spent a large amount of the nation's wealth transforming Yamoussoukro, the village of his birth, into a major city in the country's interior. Numerous expensive public works projects were undertaken and buildings and infrastructure were erected. The city was named the national capital in 1983, although the country is effectively run from Abidjan. Yamoussoukro remains a lavish town with a population of only about 200,000.

Between 1985 and 1989, a church modeled on Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome was built on the president's behalf at an estimated cost of USD 300 million, with annual maintenance of USD 1.5 million. The church (the world's largest based on

certain parameters) is constructed of Italian marble and features 7,000 sq m (75,347 sq ft) of stained glass, including Houphouët-Boigny's stained-glass image beside those of Jesus and the apostles. The main church seats 7,000 but is rarely filled to capacity. On 10 September 1990, the basilica was consecrated by Pope John Paul II.<sup>27, 28</sup>

### *St. Paul's Cathedral*

A key sightseeing destination is St. Paul's Cathedral, designed by the Italian architect Aldo Spirito, and completed in 1985. The seat of the archbishop of the Archdiocese of Abidjan, it is the second-largest church in Africa. Because of its anthropomorphic design, it appears from a distance to be an enormous figure of St. Paul; the nave, which seats 3,500, forms St. Paul's trailing robe. The church features large, illustrative stained-glass windows.<sup>29</sup>



## *The Grand Mosque*

In 1994, the government approved construction of the Grand Mosque in Plateau, the business district of Abidjan. (It is also referred to as the Plateau Mosque.) A spectacular complex featuring a soaring minaret and blue dome, it was jointly financed with the assistance of several Arab nations.



*Mosque in Abidjan*

*Flickr / Felix Krohn*

## Religious Holidays

Major Muslim and Christian religious days are officially observed as national holidays; government and most commercial offices close for business. The four recognized Muslim holy days are the Eid al-Moulid (the birthday of Muhammad), Laylatal-Qadr, Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha. The five recognized Christian holy days are Easter Monday, Ascension Day, Whit Monday, All Saints' Day, and Christmas.<sup>30</sup>

### *Ramadan*

Ramadan commemorates the month in which the Quran was revealed to Mohammed, although only two of the days (Laylat al-Qadr, Eid al-Fitr) are national holidays. During Ramadan, Muslims fast between sunrise and sunset; only infants, the elderly, the infirm, and others for whom fasting would be a severe hardship are excused. Agricultural laborers, or those who need nutritional sustenance to work, respect tradition by fasting for a day or two.<sup>31</sup>

### *Laylat al-Qadr (Night of Destiny)*

This holiday, falling on the 27th day of Ramadan, commemorates the revelation of the first verses of the Quran. According to the book, it is the time when God answers Muslim prayers and determines the course of the world for the following year. It is considered the most holy night of the year. Muslims spend the night reading the Quran and praying.

### *Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan)*

This religious observance ends with a large feast in which Ivoirian Muslims pray together, visit friends, and exchange gifts. In villages, residents dress in their best clothes and stroll through the community.

### *Eid al-Adha (Tabaski)*

Occurring at the conclusion of the hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca), this Muslim holiday, known as *Tabaski* in much of Africa, commemorates the biblical story of Abraham. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac to God, but God allowed him to sacrifice a ram instead.

#### **Exchange 8: Please join us for a *tabaski* meal!**

Soldier:	Please join us for a tabaski meal!	vy/e/ tE joo/i/dRe ah noo seel tE pley af/i/ de degUstey notR plat dE tabastee!
Local:	I'd be honored.	jE soRey onoRey

Muslims celebrate the event by sacrificing an animal; one-third goes to the poor, one-third to family and friends, and one-third is kept. *Tabaski* is a boon for livestock traders. In the days preceding the holiday, flocks of sheep are gathered on the outskirts of cities.

### *Easter Monday*

Since Easter is always on a Sunday, the holiday falls on the Monday after. Easter celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Côte d'Ivoire, in accordance with mixed traditions, it is sometimes combined with springtime rebirth.

### *Ascension Day*

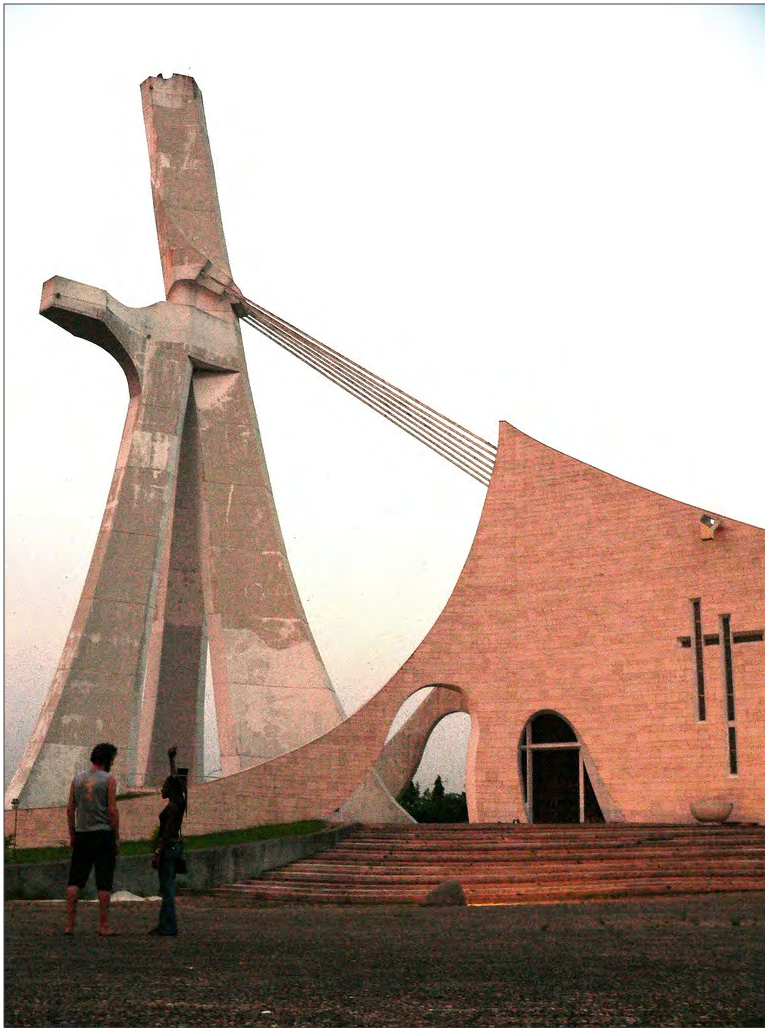
This Christian holiday commemorates the ascension of Jesus to heaven. It is always on a Thursday, the 40th day after Easter Sunday.

### *Whit Monday*

Whit Monday has its origins in the Christian festival of Pentecost, which is observed on the seventh Sunday after Easter.

#### **Exchange 9: Will you celebrate Whit Monday tomorrow?**

Soldier:	Will you celebrate Whit Monday tomorrow?	aley-voo selebReR la p/e/tekot deem/i?
Local:	Yes.	wee



*Cathedral in Abidjan  
Flickr / Jake Brown*

Christians believe that on this day, the holy spirit visited the disciples, inspiring them to go forth and spread the word of Christ. Hence the holiday recognizes the birth of the Christian Church. In Côte d'Ivoire, it is traditionally a time of baptism. Alternatively known as Whit Sunday or White Sunday, the name reflects the custom of wearing white while being baptized.

### *All Saints' Day*

This Christian feast is celebrated on 1 November. It honors all martyrs and saints, known and unknown. It is often commemorated by visiting cemeteries and leaving flowers.<sup>32</sup>

### *Christmas*

Christmas is celebrated much as it is in the greater Christian world, although in Côte d'Ivoire the buying of gifts is less important.

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## Overview: Chapter 2 Assessment

1. Islam is the state religion in the Côte d'Ivoire.

**FALSE**

The Constitution of Côte d'Ivoire provides for freedom of religion.

2. William Wadé Harris was a successful evangelist in West Africa.

**TRUE**

Harris was a powerful orator and is believed to have baptized more than 100,000 converts in Côte d'Ivoire in a single year, often baptizing entire villages at once. More than 120,000 villagers in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire became members of the Harrist Church in 1913–14.

3. The Basilica of Our Lady of Peace in Yamoussoukro is the largest cathedral in the world, based on certain parameters.

**TRUE**

The Basilica of Our Lady of Peace, modeled on Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome, is the world's largest church according to certain parameters.

4. All Ivoirian Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset during the month of Ramadan.

**FALSE**

Infants, the elderly, the infirm, and others for whom fasting would be a severe hardship are excused. Agricultural laborers, or those who need nutritional sustenance to work, respect tradition by fasting for a day or two.

5. Each Muslim household sacrifices a sheep during the holiday known as Tabaski.

**TRUE**

Because Muslim households each sacrifice a sheep for Tabaski, sheep stalls and vendors appear in Ivoirian cities in the weeks prior to the holiday.



## Chapter 3: Traditions

### Introduction

French colonization exerted a European influence on the centuries-old tribal cultures of Côte d'Ivoire. Change came in fits and starts, and varied by locality. Cash-crop agriculture began to replace subsistence farming. An education system trained native Africans to function in a modern bureaucratic society. French became the language of governance and education. Christianity became a dominant religion in the south, and among the ruling class.<sup>1</sup>

Rather than supplanting African traditions, however, the new ways of thinking merged with the old. European traditions blended with the culture of the south, the way Islamic traditions had blended with the culture of the north hundreds of years earlier. Côte d'Ivoire became a nation of hybrid cultures, old and new, African, Muslim, and Christian.<sup>2</sup>

Under the somewhat utopian model of modernity promoted after independence by President Houphouët-Boigny, African traditions would be swept away as, for example, in the 1965 Civil Code which outlawed polygamous marriages and other practices. In practice, new laws had limited effects on old practices, which went on much as they had before.<sup>3, 4</sup>

*A friendly smile  
Flickr / BBC World Service*

## Greetings and Hospitality

**S**pecific customs vary according to tribe across Côte d'Ivoire. Generally speaking, it is considered impolite to stand close to someone while conversing, or to make steady eye contact.<sup>5</sup>

### **Exchange 10: Good morning.**

Soldier:	Good morning!	b/o/jooR!
Local:	Good morning.	b/o/jooR

It is appropriate to greet everyone with a handshake when you enter a room even if you already greeted them only an hour or two before.<sup>6</sup>

### **Exchange 11: How are you?**

Soldier:	How are you?	kom/e/ sa-va?
Local:	Fine, thank you.	by/e/, meRsee

Ivoirians will offer water and a seat to houseguests, then inquire about family or other news.<sup>7</sup>

### **Exchange 12: Please sit down and have a glass of water.**

Soldier:	Please sit down and have a glass of water.	aseeyeytwa seel tE pley ey ty/e/ sE veR do
Local:	Thank you.	meRsee



## Hospitality and Gifts

If invited to a social event or to someone's home, it is considered polite to arrive on time.<sup>8</sup>

### **Exchange 13: Good evening.**

Soldier:	Good evening!	b/o/ swaR!
Local:	Good evening.	b/o/ swaR

An appropriate gift for the host would be a small souvenir, identifiably from the United States, or something with a company logo on it.<sup>9</sup> The best time to present gifts is at the beginning of the visit.<sup>10</sup>

### **Exchange 14: This is a small gift.**

Soldier:	This is a small gift.	Sey /u/ pEtee kado
Local:	Thank you.	meRsee

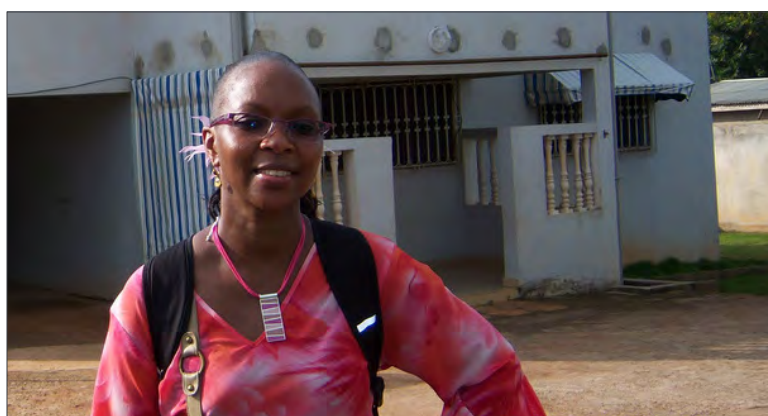
The best time for conversation is after the meal.<sup>11</sup>

### **Exchange 15: Good night.**

Soldier:	Good night.	bonE nUee
Local:	Good night.	bonE nUee

### **Exchange 16: Have a safe trip.**

Soldier:	Have a safe trip.	fet /u/ b/o/ vowayaj
Local:	Thank you.	meRsee



*A welcoming smile  
Flickr / BBC World Service*

Ivoirians are resigned to a degree of corruption in the government. They do not discuss it openly, and it would be rude to broach the subject. This is reflected in the way corruption is described. The French verb *bouffer*, for example, is slang for “to eat.” But in the Ivoirian context it more commonly conveys “lining one’s pockets.” Example: *Il a bouffé l’argent de la caisse*, or “He has emptied the till.”<sup>12</sup>



Smoked fish  
Flickr / ILRI

## Eating and Types of Food

Ivoirians are hospitable people who enjoy eating with family, friends, and neighbors. The sharing of food is a sharing of life's good fortunes, daily and in religious or traditional ceremonies. In village life, eating together in a common area engenders community spirit. Females join together as one group, grown men as another, and boys as a third. Diners sit on large mats on the ground. Meals are cooked outdoors. Food is typically eaten with the hand (right only), not with utensils. Rice, rolled into a tight ball, is used to scoop up meat and sauce from common bowls. Elders eat first, to certify that the food is not

contaminated or gone bad. During the meal, talking is kept to a minimum. After the meal, a bowl of water is passed for hand-cleaning, then conversation resumes.<sup>13, 14</sup>

### Exchange 17: May I have a tea?

Soldier:	May I have a tea?	jE pE avwaR dU tey?
Local:	Yes sir!	wee mEsyER!

Although there is a commonality to Ivoirian cuisine, it varies among the many ethnic groups, often depending on locally available foodstuffs. Grains and tubers, usually cultivated locally, are the staples of the Ivoirian diet: yams, cassava, rice, millet, corn. These are complemented with peas, beans, peanuts, and other vegetables. Meat is a bit of a luxury; for those who can afford it, chicken is a favorite, and, among coastal inhabitants, fish. The typical dessert is fresh fruit, served with *bangui* (white palm wine), or ginger beer.<sup>15</sup>

### Exchange 18: This tastes so good!

Soldier:	This tastes so good!	sa goot b/o/!
Local:	Thank you!	meRsee!

Ivoirian cuisine tends to the spicy. *Kedjenou* is a traditional dish; seasoned poultry or meat cooked in a vegetable sauce, which may consist of tomatoes, onions, eggplant, okra, or peanuts.<sup>16</sup>

### Exchange 19: I would like *kedjenou* chicken.

Soldier:	I would like <i>kedjenou</i> chicken.	jE /e/vee d/u/ pooley kedjenoo
Local:	Yes, sir.	wee, mEsyER

Another traditional dish is *foutou*, made from a thick paste of pounded yams or plantains and eaten with a spicy meat or fish sauce. It may be served with a grasscutter, a giant jungle rat.<sup>17</sup>

*Attiéké* and *placali* are side dishes made from fermented cassava. *Attiéké*, also called manioc, is similar to couscous.<sup>18</sup>

### Exchange 20: What is this?

Soldier:	What is this?	sey kwa sa?
Local:	It's <i>placali</i> , ma'am.	sey dU plakalee, madam



Typical clothing  
Flickr / BBC World Service

## Dress Code and Clothing

Ivoirians can be found wearing either Western styles of clothing or traditional garb. Western clothing is typical in towns and cities, while traditional dress is more common in rural areas. Dress is generally informal—blue jeans and shirts, for instance—in most settings. Business people dress conservatively. Ivoirian women are fashion-conscious and still wear traditional brightly colored dresses and head scarves. In the villages, they wear *pagnes*, cloth wraps used as skirts. Men wear shorts or cloth wraps. Long, decorative robes are worn for ceremonial occasions.<sup>19</sup>

### Exchange 21: Is this acceptable to wear?

Soldier:	Is this acceptable to wear?	sE takseptabl, jE pE lpoRtey?
Local:	It's fine.	sE koRekt



Visitors should dress for the tropical weather, lightweight clothing in the day, waterproof layers for the rain. Safari clothes are acceptable for casual attire, but not for business, as they may serve as uncomfortable reminders of the colonial era. Camouflage or military dress should be avoided.<sup>20, 21</sup>

Women's dress in rural areas is conservative. Visitors should wear skirts below the knee, and keep the shoulders covered.<sup>22</sup>

## Non-Religious Holidays and Social Events

### *Public Holidays*

**I**ndependence Day celebrates Côte d'Ivoire's independence from French colonial rule. It is celebrated on 7 August, the day that the country became independent in 1960.<sup>23</sup>

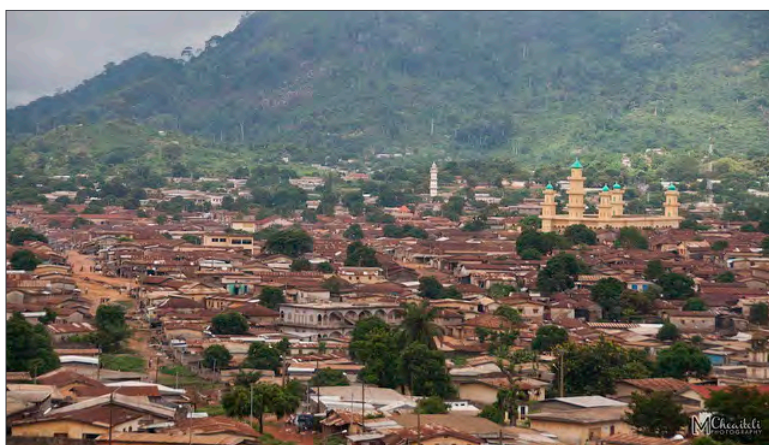
National Peace Day has been observed every 15 November since 1996. It is a day to promote peace and human rights.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, New Year's Day and Labor Day are celebrated on their traditional dates of 1 January and 1 May.<sup>25</sup>

### *The Bouaké Carnival*

Thousands of visitors are attracted every year to the Bouaké Carnival, which takes place in one of Côte d'Ivoire's largest cities. The week-long festival, from the end of March through the first week of April, is held at St. Michael's Cathedral and celebrates life and friendship. It features music, food, street parties, and parades.<sup>26</sup>

### **Exchange 22: When is the Bouaké Carnival?**

Soldier:	When is the Bouaké Carnival?	k/a/ oRa lyE lE kaRnaval dE boo-akey?
Local:	Next week.	la sEm/i/n pRoshen



*Man, home of Fêtes des Masques  
Flickr / Moustafa Cheaiteli*

### *The Festival of Masks*

Celebrated every November, *Fêtes des Masques* in the town of Man is one of the most popular festivals in Côte d'Ivoire. Villages in the district hold dance competitions, paying homage to forest deities whose spirits are embodied in the elaborate masks worn by the participants.<sup>27</sup>



### *Fête du Dipri*

Held in Gomon, near Abidjan, this April festival kicks off at midnight, when women and children sneak out of their huts. Naked, they engage in rites intended to exorcise the village of evil spells. Before sunrise the chief appears, the pounding of drums begins, and sleepy villagers drift into trances. Festivities continue into the late afternoon.<sup>28</sup>

### *New Yam Festival*

An area stretching from the Bandama River in Côte d'Ivoire, on the west, to the Central African Republic in the center of the continent, is known as the Yam Belt. It produces about 94% of the world's yams, with Nigeria alone accounting for 71% of world production. Yams, a starchy tuber, have been a major crop plant in the region for thousands of years. In fact, much of the belt overlaps the domain of the Kwa language group, suggesting an ethnic basis to yam cultivation.<sup>29, 30</sup>

#### **Exchange 23: When is the Yam Festival?**

Soldier:	When is the Yam Festival?	k/a/ sey la fet dezigname?
Local:	In August.	/e/ noot

Yams are planted between February and April, and harvested six to nine months later. The traditional New Yam Festival celebrates the harvesting of the new crop, and is held at different times in different locales. Any remaining yams from the previous season are discarded. In some cultures, eating new yams before the festival was prohibited; this prevented the consumption of immature tubers, guarding against starvation later in the season.<sup>31</sup> These societies applied mystical justification to the practices, however: proper rituals ensured a successful harvest, premature consumption cursed it.

The festivals, held across the Yam Belt, are cultural and festive; they are also used as the opportunity for political speeches and messages of reconciliation. And, of course, consumption of the new yams in different ways.<sup>32</sup>

## Do's and Don'ts

- **Do** shake everyone's hand upon entering a room, even if you have greeted them earlier that day.
- **Do** ask someone before taking a photo because some Ivoirians believe that having one's picture taken steals the soul.
- **Don't** discuss politics, corruption, or religion.
- **Don't** extend or use your left hand for any reason in the presence of Muslims. It is reserved for activities undertaken in the restroom.
- **Don't** issue commands to elders. Be respectful.
- **Don't** pick up a mask and put it on. Ivoirians believe this transforms a person into the spirit the mask represents.

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## Overview: Chapter 3 Assessment

1. Yams have been a staple in the Ivoirian diet for centuries.

**TRUE**

Côte d'Ivoire is located in a region known as the Yam Belt that produces about 94% of the world's yams. Yams, which have been a major crop plant in the region for thousands of years, are the focus of cultural celebrations held annually across the country.

2. Some Ivoirians do not like having their pictures taken.

**TRUE**

One should ask before taking someone's photo because some Ivoirians believe that having one's picture taken steals the soul.

3. Like in the West, Ivoirians sit at tables and use utensils for eating.

**FALSE**

Diners sit on large mats on the ground in Côte d'Ivoire, where food is typically eaten with the right hand. Rice, rolled into a tight ball, is used to scoop up meat and sauce from common bowls.

4. Ivoirians enjoy conversations while eating together.

**FALSE**

During the meal, talking is kept to a minimum. The best time for conversation is after the meal.

5. Annually, naked women and children engage in rites intended to exorcise evil spirits.

**TRUE**

During the annual Fête du Dipri festival in Gomon, which kicks off every April at midnight, women and children sneak out of their huts naked to engage in rites intended to exorcise their village of evil spirits.



*View over Abidjan  
Flickr / Moustafa Cheaiteli*

## Chapter 4: Urban Life

### Introduction

Côte d'Ivoire's coastline—which lacks natural harbors, is blocked by rocks, sandbars, and lagoons, and has dangerous Gulf of Guinea currents—has made it unsuitable for maritime traffic throughout the nation's history. Thus, the country began the 20th century less developed than other areas of West Africa.<sup>1</sup> The vast majority of the native population was rural. Communities ranged from villages to small towns and cities did not exist.

During the European quest for territory in Africa in the late 19th century, the French explored the interior of Côte d'Ivoire, making what is today the nation of Côte d'Ivoire a colony in 1893. The country steadily converted from a subsistence economy to cash crops for export. Abidjan began the 20th century as a lagoon fishing village of several hundred inhabitants, and ended it as Côte d'Ivoire's biggest city, with a population of several million.<sup>2</sup>

Bouaké, about 350 km (217 mi) inland on the railway, is Côte d'Ivoire's second-biggest city, with a population approaching a million. (The last official census was in 1998; current city population statistics are unavailable).<sup>3</sup> Yamoussoukro, the official capital and one of the biggest cities, has a population of more than 800,000. There are approximately a dozen cities with populations over 100,000, most in the low six-figure range.<sup>4</sup>

Urban residents make up 51% (2010 est.) of the total population. Urbanization is projected to increase by 3.7% annually.<sup>5</sup>



*Ebrié Lagoon*  
*Flickr / Felix Krohn*

## Urban Planning

### *Abidjan*

**A**bidjan, with close to 4 million residents, is Côte d'Ivoire's most populous city. It is the major urban focus of the country and an important city for the entire West Africa region.<sup>6</sup>

Prior to colonialism, Abidjan was a fishing village on the Ebrié Lagoon. French colonial authorities recognized its strategic location as a port and as the end point of a railway linking the interior to the sea. Construction of the railway began in 1903, spurring economic activity and population growth in towns along the line. The original line, 800 km (497 mi) from Abidjan to Bobo-Dioulasso

(Burkina Faso), was completed in 1934; an extension to Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) was completed in 1954. Abidjan boomed in population from 800 in 1910, to 17,000 in 1934, to more than 110,000 in 1954.<sup>7, 8</sup>

Colonial authorities, starting in 1928, guided the growth of Abidjan through a series of plans that involved projects such as laying out street grids and zoning areas for industrial and residential usage. The Vridi Canal, which joined the Ebrié Lagoon to the sea, opened in 1950. The Badani Plan, approved in 1952, established goals for transforming the city into a major port and industrial center. In the first two decades following independence in 1960, rapid economic development was fed by the migration of labor from the savanna region of Côte d'Ivoire and from neighboring countries. Many workers settled in Abidjan, which spurred massive housing development. A 1969 plan led to the expansion of urban boundaries, the development of commercial zones, and the recognition of the increasing potential for tourism. All such plans enjoyed only partial success because unexpected fluctuations in economic conditions and population undermined some of the planners' designs. Planning was not successful in checking the rapid growth that led to the rise of shantytowns populated by the underemployed.<sup>9, 10, 11</sup>

## Yamoussoukro

Unlike Abidjan, which was developed around realistic guiding principles, Yamoussoukro was a whim of authoritarian President Félix Houphouët-Boigny, who ruled Côte d'Ivoire from 1960–1993. Houphouët-Boigny used his power and influence over the treasury to transform the village of his birth, which is located in the middle of the forest region, into a massive city. Large expanses of forest were leveled; they were replaced by gridded neighborhoods, a presidential palace surrounded by an artificial lake, modern office buildings, a university, a golf course, and the world's largest church, the Basilica of Our Lady of Peace. These oversized facilities are generally underutilized because they are beyond the reach of most Ivoirians. In addition, most Ivoirians do not own automobiles, so they cannot tour the city by car. A walking tour is also out of the question because the city, which exudes a sense of emptiness, is so extensive. In 1983, Houphouët-Boigny made Yamoussoukro the capital, although most of the real governance of the country remains in the prior capital, Abidjan.<sup>12</sup>



Urban housing, Abidjan  
Flickr / abdallahh

## Housing

Abidjan, as the Ivory Coast's largest city, draws the focus of attention for urban conditions. The city has several positive aspects: high-rises, modern thoroughfares, beaches, and European-style neighborhoods in areas like the central Le Plateau district. But most residents live in modest to impoverished conditions. About 70% live in *habitats de cour*, sets of living units with a shared courtyard (*cour*), kitchen, and sanitary facilities. Most of these residents are renters.<sup>13</sup>

Roughly 16–20% of Abidjan's residents live in "precarious settlements." These are makeshift dwellings erected illegally, often in areas linked to industrial development, like the Vridi-Canal

district near the port facilities. These settlements, which often lack infrastructure, services, and road network, are poorly served by public transportation. Garbage and sanitation disposal is handled haphazardly, drinking water is purchased from retailers, and paraffin lamps supply indoor light. The settlements are generally filthy and disease ridden, and crime rates are high.<sup>14</sup>



### Exchange 24: Where do you live?

Soldier:	Where do you live?	oo voo-veevey?
Local:	I live in Treichville.	jE vee ah tReshvil

Dwellings are often one-room “bedsits,” generally constructed from planks, sheet metal, and other discarded materials. Floors are cement, roofs are corrugated sheeting, and plastic sheeting is used to waterproof the walls. The impermanent construction is by design. If authorities crack down, a dwelling can be packed up and moved to another area. Occupancy levels are high: 3.5 persons per room in the poorest areas.<sup>15</sup>

### Exchange 25: Are they all members of your family?

Soldier:	Are they all members of your family?	s/o/til toos m/e/bR dE votR fameeye?
Local:	No.	n/o/

The majority of the inhabitants in the settlements are undereducated and, if employed, work as launderers, fishers, laborers, watch persons, domestic helpers, waiters, and at other jobs that do not require apprenticeships. Many residents who come to Abidjan for work cannot afford to return home when employment runs out.<sup>16</sup>

### Exchange 26: How many people live here?

Soldier:	How many people live here?	a k/o/biy/e/ dE peRson/e/ veevE eesee?
Local:	30.	a tR/e/t peRson

With its steadily rising population, Abidjan requires tens of thousands of new dwellings every year.<sup>17</sup>

## Immigrants

During the 1960s and 1970s, the years of rapid economic growth known as the “Ivoirian miracle,” Côte d’Ivoire’s economy was largely expanded through the work of laborers from poorer neighboring countries like Burkina Faso and Mali. Immigrants make up about a third of the nation’s population.<sup>18</sup> During the dampened economic period of the post-miracle years, immigrant populations were made unwelcome in a variety of ways.

Starting in 1990, an annual residence permit was required for foreigners. Because the permit was a method of raising revenue for state coffers, the cost was raised whenever the government faced economic difficulties. At times, foreigners were rounded up and expelled from the country if they could not produce a permit.<sup>19</sup> The concept of *ivoirité*—or the state of being truly Ivoirian—which rose to prominence in the power struggle following the 1993 death of longtime President Houphouët-Boigny, was an attempt to redefine residents of foreign origin as citizens with fewer rights and exclude them from the political process.

### Exchange 27: Are you Ivoirian?

Soldier:	Are you Ivoirian?	e-tU eevwaReey/e/?
Local:	No, I come from Burkina Faso.	n/o/ jE vy/e/ dU buRkeena faso

In Côte d’Ivoire, employment discrimination against immigrants takes several forms. Anyone can work as unskilled labor, but preference is given to Ivoirians for apprenticed or skilled positions. Professional positions are also reserved for citizens. Because obtaining citizenship is a long and difficult process, foreigners are relegated to the lowest rungs of society.<sup>20</sup>

Housing opportunities are subject to bias as well. In government-produced low-cost housing, 80% of the residents are Ivoirians, whereas the majority of the inhabitants in the squalid settlements are foreigners.<sup>21, 22</sup>

The recently concluded civil war was fueled by ethnic tensions. Both rural and urban immigrants often found themselves in jeopardy. Immigrant neighborhoods in Abidjan were targeted by government security forces to prevent the areas from becoming sanctuaries for rebels. Soldiers often threatened or extorted immigrants.<sup>23, 24</sup>

In the run-up to the 2010 presidential election, President Gbagbo abolished the residence permit requirement, with the professed goal of strengthening the foreign community to benefit the economy.<sup>25</sup> The ultimate winner of the disputed election, President Ouattara, has preached reconciliation and unity, but policies in regard to immigrants are as yet unclear.<sup>26</sup>



*Doctors in an urban hospital  
Flickr / Community Eye Health*

## Healthcare

### *War-Related Healthcare*

The effects of the civil war and the 2010–11 post-election violence overshadow current considerations of healthcare in Côte d'Ivoire. When President Gbagbo contested the electoral victory of his successor, Alassane Ouattara, it set off 5 months of conflict, ending with Gbagbo's arrest on 11 April 2011. By the end of the conflict, Côte d'Ivoire had an estimated 1 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). Many IDPs massed into overcrowded refugee camps that lacked clean water and sanitation facilities. Among the IDPs were doctors and other medical professionals,

who left medical facilities understaffed or abandoned. Medical facilities were damaged or destroyed, and pharmaceuticals were looted. Ambulances were stolen, leaving patients to supply their own emergency transportation.<sup>27, 28</sup> By September 2011, three-quarters of the IDPs had returned to their homes, but damage to the medical infrastructure remains, particularly in the western region.<sup>29</sup>

At the end of the crisis, President Ouattara addressed the emergency by implementing a policy of free healthcare for all. But the program failed to project the system's capacity to deliver services. Doctors could diagnose problems for free and issue prescriptions, but drugs were not available. Some doctors and nurses pilfered pharmaceuticals for resale to make up for loss of salary. In January 2012, free care was abandoned, except for pregnant women and children under six.<sup>30, 31</sup>

An invisible cost of the conflict—unmeasured by the Health Ministry—has been the impact on mental health. Many people in Côte d'Ivoire were traumatized by witnessing violence, sometimes against loved ones. Participants in the violence, some of whom are youths, have experienced long-term psychological damage as well.<sup>32</sup> Young children, separated from their parents and too traumatized to speak, offer special challenges.<sup>33</sup>

## *Health Indicators, Diseases, and Hospitals*

These war-related consequences are layered on top of existing health problems. African nations, in general, have poor health indicators (such as high birth-related deaths for both mothers and infants and low life expectancies) compared to other nations. Cote d'Ivoire is no exception: at 57 years (2012 est.), life expectancy in Côte d'Ivoire is approximately 20 years less than in the United States and most European countries. Of particular concern is the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate. Cote d'Ivoire ranks high, with 3.4% (2009 est.) of adults living with the disease.<sup>34</sup> Prevalence rates vary demographically, yielding higher rates, for example, for women (6.4%) and residents of Abidjan (6.1%).<sup>35</sup> Acts of rape, committed against women and girls during the post-election conflict, threaten to spread HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.<sup>36, 37</sup> In the high-risk 15–24 age group, an accurate understanding of HIV and its dangers is low.<sup>38</sup>

Additionally, the country carries a high risk of infectious diseases endemic to West Africa. Among these are insect-borne diseases like malaria, dengue fever, and trypanosomiasis (African sleeping sickness); and food or waterborne diseases like schistosomiasis bacterial diarrhea, and typhoid fever.<sup>39</sup>

### **Exchange 28: Where is the hospital?**

Soldier:	Where is the hospital?	oo ey lopeetal?
Local:	In the center of town.	o s/e/tR dE la veel

The country's best hospitals are in Abidjan. Medical care is extremely limited elsewhere. Most doctors and hospitals expect payment in cash, regardless of whether the patient has health insurance.<sup>40</sup>

### **Exchange 39: My arm is broken, can you help me?**

Soldier:	My arm is broken, can you help me?	m/o/ bRa ey fRaktURey, tU pE meydey?
Local:	Yes, I can help you.	wee, jE pE voo zeydey





*Schoolgirls singing  
Flickr / BBC World Service*

## Education

### *Historical Background*

In 1887, French colonials set up the first school in Côte d'Ivoire. Its purpose was to train clerks and interpreters to aid in the administration of the territory. Africans were not included among the students. After 1908, some Africans were permitted to attend government schools, but the numbers remained extremely low for decades. A separate educational system, which did include Africans, developed within the Catholic missionary network.

By the end of World War II, the government had established an assimilationist policy designed to absorb Africans into the French political elite. From 1947–57, the French expended a great deal of effort and money on developing the educational system. In 1945, 2.5% of the total population attended school; by 1957, the number had risen to 24%. As independence approached, education was given increasingly greater emphasis. The system evolved along the French model: six years of primary school with qualified students advancing to seven years of secondary school, leading to a baccalaureate. A select few students were sent to universities in France and Senegal. Côte d'Ivoire's first institute of higher learning was established in 1958; it became the University of Abidjan in 1962. A large number of teacher and vocational schools were also established.

In the 1950s, a third of the nation's schools were religious, 90% of which were Catholic. But colonial authorities discouraged missionary schools, fearing the spread of radical ideas. Under President Houphouët-Boigny the policy changed, and religious schools received government subsidies. In the north and in other areas with Muslim populations, Quranic schools have become prevalent.<sup>41, 42, 43, 44</sup>

### *Post-Independence*

Houphouët-Boigny, a 1925 graduate of the Dakar School of Medicine and Pharmacy in Senegal, devoted up to a third of the nation's budget to education. The fiscal crises of the 1980s and beyond had a direct impact on education expenditures. By the mid-1990s, education spending had shrunk to 19% of the budget. Problems in education were a harbinger of greater problems to come in the civil war. Spending on education had always favored the Christian south, even in flush times, amplifying the divisions between south and north, rich and poor, Christian and Muslim. In addition, in

the foundering economy, the link between academic achievement and meaningful employment began to weaken. That and broader issues led to ominous and at times violent student protests in the 1990s.<sup>45</sup>

President Gbagbo, elected in 2000 to a country with an illiteracy rate above 50%, made the struggling education system a priority, but his reforms were undermined by the 2002 civil war. Students and teachers were among the hundreds of thousands of people displaced by the war. Schools were looted, destroyed, or used as military facilities. The remaining schools were overcrowded, with high pupil-to-teacher ratios. Students were recruited as combatants. The teacher shortage was exacerbated by losses due to HIV/AIDS. With so many students absent from the normal school rotation, illiteracy increased.<sup>46</sup>

The resumption of normal education was included in the peace agreement that ended the conflict. But the system remains in disarray. The violent 5-month crisis that followed the 2010 elections caused further disruptions. University campuses were turned into campaign centers, battlegrounds, and military encampments. The 2011 academic year was all but lost.<sup>47</sup> For example, with the start of the October 2011 term, students returned to school but attendance was 12–50% of normal.<sup>48</sup>

## Restaurants

*M**aquis* are cheap and lively open-air restaurants in the courtyards of private homes. The mistress of the house serves dishes made from a variety of meat, fish, local produce, and spices.<sup>49</sup> The best place for spicy African food is the densely populated Treichville district of Abidjan.<sup>50</sup>

### Exchange 30: May I have eating utensils?

Soldier:	May I have eating utensils?	jE pE avwaR dey Uzt/e/ sil pooR m/a/jey?
Local:	We eat with our hands.	noo m/a/j/o/ avek ley dwa

Travelers often recommend the Lebanese dining establishments in Abidjan rather than Ivoirian establishments. The latter tend to have limited menus with dishes that may not appeal to international visitors.<sup>51</sup>

### Exchange 31: Is there a restaurant around here?

Soldier:	Is there a restaurant around here?	yateel /u/ RestoR/a/ d/a/ ley z/e/veeR/o/?
Local:	Yes, down the street.	wee, /e/ ba dla RU



*Market in Bouaké  
Flickr / BBC World Service*

## Markets

Much of Côte d'Ivoire shopping takes place in lively outdoor markets (*marchés*), which can be found in both small towns and cities. The commercial heart of Abidjan is the Marché de Treichville, near the ports. Many people do their grocery shopping at this market, which features produce trucked in from plantations. Other products available include textiles, cosmetics, ornamental items, jewelry, pottery, and basketware. Hard bargaining is expected.<sup>52, 53</sup>

### Exchange 32: How much longer will you be here?

Soldier:	How much longer will you be here?	komby/e/ dE t/e/ aley-voo /e/koR Restey eesee?
Local:	Three more hours.	tRwa zER oh plUs

A study of Côte d'Ivoire market and street vendors <sup>revealed</sup> that more than 70% of the traders were women. The study also noted that women tend to sell food products, while men sell non-food products.<sup>54</sup>

### Exchange 33: Can I buy a tribal mask here?

Soldier:	Can I buy a tribal mask here?	pU-ee-jE ashtey /u/ mask tReebal deesee?
Local:	Of course!	seRtenm/e/!

Many of the vendors belong to the unregulated informal economy. Their ranks swell as unemployment rises in the regular economy.<sup>55</sup>

### Exchange 34: Do you have any more of these?

Soldier:	Do you have any more of these?	avey-voo dav/a/taj dE sEsee?
Local:	Yes.	wee

The markets stayed open and active during Côte d'Ivoire's recent periods of violence.<sup>56</sup>

### Exchange 35: May I examine this close up?

Soldier:	May I examine this close up?	jE pE egzaminey sEsee dE too pRe?
Local:	Sure.	seRtenm/e/!

Following the post-election turmoil of 2010-11, the Public Health Ministry instituted Operation Clean Nation, an attempt to regulate the markets and improve the national image. Calling the hawkers a “serious nuisance,” government officials demolished shops and makeshift stalls and confiscated merchandise. Critics complained that vendors would simply be thrown back into poverty.<sup>57, 58</sup>

### Exchange 36: Can you give me change for this?

Soldier:	Can you give me change for this?	poovey-voo mE sh/a/ jey sEsee k/o/tRe dE la money?
Local:	No.	n/o/

## Transportation

Abidjan's international airport (Abidjan Félix Houphouët-Boigny International Airport) is 16 km (10 mi) southeast of the city center.<sup>59</sup>

### Exchange 37: Which road leads to the airport?

Soldier:	Which road leads to the airport?	kel Root men ah la-eyRopoR?
Local:	The road heading east.	laa Root sE deeReej/e/ veR lest

The international express train used to be a primary means of traveling from Abidjan to Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

### Exchange 38: Is there a train station nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a train station nearby?	yateel Une gaR pRey deesee?
Local:	No.	n/o/



The public transportation system in Abidjan is poor. If bus travel is necessary, the express line is the best choice.<sup>60</sup> Legitimate taxis are cheap and available, but poorly maintained.<sup>61</sup>

**Exchange 39: Can I get a cab around here?**

Soldier:	Can I get a cab around here?	pUee jE tRoovey /u/ taksee oh zal/e/tooR?
Local:	Yes.	wee

Drivers are notorious for not respecting the rules of the road. Serious accidents are common.<sup>62</sup>

**Exchange 40: Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?**

Soldier:	Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?	yateel /u/ b/o/ mekanisy/e/ too pRe?
Local:	Yes.	wee

Communal taxis (*woro-woros*) travel only within the limits of a district. They are not metered and are unsafe. Local vans (*gbaka*) should be avoided because of the high accident rate.<sup>63</sup>

**Exchange 41: Can you take me there?**

Soldier:	Can you take me there?	tU pE mamneR lah-ba?
Local:	No.	n/o/



*Murdered in the street*  
Flickr / Bruno Ben Moubamba

## Crime

Crime is a major problem in cities and throughout the country. According to a 2008 World Health Organization estimate, Côte d'Ivoire has the third-highest homicide rate in the world, with 56.9 murders per 100,000 people annually. By comparison, the next-ranked country in West Africa is Guinea with 22.5; the worldwide rate is 6.9, with 5.0 for the United States and 1.2 for the United

Kingdom. Most of Côte d'Ivoire's homicide victims (85%) are male.<sup>64</sup>

The country has high rates of population growth and poverty, which inevitably lead to high rates of robbery, burglary, and other property crimes. Criminals may be armed and prepared to use force, but because valuables are the target, victims are usually not harmed if they do not resist. Armed robberies may be carried out by well-coordinated gangs of three or four young men, sometimes dressed in military garb. Commonplace urban crimes are pick pocketing, purse snatching, street robbery, auto theft, carjacking, and residential burglary. Criminals target individuals, homes, businesses, and even police stations. Many restaurants, hotels, and other businesses shield themselves with private security.<sup>65, 66</sup>

Visitors to Abidjan run particular risks. Criminals target obvious items like watches, jewelry, and cameras. People who project affluence via their appearance and/or vehicle run increased risk. Thieves may use motorcycles in grab-and-flee operations. They may open the doors of vehicles stopped in traffic and steal items. Some Abidjan districts—Koumassi, Yopougon, Treichville, Adjamé, and Abobo—are considered extremely dangerous after dark. Pedestrians crossing the bridges into Le Plateau are at risk day or night.

The police presence is generally inadequate to the scale of the problem. Additionally, official corruption is widespread. The police operate checkpoints whose sole purpose is to extort money from vehicle operators and passengers. They can detain people who refuse to cooperate.<sup>67, 68, 69</sup>



*Street child  
Flickr / Moustafa Cheaiteli*

## Orphans and Street Children

It is estimated that Cote d'Ivoire has 1.4 million orphans (2006).<sup>70</sup> Hundreds of thousands of orphans live in poor conditions or on the street in Abidjan, the country's major metropolis. Their numbers are swelled by non-orphaned street children. The phenomenon of street children predates the civil war, but was exacerbated by it. The orphans are detached from their families for a variety of reasons. Their parents may have died from diseases such as AIDS and malaria or from famine or the war. The non-orphans may be runaways from abusive homes, or they may have

been brought from rural districts to work as porters or vendors in places like the Adjamé market, in the district directly north of Le Plateau.<sup>71</sup>

### Exchange 42: Where is your family?

Soldier:	Where is your family?	wey votR fameeye?
Local:	I am an orphan.	jE swee oRfel/i/

Adjamé is a commercial section of the city whose population is a quarter million, but 2 million travelers, traders, and shoppers pass through it every day. Street children flock to major intersections or population areas to beg.<sup>72</sup> Many boys belong to gangs; younger boys pay older ones for protection.<sup>73</sup> Many girls end up in prostitution, loitering around bus stations to trade sex for food or money. Many are victimized by pimps who keep them in line with machetes. They are forced to engage in unprotected sex, often carry HIV, and live short, violent lives.

### Exchange 43: Give me money.

Local:	Give me money.	don-mwa dlaRj/e/
Soldier:	Sorry I have none.	deyzoley j/e/ ey pa

Authorities encounter difficulties when trying to police the street children, many of whom offer cigarettes or chewing gum for sale to disguise their true activities.<sup>74</sup> They are wary of adults and resistant to any aid offered by NGO (Non-governmental Organization) workers.

#### Exchange 44: Please, buy something from me.

Local:	Please, buy something from me.	seel voo pley, ashetey mwa kelkE shoz
Soldier:	I have no money left.	jey plu daRj/e/



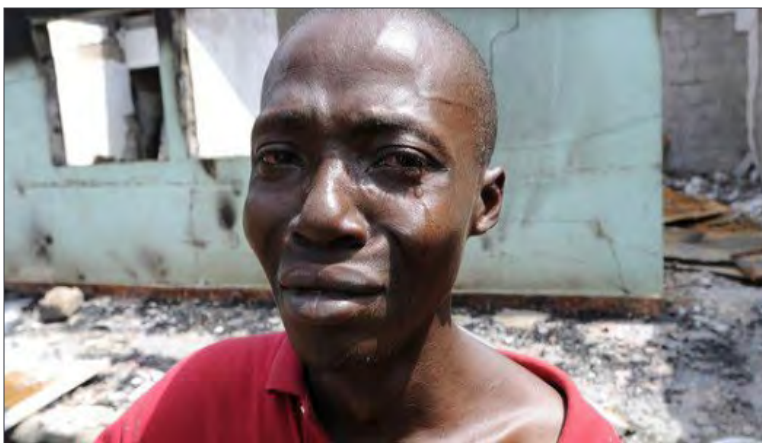
*Women working as street vendors  
Flickr / KONSUL*

### Human Trafficking

Côte d'Ivoire is a major site of human trafficking. Inside the country, workers are forcibly relocated from the impoverished north to the more prosperous south. Workers are also brought in from nearby countries like Ghana and Nigeria. Many victims are forced to labor in the agricultural sector; others are brought to the cities. Boys are pressed into work as carpenters and construction workers. Women and girls work as waitresses, domestic servants, and street vendors; sometimes they are brought in under false pretenses and forced into prostitution. Harsh treatment and severe working conditions are the norm.

The U.S. Department of State has labeled the efforts of the Côte d'Ivoire government to combat these problems "limited and ineffective." Laws against trafficking are inadequate, the political turmoil of the past 13 years has been a hindrance to enforcement, and the government has been slow to address problems. For example, authorities have consistently ignored accusations that policemen demand sex from foreign prostitutes in exchange for not arresting them.<sup>75</sup>





*A home destroyed*  
Flickr / Bruno Ben Moubamba

## War Crimes

Politically motivated crime occupies a special category. During the civil war and the post-election turmoil of 2010–11, each side of the conflict attacked civilians considered sympathetic to the opposing side. Atrocities included rape, murder, and the burning of entire villages. Political murders undoubtedly contribute to the country's high homicide rate. Pro-President Gbagbo militiamen used checkpoints to detain and massacre unarmed civilians. In one routine practice, they piled

tires and wood on a victim, then burned the person alive. Pro-Ouattara Republican Forces engaged in collective punishment that included mass murder. The criteria for these acts could be appallingly thin, including the victim's name, manner of dress, or native tongue. In Abidjan, rotting corpses were burned to get rid of the stench; charred remains littered the streets for weeks. Parking lots or soccer fields were used as makeshift burial grounds.<sup>76</sup>

The scale and pattern of the crimes suggested coordinated, systematic effort, which became the basis for the transfer of Gbagbo to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague to stand trial for crimes against humanity. In February 2012, the ICC expanded its investigation to 2002, near the start of Gbagbo's presidency.<sup>77</sup> On 13 July 2011, President Ouattara established the Dialogue, Truth, and Reconciliation Commission, whose mandate is to investigate war crimes and hold the guilty accountable. But Ouattara has been accused of sparing his own supporters from the inquisition.<sup>78</sup> The final outcome, and whether it cleanses the nation of violent habits, remains to be seen.

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## Overview: Chapter 4 Assessment

1. As much as 20% of Abidjan's residents live in illegal makeshift dwellings.

**TRUE**

Roughly 16–20% of Abidjan's residents live in “precarious settlements.” These are makeshift dwellings erected illegally, often in areas linked to industrial development.

2. Maquis are expensive restaurants located in downtown business areas.

**FALSE**

Maquis are cheap and lively open-air restaurants in the courtyards of private homes. The mistress of the house serves dishes made from a variety of meat, fish, local produce, and spices.

3. Most of the food in markets is sold by men.

**FALSE**

A study of Côte d'Ivoire market and street vendors revealed that more than 70% of the traders were women. The study also noted that women tend to sell food products, while men sell non-food products.

4. Crime is a pressing concern in Abidjan even during daylight.

**TRUE**

Because crime in Abidjan is a major problem, even during the day, upscale businesses often employ private security guards to protect their customers.

5. Restaurants of every type are known as *maquis* in Abidjan.

**FALSE**

Only open-air restaurants are called *maquis*.



*Woman with cocoa pods  
Flickr / Nestlé*

## Chapter 5: Rural Life

### Evolution of the Rural Economy

#### *The Colonial Era*

**T**he French colonization of Côte d'Ivoire coincided with the great chocolate boom (1880s–1914), when the worldwide market for cocoa expanded.<sup>1</sup> Cocoa seeds were introduced to Africa in this period and cultivated from Sierra Leone to Angola. The cocoa tree is native to the Amazon Basin, but flourishes within 10° of the equator, a zone that encompasses Côte d'Ivoire. The country's tropical climate is suitable to cocoa trees, which require copious rainfall and high humidity.

In Côte d'Ivoire, a number of European-owned cocoa ventures were established in the early 19th century, but all of them had collapsed by World War I. An African merchant, a Fanti from the Gold Coast named Morgan Dougan, diversified his plantation to



include cocoa. He employed numerous laborers and ran a steamboat down the Bandama River. By 1912, Dougan was the single largest producer in the colony. The colonial government took note and requested cocoa seeds for agricultural experimentation. Nor was Dougan's success lost on Africans. Farmers began to grow cash crops instead of crops grown for personal or local use. This development prompted the razing of forestland for farming. After World War I, the French administration encouraged white farmers to establish plantations for cocoa as well as for coffee, another crop that flourishes in tropical environments. French policy vacillated over whether to support African or white farmers, which led to countless small-holder farms in the region.<sup>2</sup>

France was the sole buyer of Ivoirian cocoa until the Great Depression of the 1930s. The Depression resulted in excess supply, which led to the development of supplementary markets in the United States, Holland, Great Britain, and Germany. Cocoa exports plummeted during World War II because of a lack of shipping. In the coffee industry, the French had long regarded Côte d'Ivoire's robusta bean as inferior to Brazilian Arabica coffee beans. But World War II shortages allowed the robusta to make inroads into the French market. During the postwar period, cocoa and coffee export markets grew haltingly, subject to fluctuations in world price and local weather. By the time of Côte d'Ivoire's independence in 1960, cocoa and coffee were firmly established as the country's two most valuable export products.<sup>3</sup>



*Training for better harvests  
Flickr / Nestlé*

### *Land Use After Independence*

Under French rule in West Africa, laws allowing forced labor, largely imported from neighboring countries, favored European planters.<sup>4</sup> In 1946 Félix Houphouët-Boigny, a wealthy farmer and African Agricultural Union leader at the time, sponsored legislation that abolished the practice, an action that established his influence in Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>5</sup> In 1950, Houphouët-Boigny abandoned anticolonialism to make a deal with the French. The deal stipulated that small-holder farms were to become the foundation of the agricultural economy, alternatives to cocoa and coffee were to be developed, and infrastructure was to be expanded.<sup>6</sup> This plan became the blueprint for

independent Côte d'Ivoire and Houphouët-Boigny's presidency. Agriculture would provide the path to development, not the industrialization favored by other newly independent African nations.<sup>7</sup>

President Houphouët-Boigny's approach, which favored small-holder farms, blocked the emergence of large-scale plantations. His policies included heavily taxing capital



accumulation and reinvestment and structuring the market to guarantee that most export profits went to the government. The policy resulted in the creation of roughly 400,000 farms of 5 hectares (12 acres) or less.<sup>8</sup>

### Exchange 45: Where do you work, sir?

Soldier:	Where do you work, sir?	oo tRavey-tU, mEsyER?
Local:	I am a farmer, sir.	jE swee fERmyeR, mEsyER

Land ownership and immigration policies were intertwined and contributed to small-holder proliferation. Traditionally in Côte d'Ivoire, few farmers held legal title to their land. According to established practice, land was allocated to members of kinship groups. Houphouët-Boigny upended customary and statutory law by famously declaring that “land belonged to the person who made it productive,” while simultaneously encouraging the migration of foreign labor through pacts made principally with Upper Volta (Burkina Faso) and Mali. This policy encouraged workers, Ivoirian and foreign, to cultivate new areas of the forest, particularly in the southwest where cocoa and coffee could be grown.<sup>9</sup>

### Exchange 46: Is this your land?

Soldier:	Is this your land?	sey votR teR/i/?
Local:	Yes.	wee

The forest was rapidly converted, but at great cost. Timber, one of Côte d'Ivoire's few natural resources, was severely depleted.<sup>10</sup> The undermining of traditional practices bred resentment between natives and foreigners. Because the multitude of small-holders lacked wealth and were powerless, a rural middle class that could influence policy failed to develop.<sup>11</sup>

### Exchange 47: Are you from around here?

Soldier:	Are you from around here?	abeete tU d/a/ ley z/e/ veeR/o/?
Local:	Yes.	wee

### *After Houphouët-Boigny*

In the 1980s, the long-term costs of Côte d'Ivoire's agriculture-based economy became clear. Heavy investment had been made in diversification of crops such as coconut, rubber, and sugar, but with limited success. The timber was mostly gone. The export profits that had flowed into government coffers and out to public works projects also ended up in the pockets of well-connected urban elites and into wasteful building projects like those in Yamoussoukro. When world prices for cocoa and coffee plummeted in the 1980s, the country lacked reserve funds, and foreign debt quickly soared to unsustainable levels.<sup>12</sup>

By the time Houphouët-Boigny died in 1993, the seeds for civil war had been sown. Prosperity was gone; population growth and unemployment were high. Three decades of muddled land-tenure policies had created a rural landscape in which locals, foreigners, and internal migrants, from a variety of religious and ethnic groups, were pitted against one another in a struggle for scarce land. The country pivoted from Houphouët-Boigny's stifling authoritarianism to a political free-for-all that divided the populace across ethnic lines.

The recent protracted era of turmoil in Côte d'Ivoire—from the 1999 coup (in which General Robert Guéï toppled President Henri Bédié) to the disputed 2010 presidential election—has given way to a fragile peace. But the conflict did not resolve land ownership issues, which have been complicated by new cases of land being taken by force or appropriated from internally displaced refugees.<sup>13, 14</sup>

#### **Exchange 48: Do you know this area very well?**

Soldier:	Do you know this area very well?	koney-tU paRfetm/e/ set Rejy/o/?
Local:	Yes.	wee



*Immigrant workers*  
Flickr / Moustafa Cheaiteli

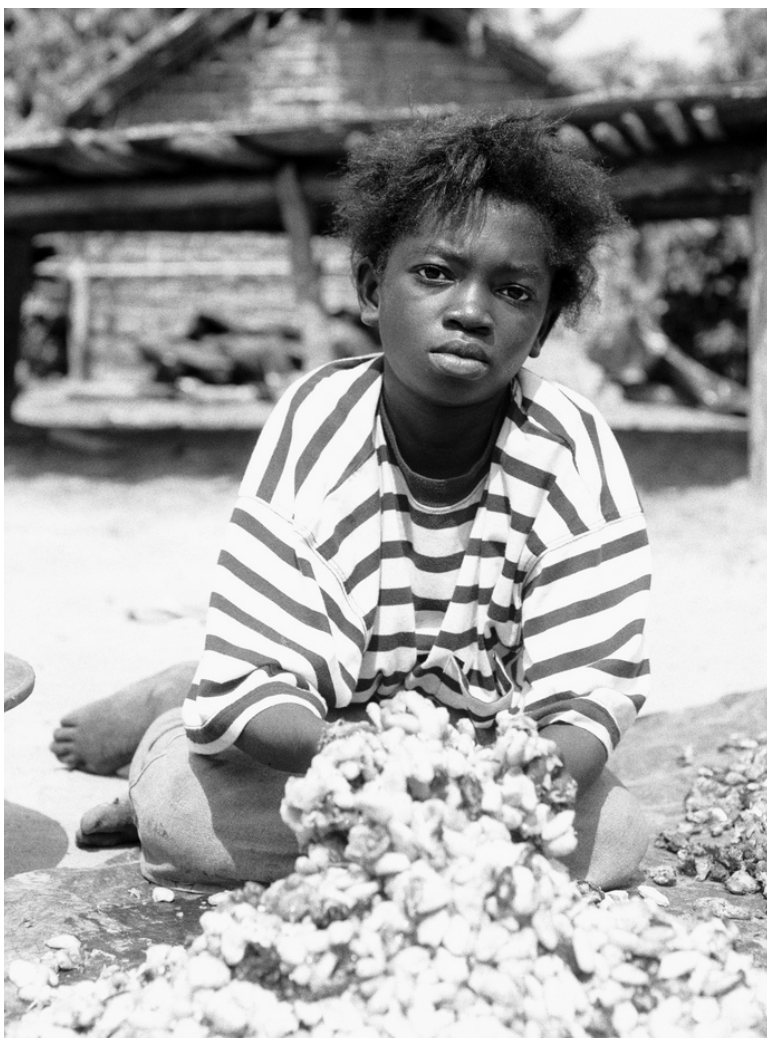
## Identity Cards

Because of a large, mostly undocumented immigrant workforce, questions of citizenship have become confused over time. This created the basis for *ivoirité*—the notion of being truly Ivoirian—and divisive identity politics. After the 2002 civil war, one of the impediments to holding elections was concern over voter legitimacy—the fear that noncitizens and foreigners would vote, thereby determining or altering the results.<sup>15</sup>

The issue was seemingly resolved in 2010, when representatives of Côte d'Ivoire and the United Nations worked out a definitive voter list and a

plan to distribute 5.7 million identity cards on the eve of the October election. Centers were set up and cards were distributed over a 4-day period.<sup>16</sup>

When the election was disputed, and a virulent wave of violence swept over the country, the downside to the identity card became apparent. With people on each side of the conflict determined to eradicate their political opponents, identity cards were used to make ad hoc determinations of ethnic identity. Victims were arrested and in some instances beaten or murdered.<sup>17</sup>



*Young girl mixing cocoa beans  
Flickr / Free2WorkPlatform*

## Chocolate and Child Labor

### *The History*

Child labor takes place in Africa and in Côte d'Ivoire. Côte d'Ivoire's cocoa industry employs about 70% of the population, including large numbers of children.<sup>18</sup> A September 2000 BBC television documentary exposed exploitative aspects of child labor in the Côte d'Ivoire cocoa industry and ignited an international controversy that persists to the present day.<sup>19</sup> Although children work in other industries, attention is drawn to the cocoa industry because of the availability of information about it.

Côte d'Ivoire's cocoa is harvested from hundreds of thousands of small farms, most of which are family operations. Historically, children have been expected to contribute. In prosperous times, such as during the "Ivoirian miracle" of the 1960s and 1970s, children helped on the family farm and attended school without serious conflict. But because of mostly depressed cocoa prices since that time, farmers have had to produce more to subsist, compelling their children to forgo education.

### **Exchange 49: Do your children go to school?**

Soldier:	Do your children go to school?	tɛy z/ɛ/f/a/ fRɛyk/ɛ/ tEteel ley-kol?
Local:	No.	n/o/

Farmers employ children from outside the family. Children are preferred to adults because of their compliancy. Labor brokers traffic young workers, primarily from Mali and Burkina Faso. Under normal conditions the children, mostly teenaged, make salaries that dwarf what they can earn in their impoverished homelands, and the income is sent to their families. But the system of trafficking and labor is exploitative. Known abuses include hiring children under the legal age of 14; luring children with promises of payment that go unfulfilled; entrapping children into debt servitude, in which income



is almost completely consumed by transportation and living expenses; and subjecting children to beatings and involuntary confinement.<sup>20, 21</sup>

### Exchange 50: Did these people threaten you?

Soldier:	Did these people threaten you?	es-kE sE j/e/ tE menasE?
Local:	No.	n/o/

### *The Controversy*

At the beginning of the child labor controversy in 2000–01, terms like “chocolate slaves” and images of children with whip scars on their backs were used to dramatize the issue. Widespread abuses were claimed. Consumers, as well as manufacturers like Nestlé and Hershey’s, received the message: “Your chocolate came from abused children.” But the Côte d’Ivoire government and sectors of the international cocoa industry strongly claimed that the charges were exaggerated.<sup>22</sup> For example, the BBC documentary focused on a single “500-acre plantation,” which is atypical of Côte d’Ivoire’s tiny family farms.

### Exchange 51: What do you grow?

Soldier:	What do you grow?	kes-kE tU kUlteev?
Local:	I grow cocoa.	jE kUlteev le kaka-o

Although abuse is undeniable, and even predictable, the scope of the problem is exceedingly difficult to measure. With so many small farms, many in remote and inaccessible locations, abuses can be concealed, and no reliable statistics for the problem have been gathered. The problem has been described anecdotally and through snowball sampling, in which interviewees direct the journalist or surveyor to other abuse victims, a data collection technique that may yield only a subset of the population.<sup>23</sup>

Economic exploitation, rather than slavery, is most likely experienced by children trafficked in from other countries; it is also more likely to be experienced by these children rather than farmers’ own offspring. In 2000, the Mali government estimated that 15,000 Malian children worked without pay on Côte d’Ivoire cocoa plantations.<sup>24</sup> A 2008–09 Tulane University survey estimated that 819,921 children worked in cocoa-related activities in Côte d’Ivoire.<sup>25</sup> Notwithstanding the 8-year gap between estimates, the Mali figure is under 2% of the total number of children.

The Worst Forms of Child Labor (WFCL), a 1999 Convention of the International Labour Organization, defines exploitation of child workers. Most nations, including Côte d’Ivoire, have ratified this convention.<sup>26</sup> Prohibitions include trafficking of children

for exploitative purposes or debt servitude. Specific restrictions in the local cocoa industry, set by Côte d'Ivoire, bar children under 18 from cutting trees, burning fields, carrying heavy loads, working with chemicals, and other high-risk activities.



*School instead of farming  
Flickr / Nestlé*

### *The Response*

The 2000–01 media coverage inspired the Harkin-Engel Protocol (named for its two U.S. Congressmen authors), a 2001 international non-legislative agreement aimed at bringing the cocoa industries of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana into compliance with WFCL standards.<sup>27</sup> The Côte d'Ivoire government, quick to recognize the political importance of the protocol, signed the plan of action. Progress on the issue was slowed not only by its inherent difficulty, but especially by the 2002 civil war and its aftermath. A series of international conferences and programs funded by NGOs (Non-governmental Organizations) failed to produce much measurable change. Côte d'Ivoire signed a 2005 accord with eight other West African nations to combat child trafficking. In 2007, the government established a Child Labor Monitoring System.<sup>28</sup> In late 2010, President Gbagbo signed a bill outlawing child trafficking and implemented WFCL. This was soon followed by the disputed election, which again threw the country into turmoil, disabling the enforcement regime. In 2011, the U.S. Department of State reported that the Côte d'Ivoire government was making progress on the issue, albeit slowly.<sup>29</sup>

## Healthcare

Rural Côte d'Ivoire has historically lagged far behind urban areas in terms of access to healthcare. The 2002 civil war restricted service delivery even more, and recovery was incomplete when the 2010 post-election violence delivered another setback. During the strife, health facilities, particularly in the west, were occupied and ransacked, causing medical professionals to flee. The health system virtually shut down. Diseases common to the region, such as malaria, meningitis, and leprosy, whose control depends on early intervention, went untreated.<sup>30, 31</sup>

### Exchange 52: Is Dr. Glondé in?

Soldier:	Is Dr. Glondé in?	es-kE lE doktUR glondey i ye?
Local:	No.	n/o/



*Doctor at a rural clinic  
Flickr / Sunset Parkerpix*

The post-election violence added new healthcare problems to existing issues. Violence persisted in rural regions, even after it had been halted in the cities. Civilians were targeted. Victims commonly suffered gunshot or machete wounds or symptoms of sexual violence.<sup>32</sup> Their problems were exacerbated by a lack of healthcare. Fear of harassment at armed checkpoints deterred many patients from seeking help.<sup>33</sup> Easily treatable injuries festered, leading to otherwise avoidable amputations, or death. The conflict disrupted the system of blood storage, leading to unnecessary deaths among those needing transfusions, especially children. Impromptu blood donations from relatives were hindered by a lack of collection and storage capacity.<sup>34</sup>

Years of conflict degraded water supply systems in the north. Northerners were forced into unsafe alternatives, such as digging shallow wells for drinking water or drinking creek water, which can lead to debilitating waterborne diseases from roundworms. Water access issues were particularly acute for war refugees living in camps or in the bush. Severe stomach ailments were common.<sup>35</sup> Recently, village water committees, made up of several ethnic groups, have been addressing local water issues.<sup>36</sup>



### Exchange 53: Do you know what is wrong?

Soldier:	Do you know what is wrong?	sey-tU kes-kee va pa?
Local:	No.	n/o/

Rural Ivoirians, particularly in the north and west, suffer alarmingly high rates of malnutrition. Children are especially affected. Chronic malnutrition affects 35–45% of the rural population; acute malnutrition, which can eventually lead to death, affects 3.6–7.2% of rural dwellers. Turmoil after the 2010 presidential election intensified malnutrition problems by preventing farmers from tending their crops.<sup>37</sup> Half of the country's cereal diet is rice, but only half of the needed supply is produced domestically; the remainder is imported. Government initiatives to contain the price of imported rice have fallen short; an average rural family spends over half its income on food. In 2012, the UN World Food Programme began supplying Côte d'Ivoire with emergency food relief.<sup>38</sup>



*Children selling corn and eggs  
Flickr / BBC World Service*

### Different Ways of Life

Although the cash crop economy—cocoa and coffee cultivation—dominates Côte d'Ivoire's rural landscape, some tribal groups have held onto traditional livelihoods. The Senufo, for example, who reside in north central Côte d'Ivoire, maintain a culture that values agriculture and collective food storage. They grow a wide variety of crops, including corn, millet, sorghum, peanuts, yams, potatoes, and many other tubers. Their notable cash crop is cotton. The Senufo take great pride in their farming prowess; the best cultivators typically become community leaders.<sup>39, 40</sup>

### Exchange 54: Does your elder live here?

Soldier:	Does your elder live here?	es-kE votR fReR eyney vee eesee?
Local:	Yes.	wee



In Senufo culture, inheritance is traced through mothers, the matrilineal line. Women and their maternal role are highly celebrated in religion and art. Distinctive sculptures, prized by museums, depict women in an expressionistic fashion, often with exaggerated breasts and suckling babies to emphasize motherhood.<sup>41, 42</sup> When these artifacts were exhibited in Paris museums in the early 20th century, they inspired artists like Picasso and were influential in the development of Cubism.

**Exchange 55: Can you take me to your elder?**

Soldier:	Can you take me to your elder?	tU pE mamney ah t/o/ fReR eyney?
Local:	Yes.	wee

It is difficult to know how much of Côte d'Ivoire's traditional tribal life was obliterated by the conflicts of the past decade. Life in western and northern Côte d'Ivoire became quite grim, especially after the 2010 election. Ethnic groups presumed to be loyal to President Gbagbo were harassed. Hundreds of thousands of people were displaced, and family members were murdered. Land was confiscated, leaving villages empty; when residents finally returned, they found buildings destroyed and food and valuables looted.<sup>43, 44</sup>

**Exchange 56: Respected elder, we need your advice.**

Soldier:	Respected elder, we need your help / advice / opinion.	avek Respe noo soleeseet/o/ votR eyd / vot Ravee / votR op/i/ y/o/
Local:	Yes.	wee

## Travel in Rural Areas

Road checkpoints in Côte d'Ivoire are operated by military police, civilian police, customs, and other entities. Officers detain all vehicles, subject travelers to document examinations, and collect formal and informal fees (bribes). During the post-election conflict, checkpoints were co-opted by opposing forces to harass or murder perceived political enemies.

The Borderless Alliance, an advocacy group, keeps statistics on the general problem. Côte d'Ivoire—based on measurements of 100 km (62 mi)—ranks second highest in the region in two categories: USD 11.88 in collected bribes and 1.4 checkpoints. The problem crosses national borders. For example, a trucker transporting goods 800 km (497 mi) from Abidjan to Lagos, Nigeria, is required to have 43 documents, pays 35 fees, and averages only 7 kph (4.4 mph). Truckers are unable to give precise delivery estimates, perishable goods are put at risk, and the uncertainty discourages business investment.<sup>45</sup> The overhead adds to the cost of transported goods, weighing upon economies plagued with poverty and high food prices. Jean-Louis Billon, president of Côte d'Ivoire's Chamber of Commerce, estimated that bribes alone may amount to USD 600 million annually, more than 2% of the Côte d'Ivoire economy.<sup>46</sup>

### Exchange 57: Would you step out of the vehicle please?

Soldier:	Would you step out of the vehicle please?	tU pE des/e/dR dE la vwatUR seel tE pley?
Local:	Yes.	wee

Côte d'Ivoire has 80,000 km (49,700 mi) of good to passable roads throughout the nation; only 8% are paved. Another 170,000 km (106,000 mi) of dirt roads are considered poor to impassable.<sup>47</sup> During the May–November rainy season, torrential rains, flooding, and landslides heavily affect rural road conditions.

### Exchange 58: Is this area mined?

Soldier:	Is this area mined?	es-kE set zone ey meeney?
Local:	Not at all.	absolUm/e/ pa

Ivoirian drivers have a reputation for recklessness. Nighttime driving is particularly dangerous; many cars lack working lights and accidents are routine.<sup>48</sup>

**Exchange 59: Where is the nearest checkpoint?**

Soldier:	Where is the nearest checkpoint?	oo sE tRoov lE post dE k/o/tRol lE plU pRey?
Local:	It's two kilometers.	a dE keelomeytR deesee

The main form of public transport between rural destinations is the minibus. Drivers usually wait until their vehicles are jam-packed before departing, which can take hours. Passengers may include chickens. Closer to cities, a private car and driver may be hired.<sup>49</sup>

**Exchange 60: May I see your ID?**

Soldier:	May I see your ID?	jE pE vwa votR kaRt deed/e/teetey?
Local:	Yes.	wee

**Exchange 61: Are you carrying any weapons?**

Soldier:	Are you carrying any weapons?	poRtetU Une aRm kelk/o/k?
Local:	Yes.	wee

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## Overview: Chapter 5 Assessment

1. Under President Houphouët-Boigny, land belonged to the person who cultivated it.

**TRUE**

“Land to the tiller” was the official policy under Houphouët-Boigny.

2. The plight of children in Côte d’Ivoire who work in the cocoa industry has received international publicity.

**TRUE**

In September 2000, a BBC television documentary exposed exploitative aspects of child labor in the Côte d’Ivoire cocoa industry and ignited an international controversy that persists to the present day. The publicity has led to international efforts to improve labor conditions on Ivoirian farms.

3. One result of civil war in the north was degraded water conditions.

**FALSE**

Years of conflict degraded water supply systems in the north. Northerners were forced into unsafe alternatives, such as digging shallow wells for drinking water or drinking creek water, which can lead to debilitating waterborne diseases from roundworms.

4. Cocoa is the main cash crop grown by the Senufo tribe.

**FALSE**

Cotton is the main cash crop cultivated by the Senufo.

5. The Senufo are a patrilineal culture.

**FALSE**

The Senufo are a matrilineal culture.



*Village couple  
Flickr / BBC World Service*

## Chapter 6: Family Life

### Introduction

**D**uring Côte d'Ivoire's colonization by France in the 19th and 20th centuries, African family traditions came into conflict with French social values. Both before and after independence in 1960, traditional practices such as polygamy (one man, multiple wives) and matrilineal descent (descent traced through one's mother and maternal ancestors) were undermined by family law, which elevated European values such as the nuclear family (mother, father, offspring). Pre-colonization social mores in the region were already complex because of different practices among ethnic groups. In the north, for example, Islamic practices had been adopted. Since colonization, many factors—such as changes to family law, foreign immigration, internal migration, increased urbanization, and mixed marriages—have continued to affect family life. Rates of change in family life differ between the city and country. Educated and urban elites



are more likely to reflect modern standards. Remotely located rural residents may continue to observe traditional practices and may be unaware of laws that bear on them.<sup>1</sup>



*Smiling family  
Flickr / Moustafa Cheaiteli*

## Family Structure and Lineage

Unlike the small nuclear family model of Western societies, traditional African social structure favors large extended families, defined as kinship groups.<sup>2</sup> The family includes multiple generations and members: parents and their children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, in-laws. Africans refer to older relatives as “auntie” or “uncle” and to cousins as “brother” or “sister” without regard to the actual relationship.<sup>3</sup> In the extended family, responsibilities and resources are distributed across the group, a source of social stability in chronically poor societies.

### Exchange 62: Do you have any brothers?

Soldier:	Do you have any brothers?	avey vey voo dey fReR?
Local:	Yes.	wee

The key element in the kinship group is lineage, or a link to ancestral heritage. Matrilineal descent is prevalent in Côte d’Ivoire, particularly in the eastern and central parts of the country among the Akan, Senufo, and others. Patrilineal groups—for instance, the Kru, Mandé, and Malinké—are found in the western half of the country. In a patrilineal group, both the exercise of authority and transmission of kinship are male prerogatives. In a matrilineal group, men retain authority but descent is traced exclusively through the maternal line. (A minor practice is bilineal descent, in which both parents contribute equally to kinship.) Groups generally stay geographically close, in the same neighborhood or village.<sup>4, 5</sup>

The line of descent determines significant issues, such as membership in the extended family, criteria for preferred spouses, and inheritance. Major family decisions, including the settlement of disputes or the arrangement of marriages, are customarily made by family elders, both men and women. Marriages are typically arranged between members of different lineages as a way of increasing the prestige and power of groups.<sup>6</sup>

### Exchange 63: Is this your wife?

Soldier:	Is this your wife?	sey votR epooz?
Local:	Yes.	wee

Patrilineal societies tend to be more stable because the rights and responsibilities of spouses are well defined. Matrilineal societies are considered fragile because they frequently introduce conflict between the male and female lines. For example, because wives remain under the authority of their brothers, or because a husband's accumulated wealth is inherited by his sister's sons, conflict can occur. When disagreements grow too severe, the lineage may split, leading to an association of related lineages, or a clan.<sup>7</sup>



*Happy couple  
Flickr / Moustafa Cheaiteli*

### Modern Life and the Family

**M**odern life has undermined traditional arrangements. Education was stressed in the decades following independence. Although primary education is available in rural areas, secondary levels and above are not. Top primary students leave their families for culturally mixed urban environments; they live with foster parents who may or may not have family ties.

The continuing rural exodus to the cities can put urban family members under pressure. When a male family member gets a good job in the city, relatives arrive who may stay indefinitely, resulting

in crowded living conditions and other problems. The working family member does not protest because he has a deep sense of family obligation and fear of disapproval from the home village if he does not support his kin. If relatives do not find work or move out, tensions can arise, fraying traditional bonds of mutual support.<sup>8,9</sup>

### Exchange 64: Are you the only person in your family who has a job?

Soldier:	Are you the only person in your family who has a job?	e-voo lE sE ah avwaR dU tRavay d/a/ votR fameeye?
Local:	No.	n/o/

Family law in Côte d'Ivoire has disassembled legal support for traditional behavior. The 1964 Civil Code outlaws polygamy, forced marriages, underage marriage, and the payment of the bride price. It also undermines support for matrilineal customs, officially disapproved of by former President Houphouët-Boigny. For instance, the code gives preference to a deceased's children, instead of the person's wife, in matters of inheritance.

All of these factors have accelerated the trend toward the nuclear family model in Ivoirian society.

### Exchange 65: Does your family live here?

Soldier:	Does your family live here?	es-kE votR fameeye veet eesee?
Local:	Yes.	wee



*Women with their children  
Flickr / Sunset Parkerpix*

### Status of Women

Traditionally, women played an equal role in the country's main economic activity, agriculture. Farms were generally family- or clan-owned and operated; the entire family contributed labor. Men were primarily responsible for the most dangerous jobs, such as clearing the forest; women planted, weeded, harvested, and processed the crops. The extended family cultivated the land and provided for itself.<sup>10, 11</sup>

The shift toward cash crops such as coffee and cocoa, which occurred on a widespread basis between World War I and World War II, changed the value of land from life giving to income

providing, which tended to lower the status of women. Men began to work for wages, while women remained in subsistence farming. When women were hired for wages, husbands received their wives' payment.<sup>12</sup>

In the area of education, women have historically been underrepresented, increasingly so at the higher levels. This has blocked upward mobility into the professional classes.<sup>13,</sup>

<sup>14</sup>

Family law, since independence, has tended to treat women as dependent minors (although laws are often ignored). The husband is the legal head of the household and accrues a variety of benefits. His wife cannot work outside the home without his



approval. The husband can manage the couple's joint assets independently, but the wife must have his permission to do so. The husband is given sole authority for picking the family residence, although the wife may contest the location in court. If the judge sides with her, the judge then picks a new location. After divorce, the man may remarry immediately, but the woman must wait 300 days.<sup>15</sup>



*HIV awareness booth  
Flickr / Felix Krohn*

## Household Health

The HIV/AIDS epidemic has had the biggest impact on household health. HIV is the main cause of mortality among adult men and second among women. Nevertheless, women show consistently higher prevalence rates in all demographic categories. The disease reduces the economic capacity of households because of medical and funereal expenses. In many areas, sufferers have no access to care or treatment.<sup>16</sup>

Women are more affected because of prostitution, wartime rape, and sexual violence.<sup>17</sup> The undereducation of women leads directly to illiteracy and a lack of knowledge about the disease and how it is spread. Some women believe that thinness is a symptom of HIV and that normal weight disproves its presence. Others believe that HIV results in immediate death, so being alive disproves its presence. Being HIV-positive is sometimes compared to having an electric shock because people think that the disease, like electrocution, means instant death.<sup>18</sup>

A related superstition is that couples should abstain from sex during the postnatal period because sperm will poison the mother's breast milk. This leads to increased extramarital sex among otherwise monogamous males, which can introduce HIV into the household, eventually infecting the mother.<sup>19</sup>

HIV is treated as taboo in many households and communities.<sup>20</sup> Infected women are presumed to have committed immoral acts and may be stigmatized or ostracized. Fearing shame or rejection, women may conceal the infection from their husbands. Condoms are associated with illicit sex and are not commonly used by married partners.<sup>21</sup>



The Côte d'Ivoire government responded to the HIV crisis with two National Strategic Plans (2002–04, 2006–10) aimed at spreading awareness of the disease. The government appears to have had success because prevalence rates began to drop noticeably after the introduction of the first program.<sup>22</sup>



*Wedding in Abidjan  
Flickr / Jake Brown*

## Weddings

At independence in 1960, Côte d'Ivoire had dual legal systems: European law for urbanized Ivoirians and traditional law practiced in rural areas. The 1964 Civil Code set a single standard for marriage and family law, creating a model of marriage compatible with the Western nuclear-family ideal. It outlawed traditional practices like polygamy, arranged marriages (without the consent of the betrothed), the payment of a bride price to the bride's family as a condition of marriage, and underage marriage. But the break with the past was not entirely clean; for example, the law did not abolish existing polygamous marriages. In practice, the new law proved difficult to enforce, and practices in rural

Côte d'Ivoire continued as they had in the past.<sup>23</sup>

There were some virtues of polygamy: multiple wives strengthened the family by providing hands for the farm, and the husband had to support his wives. Outlawing polygamy erased the obligations but not the tradition. Ivoirian men often keep mistresses in addition to their legal wife, a de facto polygamy. This practice is declining for financial reasons, especially in cities. In the mid-1990s, an estimated 80% of Ivoirian couples lived together and produced children out of wedlock, with no guarantee of support for the mistresses and children.<sup>24</sup>

### **Exchange 66: Are you married?**

Soldier:	Are you married?	et-voo maReeyey?
Local:	Yes.	wee

## *Muslim Weddings*

In the Muslim north and throughout sub-Saharan Africa, wedding celebrations follow similar customs. An outdoor celebration generally features colorfully garbed storytellers who howl into a microphone or leap, shake, and stomp in a frenzy of dancing. Indoors, a young bride is covered with a colorful blanket. The ceremony proceeds without the groom, who waits at home for the delivery of his wife.<sup>25</sup>

Marriages typically occur within clans. A young girl is married to a distant relative, who can be several times her age and who may have chosen her years before. According to the positive view of arranged marriages between relatives, the groom is known to be trustworthy and is financially stable because he is older. In addition, wealth is kept within the extended family, not wasted on outsiders, an important consideration in poverty-stricken communities. The marriage strengthens social stability, cements kinship ties, and ensures that female promiscuity will not dishonor the family. The counter view is that a young girl is forced into a sexual relationship with an older man and that she can be beaten with impunity if she refuses his wishes, actions that are considered pedophilia and child abuse in the developed world.<sup>26, 27</sup>

In terms of underage marriage, the Quran teaches that a girl is ready for marriage as soon as she can conceive; this conflicts with the Civil Code, which sets the minimum marrying age for women at 18.<sup>28</sup> But some Islamic experts say that the religion does not condone forced wedlock.<sup>29</sup>

## *Traditional Weddings*

Although particulars differ among groups, the act of marrying is not confined to a single event with an exchange of vows. Instead it is a multistage process of new family formation. Stages involve negotiations between the families or between the young man and the prospective bride's father. Payment of a bride price is a separate stage. Depending upon the group, any of these stages may confer marital status on the couple without a wedding ceremony. Children can be born ahead of the wedding, which is not scheduled until financially feasible.<sup>30</sup>

### **Exchange 67: Congratulations on the birth of your baby!**

Soldier:	Congratulations on the birth of your baby!	jE voo zadRes mey k/o/ pleem/e/ ah lokazy/o/ dE la neys/a/se dE votR beybey!
Local:	Thank you.	meRsee

## Funerals

### Traditional

**B**ecause most Ivoirians hold traditional spiritual beliefs, the purpose of a funeral is to help the deceased pass peacefully into the spirit world. The funeral may include a number of rituals, taking place over days or weeks. Mourners seek the blessings of the spirits during all ceremonies. Rituals can include singing, dancing, and feasts. The funeral takes place at the end of these events and can be delayed because of the expensive, elaborate rituals.<sup>31</sup>

#### Exchange 68: My condolences to you and your family.

Soldier:	My condolences to you and your family.	mey k/o/doley/a/s pooR voo et votR fameeye
Local:	Thank you so much.	meRsee bokoo



*Funeral mask  
Flickr / Peter Roan*

Each ethnic group has its own rituals, which are not always understood by outsiders. Among the Akan, members of the deceased's family shave their heads and place the hair into a family pot.<sup>32</sup> The Baoulé perform their burials in secret.<sup>33</sup> This even applied to certain burial rites for former President Houphouët-Boigny, a Baoulé.<sup>34</sup> The Senufo believe that the deceased's spirit lingers in the places the person used to frequent. In one ritual, people dressed in costumes blow horns and beat drums as they follow the tracks of the deceased's soul through the village to the hut where the body lies; the purpose is to chase the soul away and prevent it from endangering the village.<sup>35</sup>

The Kouya, of west central Côte d'Ivoire, follow distinctive funeral rites. Funerals are their most joyous celebrations, a break from the drudgery of life, especially for women. The body of the deceased is washed, dressed in the person's finest clothing, and placed on a bed surrounded by personal possessions. People dance around the bed day and night until the burial. Expressions of grief are stylized. Men clench their fists in front of their faces and walk in random patterns, crying out their despair; women tear their clothes off and roll on the ground, before changing into funeral clothes and caking themselves with mud. An intermission follows the actual burial. Afterward, celebrations mark



the passing of the deceased to the realm of the dead. A sacrificial animal is killed and eaten.<sup>36</sup>

## Naming Conventions

**T**he naming of children carries great significance in traditional Côte d'Ivoire life. Being named is considered an integral part of being; it symbolizes the passage of the child's soul from darkness to light. One naming ceremony, called Poyouzon, takes place within three or four days after a child's birth. The child's godmother holds the child in her arms. A priest pours water on the newborn's head, gazes toward the sun, and reveals the name the infant's father has told him. The head of the family then describes the meaning of the name, which has been inspired by some historical event. Others are welcome to address the group with their own thoughts.<sup>37</sup>

### **Exchange 69: Are these your children?**

Soldier:	Are these your children?	sE s/o/ vo z/e/f/a/?
Local:	Yes.	wee



In some ethnic groups, the father's first name is incorporated into the child's last name (e.g., in Western names, "John" and "Johnson"). The first law of the 1964 Civil Code codified child naming, requiring that a child be given a patronym; that is, a name derived from the father's, grandfather's, or an earlier male ancestor's first name. It was another strike against matrilineal groups, who use various naming practices.<sup>38</sup>

*Children playing  
Flickr / Empowering the Poor*



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## Overview: Chapter 6 Assessment

1. The nuclear family is the traditional norm in Côte d'Ivoire.

**FALSE**

The extended family is the traditional norm in Côte d'Ivoire.

2. After divorce, a woman may remarry immediately.

**FALSE**

A divorced man may remarry immediately, but a woman must wait 300 days.

3. Matrilineal societies are considered stable.

**FALSE**

Matrilineal societies are considered fragile because they often introduce conflict between the male and female lines.

4. The importance of lineage is common among all Ivoirian kinship groups.

**TRUE**

The key element in a kinship group is lineage.

5. The Côte d'Ivoire government has worked actively to address the HIV crisis.

**TRUE**

The government began spreading awareness of the disease with two National Strategic Plans. Prevalence rates began to drop after the introduction of the first program.



## ***French-Côte d'Ivoire Cultural Orientation: Final Assessment***

1. The “Ivoirian miracle” refers to the political stability Côte d’Ivoire enjoyed during its first three decades of independence.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
2. The Baoulé are a Senufo tribal people.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
3. Houphouët-Boigny’s presidency was a model of democratic government.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
4. Ivoirité, the state of being truly Ivoirian, played a key role in creating a schism in Côte d’Ivoire.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
5. The lagoon region is the largest of the three main geographic regions in Côte d’Ivoire.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
6. Muslim immigrant laborers were spurned when the economy stalled.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
7. Polygamy is legal in Côte d’Ivoire.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
8. According to traditional African religious beliefs, spirits in trees, rocks, etc., have only a positive influence on people’s lives.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
9. Carved masks, used to communicate with spirits, are worn by both men and women in Côte d’Ivoire.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**

10. The Baoulé, who are largely Catholic, practice a pure form of the religion.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
11. In terms of personal space, Ivoirians stand close together while talking.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
12. Women in Côte d'Ivoire wear head scarves.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
13. Jungle rats are a traditional source of protein for Ivoirians.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
14. Coffee is usually served to guests in Côte d'Ivoire.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
15. Playing with masks is popular in Côte d'Ivoire.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
16. Abidjan's urban layout was guided by a series of plans.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
17. In Côte d'Ivoire, foreigners fill professional as well as manual labor jobs.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
18. Most of the street children are runaways.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
19. Residents of "precarious settlements" have no schools or churches.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
20. The education system has recovered from the 2002 civil war.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**

21. Because of the recent years of strife in Côte d'Ivoire, diseases common to the region, such as malaria, meningitis, and leprosy, went untreated.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
22. Cote d'Ivoire's agriculture-based economic growth came at the cost of depleting a major natural resource.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
23. The use of child labor is widespread on Ivoirian cocoa farms.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
24. Ivoirité and identity cards played no role in ethnic politics.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
25. Bribery at checkpoints in Côte d'Ivoire is less prevalent than in other West African countries.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
26. The obligation to take care of one's family can burden family members with city jobs.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
27. The 1964 Civil Code strengthened traditional African values.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
28. Women have gradually attained enhanced status in Côte d'Ivoire society.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
29. Women are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**
30. In terms of the marriageable age for girls, the Quran is in accordance with the 1964 Civil Code.  
**TRUE OR FALSE?**

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