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THE NATION AS FRONTIER: ETHNICITY AND CLIENTELISM IN IVORIAN HISTORY

By David A. Chappell

If unity had not been in our heart, we should have discovered
it in our head.

– Félix Houphouët-Boigny¹

Western analysis of independent Africa has suffered from an academic schizophrenia born of ethnocentrism. Anthropologists have tended to focus on "tribal" traditions in a rural setting as the starting point from which to measure change,² while political scientists study the integration of "ethnic groups" by centralizing "national" institutions.³ Historians have tried to fill the gap between these approaches by categorizing various stages of anti-colonial nationalism⁴ or of cooption into the world capitalist system.⁵ The underlying assumption is that colonialism – or post-independence neo-colonialism – altered Africa sufficiently to introduce a new era of aspirations and identities which is essentially dissynchronous with the past. Félix Houphouët-Boigny of the Ivory Coast, for example, wears Parisian suits, has relegated traditional religion, language, and custom to folkloric status, and speaks of "a mystical Franco-African community."⁶ His style of rule has been described as autocratic managerialism⁷ or neo-colonial mercantilism.⁸ Yet this same man has refused to confirm a political heir because, according to the culture of his Baule people, "No one may know the identify [of

¹Aristide Zolberg, *One-Party Government in the Ivory Coast* (Princeton, 1969), 74.

²See the criticism of this attitude in Max Gluckman, "Tribalism in Modern British Africa," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, I, 1 (1960), 56-57.

³Aristide Zolberg, "Political Development in the Ivory Coast since Independence," in Philip Foster and Aristide Zolberg, eds., *Ghana and the Ivory Coast: Perspectives on Modernization* (Chicago, 1971), 9.

⁴Thomas Hodgkin, *Nationalism in Colonial Africa* (London, 1956). See also Robert Rotberg, "African Nationalism: Concept or Confusion?" *Journal of Modern African Studies*, IV, 1, (1966), 33-46, and Terence Ranger, "Connexions between 'Primary Resistance' Movements and Modern Mass Nationalism in East and Central Africa," *Journal of African History*, 9 (1968), 437.

⁵Immanuel Wallerstein, "Three Stages of African Involvement in the World Economy," in I. Wallerstein and P. G. Gutkind, eds., *The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa* (Beverly Hills, 1966), 30-57.

⁶Aristide Zolberg, "Patterns of National Integration", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, V, 4, (1967), 464.

⁷Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, *Personal Rule in Black Africa: Prince, Autocrat, Prophet, Tyrant* (Berkeley, 1982), 6.

⁸Samir Amin, *Le Développement du capitalisme en Côte d'Ivoire* (Paris, 1967), 99-107, and his *Neo-Colonialism in West Africa* (New York, 1973) 274.

a successor] while the chief is still alive. Ivory Coast has its own traditions, and the West should take us for what we are – not what you would have us be.⁹

Is Houphouët, an ailing octogenarian, simply suffering from senile delusions of grandeur after half a century of political power? Perhaps a more African perspective is needed for us to begin to understand the transition from precolonial ethnicities to a moderately stable nation-state. Houphouët's application of a supposed Baule tradition to the whole country implies that, from his viewpoint "on the hill" above the divisions in the population,¹⁰ the Ivory Coast has passed through a culture conjuncture that might transmute his historical metaphor into mythical reality. Marshall Sahlins argues that history and cultural change each other, since people act according to their values but react according to their experience: "one may question whether the continuity of a system ever occurs without its alteration, or alteration without continuity." Even legends have their roots in archetypal experiences.¹¹ When *le vieux* helped to get forced labor abolished in 1946, the consequent dances, songs, plays, pictures, lockets and cloth prints started "a myth around Houphouët, the first truly national Ivory Coast tradition."¹² As president, he moved the capital to his hometown, Yamoussoukro, where he is *canton* chief, and from his palace (surrounded by its crocodile moat) dispensed favors to loyal adherents or remonstrated face-to-face with recalcitrants until they rejoined the family fold. He held chiefly palavers with *ad hoc* national councils or dialogues with interest groups.

You are all my brothers, my sons, and my grandchildren; good or bad, you are all my brothers, my sons, my grandchildren. And for my part, I consider you all to be good brothers, good sons, and good grandchildren. Therefore, have confidence in me.¹³

How modern a phenomenon is such paternalism; does it perhaps represent a fusion of indigenous and introduced dynamics? I. William Zartman and Christopher Delgado have suggested that "from chief of the Baule nation Houphouët worked his way into the position of paramount chief of the Ivorian nation, using both the modern mobilizing nationalist party and the colonial state institutions of government as a vehicle."¹⁴ If the goal was indigenous, how alien could the political vehicle, in practice, really be? One way to bridge the 67-year gap between precolonial and post-colonial Ivorian history might be to extend an anthropological theory over time. Igor Kopytoff recently formulated a vision of ethnogenesis that replaces the old tribal model with an African "frontier thesis."

⁹ *Africa Report*, Jan.-Feb. 1986, 35, and May-June 1988, 54.

¹⁰ *Africa Report*, Jan.-Feb. 1983, 5.

¹¹ Marshall Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities* (Ann Arbor, 1964), 3-14, 67-72.

¹² Ruth S. Morgenthau, *Political Parties in French-Speaking West Africa* (Oxford, 1964), 179-188.

¹³ *Africa Report*, Jan.-Feb. 1983, 5.

¹⁴ I. William Zartman and Christopher L. Delgado, eds., *The Political Economy of the Ivory Coast* (New York, 1984), 3.

Unlike Turner's one-sided essay on the American frontier, and its Euroamerican academic offspring,¹⁵ Kopytoff argues that most African ethnicities evolved from the "bits and pieces – human and cultural . . . that nestle in the interstices" between established societies. Such diasporas of exiles kept Africa historically fluid, not static, and transformed kinship and clientelism into metaphors to legitimize a social "mishmash" of immigrants and autochthones. Kopytoff suggests four possible stages: initial settlement in an area defined politically as "vacant," amalgamation through the acquisition of slaves or intermarriage with previous inhabitants into a patrimonial chieftaincy, maturation from integrative society into political kingdom and, possibly, expansion into a pragmatic metropole "held together by force or cunning" which would in turn cast off new refugees and adventurers.

To be a frontiersman is to be an entrepreneur. . . . The drive to acquire relatives, adherents, dependents, retainers, and subjects, to keep them attached to oneself as a kind of social and political "capital," has often been remarked upon as a characteristic of African societies and African political processes. The mirror-image of this drive is the search for patrons and protectors and a readiness to attach oneself to a superior power.¹⁶

This model raises questions about the nature of ethnicity and clientelism in an African context. Could indigenous traditions actually mesh with colonial structures to create a cultural hybrid that was at least as African as it was Euroamerican? How adaptable are ethnicity and clientelism? Can they build a nationality, in the way Kopytoff says? There has been debate over the extent to which ethnicity is primordial or can be forged. M. Crawford Young admits that "culture is a human construction, and is socially learned," but insists that "Instrumentalism alone fails to capture the intensity, the passion, the availability of ethnicity for political mobilization."¹⁷ Donald Horowitz places ethnic affiliations of varying ascription along a continuum of ways that people categorize themselves, stretching from membership by choice to membership by birth. He defines ethnicity as a kind of extended family, complete with familial duties and emotional bonding, but says the "myth of collective ancestry" can accommodate "fictive elements" in order to legitimize amalgamation, division, or proliferation.¹⁸ This rather flexible conception leaves room for the incorporation

¹⁵See Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (New York, 1963); Walter Prescott Webb, "The Western World Frontier," in Walker D. Wyman and Clifton B. Kroeber, eds., *The Frontier in Perspective* (Madison, 1965), 111-126; and William H. McNeill, *The Great Frontier* (Princeton, 1983).

¹⁶Igor Kopytoff, ed., *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional Societies* (Bloomington, 1987), Introduction, 3-78.

¹⁷M. Crawford Young, "Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Class in Africa: A Retrospective," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, XXVI, 3 (1986), 450.

¹⁸Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley, 1985), 52-65.

of adherents as long as the security and growth of the "imagined community"¹⁹ are thereby assured. In Kopytoff's model, the frontier entrepreneur acquires adherents through kinship metaphors, such as marriage or adoption, and through ruler-subject clientelism, basing his authority on the false premise that he is a "firstcomer":

The standard myth of the founding of most African societies depicts the founders as leaving their place of origin, entering a frontier, confronting local inhabitants, and instituting a new political order that was at the origin of the society. . . . The rulers, for their part, saw the subjects in the metaphor of late-coming strangers to the polity the rules had founded . . . the ruler's ideology of rulership was patrimonial: the polity was an extension of the ruler's household.²⁰

Such clientelist alliance-building, even within the metaphor of kinship, seems consistent with René Lemarchand's definition of patron-client ties as "dyadic bonds between individuals of unequal power and socioeconomic status [which] derive their legitimacy from expectations of mutual benefits." He adds that clientelist nets are shadowy, intimately personal and fluid, yet, despite their voluntary nature, "strongly reminiscent of ascriptive solidarities." They can link groups, as well as individuals, to political authority, and tend to infiltrate very dimension of human relations.²¹ Moreover, Lemarchand says clientelism preceded colonialism in Africa, in the forms of patrimonial chieftaincy, feudal kingship, and mercantile partnership. Such ties created enough trust and loyalty to establish "vertical links of reciprocity between ethnically or socially discrete entities." Clientelism could be the "missing link" between ethnicity and nationhood, particularly in the Ivorian case:

Although the men in charge of running the machine may occasionally bolster their authority by charisma or by coercion, they can best be thought of as political entrepreneurs. Their job is to weld together disparate ethnic segments through the allocation of prebends.²²

The advantage of Kopytoff's thesis is that a frontier is not a boundary but a zone of interaction, not only for polities but for entrepreneurial individuals or groups who can build kin, captives, and other adherents into new identities. Such a process tests the creative limits of both ethnicity and clientelism. It can help explain the history of the Ivory Coast from precolonial to modern times. Today,

¹⁹See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, 1983).

²⁰Kopytoff, *African Frontier*, 16-17, 62-63.

²¹René Lemarchand, "Comparative Political Clientelism: Structure, Process and Optic," in S. N. Eisenstadt and René Lemarchand, eds., *Political Clientelism, Patronage and Development* (Beverly Hills, 1981), 7-26.

²²René Lemarchand, "Political Clientelism and Ethnicity in Tropical Africa: Competing Solidarities in Nation-Building," *American Political Science Review*, 66, 1 (1972), 68-85.

cynics might say that military coups provide the best analogy to precolonial African power struggles; the colonial conquest territory and authoritarian state simply gave old behavior a new arena. Indeed, coups can become a political way of life in societies that lack a sense of national community. So can "corruption," a major cause, and result of many coups.²³ Yet Aristide Zolberg argues that party-state machines like that of the Ivory Coast do "not require the exercise of military power or the maintenance of a garrison state, but rather constant bargaining, a task for which machine politicians are eminently suited." Even corruption is "a fairly rational distributive system."²⁴ Ivorian "machine politicians" may have learned new formal procedures through colonial experience, but they had already developed an aptitude for the process of making deals.

The peculiar historical heritage of the Baule, in particular, earned them an edge over other traditions and a leading role in building the team that has dominated the Ivory Coast since independence. Houphouët's Baule mastered frontier ethnogenesis early, adapting their ethnicity and interpersonal networking to the cultural crucible to which they migrated, the "V" of savanna between the Bandama and Nzi rivers in the heart of the modern Ivory Coast. This location, on a dynamic frontier and trade crossroads, helped develop a tradition of opportunism and alliance-building that contributed to Baule ascendancy, not only in the precolonial era, but also during the plantation "revolution" under French rule and the rise of a post-independence state bourgeoisie built on mixed ethnic and clientelist ties. The Baule have certainly not made every Ivorian a Baule, as Houphouët's rhetoric hints, but they have, relatively speaking, injected a special style into the Ivorian political process. In this sense, the charisma of aloof, sage Houphouët is not only the result of personal ambition or colonial manipulation but also the culmination of a longer historical evolution that began with a cultural conjuncture in a precolonial frontier zone.

Precolonial Ethnogenesis

The most essential element is a living and active corporate will [which] asserts that the nationality is the source of all cultural creative energy and economic well-being.

— Hans Kohn²⁵

The first major conjuncture in modern Ivorian history occurred when the Baule forced their way into the epicenter of the Ivorian frontier. In the contest for survival and influence, the Baule benefited from their geographic location, a fairly benign ethnic ideology, political innovation, economic opportunism, and social flexibility. Let us examine this "ancient" heritage of *le vieux*.

The location of the Baule on the map almost makes it look as if the rest of the present Ivory Coast grew up around them. That would be a misleading

²³ Edward Luttwak, *Coup d'Etat: A Practical Handbook* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), 13-17.

²⁴ Aristide Zolberg, *Creating Political Order: The Party-States of West Africa* (Chicago, 1966), 160.

²⁵ Hans Kohn, *Nationalism* (Princeton, 1965), 9-10.

exaggeration, but not a total falsehood, for the Baule chose their destiny, in part, by settling where they did. The Ivory Coast, whose very name is an alien perception, is a crossroads of African cultures – a frontier. Broadly speaking, it is a confluence of three main civilizations whose heartlands lie outside the present territory: Kru-speakers and other groups in the southwest, whose cultural roots are in Liberia or predate the frontier; Mande- and Voltaic-speakers in the north, whose heritage derives from the Afro-Islamic Sahel; and Akan-speakers in the southeast (Anyi, Abbron, etc.) or center (Baule), whose historical ties are with Asante in Ghana. These groupings are, of course, oversimplifications but coincide with Ivorian perceptions of themselves. The southwestern peoples (including the Bete, Dida, Guro, and Gagu) are often referred to as the "original" inhabitants, but their political decentralization – and supposed primitiveness – led to their being pushed westward by more aggressive intruders from the north and east.²⁶ What was the context of the Baule migration?

Kopytoff describes the typical African frontier as being sparsely populated and vulnerable enough to be regarded by intruders as "politically open."²⁷ Perhaps because of abundant land, the early inhabitants of the "Ivory Coast" were a scattering of stateless societies whose hunter-warrior individualists rarely cultivated the land or developed loyalties beyond village or patrician.²⁸ The first intruders came from the north: matrilineal Senufo farmers and craftsmen, disunited except for the activities of their *poro* initiation society, followed by Mande-speaking traders and conquerors who sought kola nut, gold and slaves and established the first chiefdoms.²⁹ The Dyula (traders) intermarried and interspersed with the non-Islamic Senufo, recruited slaves for their cotton fields, caravans or armies, and added a new dynamic to the Ivorian matrix: mobility.³⁰ They widened the frontier by marrying Guro to form the Wan people on the upper Bandama and by founding Tiassale farther downriver in order to trade with the coastal lagoon peoples who controlled access to European goods.³¹ These clientelist links were mercantile in purpose. The Dyula introduced cowries and iron rods as currency and prestige goods, made cloth from locally-grown cotton and traded firearms, horses, and slaves to Senufo and Guro groups wanting to increase their power. Cloth and cowries helped to legitimize rank in the Senufo system, while for the Guro, "trade was largely a means of acquiring wives and dependents, and wives and dependents were a means of acquiring

²⁶Zolberg, *One-Party Government*, 11-21.

²⁷Kopytoff, *African Frontier*, 9-11.

²⁸See Claude Meillassoux, *Anthropologie économique des Gouro de Côte d'Ivoire* (Paris, 1964), 13-16; Denise Paulme, *Une Société de la Côte d'Ivoire Hier et Aujourd'hui: Les Bété* (Paris, 1962), 109-116; and L. Tauxier, *Nègres Gouro et Gagou* (Paris, 1924), 103-127, 169-177.

²⁹Robert Launay, *Traders Without Trade: Responses to Change in Two Dyula Communities* (New York, 1982), 13-24.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 32-42, 73, 167.

³¹Philippe de Salverte-Marnier, "Les étapes du peuplement," in *Etude Regionale de Bouake, I* (Abidjan, 1964), 25-30.

power.³² The Dyula activation of this frontier depended on the role of *diatigi*, the trusted host who linked itinerant traders and local producers by relying on the "credit rating" of his personal reputation: "client-patron ties . . . are not necessarily dyadic and unidirectional, but may involve networks of reciprocities. . . ."³³

The rise of the Asante metropole to the east in the seventeenth century drove Akan migrants, including the Baule, into the expanding Ivorian frontier. These groups brought with them "royal" hierarchy.

In some cases the Akan groups simply imposed their authority through outright military conquest. Frequently, however, the Akan extended their influence more gradually as a cumulative result of successive generations of advantageous marriage exchanges, exchanges, commercial control, and conciliatory judicial interventions imposed with force or the threatened use of force.³⁴

The Abron conquered the Kulango for their kola trade and held sway over other Akan migrants like the Anyi-Juablin but also felt the shadow of nearby Asante domination.³⁵ The proud Anyi kingdom of Sanwi imitated the Asante hierarchy of noble, commoner, and slave classes despite displacement: "A tribe migrated under the leadership of its king, the noblest of the family heads; when an important family broke away from this sub-group in its turn, its head also became king."³⁶ The Anyi of Ndenye, like the Anyi-Sanwi, disdained the "anarchy" of more aboriginal westerners: "Those people are savages, but we have always been civilized."³⁷ The Anyi of Moronou were matrilineal but patrilocal like other Asante refugees and claimed to be the purest Anyi of all; but their kingdom was reduced to an empty throne and bickering lineages in the mid-eighteenth century by a devastating Baule invasion.³⁸

In such a reawakened frontier, those most powerful or pragmatic, or both, were likely to prevail. The Baule pushed beyond conservative Anyi country to the outer fringe of the Akan dominions, the vortex of the Ivorian conjuncture.

³²Robert Launay, "Inter-Societal Exchange in the Ivory Coast," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, XVII, 4 (1978), 568-572.

³³Lemarchand, "Political Clientelism and Ethnicity," 73-75.

³⁴Timothy C. Weiskel, "The Precolonial Baule: A Reconstruction," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, XVIII, 4 (1978), 506-507.

³⁵David H. Groff, "The Development of Capitalism in the Ivory Coast: The Case of Assikasso 1880-1940" (Ph.D. thesis, Stanford University, 1980), 19-50; see also his forthcoming article, "The Revolt of Assikasso of 1898: An Episode in the Colonial Restructuring of an African Regional Economy," *African Economic History*, 18 (1989), 1-23.

³⁶Gabriel Rougerie, "Le Pays Agni du Sud-Est de la Côte d'Ivoire," *Etudes Eburnéennes*, VI (1957), 59-65.

³⁷A. J. F. Köbben, "Le Planteur Noir," *Etudes Eburnéennes*, V (1956), 38, 185.

³⁸Michel Pescay, "La Sociologie," in *Etude Socio-Economique de la Région du Sud-Est*, II (Abidjan, 1967), 33.

Their diaspora was a complex process of migrating families splintering and jostling for farmland, adherents, and access to gold fields or trade routes. Some factions intermarried with Guro, or settled among them in strategic villages, and learned new techniques of wood sculpture, weaving and healing, while others mixed with northern groups and borrowed dyeing, iron-working, and powerful religious masks. Gold rushes and trade alliances increased the heterogeneity of Baule villages. Young adventurers exploited pragmatic frontier power structures to achieve new wealth and prestige. Oral tradition claimed common descent from the followers of Queen Poku, who fled Asante after a royal succession dispute in the early 1700s, but this ideology was fairly undemanding. After a period of organized conquests by Poku's kin, central authority gave way to civil wars, and *nyamwe*, or encampments, proliferated, becoming nuclei for new villages.³⁹

Kopytoff would call the Poku legend "official" ideology. The tale of her supernatural rescue from pursuing Asante warriors – the Komoe River god provided a tree-bridge after she sacrificed her child – validated Baule intrusion: "legitimacy is sought by associating one's origins with mythical events, prestigious historical figures, and grand politics known in the region but often rooted outside it." Once the Baule coopted the healing and mystical powers of the previous inhabitants, they could afford to relinquish their political unity, as a "charter of separation" from the Asante metropole.⁴⁰ What enabled them to survive, even to control, the Ivorian frontier without a real monarchy? First, they developed a style of political leadership that "depended more upon persuasion than upon brute power." Timothy Weiskel has shown that even Poku attracted followers as much for her judging of disputes as for her military power and that the role of chief took on an increasingly earned aspect as negotiating skills became the prerequisite for building a manpower base.⁴¹ They also adapted their economic activities and social system to the new environment.

The resources and trade routes of their new location gave the Baule many opportunities for advancement. The Baule drove a wedge between the Dyula and their lagoon contacts and, after initially redirecting trade eastward toward Asante, opened "transit markets" on their northern and southern peripheries which were linked by chains of kin and client alliances that criss-crossed Baule country. Internal migrations colonized the best farming and gold-mining sites and stimulated craft exchanges. Chiefs traveled to Tiassale to offer their gold jewelry, cloth, and captives (often purchased from the Dyula to the north) for European guns, ammunition, and other manufactures provided by Nzima middlemen. Such Baule entrepreneurs found shelter en route among allies in Tiassale with *sikafwe*, hosts who housed the Baule and Nzima traders in the same compound. Moreover, two centuries on an inter-ethnic frontier changed Baule social relationships. The drive to acquire adherents, by means of captives, adoptions, or calculated *à qui mieux mieux* marriages, led Baule to spread their alliances thinly but widely. The matrilineage gave way to cognatic kinship based on the *aulo bo*, or integrative family compound, enabling an individual to choose membership in the household of whichever of his four grandparents had the most to offer. Even captive slaves

³⁹Salverte-Marnier, "Étapes du peuplement," 25-57.

⁴⁰Kopytoff, *African Frontier*, 49-55, 71-73.

⁴¹Weiskel, "Precolonial Baule," 540-557.

could be assimilated into the family as "fictive kin" with the status of children. The social fabric of Baule ethnicity was relatively flexible and its clientelist bonds all-pervasive.⁴²

The modern history of the Ivory Coast did not begin with independence in 1960, nor even with formal French annexation in 1893, but with the Baule takeover of the inland frontier during the previous one hundred fifty years. The Baule location, astride the network of "transaction spheres" created by itinerant Dyula traders,⁴³ and their adaptation to competitive conditions – which reduced weak peoples to slavery – instilled in them a tradition of political, economic, social, and even ethnic innovation. Zolberg says that "there is no core Ivory Coast traditional culture" or any real "source of myth for contemporary unity." He points out quite rightly that, on the basis of Maurice Delafosse's 1904 classification of languages, the Ivory Coast has over sixty disparate "tribes." Yet he admits that the Baule are the largest single ethnic group, comprising nearly one-fifth of the indigenous population, and that they so dominate Houphouët's regime – including his "Baule warrior" party militia – that other groups resent it.⁴⁴ The Baule aptitude for negotiation, opportunism, and amalgamation, born of their success as frontier entrepreneurs, may have prepared them for the next conjuncture, what J. F. Ade Ajayi calls the "politics of survival" necessitated by the "mythical situation" of colonial transformation.⁴⁵ The Baule had no monopoly on the clientelist ethic, but their experience seemed to give them an edge over the competition when the frontier was redefined.

Colonial Unification and the Plantation Economy

If the cards were dealt by the colonizers, the game was played by the people.

– J. P. Chauveau and J. P. Dozon⁴⁶

French colonial conquest and rule, while traumatic and degrading for many indigenous people, also reawakened the Ivorian frontier on a broader scale than ever before and thus marked another major conjuncture. France defined the area as politically vacant and established, by force and clientelism, a new quasi-assimilative authority system. It expanded the territory of interaction, to include ultimately French West Africa and even the capitalist world system, but also

⁴²*Ibid.*, 516-536. See also P. and M. Etienne, "A qui mieux mieux' ou le mariage chez les Baoulé," *Cahiers ORSTOM*, Sciences humaines, VIII, 2 (1971), 165-186; and J. P. Chauveau, "Société baoulé précoloniale et modèle segmentaire. Le cas de la région de Kokumbo," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, XVII, 4, 1977, 415-34.

⁴³Launay, "Inter-Societal Exchange," 572.

⁴⁴Zolberg, *One-Party Government*, 11-16, and Zolberg, "Political Development," 11-18.

⁴⁵J. F. Ade Ajayi, "The Continuity of African Institutions Under Colonialism," in T. O. Ranger, ed., *Emerging Themes of African History* (Nairobi, 1968), 195-197.

⁴⁶J. P. Chauveau and J. P. Dozon, "Colonisation, Economie de Plantation et Société Civile en Côte d'Ivoire," *Cahiers ORSTOM*, Sciences humaines, XXI, 1 (1986), 76.

tried to fix ethnic and administrative boundaries. It removed politics from indigenous control, except in the interstices, but opened up new channels of economic development. Finally, it stirred up more inter-ethnic contact with its policies, adding even new immigrants to the frontier, and used differential patronage to generate what would become a local bourgeoisie. In the context of what preceded colonialism, however, such apparent discontinuities are less absolute than relative. Even passive water, when compressed, finds an outlet. And many Ivoirians, especially Baule, were not passive between 1893 and 1960.

Despite a few ambiguous agreements signed between local dignitaries and French marine officers or commercial agents, the Ivory Coast was a conquest colony – a fact that modern Ivoirians prefer publicly, as in the case of ethnicity, to ignore. Before the 1890s, it was a paper claim, wherein Nzima and British traders and coastal African entrepreneurs outlasted ephemeral French "treaties," forts, or commercial houses. Those indigenous leaders with whom the French had friendly relations collected tribute from the customs officers and "retained all their prerogatives and continued to administer their own countries."⁴⁷ Louis Faidherbe, who commanded the fort at Dabu on the Ebrié lagoon in the 1850s, later tried unsuccessfully to exchange the Ivory Coast for British Gambia. He doubted whether the West African forest region could ever be as profitable as the savanna hinterland.⁴⁸ The Baule killed the first French traders who tried to come up the Bandama in 1891 and resisted conquest for two decades, despite scorched-earth tactics by French-led Senagalese *tirailleurs*, forced relocation into strategic villages, and being surrounded after Samory's defeat in the north in 1898 and the closing of the Liberian and Gold Coast borders.⁴⁹ Serious uprisings occurred in the east and west as well, and in 1908 Governor Gabriel Angoulvant described the French position as "precarious." He adopted *la manière forte*.⁵⁰

The extensive literature on "cultural sub-nationalism" as institutionalized by colonial administrative policy and on the "supertribalization" of African migrants in new urban settings⁵¹ testifies to the impact of colonialism on indigenous ethnicity. The new rulers differentiated among African peoples according to subjective experiences and stereotypes and stimulated identity crises among them along an urban-rural continuum.⁵² What resulted was a Saussurean⁵³

⁴⁷ Amon d'Aby, *La Côte d'Ivoire dans la Cité Africaine* (Paris, 1951), 34.

⁴⁸ Paul Atger, *La France en Côte d'Ivoire de 1843 à 1893* (Dakar, 1962), 36-43.

⁴⁹ Timothy C. Weiskel, *French Colonial Rule and the Baule Peoples: Resistance and Collaboration 1889-1911* (Oxford, 1980). Also Atger, *France en Côte d'Ivoire*, 80-98; and Groff, "Development of Capitalism," 219-239.

⁵⁰ Angoulvant, *La Pacification de la Côte d'Ivoire* (Paris, 1916), 10-16, 39.

⁵¹ See Victor A. Olorunsola, ed., *The Politics of Sub-Nationalism in Africa* (Garden City, NY), 1972; Jean Rouch, "Migrations au Ghana," *Journal de la Société des Africanistes*, 26, 1-2 (1956), 163-164; and I. Wallerstein, "Ethnicity and National Integration," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, I, 3 (1960), 129-139.

⁵² René Lemarchand, "The State and Society in Africa: Ethnic Stratification and Re-stratification in Historical and Comparative Perspective," in Donald Rothchild and Victor A. Olorunsola, eds., *State Versus Ethnic Claims: African Policy Dilemmas* (Boulder, 1983), 53-56.

⁵³ See Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (New York, 1959), for a discussion of how cultural symbols are tested by worldly experience.

reevaluation of symbols which continues to the present: "each part and the whole are constantly adjusting and changing their cohesiveness and degree of importance with respect to one another as groups."⁵⁴ In the Ivory Coast, France tried to transform indigenous chiefs into petty bureaucrats who collected taxes and recruited forced labor, and if necessary appointed ex-soldiers, cooks, interpreters, or clerks to local office.⁵⁵ The southwestern peoples, despite French efforts to concentrate them in larger villages along easily patrolled paths, dispersed into remote encampments to avoid forced labor. As late as 1942, an ethnographer there observed, "the village is only a more or less artificial gathering place." The Dida and Gagu *cercles* did not develop a stronger ethnic consciousness, but the Guro (Kweni in their own language) and Bete did.⁵⁶ Dozon has disputed the collectivity of the Bete,⁵⁷ but their forced interaction with outsiders yielded a social stigma that they "had entered into contact with French culture much later than the people of the lower coast, and especially those of the east. The Bete were called cannibals."⁵⁸

Colonialism is by definition authoritarian, but clientelism helped cement the new framework. It "constitutionalized" several Akan hierarchies by recognizing their legitimacy. The Anyi of Sanwi used their 1843 protectorate treaty as a legal safeguard against French interference with customary justice or chiefly succession and protested against over-taxation, forced labor, and military conscription. The rulers of both Sanwi and Bondoukou led their followers into exile across the border (in old Asante) when the colonial administration failed to respect its own treaties.⁵⁹ The Anyi of Alangouan reconstituted their long-lost "kingdom" under French patronage.⁶⁰ The "Dyula" (applied generally to northerners in the Ivory Coast) responded to their liberation from the devastations of Samory by following French authority into the south, where they joined with freed slaves, retired *tirailleurs* and assorted *commis* (clerks) in growing posts like Toumodi, a former trade crossroads in the heart of Baule.⁶¹ Of the

⁵⁴Ronald Cohen and John Middleton, eds., *From Tribe to Nation in Africa* (Scranton, 1970), 9-10.

⁵⁵D'Aby, *La Côte d'Ivoire*, 33-34; and Zolberg, *One-Party Government*, 21-22.

⁵⁶Meillassoux, *Anthropologie économique*, 13-16; Paulme, *Société de la Côte d'Ivoire*, 11-38; R. Grivot, "Le Cercle de Lahou," *Bulletin d'IFAN*, IV, 1 (1942), 62-65; C. Hallouin, "Géographie humaine de la subdivision de Daloa," *Bulletin d'IFAN*, IX, 1 (1947), 31-33; and C. R. Hiernaux, "Note sur l'évolution des Gagou," *Bulletin d'IFAN*, XII, 2 (1950), 493-495.

⁵⁷Jean-Pierre Dozon, "La parenté mise a nu, ou Pandore chez les Bété de Côte d'Ivoire," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, XIX, 4 (1979), 101-110.

⁵⁸As quoted in Aristide Zolberg, "Mass Parties and National Integration: The Case of the Ivory Coast," *Journal of Politics*, 25, 1 (1963), 38.

⁵⁹D'Aby, *La Côte d'Ivoire*, 41-44; and L. Tauxier, *Religion, moeurs et coutumes des Agni de la Côte d'Ivoire* (Paris, 1932), 176-195.

⁶⁰Paul Parin, Fritz Morgenthaler, and Goldy Parin-Matthey, *Fear Thy Neighbor as Thyself: Psychoanalysis and Society among the Anyi of West Africa* (Chicago, 1980), 21.

⁶¹J. de Bettignes, *Toumodi: Etude monographique d'un centre semiurbain* (Abidjan, 1965), 4-6.

20,000 Ivoirians who served in the French army during World War I, most were volunteers from the north.⁶²

The Baule suffered the "disequilibrium" of destructive defeat, administrative regrouping, bisection by the new coast-to-north railway and humiliating forced labor to pay the head tax, which sent them in about equal numbers to work in marginal Baule areas, Anyi country, or the Bete-Guro west.⁶³ Yet the personal diplomacy of King Kouakou Anoungble revived the prestige of the old Baule monarchy, and one *canton* baffled French officials who wanted to select a puppet chief by presenting, with typical Baule flexibility, twenty-seven local pretenders as legitimate candidates for the job.⁶⁴ In 1901, when many Baule were dying in wars of resistance, a woman named Yabo Mouso⁶⁵ went out to meet a French military column and announced she was "queen of the Akwe" (a part-Guro sub-tribe). Her village bore her name,⁶⁶ which indicates it was a *nyamwe* rather than a long-established residence. Her "adopted" son gave the French so much help that Governor Angoulvant appointed him chief of the Akwe *canton* in 1909 and made Ya(bo)moussoukro its administrative center.⁶⁷ Houphouet succeeded his maternal uncle to the same title in 1940.⁶⁸ One is reminded of Lemarchand's question, "Who are the patrons, and who are the clients?"⁶⁹

The French *mise en valeur* injected an economic dynamic into the Ivorian frontier by introducing, forcibly at first, cocoa and coffee production for export; that dynamic undermined the tidy ethnicity of *cercles* and *cantons*. The plantation economy opened a new era of migration and culture contact which heightened ethnic interaction at the same time that it transplanted individuals into a wider capitalist arena. After world demand for palm oil and rubber declined in the early 1900s, coffee, cocoa, banana, and timber exports grew. The well-favored southern forests brought migrants from all over. Anyi Moronou became a mosaic of strangers:

the Malinke seem attracted to commercial occupations, as are the Nigerians, Hausa, Djerma, Songhai, of whom many are transporters. The Mauretians are for the most part butchers or herdsmen, the Wolof are bakers and restaurant keepers. There are numerous artisans among the Ivoirians of the lower and middle Ivory Coast. The Senufo are more willingly

⁶²Virginia Thompson, "The Ivory Coast," in Gwendolen Carter, ed., *African One-Party States* (Ithaca, 1962), 239.

⁶³Peter Anyang' Nyong'o, "The Development of Agrarian Capitalist Classes in the Ivory Coast 1945-1975," in Paul M. Lubeck, ed., *The African Bourgeoisie: Capitalist Development in Nigeria, Kenya, and the Ivory Coast* (Boulder, 1987), 189-209.

⁶⁴Zolberg, *One-Party Government*, 21-22; and Salvete-Marnier, *Etude Regionale*, 199-209.

⁶⁵*Muso* means woman in Dyula.

⁶⁶Lieutenant Bouet, "Quelques opérations militaires à la Côte d'Ivoire en 1909," *Revue des Troupes Coloniales*, IX (1910), 133-153.

⁶⁷Weiskel, *French Colonial Rule*, 220-221.

⁶⁸Zolberg, *One-Party Government*, 73.

⁶⁹Lemarchand, "Political Clientelism and Ethnicity," 75.

farmers than laborers, the vast majority of the latter being recruited among the Bambara, the Voltaics, and the Malinke.⁷⁰

By the 1930s, significant numbers of non-Ivorians had arrived to profit from the cash crop bonanza. European planters, never more than 200 in number, transformed many involuntary field workers into rival commercial farmers. *Petits blancs* soon joined government personnel and businessmen in the urban centers. Lebanese shopkeepers and wholesalers carefully nurtured personal bonds with Ivorians but still incurred resentment. Educated *evolués* from other parts of French West Africa, especially Dahomey, filled important clerical posts, and large numbers of laborers from the north, mainly Mossi from Upper Volta, provided an itinerant proletariat.⁷¹

In a process described as "rural urbanization" along a "plantation frontier,"⁷² Ivorians migrated primarily as individuals, though they might call on kin to join them later. Chauveau and Dozon argue that economics has always helped to shape West African ethnic configurations. Just as precolonial Ivorians had migrated to trade kola, slaves, gold, and textiles, so later Ivorians indigenized cocoa and coffee production by taking initiatives that the government could not control. Thus the commercial agricultural "revolution" was less a discontinuity than it was the continuation of an historical pattern. Laborers, first forced and later voluntary, sold their services to forest landowners but hoped someday to become planter-employers themselves. Although many of the first workers on southeastern plantations were Bete and other westerners forcibly recruited after conquest, the two largest contingents of indigenous migrants came from the traditionally opportunistic Dyula and Baule.⁷³ The Bete, in contrast, disliked working for others, preferred to employ family members on their coffee farms instead of hiring outsiders, and (along with the Guro, Dida and Gagu) grew to resent the land-grabbing of planters migrating into their territory.⁷⁴

The Anyi benefited not only from their forest environment but also from their earlier contact with Europeans: "from south to north and east to west, regional disparity seems to have followed the path of colonization."⁷⁵ Cast in the role of landlord rather than migrant, an Anyi still upheld his traditional hierarchy. Hired laborers slipped right into the old slot for slaves,⁷⁶ and chiefs could exploit their customary powers over land use and labor by investing their

⁷⁰J. L. Boutillier, *Bongouanou, Côte d'Ivoire: Etude socio-économique d'une subdivision* (Paris, 1960), 147.

⁷¹Zolberg, *One-Party Government*, 118, 245-247; and Hubert Fréchet, "Les Plantations Européennes en Côte d'Ivoire," *Cahiers d'Outre-Mer*, 29 (Jan.- March 1955), 2-5, 23-24.

⁷²Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 174-175.

⁷³Chauveau and Dozon, "Colonisation, économie," 63-77.

⁷⁴Köbben, "Planteur Noir," 174-85; and Paulme, *Société de la Côte d'Ivoire*, 11-38, 107-120.

⁷⁵Tessilimi Bakary, "Elite Transformation and Political Succession," in Zartman and Delgado, eds., *Political Economy*, 28.

⁷⁶Rougerie, "Le pays Agni," 65.

new tax collector rebates in personal plantations.⁷⁷ Yet they also felt competition from rising commoners, and the economic unity of the matrilineage broke down as fathers gave their sons gifts of coffee or cocoa farms.⁷⁸ Migrants to Anyi country rose to 28 percent of the fixed population and 90 percent of the floating labor pool.⁷⁹ They often worked according to the paternalistic sharecropping arrangement of *abusan* (one-third of the harvest) and thus "entered more fully into the Anyi world."⁸⁰ In some cases, intermarriage between outsiders and Anyi women reduced tensions,⁸¹ but disputes over land rights and labor contracts also forced the Anyi to relegate most outsiders to distinct quarters or villages and, in Sanwi and Ndenye, to codify land tenure or ban grants to outsiders altogether.⁸² They respected the Dyula for their history of conquest and commerce but distrusted Dyula attempts to buy their fields and set up their sons as traders. The Mossi had a reputation for hard work but were regarded as backward savages and exploited. The Anyi recognized Baule as distant cousins and hard workers but grumbled because they repatriated most of their money and seemed to have forgotten their fellow Akan.⁸³

The Baule were busy colonizing the Ivorian forests. The bitter experience of forced labor had expanded their frontier of action into the Anyi southeast and Kru southwest. By 1962, 13 percent of them lived outside their original zone, mostly young men from the poorer savanna areas of the northern Baule "V." They used the time-proven tactic of *nyamwe*, which had helped them develop their ancient frontier lands and evade conquering *tirailleurs* and forced labor recruiters, to clear new fields for coffee and cocoa plantations.⁸⁴ To this day, young Baule are pioneering in the southwest. In Bakwe country in the Sassandra valley, which once depended on Bete traders for contact with the outside world,⁸⁵ they are now a demographic majority, building on the labor of older Baule migrants who, as "chiefs" of all the adherents from their home villages, provide shelter and distribute lands, like true patrons.⁸⁶ Houphouet profited from his family inheritance and his training as a *médecin* to become a scientific planter whose cocoa and coffee yield per acre was soon higher than that of any European rival. He provided Yamoussoukro with an infirmary and pharmacy, helped organize the *Association des Chef Coutûmiers*, and "not only symbolized the

⁷⁷ Amin, *Développement du Capitalisme*, 101.

⁷⁸ Kōbben, "Planteur Noir," 32-40.

⁷⁹ Pescay, "Sociologie," 11-12.

⁸⁰ Groff, "Development of Capitalism," 365-368, 406-413.

⁸¹ Parin *et al.*, *Fear Thy Neighbor*, 91.

⁸² D'Aby, *La Côte d'Ivoire*, 174-178; and Pescay, "Sociologie," 22-23.

⁸³ Boutillier, *Bongouanou*, 136-139, 182-189; and E. Dupire, "Planteurs autochtones et étrangers en Basse-Côte d'Ivoire orientale," *Etudes Eburnéenes*, VIII, (1960), 190-213.

⁸⁴ Salvete-Marnier, *Etude Regionale*, 57-66, 103-107; and Pescay, "Sociologie," 143-144.

⁸⁵ Robert D. Tice, "Administrative Structure, Ethnicity and Nation-Building in the Ivory Coast," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 12, 2 (1974), 211-212.

⁸⁶ Colette Vallat, "L'immigration baoulé en pays bakwe: étude d'un front pionnier," *Cahiers d'ORSTOM*, XVI, 1-2 (1979), 103-110.

achievements of the emerging Ivory Coast bourgeoisie but had the personal means to finance a political campaign." A true Baule, he acquired kinship ties, through his first wife, to a royal Anyi lineage and also, on her father's side, to Senegalese strangers, thus demonstrating "his mastery of ethnic calculus."⁸⁷

The colonial situation, at first a blow to Baule pride, provided them with a wider frontier framed by a political and economic system which could be manipulated. The Baule had, in a sense, already experienced the altered ethnicity, increased social mobility, and individuation of options which shocked other traditions. They were willing to work for someone or to employ someone, whether relative or stranger, and they knew how to farm. They might pay dues to a *Société indigène de prévoyance*⁸⁸ or a *Syndicat Agricole*⁸⁹ or have a bright child educated at William Ponty in Senegal, where Houphouët graduated,⁹⁰ but such ploys showed their easy understanding of the clientelism inherent in the colonial system.⁹¹ What they needed was a political option, an excuse to use their negotiating and amalgamating skills to weld Ivorian ethnicities into a national coalition.

Independence Politics and National Integration

Just as the building up of corporate and African empires can be seen as one example of pyramiding of clientelistic and other resources, the fashioning of new political entities under imperial rule may be viewed in basically the same terms.⁹²

The post-independence Ivorian system has been likened, at various stages, to a Chicago-style political party patronage machine or to the Saint-Simonian technocracy of Napoleon III.⁹³ Despite such similarities, dependency theorists relegate it to being an enclave of the world system managed by a transnationally linked petty bourgeoisie which helps its metropolitan mentors loot the land for short-term material gains.⁹⁴ It might also be compared to itself, on its own terms. Within the structures allowed it by international powers, the Ivorian elite functions in a style that is also African, born of the frontier which the Baule have learned to manage, not as an exclusive caste but as a predominating

⁸⁷Zolberg, *One-Party Government*, 73-74; and George Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets de la décolonisation* (Paris, 1965), 36-37.

⁸⁸Anyang' Nyong'o, "Development of Agrarian Capitalist Classes," 195.

⁸⁹D'Aby, *La Côte d'Ivoire*, 111-113; and I. Wallerstein, *The Road to Independence: Ghana and the Ivory Coast* (Paris, 1964), 88-91.

⁹⁰Zolberg, *One-Party Government*, 29-32.

⁹¹Lemarchand, "Political Clientelism and Ethnicity," 77.

⁹²*Ibid.*, 79.

⁹³Zolberg, *Creating Political Order*, 160; and Zolberg, "Political Development," 14.

⁹⁴Lubeck, *African Bourgeoisie*, 8; and Bonnie Campbell, "The Ivory Coast," in John Dunn, ed., *West African States: Failure and Promise. A Study in Comparative Politics* (Cambridge, 1978), 73.

minority just a step ahead of its "fictive kin." Let us examine briefly the evolution of the national party, the state bourgeoisie, the clientelist techniques of cooption and punishment, and that ultimate test of team cohesiveness, the succession issue.

Although Ivoirians learned to manipulate the colonial regime to local advantage and organized their own voluntary associations for mutual aid,⁹⁵ they could not really play their own political cards until the French state itself lost legitimacy in 1940. Until then, both African and European planters had had access to forced laborers, but Vichy racism suddenly restricted that precious economic resource to whites. Alienated Ivorian planters formed their own *Syndicat Agricole Africain* (SAA), a class-oriented organization based on canton chiefs and cocoa barons which was soon dominated by Baule and their Dyula transport-trader partners.⁹⁶ These allied with urban voluntary associations to elect the SAA president, Houphouët, to the French National Constituent Assembly in 1946, where he combined with the Communists to abolish forced labor in the colonies. Houphouët offered Senufo and Mossi migrant laborers better terms than his European rivals and thus seized the economic advantage from the *colons*, who encouraged the ensuing political repression from 1948 to 1951.⁹⁷

The same frontier clientelism that had served Poku and Yabo Mouso so well must have done the same for Houphouët in Paris. He spent thirteen years in the shifting coalition cabinets of the Fourth French Republic, usually in the Health Ministry, and had to deal with governors at home who alternated between the sympathetic leftism of a Latrille and the right-wing manipulations of a Péchoux. His attempt to ally the *Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire* (PDCI) with the Communist-backed *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* (RDA) — a wealthy planter joining with populist revolutionaries — was as likely Baule pragmatism as it was anti-colonial nationalism. He explained in 1948:

We are on good terms with the Communist Party, that's true. But to be so affiliated does not mean that we ourselves are the slightest bit communist. Can anyone say that I, Houphouët, a traditional chief, a doctor, a land-owner, a Catholic, am a communist? But our association with the Communist Party has been invaluable to us, in the sense that we found in France parliamentary groups which welcomed us warmly, whereas others did not concern themselves with us, and we found in them the possibility of fulfilling the hopes we had in our hearts.⁹⁸

Péchoux tried to bribe the Baule king away from the RDA camp but failed, so the colonial regime encouraged ethnic rivalries to split the party. Anyi Progressistes, Bete Socialists, and a coastal Bloc soon emerged, the last being led

⁹⁵Wallerstein, *Road to Independence*, 85-95, 172-175.

⁹⁶D'Aby, *La Côte d'Ivoire*, 108-113.

⁹⁷Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 179-188; and Anyang' Nyong'o, "Development of Agrarian Capitalist Classes," 207-212.

⁹⁸Chaffard, *Carnets secrets*, 49-55, 102-103; and Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 184-188.

by Etienne Djaument, a former ally of Houphouet. Djaument complained that Baule voted for Houphouet "out of racism" and accused him of seeking the Baule kingship for himself. Inter-ethnic riots, demonstrations, boycotts, strikes, hundreds of casualties, and three thousand arrests culminated with Baule filling the roads to Yamoussoukro to prevent Houphouet's detention. Finally the PDCI broke from its Communist allies in return for racial equality in government appointments and seats on the boards of French firms.⁹⁹ The 1950s became a period of "dyarchy" in which Houphouet's movement acted as a "para-administration" in concert with the colonial regime.¹⁰⁰ Houphouet was the only African in the advisory group that prepared the 1958 draft constitution of the Fifth French Republic. Because the prosperous Ivory Coast contributed 44 percent of the total exports and nearly 40 percent of the total revenues of French West Africa, Houphouet rejected radical calls for a federal community and arranged independence in 1960 as a separate territory under a single-party constitution.¹⁰¹

The SAA/PDCI/RDA struggle with colonial power supports Lemarchand's observation that client elites in a world system are not helpless, that the terms of exchange can be renegotiated when the resource-base allows. Internally, clientelist manipulation by a political machine can defuse class or ethnic cleavages.¹⁰² Zolberg says this another way:

the party was initially a loose movement which naturally incorporated the characteristics of the society in which it grew; it was eventually transformed into a political machine but continued to reflect the incomplete integration of the territorial society. Yet it was the most concrete expression of the nation, it was a self-made indigenous institution, and it was an instrument with which the new rulers were familiar.¹⁰³

The PDCI based its mass mobilization on rural villages and urban ethnic associations and manipulated Ivorian prosperity to coopt ethnic leaders:

public meetings, and more generally the entire set of political activities, takes place separately, each committee leader taking care of his own ward. There is no communication at the base between the different wards and . . . the specificity of each of

⁹⁹Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 188-209; and M. Damas, *Rapport No. 11348: sur les incidents survenus en Côte d'Ivoire* (Abidjan, 1950), 11-13.

¹⁰⁰Wallerstein, *Road to Independence*, 55.

¹⁰¹Zolberg, *One-Party Government*, 222-246; and Elliot Berg, "The Economic Basis of Political Choice in French West Africa," *American Political Science Review*, LIV, 2 (June 1960), 400-405.

¹⁰²Lemarchand, "Comparative Political Clientelism," 12-27.

¹⁰³Zolberg, *Creating Political Order*, 123.

the ethnic groups is a fact acknowledged by the Africans themselves.¹⁰⁴

Although its very penetration of the state bureaucracy created a new power broker, the PDCI remained alive as an instrument of recruitment and control,

a two-way pipeline that pumps up grievances and people and carries down information and rewards. The PDCI has been a club of the people in power and a civic congregational meeting and intercessor for local constituencies.¹⁰⁵

It became in the 1970s "a kind of Ivorian House of Lords" for old political gentry who, even in retirement, could still dispense prebends to their clients.¹⁰⁶ In the 1980s, however, as the transition from Houphouët to a compromise successor loomed larger, the party revived as an agent of hard negotiations and teamwork. It has intervened increasingly in supposedly apolitical organizations, such as the student movement, and its elections for officers display an "excessive emphasis on candidates' 'distributive' abilities."¹⁰⁷ Houphouët, the party manipulator, has paid even closer attention to "ethnic arithmetic," by appointing cabinet members from all the major ethnic groups, roughly according to their representation in the National Assembly: "the result has been the emergence of broadly understood political rules which involve an implicit recognition, but not a public display, of ethnic politics."¹⁰⁸

The oligarchy of the Ivory Coast has become a state bourgeoisie. To the early stratum of semi-official évolués coopted by the colonial regime was added a planter bourgeoisie that included 20,000 wealthy and 200,000 medium or small cash-crop producers by 1965. Only recently has a "belated and cramped" local business bourgeoisie emerged, thanks to the patronage of high officials who want to direct and benefit from national capital circulation.¹⁰⁹ Tessilimi Bakary, of the University of Abidjan, shows that 300 families have created a "confraternity of power," by maintaining careful ethnic quotas in every state body. The Baule, though quite prominent, have no monopoly of power. The once-dominant planter class has retained cash-crop investments but mutated into a "republic of civil servants" peopled by educated technocrats with connections.¹¹⁰ Michael Cohen has defined the Ivorian elite as a class of "people sharing common political and economic interests arising from access to public authorities and the public resources and opportunities which they control" which has generated an

¹⁰⁴ Henri Raulin, as quoted in Zolberg, *One-Party Government*, 143.

¹⁰⁵ Zartman and Delgado, *Political Economy*, 5-6.

¹⁰⁶ Jackson and Rosberg, *Personal Rule*, 150.

¹⁰⁷ Colin Legum, *African Contemporary Record* (New York, 1987), B68-B71.

¹⁰⁸ Donald Rothchild and Naomi Chazan, eds., *The Precarious Balance: State and Society in Africa* (Boulder, 1988), 242-243.

¹⁰⁹ Amin, *Développement du Capitalisme*, 107; and Campbell, "Ivory Coast," 110-111.

¹¹⁰ Bakary, "Elite Transformation," 24-45. He calculates that Akan (including Baule) have 40 percent of the population but half the offices, while others posts are divided mainly among Bete, Senufo and Malinke.

increasingly assertive "nascent national culture."¹¹¹ This is consistent with Richard Sklar's argument that a "collaborative bourgeoisie," based as it is on "relations of power," can assert its autonomy from neo-colonial domination with a sound "indigenous political organization."¹¹² The "modern" Ivorian system has evolved, in part, from Baule mastery of the precolonial amalgamative frontier.

Houphouët's patrimonial style relies on cooption, punishment, and rehabilitation. He prefers to recruit relative unknowns from "significant" ethnic groups and to reward them for their loyalty by encouraging speculative opportunities.¹¹³ He has told his courtiers to enrich themselves.¹¹⁴ One education minister decreed that all students had to wear uniforms made of a certain khaki fabric, of which his wife had acquired a monopoly.¹¹⁵ Ethnic adherents still appeal to their intellectuals for favors, as when a Bete group complained to the minister of agriculture (a fellow Bete) about a problem in their school,¹¹⁶ but the system offers such "fringe benefits" that few Ivoirians can resist the temptation to conform to what the oligarchy expects of them.¹¹⁷ By 1970, administratively connected people had received half of the all urban land concessions granted by the government, mainly in exclusive Cocody. Not only cabinet ministers, but also "the pastry chef and chauffeurs of the Presidential Palace" got such plots.¹¹⁸ The national independence festival rotated among constituencies of loyal ministers whose hometowns deserved the face-lifting and tourism.¹¹⁹ In 1974, after a foiled plot by Bete and Guro junior officers, military leaders were integrated into well-paid government posts.¹²⁰

Le vieux also bestows fatherly forgiveness on recalcitrants whom he has had to discipline. Potential successors like Jean-Baptiste Mockey and Phillipe

¹¹¹Michael A. Cohen, *Urban Policy and Political Conflict in Africa: A Study of the Ivory Coast* (Chicago, 1974), 22, 194.

¹¹²Richard Sklar, "The Nature of Class Domination in Africa," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, XVII-4 (1979), 550-551.

¹¹³Jackson and Rosberg, *Personal Rule*, 148; Tice, "Administrative Structure," 215; and Bonnie Campbell, "The State and Capitalist Development in the Ivory Coast," in Lubeck, *African Bourgeoisie*, 287.

¹¹⁴*Africa Report* (May-June 1988), 54.

¹¹⁵This was a widely-discussed scandal when I was a U. S. Peace Corps teacher in the Ivory Coast from 1968 to 1970.

¹¹⁶Zolberg, "Patterns of National Integration," 458-464.

¹¹⁷*West Africa*, 3088 (Sept. 6, 1976), 1288-89. The predominately Dyula Transporters' Association, with its nation-wide linkage, elected a southerner president because of his "business sense." See Barbara Lewis, "Ethnicity and Occupational Specialization in the Ivory Coast: The Transporter's Association," in John N. Paden, ed., *Values, Identities and National Integration: Empirical Research in Africa* (Evanston, 1980), 75-87.

¹¹⁸Cohen, *Urban Policy*, 42-44.

¹¹⁹Michael A. Cohen, "The Myth of the Expanding Centre: Politics in the Ivory Coast," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, XI, 2 (1973), 238-239.

¹²⁰Bakary, "Elite Transformation," 46; and *Africa Diary* (July 9-15, 1973), 6538, and (August 13-19, 1973), 6589-6590.

Yacé, once fallen from grace, were later rehabilitated.¹²¹ Towns linked to the 1963-64 coup plots by non-Baule "Young Turks" initially lost their chance for development, but jailed plotters later received urban land grants and assurances of more balanced regional investment.¹²² The regime responded to the Bete and Anyi Sanwi uprisings of 1969-70 with both force (1,000 Bete died in Gagnoa) and cooption. By 1980, the Anyi, while only 6 percent of the population, held 25 percent of the highest offices, and in 1985 Houphouët made a "voyage of reconciliation" to Gagnoa, "to heal this old wound."¹²³ Troublesome university students are usually exiled to higher studies in Paris or simply deprived of jobs. When Bete lecturers demanded multi-party democracy in 1982 and inspired a university strike, Houphouët sent the students home early, accepted a staged apology from the faculty and pressured Bete politicians and military officers to profess their loyalty and condemn the "agitators" for discrediting the entire Bete population.¹²⁴ Such declarations of filial piety demonstrated Lemarchand's dictum that, in a cooptive regime, ethnic clients are expected to "prevent the political mobilization of their respective constituencies."¹²⁵ When an overzealous young minister for rural development appointed in 1985 tried to make himself the biggest landowner in the country, he made the mistake of confiscating farms from Baule pioneers in the west. Houphouët summoned the miscreant to Yamoussoukro for an accounting, but only fired him when he "failed to show the proper degree of contrition." In 1988, the Bete commander-in-chief of the armed forces, accused of conspiring with the Malinke maritime minister to overthrow the Baule, was simply made ambassador to Brazil.¹²⁶

Perhaps the most lucrative, and problematic, avenue to fortune in the Ivorian clientelist system is appointment to a managerial post in one of the many state-sponsored agri-business or industrial firms. By 1970, 62 percent of such positions in 88 parastatals were held by National Assemblymen or other high officials. Not only did Houphouët's clients have an average of two parastatal jobs apiece, but a disproportionately large number of managers were Baule.¹²⁷ By 1980, the state owned 53 percent of industrial capital shares, private Ivorians 11 percent, and foreigners only 36 percent.¹²⁸ In the name of development, this predatory octopus plundered the countryside in a form of "pirate capitalism."¹²⁹ The national forests, for example, have been feverishly logged down to a mere 6

¹²¹Jackson and Rosberg, *Personal Rule*, 149; and Legum, *Africa Contemporary Record*, B69-B71.

¹²²Zolberg, "Political Development," 15-20; and Cohen, "Myth of the Expanding Centre," 238-239, and *Urban Policy*, 45.

¹²³Legum, *Africa Contemporary Record*, B67; and Bakary, "Elite Transformation," 35.

¹²⁴*Africa Report* (Jan.- Feb. 1983), 6-7.

¹²⁵Lemarchand, "State and Society in Africa," 62.

¹²⁶*Africa Report* (May-June 1988), 54-55.

¹²⁷Cohen, *Urban Policy*, 62-64.

¹²⁸Lubeck, *African Bourgeoisie*, 22.

¹²⁹See Sayre P. Schatz, "Pirate Capitalism and the Inert Economy of Nigeria," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, XXII, 1 (1984), 45. He contrasts the predatory, quick-profit approach with a capitalism that "nurtures" sustained development.

percent of what they were at independence; the largest timber exporter in Africa may soon have to import wood. SODEFORD, the state forestry agency, is replanting barely 5,000 hectares per year, less than 2 percent of the rate of depletion. The oligarchy has also extracted large surpluses from rural farmers, not only through taxation but by marketing their cash crops through the notorious CAISTAB (the *Caisse de stabilisation*, or commodity marketing board). When the world prices for cocoa and coffee more than quintupled in 1975-77, this state agency increased its payments to farmers by less than 20 percent.¹³⁰ An Ivorian technocrat employed by a parastatal made two to three times what a regular civil servant earned, yet the World Bank condemned the enterprises for "empire building, proliferation, lack of coordination and poor financial management." As inefficient and self-serving as this entrenched bureaucracy was, it resisted reform until a 1985 house-cleaning of the civil service opened up 1,200 jobs for university graduates.¹³¹ This purge, along with the introduction of multi-candidate elections in 1980, enabled a "petrified" elite to reproduce itself.¹³²

The Ivorian system, as directed by Houphouët's Baule, is an intricate web of regional bossism and bureaucratic managerialism which tries to bridge the gap between ethnicity and class by means of clientelism. Both Lemarchand and Young have recognized this possibility from a theoretical point of view.¹³³ Zolberg has argued that Houphouët's coalition "formula" seeks to generate "national transaction flows" by "distributing tangible benefits to key components, including the emerging bourgeoisie and the ethnic groups." After factionalism within the PDCI in the mid-1960s nearly destroyed the "formula," *le vieux* politicized the state bureaucracy by putting more power into the hands of local *sous-préfets* to "animate" policies and resorted to face-to-face dialogues with *ad hoc* national councils which stripped both the party and the National Assembly of many of their functions.¹³⁴ Houphouët assigned local administrators – and many secondary school students – to areas outside their place of origin in order to broaden the base of his coalition. Clientelism could even supersede ethnicity. In Toumodi in 1969, the Dyula *sous-préfet* bulldozed a sacred grove for a public works project despite Baule objections. When I sought permission to take two of my Baule students to Ghana over the holidays, I had to have an *apéritif* with him to get the papers signed. He was later promoted to *préfet* and transferred. Zartman and Delgado call this the "squeaky wheel principle" of distribution:

In the often-dichotomous context of class and ethnic, the Ivory Coast uses its economic growth to pursue integration and stability at both levels, using one to combat the other but

¹³⁰ *Africa Report* (Nov.- Dec. 1987), 63, and (Jan.-Feb. 1983), 6.

¹³¹ Legum, *Africa Contemporary Record*, B66-B67; and Zartman and Delgado, *Political Economy*, 9.

¹³² Bakary, "Elite Transformation," 46.

¹³³ Lemarchand, "Comparative Political Clientelism," 12; and Young, "Nationalism, Ethnicity and Class," 470-472.

¹³⁴ Zolberg, "Political Development," 13, 22-27.

not one at the expense of the other . . . the sense of nation, ethnic, class and materialism have *all* been heightened.¹³⁵

The *étatist* Ivorian economy grew by a yearly average of 7.3 percent from 1960 to 1979,¹³⁶ but the patronage which supposedly greased the "squeaky wheel" had its flaws and, recently, has threatened to dry up. In 1965, the southern forest zone produced nearly sixteen times as much revenue as northern cereal-farmers and earned a per capita income that was five times higher.¹³⁷ Sugar and cotton schemes since then have not lessened the relative deprivation of the north,¹³⁸ so it is no coincidence that the maritime minister in the 1988 anti-Baule plot was a Malinke from Toubra.¹³⁹ In 1972, Lemarchand praised the PDCI for distributing material payoffs "fairly evenly," except to the Bete and Anyi Sanwi.¹⁴⁰ At the same time, Michael Cohen attacked the "myth of the expanding center," arguing that the capital neglected the hinterland, that local administrators often alienated their subjects instead of "animating" them, and that Houphouët's famous dialogues of 1969 with discontented interest groups revealed growing inequities. Many bureaucratic intellectuals found it necessary to copy *le vieux* and establish more direct contact with their home villages in the form of para-political development associations. Even in Abidjan, the high cost and lack of housing forced many families into *bidonvilles*, but "the extraordinary share of land given to officials seems to defy any explanation other than that the members of the government take care of their own."¹⁴¹ By 1987, the International Labor Organization said that the Ivorian regime "stands out for exceptionally poor levels of basic needs satisfaction in relation to its high per capita income."¹⁴²

Part of the problem was external: a decline in commodity prices. In 1973, Finance Minister Henri Konan Bédié, a Baule who had just celebrated his first "million," announced that foreign companies were repatriating too much profit, that coffee, cocoa and timber prices were declining drastically, and that the civil service was consuming 45 percent of the annual budget.¹⁴³ World Bank austerity measures forced government staff cuts, wage reductions as high as 50 percent, and the replacement of one-third of the expensive French *coopérants* with Ivorians, particularly in education. Three thousand such technical assistants were consuming nearly 15 percent of the operational budget.¹⁴⁴ Each cost 2.2 times as much as an Ivorian to employ. By 1984, Ivorianization had reached 70 percent,

¹³⁵ Zartman and Delgado, *Political Economy*, 11.

¹³⁶ Lubeck, *African Bourgeoisie*, 21-23.

¹³⁷ Campbell, "Ivory Coast," 101; and Anyang' Nyong'o, "Development of Agrarian Capitalist Classes," 205.

¹³⁸ Zartman and Delgado, *Political Economy*, 170-171.

¹³⁹ *Africa Report* (May-June 1988), 5.

¹⁴⁰ Lemarchand, "Political Clientelism and Ethnicity," 85.

¹⁴¹ Cohen, "Myth of the Expanding Centre," 228, 236-246, and *Urban Policy*, 45.

¹⁴² *Africa Report* (Nov.- Dec. 1987), 63.

¹⁴³ *Africa Report* (Sept.- Oct. 1973), 52.

¹⁴⁴ *Africa Report* (March-April 1985), 37.

but many of the top managerial positions remained in French hands, as did most of the profits from the commercial sector. French residents, whose numbers increased from 10,000 in 1956 to 50,000 in 1975, dominated the urban economy, while Malians and *burkinabe* comprised 78 percent of the unskilled rural labor force. Just as Dahomean strangers had felt pressure to leave in 1958, so proposals were made in 1985 to restrict Lebanese participation in commerce.¹⁴⁵ By 1987, despite world leadership in cocoa (No. 1) and coffee (No. 3) production, the Ivory Coast defaulted on its debt payments. CAISTAB, which normally provided half the state investment budget, was in the red, and officials complained that austerity cuts "were running the risk of jeopardizing the political and social stability of the country."¹⁴⁶

The outcome of the upcoming succession conjuncture may depend on how well the Ivorian distributive coalition can continue to provide prebends to its adherents. Has Houphouët been in power long enough or too long? Which will prevail after he is gone, military conflict, as in so many other African states, or political in-fighting? There are a few precedents for the latter type of transition, including Senegal, where Wolof "assimilation" of other groups is even linguistic.¹⁴⁷ Has Houphouët, who has helped himself to "billions" in real estate and Swiss bank accounts and lavished expenditures on Yamoussoukro and his plantations,¹⁴⁸ also manipulated the countrymen into the habit of nationhood? Can the revived PDCI do without his charismatic palavers with *ad hoc* national councils and dialogues with interest groups? His latest "dauphin," Baule technocrat Camille Alliali, was rejected by the competitive fellow members of the party executive committee.¹⁴⁹ Bakary, a Dyula, detects a preference among the elite for a technocrat from a minor, unthreatening ethnic group. There is no alternative organization to the state oligarchy, he claims, not even the army: "The next president will emerge out of the same mold . . . the group will survive its leader. It will go on preserving its interest."¹⁵⁰ Houphouët himself urges team spirit: "we cannot afford a Baule president, a Bete president, or a Dyula president — we must have a president of the Ivory Coast."¹⁵¹ Horowitz suggests that unranked ethnic systems lack any "ascriptive bar to social mobility," but if overly centralized leave little room for maneuver.¹⁵² Konan Bédié, president of the National Assembly, will, according to the constitution, have sixty days of interim

¹⁴⁵ Lubeck, *African Bourgeoisie*, 21-23; Campbell, "Ivory Coast," 103-106, and "State and Capitalist Development," 286-301. For anti-Lebanese sentiments, see Cohen, *Urban Policy*, 128; and Legum, *African Contemporary Record*, B69. For Dahomean expulsions, see Herschelle Sullivan Challenor, "Strangers as Colonial Intermediaries: The Dahomeans in Francophone Africa," in William A. Shack and Elliot P. Skinner, eds., *Strangers in African Societies* (Los Angeles, 1979), 74-80.

¹⁴⁶ *Africa Report* (Nov.- Dec. 1987), 62-64.

¹⁴⁷ Bakary, "Elite Transformation," 21; and Donal B. Cruise O'Brien, "Senegal," in Dunn, ed., *West African States*, 183.

¹⁴⁸ *Africa Report* (Nov.- Dec. 1984), 46, and (May-June 1988), 53.

¹⁴⁹ Legum, *African Contemporary Record*, B69-71.

¹⁵⁰ Bakary, "Elite Transformation," 23, 51-54.

¹⁵¹ *Africa Report* (Jan.- Feb. 1983), 5.

¹⁵² Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 35-39.

power to arrange for a successor, perhaps himself. Half the leading pretenders are Baule.¹⁵³

The Ivorian system has managed lately, even while *le vieux* is near-blind with cataracts. Since, despite Baule prominence, it remains relatively unranked, the cohort Houphouet has personally recruited may successfully negotiate the conjuncture. Or they may not. Even if this clientelist, multi-ethnic solidarity fails to prevail, that too fits the Kopytoff thesis:

Among the frontier formations that survived and grew, most stabilized into small-scale polities and remained in that condition for long periods before disappearing. Only a few experienced in full the potential cycle of growth, expansion, stabilization, further expansion and eventual decay.¹⁵⁴

Conclusion

At the time of the migrations, the leader was a chief who exerted real power over his followers, a man whose reputation was such that he was able to gather several families about him, to persuade them to seek a new home, to share with him the precarious fate of emigrants, to wrest a new land from its often reluctant inhabitants.¹⁵⁵

The Ivory Coast is the creation not only of France but also of the Ivorian frontier. During the past two and a half centuries, Baule leaders like Abra Poku, Yabo Mouso, Kouakou Anoungblé and Félix Houphouet-Boigny have established a tradition of innovation, negotiation, amalgamation and irrepressible ambition which has shaped the current nation-state. Despite the Western material environment espoused by the modern Ivorian elite, it is still peculiarly "ivorian" and fits Lemarchand's paradigm of a "neo-traditional" machine, "in which clientelistic solidarities of a traditional type are incorporated into a broader institutional framework."¹⁵⁶ The opportunistic, integrative ethnicity developed by the Baule on the Ivorian frontier gave them a head start in both precolonial and colonial times in taking advantage of penetration by the world system. Economically and politically, they have risen to dominate the Ivorian single-party state, and they have received praise for keeping the ethnic "lid" on:

One can make arguments pro and con for the utility of the party machine in terms of growth strategies and equity considerations. But I think we have to give it relatively high marks in terms of ethnic bargaining and representation and to

¹⁵³Legum. *Africa Contemporary Record*, B70-B71; and Bakary, "Elite Transformation," 52-53.

¹⁵⁴Kopytoff, *African Frontier*, 77.

¹⁵⁵P. Cheruy, as quoted in Parin *et al.*, *Fear Thy Neighbor*, 20.

¹⁵⁶Lemarchand, "Comparative Political Clientelism," 21.

some extent in terms of elite circulation, at least at the middle and lower levels.¹⁵⁷

The key – or flaw – in this achievement has been the personal skill of Houphouët. James Coleman once compared the nation-building elites of Africa to the centralizing monarchies of early modern Europe.¹⁵⁸ Yet Houphouët also fits the Kopytoff model of rising from patrimonial chief to king of a regional metropole. He has manipulated Ivorian politics since 1940: nearly half a century, compared to 67 years of official colonial rule. He did not inherit all his status; he had to build it, just as his Baule had built their hegemony on the early Ivorian frontier and during the colonial plantation era, by upholding an ideology of pragmatism and patronage.¹⁵⁹

Nearly all the members of the elite were creations of the Head of State. . . . He has brought them into the system, provided them with all their needs – and he is the man who could exclude them from the system. And although this exclusion has mostly been smooth, and rather non-violent, the sheer threat of it has so far acted as a magnificently efficient preventative.¹⁶⁰

In 1967, Houphouët held a national funeral in Yamoussoukro for his maternal aunt; it was traditional in all but the lack of human sacrifices. The PDCI paper claimed that the Ivory Coast was united by the occasion "as a single tribe and a single family," that the country "has not awaited the disappearance of tribal customs to achieve its unity," and that all Ivorian peoples renewed their allegiance to Houphouët, the "cement that binds the nation."¹⁶¹ Two decades later, such propaganda sounds less rhetorical, and Houphouët has made his state a regional as well as national phenomenon. Though often accused of playing France's game, he has displayed considerable stubbornness and vanity of his own, by outmaneuvering regional rivals like Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Touré, Léopold Senghor and Jerry Rawlings, by imposing his will through the *Conseil de l'Entente*, and by manipulating Burkina Faso to the point where his in-law took power there in a bloody coup in 1987. President Abdou Diouf of Senegal, who constitutionally succeeded Senghor in 1983, regularly visits Yamoussoukro to partake of the "wisdom" of *le vieux* like a true adherent.¹⁶²

This essay has attempted to recreate an African perspective on the historical development of the Ivorian clientelist state by tracing a theme of

¹⁵⁷Henry Bienen, "The State and Ethnicity: Integrative Formulas in Africa," in Rothchild and Olorunsola, *State Versus Ethnic Claims*, 113.

¹⁵⁸James S. Coleman, "Nationalism in Tropical Africa," *American Political Science Review*, 48, 2 (1954), 405.

¹⁵⁹Cohen, "Myth of the Expanding Centre," 238.

¹⁶⁰*West Africa*, 3088 (Sept. 6, 1976), 1289.

¹⁶¹Zolberg, "Political Development," 29-30.

¹⁶²*Africa Report* (Nov.-Dec. 1986), 9-13.

frontier ethnogenesis and expansion from precolonial to modern times. To do so does not deny the changes wrought by the capitalist world system or by European imperialism. On the contrary, a major part of recent African history has been indigenous response to trade, conquest, colonial rule, and the ongoing challenges of modernization in a context of global interdependence. The impact of pressures from outside Africa, however, is only one side of a story in which Africans must be recognized as the central characters. Despite varying degrees of disjunctive Westernization, African culture could not be destroyed by colonialism because it was never frozen in time. Its values, motivations, identities and relationships have been evolving for a long time and will continue to do so, in an African way. Given the multi-ethnic clientelism of the Ivory Coast, it may never cease to be a frontier, where politics survive "through a judicious control rather than abolition of conflict," and where "new identities do not wipe out old ones but are added to them."¹⁶³

¹⁶³Kopytoff, *African Frontier*, 20-21, 72-73.