

# THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN: NEGOTIATION OF CITIZENSHIP AND MULTICULTURALISM IN IVORY COAST<sup>1</sup>

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## *1. The electoral campaign: “Ivoirité” and the question of civil rights.*

For more than 30 years Ivory Coast has been a peaceful country reputed for the stability of her political system. It came thus like a shock for many people when in December 1999 during the electoral campaign for the Presidency a coup d’etat was announced. President Henri Konan Bédié (PDCI) was disposed by a group of soldiers under the leadership of General Robert Guei who had already served the first President of the country, Félix Houphouët-Boigny. Guei had been supported by two other generals ( Palenfo and Coulibaly) whom he later “sacked” after coup and counter coups” draw a spur of blood and violence through Abidjan.

For many journalists and experts the “December coup” did not come as a surprise. The preparations for the electoral campaign already had been accompanied by social unrest and political strife. Strikes of many social groups (student, housewives, taxi drivers) against rising prizes for food and petrol drew attention to the precarious living conditions of the masses while the massive financial scandal<sup>2</sup> in which the ruling class was involved met with biting critic from the media and the general public. Despite the dismissal of some of the most incompetent and corrupt ministers President Bédié’s Government experienced a severe loss of legitimacy and credibility. At this critical moment Alassane Dramane Ouattara who had served as Prime Minister under President Houphouët-Boigny until the latter’s death in 1993 returned to Ivory Coast. As a political representative of the marginalized Northern Region Ouattara’s position as Prime Minister had been of political importance for the stability of the country. Being a Muslim and a Northerner, he served as “living proof” that tribalism and ethnicity was of no

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<sup>1</sup> Part of the paper is based on a visit to Abidjan in summer 1999 with students from the Free University. At the time we encountered the social unrest and participated in the various rumours. Our stay during this time was of particular interest for me since I had done research from 1974 until 1976 on the history of Daoukro and in one of its adjacent villages where President Bédié was born. At the time of my research he had joined the World Bank in Washington but I was able to speak to his uncle about the family’s history.

<sup>2</sup> More than 18mill.CFA – given as a loan by the EU in order to reform the health system – had been embezzled apparently by high ranking officials from the Ministry of Health.

importance in a country which consists of 60 different ethnic groups and 3 major language groups. Out of this position of strength, he had resisted the take over of the Presidency by Henri Konan Bédié when Houphouët died, but lost, since Bédié as President of the National Assembly could impose himself as legitimate successor. After his defeat, Ouattara left the country and pursued an international career as Vice-Director of the IWF. It was only in the wake of the planned election in December 2000 that he decided to return and run for the Presidency.

Taking this past history into account, Ouattara's return increased the tension which heightened when he was elected President of the RDR (Rassemblement des Républicains), a newly founded party which had broken away from the PDCI in 1993. Headed by the former historian Henrietta Diabaté, the RDR run a most promising electoral campaign, guaranteeing by their diverse members that the party was not a sole interest group of the Northern constituencies, although it had many supporters there. Diabaté formed a kind of coalition with the FPI, a social-democratic party, led by the Beté historian Laurent Gbagbo, who was counselled by Harry Memel-Foté, an international reputed anthropologists originating from one of the coastal ethnic groups, the Loudjoukrou. The two parties together posed a serious threat to the established regime embodied in the PDCI whose members had governed Ivory Coast for 36 years since her independence. A multitude<sup>3</sup> of smaller parties existed as well, but apart from the PDCI, RDR, FPI only the PIT (Parti ivoirien des travailleurs) had a slight chance. On the surface, the campaign looked like a personal fight of old rivals, the internal struggle of the political elite after their leading figure (Houphouët) had died. It was a battle among age cohorts who knew and rivalled with each other for many years. Several of them, like Diabate, Gbagbo, Kipré<sup>4</sup>, and Memel-Foté had been university professors before their political career began, while Bédié and Ouattara had gained their reputation in international organisations. With the exception of Gbagbo, they had all been protégés of Houphouët, but in their new role as opposition leaders had managed to convince their followers that change was necessary and imminent.

While the fever of the campaigns rose and a victory of the PDCI became rather improbable, the acting President forbade political rallies by the RDR in the south and openly questioned Ouattara's citizenship with the intent to make him non-eligible for the highest office of the state. In his autobiography which had just appeared, Bédié argued *il (Ouattara) était burkinabe par son père et il possédait toujours la nationalité du Burkina Faso, il n'avait donc pas à se mêler de nos affaires de succession*" (Bédié 199:147). Confronted with Ouattara's former political career in Ivory Coast, he conceded that the late President had given him a diplomatic passport but added that this was not equivalent with being an Ivorian. "Une passeport diplomatique,...,n'est

<sup>3</sup> Bédié spoke of 28 parties which had been admitted in 1990, but had increased meantime.

<sup>4</sup> Kipré had been minister for education but was sacked by Bédié in summer 1999 because of the continuous revolt of students which had paralysed the country's main educational institutions for some years.

pas une pièce d'état civil" (Bedie 1999: 147). He added, that according to paragraph 9 of the constitution, certain conditions to run for the Presidency had to be fulfilled. Among them was the regulation that the candidate's father and mother had both to be of Ivorian origin and had to have lived in the country.

The President's move produced an outcry from many quarters and produced a multitude of arguments and counter-arguments. Some members of the opposition discussed the issue as a pretext to get rid of his most prominent rival. Others feared that it was just a prelude to cancel the election altogether and to return again to the One-Party-State which had existed until 1990, when the EU and the World Bank had forced Houphouët to make political concessions by opening the country for democratisation. Since it became evident, that the future of the political system was at stake, the discussion quickly turned to the question of *Ivoirité* that is, who is a citizen and who is not which had been discussed already during the first economic crises in the 1990s. In the ensuing turmoil, the opposition and their supporters in the media argued that the President himself was not a citizen. This argument was based on his autobiography where he had described in detail his double origin from royal families, as his mother's father was "roi du Beli"<sup>5</sup> (Ngbogbo) whereas his father originated from an aristocratic Baule (Nambè-Ngbogbo) family; a statement which coincided with the oral data I had collected 25 years earlier in his natal village Dadiékro as well as from his maternal uncle in Daoukro. The question of royauté (kingship) being linked to the powerful Ashanti kingdom, had been an important strategy for the Baule in colonial times to enhance their own ranking. Their legend of a powerful precolonial kingdom has been accepted widely, although severe doubts are justified (see Luig 19/85). Bédié's claim to royal descent was certainly embedded in this tradition and it served him as a justification for his own claim to power, whereas the opposition ridiculed him and portrayed him as a liar trying to pass as somebody he was not. Instead, part of the media and the FPI confronted him with those rumours which had never calmed down, that Bédié was an illegitimate son of Houphouët-Boigny. The affair was treated by the opposition in moral terms and discussed on the same level as his involvement in corruption and nepotism. Daoukro, the President's hometown was forwarded as a case in point and compared to Houphouët's protection of Yamoussoukrou. Privileged by millions of francs in investment, the town symbolized the nepotism and quest for pomp of African rulers, but being without substance as the rulers themselves.

The manoeuvre of turning the question of citizenship into a political weapon exhibited a rather cynical strategy since it tried to cover up the real contradictions of the country. It ascribed the actual economic crises of the country to the presence of foreigners making them, instead of the political elite, responsible for the evils

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<sup>5</sup> Twenty five years ago when I did fieldwork in the region I was given the same succession. The title roi has to be questioned, however, since it corresponds to our notion of chief. As Bédié rightly points out, le roi du Beli controlled five different villages which were united under one stool (bia), being the symbol of chiefly or royal power.

encountered by everyday Ivorians in their daily struggle to make ends meet. By publicly questioning the size (and rights) of the non-Ivorian community, the President tried to profit from the widespread xenophobia among the (urban) population. According to him (1999:200) Ivory Coast has the greatest community of foreigners in the world in relation to the number of its inhabitants and this fact had contributed to the decline of the BSP. In fact, 1/3 of all Ivorians, that is 5 millions of a population of 15.5 mill. inhabitants (UNICEF 1997/18) are born outside the country. In the capital Abidjan, it is estimated that every second inhabitant is a foreigner. Most of the immigrants come “traditionally” from Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea, and Ghana while refugees from Liberia and Sierra Leone flocked in during the 1990s as a consequence of the ongoing civil wars in these countries. Despite an official rhetoric of tolerance and liberalism which exists side by side with the the ascriptions of foreigners as scape goats, tensions among the different communities ran high.

During my stay in Abidjan I collected comments of the men in the streets which reflected their own area of origin and social position. Taxi drivers, often of non-Ivorian origin, described the President as a public thief who was personally responsible for the 18 mill. francs fraud which had been forwarded by the European Community for improvements in the health sector, but had never been used for these aims. Many “southerners” assured me that they would never tolerate to be ruled by someone from the North, some of them even considering a civil war as a possible outcome. Others classified the religion of the candidate being a Muslim as totally unacceptable while one of my bus neighbours mentioned that Ouattara was married to an American wife. “He is definitely not one of us, how can he then claim to become our President” did he ask me while commenting the latest article in the newspaper. This highly explosive mixture of politics and xenophobia signalled the end of the Ivorian development model. The electoral campaign was therefore more than just a political power struggle among the elite, it started a process of negotiating new modalities concerning state politics, elite formation, civil rights and national identity as well as a renewed consensus among classes. It also involved hopes to redress old wounds between the North and the South which reach far into the colonial past. Despite the fact of the country’s 40 years of independence, the legacy of colonial policies are still effective and have to be redressed.

## 2. Colonial legacy

For many years, Ivory Coast represented in the crises ridden African continent one of the few economically successful countries. It was the very showpiece of capitalism in West Africa and experienced in addition an unparalleled political stability as compared with other African countries<sup>6</sup>. The former French colony

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<sup>6</sup> Political repression and state violence existed but were moderate for African standards.

Ivory Coast was governed since Independence in 1960 by Felix Houphouët-Boigny, a former doctor, deputy of the French Parliament and minister in several cabinets of the 4th. Republic. Coming from a wealthy chiefly family, he represented the emerging African “agricultural bourgeoisie” who competed heavily for labour power and market prizes with French settlers and plantation owners in the south of the country. This rich class of African farmers<sup>7</sup> who made their fortune by growing cocoa and coffee (see below) organised themselves under the leadership of Houphouët-Boigny in the African Agricultural Union (Syndicat agricole africain) in order to fight for their interests. By organising the legendary campaign against forced labour which was abolished in 1946, Houphouët-Boigny became a national hero since also the small and middle peasants supported his campaign.

He was celebrated as a fighter against colonialism although his subsequent career made it quite clear that he did not strive for independence from France but rather preferred an autonomous status inside la “Communaute Française”. He used his success to sever his ties with the French left who had supported his campaign against forced labour and subsequently formed a new, more conservative party, the PDCI, a split-off from the RDA – PDCI. Contrary to the latter’s continued anti-colonial policy, the PDCI fought for economic aims, like improved prizes and better pay of labour migrants, rather than for political freedom. But after de Gaulle’s referendum and Ghana’s independence Houphouët-Boigny had virtually no other choice than to accept independence, although reluctantly.

The state he inherited, was composed of a heterogeneous population, being divided into 60 ethnic groups and 3 main language groups. Many of them, like the Baule, Agni and Abron, who belonged to the Akan cultural complex, had migrated into the country during the 17<sup>th</sup> century where they found small communities of Mande speakers in the north. The eastern part of the country was inhabited by acephalous societies like the Gouro, Dida and Bété’, whereas the coastal area in the South was settled by Kru fishermen, sailors and traders in the east and various people of Akan stock in the west. As diverse as their economies and cultures was their political influence. The Mande speakers to the north had created more or less powerful kingdoms which were part of a large trading network reaching from North-Africa to the southern fringes of the Sahara. The Ivorian Akan groups also claimed royal origin, but most of the time their “kingdoms” comprised only several villages; which resulted in a patchwork of multiple decentralized groups being referred to as Baule<sup>8</sup> by French colonial administrators just at the beginning of this century.

After a long history of hesitation France had become seriously engaged in Ivory Coast only after the Berlin Conference in 1885. France main interest was to conquer

<sup>7</sup> Bayart 1996: 155 numbers them as 8.548, half of whom lived in Bouaké and Dimbokro districts.

<sup>8</sup> In the early colonial literature these groups were referred to as Agni du Baoule’: It was the administrator Maurice Delafosse who substituted a toponym through an ethnonym which reflects processes of homogenisation.

the powerful Sudanic kingdoms in the north, which she had unsuccessfully tried from her military bases in Senegal. The French Sudan, as it was called in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was renowned for its enormous resources in salt and gold and was seen as a doorway to Central Africa. It loomed large in the ambitions of the French military who had had several (unsuccessful) military encounters with one of the most renowned military leaders, Almamy Samori Touré. The main barrier to the French plans was the difficulty to conquer the vast hinterland of the Qua Qua coast whose population they had subjected rather easily. Neither Agni nor (most of the) Baule had an interest to allow French troops into their territory out of fear of economic competition and political control. Around 1830, northern Baule groups had discovered large goldfields in the rain forest which triggered off large scale migration. Whereas this discovery led to a marked increase of their economic and trade potential, it also deepened political cleavages between different groups. This divisiveness also determined their attitudes towards the conflict between Samori Touré and the French. Northern Baule groups were in support of the Almamy with whom they exchanged guns, ammunition and food for gold and slaves while the southern Baule became more involved only after the French had been successful in penetrating inland.

The military encounters between Samori Touré and the French<sup>9</sup> armies ended in the Almamy's defeat in 1898. The devastation of the northern parts of to-day's Ghana and Ivory Coast through French troops had significant consequences for the regional balance of power. The once powerful kingdoms in the north became reduced to arenas for slave raids by the Akan; the kingdoms' economies were shattered and many of their peoples had fled the region in panic. In contrast, the coastal and forest regions profited enormously from Samori's downfall. Their economies boomed due to the import of slaves who were either used as house slaves or sold in the Atlantic slave trade on the one hand and because of the enlarged economic possibilities which French trade stipulated. Despite their own defeat by French military troops, the structural reversal of local power relations remained because the south was in a better position to fulfil French demands for cash crops (rubber, palm oil, cotton). But it was the introduction of cocoa and coffee which finally confirmed the regional imbalance which still structures the political and economic relations of the country.

The results of colonial domination proved to be highly ambiguous. Despite many draw backs and internal fighting about adequate policies in the colonial government, a certain degree of modernisation has been achieved. The development of cash economies for the world market, improvement in infrastructure as well as in organizational capacities has deeply transformed the countryside and favoured economic growth and urban development. Yet these achievements had a high prize. Regional as well as ethnic imbalances deepened, the

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<sup>9</sup> Many of the soldiers actually came from Senegal or Mali.

social organizations of many groups were destroyed together with the loss of power of “traditional elites”. New classes emerged, power elites which had collaborated with the French entrenched themselves and continued the very political practices which they had resisted earlier on. The transformation of the colonial to the postcolonial state was not a fundamental break but rather some sort of a continuum.

### 3. *The System Houphouet –Boigny*

The new Republic was modelled in many ways on the structure of the colonial state keeping most of the French institutions intact. State power was officially divided between the legislative, judiciary and the executive but being a Presidential democracy the powers of the executive were substantial. The President could not be dismissed by Parliament during his mandate and he had the right to nominate and dismiss ministers of his cabinet who were only responsible to him. And he had the right to declare a state of emergency without further legitimation. With his charisma and political instinct Houphouet used these powers extensively to make his mark on the country’s institution. As a fervent advocate of “African Presidentialism” which according to Western standards denied basic democratic rights to the people he successfully subjected both the legislative and judiciary bodies under his influence. In the process, the National Assembly was gradually deprived of its power and turned more and more into an institution of acclamation and celebration of the President’s policies.

Like in all other French colonial states, the real centre of power was the PDCI which had taken roots in all parts of the country. The party was the most important link between the masses of the people and the country’s political elite which at first was mainly composed of veterans of the anti-colonial struggle. They constituted the Bureau Politique National (BNP) which consisted in 1959 of 16 members, some of whom belonged to prominent French/African families, originating from colonial mixed marriages. The steady expansion of the Party’s power and the accompanying differentiation of its elite is signalled in the increase of membership. The Bureau Politique National counted 34 members in 1970 and 70 persons in 1975<sup>10</sup> (Ahlers und Heimberg 1982:160). By fusing party membership with the attribution of political offices or leading positions in the economy (esp. through newly created parastatals or NGO’s), Houphouet-Boigny successfully recruited, co-opted or even “bought” a class of functionaries who were loyal and devoted to him. By this method of patrimonial clientelism he masterly contained internal oppositions which he either silenced through the distribution of privileges, like e.g. the distribution of

<sup>10</sup> A study of this inner circle is still wanting, but as much as we know, it rested on social (marital) connections, as well as on inter-regional and international networks.

concessions in the mining and timber industries or through a demonstration of affluence by lavish presents of cars and houses. In all these transactions he observed ethnic and regional affiliations, although in official discourses ethnicity did not exist. Being a chief's son he did not hesitate to use strategically placed marriages – to tie or strengthen social bonds between rival groups. One prominent example was his own marriage to an Agni princess or his cousin's marriage to a political influential person of his regime, stemming originally from Senegal for political reasons. These multiple affiliations by marriage or kinship strengthened the homogenisation of the country's elite which embodied according to Bayart a rather social than ethnic endogamy (Bayart .1996:158). But if necessary, overt repression or political fraud would do as well in order to silence his adversaries. As a consequence, there was hardly any serious opposition for many years. Most institutions, from the labour union, to the media and the women's association had been brought on line. Le Vieux, as he became affectionately called, stylised himself as a “man of peace”<sup>11</sup> and unity and himself as the foremost father of the nation.

### 3a.) The Ivorian Miracle

This political model of patrimonialism was deeply rooted in the national economy attributing privileges and benefits. Against the convictions of most African leaders at independence that African socialism was the answer to political and economic development, Houphouët-Boigny firmly believed in capitalism, relying on French capital and experts<sup>12</sup>, and the attraction of a labour force recruited from all over West Africa. In contrast to other countries' policy he abstained from rapid Africanisation but spent substantial amounts of money on education to form an Ivorian elite. His economic strategy was predominantly based on the development of agriculture, since there were only few incentives for industrial development. The success proved him right. Ivory Coast experienced for more than 30 years fabulous growth rates of 7%. She overtook Ghana as the leading producer of cocoa in 1979 and she became the fifth ranking producer of coffee in the world. Sizeable quantities of timber, rubber, palm oil (hevea) and pineapple were also exported as well as energy products, like gaz. The Ivorian miracle, as it was called, was achieved through a combination of state run plantations of hevea and pineapples in the South, and cocoa and coffee farms in the so-called *boucle du café et du cacao* between Dimbokro, Daoukro and Agnibilekrou. According to Ahlers/Heimberg ( 1982:148) nearly 50% of the population were engaged in coffee and coca production, the majority of them being Baule, Agni and Abron farmers.

Despite their image as a rural bourgeoisie as Stavenhagen (1975:156 quoted in Schulz1979:98) has coined them, most of them were in reality small-scale farmers;

<sup>11</sup> L'homme de la paix was the title of a laudatory biography by one of his French advisers,

<sup>12</sup> But for reasons of counter-balance, and to reduce too great a dependency he closely cooperated with the US as well as becoming one of the most reliable partners of the West



while only a small section represented the old aristocracy. In 1982, approximately 200.000 cash crop producing farms existed ranging in size from 2.6 to 3.3. ha (ibid.). However, in 1999 holdings had expanded to 10-15 ha (Woods 1999: 490). It signalled an impressive process of social differentiation in the rural areas which is stressed by most authors. This 'success' was due to several circumstances: the constant expansion of acreage at the expense of intensification of production; the dynamic and openness for innovation, which contradicted all theories of peasant traditionalism, and last but not least, the access to and control over a sheer inexhaustible labour force from the Northern savannah countries. In the 1970s, these migrant workers constituted more than 80% of all agricultural workers<sup>13</sup> compared with 1,5-3% originating from the forest zone (quoted from Schulz 1979: 95). Originating from the northern part of Ivory Coast as well as from Burkina Faso and Mali their economies were disadvantaged in regard to the production of cash crops. The once flourishing Sudanic states which had controlled long distance exchange between North Africa and the countries of the Sahel had been relegated by French colonial policy to an economic backwater, either living from subsistence farming or using labour migration as a means to gain some money.

Without this easily available labour force the leading economic position of the country in cocoa and coffee production would have been unthinkable. Regional disparities which had been created in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were upheld and constantly reinforced through a system which Habermeier had qualified as a particular form of West African accumulation. In the plantation belt labour migrants were heavily competed for between small holder peasants and agro-business farmers and/or industries. Although wages offered by smallholder peasants were far less<sup>14</sup> than what labour migrants could earn in the (agro) industries, many of them preferred to work on private farms. They were attracted by relics of precapitalist forms of production which consisted in two different contract systems, called *abusan* and *abuno* (vgl. Schuerkens 2001:45). In the first system (*abusan*) the harvest was shared between peasants and their labourers in relation 2:1; in the second it was divided equally (50:50) but implied different arrangements concerning land. Contract labourers of *abusan* were given land as usufruct in order to plant cash crops themselves when they had finished work on the farms of their masters whereas in *abuno* no such arrangements were taken. These precapitalist arrangements proved an ultimate attraction for the disadvantaged northern labour force because it allowed peasants, turned into proletarians, to transform themselves into peasants again. As a consequence most villages in the forest area were composed of multi-ethnic communities. In the Baule village where I did research in the 1970s, two village sites existed: the main village for the local Baule population,

<sup>13</sup> 22% of them belonged to the Mossi who were the most dominant group.

<sup>14</sup> Sawadogo writes that day labourers were paid 0.60 –to0.80 Dollars whereas the profit of the farmers run to 1.2.-2.3 Dollars a day. Altogether this resulted in a transfer of profits from the voltaic labourer to the Ivorian farmer of 33- 63 Mill. Us-Dollars, quoted according to Schulz, p.95.

the other, set apart, was inhabited by seasonal “Dioula” labour migrants as well as by “transformed peasants”. The term Dioula referred to a common ethnic category which included all migrants from the North, irrespective of their real origin. They had secured usufruct from the land and cultivated cash crops like everybody else. Their demand for land was officially recognised by the legislation of the Ivorian state in which ownership of land was linked to its cultivation. Although this alleviated some pressure, it did not really change the structures of dependency, inequality and inferiority these labour migrants found themselves implicated in. The postcolonial state did not only replicate these social hierarchies, which had been generated during colonial times, but extended them in scale.

Being aware of this glaring regional discrepancy Houphouët-Boigny made regionalisation a corner stone of his political philosophy and rhetoric. Several development efforts, like the implantation of sugar plantations were undertaken but ended in a dramatic failure due to the financial policy of Sodesucre, one of several parastatal bodies. It was hoped that “the development of parastatal farms” would transfer their modern techniques to small-scale producers” (Woods 1999, 491). The success of these farms depended on a pricing mechanism which paid the producers less for their products than the official prize on the world market. The difference which amounted to a form of hidden, but nevertheless known tax was reinvested in the parastatals or directly “in the country’s industrial and infrastructural development (ibid 491)”. More than half of the state’s investments came from the Caisse de stabilisation (Caistab) (quoted from Mahieu 1990: 130-8). But the official rhetoric that development programmes in the realm of infrastructure, health and education were financed by these funds, did not always come true. In reality, many leading managers used these funds either for self-enrichment or for servicing a political and ethnic clientele. As most of the lucrative management positions were held by Baule functionaries, they contributed to further Baule hegemony which had been skilfully constructed by the President over the years. The deep ambiguity of this fiscal praxis resulted in the deepening of social cleavages reversing the proclaimed aims of state policy. The critics grew ever more vocal, the more it became obvious that access to resources, credit facilities and modernisation procedures were intimately linked to the political machinery of the party. Those who were excluded from it were marginalized and left hopeless. Since their numbers grew, the regime came under fundamental pressure during the economic crises of the 1980s when these clientelistic structures dwindled or got out of control.

After 18 years of expansion and growth of the economy from 1960 to 1978<sup>15</sup>, the next 20 years were characterized by pauperisation, social insecurity and ecological crises. The crises came into the open when the prizes for cocoa and coffee fell drastically on the world market. Compared with the 7% growth in the years before, in the period from 1980 to 1991 the annual growth rate in the agricultural sector fell

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<sup>15</sup> The following quantitative informations are based on Jütting 1996, 121 ff.

to 1.2% (ibid.S. 120). This meant, that the income of the state was drastically reduced from 40% in 1977 to 1% in 1987. In addition, the debts of the state amounted to 52% of the BSP (see Bédié 1999:205) which brought the World Bank and the IMF into play. They recommended the following: 50% devaluation of the CFA; thorough reforms of the Caistab and the CGPP and the introduction of a multi-party-system which Houphouët had to concede. In fact, he had always championed against the introduction of a multi-party-system because he feared that it would bring about ethnic conflicts which was a standard argument at the time. The real reason however, was his attitude to power since he was convinced according to Bédié, that “*le pouvoir ne se partage pas*”; an argument which he shared with many other autocratic African rulers.

### 3b.) From the “miracle ivoirien” to the “debacle ivoirien”.

Houphouët’s fear that democratisation increased the potential for conflicts in all domains of society became true. But despite its increase in social tension it allowed more people to participate in the discourse of the country’s political future. Whereas it seems to me that most opposition parties still had to find their role in defining programmes and visions for future development, free and quite critical media guaranteed the publicity of issues which had not been possible before. The principles of clientelism, of corruption and class antagonism were frankly discussed and related to the economic ills of the country. The wave of pauperisation that had occurred in a formerly rich country with an affluent bourgeoisie and a substantial middle class was of shocking dimension. According to Grootaert (1994, quoted in Jütting 1996) the percentage of the poor increased in 7 years (from 1985 to 1992) from 30% to 60%. Other estimates are more conservative, but not less telling. Whereas in 1985 only 10% of the country’s inhabitants lived in poverty, in 1995 the rate had soared up to 36.8%<sup>16</sup>, that is more than a third of the population lived in abject poverty. The extent of the crises was distributed differently among social groups and between town and country. Not surprisingly, people in the countryside were less affected than in town. Although among the town dwellers even better off families were affected, they were hit less hard than the poorer section of the population, to which most migrants belonged. Those urban households from abroad, whose members stayed illegally, experienced the greatest financial loss: the ratio among them ran to 44.7% whereas only 35.4% of Ivorian households were considered to belong to the urban poor ( Akindes 1999: 130).

This fundamental crises of the economy confirmed warnings that Samir Amin (1967) issued 30 years ago. He had pointed out that the unrestrained growth and capitalist exploitation of the Ivorian model, would lead to a society without development which would not be able to survive on the long run. The consequences of the ideology of unrestrained growth and expansion made themselves deeply felt

<sup>16</sup> For a more detailed quantitative break up, see Schuerkens 2001: 50-58.

in ecological as well as in social costs. The disregard of sustainability concerning the natural resources of the country contributed substantially to the near extinction of the rain forest. Former dense forest areas had been radically decimated and turned into cocoa and coffee plantations which led to a total loss of forest from 13 mill. ha to 2.5 mill. ha over the last 30 years (Jütting 1996:121).

That a disastrous ecological policy is also uneconomic is proved by the decline of the once highly reputed cocoa and coffee belt in the triangle between Dimbokro, Daoukro and Agnibilekrou which no longer exists. The degradation of soil, increasing overpopulation and the ageing of coffee bushes put the region to a near collapse when prizes tumbled on the world market. Since a rejuvenation of these old plantations was considered uneconomic, the wave of internal migration to the Western part of the country which had already begun during the 1970s, did increase tremendously. Many Baule villages are depleted while most of their inhabitants live permanently among the Bete, Dida and Gouro, being followed by their former labourers who are now producers on their own terms. Through this internal colonization, the Western region of the country has been thoroughly transformed. In many areas does the local population find herself in a minority position which leads to increasing conflicts and even violence. The situation is tense, social unrest and political strife are common. It is here where the success of the FPI was greatest. The victory of Laurent Gbagbo in the Presidential campaign signals therefore a kind of new beginning. The Ivorian miracle with its accompanying conditions of Baule hegemony, autocratic state power, best represented by Felix Houphouet-Boigny, and a flourishing, unrestrained capitalism has come to an end. The economy of expansion has turned to an economy of atrophy which asks for new strategies. But the challenge for the new government does not refer to economics alone, since a new consensus regarding the future of inter- and intra-ethnic relations as well as well as class relations is urgently needed. The very notion of national identity oscillating between the nationalist idea of Ivoirité and the liberal vision of a multicultural community has to be resolved.

#### *4. Citizenship, national identity and multiculturalism*

Although the term multiculturalism has been applied predominantly in Industrial Societies, it is a useful term for understanding the formation of national identity in Ivory Coast. In the European context multiculturalism means the juxtaposition of different autonomous cultures which are linked to a dominant culture on unequal terms: Ethnicity however refers to members of the same culture belonging to the same nation state. While multiculturalism is conceived of as a challenge, a process of negotiation for inclusion which turns outsider into insiders, ethnicity is *inter alia* considered as a form of mobilisation and contestation for economic and political benefits among insiders. Like in many African countries, under Houphouet ethnicity

had been banned as an official topic out of fear of ethnic conflict and violence. It was sacrificed on the altar of national unity, peace and solidarity, but quite active in the underground as the accusations and counter-accusations by politicians reported in the media during the election campaign suggest.

While ethnic struggles are fought on the local and regional level, multiculturalism – although the term multiculturalism was hardly used in public – plays a more important role on the national level. Due to the large diasporas which have developed in Ivory Coast over the years, it is a burning issue. In contrast to Western countries, reservations against multiculturalism are rather voiced from above than from below, that is from the diaspora communities concerned. On the political level, it is directly linked to problems of national identity and citizenship. What is of interest in this discussion is the fact, how attitudes towards the nation have changed. Shortly after independence, the nation seemed to be rather imaginative, whereas 40 years later it has been filled with concrete experiences of most of its citizens.

Although primordial loyalties to ethnic groups and regional localities are still strong, processes of homogenisation among the diverse populations of the country have occurred. To be an Ivorian is no longer fictitious, but is rooted in the understanding of special (cultural) characteristics which are at the basis of *Ivoirité*. The term, undefined as it is, signals a process of essentialising culture which reminds one of all the other cultural movements, like *Négritude*, *Authenticité* etc. which developed as a reaction to colonialism. The interesting point in the concept of *Ivoirité* is, however, its direct association with the idea of national, not particularly African identity. It is not used in confrontation with European culture, but marks the boundary between one's own nation from other nations. *Ivoirité* is a concept of homogenisation in regard of one's own society and of differentiation vis a vis other societies. It has substituted the wide spread enthusiasm for Panafrikanism which was popular at the time before and shortly after independence, with a concern for nationalism.

Although Houphouët had never been a defender of Pan African ideas or of political unions, in practice he exercised a very liberal policy of migration and citizenship. In the first phase of capitalist expansion between 1960 to 1978, foreigners were welcomed and easily integrated. Whereas during the economic crises of the 1980s, a remarkable shift occurred. Laws regarding the right of citizenship were tightened and conditioned, like e.g. linked to party membership in the PDCI and from 1994 onwards the "carte de séjour" was introduced. Multiculturalism was either addressed to in bureaucratic or jural terms, but became politicised only in times of election. A similar case were the recent elections in Zambia which underline the fact that the contestation and negotiation of citizenship as a popular strategy of exclusion from power is not characteristic for Ivory Coast alone, but seems to become a recent tendency in African election campaigns. President Kaunda, who for more than 20 years was considered as the father of Zambian independence, was forbidden to run for a second mandate on the grounds that his father was not a Zambian. Both cases

document – apart from the every day political contests – that significant changes in defining citizenship and nationhood have taken place. While in France as well as in the former French colonies “the nation was seen as a territorial community and the criterion of *jus soli* was used to grant citizenship to those born in its territory” (Shafir 1998: 17), the cases of Ouattara and Kaunda mark a change to *jus sanguinis*, which defines rights to citizenship according to descent like in Germany. This change from an open liberal practice to a more restricted one falls back to the drawings of colonial boundaries which froze social situations which had always been quite flexible. The postcolonial states of Ivory Coast and Zambia thus reaffirm colonial policies by voting for exclusion instead of inclusion of foreign born citizens. In times of globalisation this seems to be an anachronism, but becomes understandable as part of the dialectic between the local and the global. Citizenship as part of civil rights, defends – not only in Africa but in the West as well – local notions of rights, of belonging and identity and can therefore be a powerful weapon against intrusion – of migrants and political aspirants.

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