



‘Native’ Conversion to Islam in Southern Côte d’Ivoire: The Perils of Double Identity

Marie Miran-Guyon

Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Centre d’études africaines
96 Boulevard Raspail, 75006 Paris – France
Marie.Miran@ehess.fr

Abstract

This article presents a synthetic, historical-cum-anthropological overview of the collective trajectory of Ivoirian converts to Islam from southern autochthonous lineages who can be referred to—albeit unsatisfyingly—as ‘native’ Muslims. It focuses on what is effectively an invisible and silent minority within southern native groups and the majority Dioula Muslim society alike: a community that has barely received any attention from social scientists despite the transformative impact of its slow but steady Islamization process. The study aims first at shedding light on salient socio-religious and political aspects of this group’s development, from colonial to postcolonial times. Given that this plural group is situated at the crossroads of various ethnic, national, and religious controversies, having enflamed Côte d’Ivoire in olden days as much as in recent years, the article eventually makes use of this group’s distinct prisms to question the contested Ivoirian interface between Islam, ethnic geography, and nationalism at large, and attempt some nuanced answers.

Keywords

Islam, Côte d’Ivoire, conversion, nativism, autochthony, nationalism

Introduction

This article explores the versatile interface between Islam, ethnic geography, and nationalism in colonial and postcolonial Côte d’Ivoire through the lens of a distinct type of actor at the parting of the ways, namely men and women who are at one and the same time self-fashioned (southern) ‘natives’¹ and Muslim adepts, or ‘native’ Muslims. In a country where stubbornly resilient perceptions continue to reify the northern savannah as Muslim (the generic label ‘Dioula’² having come to mean interchangeably Muslim and Northern) and the greener southern expanses as Christian or animist lands,³ the phrase ‘native Muslims’ resonates with oxymorous tension. For some it is a

contradiction in terms. One anecdote serves as an example: Akindès recounts that in recent years a man bearing an Islamic first name and a Bété (southwestern) last name once met with unusual difficulties at a police check. He was accused of having forged his ID; for the security officer in charge his name had to be fake (Akindès 2004). Others seem more ready to accept this double identity, as evidenced by another anecdote from Ahmed Kipré, a Bété Tablighi. At the time the September 2002 political-military crisis had resulted in a de facto partition of the country into a 'rebellious' north and a 'loyalist', pro-'autochthon', pro-governmental south. One evening when the curfew was in force, Ahmed Kipré was a passenger in a car with three Dioula friends, returning home from an Islamic gathering, all dressed in 'Muslim attire'. Armed youngsters in military uniform ordered them to stop at a checkpoint and became vociferously aggressive with the terrified Dioula driver. Kipré then opened his backseat window, held out his ID card, and spoke Bété to explain the situation. The tension immediately dissipated, Kipré and the policemen exchanged jokes, and the group was allowed to drive on. As Kipré explained, even in those stressful circumstances the policemen could not conceive that a Bété would hurt another Bété.⁴ Kipré's double identity was ambiguously appreciated—although his attire disguised Kipré's Bété origins, his Bété ethnicity ended up masking his Muslim faith and Dioula relations.

I use the phrase 'native Muslims' to narrowly refer to those members of ethnic groups originating from the coastal and forest regions of southern Côte d'Ivoire who have adopted Islam over the course of the past century. In this broad area in which I include the Baoulé homeland, natives have long been refractory to the Quranic message. By and large, southern converts to Islam thus remain a minority,⁵ despite a noticeable increase in the rate of Islamization from the mid-1970s. Statistics are mostly unavailable and not always reliable. This phenomenon is not only difficult to observe at a point in time but also highly unstable. Be that as it may, the rough picture is that one now finds various proportions of Muslims in most if not all of the county's southern ethnic groups. Islamization has least affected native societies of the lagoons (the *lagunaires*) in the area formerly known as Basse Côte, as in the case of the impervious-to-Islam Ebrié of Abidjan. However, conversion is far from an insignificant phenomenon among the Adjoukrou, Agni, Ahizi, Baoulé, Bété, and Dida on which I have concentrated my fieldwork, as well as among the Gouro, Wè (Guéré), Dan (Yacouba), and others. Converts were long marginalised in their own societies but this situation has changed with time; some Muslim converts even became traditional chiefs or kings in their own right.⁶

The phrase 'native Muslim' is not all satisfactory as an analytical category. For one thing, Muslim autochthons do not claim this self-identifying label

but have no problem presenting themselves as Muslim Agni, Muslim Bété, and so forth. They often use the collective label 'converts' to Islam that Dioula first gave them. But not all of them are in fact converts per se, since an increasing number are now born into Islam from at least one native Muslim parent or grandparent. Within Dioula non-convert society, power-laden representations have long equated converts with poorly Islamized, still inferior coreligionists-in-the-making, a prejudice now fought against by some converts who shun this appellation. What is more, conversion to Islam in Côte d'Ivoire is far from limited to southern autochthons; it also concerns Ivoirians of northern origins and foreign migrants. As with the expression 'Muslims of the South', once used by a group of converts from the Dabou region to name their religious association, the phrase 'native Muslims' is wanting in that it ambiguously alludes to a sort of group consciousness of its distinctive and cross-ethnic identity that never really existed. Likewise, the term overemphasises the group's social cohesiveness and separateness from both the ethnic community of origin and the new Muslim/Dioula community of faith. It may even present the group as bent on politicising its identity in public space. In truth, these matters are not as simple as they first appear.

Southern indigenous Muslims' histories and lived realities are time and space specific to an important extent, not to mention that individual converts' trajectories are to some degree incommensurable to each other.⁷ As comparisons suggest, though, they also have much in common, especially in terms of the positive and negative challenges that native Muslims continue to face to forge their hybrid lives in the midst of ambivalences and contradictions, at local and national levels. They also share the condition of being a silent/silenced minority: they have little or no visibility and are virtually unknown by their fellow countrymen and coreligionists alike, not to mention social scientists. Speaking of 'Muslim autochthons' (or 'southern Muslim converts', as a synonym) under a collective label may have the benefit of crediting their distinctiveness within Ivoirian society and bestowing them some visibility. Most of all, as the above anecdotes reveal, emphasising the group's double-edged identity may offer a uniquely pertinent lens to cloud the burning issues of the interface between religion, ethnicity, and nationalism in Côte d'Ivoire and sketch some nuanced answers.⁸ Seen from a distance, a schematic dialectic would have us believe that southern Muslim converts were caught in a cross fire, especially after the ultra-nationalist *ivoirité* crisis led by southern natives. It could be that their ethnic brothers perceive them as too Muslim to be good nationalists, and conversely that their Dioula/northern/foreign religious peers see them as too *autochtone* to be united with them. Did native Muslims play a role in or against the xenophobic construction of the Muslim as stranger and

enemy throughout Ivoirian history? To what extent did they succeed in indigenising Islam, if at all? What do southern Muslim converts themselves have to say about these issues?

The Historical Background: The Colonial Emergence of Muslim *Autochtones*

To begin unfolding answers, a diachronic survey best presents how native Muslims came into being in the first place. Setting aside the savannah-forest contact zone where Islam was introduced by Mandé merchants and clerics long before it penetrated the tropical expanse further to the south, the earliest conversions of southerners to Islam date back to the colonial era, when new trade routes and work opportunities attracted an unprecedented number of Muslim strangers. The binary opposition between *autochtones* and Muslims was, strictly speaking, the historical by-product of the colonial and later post-colonial Ivoirian political economy. This involved the development of a coffee and cocoa plantation economy, and consequently major urban areas in the south of the country attracting a massive wave of migrants from the north of the country as well as from neighboring regions, especially to the north. The Islamization of these migrants from the north took place largely within the towns of southern Côte d'Ivoire; by the same token, this migration led to the often xenophobic self-identification of southerners as 'autochthons'.⁹ In other words, in southern Côte d'Ivoire, the very social categories of 'Muslim' and 'autochthon' emerged in opposition to one another from the very start; the coming into being of a distinct group straddling both was a paradox indeed.

Islam was carried by land southward by flows of Muslim migrants coming primarily from the northern savannah, as well as by sea by a minority of Senegalese clerks and businessmen serving the colonial state. Islam's frontier of acculturation followed a different chronology according to region: the east (southeast), for instance, was generally affected ahead of the west (southwest). But what was common throughout the expanding heart of Côte d'Ivoire's plantation economy was that Islam spread strikingly slowly among indigenes, who were otherwise attracted by the new promises of alternative religions.

The reasons were at least twofold. On the side of southern societies, natives developed a deep-seated shared attitude of profound contempt in regard to Muslim strangers who were looked down on as inferior, menial workers, as expressed in the nicknames *kanga* or 'slave' in Akan languages and *brabra ouain* or 'work people' in the Dida dialect of Lakota (*brabra* is in fact a distortion of the Dioula *baara* meaning 'work'; '*baara! baara!*' was the cry of north-

ern strangers to their hosts). Unlike Christianity, the modern religion of the powerful whites, Islam—*brabra lagoon*, or ‘the God of the workers’ in Dida—was socially and culturally depreciated as the second-rate religion of impoverished migrant workers.¹⁰ Locals recognised and feared the power of Dioula marabouts and their calligraphic talismans, which they occasionally put to the test for their own sake. But they despised Islam and Muslims even when interrelations with their guests were good, as indicated by the strange rumors that arose and can still be heard today, such as that Muslims cut the throat of their dying ones before burial as they do to the animals that they eat. Additionally, whenever Muslim migrants became rich, particularly when the newfound wealth was radically disproportionate to their own, natives were quick to invoke Islamic sorcery of an anthropophagous kind.¹¹

Muslim strangers themselves added to these push factors against natives’ conversion by not being in the least preoccupied with self-presentation and proselytism. Itinerant preachers did their share to propagate the Quranic message in towns and villages, but such initiatives were isolated and not relayed at the community level. It did not help that Dioula were not lacking in their own gross prejudices regarding their ‘*busumani*’¹² hosts—a term meaning peasant, uncouth, and short-sighted savages. Young foreign migrants’ knowledge of Islam was limited. Overall, until at least the mid-1970s, for southern Dioula, economic activities took top priority over all other issues, including religion.

In such an inauspicious context the few natives who nonetheless left their ancestral religion behind (and later even Christianity) to embrace Islam were marginal insofar as they did so for unique, personal, this-worldly and other-worldly motivations. They were usually young men; women’s conversion was truly exceptional and only tied to marriage. Push factors out of the religion of birth were as important—if not more—as pull factors in favour of Islam. Dreams and visions played a meaningful part in the process.¹³ Economic incentives may not have been absent altogether but were far from key; more often than not, as explained before, conversion actually meant downward social mobility, if only temporarily.

Unsurprisingly, converts’ families and native societies at large vehemently disapproved of these conversions, seen as an offensive denial of all that mattered to autochthons. Stories abound of early converts who were harassed by their kin and chased out of the family courtyard or the native village. In the village of Korékipra in Bété country, converts could be handed over by their ethnic peers to colonial officers for forced labour. In Damé in Agni-Djuablin country the first converts were bluntly forbidden to pray and kill animals according to Islamic rituals on village soil. In Koffi Amankro among the Anno,

a group related to the Baoulé, the spilling of blood during ritual circumcision was first prohibited then subject to a heavy fee. For a long period in nearby Prikro each public call for the daily Islamic prayers cost a chicken, and to date local Muslim women are still forbidden to perform their ablutions while cultivating in the bush.¹⁴ In fact, not infrequently pressure pushed the weakened convert to apostatise and return to his/her native faith. Those who remained Muslim were hard-headed indeed! Only when wealth superseded Islam could converts be spared criticism and ostracism. It was no problem that a handful of Ahizi and Adjoukrou women married well into Senegalese quasi-colonial society in and around Dabou before and after the First World War,¹⁵ nor did fellow Bété dare criticise Ahmed Kipré's father when he first converted to Islam in the 1940s since he was already a rich planter and entrepreneur with many dependents.¹⁶ But other than that, social rejection of southern converts was, and to a lesser extent, still remains, the norm, even though intra-family relations tended to improve as years passed and new generations arose.

Becoming an Ethnic Other: Conversion as 'Dioulaization'

Given these difficulties, most southern Muslim converts sought to integrate the majority Dioula Muslim society as a way out of isolation; Dioulaization thus usually came along with Islamization. Converts not only adopted Islam as a new religion but also the Dioula dress, language, social mores, and even names. In the eastern region subject to the distant Islamic influence of the Ouattara of Kong, for instance, it was common that Agni converts bore the patronymic of their religious tutors even though Ouattara was only an ethnic and not an Islamic name. Ahizi male converts stopped fishing—an occupation ill-suited to praying at regular times—and turned to trade. Many native Muslims moved to the *dioulabougou* (*dioulakro*), southern towns' Dioula or stranger quarter, equivalent to the Hausa *zongo* in the Gold Coast/Ghana. A few succeeded in marrying Dioula wives and raised a Dioula family. In the extreme, Dioulaization was an alienating process. Native converts literally 'became Dioula', an ethnic Other. Some even forgot their native languages.¹⁷

Dioula's uncompromising attitudes vis-à-vis 'kaffir' or infidel native societies eventually radicalised converts' separation from their community of origin. New converts were taught to not share meals with their family because meat was not *halal*, and not attend traditional ceremonies including funerals of loved ones for fear of spiritual pollution. Hence for over half a century natives' conversion to Islam did not indigenise Islam: it deindigenised converts. This state of affairs not only plunged converts into invisibility, it also confirmed Islam's status as the idiosyncratic faith of the sole foreigners—the

foreign religion par excellence—or, to put it differently, the symbolic religious antithesis of mainstream *autochtone* 'Ivoirian' identity.

A Double Yoke: Converts' Marginalisation Within Muslim Communities

This is not to say that indigenous converts were well integrated into majority Dioula communities; the opposite was closer to fact. Instances of Dioula hospitality and fraternal solidarity did occur, of course, but the Muslim natives' narratives that I have collected thus far about this pioneer period are quasi-unanimous in emphasising Dioula's haughty, ethnocentric, and 'imperialist' behaviour toward converts. Indicative of these internal tensions is the name given to converts in Dioula. *Tuubijôn* literally means 'the converted slave'. *Tuubi* comes from the Arabic *tawba*, the Quranic meaning of which is 'repentance' and by extension 'reversion' and 'conversion'. *Jôn* means 'slave' in Dioula. It can refer to a non-free man, but not exclusively; in line with the Islamic conception of man's submission to God, it has a broader semantic range and can refer to any man as being God's slave or servant.¹⁸ *Tuubijôn* is thus not pejorative in and of itself, yet southern converts pinpoint the appellation's derogatory edge in the Ivoirian sociolinguistic context. The country's current Muslim reformist and modern-oriented leadership now concurs with converts in saying that traditional Dioula society manifested undue contempt toward *tuubijônw*. In reformists' view, this was mostly due to Dioulas' traditionalism and ignorance of the universal values of Islam, but they did the best they could given the precarious colonial circumstances.

Another indication of converts' poor integration was that, as a rule, the Dioula balked at the idea that converts could marry their daughters, except when converts were wealthy. However, they eagerly married native wives, who usually converted to Islam if they were not already Muslim. Stories have also surfaced of Dioula fraudulently exploiting converts' naivety or outright extorting them in matters of commerce, such as in the kola trade. Religious fraternity paled in comparison to profit.

Contempt for converts may have been a diluted version of contempt for *busumani*. Southern converts were clearly perceived as religious inferiors, and this concerned even the few natives who became learned in Islamic sciences. It appeared that ethnic origin had precedence over and even abased religious piety and knowledge in Dioula public opinion. Converts were regarded as too immature in the religion to even be eligible for an imamate position. Meanwhile, nothing was done to address converts' specific needs and aspirations. As a matter of fact, the rough scenario is that in any given region the conversion of the first southerner(s) was always a by-product of a fruitful encounter with

a Dioula/foreigner, whether itinerant preacher, trader, neighbour, or other. But for Islam to make inroads into the local southern society, a convert with the gift of charisma had to stand up and preach in the vernacular language to his own ethnic brothers and sisters about the highest rewards of the Islamic path, belittling the series of pitfalls on the way. The Dioula cannot take much credit for that.

Southern converts' minority position was thus doubly difficult. In the end, they found themselves both alienated from their native society and marginalised within the majority Muslim community. These exclusionary tensions made their hybrid lives fairly precarious—and conversion unattractive to others! Yet new converts' faith in this pioneer colonial period was often solid enough for them to cling to a quiet status quo while teaching themselves and their children Islam and gradually reorganising many aspects of their lives.

The Turn Toward Arabization: Southerners' Conversion to the Ivoirian 'Wahhabiyya'

A gradual change of course occurred in the late 1950s and 1960s when many native Muslims joined the ranks of the new, minority Wahhabi/Sunni¹⁹ community. This reorientation at the grassroots level in both towns and villages was barely visible and probably uneven, but it was nonetheless meaningful in that in the mid-1970s it paved the way for the first emergence of a native Wahhabi elite in the national Islamic public sphere. The latter was in the making at the time and dominated by the traditionalist Dioula; fierce intra-Muslim competition for public prevalence was an integral part of its formation process. A striking feature of the mid-1970s was that a young, native Muslim elite had come to realise the pervasiveness and incongruity of converts' socio-religious marginalisation within Dioula society. In this elite's view, the Wahhabiyya was the best platform to foster converts' individual and communal dignity and empowerment. Wahhabi propaganda may have helped to trigger this view.

The Wahhabi doctrine was the first pull factor. With its strict scripturalist and acultural interpretation of Islam, it insisted that all Muslim believers are equal beyond differences of race, caste, social standing, ethnicity, nationality, and even age (gender is more ambiguous). It recognises in particular that a *tuubijôn* is as worthy as any other Muslim. In fact, the label *tuubijôn* itself is deemed irrelevant, since all Muslims are converts in a way, after the Prophet Muhammad who was Islam's first convert. But despite this supraethnic stance, it also happened that the Wahhabi community of southern Côte d'Ivoire was dominated by another Muslim cluster unhappy over its own disenfranchise-

ment within the majority Ivoirian community, namely foreign nationals. Wahhabis in particular and foreign migrants generally have always been underrepresented in the more traditional and economically backward northern savannah; their concentration is in the south.

When the *Association des musulmans orthodoxes [Wahhabi] de Côte d'Ivoire* or AMOCI was created in 1976, it was clear that the alliance between native and foreign Muslims against the traditionalist-cum-chauvinistic Dioula served both parties. This is not to say that the Wahhabi association was a mere instrument of reciprocal co-option, but only that the convergence of both parties' this-worldly interests helped the association work on a national scale for a time. Southern converts must have been satisfied that a number of them reached top leadership positions. This was the case with Hajj Yao Koum, a Baoulé convert who became no less than AMOCI's first national president. There were quite a few Baoulé within the Wahhabiyya, Bouaké being the Wahhabi epicentre at the national level (Baoulé, it may be recalled, were also internal migrants). The small mosque, officially named *Masjid Oumar Ibn Khatal*, that Yao Koum built in his Adjamé courtyard from 1962—nicknamed 'the Baoulé mosque'—was the Wahhabi's first religious edifice in Abidjan. Many other southern ethnic groups were also represented in the movement. As for foreigners, the coalition with natives may have served as an 'alibi' in defending the 'Ivoirian' character of their hotly contested religious enterprise. As Ibrahim Bredji, the Dida imam of the MACA (Abidjan's prison) recalled, when Wahhabis were accused of being foreigners they replied that this could not be the case since their president was an Ivoirian Baoulé like Houphouët.²⁰

Southern converts' first awakening thus had no ethnonationalist bias and was not in the least xenophobic. In a way, it promoted a kind of cosmopolitanism within the strict confines of the Wahhabi community, which was otherwise notorious for its sectarian exclusionary trends. Likewise, the native Wahhabi turn was in no way a return to autochthonous roots. In a way, Arabization merely replaced Dioulaization. It happened, however, that in 1981 a severe AMOCI internal crisis blurred the foreigners-natives alliance. When the association and Abidjan's main Wahhabi mosque were closed down over a breach of public order, many native converts slowly but permanently turned to the new, less divisive, and partly Westernised reformist movement.

An Adjoukrou Initiative: The First Distinctive Association of Southern Muslim Converts

Contemporaneous to the AMOCI was the *Communauté des musulmans du Sud* or CMS. It was more discreet in public space but more original in that it

was native Muslims' very first associative initiative in Côte d'Ivoire, meant to debate their specific problems and challenges. It was started informally in 1972-73 by a few barely-literate-in-Islam Adjoukrou elders from Cosrou, Dabouli, and Tiagba. Within ten years, thanks to a strategic partnership with well-educated, second-generation native Muslims from the region, the CMS—officially recognised in 1982—had become a dynamic association backing an ambitious project of a grand modern *madrassa* in Dabou. The project was to be funded by the Islamic Development Bank but eventually fell through when Cardinal Bernard Yago, a native of the area, and President Houphouët-Boigny opposed it; after that the CMS gradually waned.²¹

The CMS had hoped to set in motion a synergetic momentum among all non-Dioula/stranger Muslims to broadly propagate new ideas such that converts could keep their ethnic names and cherish aspects of their native culture that were not contrary to Islam. Although the CMS managed to reach out to native Muslims north of the Dabou area, it mostly appealed to the Adjoukrou, Ahizi, and Abidji. Despite its official 'national' character, it developed more like a locally based association. At the same time, it was not conceived as a preserve of converts, as revealed by the association's more-encompassing name. The native leadership favoured a consensual approach, extending its hand to all Muslims living in the south. As repeated at the constitutive assembly, the new organisation was 'for both *autochtones* and *allogènes* [‘long-established strangers’ in French], all brothers in the Islamic faith’.²² The association rallied many Dabou-born Dioula *tagbusi* (Dioula métis or Dioula raised in the Ivoirian South influenced by southern autochthons' mores)²³ and was close to the nascent reformist movement, based only 50km away in Abidjan. If the CMS disowned yesteryear's excessive Dioulaization that converts had experienced, it was not in the least anti-Dioula or anti-foreigner. On the contrary, it dreamed of a tolerant, modern-minded Muslim brotherhood that would be both supra-ethnic and respectful of the community's plural ethnic legacies, a vision that would in fact inspire the revivalist movement or was inspired by it.²⁴

Native Converts in the Turmoil of the *Ivoirité* Crises

In postmiracle Côte d'Ivoire, the agrarian-economic crisis, the revival of an '*idéal d'autochtonie*', and the post-Houphouëtist *ivoirité* turn did not fail to affect native Muslim societies. Even though older Dioula supremacist attitudes in regard to *tuubijômw* on the one hand and converts' lingering identity crisis on the other cannot be left out of the picture, it clearly appears that it was this particular political context rather than any major internal change that provoked the rise of a new kind of native Muslim public reaction: anti-Dioula

Islamic ethnonationalist feelings, soon channelled through a plurality of boisterous, convert-led religious associations. As the Ivoirian crisis dragged on, these associations multiplied in the late 1990s to the early 2000s. All tended to be small, leader- rather than member-centred, and short-lived. Although a few were coordinated, most were not. Yet all basically censored Dioula's unwarranted monopoly on the nation's Islamic life in general and the imamate of the country's mosques in particular, something that was viewed as standing in utter disrespect for native Muslims' rights as sons of the land. Without foundation, it seems, some associations went so far as to accuse Dioula-led Muslim associations of foreign-sponsored or homegrown religious intolerance/fanaticism and even terrorist activities.

Some associations advertised a specific focus on converts, such as the *Union nationale d'aide aux convertis à l'Islam* or UNACI, led by Ibrahim Zigo, and the *Union nationale des convertis de Côte d'Ivoire* or UNACOCI, led by Dro Diomandé. Others adopted a broader name such as the *Union nationale des musulmans de Côte d'Ivoire* (UNAMUCI), *Appel à l'Islam* (Islamic Call), *Al-Coran*, or the *Confédération des associations, organisations et conseils islamiques de Côte d'Ivoire* or CAOCICI. Even if these organizations nurtured broad Islamic ambitions, their specificity remained the defence of converts if only because they somehow aimed at re-centering Côte d'Ivoire's Islamic life around Muslim autochthons. Interestingly—in reverse to the Wahhabi association—the co-option of a few Dioula and foreign nationals into their associations' leadership may have served as an alibi against their otherwise ethno-/ultranationalist posture.²⁵

These converts' associations certainly did not represent a consensual voice among native Muslims throughout the Ivoirian south. Most converts' religious life and preoccupations were community centred, at village or neighbourhood levels, and not on a national scale. Some backed the reformist movement's activities; others were attracted by the new converts' leaders, but the latter did not win the hearts of a native majority. Rather, they merely represented a minority of locally based, politicised activists. Most originated from western Côte d'Ivoire; there were also a few Baoulé but apparently no Agni. Their individual fortunes came and went as governments changed. When Gbagbo came to power, the Bété came to the fore. Taken together, these associations' aggressive bearing, in tune with the national anti-Dioula polemics of the time, ensured their media-relayed visibility in the public arena. However, this exposure was not indicative of their real grassroots impact. Although their influence cannot be denied, it should not be overrated.

Unsurprisingly, these converts' groups aroused the disapproval of mainstream reform-minded associations. For the then-leading reformist alliances

on the national level, the *Conseil supérieur des imams* (COSIM) and the *Conseil national islamique* (CNI), these small groups were merely tribalist in that they emphasised ethnic belonging over religion. When the Bété Ibrahim Zigo of UNACI reiterated Dioula mistreatment in the name of converts at the 2001 National Reconciliation Forum, Dioula were all the more unhappy that Zigo had been raised by and lived among Dioula for the better part of his life. Anti-Dioula allegations were further debased as mere manifestations of crude materialism and corruption associated with the 'politics of the belly'. At first revivalist leaders reacted openly and forcefully against ethnonationalist converts' accusations. When they realised that this gave them undesirable public coverage, they chose to ignore them instead, a strategy that effectively contributed to their gradual decline.

The 2002 political-military crisis generated an insidious malaise within the Muslim population in the loyalist south. In the weeks following the September 2002 failed coup, rumours circulated in Abidjan that some Bété Muslims were serving as informers for Laurent Gbagbo's security forces to locate Dioula imams and presumed 'assailants', many of whom went into hiding or exile. An ambiguous remark could cast a chill between a Dioula and his/her native Muslim coworker or neighbour, as if bipolar ethnic entrenchments had suddenly swept away religious commensality. Yet Islamic bonds prevailed over the rest when Muslims knew each other better or were active in the same religious communities or associations. In addition, as some Abidjan-based imams have estimated, after the strife's first few months the weekly rate of conversion to Islam did not really fall off. De-Islamization and specifically Muslim conversion to Pentecostal Christianity also occurred and may have increased in this period.²⁶

Some southern regions were spared these intra-Muslim tensions altogether. In Agni territory in the east, relations between strangers and autochthons were not strained (Perrot 2006), let alone between Agni Muslims and Dioula or non-national Muslims. In Cosrou near Dabou the native Muslim community was split between pro-governmental and pro-northern-led-opposition partisans, led respectively by Cosrou's native imam Akoman Tidjane Cissé, and Cosrou's former Muslim village chief Bédi Lekr Mamadou Cissé, who had been deposed by Gbagbo's ruling party a few years earlier upon his return from Mecca. The contention did not involve the 'stranger Muslim' issue. Although the disagreement was only political and not religious, work on the new, unfinished Cosrou mosque stopped, and for a while two native Muslim congregations formed, but no Adjoukrou or Ahizi Muslim, whether pro-opposition or not, suffered from 'ethnic' ostracism. As Watta N'dri recalled, non-Muslim natives sometimes addressed their Muslim 'ethnic' brothers by

saying, ‘*Vous, les Dioula, vous nous fatiguez!*’ (You, the Dioula, you are wearing us out!) but only as a joke. Both groups knew each other well, and religion was not a source of conflict.²⁷

Although my data is incomplete, there seems to have been more severe intra-autochthonous religious tensions in the south-western and Baoulé regions. Mohammed Dolé, imam of the Akouédo camp mosque in Abidjan, comes from a Dida village south of Lakota. His uncle was among the very first Dida to embrace Islam locally in 1958, followed by Dolé’s late father in 1960. After 2002 violent peer Dida pressure in Lakota almost drove Dolé’s uncle to apostatise. Although he managed to resist thanks in part to his nephew’s support, all of his children turned their back on Islam; however, most did not join another faith.²⁸ Apparently this case was not an isolated one, as confirmed by imam Ibrahim Konan, the Baoulé president of what was, prior to the 2010-11 postelectoral crisis, the soon-to-be-established *Association nationale islamique pour l’encadrement des convertis et la promotion de l’Islam* (National Islamic Association for the Training of Converts and the Promotion of Islam). ANI-ECOPI was aiming to be a new kind of converts’ association with transethnic recruitment, welcoming converts from northern Côte d’Ivoire and foreign countries as much as southern autochthons. A former Protestant minister from Yamoussoukro, Konan toured the country extensively, especially southern regions, to preach Islam and lay the foundations of his new association. He reported that in the western and central regions the war instigated

a massive renunciation of Islam. Many testimonies attest to this. People were meant to believe that the war was against Muslims—when it is only a military-political war! People said: “You, Muslims, sent us this war! Islam is violent!” Many were discouraged and came out of Islam either of their own initiative or under parents’ pressure. It slowed down conversions. One must be a wise preacher to maneuver in such a context. But today [2009], we are recovering. People are coming back, others are coming in. . . . The war had weakened us: we couldn’t speak anymore. . . . But today we’ve turned over a new leaf. People have understood that Muslims were not at the centre of the conflict and that Islam is different from the Dioula. Today we preach freely and without fear.²⁹

Ibrahim Konan, who like Houphouët is a Baoulé of the Akouè clan, also reports some telling incidents. In 2003 in Maounou—not far from the security zone marking the north-south divide, close to Yamoussoukro—a clash arose between the majority non-Muslim villagers and the local imam from Burkina. The imam had served for some time without problems; the tension was clearly a political import. Imam Konan went to meet Maounou’s chief and told him, ‘Do not touch him. I am a Baoulé like you and an imam like

him. If you do him any harm, I am not responsible for the fate of the village'. The chief then publicly declared that the Burkinabé imam must be untouched. Another incident took place in the village of Godiéko, north of Lakota, whose inhabitants are predominantly Muslim—Muslim Dida, in fact, and Wahhabi at that. The AMSCI (formerly AMOCI), the national Sunni/Wahhabi association, had funded the local mosque, and plans were in place to add a Quranic school when the 2002 crisis broke out. After some time AMSCI's president and other Dioula members argued that since the Dida were persecuting the Dioula the money should go elsewhere because Godiéko's Muslim could always turn to Gbagbo for support! This discouraged native Muslims. As Konan concluded, 'There is racism everywhere. All parties share the blame'.³⁰

Yet again, the remarkable trajectory of Mohamed Soukou Sess, aka Ben Souk, adds nuance to the picture. Mohamed Sess is from an Adjoukrou lineage from Okpoyou, a small village set in the midst of luxuriant palm tree plantations near Dabou. Sess's Catholic grandfather and father were both men of local influence and big coffee and cocoa planters who employed many Sahelian workers. In 1957 admiration of the workers' behaviour led the two of them to embrace and study Islam. Mohamed Sess was born in 1959 as an Adjoukrou Muslim, became a devout believer, and recently built Okpoyou's only mosque, in the family compound's backyard. Sess states that in 2000 he was arrested at a road check and was appalled to be told that his ID, which combined a Muslim first name and an Adjoukrou last name, must be a fake—a repeat of the aforementioned story reported by Akindès regarding a Bété Muslim. He found this situation revolting. When the failed 2002 coup d'état occurred, out of ethical idealism and in search of justice, Mohamed Sess went underground, joined the rebellion, and contributed to launching the western-based *Mouvement pour la Justice et la Paix* (MJP), which soon came under the umbrella of the Guillaume Soro-led *Mouvement patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire* (MPCI), later renamed *Forces nouvelles* (FN). For a few years Ben Souk was a rebel war chief in Man. As tensions receded and he grew disenchanted with some FN officials' corruption, he returned to his home village and became a local notability while remaining personal advisor to Prime Minister Soro. In February 2010 he was appointed as one of thirty office bearers on behalf of the MPCI in the reshuffled Independent Electoral Commission. He spent the 2010-11 postelectoral crisis at the *Hôtel du Golf* with Soro and the elected president Alassane Ouattara, who took power only after the fall of Laurent Gbagbo who had refused to concede his defeat in the polls.³¹ In the November 2011 legislative contest Ben Souk was elected MP in Dabou on Ouattara's party's list. His story may be unusual, it is neither unique nor isolated. The

rebellion's social fabric was not an exclusive preserve of northern *originaires* but to a certain extent an ethnic and religious mix. Conversely, so was the post-2002 pro-Gbagbo patriotic galaxy, which was comprised of 'northern' personalities such as Issa Malick Coulibaly, Bêh Diabaté, Navigué Konaté, Al Moustapha Koné, Issouf Fofana, Abdurahmane Sangaré, and Moussa Zéguen Touré, and even some formerly southern Muslim converts turned radical antistranger militiamen like Eugène Djué and Duékoué's dreaded warlord, the so-called Colombo.³²

As after 2002, the bloody Ivoirian postelectoral war again deeply affected the mixed 'native-Dioula' Muslim society. Until Gbagbo's fall the extreme violence that his armed supporters unleashed against whoever was deemed pro-Ouattara—but mostly the 'Dioula'—entrenched a defensive 'Dioula' distrust vis-à-vis Kru-speaking³³ converts, suspected of backing Gbagbo's radical clinging to power. This occurred primarily in Abidjan and the west; the rest of the country was relatively spared. Long before the first electoral round, imam Ibrahim Konan took pains to explain to the local leaders of his converts' association that he would not campaign for any candidate. He urged them likewise—in vain—to spare ANIECOPI of all electoral stakes at the grassroots level for fear it would tear the group apart, since converts were legitimately divided in their political preferences. Imam Konan was so disappointed with the bad behaviour of some of ANIECOPI's regional leaders that he decided, after the war, to rename his association *Mission islamique Mouzdalifa*, Mouzdalifa being a transition city between Mecca and Medina, in order to rid the group of ill-behaved members and of a converts/conversion discursive reference altogether; all else remained basically unchanged. Yet intra-Muslim solidarity also manifested itself, even in those dreadful postelectoral months. In the village of Bidié near Diégonéfla between Oumé and Gagnoa, local Muslim Baoulé migrants spontaneously came between the native Gagou and Dida on the one hand, and Dioula and other Muslim strangers on the other, effectively protecting the latter group from militia violence. Today in Bidié Muslim strangers are grateful for their Baoulé coreligionists' courageous initiative and socio-spiritual fraternity. In Diégonéfla itself the Muslim Sénoufo interceded between the Gagou and the rest of the Muslim community.³⁴

All in all, the entanglement and variability of local situations, along with lack of hindsight, make it difficult to draw overarching conclusions about the civil conflict's impact on stranger/native Muslim relations on the one hand and Muslim/non-Muslim native relations on the other. Realities were not rosy and took a bloody turn for the worse not once but twice, yet it would be an overstatement to say that ethnicity suppressed the fallible but tangible synergism of Côte d'Ivoire's plural Muslim community altogether.

Currents of Change: Concluding Remarks

Over the past three to four decades the reformist movement took on the task of scrupulously critiquing ethnicity's undue importance in Ivoirian Muslim practices, whether it was brought about by Dioula or native converts. An implicit correlation may have been drawn between Dioula's past ethnocentrism and southern converts' later excesses. Clearly, deviations either way were deemed not only un-Islamic but also socially unhealthy and dangerous for all Muslims nationwide. Preaching reconciliation and tolerance in the name of Muslim unity, Aboubacar Fofana (today's national chief imam and head of the *Conseil supérieur des imams*) has repeated time and again that 'in the Quran, it is said: "Whoever appeals to tribalism is not one of us". The Muslim must never say: "I am Dioula, I am superior"'.³⁵ The revivalist leitmotiv was that Muslims' personal worth has to do with faith, piety, and religious knowledge, not ethnicity. Fraternity of faith is more worthy than fraternity of race. Islam is not the religious preserve of the Dioula and even less a Dioula religion; it is a supraethnic world religion open to all, across all ethnicities.

Reformists thus painstakingly endeavoured to disentangle Islamic core principles from time- and space-specific Dioula customary practices. Contrary to the Wahhabiyya, these practices were not condemned as such since at least most of them were not characterised as antithetic to Islam, but they were deemed acceptable only as far as they added to Islamic daily life and life-transition ceremonies at the concrete level of local communities. Since Dioula traditions were not *stricto sensu* Islamic, it was believed to be wrong to impose them on others, especially converts. This would be mere ethnocultural hegemony, not Islamization. As the Abidjan-based imam Aboubacar Samassi explained:

Religious unity in Islam doesn't mean cultural uniformity of the faithful, for God has created men different. . . . There is a difference between unity and uniformity. We do not ask a tribal community or an ethnic group to dilute itself in another one to make unity. No! Everyone remains as it is, we respect all communities, we recognise their rights and their duties.³⁶

Accordingly, converts—especially southern autochthons—were exhorted not only to stay away from the Dioulaization of the old days, but also and more meaningfully to nurture the various aspects of their native heritage that did not stand in contradiction to Islam. In effect, revivalists were urging converts to become agents of their own personal and community transformation by triggering a process of Islamization of their non-Muslim ethnic culture of birth, however slow and partial the process. After all, the Islamization of

Dioula society started no differently and may not yet be completed. The hope was that the process would secure the belief that Islam is a religion adapted to all times and places and would eventually induce new ethnic groups to venture on Islam's path.

That the revivalist message was regularly articulated in the French language and only secondarily in Dioula helped the cause. When in 1977 Abidjanese reformist preachers launched a weekly Islamic television program in French targeting Muslim students, professionals, and intellectuals, they also reached out to southern autochthons, somewhat unbeknownst to the reformist teachers at first. The result was an observable wave of conversion to Islam, markedly among the Bété (Delval 1980). When in the late 1980s new ideas on *da'wa* (Ar. outreach or propaganda) convinced the fast enlarging reform-minded community to elaborate meticulous missionary strategies and set up organisations dedicated to proselytism—a radical break from past practice, partly influenced by the example of Christian apostolate missions—a number of Arab-speaking native Muslims were integrated into the 1991 *Ligue islamique des prédicateurs de Côte d'Ivoire* (Preachers' Islamic League of Côte d'Ivoire, or LIPCI). Indigenous preachers were trained to adopt revivalist values and methods, as was also the case with majority Dioula preachers who had various doctrinal backgrounds. Whenever local Islamization campaigns were subsequently organised, indigenous preachers were pushed forward to preach to natives in their own tongues. The LIPCI, along with other associations to a lesser extent, thus became a pool from which a new elite of native preachers and later imams eventually emerged. When Radio *Al Bayane* was launched in 2001, it called on this native elite's services to animate programs in their vernaculars. Although a minority, the native Muslim voice is no longer unheard in public space.³⁷

Today converts' de-Dioulaization is more or less a fait accompli. A strong marker is the patronymic. In the majority Bété Muslim village of Korékipra, imam Issiaka 'Koné' and his brother Moussa 'Koné', both of whom were born Muslim after their father converted to Islam in the 1950s, reverted to their fathers' birth name and now call themselves Issiaka and Moussa 'Menehouan aka Koné'.³⁸ Although Moumine Ouattara, imam of the Génie 2000 mosque in Palmeraie-Abidjan, may have kept the last name borrowed from his father's Muslim tutor (Moumine's father was a colonial soldier who converted to Islam before 1945), he is nonetheless one of the country's most active Agni preachers at LIPCI and Radio *Al Bayane*, and opposes the adoption of Dioula names.³⁹ New converts simply keep their birth names, except when it is a fetish name, sometimes adding a second Arabic first name. Lambert Feh Kesse, once the country's tax managing director, is a Muslim Yacouba; Antoine Méa,

the top businessman of Zaranou, a small town on the Ghanaian border, is a Muslim Agni. Names in Côte d'Ivoire are not always transparent indicators of ethnic and religious belonging.

Besides the symbol of names, the reality is that native Muslims now participate more fully than before in the traditional life of their religiously mixed native community: sharing meals, celebrating life-transition ceremonies, and even assuming chiefly or royal power. A plurality of hybrid, native Islamic religious cultures are coalescing. Southern vernaculars are becoming languages of Islam in their own right, even if Dioula remains dominant owing to Dioula-speakers' demographic weight. Muslim Adjoukrou are renowned for their beautiful Islamic gospel-like music. Ibrahim Bredji, the Dida imam of Abidjan's MACA or prison, once appeared on an Islamic television broadcast wearing a *kita*, which was met with much surprise. His gesture contributed to Islamize that traditional cloth (reversely, more and more non-Muslims now wear the traditional *boubou* dress and even the *djellaba* and Dioula hairdo for women). What was a prime claim of ethnonationalist converts' associations is slowly, though not without difficulty, becoming a reality. It is now possible for religiously eligible southern converts to become central-mosque imams. In Abidjan alone there are over ten native imams that I know of. In the interior, where resistance to change may be more pronounced, reformists sometimes encourage the appointment of well-educated native preachers as *nai'b* (Ar. deputy) to Dioula imams. Education is key; southern converts' communities are encouraged to send at least one son to study abroad if possible to prepare for the takeover. Smaller mosques may already have their homegrown imams. When Aboubacar Fofana was officially consecrated as Côte d'Ivoire Chief Imam in April 2007 in an investiture ceremony with much pomp and circumstance, it was Mounir Ouattara, the Barabo Agni-speaking imam of Yorobodi, who was bestowed the honour to set the white turban (the symbol of religious knowledge) on the Cheikh's head. This is not to say that problems have vanished; they remain plentiful, but native Muslims are no longer estranged from their ethnic communities and their integration into the majority Dioula Muslim community is underway.

In retrospect, the 'native' issue may have represented a positive challenge for the majority reformist leadership and the Dioula community at large. Addressing the problem and partnering with converts helped the demographic progress of Islam in the country. (This is not to say that de-Islamization does not exist; religious concurrence remains intense.) More meaningfully, the revivalists' conciliatory approach set in motion the slow transformation of Dioula Islam into a kind of post-Dioula, postmigration, and generic 'Ivoirian' Islam. This 'national' Islam aspires to inclusiveness across the spectrum of

ethnic and regional diversity. In fact, it is not reserved for nationals; it is also open to *allochtones* (strangers who have settled permanently on Ivoirian land), and it encompasses foreign diversity. This Dioula-based yet multicultural, patriotic yet cosmopolitan 'Ivoirian' Islam may only be imaginary thus far, but the new Muslim mentality out of which it was produced is real enough to be reckoned with. In the end, it is ironic or paradoxical that southern natives acted to exclude northern Dioula from the imagined Ivoirian nation on the grounds of their alleged foreignness precisely when the former attempted, with some measure of success, to de-Dioulaize their Islam and make it into a kind of national religion (Launay 2005). Firm Muslim public positions articulated from above, changing everyday Islamic realities from below, and plain Muslim demography seem to be converging to make it difficult if not illusory for ultranationalists to exclude Muslims/Dioula/northerners from redefining the nation's identity and sharing the state's governance in the long run. Reversely, Dioula have to deal with southern autochthons as well, whatever dreams of Malinké imperial grandeur some may hold. Should the present reconciliation process bear its hoped-for fruits—distrust remains high at national level, but trust is a relation that is slow to build—the end of the bloody post-electoral crisis and decade of *ivoirité* exclusions may contribute to reducing the gap between sociological realities and ultranationalist ideologies, and to making native Muslims' double identity less perilous.

References

- Afrique contemporaine*. 2000. 193: Special issue on the Ivoirian crisis.
 ———. 2003. 206: Special issue on the Ivoirian civil strife.
- Akindès, Francis. 2003. 'Côte d'Ivoire: Socio-political Crises, "Ivoirité" and the Course of History'. *African Sociological Review* 7.2, 11-28.
- . 2004. *The Roots of the Military-Political Crises in Côte d'Ivoire*. Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, Research Report 128.
- . 2009. 'Côte d'Ivoire since 1993: The risky reinvention of a nation'. In A. R. Mustapha and L. Whitfield (eds.), *Turning Points in African Democracy*. Oxford: James Currey, 31-49.
- Arnaut, Karel. 2008. 'Prendre en Compte les Échelles: Le Mouvement Patriotique et la Construction de "l'autochtone" en Côte d'Ivoire', *Revue Africaine de Sociologie* 12.2, 69-84.
- Banégas, Richard. 2006. 'Côte d'Ivoire: Patriotism, Ethnonationalism and Other African Modes of Self-Writing'. *African Affairs* 105.421, 535-552.
- Bassett, Thomas. 2003. 'Nord Musulman et Sud Chrétien: Les Moules Médiatiques de la Crise Ivoirienne'. *Afrique contemporaine* 206, 35-42.
- Bouquet, Christian. 2011. *Côte d'Ivoire: le désespoir de Kourouma*. 3rd ed. Paris: Armand Colin.

- Collett, Moya. 2006. 'Ivoirian Identity Constructions: Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Prelude to Civil War'. *Nations and Nationalism* 12.4, 613-629.
- Delval, Raymond. 1980. *Les Musulmans d'Abidjan*. Paris: Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques and Centre des Hautes Etudes sur l'Afrique et l'Asie Modernes.
- Dozon, Jean-Pierre. 2000a. 'La Côte d'Ivoire au Pêril de l'Ivoirité: Genèse d'un Coup d'Etat'. *Afrique contemporaine* 193, 13-23.
- . 2000b. 'La Côte d'Ivoire Entre Démocratie, Nationalisme et Ethnonationalisme'. *Politique africaine* 78, 45-62.
- . 2011. *Les Clefs de la Crise Ivoirienne*. Paris: Karthala.
- Fancello, Sandra. 2007. 'Les Défis du Pentecôtisme en pays Musulman (Burkina Faso, Mali)'. *Journal des africanistes* 77.1, 29-54.
- Fisher, Humphrey. 1979. 'Dreams and Conversion in Black Africa'. In Nehemia Levtzion (ed.), *Conversion to Islam*. New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 217-235.
- Gary-Toukara, Daouda. 2008. *Migrants Soudanais/Maliens et Conscience Ivoirienne: Les Étrangers en Côte d'Ivoire (1903-1980)*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Gonnin, Gilbert. 2008. 'Assumer son Histoire'. In Kassimi Bamba and Kevin Adou (eds.), *Côte d'Ivoire: Chronique d'une Crise (2002-2008)*. Abidjan: Editions du CERAP, 69-76.
- Kobo, Ousman. M. 2010. '"We are Citizens Too": The Ambiguity of Citizenship in Post-Independent Ghana'. *The International Journal of Modern African Studies* 48.1, 67-94.
- . Forthcoming. *Unveiling Modernity in Twentieth Century West African Islamic Reforms*. Leiden: Brill.
- Kourouma, Amadou. 1990. *Monnè: Outrages et Défis*. Paris: Seuil.
- Launay, Robert. 2005. 'Islam and Civil Strife in Côte d'Ivoire'. Paper presented to the African Studies Association annual meeting, Washington DC.
- Launay, Robert and Marie Miran. 2000. 'Beyond Mande Mory: Islam and Ethnicity in Côte d'Ivoire'. *Paideuma* 46, 63-84.
- Manby, Bronwen. 2009. *Struggles for Citizenship in Africa*. London: IAI African Arguments Series, Zed Books.
- Marshall-Fratani, Ruth. 2006. 'The War of "Who is Who": Autochthony, Nationalism, and Citizenship in the Ivoirian Crisis'. *African Studies Review* 49.2: 9-43.
- McGovern, Michael. 2011. *Making War in Côte d'Ivoire*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Miran, Marie. 2005. 'D'Abidjan à Porto Novo: Associations Islamiques, Culture Religieuse Réformiste et Transnationalisme sur la Côte de Guinée'. In Laurent Fourchard, André Mary and René Otayek (eds.), *Entreprises Religieuses et Réseaux Transnationaux en Afrique de l'Ouest*. Ibadan and Paris: IFRA and Karthala, 43-72.
- . 2006a. *Islam, Histoire et Modernité en Côte d'Ivoire*. Paris: Karthala.
- . 2006b. 'The Political Economy of Civil Islam in Côte d'Ivoire'. In Michael Bröning and Holger Weiss (eds.), *Politischer Islam in Westafrika: Eine Bestandsaufnahme*. Berlin: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and Lit Verlag, 82-113.
- Miran, Marie and Charif Vissoh. 2009. '(Auto)biographie d'une Conversion à l'Islam: Regards Croisés sur une Histoire de Changement Religieux dans le Bénin Contemporain'. *Cahiers d'études africaines* 195, 655-704.
- Miran-Guyon, Marie, Mamadou Doumbia, Georges Kohikan Gbéno, Souleymane Touré, Cyprien Ahouré, and Bruno Kozi. 2011. 'Au-delà du Silence et de la Fureur. Duékoué

- (Ouest Ivoirien): Rencontres interreligieuses au “carrefour de la haine”. *Politique africaine* 123, 95-115.
- Miran-Guyon, Marie. 2012. ‘An Ivoirian Apocalypse: Spiritual Violence in the Post-Electoral Crisis’, *Cultural Anthropology*, Hot Spots Forum Online.
- . Forthcoming. *Patrie des Dieux: Religion, Nationalisme et Citoyenneté en Côte d’Ivoire*. Paris and Abidjan: Karthala and CERAP.
- Pellow, Deborah. 1985. ‘Muslim Segmentation: Cohesion and Divisiveness in Accra’. *Journal of Modern African Studies* 23.3, 419-444.
- Perrot, Claude-Hélène. 2006. ‘Chefs Traditionnels: Le Cas du sud-est de la Côte d’Ivoire’. *Afrique Contemporaine* 217, 173-184.
- . 2009. ‘Retour dans le Sud-Est de la Côte d’Ivoire, 6 Novembre-1^{er} Décembre 2008’. Unpublished paper.
- Politique africaine*. 2000. 78: Special issue on ‘Côte d’Ivoire, la Tentation Ethnonationaliste’.
- . 2003. 89: Special issue on ‘La Côte d’Ivoire en Guerre: Dynamiques du Dedans et du Dehors’.
- . 2008. 112: Special issue on ‘Enjeux de l’autochtonie’.

Notes

1. In Ivoirian political parlance, the expression ‘native’, or ‘*autochtone*’ in French, refers almost exclusively to people of ‘southern’ lineages—the south being itself a construct—as if to speak of northern natives were a contradiction in terms (to the contrary, it is real enough from an ethnographic standpoint). The concept of Ivoirian ‘nativism’ or ‘autochthony’ indeed has less to do with geography and history and more with politics of memory and ethnonationalist ideology. To simplify complex matters outside the narrower scope of this study, vocal southerners self-styled as *autochtones* claim to be the first comers and the only ‘true’ Ivoirians, hence the sole natural-born rulers. In this highly problematic conception northerners are either seen as foreigners or as Ivoirians of a lesser pedigree. The literature on Ivoirian autochthony and ‘*ivoirité*’ or Ivoirian-first issues is now rich (see *Afrique contemporaine* 2000 and 2003; Akindès 2003 and 2009; Arnaut 2008; Banégas 2006; Bouquet 2011; Collett 2006; Dozon 2000a/b and 2011; Manby 2009; Marshall-Fratani 2006; McGovern 2011; and *Politique africaine* 2000, 2003, and 2008). My use of quotation marks when referring to ‘native’/‘nativism’ or ‘autochthon’/‘autochthony’ emphasizes those terms’ highly controversial undertones. In this article, though, for lack of a better alternative, I make use of them in a more neutral and empirical fashion, as explained in the latter part of the introduction.

2. The term ‘Dioula’, which became popularly accepted in southern Côte d’Ivoire from the colonial period, is a label that natives used to refer to all non-native Muslims regardless of their inner differences, which they may not have perceived from the outside. After the appellation became increasingly derogatory in its public usage in the late 2000s, some Muslim leaders advocated banning the use of ‘Dioula’ and using the term ‘Malinké’ (as well as Sénoufo and other northern ethnic names) instead, Malinké being both emic and neutral. The argument was not without foundation. Nonetheless, in this article I make use of the term ‘Dioula’, polysemous and controversial as it may be, because it remains co-extensive with southern natives-Muslim strangers’ relations and mutual representations in Côte d’Ivoire’s past and present.

3. For a critique of these essentialisms see Bassett 2003.

4. Interview with Ahmed Kipré, 26 December 2007.

5. Some 'mixed' Akan-Mandé societies of the eastern forest/savanna contact zone such as the Anno-Mango (related to the Baoulé) and Barabo (related to the Agni) are Muslim in majority, but they are the exception. On the village level, however, there are quite a few localities with a native Muslim majority.

6. This was the case with Kouao Bilé Abdoulaye, the Agnibilékro king of the Agni-Djuablin, who converted to Islam as far back as 1941, and also in the odd case of a new Eotilé chief (Perrot 2009).

7. This article provides only a synthetic overview of what is truly a complex issue, which I began researching as a side interest in 2001. With much original multisited material, I hope to write a book-length comparative study of native Muslims in colonial and postcolonial coastal West Africa (southern Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, and Benin). For first results see Miran and Vissoh 2009.

8. I address these issues on a broader scale in a forthcoming monograph (Miran-Guyon forthcoming, to be published in a revised English version by Ohio University Press).

9. For a good survey of Côte d'Ivoire's history and recent political predicament see Dozon 2011.

10. Interview with Mohamed Dolé, the Dida imam of the Akouédo army camp mosque in Abidjan, 23 March 2009.

11. These prejudices are not specific to southern Côte d'Ivoire but are common all along the Gulf of Guinea coast; Miran and Vissoh 2009.

12. I have not been able to trace the local origins of the Dioula term *busumani* from the English 'bushman', which does not seem to be in use in Anglophone Ghana and Liberia (with help from Gérard Dumestre, Oumane Ouattara, Ousman Kobo, and Stephen Ellis). For a historical account of the usage of *busumani* see Gary-Toukara 2008. It appears that Muslims were not alone in using this derogatory label. As early as 1928, when the newspaper *La Voie du Dahomey* negatively referred to Ivoirians as 'Bushmen', 'Côtivoiriens' and 'Dahoméens' clashed in Treichville (Gary-Toukara 2008, 112; Gonnin 2008, 70). In Kourouma's humorous novel *Monnè*, northerners depict natives of the Ivoirian forest as 'des nègres cafres appelés "bousmen"' (Kourouma 1990, 80). The south is sometimes referred to as a 'busumani zone'.

13. As described by Fisher (1979) in a different context.

14. Interviews in Korékippa in 2001, in Agnibilékro and Damé in 2009, and in Koffi Amankro, Adikro, and Prikro in 2011.

15. Interviews with Watta N'dri and Jacques Amian in June 2006; visits in Dabou, Cosrou, and Tiagba in 2001 and 2003.

16. Interview with Ahmed Kipré, 26 December 2007.

17. The conversion story of the Ga and Fanti of the Gold Coast is noticeably different in that they resisted becoming Hausa from the start; see Pellow 1985; Miran 2005; and Kobo 2010 and forthcoming.

18. Interview with Gérard Dumestre, 10 October 2008. Muslims believe that Abdallah, literally 'Allah's slave', is the name for believers that God prefers.

19. At first, the movement was actually called 'orthodox'. For a full discussion of these unsatisfactory labels and the history of the Wahhabi movement in Côte d'Ivoire see Miran 2006a, chapter 5.

20. Interview with Ibrahim Bredji, 14 August 2001.

21. For details on the *madrasa* project and its failure see Miran 2006a.

22. Archives of the Interior Ministry, CMS file, minutes of the association's constitutive assembly, Dabou, 9 May 1982.

23. In northern Côte d'Ivoire and Mali, to call someone *tagbusi* is generally pejorative; it means that a person lacks a proper education, is uncouth, or even retarded (not unlike the term *busumani*). But its socio-linguistic usage can be more positive in southern Côte d'Ivoire, as when a Dioula raised and fed on *attiéké* (a typical southern dish not found in the north) is characterized as *tagbusi*. In no case is it a social category per se.

24. Interviews with Bedi Lekr of Cosrou, 26 August 2002, and Watta N'Dri Abdul Wahhab, 28 June 2006 and 25 August 2008. A CMS counterpart in Ghana may be the Ghana Muslim Mission, founded in 1957 and still active, that is mostly geared to the Muslim Ga, Fanti, and Ashanti. Unlike the CMS, however, the GMM has kept an ambiguous anti-Hausa edge (Pellow 1985; Miran 2005; Kobo 2010 and forthcoming).

25. Meeting with Cheikh Bony Tohyr Aboh, UNAMUCI president, and Yaya Legré, CAOCICI president, 28 August 2008.

26. In the violent months of the 2010-11 postelectoral crisis, the most influential and most aggressive charismatic prophet-pastor of the pro-Gbagbo/anti-Alassane Ouattara camp was a former Muslim, Koné Amadou Malachie (see Miran-Guyon 2012 and forthcoming). For a study of Muslim conversion to Pentecostal Christianity in Mali and Burkina Faso see Fancello 2007.

27. Interview with Watta N'dri, 28 August 2008.

28. Interview with Mohammed Dolé, 15 October 2008.

29. Interview with Ibrahim Konan, 26 June 2009.

30. Interview with Ibrahim Konan, 26 June 2009.

31. Interviews with Mohamed Sess, 2009-12.

32. On Colombo's conversion and the case of Duékoué in Wè (Guéré) country see Miran-Guyon et al. 2011.

33. The Kru speak related languages and include the Bété, Dida, Wè, and other western ethnic groups. Dioula distrust mostly concerned the Kru and not the Akan, for in the name of a pro-Houphouëtist electoral alliance, many Baoulé voters, regardless of religion, supported Ouattara against Gbagbo in the second round.

34. Discussions with Ibrahim Konan, December 2011.

35. Archives of the *Association des jeunes musulmans de Côte d'Ivoire* (AJMCI), audiocassette of Fofana's conference on 'Islam and Nation-building in Côte d'Ivoire', Ibis Hotel, Plateau/Abidjan, 31 December 1995.

36. Archives of the AJMCI, audiocassette of Aboubacar Samassi's conference on 'Islam's contribution to national unity', Abidjan, 1995.

37. Details in Launay and Miran 2000; see also Miran 2006a/b.

38. Interview with the Menhouan brothers, 20 August 2001.

39. Interview with Moumine Ouattara, 28 June 2006.