Note de l'Ifri

Identity-based Mobilizations in Contemporary Africa:
The Question of Autochthony

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Introduction: From Ethnic Groups to the Notion of "Autochthony"

The way that sub-Saharan Africa's social realities and identities are portrayed in the developed world represents a great misunderstanding of life on the continent. Our two principal sources of information – our education systems and the media – have failed to give us an accurate view; almost without exception, they have failed to relay the discoveries that scholars of Africa have been making for over a century. This "sealed-off" reality could be the object of a paper itself, but here I want to look at something else. Before considering the identity formation (and reformation) currently underway in sub-Saharan Africa, the ambiguities surrounding the embarrassing catch-all term of "ethnic group" – which causes more problems than it explains – need to be clarified.

Ethnic groups are constantly being used to explain this or that event; a civil war is described as "ethnic", social tensions are "ethnic" – as if crises in Africa can't be economic, political, social, and identity-based all at the same time, just like everywhere else in the world. The excessive use of the word "ethnic" – a kind of panacea used to explain African events – highlights the lack of knowledge of the history of the societies in question. After all, why try to understand the history of Rwandan society when you can simply say that the rivalry is "ethnic"? Today the Tutsis are in power, tomorrow will be the Hutus' turn and so on. This lack of knowledge rests on condescension towards developing countries – especially African ones – which, according to the developed world, are simply a homogenous bloc of the world economy, representing a second tier of countries which only make the news because of catastrophes (wars, epidemics, famines, etc.). The repeated – even Pavlovian – use of the term "ethnic group" is even more damaging in that it is more often than not understood in rigid sociobiological[1] or naturalistic terms; that is, ethnic groups are seen as biologically homogenous groups of humans or extended family groupings that reproduce themselves unchangingly.

This notion has its origins in the first decades of the colonial period, when colonial administrators tried to understand the reality

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[1] As a simple extension of kinship. See: Ph. Poutignat, J. Streiff-Fenart : *Théories de l'ethnicité*, 1995, PUF, Paris, p. 102.

with which they were confronted. Their first objective was to categorize the diverse populations contained in the various colonies and construct a hierarchy. They needed to put a name on a more or less homogenous group that was the most "evolved" so that it could be used to assist the colonial administration in the organization and control of its territory.

The Rwandan example illustrates the extreme extent of this mechanism for differentiating human groups by name and then treating these newly distinguished "groups" differently. Jean-Pierre Chrétien[2] has shown how Rwanda's colonizers (German and then Belgian) layered a racist analysis[3] on a complex social system:

> *"These categories correspond to ancient social divisions, the Hutus being mostly farmers and the Tutsis mostly cattle-herders (the Twas[4], a small minority, mostly hunters, fishermen and potters), but not to the extent that we can speak of Hutus and Tutsis as social classes. The groups work like 'superclans' with designated functions and rivalries over which functions and emoluments were distributed to them by the royal courts and princes. The Tutsi hold on power, seen in Rwanda especially since the end of the 17th century, is much less clear in Burundi."*

Where there were in fact social distinctions, colonizers saw two "races"; according to them one (the Tutsis) was of Hamitic origins and much more highly evolved than the other (the Hutus), who were thought to be more primitive and of Bantu origins[5]. This colonial paradigm of Rwanda would be a mere anecdote had it not sparked a chain of events that led to the last genocide of the 20th century. Seen as superior by the colonizers, the Tutsis represented the bulk of the

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[2] Le défi de l'ethnisme. Rwanda et Burundi : 1990-1996, 1997, Karthala, collection Les Afriques.

[3] At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, the talk was not of ethnic groups but of "races". The classification of humans into "races" came from "scientific racism," which grouped humans according to morphological characteristics (using phrenology, craniometry, and anthropometry) corresponding to the races' "dominant characteristics" (intelligence, laziness, deceitfulness, and nobleness), as well as categories inspired by biblical notions (Semitic, Hamitic peoples). See: Joseph Arthur de Gobineau *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, 1853 and also S. Moussa (dir.), *L'idée de « race » dans les sciences humaines et la littérature (XVIIIe - XIXe siècles)*, Actes du colloque international de Lyon, (16-18 novembre 2000), L'Harmattan, 2003.

[4] Colonizers would later call them pygmies.

[5] "The Batutsi were destined to reign; their presence alone already guarantees them a considerable prestige over the inferior races that surround them…It's not surprising that the honest Bahutu, less clever, more simple, more spontaneous and more confident, let themselves be subjugated without ever having a thought of revolt." P. Ryckmans, Dominer pour servir, 1931, cited by J.-P. Chrétien : « Hutu et Tutsi au Rwanda et au Burundi », in J.-L. Amselle and E. M'Bokolo : Au cœur de l'ethnie : Ethnies, tribalisme et Etat en Afrique, 1999, La découverte, p. 138; "Hamites, race of lords, distant, polite, refined, but with a hint of deceitfulness", "Bahutus, negroes with flattened noses, thick lips, low brows, child-like characteristics, both shy and lazy, the servant class." J. Sasserath, Le Rwanda-Urundi, étrange royaume féodal, Bruxelles, 1948, cited by J.-P. Chrétien, op. cit. 1997, p. 14

schooled population during most of the colonial period and were the occupiers' assistants. In a certain way, by adopting a racist and hierarchical view of Rwandan society, the colonizers contributed to the "solidification" of the existing Tutsi and Hutu categories and seriously aggravated existing tensions. This was especially true during Rwanda's last two decades as a colony, when Hutus, a large part of the population, started rising up against the "feudal elite". The 1959 "Rwandan revolution" and subsequent massacres throughout the second half of the 20th century marked the Hutus' revenge and their rise to power in the country[6].

The mechanism of denominating, classifying, and hierarchically ranking was used throughout colonized Africa, hardening identities and increasing tensions across the continent. Basically, the fact that the diverse population of each colony was named and categorized had an effect on how the people of each colony saw and defined themselves. This is why it is often – though perhaps incorrectly – said that Africa's colonists "created ethnic groups". While this assertion is too strong, it is clear that identities changed as a result of being categorized, as a result of becoming named entities linked to a given administrative space that was then ranked in a hierarchy[7].

Despite the continuing influence of this idea since the start of colonization, "ethnic groups" are not homogenous biological groups but historical constructions, as emphasized by Jean-François Bayart[8]. Because power in pre-colonial African society was measured by the number of dependants one had, people and groups were open to the integration of "outsiders" and the history of these societies is the history of the integration of various individuals or outside groups into a host society. Colonization contributed to a redefinition of identities. Ethnic groups should not therefore be associated with the notion of "primordial identity": they are historically formed groups of humans, which have defined and redefined their identities throughout the

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[6] The history of Rwanda from 1959 to the genocide of 1994 is marked by a series of massacres.

[7] J.-L. Amselle notes that "when the European powers colonized Africa certain existing 'ethnonyms' were used in the same situation or in different ones. However, in other cases, new names were used, and not in reference to existing pre-colonial social units, but linked to spaces demarcated by the colonial administration. […] Colonization's major effect was thus the creation of new territorial divisions ('circles', 'districts', 'territories') – that is to say the breaking up of pre-colonial Africa's 'economy-world' into a myriad of little social spaces which eventually gave rise to 'races', 'tribes,' and 'ethnic groups'. Whereas such spaces were linked together before colonialism in 'chains of social groups', after the colonial land grab these ties between local groups were dislocated. This naming phenomenon came in three main forms: the ex nihilo creation of ethnic groups like the Bété in Côte d'Ivoire, the semantic transposition of existing ethnonyms into new contexts (Bambara, Dioula), or the transformation of political units or pre-colonial toponyms into 'ethnic groups' […]", J.-L. Amselle and E. M'Bokolo, op. cit. 1999, pp. 38-39.

[8] Along with P. Geschiere and F. Nyamnjoh : « Autochtonie, démocratie et citoyenneté en Afrique », *Critique Internationale,* n°10, 2001. http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/publica/critique/article/ci10p177-194.pdf

colonial period and have continued to evolve since independence within the framework of the state. Ethnic groups are linked intimately with the competition for power and the pursuit of wealth within this framework.

This paper will briefly present some modifications in identity that can be seen in contemporary African societies. In particular, the identities we designate by the term "indigenousness[9]" or "autochthony" (meaning claim to indigenous status) will be considered.

The question of indigenous status or indigenous peoples[10] is not one restricted to Africa. The question first appeared at the global level around the end of the 1970s: a UN working group on indigenous peoples was established around this time[11]. One of this group's first reports defined "indigenous peoples" very precisely[12]. This definition, however, is better suited to certain indigenous peoples in the Americas, where they sometimes make up the majority of the population (Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, Guatemala, etc.) and where their land rights were denied first by European colonizers, then by the political authorities of the independent states. The definition approaches the question of European control over indigenous populations whose economic and cultural rights were denied[13]. In spite of this, the global debate has had a strong resonance in Africa, where - although political structures are not the same as in the Americas (white power,

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[9] *Politique Africaine* n° 112, « Enjeux de l'Autochtonie », 2009, Karthala.

[10] We can sometimes also find "autochthonous peoples" used in English; in French the favored term is "*autochthonie*".

[11] See: http://www2.ohchr.org/french/issues/indigenous/groups/groups-01.htm

[12] "Indigenous communities, peoples, and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society, and are determined to preserve, develop, and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories and their ethnic identity as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions, and legal system." Special Report directed by José R Martinez Cobo, *Study of the Problem of Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations*, E/CN.4/ sub 2/1986/87 Add 4., p. 29, para. 379

[13] Collective land rights have been rendered obsolete by the individualization of access to property. This has resulted in some landowners buying up large quantities of land. Certain groups' cultural rights took a very long time to be recognized. However, numerous countries' constitutions, particularly in the Americas, now mention indigenous rights explicitly. For example, article 84 of the 1998 Ecuadorian Constitution states: "*the state recognizes indigenous peoples and guarantees (…): 1 – (…) to maintain, develop, and strengthen their identities and traditions in spiritual, cultural, linguistic, social, political, and economic domains; 2 – to preserve the immutable ownership of the community's lands, which are unalienable (…); 3 – to maintain the ancestral ownership of the community's lands and judge them in accordance with the law freely; 4 – the right to participate in the use, usufruct, administration and conservation of the renewable natural resources in their lands; 5 – to consult them over plans and programs of prospecting and exploitation of non-renewable resources (…); 8 – not to displace indigenous peoples from their lands.*" Cited by Christian Gros in "Demandes ethniques et politiques publiques en Amérique latine", *Papeles del CEIC*, n°11, March 2004 http://www.ehu.es/CEIC/papeles/11.pdf

marginalized indigenous population) – increased competition for diminishing resources (land, water, credit, work, electoral mandates, managerial posts, development programs, infrastructure) has posed questions about access to these resources.

After a look at the Ivoirian crisis, which will allow us to understand the development of claims both of indigenous rights and of ethno-nationalism in their historico-economic context, we will see that all these claims (for agricultural land, natural resources, work, selection of managers or "representatives") can be summarized by the expression, "Being in charge of your 'own' land" (*translator's note:* in French the expression is "*être maître chez soi*", which has more meanings than the English translation given here). We will also see that phenomena linked to claims of indigenous rights act at different levels: micro-local, regional, and national.

Côte d'Ivoire: Looking Back on the Rise of Claims for Indigenous Rights in a Modern African State

The Economic Miracle, Migration and Claims of Indigenous Rights

Côte d'Ivoire's "economic miracle" in the 1960s and 1970s (the country's GDP grew by an average of 7% every year for two decades) relied on the development of export agriculture (cocoa, coffee, cotton, tropical fruits). This was possible for numerous reasons: an increasing world price for these products, especially cocoa; the availability of land, especially in the southwest of the country; readily available labor, in part due to massive immigration; and, finally, the fact that the strongly interventionist state was able to lead an ambitious program of infrastructure building across the country and regulate the country's export channels for the key products as mentioned above[14].

This economic development model underwent a serious crisis in the 1980s. The end of the boom in prices for coffee, cocoa, and

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[14] The economic model was associated with a political pact: "Starting in 1960 a real political pact was established between the party-state, the urban ruling class, merchants, private entrepreneurs, and the different constituent parts of the Ivoirian peasant classes […]. In exchange for guaranteed prices, markets and economic inputs, and a regular increase in their standard of living, the country-dwelling population was expected to totally submit itself politically and accept the party-state's monopoly of the agricultural rent […]." Jean-Pierre Chauveau, « Question foncière et construction nationale en Côte d'Ivoire. Les enjeux silencieux d'un coup d'État », Politique africaine, n° 78, 2000, Karthala. In his turn, Bernard Conte explains in detail that "the Houphouétist system was a regime based on the collection and redistribution of agricultural rent, primarily from the cocoa and coffee industries. At the heart of the collection system was the CAISTAB monopsony that guaranteed the sale of the produce of the rentier agriculture. The difference between world commodity prices and official state prices generated a high level of rent to be distributed by unofficial rules that respected the political, geographical, and ethnic equilibriums. The system was controlled by the PDCI, the state's single party, with its structure reaching right down into the tiniest bush villages." Côte d'Ivoire : clientélisme, ajustement et conflit, Document de Travail du Centre d'Economie du Développement, Université de Bordeaux IV, 2004, p.5.

cotton, the effect of adventurous investments, and the implementation of structural adjustments severely affected the agricultural sector and thence the rest of the Ivoirian economy. This brought about the destabilization of President Houphouët-Boigny's paternalistic politico-economic model. While the GDP per capita rose by an average of 3.9% annually until 1978, from 1979 to 1993 it fell by 3.7% on average every year. This meant that the GDP per capita in 1993 was less than half what it was in 1979. Jean-Pierre Chauveau[15] has shown that the economic contraction occurred at the same time as a series of other serious problems.

The reduced availability of land (particularly forested terrain) in the south led to increased competition; the exhaustion of cotton-growing lands in the north increased migration of labor; the drop in the price of agricultural goods left farmers in debt and created a class of village unemployed migration to the cities, once a sign of economic success, now only led to shanty towns and the black market; and public debt increased from $255.6 m in 1970 to $11,757.2 m in 2000. The resulting state financial crisis led to massive reductions in public spending; political "clientelist" relationships for distribution replaced previous redistributive policies which prevented or reduced regional and ethnic tensions.

Côte d'Ivoire started integrating migrants in the 1930s and 1940s when the French colonizers introduced plantations. Many Upper Voltans (modern-day Burkinabés) came to live in the midwest of the country in the 1930s to develop new agricultural lands for export. The 1930s also saw the first claims of indigenous rights: the Association for the Defense of Indigenous Interests in Côte d'Ivoire (*Association de défense des intérêts des autochtones de Côte d'Ivoire* – ADIACI)[16] was created and campaigned for colonial administration jobs to be reserved for "nationals" only. In 1957, Pépé Paul's nationalist party[17] successfully campaigned for the expulsion of Dahomeans (modern-day Beninois). During the 1960s and 1970s, migration increased, attracted by the promise of higher, more stable wages; many Ivoirians moved from the north and east of the country to the center, midwest, and southeast.

These internal displacements resulted in the establishment of Baoulé communities well away from their traditional zones of settlement in the center of Côte d'Ivoire. The state encouraged this

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[15] Jean-Pierre Chauveau, *op. cit.*; Denis Cogneau, Sophie Mesple-Somps, *L'économie ivoirienne : la fin du mirage ?*, DIAL (Développement et insertion internationale) working paper n°18, 2002.
[16] Sylvie Bredeloup, « La Côte d'Ivoire ou l'étrange destin de l'étranger », in *Revue européenne des migrations internationales,* vol. 19 - n°2, 2003, http://remi.revues.org/index461.html
[17] F. Hervieu-Wane, « Comment est née l'ivoirité », *Jeune Afrique*, 11 avril 2004; Pépé Paul, one of the founders of the League for Native Ivoirians (*Ligue des originaires de Côte d'Ivoire* – LOCI), organized lynchings against foreign communities on several occasions.

outward Baoulé migration since it was dominated by the very same ethnic group. High levels of immigration from neighboring countries (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger) were added to this internal migration. Such movements and settlements of new populations occasionally resulted in elevated tensions between "indigenous" groups and non-indigenous ones, whether national or foreign. However, at the time, land was in abundant supply. What's more, in the southwest for example, certain indigenous landowning groups weren't solely dependent on agriculture[18]. A type of contract, or "tutorat"[19], was established between landowners and those who wanted to exploit the land.

A *tutorat* is much more than a simple contract; the tutor becomes a kind of symbolic parent[20]. A foreigner being tutored can obviously fail in his obligations to give back to his tutor what is expected of him and instead claim ownership of the land. Such claims were backed by President Houphouët-Boigny's declaration in the 1960s that "land belongs to he who works it"[21]. The increasing exhaustion of the supply of new land combined with the economic crisis to give rise to real competition in the 1980s, leaving indigenous landowners to rely on agriculture once more as the work market contracted (within the government administration in particular).

In rural areas, competition for access to land multiplied intercommunal tensions; indigenous groups tolerated the arrival of foreigners or Ivoirians from elsewhere in the country less and less. In the southwest these tensions boiled over into conflicts between

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[18] The name of the Krou, or Kroumen, comes in fact from the group's tradition of engaging themselves on foreign ships – the English etymology being '*crew men*' Jonas Ibo, « Le phénomène 'Krouman' à Sassandra : la marque d'une institution séculaire », *Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (1998), pp. 65-94

[19] This kind of contract was especially common in the southwestern of Côte d'Ivoire.

[20] "The tutorat consists of a series of ceremonies (libations and incantations) carried out by the landowner and dedicated to his ancestors, to whom he pledges the work of his 'stranger.' The landowner gives the 'stranger' a vaguely delineated, or unspecified, portion of land to work. Through the rituals the indigenous owners maintain control over the land […]. This manner of ceding land removes all of the transfer's commercial nature and doesn't require a reciprocal gesture. However, this transfer demands that the 'stranger' recognizes his master and gives voluntary gifts to his tutor in accordance with his moral duty, thus sealing the tie. The tie between a tutor and his dependents is therefore closer to a familial relationship: the tutor is a kind of father to the migrant […] who is considered a non-indigenous member of the family. Marriages between the indigenous population and the outsiders progressively transform ritual familial ties into real ones." A. Babo, Y. Droz « Conflits fonciers : de l'ethnie à la nation. Rapports interethniques et ivoirité dans le sud-ouest de la Côte d'Ivoire », in Colloque international « Les frontières de la question foncière », Montpellier, 2006, p. 6.
www.mpl.ird.fr/colloque_foncier/Communications/PDF/Babo.pdf
See also for the southeast: H. Ouattara Kigbafory, D. Mathias Gadou, « Allochtonie et autochtonie, rapports autour de la terre : une étude de cas à Akroaba Akoudjekoa et Ono 14 dans le sud-est ivoirien », in Colloque international « Les frontières de la question foncière », Montpellier, 2006.
www.mpl.ird.fr/colloque_foncier/Communications/PDF/Ouattara.pdf

[21] Alfred Babo, « Conflits fonciers, « Ivoirité » et crise sociopolitique en Côte d'Ivoire », *Note de l'Ifri*, 2009.

Burkinabés and Kroumen, northern Ivoirians and Bété, and Baoulé and Bété[22]. Intercommunal tensions were at their highest level in the second half of the 1990s.

Following a bloody clash between Wé and Baoulé in December 1997, President Henri Konan Bédié declared that he had asked his advisors to prepare a law clarifying rural property rights, which passed on 23 December 1998. It contained a mechanism banning foreigners from owning land in customary tribal regions[23]. This mechanism, dedicated to an ideology supporting indigenous peoples in rural areas, was combined at the national level with the notion of "Ivoirity". Further fatal clashes between "indigenous groups" and Burkinabés broke out at the end of 1999 in the country's southwest[24]. These events were followed by the evacuation of more than ten thousand Burkinabés[25] from this area.

The Opening of Ivoirian Politics

Localized land disputes between communities were relayed throughout the country by "hate media"[26]. The democratization of Côte d'Ivoire (1990) led not only to competition between different political parties, but also to real freedom of the press. Numerous scandalous titles sprang up[27]; some papers became tribunes for extremist points of view that often conflated foreigners and the popu-lation of northern Côte d'Ivoire. Other disreputable titles transmitted the northern population's feelings of being second-class citizens in their own country.

The political opening of the country in 1990 was followed soon after by the death of President Houphouët-Boigny in 1993. His death

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[22] On the other hand, these clashes didn't exclude the possibility of political alliances between opponents, such as between the Bété and the Baoulé against the others.
[23] Law n° 98750 of 23 December 1998: "The law reserves the right to own land to Ivoirians. During a first 10-year period all holders of land rights implying ownership (not including indirect methods) need to have their rights recognized and obtain a land certificate. After this time, land will be registered in the name of the state, and any exploiter of it will become a tenant. After a further period of three years, land certificates need to be registered individually; this will result in the delivery of a definitive certificate of private property."
[24] See, among others: J.P. Chauveau, Crise foncière, crise de la ruralité et relations entre autochtones et migrants sahéliens en Côte d'Ivoire forestière, May 2003, Club du Sahel et de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (OCDE), p. 18.
[25] For more on the Burkinabé diaspora see: Mahamadou Zongo « La diaspora burkinabé en Côte d'Ivoire. Trajectoire historique, recomposition des dynamiques migratoires et rapport avec le pays d'origine », in Politique africaine, n°90, juin 2003, Karthala, pp. 114-126.
[26] This expression (*médias de la haine*) was coined to describe some branches of the Rwandan media that openly called for genocide.
[27] Until 1990 the country had only 4 officially authorized papers; by 1996 there were 176.

clearly marked the end of an era, and heralded the rise in inter-communal tensions that increasingly found free expression in the political sphere[28]. Such tensions had existed since independence[29], but the "father of the nation"'s policies, the personal ties he maintained with traditional leaders, the authoritarian nature of his regime (it violently suppressed uprisings on several occasions), and the Ivoirian "economic miracle" had limited the frustrations of both indigenous groups and migrants. President Houphouët-Boigny knew how to detect and diminish tensions that arose by redistributing the country's wealth through clientelist relationships. The transition from a single party regime to a competitive political landscape allowed tensions to be expressed in the political field.

Henri Konan Bédié, president of the National Assembly at the time of Houphouët-Boigny's death, finished the former President's mandate. Long considered the president's natural successor, Konan Bédié was without rival until the last years of Houphouët-Boigny's reign. Alassane Dramane Ouattara, Houphouët-Boigny's last Prime Minister, emerged from the heart of the ruling party to contest Konan Bédié's ascendancy. Konan Bédié had to prepare for the 1995 presidential elections as the head of a weakened Côte d'Ivoire Democratic Party (*Parti démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire* - PDCI), re-centered on a Baoulé and Akan electorate. In order to enlarge his pool of electors, he developed an anti-foreigner discourse based on the politically effective observation that if the "Ivoirian miracle" had been possible thanks to immigrants, the economic situation at the start of the 1990s implied a reduction in migratory flows, or even their reversal: the return of now undesirable populations to their countries of origin. In parallel, CURDIPHE[30], a group of university researchers, tried to create a scientific foundation for the notion of "Ivoirity", in particular using the periodical *Ethics*[31].

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[28] Alain Antil: « Côte d'Ivoire », *Les nouveaux mondes rebelles*, 2005, Michalon.

[29] "In the 1970 Guébié crisis, Baoulés challenged the Bétés' political domination. Kragbé Gnagbé, originally from a Guébié village, futilely demanded of the president the right to form an opposition political party, in accordance with Article 7 of the constitution. Accusing Kragbé of fomenting a secession, Houphouët-Boigny organized a fierce repression of the Bétés – there were an estimated four to six thousand deaths." Tiemoko Coulibaly, « Lente décomposition en Côte d'Ivoire », *Le Monde Diplomatique*, November 2002.

[30] Cellule Universitaire de Recherche, d'Enseignement et de Diffusion des Idées et Actions Politiques du Président Henri Konan Bédié – University unit for research, teaching, and diffusion of the ideas and politics of President Henri Konan Bédié. See: CURDIPHE «L'ivoirité, ou l'esprit du nouveau contrat social du Président H. K. Bédié» (extracts), Politique africaine n°78, juin 2000, pp 65-69. See also Ruth Marshall-Fratani : « The War of "Who Is Who": Autochthony, Nationalism, and Citizenship in the Ivorian Crisis », African Studies Review, Volume 49, N°2, September 2006, pp. 9-43 et Elen Jolivet : L'ivoirité, de la conceptualisation à la manipulation de l'identité ivoirienne, 2003, mémoire IEP de Rennes, pp. 23-31. http://geo-phile.net/IMG/pdf/_M_ire_L_ivoirit_e_la_conceptualisation_-6164_a_manipulation_jolivet.pdf

[31] Ethics - Études et théories de l'humanisme ivoirien pour la synthèse culturelle, quoted by Alain Marie, « *Une anthropo-logique communautaire à l'épreuve de la*

In a sequence of slips, Konan Bédié and some PDCI leaders regularly conflated the country's northern populations with foreign immigrants, using the same generic term – Dioulas – to refer to them. The Dioula language, a modified form of Bambara and Malinké, is a *lingua franca* spoken by both ethnic groups in northern Côte d'Ivoire and by some groups in neighboring countries (Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea). The fact that northern ethnic groups speak a common language contributed to the creation of a false southern represen-tation of a unified northern population – "those of the North" (*ceux du Nord*). This expression also implied that all the groups were Muslim.

Among southern Ivoirians, the notion of Ivoirity meant the representation of northerners (whether they were foreigners or not) as invaders and outsiders (non-indigenous). There had in fact been a lot of Dioula migration to the south; they went to the cities where they drove trade and to the pioneer "frontier zones" where they helped develop the plantation economy. The north of the country, in spite of the cotton industry, only played a minor role in Côte d'Ivoire's econo-mic miracle and the national economic center of gravity moved to the southern regions.

Alassane Dramane Ouattara – or "ADO" – came to symbolize the Dioulas' mixed, Ivoirian and foreign, origins for the southern population. Part of ADO's family has its origins in Burkina Faso, and in fact, ADO worked for the IMF as a Burkinabé before he became Prime Minister of Côte d'Ivoire. In 1994, one year before the presi-dential elections, President Konan Bédié established a new electoral code, with very strict rules for eligibility directly targeting Ouattara. Due to his "dubious" origins, the Supreme Court twice refused his candidacy. Politically, ADO used these decisions to present himself as a martyr[32] to the northern population. The Court's rulings were considered an affront by the northern population, symbolizing the hassles and persecutions that northern Ivoirians living in the south could experience daily.

In 2000, after a disastrous presidential election[33], Laurent Gbagbo, historical opponent of Houphouët-Boigny and the leader of the Ivoirian Popular Front (*Front patriotique ivoirien* - FPI)[34], was elec-ted President. He decided in his turn to use a discourse of Ivoirity, with the aim of enlarging his electoral base beyond his core of Bété

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mondialisation. De la relation de dette à la lutte sociale (l'exemple ivoirien) », Cahiers d'Etudes africaines, n°106, 2002, pp. 207-256.

[32] ADO's opponents never forgot to remind people that he introduced ID cards (*cartes de séjour*) for foreigners in Côte d'Ivoire and that he could have let someone else from his party stand for president. He played the victimization card deliberately, with the attendant risk of inflaming intercommunal tensions.

[33] Neither Alassane Dramane Ouattara nor Henry Konan Bédié were able to run this election cycle. The supporters of Laurent Gbagbo's main opponent, Général Robert Gueï, had difficulty accepting his defeat and this led to the troubles.

[34] During Houphouët-Boigny's presidency, Gbagbo, leader of the FPI (itself a member of the Socialist International) had to sometimes live clandestinely or in exile.

supporters[35]. The elections didn't afford Gbagbo a great deal of legitimacy, and the country underwent a long period of institutional instability that resulted in the military-political crisis of September 2002.

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[35] The Bété belong to the Krou group and are found throughout southwest Côte d'Ivoire, in particular in the regions of Gagnoa, Daloa, and Issia. They make up roughly 10% of the country's population.

Being in Charge of "Your" Land

The Ivoirian example has shown the complexity of identity-based claims. It is important to distinguish tensions on a national scale (xenophobia towards foreigners, north-south tensions) from those at a local level (tensions between indigenous and non-indigenous groups), and also to distinguish claims linked to competition for scarce resources from identity-based phenomena that emerge and crystal-lize during elections. In Côte d'Ivoire, one can see that such pheno-mena have precedents, some of which date even back to colonial times, and that they are tied fundamentally to the state's destiny. In a way, all of these phenomena of identity redefinition – not necessarily new, but in constant spread and becoming more and more important in political and social spheres – can be summarized in the pithy phrase, "Being in charge of 'your' land"[36], an expression both practical *and* unclear. A good example that represents this phrase is the chain of events that took place in Shaba.

Shaba's Exiles

Roland Pourtier[37] has recounted a tragedy that was almost ignored by the media at the time. Between 1992 and 1994, an estimated 600,000 to 800,000 Zairians from the provinces of Eastern and Western Kasai were driven out of Shaba province[38]. This "cleansing" also resulted in tens of thousands of deaths[39]. Those driven out were originally from Kasai and most belonged to the Luba ethnic group, although some had been present in Shaba for generations. The Luba first came to settle in this region around the mining zone of Katanga during the colonial period. The Kasaians, and Luba in particular, were consi-dered "superior" by the Belgian colonial administration[40] and were recruited to its ranks in great numbers. They also made up a majority of the staff and directors of Katanga's/Shaba's large mining company,

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[36] Alain Antil has has borrowed the phrase "being in charge of 'your' land" (*être maître chez soi*) from Banjikila Thomas Bakajika.

[37] « Les refoulés du Zaïre : identité, autochtonie et enjeux politiques », *Autrepart* (5), 1998, pp. 137-154. See also: B. Thomas Bakajika *Epuration ethnique en Afrique : Katanga 1961-Shaba 1992*, 1997, l'Harmattan, 244 p.

[38] Katanga was called Shaba between 1971 and 1997.

[39] R. Pourtier, *op. cit.* 1998, p. 137.

[40] R. Pourtier, *op. cit.* 1998, p. 141.

Gécamines[41]. This migration from Kasai was all the more important because Katanga was not very densely populated. Denounced by "indigenous" elites of Katanga/Shaba as internal colonization, the situation escalated into full-blown ethnic cleansing of Kasaians in the 1990s. The motivation of indigenous groups[42] was based on some facts but also on the feeling of being in the minority on their own land. The nomination of Etienne Tshisekedi[43] during the night of 14 August 1992 as Prime Minister by the *Conférence Nationale Souveraine* (CNS) provoked strong reactions in Shaba; it was feared that having a Kasaian at the head of the government would strengthen Luba power in Shaba to the detriment of indigenous groups. Indeed, as Roland Pourtier emphasizes[44], the Luba in Shaba publicly demonstrated their pleasure at his nomination. This feeling was supported by real facts; the stranglehold that the Luba held over the Gécamines mining company was not an imaginary one.

However, far from being spontaneous, the violence was organized in part by the then-governor of Shaba, Kyungu wa Kumwanza, and was part of a strategy to strengthen the autonomy of Shaba/Katanga within the country. The large-scale murders and the displacements of people bear witness to the political and social weight that indigenous claims can have. These events show how such claims can result in a growing "ethnicization" of space[45] and the reversal of social dynamics that have existed for centuries (mobility and the fusion of identities in this case).

Kenya's "Nested Identities"

Following Kenya's last presidential elections, the country was rocked by a series of large-scale violent protests[46]. The electoral crisis went

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[41] Gécamines (*Générale des Carrières et des Mines*) was founded in 1966 to replace the Upper Katanga Mining Union. It is a state-owned enterprise which primarily produces copper, cobalt, nickel, and zinc.

[42] "Katangans were colonized in their own land. Everything was being done to marginalize the Katangans in their own land, to the extent that they couldn't take up administrative or political functions. At Gécamines […] everything was in the hands of foreigners. All Katangans who claimed their rights were sacked, judged, and imprisoned. […] The security services – almost exclusively made up of people who made it their mission to perpetuate the persecution of Katangans – were unremittingly hostile to all Katangans." This example of Katangan martyrdom, which illustrates the indigenous mobilizing discourse, is taken from the document « Kyungu sait ce que le katangais veut : être maître chez lui », Le libérateur Ujamaa, Third edition, n° 56, 26 December 1994, p.3, quoted in B. Thomas Bakajika , *op. cit.* 1997, p. 127.

[43] Mobutu's main opponent Étienne Tshisekedi wa Mulumba, a Luba from Kasai, was the country's Prime Minister from 15 August 1992 to 5 February 1993.

[44] Roland Pourtier, *op. cit.* 1997, p. 147.

[45] *ibid.* p. 154.

[46] *L'Afrique en questions n°1*, « Crise kenyane : Entretien avec Hervé Maupeu », Hervé Maupeu, Sylvain Touati, Ifri, February 2008.

beyond a simple rivalry between Raila Odinga's and Mwai Kibaki's partisans, or their ethnic and regional power bases.The Rift Valley – where some of the most fertile land in the country is found – distinguishes itself for its levels of violence. This was due to more complex issues than electoral theft; scores were settled over land disputes which date back to British colonial times. As in Côte d'Ivoire, competition over access to agricultural land is an important factor in identity formation in Kenya.

Claire Médard has analyzed the emergence of a "ndorobo" identity within the framework of a strategy to gain control of land that the Kenyan state was going to open to being transferred legally[47]. "Ndorobo" originally referred to hunter-gatherer populations associated with the Kalenjin ethnic group, and had rather negative connotations[48]. The inhabitants of Mount Elgon lay claim to a ndorobo identity, distinct from the rest of the Sabaot ethnic group (itself a sub-group of the Kalenjin ethnic group) to which they belong. Their distinction is based on the contrast between mountain inhabitants and plains-dwellers; they are also in the minority in their administrative area.

> *"In Kenya, the Kalenjin ethnic group has a territorial base due to the existence of the Rift Valley Province. Since its borders were redrawn at independence, it is where all the Kalenjin in Kenya live with the exception of the Sabaot. The Sabaot are administratively attached to a province associated with the 'Luhya' (a generic term which covers Bantu-speaking groups in western Kenya including the Bukusu, the immediate neighbors of the Kony, Bok, and Bongomek). The claim to a 'Sabaot' identity has its origins in the country's territorial organization, which gives them the status of minority without giving them their own territory. In 1993, following a violent clash between Sabaot and Bukusu, part of a wave of conflicts linked to Kalenjin territorial consolidation supported by President Moi's regime, the Mount Elgon 'ethnic' district was created for the Sabaot. Alongside the Sabaot's territorial claim, the 'ndorobo' claim […] should be understood as a*

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http://www.ifri.org/frontDispatcher/ifri/publications/actuelles_de_l_ifri_1197584475485/publi_P_actuelle_crisekenyane_1202397732036?view=popupActuelle
[47] Claire Médard, « Les 'Ndorobo' du Mont Elgon (Kenya/Ouganda) : apparition d'une revendication autochtone dans un contexte de crise foncière et de forte ingérence territoriale de l'Etat », in Colloque international « Les frontières de la question foncière », Montpellier, 2006.
http://www.mpl.ird.fr/colloque_foncier/Communications/PDF/Medard.pdf.
See also C. Médard, « Quelques clés pour démêler la crise kenyane : spoliation, autochtonie et privatisation foncière », Les Cahiers de l'Afrique de l'Est, n° 37, 2007, Ifra, pp. 81-98 : http://www.ifra-nairobi.net/resources/cahiers/Cahier_37/4medard.pdf.
On neighboring Uganda see: R. Hjalmar Espeland, The 'Lost Counties': Politics of land rights and belonging in Uganda, in Colloque international « Les frontières de la question foncière », Montpellier, 2006
http://www.mpl.ird.fr/colloque_foncier/Communications/PDF/Espeland.pdf.
[48] *Ibid.* p. 6.

> *local intra-Sabaot disagreement over access to land in the state-created agricultural plot of Chebyuk[49]."*

This long passage demonstrates the complexity of identity-based claims: administrative boundaries can become ethnic ones; a group that is in the majority in a particular administrative area can claim the right to preferential, or even exclusive, rights over natural resources; or a sub-group can have motives to claim a particular identity – a "micro ethnic group" – based on claims of being indigenous in order to gain access to new land when it is distributed by the state. This last consideration is an even more effective tactic when the state supports indigenous claims for whatever reason (clientelism, wanting to weaken local rivals, etc.[50]). However, when it's useful, claims to belong to another 'bigger' identity can be much stronger (Kalenjin for instance). Therefore, depending on the issues at stake, a group of individuals can claim to be either ndorobo, Sabaot, or Kalenjin, or more than one at the same time. These identities can be said to "nest" inside one another[51], and are mobilized as a function of a group's interests at a particular time. As we have seen, such claims should be linked to state policies of natural resource management[52] and the development of clientelist networks.

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[49] C. Médard *op. cit.* 2006, p. 7.

[50] "Kenya's recent violence recalls events in the 1990s. At the time, the conflicts were the result of President Daniel Arap Moi's tactics to stay in power (he ruled from 1978 to 2002). Threatened by the emergent democratic process, his regime favored regional devolution (an ideology know as *Majimbo*) for the benefit of 'minorities' as an alternative to multiparty democracy. A wave of organized violence rocked Kenya, resulting in the creation of electoral and ethnic 'fiefs'." C. Médard, « *Les frontières de la violence au Kenya* », *EchoGéo*, Sur le vif 2008, 2008: http://echogeo.revues.org/index2335.html

[51] J-L. Amselle*, Branchements. Anthropologie de l'universalité des cultures*, Paris, 2001, Flammarion, 265 p.

[52] C. Médard observes that "within a framework where state actors play a decisive role defining and redefining access to land, where the institutions and mechanisms for distributing land are linked to the state, where 'ethnic' clientelist networks attach themselves to the mechanisms of state power, the ultra-minority 'ndorobo' were disadvantaged. During the Moi regime, the support that certain minority groups' territorial claims (including briefly the ndorobo) received from the state was opportunistic. This explains why that support was both ambiguous and often inconsistent." *op. cit.* 2006, p. 23.

Conclusion

"Indigenous rights" is a generic term encompassing identity-based mobilizations on many scales (local, regional, national, ethnic, micro-ethnic, etc.) and concerning a range of rights, but in particular, access to resources (natural resources, public goods, infrastructure, rent, credit, etc.), and electoral representation. Such mobilizations are even more pronounced when the country in question is undergoing a reduction in the supply of such resources, and therefore experiences intensified competition. The key is to gain control of an administrative area. In order to do so a distinct identity must be invented or one of a group's existing sub-identities must be emphasized (micro-ethnic over ethnic) – all while still being able to call on the wider identity when needed (for another issue at another time).

Movements in favor of indigenous rights have borne witness to significant social transformations in sub-Saharan Africa, and show that analyses based on ethnicity – which one can find in numerous media sources and public discourses – are quite simply ineffective and insufficient for understanding the entirely more complicated true nature of ethnicity.