

# **How Independence Accelerated the Careers of Ivorian Teachers: A Connected History of Education in Côte d'Ivoire, 1958–1974**

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## **ABSTRACTS**

In diesem Artikel wird die Veränderung von der kolonialen zur postkolonialen Lage des Bildungssystems der Elfenbeinküste von Ende der 1950er bis Mitte der 1970er Jahre untersucht. Übergangsmechanismen werden aus der Perspektive der Karrierewege von Grundschullehrern beobachtet. Warum und wie hat die Unabhängigkeit des Landes die Karrierewege afrikanischer Lehrer beschleunigt, die unter der Kolonialregierung ausgebildet wurden? Und inwieweit widerspiegeln diese individuellen Wege den politischen Wandel von der kolonialen Föderation Französisch-Westafrikas hin zu separaten unabhängigen Staaten in Bezug auf Bildung? Die Beantwortung dieser Fragen erfordert große Aufmerksamkeit für (1) Entscheidungsprozesse, einschließlich der Neuzuweisung von Personal und Arbeitsplätzen, der Nationalisierung und Neuausrichtung des französischen Lehrerausbildungsmodells, (2) der Unterschiede in den internationalen Beziehungen zu Frankreich zu ehemaligen Kolonien und neuen postkolonialen Partner, (3) die nationalen Entwicklungsstrategien, (4) die Handlungsmacht individueller und kollektiver Akteure in der aufstrebenden Zivilgesellschaft.

This paper assesses the shift between the colonial to the post-colonial situation in the educational system of Côte d'Ivoire from the late 1950's to the mid-1970's. Transitioning mechanisms are observed from the perspective of primary teachers' career pathways. Why and how did the turn of independence catalyse the career pathways of African teachers trained under the colonial situation? And to what extent do these individual pathways reflect the political-scale change from the colonial federation of French West Africa to separate independent states in terms of education? Answering these questions requires paying great attention to (1) decision making processes including the reassignment of staff and places, the nationalisation and repurposing of the teacher training model inherited from the French Rule, (2) the variations in

the international relations with France, other former colonies and new postcolonial partners, (3) the national strategies towards development, (4) the agency of individual and collective actors in the emerging civil society.

## 1. Introduction

The 1960 decade in the broad sense was the theatre of major changes in African educational systems. 73 percent of the continent achieved independence within the decade, from 1956 to 1968. This resulted in a global dynamic wave of decolonisation, with 38 new sovereign states popping up in the international community<sup>1</sup> and hence the necessary recomposition of diplomatic relations and public governance authorities.<sup>2</sup> Prior to this, the educational authority had remained under the colonial rule, however, the massive decolonisation that swept through the world, brought up new challenges to the educational systems. One of these challenges was to come up with solutions to overcome the colonial paradigm, while training qualified nationals to replace European staff and administrators.<sup>3</sup> In the meantime, the new sovereign states realized that they shared a common pan-African destiny regarding education, through their participation in the series of International Conferences on the Development of Education in Africa, which began to be held on a regular basis under the aegis of the UN and the UNESCO following the 1961 Addis Ababa conference.<sup>4</sup> In the context of the Cold War and the polarization of international relations, those conferences proved unifying, setting education as a common priority; the aim being to facilitate social and economic development. In that regard, a goal of universal primary education was mutually set, combined with national plans, as well as north-south and south-south cooperation programmes. Besides, African education became also utterly determined by the emergence of foreign development aid, launched by both the Western and Eastern Blocs in the wake of independence.<sup>5</sup>

Francophone Africa is a striking instance of this pivotal moment between the colonial and postcolonial situations. The years from the post-war era to the 1960s brought an explosion of opportunities to Francophone Africa in terms of recomposition of civic and

1 See RFI, *Chronologie des indépendances africaines*, 31 December 2009, <<http://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20091231-chronologie-independances-africaines>> (accessed 10 February 2020).

2 A. Peshkin, *Educational Reform in Colonial and Independent Africa*, in: *African Affairs* 64 (1965) 256, pp. 210–216.

3 M.-A. De Suremain, *Africaniser la formation des professeurs de géographie: les Dopedocs de l'École normale supérieure de Dakar*, in: C. Labrune-Badiane et. al., *L'École en situation postcoloniale* (= *Cahiers Afrique* n°27), Paris 2012, pp. 119–140; A. Fall, *Recrutement de volontaires de l'Éducation au Sénégal: regard rétrospectif sur une expérience controversée*, *ibid.*, pp. 159–182.

4 Conference of African States on the Development of Education in Africa, 15–25 May 1961, Addis Ababa, <<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000077416>> (accessed 10 February 2020).

5 E. Frankema/M. Van Waijenburg, *The Great Convergence. Skill Accumulation and Mass Education in Africa and Asia, 1870–2010*, in: CEPR Discussion Paper n°DP14150, London 2019.

institutional statuses that were intrinsic to colonialism,<sup>6</sup> the formation of public policies,<sup>7</sup> and the emergence of civil society supported by a new emerging elite: the colonial intermediaries.<sup>8</sup> Over this period, the order of relationships between the former colonies and mainland France, and even the political ecosystem of France itself, were deeply transfigured by a series of events. In 1958, the escalating Algerian war led to serious political crises in France, causing the fall of the Fourth French Republic (1946–1958), replaced by President Charles De Gaulle's Fifth Republic, with a strengthened presidency and new policies towards Africa. The same year, the French Community (*Communauté française*) was founded (October 1958), initiating an association of former French colonies, mostly from Africa. The member states were federated by a citizenship of the French Community, but were no territories of the French Republic as they were recognized as autonomous States with autonomous governments. However, equality between member states proved limited by the fact that fundamental sectors, such as foreign affairs, defence, the currency, economic policies, control of raw materials, and education remained, *de facto*, in the *domaine commun*; all sectors that a genuine state wished to control. Though short-lived, due to the emergence of independences less than two years after its creation, the Community durably impacted Franco-African relationships. Through the action of French long-lasting Secretary-General for African and Malagasy Affairs, Jacques Foccart, those relationships shifted from the Colonial Situation to the new paradigm of post-colonial Franco-African assistance (*Coopération*), involving the sectors of culture and education, finance and economy, as well as the military. However, Foccart's action also contributed to extending France's sphere of influence in sub-Saharan Africa (or *Françafrique*) beyond independence, by building a dense web of personal networks that underpinned the informal and family-like relationships between French and African leaders.<sup>9</sup> But beyond political matters, in those years, a new generation of Africans emerged as key actors of postcolonial developing Francophone Africa. All of them were young adults upon independence. Born between the late 1910s to the 1940s, raised under colonial situation, they embodied the very transition between the colonial to the "post", since they came out of an era to build a new one. Addressing the transitioning mechanisms of the society to which they belonged from their own viewpoint should contribute to better understanding the inner history and chronology of the formation of African public policies. Therefore, studying social objects in Africa through this perspective, – especially public services such as education, public health, the army etc. –, allows addressing at the same time (1) political decision-making processes, (2) the variations in the international relations with France, other former colonies and new postcolonial partners, (3) the na-

6 F. Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960*, Princeton 2014.

7 L. Manière, *La politique française pour l'adaptation de l'enseignement en Afrique après les indépendances (1958–1964)*, in: *Histoire de l'éducation* (2010) 128, pp. 163–190.

8 J.-H. Jézéquel, *Les enseignants comme élite politique en AOF (1930–1945)*, in: *Cahiers d'études africaines* (2005) 178, pp. 519–544.

9 J.-P. Bat, *La Fabrique des barbouzes: Histoire des réseaux Foccart en Afrique*, Paris 2017.

tional strategies towards development, (4) the agency of individual and collective actors in the emerging civil society.

This paper aims at drawing a connected microhistory of primary education in Côte d'Ivoire, from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s, based on the individual itinerary of my own grandfather, teacher Koutia Lémon, together with those of other Ivorian teachers from his generation. To what extent did the turn of the 1960s catalyse the career pathways of this generation of Ivorian teachers trained under the colonial situation? And how can individual pathways reflect the political-scale change from colonial federation to separate independent states in terms of educational systems, including the reassignment of staff and places, the nationalization and repurposing of the fundamental French teacher training model, as well as the implementation of international cooperation programmes? Koutia Lémon was born in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire in 1918 and trained at the rural normal school of Dabou. He worked as a village school principal, then, upon his return from in-service training in France in Autumn 1959, was assigned to supervise the creation of the first three Écoles Primaires et Pré-scolaires (EPP, Primary and Pre-Schools) of the country in elite neighbourhood Cocody-Abidjan. Generationally, his profile is representative of his peers. Most of them were originally trained around the 1930/1940s under the policy of Educational Adaptation, launched in the early 1930s by the French Administration to meet the purported needs of "*indigènes*" for rural employability through practice-based curricula.<sup>10</sup> Selected to upgrade their professional skills in mainland France on the eve of independence, they later achieved executive positions in the Ivorian system after independence.

Beyond genealogy and biographical research, the approach through individual pathways is very representative of this generational group, which was numerically limited (there were only 5,080 Ivorian teachers in 1960), with homogenous socio-professional profiles and career paths. Such approach allows:

- rethinking the internal mechanisms and the continuity between several disjoint institutions that nonetheless belonged to the same educational system: normal schools, in-service trainings, primary and pre-schools, and the administration.
- reassessing the agency of Ivorian teachers, as intermediaries in the transition from the colonial to the postcolonial situation;
- rethinking the long-term chronology of Ivorian education policies by disentangling from the colonial/postcolonial paradigm, focusing rather on the generational approach, and long-term institutional, pedagogical, and ideological variations since the early 20th century;
- accessing unprecedented and/or under explored sources, linked with the itineraries of the teachers: private and family archives, schools' archives etc.

This work is based on three archival discoveries, intimately linked to the itinerary of teacher Koutia Lémon. Among them are:

10 H. Gamble, *Peasants of the Empire. Rural Schools and the Colonial Imaginary in 1930s French West Africa*, in: *Cahiers d'études africaines* (2009) 195, pp. 775–804.

- the former Rural Normal School of Dabou, where Koutia was trained. The archives include founding documents since the creation of the school in 1937, every staff and students' registration books since 1946, every annual headmaster's reports since 1947, and every ledgers since 1960;
- the first three Primary and Preschools of the country. Those schools were created in the early 1960s under the supervision of Principal Koutia Lémon. They were at the same time pedagogical laboratories and showcases for the regime of Côte d'Ivoire's long-lasting president, Félix Houphouët-Boigny. The sources required to write the history of the schools' creation and first years of existence (registration and matriculation books, copybooks, etc.) are still available. They remained untouched since then except for occasional administrative uses;
- Koutia's private archives, including official degrees, correspondence, and a journal, as well as numerous photographs from the early 1940s onwards. Such sources provide a rare inner view of the condition of this generation of African teachers.

By confronting these archives with a series of oral sources collected in fieldwork, together with traces of decision-making processes, this paper is aimed at examining the commencement of the careers of this generation of Ivorian teachers through (I) the case study of an in Service training in France, as an insight into the making of Franco-Ivorian cooperation, (II), the invention of the ideal Ivorian rural teacher through the re-appropriation of the normal school of Dabou and (III) the Socio-spatial influence of schools and teachers' housing in the planning of postcolonial Abidjan.

## 2. In-Service Trainings through Foreign Assistance: A Breakaway from Educational Colonialism?

The 1958 emergence of the French Community accelerated the end of the colonial situation *stricto sensu* and triggered the state-to-state cooperation with France. Although the French Community and cooperation involved new forms of pre-eminence and intervention of France in the African educational governance through the "Françafrique system",<sup>11</sup> they also brought renewal in terms of political structures and socio-professional development for African elites. It redefined the prerogatives of French ministries and decision-makers in general, including allowing greater latitude to African leaders. At an individual scale, it also opened new windows of opportunities for career development for Ivorian teachers. As a matter of fact, political autonomy (and later independence) did not mean the end of links between France and the African part of its former Empire, especially Côte d'Ivoire. As shown by Laurent Manière, as early as 1958, the Franco-African Cooperation launched a whole set of intensive courses and training sessions for educational administrators, executives, and teachers.<sup>12</sup> The aim was to facilitate the transition

11 Bat, La Fabrique des barbouzes.

12 Manière, La politique française.

towards independence and the progressive replacement of the colonial staff, with Ivorian nationals in the education authority.

Within primary teacher education, one of the Franco-African cooperation programmes that proved particularly crucial was the in-service trainings in France. The training completed by Koutia's group took place in 1958/1959, at the very dawn of the newly sealed cooperation. The archives and oral sources on Koutia allow to shed light on the institutional context of the programme and on inner views in the individual experiences of the interns.

### Franco-African Cooperation in the Making

In the 1950s, when the in-service trainings started, the programmes only lasted a couple of months, being specifically designed to develop targeted skills. These programmes were progressively extended to one to two years, assigned with degree certificates and set under the aegis of the French Ministry of Cooperation. Below is Koutia's certificate, delivered in 1959. The programme he attended was an in-between case, as it took place during the pivotal year of 1958/1959, the year when the French Community was created. Several details of the document underline this transitioning context.



This certificate highlights a peculiar division of authority between the French Ministry of National Education and that of Overseas Affairs as it was stamped by both institutions. This division of authorities was inspired by the institutional reforms that swept through the French Empire post WW2, a distinctive deviation from the arbitrary power of the single, omnipotent colonial administration.<sup>13</sup> In fact, since 1946 a new deal in the divi-

13 H. Gamble, The Education Crisis in French West Africa 1944–1950, in: *Histoire de l'éducation* 4 (2010) 128, p. 25.

sion of power was established between the young Ministry of Overseas France (whose missions hardly differed from the former Ministry of the Colonies) and the French Ministry of National Education. Such reconfiguration proved a long-term process, including intense rivalry between both institutions, as analysed by Gamble.<sup>14</sup> Since the post-war period, in the context of curricula assimilation to the French model, the Ministry of National Education endeavoured to expand its scope of action to Francophone Africa, while restraining the power of the colonial administration. For instance, in May 1946, the Higher Council of National Education was reformed and assigned with the supervision of educational policies in Africa, which reduced the Overseas Affairs' administrative responsibilities in this field.

Such division of power also had consequences in the organisation of training programmes. Beyond institutional rivalry, the 1958/1959 in-service training was above all an instance of partnership and practical collaboration, as it required deep commitment on both sides. The Ministry of National Education provided with staff and places (the Normal School of Caen and the International Center for Pedagogical Studies of Sèvres), while the Ministry of Overseas France took care of the travels and teacher replacement back in Côte d'Ivoire.

In the following years, the responsibility of the training programmes was handed over to the Office for Cultural and Technical Cooperation, as part of the French Ministry of Cooperation created in 1959. This brand-new administration was designed to fill the institutional gap in France's educational policy towards postcolonial Africa. However, the very existence of a French Ministry of cooperation itself highlighted the paradox of Francophone Africa's sovereignty regarding education: though theoretically autonomous since 1958, the educational systems remained dependent on France's policies, due to a lack of infrastructures and professional trainings as well as a teacher shortage. Most Francophone countries achieved independence in 1960. They could have engaged in classic diplomatic relationships with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, like every other foreign state. Instead, their relationships with France remained regulated by the exceptional regime of Cooperation, with the specific goal of maintaining close ties with the newly independent young nations while facilitating their development.<sup>15</sup> In fact, the Ministry of Cooperation existed until 1999, the year when it was merged into the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

### Opening Windows of Opportunities for African Teachers

In most cases, Ivorian primary teachers from Koutia's generation had been originally trained during the 1930s to the 1940s, under the policy of educational adaptation, to teach practice-based curricula, with mere rudiments of reading, writing and calculation,

14 Ibid.

15 P. Jacquemot, *Cinquante ans de coopération française avec l'Afrique subsaharienne. Une mise en perspective* (deuxième partie), in: *Afrique contemporaine* 3 (2011) 239, pp. 23–34.

together with further elements of farming and health education.<sup>16</sup> Their mission was to prepare rural children for direct employability in their own milieu, which left very little latitude for personal development, except for socio-professional agency – that is to say committing to trade unions and teachers' associations<sup>17</sup> – and individual strategies for social mobility.<sup>18</sup> The Koutia generation's skills were mainly practice-based, and witnessed shortcomings in disciplinary knowledge. Hence, one of the purposes of the in-service trainings was to upgrade their skills and knowledge. The programmes also aimed at training qualified national executives and major actors committed to the development of their own countries. At least is it the impression held from the archives, oral sources and academic works.

Upgrading skills and knowledge implied delivering the same learning contents as those delivered in France's normal schools. At that time, the standards of teacher education in France involved disciplinary courses, introductions to psycho-pedagogy and apprenticeship sessions *in vivo* in primary schools.<sup>19</sup> On this point, Virginie Tapa-Kodombéré, a former colleague of Koutia who underwent a similar in-service training in 1961, recalled:

*The French welcomed us well when we arrived. There was nothing wrong between us. I don't remember experiencing any racism from them at all, to be honest. We got along well with each other. They were very friendly and helpful. Sometimes when we asked them questions about their classes, or about French children, they answered frankly. We often exchanged advice to keep our class running smoothly.*<sup>20</sup>

This general impression is common to most of the interviews with Koutia's former colleagues led in fieldwork since 2016.

Another aspect of the training consisted in introducing African teachers to public and corporate leading experts in the field of African education. For instance, as shown in the photograph below, on 9 July 1959, the Ivorian trainees took part in a conference in Paris with the board of French publishing company *ISTRA*.

ISTRA was a leading publishing company specialized in children's literature and handbooks for African schools. During the interwar period, it launched the best-selling handbook series *Mamadou & Bineta*, broadly circulated all around Francophone West Africa and still used in classes by the end of the 20th century.<sup>21</sup> Such meetings aimed to integrate African teachers into a network of key actors actively committed to the global

16 D. Bouche, L'École rurale en Afrique occidentale française, in: D. N. Baker/P. J. Harrigan (eds.), *The Making of Frenchmen: Current Directions in the History of Education in France, 1679–1979* (Historical Reflections/Réflexions historiques 7 [1980] 2/3), pp. 207–219.

17 J.-H. Jézéquel, Les enseignants comme élite politique en AOF (1930–1945). Des “meneurs de galopins” dans l'arène politique, in: *Cahiers d'études africaines* 2 (2005) 178, pp. 519–544.

18 C. Labrune-Badiane/E. Smith, *Les Hussards noirs de la colonie. Instituteurs africains et “petites patries” en AOF (1913–1960)*, Paris 2018.

19 G. Laprévotte, *Les écoles normales primaires en France 1879–1979. Splendeurs et misères de la formation des maîtres*, Lyon 1984.

20 Interview with Virginie Tapa-Kodombéré, Abidjan, 6 September 2017.

21 H. Kloeckner, À quand une édition scolaire africaine ?, in: *Africultures* 4 (2003) 57, pp. 71–85.



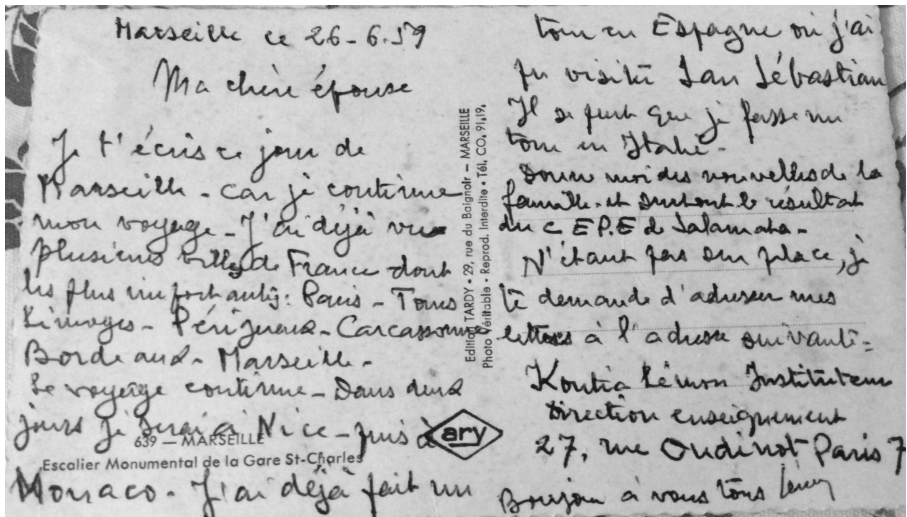
renewal of pedagogy and the advancement of African education. ISTRÀ, for instance, deeply contributed to the creation of the African and Malagasy Pedagogical Institute (IPAM) in 1965, in collaboration with French publishing companies Hachette, Presses Universitaires de France, and Larousse. Those African teachers were thus given the opportunity to be included in the reflection on the renewal of African education.



It seems that another purpose of the programmes was to give the trainees an opportunity to discover France and Europe, and to get used to collaborating on an equal footing with white fellows, as illustrated by testimonies such as that of Virginie Tapa-Kodombré (see above). Though hypothetical, this view seems all the more probable, as most trainees were assigned with executive positions upon their return back home, including working with and/or supervising French *coopérants*. As a matter of fact, Koutia's private archives give an inkling of how the trainees visited France and Europe. In the postcard below sent to his wife and family from Marseille on 26 June 1959, Koutia described his whole trip throughout the country and continent, having already been to Paris, Tours, Limoges, Périgueux, Carcassonne, Bordeaux, Marseille, and still planning to head for Nice, Monaco, Spain, and Italy. Given that this generation of African teachers was born, bred, and trained in the cultural framework of colonization, it was necessary to deconstruct certain social codes and habits in order to allow fruitful collaborations. Obviously, addressing the issue of what Frantz Fanon identified as "the complex of the colonized"<sup>22</sup> became a deeply practical

22 F. Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, Paris 1952, pp. 67–87.

priority. However, it isn't clear whether this was an intentional goal or an accidental consequence of the programmes. The overall effect was nonetheless that the African teachers of this generation who had undergone in-service training in France were sociologically prepared to live and work in the postcolonial situation, while actively contributing to building their young countries.



### 3. Dealing with the Memory of the Rural Normal School of Dabou: The Invention of the Ideal Ivorian Rural Teacher

#### General Teacher Training in French West Africa

Before attending in-service training in France, most teachers from Koutia's generation (i.e. roughly born between 1920–1940) had been originally trained in one of the normal schools of the federation.<sup>23</sup> Since the 1930's, French West Africa was equipped with a network of five territorially complementary normal schools, which were assigned to developing specific areas of specialisation in teacher training: French assimilated training (i.e. similar to mainland France's curricula) for men in William Ponty (1903) and females in Rufisque (1938), Senegal, savannah farming in Katibougou (1935), and Sévaré (1939), French Sudan, and palm-forest farming in Dabou (1937), Côte d'Ivoire. Koutia attended the Rural Normal School of Dabou between Fall 1937 to Summer 1940. Rural normal schools (Katibougou, Dabou, and Sévaré) were founded in the middle of the 1930's to support the policy of Adapted Education, launched by French Governor-General Jules Brévié and Inspector General for Primary Education Albert Charton

23 This proves less true when it comes to female teachers, whose training remained scarcely professionalized until the creation of the "assimilated" normal school of Rufisque, Senegal in 1938.

to meet the purported needs of “indigènes” for rural employability through practice-based curricula.<sup>24</sup> They were conceived as small training centres for apprentice teachers from all around the sub-region to learn how to teach practice-based curricula to rural “indigènes”. Though quickly aborted in the post-war era – as France intended to boost the development and assimilation of African education in recognition of the continent’s active participation in the war effort –, the rural normal schools experience lasted a decade and a half, and deeply influenced the tradition of technical and agricultural education, which was especially looked up to in post-independence Côte d’Ivoire.

In the tradition of Jules Ferry and Ferdinand Buisson in late 19th-century France, trainee teachers were meant to be at the same time social educators in the broad sense, and political go-betweens. Therefore, their training involved deep moral transformation in order to inspire African teachers with professional ethics and faith in their mission.<sup>25</sup> They were taught westernised *habitus*, including cultural, clothing, and hygiene practices etc., so that they could become role models in “indigène” societies once in office. Such *habitus* were acquired by coexisting together during a few years training (three years in Dabou) in boarding schools. Prolonged coexistence in a confined space allowed providing the students with ‘total education’. Rural trainee teachers’ curriculum was based on cultural proximity with the rural world, focusing on pupils’ employability rather than theoretical education, and aiming at modernising rural societies. Dabou’s trainees were specifically trained to teach in village schools where “indigènes” children completed a five-years primary education, including two years of rudimentary reading, writing, and calculation, together with further elements of agriculture, forest crops, and health education in the last three years. The efficiency of the professional training mainly relied on the teachers’ ability to adapt to realities in the field.

By the turn of the 1950s, rural normal schools were gradually standardised and their curriculum became assimilated to that of mainland France, focusing on Baccalauréat training. The number of students began to increase significantly. In Dabou, for instance, there were three times more students in the late 1940s than in the early 1960s.<sup>26</sup> Another change occurred a decade later, in the wake of the 1960 independences: the nationalisation of normal schools, together with the re-territorialisation of apprentice teacher recruitment. Among the young sovereign African states, those which had been previously equipped with teacher training infrastructures maintained a certain dynamic in terms of academic standards and the professionalisation of teaching. It was notably the case of Côte d’Ivoire, whose single normal school had over 300 resident students every year.

24 Gamble, *Peasants of the Empire*.

25 J.-H. Jézéquel, *L’éthique sous les tropiques: réflexions sur la formation du bon enseignant dans la République coloniale*, in: J.-F. Dupeyron (ed.), *Éthique et déontologie dans l’Éducation nationale*, Paris 2013, pp. 15–32, at pp. 15–17.

26 Dabou Fonds, Ledgers, 4 October 1962.

## The Ambiguous Legacy of Dabou

After independence, Côte d'Ivoire found itself in a particular situation shared with no other former colony of FWA, except Senegal and Mali. As it had previously been equipped with large teacher training infrastructure functioning at full capacity, the young state was to reappropriate the whole institution, while dealing with an uneasy legacy, which stood for both the tradition of academic prestige and the trace of France's colonial presence. On the whole, this was representative of the Houphouët administration's dilemma towards France. Côte d'Ivoire was at the same time a leading light for postcolonial panafrikanism and yet the main architect of the "Françafrique system".<sup>27</sup> President Houphouët responded to this paradox with political pragmatism and calculated symbols of power (ambitious urban planning, academic programmes etc.) to demonstrate the state's ability to overcome the colonial model. Houphouët's strategy shall be kept in mind when addressing the issue of the memory of Dabou.

To date, in Ivorian society, the former normal school seems remembered as both a prestigious school, where a great number of Ivorian leaders were educated, and the place where the "good old" first primary teachers were trained to teach adapted rural curricula. Both memories are based on tangible facts. The generation of students who attended the normal school between the late 1950's to the early 1970s (that is to say roughly born between 1935 to 1955), experienced the Golden Age of Dabou, as it was the only place in the country that trained students for the *Baccalauréat*, while offering them direct employment as teachers and a chance to pursue higher education in universities abroad. Those circumstances account for the production of many national elites in a row. The current principal holds a list of notable alumni, including former President Henri Konan Bédié, former Ministers Charles Konan Banny, Laurent Dona Fologo, and Paul Akoto Yao. As for the other side of the memory, nowadays, in administrator's discourses, there seems to be some nostalgia for the training model and the professionalism of the *vieux maîtres* (good old teachers), whose action had consequences well into the second half of the twentieth century. It is specifically the case among those who attended primary school when the former rural teachers were still active, between the 1940s and the 1980s. They are the 1935–1955 generation mentioned above. A growing number of published memoirs testify their special attachment to the old teachers, see for instance *The Founders of Education in Côte d'Ivoire* (Les Bâisseurs de l'enseignement en Côte d'Ivoire) by Touré Abdoulaye Jabali (1985).<sup>28</sup>

Somehow, both memories of Dabou seem deeply concatenated today, mistaking the tradition of rural training excellence for the prestige of the 1935–1955 alumni generation. However, it is not clear whether this confusion is due to the genuine degradation

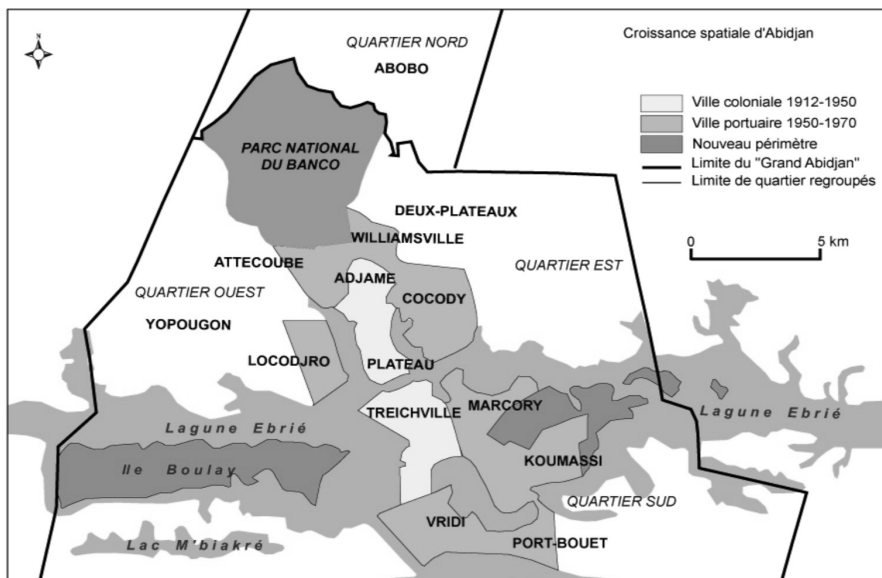
27 According to Jean-Pierre Bat, the expression "Françafrique" was even coined by President Houphouët-Boigny himself (see J. Tilouine, *Le Monde*, 22 January 2015, [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2015/02/06/l-ombre-d-houphouet-boigny-plane-toujours-sur-la-cote-d-ivoire\\_4571219\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2015/02/06/l-ombre-d-houphouet-boigny-plane-toujours-sur-la-cote-d-ivoire_4571219_3212.html)).

28 T.A. Touré, *Les Bâisseurs de l'enseignement en Côte d'Ivoire, 1942–1958*, Abidjan 1984.

of memory over time, or if it results from a political intent to repurpose the legacy of the former rural normal school. It is conceivable that the Houphouët administration might have purposely designed a political narrative (if not an etiological myth) on the origins and success of the Ivorian educational system, enhancing the legacy of the normal school of Dabou. This would be a way of symbolically combining the academic prestige of the rising elites of the regime, the celebration of the country's rural roots, as well as the long-lasting tradition of partnership with France. Though hypothetical, this point is yet to be clarified by consulting national press archives, especially those of *Fraternité Matin* looking for comments on the contemporaneous valorization of Dabou, for instance in 1975, when the normal school was officially reallocated as an elite high school.

#### 4. Shaping the Postcolonial City around the Social Figures of Teachers

Another aspect of President Houphouët's postcolonial policy relied on urban planning. The goal was to come up with meaningful symbols of power for the young regime, while breaking away from the colonial city model, which implied race-based residential segregation. In Abidjan, for instance, except for intermediaries, Africans were expelled from the central Plateau quarter, which was the centre of government administration, reserved for colonists.<sup>29</sup> The colonial intermediaries stayed in the quarter called "Adjamé" in the North of the Plateau, and the other "indigènes" in the southern quarter of Treichville, geographically separated by the Ébrié Lagoon (see the map below).



Source : Antoine P. & Henry C., 1983 *La population d'Abidjan dans ses murs : dynamique urbaine et évolution des structures démographiques entre 1955-1978*

290 A. Mehretu/C. Mutambirwa, Cities of Sub-Saharan Africa, in: S. D. Brunn/J. F. Williams/D. J. Zeigler (eds.), *Cities of the World: World Regional Urban Development*. Lanham 2003, pp. 293–330.

In the wake of independence, as shown in Hashimshony-Yaffe's paper in the Momentous 60s conference,<sup>30</sup> the Houphouët administration launched an urban policy which consisted in erecting new places of power – such as the Presidential Palace in 1961 –, implementing major architectural projects to symbolize the State's modernity – such as the Houphouët-Boigny Bridge in 1957 –, as well as opening many new public schools, which were perceived as a most efficient medium for development. The commune of Cocody, Abidjan clearly illustrates such strategy. It encompasses the oldest three primary and pre-schools of the country, the elite suburb of *Cocody 2 Plateaux*, and many market-places and facilities. Koutia Lémon worked and lived there with his family since 1960. As attested by Koutia's private archives, together with oral sources and various testimonies on the microhistory of the neighbourhood, the schools' creation, and the neighbouring presence of the teachers' houses deeply impacted the growth of Cocody.

### The Impact of the Creation of New Schools

Originally, Cocody was a small Akan village in the Northeast of Abidjan. It began to grow, as Abidjan was designated the colony's new capital in August 1933. In those years, Cocody merely included the Blohorn palm oil factory, a few villas near the main road to Bingerville, and many cassava and coffee plantations. The rest of the area was covered by forest. During the 1950s, in the context of strong urbanization due to the opening of the Autonomous Port of Abidjan (1951), which triggered massive sub-regional immigration, the population and amount of buildings increased exponentially. There were indeed six times more inhabitants in Abidjan in 1956 than in 1936.<sup>31</sup> The first three primary and preschools of the country were created in Cocody – *Cocody Est* (1960), *Chateau d'eau* (1961), and *Cocody Sud* (1965) –, under the supervision of principal Koutia Lémon, in this context of rapid urbanization and high demand for education.

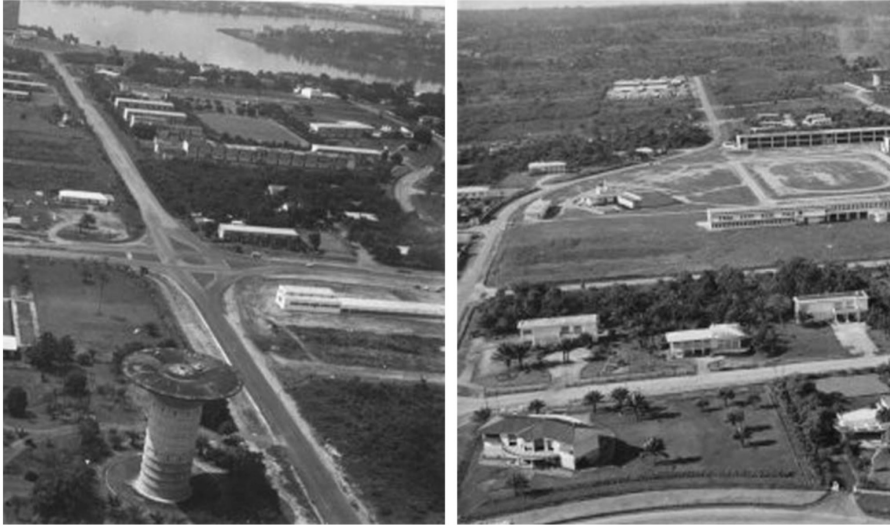
Below is an aerial view of Cocody, Abidjan in 1960 (see next page). The photograph is available online on the website of the Town Hall of Cocody. It comes with the following caption: "The first infrastructures of Cocody in 1960. 160 buildings were designed to house Ivorian civil servants".<sup>32</sup> Among the 160 houses were those of the teaching staff of the three schools. They were built in a row of two-storey houses, equidistant from the primary and preschools.

30 N. Hashimshony-Yaffe / T. Abramovich, The Intense 1960's: Planning the independent State, paper to the Momentous 60s Conference, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Israel, 6 January 2019.

31 See Unsigned Article, En soixante ans, la ville d'Abidjan est devenue une véritable métropole, in: Le Monde Diplomatique, Octobre 1959, Dossier Côte d'Ivoire, pp. 9–10.

32 See Historique de la Commune, 10 February 2020, <<http://mairiecocody.com/historique/historique-de-la-commune/>> (accessed 10 February 2020).





The creation of the schools and of the teachers' houses was pioneer in Cocody. It opened the way to the urban expansion of the commune. In his 1985 article, French geographer Philippe Haeringer analyzed how, since 1959, the *Société d'Urbanisme et de Construction de Côte d'Ivoire* (SUCCI) developed an ambitious urban plan for Cocody, aiming both to symbolically overcome the colonial city model and to boost the advancement of the emerging national elite. He described these buildings as a brand-new kind of fine autonomous urban planning:

*A very modern architecture, quite sought after, which deversified the volumes and types of housing, from the courtyard apartment (therefore on the ground floor), to the upstairs apartment (a risky innovation at the time), via the "duplex apartments" in strips, is associated with a landscape research whose ingredients, in addition to pedestrian walkways, trees, lawns and playgrounds, include a fairly wide range of social facilities (school, maternity, etc.) or entertainment (market, shopping mall) as well as administrative services (police station, post office, etc.).<sup>33</sup>*

The urbanistic approach to this neighbourhood underlines how symbolic, modern and influential Cocody was meant to be right after independence.

### Defining the Social Identity of Cocody

Not only did the construction of the schools and teachers' houses determined the urban planning of Cocody, but it also deeply impacted its socio-spatial identity. The popula-

33 P. Haeringer, Vingt-cinq ans de politiques urbaine à Abidjan ou la tentation de l'urbanisme intégral, in: Politique africaine (1985) 17, pp. 20–40, at 23.

tion of the whole commune was mostly composed of civil servants, including public teachers, executives of the PDCI-RDA single-party and other rich Africans, especially in the upper-class neighbourhood of *Cocody, 2 Plateaux*, near the schools. Those three schools became particularly attractive to the emerging elite of Abidjan, being the places to which most of them would send their children.<sup>34</sup> They served as showcases for the regime of Côte d'Ivoire's long-lasting president, Félix Houphouët-Boigny. Until the middle of the 1970s, the teaching staff was mostly composed of French *coopérants* (in 1964, for instance, 80% of the teaching staff in Cocody – Sud's EPP were French),<sup>35</sup> and classes were shared by black and white pupils, mainly the children of European *coopérants*. The coexistence of European and African students in the same classes implied high academic standards and the mutual recognition of curricula with France, to ensure that *coopérants'* children could benefit from the same quality of education as they would in their home country. In fact, it is hard to say whether the three schools became socially attractive because of their success, or particularly successful because of the privileged social background of their students.

Even African expatriates living in Abidjan used to send their children to those schools. For example, below is the registration file of Princess Anne de Berengo, one of Jean-Bedel Bokassa's daughters, who attended the school of Cocody-Est in 1981, as her parents fled from the Central African Republic. Funnily enough, the "father's name and occupation" sections were filled in as follow: "Bokassa I, Ex-Empereur".

REPUBLIQUE DE COTE D'IVOIRE  
MINISTÈRE DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT PRIMAIRE ET DE LA TELEVISION EDUCATIVE

**FICHE SCOLAIRE**

N° Matricule 3579

NOM Bokassa Prénoms Princesse Anne de Berengo  
Né (e) le 2-11-76 à Bangui Sous-Préfecture de Bangui  
Acte de naissance ou jugement supplétif n° \_\_\_\_\_ délivré le \_\_\_\_\_ à \_\_\_\_\_  
Du père \_\_\_\_\_ De la mère \_\_\_\_\_ Du tuteur \_\_\_\_\_  
(en cas de décès du père)  
Nom et prénoms Bokassa I Gabriella Idrissa  
Profession Ex-Empereur A  
Domicile Cocody Cocody  
Lien de parenté \_\_\_\_\_

ANNEE SCOLAIRE	1981-1982	19__-19__	19__-19__	19__-19__	19__-19__	19__-19__	19__-19__	19__-19__
Année de scolarité	1re	2e	3e	4e	5e	6e	7e	8e
Niveau du cours . . .	<u>CP</u>							
Moyenne annuelle . .	<u>3.85</u>							
Classement . . . . .	<u>57.5</u>							
Effectif de la classe . .	<u>73</u>							
(ou du cours)								

34 M. Le Pape/C. Vidal, *L'École à tout prix: stratégies éducatives dans la petite bourgeoisie d'Abidjan*, in: *Actes de la recherché en sciences sociales* (1987) 70, pp. 64–73.

35 "Coopérants" were foreign civil servants (mostly technicians, teachers, and private soldiers) seconded to overseas developing countries for international cooperation. Statistics held from the archives of South-Cocody's Primary and Preschool, 1964 registration book.



## 5. Conclusion

All in all, the careers of the first generation of Ivorian teachers were catalysed by independence, as the new sovereign administration needed to replace colonial staff with qualified nationals. At the eve of independence, there were only 5,080 qualified teachers in Côte d'Ivoire for the entire population. The administration was left no choice than to upskill the existing teachers and assign them to higher responsibilities. This phenomenon therefore resulted in the “Koutia Generation” of teachers being collectively leapfrogged from the status of “second class” rural teachers (that is to say trained to teach practice-based curricula) to pioneer actors of Houphouët's post-independence schools.

Their responsibilities were expanded, beyond teaching, to administration, policy implementation, teacher training as well as project supervision. This expansion of responsibilities was triggered by the postcolonial strategic policy of the Ivorian government to massively invest in education to foster social and economic development. This stimulated a huge demand for education and put pressure on the existing infrastructure and personnel available for this service. Consequently, the need to recruit and train new generations of teachers became of top-most priority to the administration, leading to the optimization of the teacher training system,<sup>36</sup> as well as skill transference from the “Koutia generation” to the new cohorts of teachers.

The quest for understanding the transition to the postcolonial educational system unveils the historical horizons of crosscutting themes of colonialism, agency, independence, nationalization, cooperation and interdependency between Francophone Africa and France. The approach of following the individual itineraries of the “Koutia generation” of teachers allows for the examination of colonial and postcolonial impacts under the following contexts: 1) local, 2) national, and 3) transnational. At the local level, the social (and socio-spatial) influence of teachers to the Ivorization agenda became a serious mandate to be delivered by all teachers at all community levels. This responsibility for inspiring, equipping, and rebuilding a new cadre of citizens for political, social, and economic empowerment fell on the shoulders of teachers, reinforcing their roles as architects of the future. At the national level, the definition of the ideal teacher and the theorization of the educational system became shaped. This was part of the strategic policy decisions made by the Houphouët administration prioritize education as a medium for development, resulting in investments in teacher training, educational infrastructure, massive school enrolment etc. At the transnational level, the interdependence between France and its former African colonies caused the transfiguration of France's relationship to Africa, as well as its own political ecosystem, administrative organisation of government through ministries, departments and agencies. It is worthy of note that the shift to the 5<sup>th</sup> French Republic, which is ongoing till date, originated the Algerian war.

36 J.-L. Koné, *The Emergence of the National in Francophone West African Education. The case of the Rural Normal School of Dabou, Côte d'Ivoire (1937–1975)*, Abingdon 2020 (forthcoming).

The approach of documenting individual itineraries of Ivorian teachers produced significant discoveries in their social mobility. However, one limitation of this approach is the class discrimination in its subject of study. There is a high propensity to study African literates who possess the skills and habitus of producing and storing archives. This leaves a vacuum in the situated knowledge that could have been explored and captured were they documented and stored by a majority of other Africans who were neither educated nor appreciative of history.