An Intimate Rebuke
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Published by Duke University Press

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An Intimate Rebuke: Female Genital Power in Ritual and Politics in West Africa.

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Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. I am coining this term, conscious that it stands as a counter to other, better-known but heinous ritual practices in Africa referring to women’s genitals: FGM (female genital mutilation) and FGC (female genital cutting). Excision, now illegal in Côte d’Ivoire as elsewhere in West Africa, has no correlation with the rite that appeals to FGP. While neither the Abidji nor the Adioukrou people—who were the subjects of my fieldwork—traditionally practice genital cutting (or even any form of scarification), it is certain that other people whose traditions do include female excision simultaneously hold “the Mothers” in high regard and acknowledge their power, including their female genital power. A case in point is the Sande secret society, discussed in chapter 1.


3. In 1910 Lucien Lévy-Bruhl forwarded the hypothesis that the traditions of non-Western peoples reflected the “prelogical mentality,” characterized by an “undifferentiated consciousness” that did not distinguish between myth and history and that enabled “mystical participation” (participation mystique). Although Lévy-Bruhl later abandoned this hypothesis, it was obstinately maintained by other influential thinkers of the modern era, notably Carl Gustav Jung, who refused to abandon the discredited projection (Jung 1958, vol. 11, 817n28). Such ideas still circulate in the popular Western imagination.

4. This idea that societies without writing were without reflexivity was largely given currency by Karl Jaspers’s lamentable theory of an Axial Age, an imagined period that supposedly signaled a metaphysical breakthrough and transcendence over the fixed ideologies of the past, “tradition.” The Axial Age thesis elevated the Western values associated with modernity to the status of universal standards against which all cultural development can presumably be measured. It pits “higher” civilizations—those with writing—against societies that entrap its members in a “closed predicament”: the “other” remains unaware of alternative worldviews or systems and unable to transcend a limiting and stagnant social definition. Robin Horton’s influential essay “African Traditional Thought and Western Science” (Horton 1967), which relied on the thesis to compare African thought with Western natural science, failed to discredit the thesis but reinforced its applicability to the African case.

5. In referring to vestiges I do not mean to imply that I am making an appeal to an evolutionist view of the history of humanity or attempting to reinvigorate the antiquated imperial theory that presumed Africa to be a fossilized remnant of the earliest cultures.
6. This is not to say that scholarship has no import in history. Certainly, we are far too aware of the devastating complicity of theory and politics. As Said put it, anthropology was “often [the] direct agent of political dominance” (Said 1989, 219–20).

7. As a domain, the moral extends beyond any particular ethical code. That is, I use the term moral to designate behavior that is sanctioned by conscience and values that are so deeply engrained as to become embodied, “second nature,” and part of the cultural “habitus” (Bourdieu 1977, 72–95). Ethics, by contrast, refers to prescribed principles and the discipline of enforcing commonly held standards of right behavior. The two may overlap, but I attempt to maintain a distinction throughout, choosing the phrase matrifocal morality to signal the deeper and more affective nature of FGP and its distinction from particular “religious” mandates.

8. The proposition that matrifocal morality is an underlying principle common to West African society is quite distinct from the imagined ur-matriarchy that inspired Bachofen, Gimbutas, and proponents of a primordial goddess tradition. My thesis is not concerned with any universalizing theory about the origins of humanity. Instead, I maintain that this uniquely African phenomenon must be appreciated in its own terms and as an expression of a particular “ontological-cultural epistemology” that is not universally applicable (Long 2004, 90).

9. Even as I show that early female scholars’ misguided application of feminist ideology to the interpretation of African women’s mobilizations and ritual protests led to a distorted appraisal of their cause, I also warn against facile but misplaced comparison with political demonstrations using female nudity that have recently appeared on the sociopolitical landscape in the West, such as those of the women of the Ukranian political group Femen.

1. Genies, Witches, and Women

1. Adioukrou is variously spelled in the literature as Adjukru, Adyoukrou, Adyukru, Ajukru, or according to the more authentic, phonetic version, Odjukru. I use the most common contemporary spelling except when quoting ethnographers such as Memel-Fotê, who prefers Odjukru.

2. In what follows, I will refer to the consonant festivals of Dipri and Kpol as “Dipri,” unless quoting or referring to a practice that is unique to the Adioukrou (Kpol) tradition.

3. A fuller discussion of witchcraft will follow.

4. Genie is an adaptation of the Arabic word djinn [Arabic: الجنى al-jinnî], referring to a spiritual being who inhabits a usually invisible realm, though able to interact physically with people in the visible world. Like human beings the genies are neither good nor evil, but exercise free will. Such beings are mentioned in the Qur’an as well as in Arabic folklore. The long history of Arabic and Islamic influence on sub-Saharan West Africa accounts for the adoption of the term. The English word genie is derived from Latin genius, originally referring to a guardian spirit that guided destiny. Africans speaking European languages regularly and unselfconsciously use genie, though their indigenous languages have their own precise terms. For the Abidji, the word is Eikpa, and the genies of the
water are *Dikpè-Eikpa*. West African water spirits are elsewhere referred to as divinities, and their cults are recognized to be a common feature of African indigenous religions. The adoration of the river genie in Dipri can be likened, for example, to the worship of the prominent river goddesses in the Yoruba pantheon. Therefore, the adoption of the term *genie* here is not intended to diminish the stature of the spirit being nor to distinguish the worship of that spirit from the practice of religion.

5. In 2010, I gave the Okpolu photos that I'd taken of Dipri thirty years earlier, and they delighted in identifying themselves and each other. The one who performed this feat was then identified as Owel Assra Antoine.

6. In the Adioukrou language, no word ends in a vowel. Therefore, *Egbiki* is pronounced with a nasal consonant at the end, *Egbikng*. For the sake of consistency, I will use *Egbiki* except when directly quoting from a transcription. Lafargue (1976) calls this same rite *sokroyibè*. The discrepancy is discussed later in the chapter.

7. This and all other translations from the original French to English that appear in this work are my own.

8. The Baoulé, one of the largest ethnicities in Côte d’Ivoire, are classified as Akan. The Abidji often use Baoulé as a ritual language. I consulted an aged Abidji diviner (*mtrabapo*) in Sahuyé who conducted his reading by entering a trance and channeling his genies, who speak through him in Baoulé, although he himself did not understand the language. Lafargue confirmed that Baoulé “seems to be a type of secret language, as much among the Abidji as among certain Adjoukrou” (1976, 209).

9. From this point forward I will use the abbreviation *FGP* for “female genital power.”

10. In Lafargue’s account, the genie was not Kporu but the nameless genie of the forest who also taught the ancestor how to use agricultural tools. This becomes more significant when considering the second myth associated with the origin of Dipri.

11. The chef de terre is the head of the original clan (*boso*) and leader of all the clans that comprise Abidji society, each of which occupies a separate quarter of the village and maintains its own lineage head. This nonhierarchical social organization is typical of the stateless societies that predominated in West Africa, to be discussed in chapter 2. Upon this horizontal social arrangement the French colonials imposed a vertical structure by demanding that an administrative chief be named in each village. According to Lafargue, the village chief was chosen essentially for his knowledge of the French language and his loyalty to the enforcement of colonial governance (1976, 25). The office of chief is therefore a vestige of the colonial imposition of a doubled authority, religious and secular.

12. On May 7, 2009, in addition to Chief Tanau Langau, I met with Gnangra N’Guessan Bertin, chef de terre, and six sékèpuone: Djidja Anangba Marcel, Yao Tanoh Daniel, Lasme Tomah, Abo Brou André, Yede Okon Richard, and Kassi Aby Simeon. Also present were Victorine Akadee Dongo, François Binje, and Henry Pernet.

13. Referred to in French as “biche” and translated in English as “doe,” the animal is actually a type of small antelope, or *duiker* (*Philantomba maxwellii*). The subject of human sacrifice, alluded to in Gnagra’s remark, is beyond the purview of this discussion. However, it is noteworthy that it is known to have been practiced in West Africa little
more than a century ago and that kings and potentates could order mortuary slayings on the occasion of the death of important chiefs to accompany the deceased to the next world (Ellis and Ter Haar 2004, 90). Human sacrifice would therefore be both a means of accessing power and an accessory of power.

14. The occupation of the office by his younger relative was still the source of contestation for some villagers. According to some, the usurpation of N’Guessan’s office would cause confusion over who would invoke Egbiki that year.

15. Here he named Bidjo as the sacrificed child, not the sacrificing ancestor. A youth sitting in on the interview intervened to protest that he was providing misinformation, and N’Guessan replied, “We must not tell all the secrets.” This exchange in Abidji was recorded and later translated for me by François Binje. It is of special interest that the detail suppressed was the sex of the sacrificial victim.

16. The name changes slightly from one telling to the next, remaining phonetically similar.

17. N’Guessan’s version also claimed that his great-grandfather Aiudibo was among those first elders in Sahuyé to receive the genie’s gift. By his reckoning this dated the introduction of Dipri to c. 1850. The detail also asserted himself as rightful heir to the office of earth priest.

18. The double origin of Dipri is certain, but is of a different nature. The roots of the festival in both Adioukrou and Abidji sources, and specifically the “genii-ological” association of the two ethnic groups that celebrate the festival, will be fully explored in a subsequent chapter.

19. Niangoran-Bouah indicates that the New Year ceremony proper involves “chasing away death” to activate the renewal of the world and its fecundity ritually, but he makes no mention of Egbiki.

20. In her contemporary classic Male Daughters, Female Husbands, Ifi Amadiume (1987) presents the myth of origin of Nri, an Igbo state in Nigeria. Its details are remarkably consonant with the first of the founding myths of Dipri. It relates that the primordial ancestor Nri came to settle among the Igbo people, who at that time still had no agriculture. In a time of famine Nri sought God’s help and, following God’s directive, cut off the heads of his son and daughter and planted them. From the head of his daughter sprang cocoyam, a “subsidiary crop managed by women” (28) and from his son’s head, the yam, which is prized in ritual and ceremony and monopolized by men.

21. As we shall see in chapter 4, the genies of Gomon and Sahuyé are linked in their own “genii-ological” alliance, considered goddess and consort respectively.

22. In 1979 I witnessed young men holding the same woven palm fronds during Lowe, the Adioukrou initiation into an age set, a class of successive generational groups that collectively organize the structure of village life. In the village of Mopoyem, initiates were led to the local stream. They held one end of the palm braid while a young woman from their maternal lineage held the other, and were thus united with this symbolic umbilical chord. In this way a man is born to the matrilineage.

23. Elsewhere the new yam harvest is the occasion for investing the chief or king with the spiritual authority that ensures his ability to foster fertility and abundance, the neces-
sary complement to military bloodshed. Among the Yoruba in the sacred city Ilé-Ifè, the king’s New Yam Festival begins with a visit to the Osàrà River, the abode of the goddess. There diviners and priests perform a ritual dramatizing the planting and harvest of the yam (Olupona 2011, 185). At the riverbank they also gather medicinal leaves, considered female and regarded as living entities engaged in a sacred pact with the king and community (187–88). Of special note in this parallel with Dipri is the fact that the yam not only inaugurates the New Year but is also ritually associated with the spiritual powers of the water goddess and her river abode.

24. As a society of initiates charged with the conservation and transmission of the deep knowledge of sékè, Dipri may be seen to function like the Sigí ceremony of the well-known Dogon people of Mali, through which “the power of deep knowledge and menstrual blood [is] domesticated and incorporated into the body politic, brought from the bush into the center of the village—in effect, cleansed and channeled into regeneration” (Apter 2007, 126).

25. Others present were Sangroh Esaïe, Essoh Nomel Salomon, son of the village chief who served as interpreter, Yedoh Edouard, Philippe Leite, and Henry Pernet.

26. Lafargue noted the existence of methods for the attenuation or ablation of power used in situations where its exercise is considered dangerous, such as the excessively strong manifestations of sékè among women at Dipri. For example, to remove a woman from trance, sacred plants were soaked in water and the juices squeezed into her eyes (cf. Lafargue 1976, 163–64).

27. The woman’s sacrifice of fecundity is a perpetual one; her blood is diverted to aggrandize the genie’s power, as Dipri assumes woman’s power to aggrandize male prowess.

28. Here I relate an uncanny misadventure in the form of confession. In 1980, while my Adioukrou husband and I spent the night prior to Dipri in Sahuyé, we violated this taboo. When at first I’d resisted, in consideration of the taboo, he mocked my credulity. But within minutes great welt-like hives began to appear, first behind my knees and in the crux of my elbows, then on my neck and chest. Fearing anaphylactic shock, I wanted to seek medical attention, but he adamantly refused: “The village has been ritually sealed!” It was not until morning that the swellings began to subside.

29. Such a wound is also the notorious mark of a witch’s spiritual attack and a sure sign of that kind of bewitchment. The symbolic association between the permanent wound and the female sex may further suggest the reason women are assumed to have an innate potential for witchcraft.

30. Because of such dangers, there had been some objection to Meledje becoming the “Dean” of Kpol, for although he was the rightful occupant of that office as the senior member of Yassap’s original clan and renowned for his own strong powers, his wife was still of childbearing age: “If you have a young wife, they don’t like that too much. If she forgets and approaches you on the day that she is in her period, it would be a provocation [for the genies] and that would bring misfortune.”

31. In the 1960s, during Dipri in Gomon, “some kponpuone [masters of trance (Abidji: kpon)] took out their eyes from their sockets and let them hang on their cheeks, then put them back in place” (Lafargue 1976, 15). In 2010 I witnessed Sangroh’s apprentice insert a knife into the eye socket and hold it there.
32. The sacrificial victim on which they “feast” is typically a member of an initiate’s matrikin. So the object of the meal and this gesture together violate the core moral principles, for as Amadiume notes, in West Africa the matricentric unit was “also an eating unit; all the children of one woman ate out of their mother’s pot. . . . This was the unit bound by the closest and strongest sentimental sibling tie” (1987, 36).

33. For further reflection on the consonance of diviners and witches and firsthand acknowledgments from diviners that they are indeed a kind of witch, see Grillo 2009.

34. Among the Yoruba, were your mother to call you into private quarters and kneel in the position of childbirth, it would instill terrible fear, for it is a signal of her condemnation (Jacob Olupona, private communication, March 2013). It is a threat so mighty that it calls for immediate repentance or doom. The gesture at once evokes her primacy as progenitor and her matching capacity to revoke the life she bore.

35. As we shall see later in other cases, women mobilize and evoke FGP to rebuke men who insult or injure women and defecate at the doorstep of the accused.

36. Ifi Amadiume proposed that the primordial traditions subscribed to this belief, as the societies were also originally matriarchal: “The Earth is usually a goddess in African religion” (1997, 123).

37. In the 1970s Lafargue (1976) also witnessed this phenomenon, claiming they pounded raw plantains that miraculously produced cooked “fufu.”

38. In this passage, Lafargue twice spells the word with a final acute accent on the final letter (é), but elsewhere in the passage and in most of the work including the glossary, the term is spelled with a “grave” accent on the final letter (è). I have adopted the most prevalent spelling.

39. The French version reads, “Un petit groupe composé principalement de vieilles femmes, celles qui ont la plus haute autorité dans le sokroyibé, se réunissent.” Another intriguing clue to the possibility that the Mothers who perform Egbiki may originally have had their own secret society lies in the fact that among the Yoruba of Nigeria egbe is the name of the secret society of those powerful old women who are honored by the famous masked celebration, Gelede. The details of that performance suggest so great a consonance between the Yoruba conception of the Mothers’ power and that of the women who enact Egbiki that one might conjecture that the origins of the principles and the rite itself may lie in the older societies to the east, from where many of the ethnicities that people the southeastern Côte d’Ivoire emigrated. These migrations and the way that FGP founded new settlements and ethnicities in this forest region are the subjects of chapter 4.

40. See chapter 3 on comparative cases of FGP in resistance efforts during colonialism.

2. MATRIFOCAL MORALITY

1. Adler noted that it was remarkable that even in the Christian West, the famous doctrine of “two bodies in one king” conceived of royalty as the embodiment of both sexes. “Thus, when one thinks of the relation between the body politic and the mystical body, of the king and his physical body according to the maxim magis dignum trahit ad se minus dignum, it refers . . . to the two sexes of a hermaphrodite” (2007, 86n3).
2. Mansa Musa’s legendary passage through Cairo on his pilgrimage to Mecca has been dated with certainty to 1324 A.D. At that time the monarch was said to have brought so much gold from West Africa that it contributed to a fall in the price of gold there the following year (Bell 1972, 224).

3. Adler notes that a good number of myths of origin of the initiatory secret recount that “men robbed, or rather, tore it away from women,” since its “original place is in the belly of woman” (Adler, 2007, 87). That men stole spiritual power from women is a widespread theme in the myths of Africa (cf. Pernet 1992, 138).

4. The ritual gestures involved in the Yoruba ceremonies that invest a king with spiritual power are also reminiscent of the Dipri performance. The deities (orisha) are “invoked in the bush, where their dangerous powers are enlisted and embodied by priestesses and are contained in calabashes and bottles that are . . . carried through the town to the palace and central shrines, where the powers are ‘cooled’ and ‘delivered’ on behalf of the king and his subjects” (Apter 2007, 25). As in Dipri, the spiritual entity is associated with the undomesticated terrain, the marshy waters. In both, the spirit is invoked “in the bush” and brought into the central domesticated space. In Dipri, calabashes and bottles containing water from the river, plants used in healing, kaolin clay, and other elements associated with the genie’s powers are paraded through the village, carried by youths who follow the entranced initiates. While the Yoruba priestess is able to contain the dangerous powers of the orisha in her body and deliver them in an orderly fashion to the shrine, the young Abidji initiates can only embody the genie of the river in a state of frenzied possession trance, and their untamed, “hot” power builds to a violent crescendo. In Dipri, initiates’ very bodies become the receptacles that deliver the power (through their “cooling” wound) to the central place of habitation, where it may then come under domesticating rule. For both the Yoruba and those celebrating Dipri, a ritual transfer and containment of power inaugurates the New Year.

5. The exploits of Queen Amina are related in the Kano Chronicles, a translation of precolonial documentation of Hausa tradition. For the original text, see H. R. Palmer, “The Kano Chronicle,” Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 5, no. 38 (1908): 60, as noted by Djibo 2001, 38.

6. This applied both to clans, based on an early unnamed ancestress, and lineages, originating from a known ancestress in historical time.

7. As Stoltejte sagely noted, “The concept of motherhood slips and slides between the symbol (the queen mother) and its referent (both the social and biological role of mother),” at least for Western interpreters (1997, 57).

8. This source quotes Aidoo, suggesting that her courtiers were women, but Gilbert contradicts this, specifying that “members of her court are men,” and therefore their force was more than symbolic (Gilbert 1993, 35n4).

9. The British colonial administration made the Omu subservient to the Obi, who received financial consideration to enforce “indirect rule” (Okonoj 1976, 55).

10. Sande is also known as bundu, bundo, and bonds, making reference to the name of the helmet mask that is worn at Sande initiation ceremonies and that represents the ideals of womanhood.

11. According to McGovern the esoteric “power associations” lend authority to “Gerontocratic Hierarchy” (2011, 57). However, closer examination of the actual dynamics
of power show features that are less visible than the structures of organizational authority and reveal that gerontocratic hierarchy is not as uniform, as stable, or as profound as it has often been made to appear.

12. Despite this homage to the seat of moral power, initiation into Sande includes female genital cutting (FGC), both clitoridectomy and excision, performed by the head of the society. FGC, also called female genital mutilation (FGM), is believed to eradicate the vestiges of the opposite sex to promote fertility and to instill morality. The study of FGC and FGM is beyond the scope of this study. But for a thorough discussion of Sande and FGM in Liberia, see “28 Too Many (2014) Country Profile: FGM in Liberia,” www.28toomany.org/countries/liberia/.

13. In chapter 1, I suggested that the term sokroyibé, now known as “Egbiki” among the Abidji, by which Lafargue identified the rite of FGP, might be the name of the now-defunct female association responsible for conducting the rite.

14. The metaphor reflects the degree to which gender was a culturally inscribed role, not uniquely fixed to the physical body, and is an example of gender flexibility, so ably defended by Amadiume (1987).

15. These details are beyond the purview of our discussion here, but the commonalities between these rites of consecration at the spring during the Festival of Generations and the rites of consecration during Kpol (Yam Festival) and Dipri deserve further study.

16. As in the Adioukrou festival of Angbandji that precedes the “Festival of Generations” (Ebeb), the women who surround the male on parade are his matriclan. He is only the emblem of their power and wealth, and in essence servant to their cause (see chapter 4).

17. A fascinating detail in a study of precolonial Angola relates “an oral tradition of a woman pulverizing her own infant with a mortar and pestle. The resulting liquid was used ritually to bestow men with an invulnerability before engaging in war” (Hunt 1989, 372). This account suggests that the Angolan women would deploy magico-religious powers in times of war and links those powers in other ways that relate to Egbiki: the association of women’s power with the sacrifice of maternity as opposed to fecundity; the use of the pestle to evoke that power; and enacting spiritual warfare.

18. In the department of Tanda in northeastern Côte d’Ivoire, and most notably among the Bron (also known as Brong, Abron, or Abrong), such a cleansing ritual is called Mgbra. It is executed not only to push back an enemy in time of war, but also to excise the danger to the community in cases of a prolonged drought and famine or when battling epidemics (chickenpox, measles, leprosy). “With the stalks and leaves of the Mgbra in hand, the elderly women make the rounds of the village in single file, dragging the Mgbra (a plant that grows along the banks of waterways). With the leafy branches of the palm tree wrapped on their heads, they sing in chorus while sprinkling kaolin here and there. . . . Only menopausal women have the right to participate in the ceremony. Men are formally prohibited. Women still of childbearing age are also excluded” (Ba Morou Ouattara, email communication, August 17 and 22, 2017, translation mine).

19. More recently, Óyèrónké Oyewumi contends that early Western feminists, resisting the “essentialist” idea that biology is destiny, refused to give women’s reproductive capacity its due or sufficiently value the role of motherhood. “That women bear children calls for a distinctive assessment” (2005a, 103). Yet here is exactly where many contemporary
interpreters go awry when interpreting African women’s mobilization and FGP. They focus too much on maternity as the source of solidarity and as the motivating impulse for their fierce defense of justice.

20. Douglas attempted to reassess the prospects for the future survival of matrilineal descent. However, neglecting the moral dimension of matriliny (as well as the religious battle waged by the Christian missions against the indigenous religious systems), her analysis ends on what today reads as a sadly naïve note: “All [matriliny] needs for its full creative contribution to the twentieth century are conditions for steady economic growth” (1969, 133).

3. GENDER AND RESISTANCE

1. FGP is “essential” in nature because postmenopausal women are considered to bear that power innately. It is not the performance that evokes the special quality of their gender. The act only deploys that power.

2. This is one of many examples of comparable cases in other regions in Africa, both in precolonial and contemporary history. Our work limits the comparative frame to the more readily recognized culture area of the West African subregion.

3. Interestingly enough, the women who performed this were the wives of men who had been robbed of their property by their sister’s sons, a matrilineal theft! Here again we see an ubiquitous mytho-ritual theme that attests to the preeminence of women’s power despite the current appearance of female subservience.

4. One interesting exception is noted in the colonial court documents in Cameroon, which record charges being brought against a woman for revealing “women’s secrets” (Ardener 1973).

5. The report of the commission was entitled “Report of the Commission of Inquiry appointed to look into the disturbances in the Calabar and Owerri Provinces, December 1929.”

6. Sylvia Boone (1986) rejected W. L. Hommel’s suggestion that the flared crest was sexually symbolic of the “vagina with the clitoris represented by the same forms as the phallus” that appear on other Sande masks, arguing that the allusion would not be in keeping with the Mende’s strict codes of sexual conduct and propriety (223). However, her rejection is inconsistent with the depiction of other recognized sexual imagery, such as the cowrie shell, whose Mende name is a pun on the word for a woman’s body where “the stone of life is embedded” (221).

7. Among the Yoruba, too, the “genitals become metaphors for the two kinds of power,” generative and destructive (Drewal 1992, 178).

8. It is significant that this body was a colonial institution and not a traditional one. Where tradition provided for the defense of women’s interests through self-rule, the colonial system had suppressed these self-governing bodies and their mode of enforcement. Therefore, “representation” in the Western style was women’s only recourse at that point.

9. This last detail is particularly interesting, for the threat suggests a return to a sterile situation alluded to in many cosmogonic myths, one in which men and women live apart, often as enemies.
10. Since established male elders rejected the new faith, “young men” were trained to become catechists and priests. Once the advantages of a new cadre under the colonial administration were noticed, young men with allegiance to the Obi were sent for Western education in accounting; conversion was the unexpected consequence (Bastian 2000, 147–48).

11. In the literature “Takembeng” is alternatively spelled “Takumbeng,” a version which I use only in direct quotes.

12. When I presented portions of this work at the 2017 MANSa conference in Grand-Bassam, Côte d’Ivoire, the respondent suggested that Muslim women would not be likely to engage in such behaviors. Many African colleagues there rejected this challenge and supplied validating examples of cases in Côte d’Ivoire as well as in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger that demonstrate that Muslim women indeed do participate. I am grateful to Bintou Koné for following up on her promise to provide her example in writing.

**PART II. WORLDLINESS**

1. The Ogbru clan is comprised of the three villages Gomon, Sahuyé, and Yaobou.

2. The classic definition of a lineage, according to the Ivoirian ethnographer Memel-Foté, is “a community of relatives who claim the same ancestor and whose genealogy is clearly determined, who bear a name with which the members identify and by which they are identified, who follow the rules of exogamy” (Memel-Foté and Brunet-Jailly 2007, 221).

4. **FOUNDING KNOWLEDGE/BINDING POWER**

1. We will return to this most egalitarian form of collective rule and its import; for now, suffice it to say that it is indicative of the degree to which age and sex are determinative factors for social organization and the exercise of power.

2. The words have a terribly ironic ring today after two civil wars and over a decade of violence fueled by contestation between “indigenous” Ivoirians and recent immigrants over rights of citizenship and land use. This is the subject of part III.

3. Memel-Foté defines ethnicity in a way that attests to the complexity of the concept: “A relational notion, the ethnic group determines itself as much from within as from without according to the relations that link the society to its neighbors. The consciousness of belonging becomes explicit and reinforces itself by the opinion that the members of that society show towards other peoples” (1980, 86). This relational aspect is key for understanding the “profound similarities among the political cultures of far-flung African societies” (1987, 8).

4. On this basis Kopytoff questioned “whether ‘lineages’ have really existed in Africa” and proposes “corporate kin groups” as an alternative (Kopytoff 1987, 41).

5. Here we see operative a basic strategy of matriliney, which often resorts to creative means to allow for the expansion of its lineages.

6. According to both Memel-Fôte and Lafargue, sékè was most likely of Adioukrou origin and brought to Gomon through Yassap, but “in order to erase any trace of depen-
dence [on the Adioukrou, the Abidji] have a tendency to affirm that [sékè] was given to them directly by a genie” (Lafargue 1976, 150).

7. In traditional society, the term eb-ij did not apply to foreigners, the uninitiated, or other persons not fully integrated into the ranks of society, such as slaves.

8. Among the Baoulé, the rite of FGP was performed at the funeral of a woman who died in childbirth, acknowledging her warrior spirit (Perrot 1982).

9. In using the compound expression “founding knowledge/bind ing power,” I draw on Foucault’s insight into the inextricable association of “knowledge” with “power” (Foucault and Gordon 1980). He expresses the connection between them with the composite term power/knowledge (pouvoir/savoir). Emphasizing its dynamic capacity, he proposes that power is not a thing with which either a person or a state is endowed, but a process. As strategic action, power is necessarily linked with knowledge and conveys a way of being in the world.

10. As we saw in chapter 2, the institution of the queen mother and the dynamics through which she selected her coregent demonstrate how matriliney was conceived not only in terms of bloodline—that is, descent from a common matriarch—but also as a means for including and engaging the support of patrilineal clans. The appointment of both rulers is based on female kinship, but patrilineal clans would compete to demonstrate their integration into the line of royal succession.

11. “In tributary societies, the communities preserve the means of production but they must give a tribute in kind to a leading class that masters the apparatus of the State” (Memel-Foté 1980, 1112).

12. Kopytoff challenges the idea that the stateless societies were more egalitarian: “It has often been remarked by ethnographers . . . that African cultures are suffused with a sense of hierarchy in social, political, and ritual relations . . . . This holds true even for those ‘segmentary’ or ‘acephalous’ or ‘stateless’ African societies that are sometimes labeled (or rather mislabeled) as ‘egalitarian.’ . . . [Within them] seniors stood over their juniors and patrons over their clients” (1987, 35–36). What cuts across every social rank, however, is the command of spiritual power. In this, elderly women always excelled and held ultimate authority.

13. While the stateless societies like those of the frontier, and the Akan groups in Côte d’Ivoire in particular, are generally assumed to be inferior to the “great” military empires, in fact “the basis of the state’s power was more fragile” (Akyeampong and Obeng 2005, 34). This is borne out by the fact that the stateless societies were among the last to succumb to colonial domination.

14. Additional evidence that the origins of sékè were the lagunaires (the Adioukrou and other lagoon peoples) may be inferred from Visonà’s research among the Akye. In the lagoon village of Memni, she was told that “the women had a power called seke that allows them to see invisible webs or poisonous substances left by evildoers” (Visonà 2010, 145). It is significant, too, that this power is ascribed especially to women.

15. “Bouboury” means “to gather together” (Lassm 1971, 43).

16. Significantly, according to the myth, Lodz’s daughters founded the principal villages of the first Adioukrou confederation, Bouboury. Those striking out farther into the frontiers to found rival polities are sons.
17. An example is the rank one holds in the society of Sékèpone, as some are deemed to be born with sékè, or a greater power, and may consequently be granted authority over others, despite their younger age. This explains why the chef de terre of Sahuyé was not the eldest of them.

18. The Adioukrou held out against French colonialism, succumbing only in 1914, with the final battle of resistance being led by Debrimou. Colonialism imposed the reunification of Adioukrou governance, establishing artificial cantons and chiefs (Memel-Foté 1980, 109).

19. Intra-ethnic division and war between villages was certainly a factor in precolonial Africa, made more volatile by the introduction of firearms and the destabilization of society through the slave trade. In the frontier, where egalitarian/acephalous polities determined the fates of their independent communities, skirmishes may not have been rare. Even as recently as 2010, during my visit to Orbaff, a “war” broke out with the youth of the neighboring village, Lopou, over land boundaries and the rights to exploit certain agricultural territories.

20. Erng signifies “water,” and more specifically water into which one plunges, while ok means “to fall, in the collective sense, since this formulation is never applicable or applied to a fall or to an individual bath” (Memel-Foté and Brunet-Jailly 2007, 715). The etymology therefore indicates a ritual immersion.

21. As we shall see in chapter 6, “Violation and Deployment,” the Komye are, like the Mothers, endowed with the power to rid the community of evil and purify it from the bloodshed of war.

22. Such blood pacts were made at some point in the past between the Dida and Adioukrou as well as between the Dida and Abidji, and, as they were both inviolable and eternal, they remain in force to this day.

23. Atiéké is the staple food of the Adioukrou. The product resembles couscous but is made from cassava, through a laborious process of fermenting and pressing the cassava, sifting the resulting granules, drying, and finally steaming them.

24. An example comes from Nigeria at the turn of the last century, when, on the occasion of an influenza epidemic, Igbo women forced men to come to the central market to swear their innocence. “The women dug a hole in the ground . . . and poured into it water collected from the shrines of two of the most powerful Agbaja deities. . . . And they killed a fowl and poured its blood into the hole. . . . And the men came up one by one and had to dip their hands in the hole and wash their faces in the liquid” to make their oath (Amadiume 1997, 182).

25. The intimate pacts of marriage or broader social contracts, like military alliance, were both sealed with this ritual submission to metaphysical sanction. To this day, when referring to alliances, allusion is made to the ritual originally involved in their making, saying that the parties “have drunk” (Memel-Foté and Brunet-Jailly 2007, 361).

5. WOMEN AT THE CHECKPOINT

1. The term civil war is formally ascribed to any internal armed conflict that meets the following two criteria: fighting is between rival claimants to the state who are from the same country, and the clash “produces enough deaths to cross the casualty threshold” of 2,000 people (Cramer 2006, 62).
2. At one time Europeans classified as “Krou” all the coastal populations between Monrovia and Grand Lahou. The Dida are therefore also included in the Krou cluster. But their territory borders the southwestern region; therefore, they are also culturally informed by alliances with the Abidji.

3. The blood pact described in chapter 4 was drawn among various subgroups self-identified as “Bété” and the Neyo peoples and dated to the nineteenth century.

4. The Ivoirian state maintained the first rights over coffee and cocoa harvests and guaranteed a fixed purchase price to farmers. In this way it assumed the risk, but also reaped the greatest share of the rewards as prices rose on the international market.

5. The coalition was composed of Guébié, Zabia, and Pacolo, as well as Bété, all belonging to the wider Krou ethnic group (Grah Mel 2010, 294).

6. McGovern appears indebted to Achille Mbembe (2001) for the idea of “pillaged territories” as well as ideas about the way that territorial disputes have “contributed to the crystallization of ethnic identities” and accentuated distinctions “between autochthonous peoples and foreigners” (31).

7. Regrettably, McGovern characterizes the infamous slave trader Samory Touré in particular in glowing terms as an “empire-builder” (McGovern 2011, 60) and “anti-colonial resistance hero” (61). While he acknowledges that the slave trade created social anarchy in the south, he fails to mention that Samory Touré was a significant player in this regional destabilization.

8. See chapter 6, “Violation and Deployment,” which focuses on this issue.

9. McGovern ignores the fact that divination is at the heart of many traditional religious systems across the forest region along the Gulf of Guinea, from Benin to Côte d’Ivoire, including the formidable institution of Ifa. Elsewhere I have written extensively to show that divination is a means of negotiating destiny that sets the individual person as an independent and ethical agent in a position of responsiveness to the cosmos and spiritual world as well as responsibility with respect to the social world (cf. Grillo 2009, 2010).

10. McGovern uses the spelling *Jula*; I retain the more common spelling *Dyula* or, alternatively, *Dioula*, which appears in the literature in French.

11. Tokpè is not only a Dida tradition. The term is used throughout Côte d’Ivoire and employed as a rhetorical form not only in traditional society, but as a currency for breaking the ice in contemporary society. Even children are encouraged to practice the ritual exchange of insult as a means of solidifying relations among them (Cossette 2013, 87).

6. VIOLATION AND DEPLOYMENT

1. Postelection violence in 2011 claimed at least 3,000 civilian lives, and more than 150 women were raped. The casualties were so high during a five-month period of contested leadership and associated armed struggle that some refer to it now as “the second civil war.” In 2015 HRW and the Paris-based International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) jointly issued a call for the Ouattara government to realize its promises made in June 2011 to look into the postelection abuses and to execute impartial justice of these crimes against humanity (FIDH 2015).
2. *Dyula* is the term commonly applied to many of the ethnic groups from the north of Côte d’Ivoire or other countries in the subregion, particularly Burkina Faso and Mali. Under some circumstances it is used to describe any person with a Muslim name. It is alternatively spelled Dioula or Jula.

3. *FESCI* was once led by Charles Blé Goudé, who was sanctioned by the UN and later arrested for crimes against humanity.

4. The Forces Nouvelles was a politico-military alliance between the *MPCI*, Mouvement Patriotique de Côte d’Ivoire (Patriotic Movement of Côte d’Ivoire), and two western groups: the *MJP* and *MPIGO*, Mouvement Pour la Justice et la Paix (Movement for Justice and Peace) and Mouvement Populaire Ivoirien du Grand Ouest (Ivorian Popular Movement for the Far West).

5. It was at such a checkpoint that the vehicle in which anthropologist Mike McGovern was traveling stopped and where he witnessed the remarkable capitulation of armed forces to the threat of FGP made by elderly women (see chapter 5).

6. The Dozos are a “traditional hunter brotherhood that has existed in several West African countries for centuries. They recruit beyond ethnic and religious lines, although most are Malinke and Muslim” (Boisvert 2013). Some contend that their initiated membership is an ethical force committed to protecting the populace against wanton banditry. Claiming that their tradition forbids harassing, harming, or killing human beings, they patrol regions plagued by tensions ostensibly to defend civilians against criminality. However, in a report in 2013 the UNOCI found that “at least 228 people have been killed, 164 injured and 162 illegally arrested and detained by dozos in several regions of the country between March 2009 and May 2013 [and] that 274 confirmed cases of looting, fire and extortion have been committed by dozos” (Boisvert 2013).

7. Joseph Hellweg’s *Hunting the Ethical State* (2011), an ethnography of Dozo hunters, argues that the ethics of Dozo ritual and hunting practices informed their emergence as political actors in Côte d’Ivoire. Ironically, the Dozo were perpetrators of the most reprehensible violence—including sexual violence—and involved in this, the worst massacre in the history of the Ivoirian civil war. Their partisan violence in an effort to seize control of the state is a far cry from the nonviolent rebuke of moral outrage enacted by the Mothers. Their moral grounding is far from comparable.

8. According to a report by Amnesty International, “Côte d’Ivoire: The Victors’ Law,” Bro-Grébé was herself a victim of the war, held in a prison in Katiola, in the north, for twenty-eight months. Along with other former ministers who served in Gbagbo’s government, she was detained without recognizable criminal offense, access to legal representation or trial (Amnesty International 2013, 58–59).

9. Bro-Grébé’s narrative about the rebels turning on each other implies that they did so because they were under the spell of the Mothers’ curse.

10. French journalists Stéphane Haumont and Jérome Pin were present at the events as reporters for the French satellite TV channel Canal+. Their documentary film based on their footage as well as that obtained from Ivoirian journalists from Radio-télévisionivoirienn (RTI), entitled “Black Tuesday of the French Army,” witnesses to the violence and confirms that civilians were unarmed and that the French attacks on protestors on the
Notes to Chapter 7

bridge and at the Hôtel Ivoire were unprovoked. The film was first shown at the Human Rights Film Festival in March of 2004 (cf. Aymard 2011).

11. It is worth noting that these women were largely from northern ethnic groups in which most identify as Muslim. That is, the phenomenon of FGP is not only a southern tradition, restricted to women belonging to matrilineal traditions.

7. MEMORY, MEMORIALIZATION, AND MORALITY


2. Chérif Ousmane was the long-time commander of Forces Nouvelles in Bouaké and was implicated in extrajudicial killings of Liberian and Sierra Leonean mercenaries in 2004. He led Republican forces in the battle for Abidjan in 2011. That year, President Ouattara promoted Ousmane to second-in-command of the presidential security guard, Groupe de sécurité de la présidence de la République (HRW 2011b, 106).


4. The raid paralleled a brutal incident of postelection violence that preceded Ouattara’s installation as president that took place in the town of Duékoué itself. On March 29, 2011, forces loyal to Ouattara captured Duékoué in western Côte d’Ivoire, considered a hub of pro-Gbagbo militia, and viciously retaliated against the populace. According to HRW, throughout their military offensive, the forces committed rape, executed civilians including women, children, and elderly, and razed villages. HRW as well as UN Operations in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI) identified Amandé Ouérémi as one of the commanders responsible for the massacre, fighting alongside Republican forces (Wells 2012). See reference to this incident and further comment on it in chapter 6 and in that chapter’s endnote 7.

5. Côte d’Ivoire is a signatory of The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998 that defines rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, enforced sterilization, forced pregnancy, and any other form of sexual violence as war crimes, and when conducted as part of a systematic attack against a civilian population, as crimes against humanity (UNHCR 2007). In 1989 Côte d’Ivoire ratified Article 4 of Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, which prohibits violations of human rights, including acts of violence against women, namely “outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment, rape, enforced prostitution and any form of indecent assault; slavery and the slave trade in all its forms” (UNHCR 2007). It also has signed the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, adopted by the African Union in 2003, obliging signatory states to prohibit all forms of violence against women and protect them in armed conflicts.

6. This “radical break with the past” is reminiscent of the style and call of Pentecostal Christian churches in Africa today that also foster a deliberate personal and cultural amnesia by calling for a rupture with any association with indigenous tradition, demonized as the cauldron of the diabolical works of witches and heathens. Such a narrative disavows Africa’s cultural past as a literally “primitive” one in the classically denigrating sense of the term (cf. Meyer 1998).
7. The actual inscription reads, “À nos vaillantes femmes qui par leur marche histo-
rique sur la prison de Grand-Bassam le 24 12 1949 ont arraché la liberté confisquée des
hommes’ le 06 02 1998 Maire F. Ablé.”

8. Surprisingly, this reduction of FGP as a theatrical performance and representation of
African cultural heritage was, in fact, organized recently in francophone Switzerland. An
advertisement of the Association Vaudoise de danse contemporaine (AVDC) called for
auditions for a spectacle to be entitled “Legacy,” and reads, “Nadia Beugré invites 10 danc-
ers of the greatest possible diversity of age and background to participate in the creation
of a professional full-time and paid group, leading to the experience of a scenic presen-
tation, at once singular and highly legitimate! Inspired by the march of Bassam (1949),
during which Ivoirian compatriots were beaten, and the determination of the Ghanian
queen Pokou (XVIII c) who sacrificed her son to enable the survival of her people,
Nadia Beugré will work with the participants around the idea that the ‘women are on
the march’ in the service of a cause, an ideology, a people . . . the participants will also be
initiated to the ‘Adjanou’ dance, a sacred dance that African women practice in situations
of grave conflict by stripping naked” (AVDC 2013).

9. Elsewhere I take up more extensively the theme of the logocentricity of the academy
and the impossibility of representation of the subaltern through language (Grillo, 2013).

10. The Harrists are followers of a local prophet who foretold the arrival of Christian
missionaries, and while they consider themselves Christian, their practice is a syncretic
blend of indigenous traditions with Christianity.

11. The divided opinion is certainly related to the current discourse about gender and
power that is shaping Christianity and Islam on the continent. Such matters are, however,
beyond the scope of this discussion.

12. The term ethnopornography refers to “the synergy of sexuality and violence in the
cultural process of colonialist observation and exploitation” (Humanities and Social Sci-
ences Online 2013). In the past decade anthropological scholarship has increasingly come
under scrutiny and has been critiqued for extending the legacy of the “ethnographic gaze”
that objectified the other, and doing so by exposing the (colonized) bodies of others in
voyeuristic and sexual manner in the guise of “purporting to know the intimate (or the
‘authentic’)” (Humanities and Social Sciences Online 2013).

CONCLUSION. AN INTIMATE REBUKE

The kodjo is the traditional female undergarment; the color refers to menstrual blood,
which it is also intended to camouflage.