Résumé
T. C. Weiskel — Le Baule précolonial : reconstruction.
Essai de description globale de l'histoire et des structures socio-politiques du Baule avant la pénétration française. Critique de l'acceptation inconditionnelle, par Dela-fosse, de la légende de la reine Aura Poku, qui implique une migration massive à partir de l'Ashanti au XVIIIe siècle : l'installation akan a dû se faire par petits groupes à une époque plus ancienne, le nom même de Baule apparaissant, sous des formes diverses, dans des documents européens du xve siècle. Les relations commerciales, jusqu'au XIXe siècle, étaient établies avec les Akan orientaux plutôt qu'avec la côte. Après la « révolution du palmiste », l'économie commerciale baule garde un caractère archaïque, reposant sur les produits de luxe (or, pagnes, ivoire, esclaves) plus que sur les denrées agricoles ; elle se réoriente vers la côte, avec des chaînes parallèles et rivales. Les conditions d'installation expliquent le changement du système de parenté, cognatique et fondé sur l'établissement local, aura bo, plutôt que sur le matrilignage, abusua, des Akan nucléaires. Le système politique est hiérarchique mais non centralisé, l'autorité se fondant sur le succès —contrôle d'un effectif humain important — et non sur la séniorité. L'organisation économique à la fin du xixe siècle est telle que l'intervention française aura des répercussions chez les Baule avant même que le contact direct ait été établi.

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The Precolonial Baule: A Reconstruction

1. The Quaqua Coast and its Hinterland in the 17th and 18th Centuries. Akan Westward Migrations and the Formation of the Baule Peoples

In the trade jargon of the 17th and 18th centuries the Quaqua Coast designated the region between Cape Lahou in the west, and the town of Assini in the east, corresponding roughly to what has become the eastern half of the present-day Republic of the Ivory Coast. (See Map 1.) Although there is evidence of continuous habitation in the area from the late stone age (Mauny 1972: 19-23), and although some early records suggest that the peoples there conducted a significant trade with groups far in the interior, European merchants were generally reluctant to establish permanent trading stations onshore. The trading partners of these coastal populations were primarily interlopers who sought to operate beyond the western margin of control of the major trading forts along the Gold Coast. In effect, the Quaqua Coast remained a backwater area for the bulk of European trade throughout most of the 17th and 18th centuries.

There seems to be several reasons for the relative neglect of the Quaqua Coast by the main European trading powers. In the first place, the coastal geography of the Quaqua Coast was difficult to navigate safely with the available sailing technology in the 17th and 18th centuries. There were no natural harbours along the coast, and the mouth of the Bandama river at Lahou and that of the Comoé river at Bassam were separated from easy access to the open sea by a series of shifting sandbars. In addition, the pattern of coastal currents and winds made it hazardous to approach too closely to the shore. Anchoring offshore was also difficult, for the strong coastal currents were capable of dislodging an anchor and placing a vessel in peril of shipwreck. One spot in particular about half-way between Lahou and Assini was nicknamed ‘the

1. Dapper 1686: 277. This volume is a French translation of a text originally published in Dutch in 1668. Dapper’s work is a descriptive geography, and not an eyewitness account. It represents a compilation of what was known about Africa from various travelers’ accounts by the mid-17th century. For a similar description of the Quaqua Coast in English, see Ogilby 1679: 416-418.

Cahiers d’Études africaines, 72, XVIII-4, pp. 503-560.
bottomless pit' because of the way in which the currents converged to form a whirlpool, making it difficult for sailing ships to manoeuvre.\textsuperscript{2} Even when the winds were right and the currents not too strong, landing proved to be hazardous. The rapid drop in the ocean floor just offshore created a pattern of very heavy surf all along the shoreline itself, and trade goods were frequently lost as small boats were smashed or overturned in the pounding breakers.

Even when these disadvantages were overcome by the combined efforts of experienced European navigators and skilled local boatsmen, the Quaqua Coast presented other problems. In particular the climate was significantly different from that found along the Gold Coast just a few miles further west. The rains came earlier and lasted longer than

\textsuperscript{2} Dapper 1686: 277. As late as the mid-19th century travelers commented on the difficulties of navigation in these coastal waters. See for example Bouët-Willaumez 1846: 109.
on the Gold Coast, leaving the Quaqua Coast with roughly twice as much annual precipitation and a markedly higher relative humidity all year-round. Although a precise connection between a more humid climate and a higher disease rate is difficult to establish, it is significant that Europeans considered hot, humid environments to be less healthy than cool, dry ones, and for this reason among others, they preferred conditions on the Gold Coast over those on the Quaqua Coast.

In addition to these general features of physical geography and climate, permanent European settlement on the Quaqua Coast was further discouraged for reasons which could be broadly described as political. Towards the end of the 17th century, as the character of local trade was shifting from the earlier emphasis upon gold and ivory exports towards an increasing emphasis upon the export of slaves, European powers began to contemplate the possibility of creating permanent settlements along the Quaqua Coast. Simultaneously, however, the entire length of the Quaqua Coast was being invaded by wave upon wave of migrant refugee communities from the east, seeking to escape domination or enslavement resulting from internal warfare between Akan groups on the Gold Coast. These groups readily understood the advantages to be gained from a position on the coast and collectively they constituted an effective barrier to permanent European onshore settlement.

Once again, local geographic configurations played an important role. The hinterland of the Quaqua Coast was divided from the coast itself by an interconnected series of freshwater lagoons, navigable by small craft but inaccessible to larger sailing vessels. The intricate geographic pattern of peninsulas, inlets, and islands provided ideal conditions for numerous petty chiefdoms to establish themselves and defend their individual autonomy. The key to economic and political power lay in the control of the lagoon network, and as long as the Europeans were prevented from dominating the waterways, fortified trading factories of the type found on the Gold Coast would be of little commercial benefit. In effect the Europeans could only gain access to the mainland at the discretion of local potentates who controlled the traffic on these inland lagoons. Insofar as these local chiefs acted as intermediaries between European merchants and the inland sources of gold, ivory and slaves, they did not generally allow the Europeans access to the mainland, for this would have undercut their own commercial advantage.

The Europeans had little choice but to accept the conditions of these local chiefs for, given the lagoon geography, they had no effective means of imposing their authority with force. Local populations were well armed and they enjoyed a considerable strategic advantage over the

3. Several eyewitness accounts of the population movements in the area at the end of the 17th century are reproduced in ROUSSIER 1935. Studies with accounts of the settlement of this region by African populations include: BOUSCAVROUL 1949; BONNEFOY 1954; MEMEL-FOTÉ 1969a; NIANGORAN-BOUAH 1965; AUGÉ 1969.
Europeans in knowing how to manoeuvre rapidly in the lagoons. Ocean-going vessels could not enter the shallow lagoons, and without being able to bring cannons within range of native villages, the Europeans could inflict little harm on the local populations. In the case of a frontal attack, villagers could simply take to their canoes and escape. In short, by increasing the local population's capacity for self-defense, the inland lagoon network made it possible for relatively small communities to prevent Europeans from establishing profitable trading ventures on the Quaqua Coast. The French were the only European power to attempt a permanent onshore settlement, but under these conditions it is perhaps not surprising that their attempt failed.4

The absence of permanent European trading forts on the Quaqua Coast had profound implications for the pattern of economic and political development in the hinterland during the late 17th and 18th centuries. By examining the oral traditions collected from peoples in the area together with the fragmentary contemporary record of coastal visitors, it is possible to reconstruct a general outline of what took place beyond the realm of European observers.5 Broadly speaking it appears that numerous Akan splinter groups migrated westwards from the Gold Coast hinterland and progressively extended their control over pre-existent Voltaic, Kru and Mande-Dyula populations in the Quaqua Coast hinterland. The trade from these groups towards the south remained relatively slight because of the lack of permanent European settlements on the coast. Instead, trade continued to flow between the Akan heartland and these western frontier settlements. In exchange for gold, ivory, woven cloth and slaves these outpost communities received guns and ammunitions, enabling them to assert their authority more effectively over the poorly armed and politically disparate pre-existent populations. In some cases the Akan groups simply imposed their authority through outright military conquest. Frequently, however, the Akan extended their influence more gradually as a cumulative result of successive generations of advantageous marriage exchanges, commercial control, and conciliatory judicial interventions imposed with force or the threatened use of force. The theme of military conquest dominates the oral traditions of virtually all the Akan groups along the western frontier, but the more subtle forms of cultural expansion seem to have played an equally important role in the consolidation of Akan influence in the Quaqua Coast hinterland.

The pattern of westward Akan migration, settlement, and trade tended to gather momentum in the 18th century as the slave trade

4. Established in 1701, the French fort at Assini was evacuated in the face of local hostility in 1704 (Roussier 1935). Further attempts to establish permanent onshore settlements were not made until the 19th century.

5. Oral traditions concerning the migrations of the Akan peoples of the eastern Ivory Coast are presented in Mourey 1954; Rougier 1957; Tauxier 1932; Salverte-Marmier & Etienne 1965; Pescay 1967.
replaced the earlier gold trade on the Gold Coast. The influx of European
guns and munitions in exchange for slaves heightened the internal
warfare between emerging Akan States. Some of the victims of war
were subsequently integrated as subjects into the enlarged political
systems which succeeded one another in the Gold Coast hinterland over
the course of the 18th century. Others were sold as slaves to the
Europeans in the coastal trading factories. Still others fled as refugees
westwards to join previous migrant Akan communities or establish their
own settlements in the Quaqua Coast hinterland. The Quaqua Coast
may well have remained a commercial backwater for European merchants,
but partially for this reason its hinterland developed as a haven of refuge
for those who escaped the ravages of the slave trade on the Gold Coast.
An area formerly inhabited by dispersed Dida, Guro, southern Mande
and Dyula populations, witnessed the progressive rise of Akan cultural
hegemony as the previous ethnic groups either fled from or became
absorbed within the more powerful incoming minorities.

One of the polities to emerge in the Quaqua Coast hinterland as a
result of this pattern of migration and assimilation was a group known as
the Baule peoples. According to oral traditions collected in the early
colonial period, the name ‘Baule’ was derived from an event experienced
by a group of refugee migrants in the course of their flight westwards
before the pursuing Ashanti army. Upon the death of the Ashanti king,
Osei Tutu, a succession dispute occurred between two nephews, Dakon
and Opoku Ware. Dakon was killed in the struggle that ensued, but
according to the tradition recorded by Maurice Delafosse, a large number
of his partisans fled westwards under the leadership of his sister, Aura
Poku. Although Opoku Ware’s army followed them to the banks of
the Comoé river, the refugees succeeded in escaping by sacrificing Aura
Poku’s only son to the river spirits. Immediately a large tree from the
right bank of the river miraculously bent itself over and served as a
bridge for the fleeing refugees. When the Ashanti troops arrived, the
tree righted itself, and as they had no canoes to cross the river, the
Ashanti were prevented from pursuing the refugees any further. Dela-
fosse (1900: 163) concluded the transcribed myth, indicating that:
‘... la reine Pokou, en souvenir de la mort de son fils, qu'elle avait
jeté dans la Comoé et qui s'y était noyé, dit: “On appellera ce pays
Baoulé (mort d’enfant)”. Car la mort de cet enfant lui avait causé de la
douleur.’

The myth suggests that the term Baule was intended to refer to a

6. Delafosse’s etymology of the name ‘Baoulé’ has been accepted uncritically
by most writers since his day. See for example Mouezy 1954: 44; Salverte-
Marmier & Etienne 1965: 25. No doubt the account corresponds closely to
what the Baule believed, for some Baule authors have also given the same expla-
nation for the origin of the name (Effimbra 1959: 226). Nevertheless, carto-
graphic evidence suggests that the name may have been used previously to design-
ate a geographic area in the hinterland of the Quaqua Coast long before the
alleged arrival of Aura Poku and her partisans. On the maps of Africa published
geographic area. This is the usage which Delafosse adopted in his own writings, referring to the Baule peoples as ‘les peuples du Baoulé’, or ‘les tribus dans le Baoulé’. Alternatively, when he wished to emphasize their ethnic relation to the Anyi-Ashanti groups, Delafosse employed the phrase ‘les Agnis du Baoulé’. By extension, however, he indicated that the term could be used interchangeably to designate the people themselves and their language, as well as the geographic area they occupied.  

According to the tradition recorded by Delafosse, queen Poku’s following consisted of four groups of noble rank (the Warebo, the Faafwé, the Nzipri, and the Sa) to which were attached four subordinate groups thought to have been conquered by the Ashanti prior to queen Poku’s exodus (the Atutu, the Nanafwé, the Ngba, and the Agba). Upon crossing the Comoé, these groups continued their migration westwards and then turned southwards to occupy the Tiassalé region. After subduing the local populations and leaving some of the migrants there to settle, queen Poku is then alleged to have directed her conquests northwards along the left bank of the Bandama river until she reached the region just to the southwest of the present-day city of Bouaké. There she died, but her successor, Akwa Boni, is said to have conducted further conquests to the west, expanding the zone of Baule control by displacing the pre-existent Guro, Wan, Senufo and Dyula populations until the end of the 18th century. (See Map 1.)

Taken at face value the queen Poku myth provides a simple explanation for the formation of the Baule peoples. The theme of armed ‘conquest’ is readily understandable, and the image of massive migration provides a convenient framework for interpreting the apparent ascendency of Akan influence in the hinterland of the Quaqua Coast. In

by Jodocus Hondius (1606), Mattheus Merian (1638), Petrus Bertius (1639), John Speed (1662) and Alexis Hubert Jaillot (1674), the term ‘Bacorees’ designates an area north of the Quaqua Coast. Thus it seems likely that the term ‘Baoulé’ was derived historically from a previously employed place name that the Baule themselves subsequently incorporated into the accounts of their origins from the Akan heartland. (See ‘Bacorees’ on Map 2 [1613].)

7. ‘Le même mot est souvent employé pour désigner le pays, les habitants et la langue. . . .’ (DELAfosse 1900: 34.) Delafosse’s own habit of employing ‘Agni’ to refer to the ethnic group and ‘Baoulé’ as merely a geographic designation has often confused modern students of the area. In present-day usage, the term ‘Baule’ is used to refer to those peoples whom Delafosse and his contemporaries called ‘les Agni du Baoulé’ or sometimes simply ‘les Agni’. Modern parlance reserves the word ‘Agni’ (or ‘Anyi’) to designate the Akan groups east of the Comoé river or in the Moronou area of the Ivory Coast as well as an isolated but related group just to the east of Tiassalé.

8. DELAFOSSE 1900: 159-165, 189, 200-201. Delafosse presented Baule myths of origin and warfare, transcribed in Baule, followed by a literal and a figurative translation. Earlier accounts of Baule origins exist, including VERNeau 1895; Lasnet (ANRCI X. 31.23); Le Magnen (ANRCI X. 38.9). In each case, however, these authors appear to have derived their material from Delafosse who had been working among the Baule since 1864. Delafosse in turn was introduced to the Baule by Albert Nebout, the first French administrator in the area.
This map published in the early 17th century was based upon earlier maps, travelers' accounts and geographies of the 16th century. It indicates a people known as the 'Bacorees' in the hinterland of the Quaqua Coast, just to the west of 'C. de 3 Pontas'. This and other maps of the period suggest that the Baule may have derived their name from a place name in common usage in this region. (See p. 507, note 6.) The term 'Labore' further inland may have referred to the region subsequently known as 'Yaouré'.

Map 2. Guinée (Mercator-Hondius, ca. 1613)
addition, if Delafosse's version of the myth is taken as a statement of fact, the problem of dating the origins of the Baule people is largely resolved. Delafosse places queen Poku's exodus from the Kumasi region around 1730, and this furnishes him with a convenient baseline for tracing the subsequent chronology of Baule oral traditions. The queen Poku myth also appears to account for the seeming prestige of the Warebo chieftaincy, for the Warebo were reputed to be the descendants of queen Poku herself, and her quasi-royal status serves as the foundation for the entire myth. In the absence of critical historical studies on precolonial Baule history, the queen Poku myth has been accepted as the 'official version' of Baule origins ever since Delafosse first published a Baule transcription of the myth in 1900.

In reality, the formation of the Baule peoples seems to have resulted from a process considerably more complex than the queen Poku myth suggests, and more research is needed before an adequate history of the Baule origins can be written. In the first place, the problem of dating queen Poku's alleged departure from Kumasi is not yet settled. Delafosse notes the discrepancy between the date suggested by Bowdich for Osei Tutu's death (1720) and the one he himself puts forward (1731), indicating that whichever date is accurate, the departure of queen Poku took place shortly thereafter (Delafosse 1900: 189, 200-201). Recent research indicates, however, that it was not until 1749, upon the death of Opoku Ware, that Dakon made his unsuccessful bid for the Ashanti succession (Wilks 1975: 327-328). If this version is to be believed, and if queen Poku is still thought to be the sister of Dakon, her departure most probably occurred around 1750 rather than 1720 or 1730.

Whatever the ultimate decision concerning the probable date of queen Poku's departure from Kumasi, it is likely to be largely beside the point, for in any case there appears to have been several successive waves of migrant Akan groups contributing to form the Baule peoples (Salverte-Marmier & Etienne 1965: 15-35). Queen Poku and her followers probably constituted one of the more numerous and most recent of the Akan arrivals, but as Delafosse himself indicated (1914: 83), their numbers were not sufficient to justify a theory of mass migration: 'Des observations ultérieures m'ont amené à penser que seules les familles dirigeantes firent partie de cette immigration récente et que la masse de la population, quoique appartenant au même rameau ethnique, est installée depuis beaucoup plus longtemps dans le pays.'

In addition the role of military conquest in Baule history is something which deserves re-examination in the light of the evidence that Akan elements were so few in number. It now seems that the theories of armed

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9. Delafosse seemed to derive the date of 1730 from the Ashanti succession accounts in J.M. Sarbah (1897) which he read upon returning to Paris from Baule country in 1900. Nevertheless, Delafosse (1900: 184, 206) acknowledged the date of 1720 which Bowdich suggested as being the date of the Osei Tutu succession crisis.
conquest and mass migration receive disproportionate emphasis in the queen Poku origin myth. In reality, the ‘conquest’ of the Baule area may have been accomplished by Akan elements in a much more extended and subtle fashion. Albert Nebout, the first French administrator among the Baule, explained the likely evolution in these terms:

‘Des Achanti, relativement peu nombreux (quelques centaines tout au plus), vinrent de l’est et chassèrent les Gouro dans les forêts de l’Ouest [. . .] Les différents chefs de famille de l’invansion achanti devaient porter les noms des tribus actuelles: Zipouri, Eloumoi, Atoutou, Saafoué, etc. Chacun fonda un village, s’entoura de ses parents et d’esclaves et forma ainsi une petite tribu qui porta son nom. Mais les éléments achanti ne furent pas longtemps à rester purs. Les membres de chaque famille durent nécessairement contracter alliance avec des femmes esclaves. Le fils d’un homme libre et d’une femme esclave étant libre, les fruits de ces unions continuèrent à porter le nom de la famille achanti, tout en ayant du sang étranger [. . .] On cite dans chaque tribu quelques individus, très peu nombreux, qui descendent directement des conquérants.’

This description of progressive demographic expansion and cultural assimilation suggests an alternate model for interpreting Baule precolonial history—one which is perhaps more useful than the simplistic framework of mass migration and armed conquest, reflected in most origin myths. A great deal of work remains to be done on the precise mechanisms of expansion and assimilation which were at work over the course of early Baule history, but research in this direction would seem to hold out the most promising results for a more complete understanding of Baule precolonial history.11

The arrival of the various Akan groups and their subsequent consolidation into the Baule peoples did not stimulate trade between the Quaqua Coast and the Sudanese interior. On the contrary, as the French historian Yves Person has suggested (1975, III: 1683), the Baule may have severed the pre-existent north-south trading linkages.

‘Le fameux “golfe Baule” paraît avoir attiré de tout temps les influences septentrionales et le Bandama leur avait servi de débouché sur la mer jusqu’au xviième siècle. En détruisant radicalement les structures antérieures, les Baule en avaient effacé jusqu’au souvenir. La formation de cette ethnie vigoureuse [. . .] avait réduit au minimum les échanges et repoussé les influences soudanaises vers le nord du 8ᵉ parallèle.’

During most of the 18th century the trade arriving at Grand Lahou, the natural coastal outlet for Baule southern trade, was never significant

10. Delafosse’s Papers, Notebook, 1894, Entry for 8 Nov. 1894. Delafosse indicated that this passage was copied from Nebout (‘d’après un rapport de M. Nebout et des notes’). Delafosse arrived in Kodiokofikro on 19 Oct. 1894, and in the following weeks he was introduced to Baule customs by Nebout who had been placed as an administrator in the area by Capt. Marchand a few months previously.

11. These and other problems in Baule precolonial historiography are discussed at greater length in Weiskel 1976.
enough to attract sustained European interest. During the early 1760’s, for example, when the French were secretly investigating the possibilities of expanding their influence on the coast, their observations concerning Lahou were quite revealing: ‘... il y a quelquefois à traiter 100 captifs à la fois, peu d’or et de morfii, cela ne vaut point encore la peine d’un établissement’ (Bussy 1761). The slaves may have resulted from the occasional warfare in the Baule region in the interior, but the trade was clearly not regular enough to justify a trading fort, nor were the quantities of gold or ivory sufficiently abundant to attract French attention. In 1786 the French resident at Whydah was instructed to look into the possibility of expanding trade along the Quaqua Coast. A treaty was concluded with Lahou in 1787, granting the French permission to construct an onshore factory, but the French never followed up this initiative (Hargreaves 1967: 67).

Little is known about Baule production during this period, but it is likely that whatever trade the Baule conducted was probably channeled overland towards the Akan commercial network. Woven cloth had been sold to European merchants on the Quaqua Coast in the pre-Baule period and re-sold by these merchants to the inhabitants of the Gold Coast (Dapper 1686: 277, 300). This commerce seems to have been eclipsed on the coast at roughly the same period that the Baule emerged in the Quaqua Coast hinterland, suggesting that the Baule probably succeeded in re-directing the trade through a number of overland routes towards the Gold Coast consumers. Similarly, trade in gold and ivory and perhaps a commerce in captives probably focused eastwards in exchange for supplies of guns, gunpowder and the European trade goods that flowed into the Gold Coast in great quantities from the permanent forts on the coast. (See Map 1 above for indication of general flow of trade.)

It is perhaps significant in this respect that Europeans became aware of the existence of the Baule not from the coastal peoples but rather from the Ashanti themselves. In 1817, T. E. Bowdich (1819: 169) heard of the Baule for the first time in the course of his mission to Kumasi: 12 ‘A powerful kingdom called Bahoorree, which has hitherto successfully resisted the Ashantees, was described to be westward, and expected to afford refuge to the King of Gaman [Abron] on the approaching invasion [i.e. the Ashanti invasion of Gaman].’ On the basis of this information, Bowdich placed the Baule, or Bahoorree, as he called them, to the north-west of Bondoukou, clearly beyond the sphere of Ashanti authority. (See Bowdich: Map 3.) The fact that the Baule were better known in Kumasi than they were at Grand Lahou serves to confirm the hypothesis that communications remained more developed in the east-west direction than in the north-south direction, even as late as the early years of the 19th century.

12. Joseph Dupuis also appears to have heard of the Baule while among the Ashanti. (See Dupuis 1824: 242-243.)
Map 3. The Gold Coast (Bowdich, 1819)
2. Production, Trade and Baule Southern Expansion in the 19th Century

The decline of the slave trade and the progressive shift to the production of palm products for export during the early to mid-19th century profoundly altered both the productive economy on the Quaqua Coast and the direction of trade in the Baule interior. The dramatic development of trade in the coastal area is evident from contemporary travelers' accounts. According to one English observer, R. G. Robertson (1819: 82), the Lahou area had enjoyed a remarkable expansion of commerce, apparently for a number of years:

'Cape Lahou has long been famous both for the extent of its trade and its sedulous pursuit by the inhabitants. More business is done here than in the whole distance from Cape Mount to Saint Andrews; the quantity of gold and ivory sold annually is greater than at any of the European settlements, Cape Coast and Aura excepted.'

This picture contrasted markedly with that of observers in the 18th century, and the reason for this seems to be that by 1819 trade between Lahou and the interior had been established on a regular and permanent basis by way of the Bandama river. 'The river Elmina [the Bandama] affords them great facility in transporting their merchandise into the interior in canoes, which are large and commodious. They derive many advantages from this source.' (Ibid.)

It is significant, however, that despite the development of regular trade with the interior, the Baule were still not known by name to the inhabitants of Lahou. Nevertheless, Robertson (1819: 88) provided an interesting reference to the interior trading partners:

'The greater part of their trade they say comes from Weesaw (perhaps Wassaw) and Couche, or Cotche; the latter they represent to be governed by a female, of the extent of whose dominions and power they entertain a high opinion. They say that the queen declares war against all countries that do not pay her seeka or sicca (gold), and that she often sends troops to fight for other countries that can pay her well; but that she never commences hostilities against Cape Lahou, as it is a place of trade.'

It is possible, but by no means certain, that Robertson's reference to Cotche may have reflected the developments among the Baule instead. If Delafosse's transcription of the origin myth and succession pattern is broadly correct, queen Poku was succeeded by her niece, Akwa Boni, and according to Delafosse (1900: 200-201) she launched major campaigns of military expansion for the control of new gold-producing areas up until the time of her death in about 1790. Alternatively, it is possible that the 'queen' described by Robertson may have been queen Aura Poku herself, for the period of her influence still remains obscure, and
some of the early accounts of Baule origins (Verneau 1895: 566)\textsuperscript{18} indicate that the Akan migrants began to dominate local pre-existent populations only in the early years of the 19th century.

Whatever was taking place in the interior, it is clear that the volume of commerce at Lahou encouraged Europeans to think again about the possibility of onshore trading establishments. Robertson reported that the gold and ivory trade from Grand Lahou amounted to about 15,000 pounds sterling annually, and he estimated that trade in palm oil, gum, pepper, and livestock was probably worth from 3,000-5,000 pounds per year. In 1821, Mr. William Hutton advocated the creation of an English trading station along this portion of the coast, and he weighed the advantages of Lahou compared with Cape Palmas, indicating that he favoured the establishment of a fort ‘... at Cape Lahou, 140 miles to the eastward of Cape Palmas for the purpose of opening up a communication with the Buntakoos [Bondoukou], a large and powerful nation to the northwest of Ashantee...’ (pp. 36-37). The possibility of developing trade relations with Bondoukou beyond the western flank of Ashanti influence seemed attractive to Hutton in the light of Ashanti interference with British trade on the Gold Coast, but in the event the British did not build an onshore station. This was perhaps due to the opposition of the Lahou inhabitants, rather than to the nature of the trade itself. As Robertson had commented earlier (1819: 88), ‘They have always been unwilling to allow Europeans to remain onshore, as they observe that it would interfere with their commission business...’

Despite the absence of European settlements, a substantial shift in the nature of local production and commerce appears to have taken place on the Quaqua Coast between roughly 1815 and the 1840’s. Whereas during Robertson’s visit the export of ivory and gold from the interior amounted to over three times the value of local agricultural exports, by the late 1830’s palm oil had become the major export.\textsuperscript{14} In effect, the coastal trading polities changed their economic role within the developing system of international trade. Rather than simply occupying the position of intermediaries for the export of gold and ivory produced in the interior, the coastal peoples became instead producers of primary agricultural produce for the European commodities market. As in other areas along the Guinea Coast this transformation was accompanied by a multiplication of the number of trading communities, a heightened local demand for labour, an increase in the bulk importation

\textsuperscript{13} Since Delafosse was the source of Dr. Verneau’s information, it appears that Delafosse himself initially placed the Baule migrations in a much more recent period than he later describes them in his \textit{Essai de manuel}. He probably decided upon the earlier date after familiarizing himself with published works on Ashanti history, upon his return from the Baule area to Paris in the spring of 1900.

\textsuperscript{14} \textsc{ATGER} 1962: 47. For details of the coastal trade during the 1830’s and 1840’s, see Bouét (\textsc{ANSOM, Sénégal}); and \textsc{Bouët-Willaumez} 1848.
of cheap European manufactures, and a rise in the incidence of disputes over trade jurisdiction and control.  

The implications of these changes were not limited to the coast. The rise in the demand for labour on the part of coastal communities engaged in palm oil production combined with their increased purchasing capacity of large quantities of European manufactures stimulated new patterns of trade and migration in the Baule interior. Schematically,  

15. For a succinct summary of the changing conditions of 19th-century coastal trade, see Newbury (1969: 66-109; 1971: 91-109). A detailed economic history of the Ivory Coast has not yet been attempted. For the Gold Coast a useful study
the kinds of movement which the Baule undertook can be represented in terms of three general patterns: (1) expansion migration, involving the creation of new villages in close proximity and constant relationship with the parent village; (2) directed migration, involving the creation of related settlements at a greater distance, the location of which is usually inspired by specific strategic or economic objectives; and (3) disjunctive migration, in which the new settlement is established at such a great distance that continuous relations with the parent community tend to atrophy.16 (See Diagram 1.)

At any one time, of course, Baule migration was composed of a combination of these three types of displacement, but over longer periods one or another of these patterns tended to dominate. Thus in the early 18th century disjunctive migrations appear to have been predominant, as groups split off from the Akan heartland and moved great distances westwards. In the latter part of the 18th century and early 19th century, expansion migration probably accounted for most of Baule settlement relocation, whereas by the mid- to late 19th century, directed migration emerged as predominant. From the 1830's onwards, small groups of Baule split off from the main region of northern settlement and migrated southwards largely in response to the new economic possibilities afforded by the expanded coastal trade and the discovery of new gold deposits in the Kokumbo area.17 (See Map 4.)

In subsequent years these southern colonies of the northern groups functioned simultaneously as new productive bases in themselves and as relay stations for an increasingly important north-south trade (Salverte-Marmier & Etienne 1965: 39-44; Chauveau 1979: 23-37). By the 1880's the pattern of directed southern migration had run its course, and the southern colonies were competing with one another locally for wider spheres of influence. By the time of European penetration, in the early 1890's, the Baule groups were distributed geographically in much the same way as they are today. (See Map 5.)

In retrospect there are two important observations to be made about these historical developments among the Baule in the 19th century. In the first place, it must be emphasized that until their initial contact with Europeans, the Baule had become accustomed to a pattern of virtually unreversed expansion. At no time had they experienced an

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16. These categories are derived from descriptions of Baule movements contained in Salverte-Marmier & Etienne (1965: 39-44); and modeled upon the distinctions made by Bohannan (1954).

17. Early colonial accounts of this movement, based on oral traditions of the area, include: Le Magnen (ANRCI X 34.8; X. 38.9); and notes by Delafosse quoted in Verneau 1895: 566.
invasion. On the contrary, through the combined processes of military conquest, economic domination and social assimilation the Baule had managed to extend their control over a wide variety of pre-existent groups in the interior. In this respect the first years of the colonial period can be said to have represented an encounter between two expanding cultures—the French on the one hand and the Baule on the other—each of which had come to believe in its own capacity to conquer.

The second important point about the course of the Baule 19th-century history is that despite the remarkable change in the direction and intensity
of trade, the structures of Baule production and the overall role of trade in the Baule economy remained much the same as in the 18th century. Whereas the coastal populations had adapted their economic and political structures to furnish bulk agricultural goods for the European market, the Baule had not yet been integrated into this network of intercontinental exchange. Their economy was still based on the production and exchange of the classic commodities of the 'royal' or 'luxury trade'—that is, gold, ivory, richly woven cloth and slaves. Trade in these goods remained the prerogative of politically dominant chiefs, and a
specialized commercial sector deriving its existence primarily from profit-making exchanges had not yet emerged.\(^{18}\)

The resulting structure of the Baule economy was strangely archaic. Although gold dust and gold nuggets were universally recognized as a medium of exchange, and although virtually every Baule household produced something for export, economic activity remained embedded in a complex network of social relations. Internal produce markets were non-existent within Baule country. Instead the major commercial transactions took place at what could be called ‘transit markets’ on the periphery of Baule territory. The importance of these villages derived from their position on an inter-ethnic frontier where they could function as relay points for transiting trade between two separate ethnic groups. Tiassalé emerged as a particularly important transit market on the southern Baule border. There dominant Baule chiefs or their personal representatives would meet with their counterparts from the neighbouring ethnic groups to the south, to barter goods at favourable rates (Chauveau 1976).\(^{19}\)

Trade was seasonal, and it characteristically took the form of periodic expeditions. A Baule chief who had amassed enough gold, woven cloth and captives to obtain the goods he wanted in the South, travelled to Tiassalé with an armed band of his dependants and slave porters. Along the way he would seek shelter and protection from allied groups to whom he was usually related by ties of common descent or marriage. In this respect the southern colonies of the northern Baule groups served a particularly useful role, and exchange between the parent settlements and the offshoot colonies were sustained by these trading practices.

Once the chief had arrived in Tiassalé he was put into contact with a trading partner from the South under the auspices of a resident intermediary with whom they both stayed. Known locally as *sikefwe*, these men were figures of considerable local prestige, and they did derive a certain measure of advantage by facilitating exchange between others, for they were compensated for their services. The *sikefwe* were not, however, merchants in any conventional sense. On occasion they might agree to store goods for a client, but they did not generally stock merchandise

\(^{18}\) Although no Baule traders had emerged, there is some evidence that individual Apollonien traders circulated throughout Baule country prior to the arrival of the Europeans. Known locally as ‘Asoko’, these traders extended their activities into the Ivory Coast from the Gold Coast in the late part of the 19th century. By the 1890’s, a community of Apolloniens had established themselves at the village of Ahua on the lower Bandama, just south of Baule territory, and individual Apollonien traders had commercial dealings with Baule chiefs further in the interior. See, for example, the brief portrait of the Apollonien named Kouamé or Angola who had apparently operated among the Baule for twenty years by the time the French arrived (ANSOM, Afrique III 23c M30).

\(^{19}\) For an elaboration of the concept of ‘transit markets’, see ARHIN (1971: 267). The Baule case seems to support Meillassoux’s hypothesis that markets emerge among peoples like the Baule not within the territory of the ethnic group but rather on its borders, where relations of economic complementarity stimulate exchange (MEILLAWSoux 1971: 82-83).
Map 6. Detail of Gilbert Map of West Africa (Modern Atlas, 1841)
on their own account for the explicit purpose of making profits on retail sales. Their role was more akin to that of an innkeeper than that of a merchant. Their main function was to provide the institutional framework within which an inter-regional house-trade could be conducted (Chauveau 1976; Bamba 1975: 67-97).

Given this pattern of exchange it is difficult to summarize the function of trade among the precolonial Baule. An independent class of commercially minded agents with relative autonomy from the local political structure had not yet emerged among them, but trade cannot therefore be said to have been unimportant for that reason alone. On the contrary, trade occupied a very important role precisely because every chief had a stake in pursuing it to his best advantage. The way in which chiefs defined their advantage, however, did not resemble classical commercial profits. To be sure they sought to obtain goods at the cheapest possible barter rate and for this reason they journeyed to Tiassalé, but generally they did not set out to purchase goods with the sole intention of deriving profit from their re-sale in the North. Most goods were obtained for use or consumption within the productive processes in Baule country itself. The result of this was that the volume of trade transiting through Baule country was never as great as the traffic which crossed other Akan territories to the east, on its way to Bondoukou and Kong, even though Baule trade with their southern neighbours was considerable.

Ironically, the economic transformation in the coastal areas during the mid-19th century had the effect of perpetuating and expanding the archaic nature of the Baule economy largely by creating a heightened demand for the luxury items of trade. To increase palm oil production coastal groups were willing to purchase captives from the Baule. Similarly, coastal chiefs competing for power and prestige sought to consolidate their positions by amassing large quantities of gold and woven cloth, the traditional symbols of wealth and office. The influx of large quantities of European manufactures provided the coastal peoples with unprecedented purchasing power with respect to the Baule suppliers of these luxury goods. The overall effect was to stimulate gold mining at Kokumbo, cloth production among the Akwe and the Nanafwe, and jewelry manufacture among the Aitu, and to encourage the development of a trade in captives obtained by the northern Baule from northern Voltaic and Mande peoples, primarily in exchange for firearms and gunpowder (Delafosse 1899a, 1899b; Chauveau 1976, 1979: 7-22).

Europeans began to hear of the Baule on the coast by the late 1840’s. General maps of West Africa continued to place the Baule to the north-west of Bondoukou following Bowdich’s earlier map (see Maps 6, 7 and 8), but in 1848 a group known as the ‘Bahouri’ was identified as being one of the main ‘tribes’ north of Grand Lahou (Clarke 1849: 73). By 1856 Tiassalé, or ‘Thiassaré’ as it was known then, was situated on a map of the French Marine (ANSOM, Fonds des fortifications. . .) (see Map 9). During the 1860’s, the Baule region became well known to coastal
Map 7. Details of Betts Map of West Africa (Family Atlas, 1848)
visitors who commented upon its commercial reputation: ‘Le commerce de Baouré [sic] consiste en or, en riches pagnes de coton dont la souplesse et l'éclat rehaussent la valeur. Les Bambara viennent sur ce marché avec des chevaux; il ne leur est pas permis de dépasser.’ (Fleuriot de Langle 1873: 378.) By 1867, the French included the ‘Baoree’ on a map of their coastal possessions, but apparently they considered it to be a specific town rather than a general region.20 As Admiral Fleuriot de Langle commented in one of his official dispatches (ANSOM, Gabon): ‘Nous aurions un avantage considérable à entrer en relation avec Baouré, parce que cette ville [sic] a un grand marché [. . .] Les pagnes du pays, fabriqués avec le coton qu'on y recueille en quantité considérable, sont très recherchés.’

Europeans continued to hear about the Baule indirectly until the 1890’s but no attempt was made to penetrate their territory. After his return from the Ivory Coast, in 1889, Louis-Gustave Binger summarized what was known about the Baule, providing for the first time a map which placed the Baule in their approximate position with respect to other ethnic groups. (See Map II.) The Baule, for their part, continued to expand their production of gold and cotton commodities for export, but they remained shielded from the new kinds of European demands for agricultural raw materials. Sealed off from one another by the intervening ethnic groups of palm oil producers, European merchants and Baule producers operated in largely separate economic spheres. The economic ‘revolution’ that had transformed so many of the coastal areas in West Africa during the 19th century had not yet occurred among the Baule in the interior. Indeed, given the vitality of the local trade in luxury exports, relatively archaic structures of production and exchange remained viable among the Baule long after they had given way to other forms of economic organization among their southern neighbours. (See Map 12.)

20. Service hydrographique de la Marine, 113.2.5 (1866-67), ‘Côte d’Ivoire, Côte d’Or et Côte des Esclaves’. A detail of this map is reproduced in SCHNAPPER 1961: 24-25. This map pinpoints a place called ‘Baoree’ in virtually the same position that a centre called ‘Bacorees’ appears on Alexis Hubert Jaillot’s map of Africa in 1674 (see: ‘L’Afrique divisée suivant l’estendue de ses principales parties [. . .] sur les relations les plus nouvelles par le Sr. Sanson, Géographe Ordinaire du Roy. Présentée à Monseigneur le Dauphin par [. . .] Hubert Jaillot’, 1674). It is significant that the Akan migrations into the lagoon area of the Quaqua Coast during the late 17th and 18th centuries cut off communication with the interior to such an extent that the term disappeared from European maps for over a century. Compare also the position of ‘Bacorees’ on Dapper’s 1686 map with the position shown for ‘Bahourie’ on the French version of Bowdich’s map (1819), (Maps 10a and 10b).
Map 8. Detail of West Africa I—SDUK (c. 1848)

The map which indicates for the first time the presence of Tiassalé, thought to be an entire region. The trade route from Tiakba to the Bandama is traced as well as a segment of the Bandama itself, but the French had not penetrated up the Bandama far enough from Lahou to confirm that the river they heard about from Tiakba was in fact the same one that flowed to Lahou.
Dapper’s work, initially published in Dutch in 1668, is a compilation of travelers’ accounts of the African coast. Like the maps of Hondius, Merian, Bertius, Speed, Jaillot and others of the 17th century it includes the designation of a region called ‘Bacorees’ in the hinterland of the Quaqua Coast (‘Quaqua Kust’ on the map). The position of this region is remarkably similar to that given to the area called the ‘Bahourie’ on the French version of Bowdich map (see Map 10b). Indeed when the differences in scale and scope of the two maps are taken into account the ‘Bahourie’ of Bowdich would seem to be only slightly to the north of Dapper’s ‘Bacorees’.
After an absence of nearly one hundred years from European printed maps, the term 'Bahourie' ('Bahooree' in the English version—see Map 3 above) appears on Bowdich's map in 1817. Bowdich heard of the 'Kingdom of Bahooroe' while on a mission in Kumasi. Other geographers located the 'Bahoree' to the northwest of Bondoukou, following Bowdich's designation (see Maps 6, 7 and 8 above). In 1866-67 a map of the Service Hydrographique de la Marine located a place called 'Baoree' to the north of French coastal forts. (See p. 524, note 20). Although the map of the Service Hydrographique indicates 'Baoree' as a town rather than a region, the placement given is virtually identical with that of the 'Bacorees' on 17th century maps. The reason for the absence of the term from European maps for so long might well have been related to the invasion of the coastal areas by migrant Akan groups who cut off coastal traders from the 'Bacorees' ('Bahooree', 'Bahourie', 'Bahooree', 'Baoree'—i.e. Baule) to the interior. Significantly, when they were first heard of in the 19th century, it was not on the Quaqua Coast itself but rather in Kumasi.
THE PRECOLONIAL BAULE

Map 11. Trade between the Sudan and the Gulf of Guinea (Binger, 1889)
3. The Evolution of Baule Social Structures

Although the Baule claimed to have originated from the Akan States to the east, their kinship organization on the eve of European penetration differed significantly from the lineage structures found among the Akan groups on the Gold Coast. Considering the historical context in which
the Baule peoples emerged, this was not surprising. Two centuries of migration and assimilation along an inter-ethnic frontier created conditions which favoured the development of new principles of group formation. The distinctive features of Baule social structure are perhaps best understood when they are considered in contrast to the classic lineage formations of the heartland Akan.

The Akan groups in the Gold Coast hinterland were organized on the basis of matrilineages, that is, groups of consanguineous kin related to one another by ties of descent traced through females. The matrilineage, or abusuan, as it was known in most Akan dialects, held collective rights in land, provided the framework within which inheritance and political office passed from one generation to the next, and regulated access to women by arranging marriages for its members. Matrilineages were by definition bounded groups with ascribed and unambiguous criteria for recruitment. In other words, from birth any individual Ego was automatically located within one and only one matrilineage. Thus, an individual’s location in the field of social relations was not a matter of choice nor was it open to dispute. As exogamous units matrilineages were linked with one another in patterns of marriage exchange. Among the Ashanti cross-cousin marriage was a preferred form of marriage arrangement, affording the structural possibility for two matrilineages to establish marriage alliances between themselves for several successive generations (Rattray 1929: chap. 29; Fortes 1950: 281-282).

The Akan lineage organization, as indeed any matrilineal form of social organization, contained within its own logic several points of structural ambiguity. One of the most salient had to do with the inherent conflict of authority between husbands and their wives’ brothers concerning authority over the wife’s/sister’s children. To the extent that the Akan groups adopted patterns of post-marital uxorilocal residence, the conflict was minimized, for under these circumstances the domestic unit of socialization was subsumed within the larger lineage structure. The wife’s brother could exercise both domestic and lineal authority over the sister’s children, while the husband remained peripheral, sometimes only visiting the domestic unit within the compound of the wife’s kin.

Conflicts would arise more readily, however, in circumstances where married couples took up post-marital virilocal residence, for in this case the unit of domestic authority and the matrilineage were not co-extensive. In this situation children would be raised in a domestic unit which was spatially separate from the residence of their lineage kin, and the lineage authority of the wife’s brother could only be exercised by intruding upon, and at times overriding, the paternal authority within the domestic unit.

21 Anthropologists have discussed what Audrey Richards dubbed the ‘matrilineal puzzle’ for several decades, and the structural contradictions of matrilineal descent systems are now well known. See particularly Richards 1950; Schneider 1961; Douglas 1971.
In short, a structural conflict existed between the lines of domestic and lineage authority. (See Diagram 2.) Despite this inherent type of conflict, this pattern of residence was the preferred one among the Ashanti in the Akan heartland (Fortes 1950: 262).

**Diagram 2. Matrilineage Mapped upon Units of Domestic Authority (Virilocal Residence)**

The practice of virilocal residence had the effect of geographically dispersing the matrilineage members. The newly married matrilineage females were separated from the core group of their lineage kin, raising their children in the household of their husband’s kin. Ideally the children, when fully grown, returned to take up residence with their mother’s kin, but for a large part of their early lives they were likely to live with their father’s kin. Thus, at any one point in time, a matrilineage had its younger members located in a variety of different and geographically separate households, and over time, the strength of the matrilineage depended upon its capacity to recuperate the children of the women it extended in marriage to males from other lineages.

In reality the ability of a matrilineage to recuperate its younger members was circumscribed by several practical considerations. The proximity between the husband’s domestic household and the wife’s matri-kin was an important limiting condition. If the two social groups were quite distant, communication between them could be reduced to a minimum, and recuperating the children from the husband’s household might prove problematic. On the other hand, large, stable towns provided ideal conditions for several matrilineages to live in close proximity, allowing for constant interplay between the matrilineage elders and the domestic units within which their junior members were
being nurtured. Since the household of his matri-kin would be both close by and familiar to the child under these circumstances, his chances of taking up residence in it were correspondingly greater than they would be for a child who had been raised with his father's kin at a considerable distance away.

Other conditions encouraged the formation of sizable matrilineages by providing positive incentives for younger members to return and reside with their matri-kin. High population densities created problems of relative land shortage, and in a context where matrilineages controlled all rights of access to land, junior members of a lineage would clearly have an interest in returning to take up effective residence with their matri-kin. Indeed, this may have been the only way for younger males to acquire the land they needed to establish themselves. In a similar way, the existence of substantial inheritable wealth in the hands of matrilineage elders tended to reinforce matrilineage structures, for the possibility of receiving an inheritance also attracted junior members to take up residence with their matri-kin.

Broadly speaking, then, matrilineages were most viable in areas of relatively high population density where people were located in large and stable nucleated settlements and elders possessed considerable amounts of inheritable wealth. To the extent that these conditions prevailed among the Akan of the Gold Coast hinterland throughout most of the 18th and 19th centuries, it is understandable that large, internally segmented matrilineages could emerge, achieving considerable genealogical depth over time.\(^\text{22}\)

Conditions along the Akan western frontier differed significantly, however, from those prevalent in the Gold Coast hinterland, and they did not provide a context in which matrilineages could flourish. The disjunctive migration pattern which led to the formation of the western groups had the effect of emphasizing the importance of the domestic household under the leadership of a founding adult male at the relative expense of the wider matrilineage. The process of migration itself greatly weakened the effective lineage relations between the heartland Akan groups and the settler offshoot communities, and under the turbulent conditions of the frontier, new matrilineages never developed properly. Instead, the localized household, known as the aulo bo, became the effective unit of social organization among the Baule.

The reasons for the progressive eclipse of the matrilineage among the Baule and the corresponding ascendancy of the aulo bo become apparent when the historical context is kept clearly in mind. Initially, groups of Akan peoples on the western frontier were small and separated from one another, dispersed as minority settlements in the midst of the pre-existent Guro, Dyula, Senufo and Dida populations. Thus, one of the

\(^{22}\) Fortes (1950: 255) reported that Ashanti maximal matrilineages reached a depth of twelve generations.
major conditions which facilitated the growth of matrilineages in the Akan heartland—that of lineage proximity in stable nucleated settlements—simply did not exist on the western frontier. Furthermore, the positive incentives were lacking for younger matrilineage members to leave the household of their father and join that of their mother’s kin. Although land was relatively plentiful along the frontier, the right of access to it needed to be acquired from the pre-existent ethnic groups in the area, either by force or by negotiation. In either case, the aulo bo was the effective social unit which received the right to cultivate land, and it was in his capacity as a member of an aulo bo, rather than as a member of a dispersed matrilineage, that a younger male could establish his own fields. As for inheritable wealth, in the period directly after migration, this was probably not in as great a supply as among the Akan groups in the Gold Coast hinterland, and of itself it was not likely to provide a strong enough attraction for junior members to abandon the security of the aulo bo in which they had been raised. Increasingly, the institution of the matrilineage fell into effective disuse as the functions it formerly provided among the heartland Akan were performed on the frontier by the aulo bo instead.

Ultimately the aulo bo replaced the matrilineage among the precolonial Baule because it proved to be a more effective unit of rapid social recruitment in a context where numbers were crucial for survival. The size of the immigrant Akan groups was a key factor in determining whether they could exist among the pre-existent ethnic groups. Over time the most successful Akan settlements were those which developed social mechanisms for generating or assimilating new members. Strict adherence to principles of matrilineal descent proved to be comparatively disadvantageous in the process of group formation. The reason for this was that the number of matrilineal descendants a man could expect to have was entirely dependent upon the number of his female siblings and further limited by their physical capacities of reproduction. This might be very limited indeed, and in any case it was something beyond his control. By contrast, the male head of an Akan household could swell the numbers of his children to a much greater extent simply by marrying more wives. Under conditions of virilocal residence and polygamy, therefore, it was possible within a short period of disjunctive migration to form households which were effectively larger than the available groups of matri-kin.

Matrilineages had proved useful among the Gold Coast Akan in a context where labour was plentiful and the problem at hand was to restrict access to inheritable wealth or land. As a means of restricting legitimate group membership matrilineal descent criteria were highly adaptive, but along the western Akan frontier, in situations where inheritable wealth was initially insignificant, land was plentiful and manpower was scarce, other norms of group organization were required for survival. As a nuii of defense or of economic production the large
potential membership of the *aulo bo* made it a more viable form of social organization than the comparatively restricted matrilineage.

Each *aulo bo* began as a localized descent group, composed of a senior male and his siblings, their junior wives and their children. To this core group were added any captive slaves which they could manage to obtain. Significantly, when captives were acquired, they were assimilated within the household as ‘fictive kin’, occupying the status of ‘child’ with respect to the household head or *aulo kpēgbē*. Thus, a household head who expanded the size of his following by absorbing slaves was in a structurally similar position to one who had married several wives and had numerous children. By either means the *aulo kpēgbē* was able to increase his following rapidly, but he could only do so at the expense of strict adherence to matrilineal principles of group formation. (See Diagram 2.) Newly assimilated slaves or direct offspring of the *aulo kpēgbē* were accepted as members of the *aulo bo* by virtue of real or fictive ties of patrilineal descent. Over several generations individuals came to trace their attachment to a particular *aulo bo* through a variety of descent lines. Matrifiliation, patrifiliation or indeed any combination of the two qualified an individual for group membership. Hence in practice, the kinship organization of the Baule became increasingly cognatic in character.

The cognatic nature of Baule kinship structures was already fully reflected in the kinship terminology which the Baule employed at the time of initial European contact in the 1890’s. The evidence that Delafosse published in 1900 on the basis of his observations among the Baule from 1894 onwards, indicated that, unlike the Ashanti, the Baule did not possess kin terms to distinguish between the status of ‘father’s brother’ and that of ‘mother’s brother’ or, for that matter, between either of these positions and that of the ‘father’ himself. All three individuals were referred to by the Baule with the single kin term, *si*. Similarly, all females in the first ascendant generation were designated by the basic term, *ni*. This generational pattern of kinship terminology characterized the terms used on other levels as well. Special terms for distinguishing between parallel and cross-cousins were lacking, and cousins were referred to by the same kin term used to designate siblings, *nyama*. In the first descending generation, basic kin terms were also lacking to distinguish an individual’s offspring from that of his siblings or his cousins; all children were referred to as *wa* or *ba* interchangeably.23

It is perhaps impossible to date the emergence of cognatic descent groups among the Baule with any degree of precision. The conditions along the western Akan frontier favoured their development ever since the first waves of immigrant Akan arrived amidst the pre-existent populations, but it is likely that during an indeterminate transitional period.

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23 Delafosse 1900: 18-20; for a detailed analysis of Baule kinship and alliance terminology see P. & M. Étienne 1967. The findings of the Étiennes, based on research in the 1960’s, are consistent with the evidence given by Delafosse.
both the *auto bo* and nascent matrilineages existed as concomitant forms of social grouping among the Baule. By the mid-19th century, however, the renewed pattern of directed migration towards the South and the increased assimilation of slave populations obtained from the North probably completed the eclipse of the matrilineage. The terminological evidence would seem to support this hypothesis, for changes in kinship terminology generally lag behind shifts in the day-to-day organization of social relations, usually by several generations. The fact that the Baule in the 1890's employed a broadly generational kinship terminology in which lineal, co-lateral and non-lineal distinctions were absent suggests that the cognatic character of Baule kin groups had already been firmly established in practice for several generations.

Beyond the realms of group structure and basic kin terminology, the Baule also differed from the Akan of the Gold Coast hinterland with respect to their pattern of marriage alliances. As we have indicated above, the matrilineal Ashanti preferred marriage between cross-cousins. In this manner, stable and continuous relationships could be built up over generations between two matrilineages engaged in the exchange of women in alternate directions. Among the Baule, however, positive marriage norms did not exist. Instead, marriage arrangements were governed by extensive negative marriage rules, or definitions of incest. To begin with, the *auto bo* was in principle an exogamous unit, and marriage within it was considered incestuous. As a result, *auto bo* members had to seek out marriage partners from neighbouring *auto bo*, but this realm choice was also limited by further extensive definitions of incest. Basically, it was considered a form of incest for any individual to marry into an *auto bo* with whom another member of his own *auto bo* had already contracted a marriage arrangement in the past (Etienne 1972; 1974).

Cross-cousin marriage was therefore not permitted among the Baule; indeed it was considered to be one of the most pronounced forms of incest. The interdiction of parallel marriages operated not only from one generation to the next, but within the generational level as well. Hence it was considered a form of incest for two siblings from one *auto bo* to marry into the same neighbouring or distant *auto bo*.

The collective effect of the Baule non-parallel marriage strategy was to spread marriage alliances in the maximum number of different directions. Instead of building up enduring alliances through repeated marriage exchanges between kin groups as the matrilineal Akan managed to do by concluding cross-cousin marriages, the Baule sought to spread their alliances thinly but widely. The reasons for the development of this form of marriage strategy probably lie once again in the conditions along the western Akan frontier. Incoming groups of immigrant Akan were no doubt anxious to establish marriage alliances with the pre-existent ethnic groups. Those immigrant groups that established the widest web of alliances were least vulnerable to attack and absorption,
and hence most capable of survival over time. In this respect the Baule non-parallel marriage strategy probably developed as a social solution to the collective problem of defense among the minority Akan immigrant communities.

The total pattern of Baule kinship and marriage practices created a society which differed significantly from the lineage-based societies in much of West Africa during the 19th century. Generations of development under conditions of frequent movement and continuous inter-ethnic exchange endowed the Baule with extraordinarily flexible social institutions on the eve of the colonial period. Structured as a cognatic descent group, the aulo bo differed from matri- or patrilineages in that its membership was not determined through simple ascriptive criteria. In a lineage-based society an individual was destined from birth to belong legitimately to one and only one lineage. This was not the case, however, concerning the position of an individual in a Baule aulo bo. The custom of aulo bo exogamy and the recognition of both matri- and patrifiliation as legitimate criteria for group membership combined to create circumstances in which a freeborn Baule was potentially a member of several different aulo bo. Because of the rule of exogamy his parents would have had to originate from two different aulo bo. Their respective parents in turn came from two separate aulo bo, so that by tracing his descent through lines of matrifiliation, patrifiliation, or any combination of the two, an individual Baule could legitimately claim membership in any of the four different aulo bo from which his grandparents originated. (See Diagram 3.)

Theoretically this structural feature of cognatic descent organization afforded the individual Baule a degree of choice not available in lineage-based societies. One’s choice was expressed by taking up residence in a particular aulo bo. In practice, one was raised within a given aulo bo until the age of young adulthood and for reasons of familiarity one usually stayed within that aulo bo. If conditions there became unattractive, however, the alternative of taking up residence as a full-fledged member of another aulo bo still existed, and to exercise that alternative one had only to move.

The possibility of structural alternatives for the individual within Baule society created a collective pattern of social relations that differed markedly from the pattern to be found in lineage-based societies. Lineages were discrete entities related to one another through regulated customs of marriage exchange. The aulo bo, however, necessarily included individuals who were potentially full-fledged members of other aulo bo as well. In other words, as cognatic descent groups, the aulo bo were not discrete bodies, but rather groups with overlapping membership, perpetually competing with one another to some extent for the effective adherence of the same mutually eligible personnel. (See Diagram 4.) Whereas patterns of solidarity between groups in a lineage society depended upon mechanisms of marriage exchange, inter-group relations
among the Baule cognatic descent groups were a function of descent as well as marriage exchange. This meant that although the social fabric of inter-group relations among the Baule was never very strong at any one point, it was nonetheless pervasively extended throughout the society as a whole. The two centuries of historical evolution prior to European contact had in effect equipped the Baule with flexible social institutions ideally suited for the purposes of defense. In the face of adversity an individual Baule had a number of alternate social
groups to which he could withdraw. As the French were to find out in later years, this feature of Baule social structure often made it difficult even to identify, let alone defeat, those who opposed their intrusion.
4. The Nature of Baule Political Leadership

A detailed political history of the precolonial Baule has yet to be written, and the task promises to be a difficult one. In the absence of contemporary written accounts, Baule political history needs to be reconstructed on the basis of oral traditions and external evidence. During the colonial period French administrators, in their attempt to identify chiefs with whom they could collaborate, began to collect traditions of chiefly succession, and their efforts have served as a starting point for most discussions of Baule political history since then.

Diagram 5a. Ouarébo Succession according to Delafosse (1900)

Diagram 5b. Ouarébo Succession according to Delafosse (1904)
The first outline of Baule political history was published by Delafosse in 1900 as part of his *Essai de manuel de la langue agni*. Taking the queen Poku myth as the basis for his historical reconstruction, Delafosse (1900: 200-201) offered a list of successive Warebo chiefs who were alleged to have governed the Baule peoples from their initial westward migrations until the arrival of the Europeans. (See Diagram 5a.) The list itself was rather short, and the precise line of lineal descent is not clear. Delafosse indicated only that succession passed to the nephew in each case. Apparently dissatisfied with this summary effort, Delafosse (1906: 281, Appendix II) presented a second list of chiefly succession in 1904. (See Diagram 5b.) On this list one additional chief appears, and Delafosse has eliminated the dates which he published with the first list in 1900. Even this schema did not seem fully satisfactory to Delafosse. He was careful to emphasize its tentative character, indicating that ‘Ce tableau est donné sous toutes réserves’ (*loc. cit.*).

Others who conducted more extensive inquiries, produced more elaborate genealogies of the Warebo chiefs. In 1905 after two months of investigation among the principal Warebo groups, Lieutenant Carpentier compiled a remarkably detailed genealogy of the Warebo from Mahonou and Sakassou. (See Diagram 6.)\(^{24}\) His list was considerably more

\(^{24}\) This diagram is a simplified version of an elaborate genealogy compiled as an appendix to: ANRCI X.38.9, ‘Rapport du Lieutenant Carpentier’.
extensive than the previous efforts by Delafosse, particularly in the presentation of family groups existing in 1905, but like the earlier attempts it lacked detail in depth. Recent attempts to trace the Warebo chieftaincy mirror many of the structural aspects of Carpentier’s 1905 findings. For example, the Warebo genealogy presented by Philippe de Salverte-Marmier (1965: 208) on the basis of research in the 1960’s also suggests that the Warebo chieftaincy alternated between different branches of the founding family—one in Sakassou and the other in Mahonou. (See Diagram 7.) Inconsistencies exist between each of these four principal chieftaincy lists, and for the time being they have not been resolved. More systematic inquiry is needed into Warebo traditions in order to be able to judge which of these alternative genealogies is most accurate.

Even after the problems of Warebo succession are satisfactorily resolved, important realms of Baule political history will still be largely incomplete. A major enigma remains, concerning what precise relations existed between the Warebo Baule and the other Baule groups. Delafosse accepts the queen Poku myth at face value and suggests that the Warebo dominated the other Baule groups as a royal lineage during the early years of Baule history. The image he presents is one of a feudal monarchy: ‘Aoura Pokou et ses trois premiers successeurs exercaient sur tout le Baoulé une véritable autorité féodale, et la famille royale, celle des Warebo, avait l’hégémonie.’ The evidence upon which Delafosse (1900: 201) formulated this generalization is not clear. For the most part, it seems to be derived logically from a model of what Delafosse (1900: 207) thought a conquering, quasi-military chief must have been like:

‘A l’époque des migrations Zema ou Akan, les immigrants suivaient un chef qui avait sur tous ses partisans une autorité véritable. Cela s’explique: un homme qui avait assez de prestige pour grouper autour de lui plusieurs familles et les amener à changer de patrie, à partager son sort d’exilé, à conquérir sur des autochtones souvent difficiles, à soumettre un nouveau pays et de nouveaux foyers, cet homme—ou cette femme—était par la force des choses le maître absolu de ses bandes.’

Although the image of a quasi-military, authoritarian chief is certainly consistent with the myths of Baule origins which Delafosse presents, it is doubtful whether this picture of authority is historically accurate. The formation of the Baule peoples, as we have seen, was the result of a more subtle and complex process than Delafosse’s version of the queen Poku myth suggests, and it is likely that from the beginning the role of chieftaincy among the Baule was based on more than simply military prowess.

Interestingly enough, Lieutenant Carpentier’s account of queen Poku’s arrival in the Baule area gives us a glimpse of the other kinds of leadership qualities reflected in Baule chieftaincy. Speaking of the peoples in the Warebo region, Carpentier indicated:
'La majeure partie de ces gens sont des autochtones ou plus exactement leur invasion du Baoulé s’est accomplie à une époque antérieure à celle d’Aura Pokou. Le chef des premiers occupants s’appelait Agpatou Mhenif et résidait à Niamabo. Aura Pokou, venant du sud, vint le trouver et lui demanda de lui indiquer un emplacement où elle pût construire son village [...] Agpatou lui indiqua le
voisinage de la Loka et Pokou s'installa à Badibassendi. Mais l'origine d'Aura Pokou étant connue, les habitants vinrent bientôt lui soumettre leurs différends. La reine fugitive ayant accepté de rendre la justice, Agpatou se jugea offensé et lui déclara la guerre. (ANRCI X,38.9.)

In the ensuing struggle between Poku and Agpatu, Lieutenant Carpentier recorded that Poku's partisans gained the upper hand despite their meager numbers, because of the supplies of guns and munitions which they brought with them. Ultimately Agpatu paid a tribute to the victorious Poku and her authority was recognized over the entire area.

Clearly, then, warfare enters as a theme in Carpentier's version of Baule origins, but he stresses that hostilities began on the initiative of Agpatu Mhenif, the indigenous chief, who was apparently jealous of the ascendant influence of the newly arrived queen Poku. As an overall picture of Baule expansion, Carpentier's version emphasizes Aura Poku's judicial role and suggests that her abilities as a conciliator in local disputes accounted for her initial influence. Significantly, Poku's alleged military prowess was only deployed in self-defense. Carpentier's vision of Baule chieftaincy as involving the broadly political attributes of conciliator and judge contrasts markedly with Delafosse's picture of early chiefs as military conquerors. In reality, Baule chiefs in the 18th century probably combined both attributes.

Over the course of the 19th century Baule political leadership appears to have been effectively decentralized. Southern migrations and expanded commercial activity during the 19th century provided opportunities for splinter groups to gain independent access to arms and establish their effective autonomy from the northern parent settlements. Delafosse (1900: 201) described this evolution in terms of the collapse of Waræbo hegemony:

‘... les grandes familles se fractionnèrent, émigrant du nord vers le sud, et à partir de 1850 environ, le chef de Sakassou [i.e. Waræbo], isolé, n'ayant que des rapports lointains avec les districts éloignés, n'eut plus assez de prestige pour gouverner une tribu qui occupait un aussi vaste territoire.’

Whether or not Delafosse was correct about the initial monarchical structure of the Baule under the first three Waræbo chiefs, it seems clear that by the end of the 19th century the Baule people were a stateless society, lacking the political institutions of centralized control typical of the Akan States to the East. As Delafosse (1900: 207) phrased it: ‘Il n’y a pas de chefs de tribus au sens que nous donnons au mot “chef”; il n’y a même pas à proprement parler de chefs de villages: il n’y a que des chefs de famille, au sens étendu de ce mot “famille”. Le régime politique se confond avec le régime social...’

On the most basic level, then, political influence was a function of one's kinship position as a household head or aulo kpégbé.25 The aulo

25. The following summary of Baule political structures is based on information
kpêgbê was the custodian of the household treasury, or adja. This consisted principally of gold jewelry or gold dust and richly woven cloth which was managed by the household head as a form of capital on behalf of the household as a whole. The adja accumulated from the pooling of individual production, and it was from this household treasury that debts would be paid, trading ventures would be financed, and captives would be bought. In short, by concentrating the most valued forms of wealth in the hands of the household head, the other members of the aulo bo were providing him a quantity of social capital which they expected him to deploy in their collective interest.

The performance of the household head was closely watched, and retribution for squandering the household adja could extend beyond the grave. Upon the death of the aulo kpêgbê, the household adja was displayed during the funeral and transmitted intact to his successor. One’s position in the afterworld was thought to be a function of the memory which people retained of the deceased person, and this memory was in turn directly related to both the absolute and the relative size of the family treasury displayed at the funeral (Etienne 1968). To the extent that the deceased aulo kpêgbê had succeeded in increasing the household adja over the amount that had been left to him by his predecessor, he was well remembered. Conversely, one’s reputation suffered if the relative size of the adja had diminished. Hence, the whole structure of belief created a situation in which one of the most compelling ambitions of any household head was to enlarge the household treasury entrusted to him.

In order to do this, the aulo kpêgbê needed to increase the overall production of his household. During the 19th century, the technology of production remained relatively simple in the gold mining and cotton producing sectors of the Baule economy, and land was still comparatively abundant. The major restraint upon the productive capacities of the 19th-century Baule resided in the relative scarcity of labour. Ultimately, those chiefs who could attract and retain the most manpower in their service, emerged as the most wealthy and thus the most influential political figures. For much of the 19th century, then, household heads directed their attention to what might best be called the politics of manpower.

Given the cognatic nature of the Baule descent groups, a household head was not automatically guaranteed the loyalty of his close kin. If conditions in a given household became too unbearable, a freeborn member might choose to take up residence in another aulo bo of which he was a potential member. Normally this did not happen frequently within the lifetime of a single household head, but his death might well occasion a major shift in the composition of the aulo bo, depending upon

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the popularity of the designated successor. The successor was obliged to some extent to solicit the loyalties of the members of the aulo bo by offering them conditions which were sufficiently attractive to dissuade them from taking up residence elsewhere.

This pattern of kin-group recruitment had several implications for the style of political leadership which emerged among the Baule during the 19th century. In practice the skills of the negotiator became virtual prerequisites for any household head who wished to maintain or extend his following. Skillful household heads could, for example, conclude advantageous marriage arrangements whereby their aulo bo would retain effective control over the children of in-marrying women, while at the same time, they would acquire the control over those of other out-marrying women. Similarly, skillful aulo kpēgbē could obtain favourable barter terms for the goods their dependants produced, and with accumulated capital in gold and woven cloth they could further expand their productive output by purchasing more slaves and recuperating the fruits of their labour. All of these activities required deliberate and often prolonged negotiations.

If a household head successfully recruited enough dependent kin and slaves, he could seek to establish his own village (P. Etienne 1971). He would thus assume the role of klo kpēgbē—that is, village headman or chief. The pervasive diffusion of arms and munitions in the 19th century made it possible for smaller and smaller groups to establish their effective autonomy from one another. Under these conditions many men who, under other circumstances, would have been limited to the role of household head within a larger village, found themselves capable of becoming independent village chiefs. To the extent that they could attract other potential kinsmen to join them, they could increase their productive output and purchase more slaves to further increase their production. In short, wealth and influence were reciprocally related. Intelligently employed inherited wealth could be used to attract more dependants, and more dependants created still more wealth. On this level political leadership was essentially conservative in character, for a chief’s concern was to maintain and expand his following through the prudent allocation of available resources in the expectation of a certain return.

A successful village chief could expect to extend his influence beyond his own village through a variety of means. By arranging marriage alliances for his junior kinsmen, a village chief entered into contact with other chiefs of varying importance from surrounding villages. As the importance of the particular village became recognized in a region, marriage exchanges between it and outlying villages could take on an asymmetrical character. Residence patterns among the Baule were ideally virilocal, but in practice they proved to be ambiloclal, reflecting most closely the relative resources of the partners concerned. Wealthy chiefs could expect to attract sons-in-law to reside in their village, while
at the same time gaining control over daughters-in-law. A *klo kpêsghê* who managed to conclude these types of arrangements in several different directions, simultaneously swelled the ranks of his immediate following and extended the radius of his allies (P. & M. Etienne 1971).

Baule village chiefs were expected to defend the interests of their dependants if they became involved in disputes with neighbouring villages, and in his role as conciliator a chief could extend his influence beyond his own village. Disputes could arise over land rights, incomplete marriage payments, divorce indemnities, or debts incurred in trade or exchange arrangements. Village chiefs tried to reach an agreement between themselves for infractions which their dependants committed. In the event that two village chiefs failed to agree upon a settlement, they could take their case to arbitration before a third village chief whose seniority, impartiality and influence they both respected (Delafosse 1902: 138-139). Chiefs in this position were usually elderly village chiefs of considerable substance who had achieved a regional reputation for their capacity to conciliate disputes. In some cases they claimed to be direct descendants from original leaders of the early migrations, but their role as arbitrators was something which they had acquired by virtue of their demonstrated abilities. In other words, although descent criteria played some part in determining who might most easily aspire to the role of senior or paramount chief in a given region, these criteria alone were not sufficient to qualify an individual for the task. One's descent position needed to be validated by widely recognized achievements.

Paramount chiefs of this status were known as *nvle kpê* and addressed with the respectful title of *famye*, but it appears that their position was not as fully crystallized as the institutions of *klo kpêsghê* and *auilo kpêsghê*. In this respect the position of *nvle kpê* or paramount chief is perhaps better characterized as a role rather than an office. Individual paramount chiefs could gain considerable influence over a wide area, but this was a function of their personal skill more than it was a feature of the role of *nvle kpê* itself. The evidence suggests that the formalized character of the role probably varied regionally. Broadly speaking, in the northern areas where settlements had been established on a stable basis for the longest period, the role of *nvle kpê* came closest to approximating a formalized office which could be inherited. Among the southern settlements, however, where migrant Baule groups had only established themselves since the middle of the 19th century, it seems that the institution was still in the process of formation and corresponded more closely to an achieved status or role, rather than a formalized office. In either area the primary function of the paramount chief was essentially judicial.

Judicial procedures themselves generally served to increase the wealth and consolidate the importance of the paramount chief concerned (Delafosse 1902: 144-145). Paramount chiefs received gifts in the first instance from each party in order to agree to hear the case. Subsequent
proceedings cost money as well, and a paramount chief would often be paid for his pains in gold. More importantly, perhaps, the paramount chief would often emerge from the proceedings as the creditor to the losing party. Most disputes were settled by payment of compensation, but if the losing party was incapable of paying the fine at the end of the case, he would often place himself in debt directly to the paramount chief who would pay it on his behalf. In reality the paramount chief usually paid out very little to the winning party, because by custom, the winning party was held responsible for the costs of the proceedings. Once these had been deducted by the paramount chief from the amount of the indemnity to be paid to the winning party, there was usually little left to be extended to the victor. On the other hand, the losing party was held to be in debt for the full amount of the settled indemnity to the paramount chief himself. In this fashion, paramount chiefs extended their influence beyond the range of their own kin, acquiring debtors as effective dependants from a wide geographic area.

An important village chief or a paramount chief could further extend his influence by concluding a special form of marriage arrangement with a similarly high ranking chief from another region (P. & M. Etienne 1971: 172-173; ANRCI X.34.8). These alliances, known locally as atôvéle marriages, conferred considerable prestige upon those who undertook them. The main reason for this was that these marriages were very expensive affairs. In addition to paying an inordinately high bride-price to the distant chief for his wife-to-be, a chief who concluded this type of alliance was required to finance public festivities accompanying the arrival of the bride in his village. Next to funeral ceremonies these occasions were the most expensive public events among the Baule, and those who had demonstrated their capacity to finance such events had given public proof of their wealth.

The marriage arrangement itself worked to the chief's long-term advantage, for in exchange for the unusually high bride-price he acquired undisputed rights over his wife's offspring. Children of such marriages were in effect uniquely dependent upon their father's aulo bo and were not permitted to return to their mother's kin group. Thus, by concluding an atôvéle marriage, a chief was strengthening his political position by securing the unqualified allegiance of his future descendants. As a means of generating dependants, this form of marriage was more advantageous than all others. Only the purchase of female slaves afforded the chief with the same structural guarantee of absolute control over his offspring.

In the absence of developed State structures among the precolonial Baule, the atôvéle alliances provided important inter-regional political linkages. Alliances of this kind could also serve as the basis for

26. ANRCI X.34.8; Delafosse (1902: 102) indicated that this kind of marriage was celebrated with elaborate festivities.
continuous commercial exchanges between distant groups, and there is evidence that some of the wealthy chiefs in the southern settlements concluded *atôvle* marriages with chiefs from the northern Baule groups (Chauveau 1979: 81-150). Whether or not commercial motives were paramount in moving chiefs to establish these alliances remains obscure, but it is likely that once they were established these alliances could serve as channels for the flow of trade goods in the mutual interest of both allied parties. Hence in addition to its symbolic function as an index of wealth, the *atôvle* marriage conferred multiple advantages upon those who could afford to conclude them.

In terms of the pattern of political activity among the Baule, then, although it is accurate to say that the Baule were a stateless society, it would be misleading to suggest that political power among them was evenly distributed. On the contrary, marked hierarchies existed in local patterns of leadership. In summary form, the gradation of leadership roles can be represented along these lines:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paramount chief</td>
<td><em>nułe kpê</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village chief</td>
<td><em>klo kpêgbê</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household head</td>
<td><em>auto kpêgbê</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On each level, the respective role was more of an achieved status than it was an inherited office. One’s chances of acquiring and maintaining the particular status depended upon the size of one’s following, and this was related most directly to one’s age, wealth, and personal skill in recruiting kinsmen and attracting other dependants.

Under these circumstances, political leadership among the precolonial Baule can be said to have depended more upon persuasion than upon brute power. The role of chief at any level more closely approximated a judicial figure than a military leader. The key to authority was influence. More precisely, it seems that the degree of authority which a leader could assert at one level was directly related to the strength of his influence on the next higher level. Schematically, the scope of influence and authority for the respective chiefs can be represented in this way:

27. Hierarchies existed as a result of the uneven outcome of the competition for manpower. One chief’s gain was to some extent another chief’s loss, and both gains and losses would influence a chief’s future manoeuvrability by determining which strategies remained open to him. In this sense, Baule society, while lacking State structures, was not a ‘segmentary’ society, for a chief’s position was not guaranteed by virtue of an acknowledged position in a balanced genealogical structure. Instead, dominance had to be achieved, and it could be lost. At any one point hierarchies existed, giving rise to very powerful individual chiefs, but the heirs of these chiefs had to reconstitute their own following. For a discussion of the inadequacies of a segmentary model with respect to the Baule, see Chauveau 1977.

28. Power, in the form of an armed following, was, of course, an effective means of persuasion.
This pattern of political activity created a situation in which a chief, in order to assert his authority at one level, was constantly trying to extend his influence beyond that level through the skillful manipulation of marriage alliances, credit and debt arrangements, and advantageous trade relations. In contrast to societies in which political office was hereditarily determined, and authority was a built-in feature of rank, the Baule political system was exceptionally fluid. Junior chiefs—that is, aulo kpégbé or klo kpégbé—were afforded considerable prospects for increasing their importance as they grew older and more wealthy, but the authority they achieved could not be transmitted intact to their successors. It was perhaps this feature of Baule politics which moved Delafosse (1900: 207) to observe: ‘. . . la forme politique qui prédomine est l’anarchie.’

In reality, although the Baule lacked a strong institutionalized framework of authority, Baule politics demonstrated a high degree of internal consistency. Political leadership, like the kin group upon which it ultimately depended, needed to be constantly regenerated. In this process the skills of negotiation and conciliation as well as the capacity for prudent calculation concerning the deployment of manpower and wealth proved to be the qualities most necessary for successful leadership.

5. Patterns of Conflict on the Eve of European Penetration

The non-ascriptive character of Baule kin groups established rivalry as an endemic feature of Baule social relations. Chiefs at all levels were engaged in muted competition for the effective support of mutually available kin. These rivalries existed between different aulo bo within a village, and if the animosity between two aulo kpégbé became too intense, the unity of the village could be jeopardized.

Under normal circumstances a gradual process of village fission was the regular result of the progressive displacement of populations as lands became exhausted around the immediate environs of a particular settlement. Villages were generally surrounded by a series of agricultural encampments, or niamwe. Each household within a village would create one or more niamwe close to its fields and, as the farm land in the vicinity of the village became less and less productive, the niamwe could be located
at a considerable distance from the village itself. The encampment consisted initially of temporary habitations capable of housing the members of a household near to the fields during the periods of intense agricultural activity from February through April and August through October. Over a period of years the makeshift accommodations in a niamwe could be gradually transformed into more permanent dwellings, and the niamwe itself would thus take on the appearance of a small village in which the members of a household would spend increasing amounts of time.

When tensions between two aulo bo in a village became pronounced, the normally gradual process of transforming a niamwe into a place of permanent settlement usually accelerated. One or both of the aulo bo would effectively split off from the parent village to form an independent village out of their respective niamwe. Thus, the existence of the niamwe provided the Baule with a mechanism for coping with the potentially dangerous conflicts which could flare up from the inherent rivalry between cognatic descent groups.

This means of dealing with social tensions had several important implications for the total pattern of social relations throughout Baule country. In the first place, the entire process helped to contribute to the generally weak pattern of Baule chiefly authority. The centrifugal tendencies of swidden agriculture combined with the flexible definition of Baule kin groups imposed practical limits on the exercise of arbitrary authority by aulo kpegbé with respect to their junior kinsmen. If demands became too intense, junior kinsmen could simply hive off with their families to transform their niamwe into permanent settlements.

Perhaps more important, the process of social fission never really resolved conflicts: instead it merely projected them onto a different plane. Tensions between aulo bo became rivalries between villages as each household group transformed its niamwe into a permanent settlement. Thus localized disputes tended to project themselves outwards over time, and relatively minor incidents, although never provoking overt hostility, could take on the proportions of enduring feuds, sometimes lasting in varied forms for generations. Often the precise cause of the original friction would have been forgotten, but a residual feeling of mistrust persisted between villages that were historically related.

Among the Baule, then, geographic proximity was not necessarily a reliable index of political solidarity as it frequently was in segmentary lineage societies. A village which was commonly recognized as being the parent settlement in a particular area could not simply count upon its seniority to assure its political preeminence. The Baule had a great respect for seniority, but an even greater respect for achievement. Thus a Baule household head who could establish his own village and successfully attract subordinate kin, acquire dependent slaves and build up an autonomous unit of production, was widely acknowledged in his own right.
As Baule village chiefs were constantly trying to extend the scope of their influence on a regional level, inter-village animosities could be projected on an ever wider scale. Feuding villages sought out relations with other feuding villages at a greater distance, and tentative lines of cooperation and hostility could be extended beyond the territorial scope of any one chief's authority, forming a network of rival ties across an entire region. Indeed, rival groups often linked up along their borders with corresponding factions within the socio-political structure of a neighbouring ethnic group, and in this fashion opposing networks of rival villages could transcend ethnic boundaries.

This pattern of rival village linkage became particularly pronounced among the Baule during the late 19th century as the different resources available along the Baule northern and southern borders stimulated the development of inter-territorial exchange. Since commercial relations among the Baule remained embedded in the general nexus of socio-political relations, enduring political conflicts were simultaneously expressed as commercial rivalries. Every chief had an interest in engaging in commerce, for to the extent that he succeeded in obtaining a secure source of captives from the North, and European trade goods from the South, he could consolidate his autonomy and gain a relative productive advantage over his local political rivals. Competing chiefs would therefore seek to extend the range of their socio-political alliances in a north-south direction in the expectation that these relations would serve as a channel for the circulation of trade goods to their advantage. Collectively these strategies led to the development of what could be called parallel 'trading chains'—that is, several parallel series of villages linked to one another in a north-south direction through multiple levels of kinship, political and commercial alliances. (See Diagram 8.)

The result was that fixed trade routes, in the sense of universally recognized and widely employed highways of regular and secure commerce, did not exist among the Baule. Instead the territory was transected by numerous alternate trails, serving as networks for the competing trading chains. On a map a 'trade route' could only sketch a general axis along which the more particular competition of trading chains took place. Within Baule country it is not yet clear what the precise linkages in the networks of cooperation and exchange were. In most cases the trading chains developed on the basis of the infrastructure of related communities formed in the process of the directed southern migration in the mid-19th century, but trading chains were not limited to groups of common origin. (See Map 4 above.) In any event trade focused towards two terminuses along the northern Baule frontier, Marabadiassa in the West and Groumania in the East. The dividing

29. For this reason the 'trade routes', on Map 12 above, are indicated as being only approximate: in reality rival trading chains competed with one another all along these axes.
point for the two branches of the trade seems to have been in the vicinity of Toumodi, where the northern flow of trade was intersected by a west-east trade route from Kokumbo towards the Anyi territories. The general area around Toumodi was referred to by the Baule as ngōda, or the 'crossroads', reflecting the pivotal position of that settlement for the patterns of exchange within Baule country (Delafosse 1900: 202; Bettignies 1965: 4).

Although little is known about the trading chains in northern or central Baule territory, evidence from the lower Bandama region reveals the emergence of two distinct trading chains beginning on the coast and extending northwards to well within the southern Baule groups (ANRCI X.30.II, oct. 1893 and nov. 1893; Salverte-Marmier &
Schematically the two parallel trading chains can be represented in this manner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>North</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Baule Peoples)</td>
<td>Lomo (Wàrèbo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Singrobo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brimbo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kpouébo (Ngàá)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ouossou</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ahuakro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N’Zianou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Elumwe Peoples)</td>
<td>Eliassou</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sindréssou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tiassalé</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Broubrou</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nianda</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Niamwé</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ahua</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ahuacré</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ahuem</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tamabo</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coast</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Avikam Peoples)</td>
<td>Grand Lahou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tiakpa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jack Lahou, Half Jack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Alladian Peoples)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Historically, the Grand Lahou–Tiassalé–Lomo trading chain seems to have been the oldest, and the Half Jack–Ahua–Kpouébo alliance appears to have emerged more recently, largely as a consequence of the conversion of coastal commerce from the trade in ivory and gold to the export of palm produce. In the 18th and early 19th centuries Grand Lahou dominated coastal commerce during the era of the luxury trade. Its position at the mouth of the Bandama river enabled it to serve as the natural outlet for the interior groups that produced the gold and collected the ivory in the entire Bandama basin. By the mid-19th century, however, the availability of palm oil along the entire length of the coast between Grand Lahou and Assini effectively deprived Grand Lahou of its preeminent commercial role. Palm oil was produced by the Adiukru and Ebne peoples along the interior lagoons and exported by the Alladian peoples situated on the thin band of land separating the ocean from the freshwater lagoons. In their capacity as produce brokers in this expanding commerce, the Alladian, known to the Europeans as the Jack Jack, became quite prosperous and attracted the major portion of the European trade. In 1862, one French observer (ANRCI III.8.80) commented on the scale of the oil trade in the region:

‘La majeure partie se vend à Jack Jack. Là, des navires marchands anglais et américains s'entendent avec les traitants noirs, font des avances considérables et emportent chaque année des milliers de tonneaux d'huile [. . .] 8 traitants y font à peu près un égal commerce, chacun d'eux envoie en moyenne 30 pirogues par mois.
The ascendancy of the Jack Jack continued throughout the latter part of the 19th century, and by 1885, when the French resident reported on the advisability of establishing customs posts along the coast, he indicated that the only significant points to control would be the Jack Jack villages (Grand Jack and Half Jack). Grand Lahou had fallen into comparative commercial decline. As Charles Bour described it: 'La nécessité de construire un poste de douane à l’embouchure de la rivière Lahou ne se fait pas sentir pour le moment à moins de causes politiques. La totalité des productions de la rivière est apportée chez les Jack Jack. . .''

To the interior a corresponding displacement of commercial activity seems to have taken place, as dissident groups split off from Tiassalé and established themselves on the opposite bank of the Bandama. The villages of Ahua and Niamwé, whose oral traditions indicate that they originated from Tiassalé, set themselves up as commercial rivals to Tiassalé, founding further trading settlements to the South (Ahuacré and Ahuém) (Salverte-Marmier & Etienne 1965: 32; Bamba 1975: 60, 94-96, 108, 115-116, 120-123; ANSOM, Service géographique des colonies). It is difficult to date the schism which led to the development of commercial rivalry in this region. Some accounts indicate that the initial disputes between Tiassalé and Ahua occurred shortly after the arrival of the populations in the region, presumably in the 18th century (Salverte-Marmier & Etienne 1965: 32). Whether or not this is the case, it seems that it was not until the development of the palm oil trade on the Alladian coast that this dispute could become a full-scale rivalry between distinct trading chains. Ahua, Niamwé and their allies gained increasing autonomy as the Alladian linked up with them to acquire slaves, gold and woven cloth from the Baule in the interior.31

Within the southern Baule region itself, an analogous rivalry developed between the Warëbo and the Ngbā. Once again the precise chronology involved remains obscure. Some accounts suggest that the northern Warëbo dispatched warriors to the southern Baule area sometime

31. The Ahua-Niamwé trading chain was strengthened from Niamwé northwards by commerce joining it from Dabou by way of the overland route from Dabou and the Adiukru. Similarly the commercial position of Tiassalé was reinforced by the contribution of commerce from Petit Lahou by way of Yokoboué, Gobous, Diagboua and Diguisou among the Dida to the west of the Bandama. See Map 13.
after 1830 to subdue the Ngbà, who were disrupting (i.e. diverting) trade between Tiassalé and the northern Warebo groups (Bettignies 1965: 4). This would suggest that Ngbà settlement in the area preceded Warebo intrusion in the South, and that the Warebo communities were relatively recent, established only in the wake of the alleged military expedition.32

Other oral traditions collected in the early colonial period (ANRCI XIII.45.3/36; XIV.34.4) outline the process in reverse, emphasizing the preeminence of the Warebo in the region and suggesting that the Ngbà under the leadership of a chief, named Akafu, challenged Warebo domination only twenty years prior to the arrival of the French:

'La région d’Ouossou a été occupée par les Baoulés au xvIIIe siècle [...]. Les Ouarébos qui dirigeaient le mouvement se seraient établis dans la région de Bouaké mais, tenant à conserver une ligne de ravitaillement avec la côte, ils ont établi une véritable ligne de postes depuis Bouaké jusqu’à Bouroubourou sur le Bandama. C’est ainsi que Tiassalé, Mbrimbo, Singorobo, Ouossou, Lomo, Domikro, Assomwé, Toumodi, etc. étaient Ouarébos. Grâce à cette ligne d’étapes les Ouarébos du Nord avaient de la côte la poudre, les fusils et le sel dont ils avaient besoin.

Les Ouarébos, qui devaient à cette époque représenter la caste militaire, abusaient de leurs avantages. C’est ainsi qu’à Ouossou ils percevaient un droit de péage sur les convois. Akafou, né à Moronou et marié à Kakoubla, s’étant établi à Ayrémou au sud de Ouossou [...], mécontent des exactions des Ouarébos, [...], réussit à grouper entre 1860 et 1870 les Ngbans dont il était le chef et les Assabous qui obéissaient à Kakoubla, et après une série de guerres meurtrières, il réussit à chasser les Ouarébos de la région d’Ouossou. Ceux-ci se réfugiaient à Singrobo et Mbrimbo et Akafou devint le chef incontesté d’Ouossou où il s’établit.'

More research is needed on the oral traditions of this area before the sequence of Warebo and Ngbà settlement can be established with certainty, but two important aspects of the area’s history seem beyond dispute. In the first place, there was some kind of armed conflict between the Warebo and Ngbà over their respective commercial influence in the area in the period just prior to French colonial rule. Secondly, it is clear that the Warebo associated themselves with the Tiassalé–Grand Lahou trading chain whereas the Ngbà linked themselves through Nzianou to the Niamwé–Ahua–Half Jack trading chain. Fatu Aka, the chief of Niamwé on the eve of French penetration, was the son of a Baule woman, and he was known to have pursued commercial relations with the Ngbà through his maternal kin in open competition with his rival, Etien Komenan, the chief of Tiassalé, whose allies were among the Warebo Baule (ANRCI XIV.4.3; Bamba 1975: 94-95).

It would be inaccurate to conclude that the rise of the palm oil commerce along the Alladian coast directly caused the conflicts in the Tiassalé area and the southern Baule interior, but it would not be misleading to suggest that these phenomena were closely related. In effect, the dispersal of economic and political power on the coast following the rise

32. This is the interpretation presented by J.-P. Chauveau, as well. See CHAUVEAU 1979: 23-37.
of the palm oil economy created conditions which favoured the development of multiple trading linkages towards the interior, thereby providing rival groups there the opportunity to forge competing commercial alliances towards the coast. The process was a reciprocal and cumulative one, giving rise to patterns of intra-ethnic conflict and inter-ethnic cooperation extending beyond the range of particular chieftaincies. Events on the coast reverberated far to the interior and, in this respect, the predisposition of various Baule groups towards the French could be said to have been prefigured long before the French actually confronted the Baule. To the extent that French activities on the coast seemed to favour a particular trading chain, its rival could be expected to be reticent, if not overtly hostile to the French presence. Similarly, by intervening to the disadvantage of a particular coastal trading centre, the French could simultaneously animate lines of potential resistance and collaboration far beyond the range of their immediate endeavour. The character of initial Baule response to the French would thus depend heavily upon the particular nature of the eventual French intrusion on the coast.

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