

Impact of food on the culture and humanity of ivory coast research paper

[Sociology](#), [Population](#)



Ivory Coast is a West African nation which is bordered by Mali, Liberia, Guinea, Ghana, and Burkina Faso. Notably, to the South its border is alongside the Gulf of Guinea. According to the survey that was carried out in 2009, population in Ivory Coast was estimated to be about 20, 617, 000. The country was colonized by the French and it gained its independence in 1960. This explains why the national language of this country is French. According to Janice (2004, pp. 23-25), from the economic point of view, Ivory Coast is well known by the production of coffee and cocoa. In terms of religion, Islam has been well propagated as compared to the other kind of beliefs. Notably, to a larger extent the culture of the Ivoirians has been greatly influenced by their colonial masters.

Arguably, food plays a significant role in defining the culture of communities. It should be noted that the kind of food that is consumed in most parts of Ivory Coast is mainly dictated by the type of climate and weather conditions that prevail in those regions. Hence, the staple foods that are found in Ivory Coast comprise of grains such as maize, millet, and rice, tubers for instance yams and cassava. Other foods include; legumes such as peas and peanuts and vegetables but in smaller quantities. These types of crops are best suited for the kind of climate that is found in this country, (Elberhard, F. & Lorenz, 2000. pp. 45-49). This explains the culture of yam and millet consumption that is common in most parts of Ivory Coast, more especially among the traditional communities who have not been largely influenced by the consumption of the western types of food. However, the nationally recognized food is foutou (futu); which is made from yams that have been crashed and should be taken with meat or fish stew. Again, this is one of the

factors why yam is respected in Ivory Coast.

Just like in most African communities, in Ivory Coast religion is highly influenced by food. For instance, among the Islam community, some foods such as pork are not allowed. Also, among the Christian community for instance, the Seventh Day Adventist vegetarianism is highly advocated. As such, food determines the culture of the various religious communities that are found in Ivory Coast. It is also important to note that food is usually used to mark different celebrations and festivals. For instance, among the Akan community yam festivals are very common. During this festival, the traditional Ivorian brew that is taken during this time is referred to as Flag. These festivals are usually organized during the harvesting periods during which members of this community come together to give thanks giving and also to commemorate the discovery of the yam as food, (Janice, 2004. pp. 15-18). The most significant of all the food festivals is the Festival of Masks. It usually takes place annually in the month of February, in the remote areas or rather in the villages more especially at a region known as Man. Also, during the month of March, food festivals known as the Carnival are very common in the Bouake region. Another significant festival that is significant in Ivory Coast is Fete du Dipri. This festival takes place in the month of April and it is held in Gomon, near Abidjan. Beside other cultural activities such as traditional dances, the festival is marked by the availability of traditional foods such cassava ('Attieke') which is taken in a special traditionally designed calabash.

As mentioned earlier, most of the parts of Ivory Coast have been dominated by the Islamic religion. Thus, during the major Muslim holidays such as

Ramadan, celebrations are usually organized at the end of the fasting period according to the fourth pillar of Islam to mark the end of this holiday.

Another significant Muslim holiday that is marked by food celebrations is Eid al-Fitr. During this period the Muslim community organizes feasts, prayers, gift giving, and fellowships. According to historians, the fetish clerics used to make magic amulets or portions. For instance, most individuals among the native individuals believe that the future could be determined by tossing a grain of rice into a box, (Fran, 2005, pp. 37-40). It is a common belief among the traditional communities that certain foods should be avoided in order to improve poor health or misfortunes. Offering of food and drink sacrifices to before consulting them is a common culture among the local communities in Ivory Coast.

Admittedly, the geographical location of any community determines the kind of food that will be available for such community. Therefore, culture of any community will be influenced by the kind of food that is available where they are located. This explains the fact that what one community takes to be its staple food might not be staple in other communities. The geographical location of Ivory Coast favors the farming of grains such as maize, millet and beans. It also favors the growth of coffee and cocoa, (Akua, 2006. pp. 24-30). Hence, to some extent, the availability of these foods in this region influences the way people live within this country. For instance, the culture of trading with traditional food products among the different ethnic communities in Ivory Coast is common. In most cases, these communities exchange among themselves what is produced in one community for what is not produced in the particular community. Moreover, farming of certain

types of food crops promoted certain traditions that are carried out during the harvesting time. This is the reason behind the yam, rice, and corn festivals. Hence, food is one of the key factors that has promoted the culture of interdependence among the different ethnic groups in the West African region in general and more specifically in the Ivory Coast.

Among most African communities, food can be used to distinguish the differences that exist between men and women. For instance, some communities believe that women are not allowed to eat certain foods because of their cultural beliefs. As such, some foods have been specifically defined for men. In the context of Ivory Coast, in the Baule community it is a taboo for a woman to eat chicken. There is no specific explanation that has been given to circumstances that led to this belief, but it is believed that if a woman eats chicken (kedjenou), there are high chances that she might not be able to conceive children, (Pamela & Kathryn, 2007, pp. 56-61). Moreover, there are some foods that cannot be eaten in some communities by a woman during the pregnancy periods. A good example is the prohibition of eating eggs by pregnant women among the Bwaka community. In order to promote healthy development of the unborn baby, in the Akan tribe women are supposed to take or rather eat certain herbs more especially during the late stages of pregnancy.

In conclusion, food is one of the key factors that define the culture of communities more especially within the African communities' context. For instance, in Ivory Coast cultural festivals are marked by consumption of certain traditional food. As an illustration these festivals include Festival of

Masks and Yam festival. Besides, religious cultures are defined by certain foods.

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