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Côte d'Ivoire: The Dioula people, particularly their physical traits, cultural beliefs, socio-economic situation and language (May 2005)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

In an August 2003 report on Côte d'Ivoire, Human Rights Watch (HRW) indicated that [HRW English version] "[t]he term 'Djoula' or 'Dioula' is actually a Senoufo word for trader [but that] it also refers to a small ethnic group from the northeast" (HRW Aug. 2003; see also AllAfrica 22 Oct. 2002; PANA 30 Mar. 2001; IRIN 2 May 2005). [IRIN English version] "Mostly Muslims" (ibid.; see also *Encyclopedia of the Third World* 1992, 917-918) and [translation] "traders by tradition" (*Le Quotidien du Peuple* 19 Apr. 2002), the Dioula from Côte d'Ivoire, like the Bambara, Mahou, Mandingue (*Encyclopedia of the Third World* 1992, 917) and Malinke (HRW Aug. 2003; *Le Quotidien du Peuple* 19 Apr. 2002), belong to the Mandé group (ibid.; *Encyclopedia of the Third World* 1992, 917; HRW Aug. 2003).

However, HRW also explained in its report on Côte d'Ivoire that the term Dioula [HRW English version] "is most commonly used to refer to people of several ethnicities from northern Côte d'Ivoire, including Malinké and Senaphou, who are in fact not ethnic Dioula but may speak a colloquial form of the language" (Aug. 2003). The same report stated that [HRW English version] "[t]he pidgen form of the Dioula language has become widely used by many Ivorians-whatever their origin-as the language of trade and commerce . . . [and that] [s]ome northerners view the use of the all-encompassing term as a pejorative" (HRW Aug. 2003, see also *Le Quotidien du Peuple* 19 Apr. 2002).

According to an information bulletin published by the United Kingdom's Immigration and Nationality Directorate, "the Dioula ethnic group was closely associated with both the MPCCI [Mouvement patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire] and the RDR [Rassemblement des républicains]" (United Kingdom Feb. 2004, para. 6.90; see also PANA 30 Mar. 2001).

The following information was provided by the president of the Burkinabe Movement for Human Rights (Mouvement burkinabé des droits de l'homme et des peuples, MBDHP), affiliated with the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), during a 17 May 2005 telephone interview.

The Dioula live in several countries of Western Africa (see also IRIN 2 May 2005), particularly in northern Côte d'Ivoire, western Burkina Faso, Mali, Gambia, Guinea (Conakry), Senegal and Sierra Leone. Predominantly Muslim, the Dioula are generally traders. They speak one language, Dioula, a sort of lingua franca that, despite minor variations, is understood in all these countries. The Dioula do not have any physical traits that distinguish them from other Sahelian Africans. However, certain patronymics, such as Touré, Koné, Konété, Ouattara, Koulibaly and Jawara, are Dioula-specific.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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United Kingdom. February 2004. Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Home Office. "Cote d'Ivoire Bulletin." <http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/en/home/0/country_information/bulletins/test_-_cote_d_ivoire.html> [Accessed 18 May 2005]

Additional Sources Consulted

Publications : *Africa Confidential* , *Africa Research Bulletin* , *Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent* , *Lettre hebdomadaire de la FIDH* , Resource Centre country file.

Internet sites, including : AllAfrica, Amnesty International, BBC Africa, European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI), Human Rights Watch (HRW), International Crisis Group (ICG), International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), MISNA, ReliefWeb, United States Department of State.

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