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Côte d'Ivoire: Chieftaincies, particularly that of the Agni king and that of the N'gouafoués of Kinimokro; process for choosing the Agni king's headman, and whether mothers must give their eldest sons over to the chieftaincy; the consequences of refusing to conform to the decision of the king and elders, and the state protection available (Sept. 2005)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

No recent information on chieftaincies in Côte d'Ivoire could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, the report *Recherche sur l'exercice du pouvoir local en Côte d'Ivoire*, published in 2001, provides a general description of the former chieftaincies in Côte d'Ivoire, and explains that the hierarchy of traditional authority consisted of three levels: the royal chieftaincy, headed by a king; the regional chieftaincy (which consisted of many villages), headed by a regional chief; and the village chieftaincy, led by a village chief (N'dri Kouadio 2001, 4). According to the same report, all three chiefs were, in the exercise of their authority, surrounded by headmen who acted as their advisers (ibid.).

The report also explained that, today, traditional chiefs have less authority: they are now appointed by the administrative authorities, and the state [translation] "has imposed a highly disciplined regime on them that includes the possibility of dismissal" (ibid., 7). The same source added that [translation] "the duties of these traditional chiefs basically consist in relaying information between the modern administration and the rural population" (ibid., 9).

With regard to the Agni in Côte d'Ivoire, who make up 4.5 percent of the country's population (Ethno-Net Africa n.d.), sources indicated that they are subdivided into several groups according to the Agni dialect they speak: Sanwi dialect (Sanvi), Indenie, Bini, Bona, Moronou, Djuablin, Ano, Abe, Barabo, Asrin, and so on (ibid.; Adouakou 8 June 2001; see also Mamadou n.d.). Speakers of each dialect have their own county town and king-the county town being [translation] "the largest village in the perimeter in which the dialect is spoken" and where the king lives (Mamadou n.d.).

An article published in *Fraternité Matin*, an Ivoirian newspaper, reported that Amon N'douffou V recently became king of the Sanwi kingdom after an enthronement ceremony was held in the village of Krindjabo, which belongs to the Sanwi Agni people (16 Aug. 2005; see also *Les Échos du Matin* 9 Aug. 2005). Other sources indicated that Boa Kouassi III is king of the Indenie kingdom (*L'Intelligent d'Abidjan* 8 Sept. 2004; *L'Inter* 17 Sept. 2002; Abidjan.net 23 Feb. 2005) and that [translation] "His Majesty Nanan Agni Bile II" is king of the Djuablin Agni (ibid.).

No mention of the chieftaincy of the N'gouafoués of Kinimokro and no information on the process for choosing a headman among the Agni or on the consequences of refusing to conform to the decision of the king and elders could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

For more information on chieftaincies in Côte d'Ivoire, see the attached document, *Recherche sur l'exercice du pouvoir local en Côte d'Ivoire*.

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.

References

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Other sources consulted

Oral sources: Attempts made to contact the author of "Les Agnis de Côte d'Ivoire" were unsuccessful.

Internet sites, including: Afrik, Afrol, AllAfrica, Amnesty International (AI), ECOI.net, Centre d'études d'Afrique noire (CEAN), International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Freedom House, International Crisis Group (ICG), Human Rights Watch (HRW), FIDH, IRIN, ReliefWeb, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Attachment

African Training and Research Centre in Administration for Development (CAFRAD) [Tangiers]. 2001. N'dri Kouadio. *Recherche sur l'exercice du pouvoir local en Côte d'Ivoire*.

<<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/CAFRAD/UNPAN005141.pdf>> [Accessed 13 Sept. 2005], p. 12.

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