

# WOMEN IN THE DOZO BROTHERHOOD IN IVORY COAST, FROM YESTERDAY TO TODAY: BETWEEN ANCESTRAL VALUES, MUTATIONS, STAKES AND POLITICAL TENSIONS

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## Résumé

*Appearing in West Africa, in Western Sudan, in the thirteenth century, at the birth of the Mali Empire, the Dozo brotherhood obeys a set of codes of good conduct. In particular, women play a leading role despite their status as initiates or not to dozoya. As in any traditional society in Africa, they are subject to the weight of many constraints imposed by the laws, customs and traditions established by initiatory rituals. The division of labour, as a general rule, is unfavourable to them, to the point where, in addition to domestic tasks, they ensure the supply of water, firewood, maintain a personal field and the education of children is devolved to them.*

*Adherence to the Dozo culture distinguishes them from others and gives them a special status. From then on, they gained a less unequal social status compared to the uninitiated and participated in certain debates in the brotherhood. Unfortunately, today, these traditional values are crumbling because of the profound changes born in contact with the so-called modern Western civilizations that call into question the functioning of the brotherhood, because qualified as primitive civilizations, in a new world order.*

*This article aims to highlight the role of the women of the Dozo brotherhood and the impact of so-called modern civilizations, political issues and tensions in Côte d'Ivoire in recent decades. Our methodology consisted in mobilizing information from books and oral testimonies in the field of oral investigations from a direct, semi-direct or free focus group. The objective cross-checking of this information and testimonies made it possible to understand the intensity of political tensions, the use of Dozo militias in national political affairs and the new functions of women in the Brotherhood.*

**Keywords:** Dozo women, Dozo brotherhood, Ivory Coast, mutations, Political issues and tensions

## INTRODUCTION

The Dozo belong to a secret, initiatory and exoteric brotherhood in West Africa. Their existence dates back to the thirteenth century with the birth of the Mali Empire, in Western Sudan. They are traditional hunters of Mandé-Bambara, Malinké and Sénoufo origin. They appear for the first time in Côte d'Ivoire, in the eighteenth century, during the great migrations of peoples that Côte d'Ivoire has known (Loucou, 1984). They settled in the north of the country, among others, in the regions of Korhogo, Ferkessédougou, Boundiali, Bondoukou, Bouna, Dabakala, mainly inhabited by the Mandé-Dioula and the Sénoufo. They are secret societies and fundamentally animist despite the expansion of Islam and Christianity in these regions. Particularly, in these groups of Dozo migrants, women figure prominently. Indeed, women, the subject of this analysis, play a preponderant role in the functioning of the brotherhood. Depending on their status as initiates to the dozo or not, they are at the forefront of the management of the household chores of the family and the country work, alongside men, according to the social division of labor in traditional African societies, in general, and according to the established rules that govern the functioning of the brotherhood to which they belong, moreover.

Unfortunately, today, more and more, profound social, economic and political changes affect their daily lives, to such an extent that their place of yesteryear within the brotherhood is crumbling. In view of this postulate, this article aims to highlight the motivations for this state of affairs, while evoking the conditions of women's adherence to the dozo; hence the following central question: What is the place of dozo women in the Dozo brotherhood of Côte d'Ivoire? Subsidiary questions will guide us in our analysis: How has the national political game affected the role of women within the Brotherhood? What are the new functions of women within the brotherhood?

A literature search was necessary to address this issue. We have exploited the work of some authors, specialists in the Dozo issue, such as (Hellweg, 2012), (Yousouf, 1994), (Guyon, 2015), (Manzon, 2014). Investigative reports from international organizations such as (Amnesty International, 2003), (UN Security Council, 2002) and (UNHCR, 2013) have also been of paramount importance in the development of this article. The publications of some actors of the Ivorian political class and academics, including (Soro Guillaume, 2005), (Datro and Kra, 2018) and the television documentary (RTI 1, 2008) helped to collect the necessary information. In addition to documentary research, the originality of the subject to be treated has led us to other avenues of information collection, including oral testimonies. We made a focus group with the Dozoba, ex-combatants of women within the brotherhood, using the direct, semi-direct and free technique.

The processing and cross-checking of the information and testimonies collected made it possible to develop a tripartite plan. Thus, in the first part of our analysis, we will present the initiatory practices and functions of the women of the Dozo brotherhood. The second part will focus on the interference of the women of the Brotherhood in the socio-political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. The last axis will deal with mutations, issues and political tensions among Dozo women.

### 1. The initiatory practices and functions of the women of the Dozo brotherhood

As mentioned in the previous pages, the dozo is a school, a form of secret, initiatory and exoteric organization. Integration at this school meets well-defined criteria including the will of the candidate. That said, one is not born Dozo but one becomes one by initiation. This principle reveals two categories of individuals in both men and women within the brotherhood.

The writings of (Holas; 1980, p.101) are revealing with regard to the organization of traditional African societies. It relies on the Krou to highlight the customarily imposed binding provisions that serve as laws in African societies.

In terms of judicial customs, prohibitions and totems (by definition unwritten, therefore formally poorly codified), the Krou in the image of African societies have always been flexible, harassing and devious.

Membership in the *dozo*<sup>1</sup> being the manifestation of a will that every candidate, man and woman, young and old man manifests to the master initiator. In the same vein, (Datro; 2015, p. 49) reporting the testimonies of Bassolé Ouédraogo, writes:

A Bambara, a Mandingo or a Mande is not in essence, a Dozo hunter. Do not become Dozo any man who has undergone an initiation to the *dozo*.

The duration of the training varies according to the candidate's ability to assimilate the lessons received. When the teacher judges that the student has shown courage and self-sacrifice, he frees him and allows him to join his family after mystical rituals worthy of his new status. However, in the context of this article, we are interested in women within the brotherhood.

#### 1.1. Women's initiatory practices: foundations and organisation

The integration of women into the Dozo brotherhood responds to well-defined motivations and obeys a particular social organization.

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<sup>1</sup> *Dozo* is a non-academic neologism that brings together a set of code of conduct specific to the brotherhood. In other words, it means the way of living, dressing, eating, hunting, better behaving in societies or maintaining relationships with uninitiated individuals.

### 1.1.1. The foundations (reasons) of women's introduction to dozoya

Women's membership in the brotherhood has a special character and is motivated by three main reasons. But the duration of training is relative and depends on the endurance, courage, tenacity and ability to assimilate the candidate's teachings. Echoing this reality, Touré Krotoum says, in these terms:

I was introduced to dozoya. It took me about a year of training, while other women spent either a little less time or a little more, depending on the strength of each of us. Once out of this initiation, I am not the woman of yesterday. I was introduced to dozoya. It took me about a year of training, while other women spent either a little less time or a little more, depending on the strength of each of us. Once out of this initiation, I am not the woman of yesterday. This is one of the functions of the women who have become Dozo, in addition to our usual functions of educating the children, helping our husbands to run the house.

But what are the fundamental motivations for the integration of women into the brotherhood? There are three reasons to be mentioned. These are the desire to apply to join the brotherhood, the response to a need for women with a certain mystical power for certain practices and the regulation of the principles of cohabitation in dozo villages are the foundations explaining the integration of women in the dozoya. As a result, this criterion identifies two types of women within the villages founded by the Dozo, namely ordinary or uninitiated dozoya women and Dozo women. The primary motivation for the initiatory integration of women is voluntary and personal.

Indeed, in the previous pages, we have mentioned that one does not become Dozo at birth or the status of the Dozo is not hereditary. Dozoya, therefore, is not passed down from generation to generation or from father to son. Membership is individual and gives the choice to any individual, man or woman to join or not. It is in this that we have men and women who are not initiated to dozoya, but who live together in the same family or in the same village. With regard to women, the subject of our study, the uninitiated or ordinary women are those who have neither education nor training in Dozo culture. In other words, they are women who are not subject to the Dozo code of conduct. This category of women leads an ordinary life like any African woman whether she is from a modern or traditional society. Kassoum Kaddy's<sup>2</sup> testimonies give a good account of this state of affairs:

I have never shown the desire to join the Dozo brotherhood in this village. I have never been introduced to Dozo culture even though I am in a relationship with a Dozo and I live with others in the village. I lead a life far from customs, forbidden and dozo totems. It is when you manifest the desire to join the brotherhood that you bring it to the knowledge of the dozoba, or the master trainer who in turn proceeds to your training, according to the provisions in force.

The second reason is purely mystical. It is a question of finding among women, in the villages of Dozo, endowed with a certain mystical power, in order to entrust them with certain tasks that fall exclusively within the competence of the initiates for the smooth running of the brotherhood. This category of women within the brotherhood intervenes in hunting rites, especially in traditional ritual hunts.

On the evening of a beating organized to ward off a bad fate within the brotherhood, the cooking of the hunting booty is entrusted exclusively to this second category of women initiated into dozo culture. It is in this respect that the words of Affoussata Maïmouna<sup>3</sup> deserve to be reported:

I joined, by initiation, the dozo brotherhood because the Dozo men needed women with Dozo values to play an important role, that of preparing the game killed during the ritual hunt that men organize to hunt bad spells in the villages and ask for the clemency of the protective geniuses. It was my husband who proposed me to the master trainer, the great *dozoba*.

Finally, the third reason is explained by the concern to regulate the principles of cohabitation in Dozo villages. It is the will of dozo men, spouses of uninitiated women. For the latter, living in a conjugal relationship or being in a relationship with a woman not initiated into *dozoya* is a threat of mystical powers, an attack on moral values and the code of conduct of initiates. This is why Kattié Youssouf's<sup>4</sup> testimonies are necessary to support our argument:

Living together in the same house and sharing the same bed with an uninitiated woman, in our Dozo, is dangerous, threatens prohibitions, totems, totems and exposes men to the wrath of protective geniuses. Because an uninitiated woman does not guarantee security in our daily life whose functioning is codified. That is why we invite or even impose at times, our spouses to integrate into the brotherhood.

As mentioned above, the dozoya is an education, a school that is based on a code of good conduct to which obedience and respect must be given to the initiated. This entry into this new universe is reflected in the wearing of the dozo outfit (photo p.6) where are engraved ornaments of various patterns and natures with different functions from each other.

According to Zoungrana Bazo<sup>5</sup>:

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<sup>2</sup> Interview of 21 July 2021, from 14:21 to 15:18

<sup>3</sup> Interview of 31 July 2021, in Korhogo, from 14:21 to 15:00

<sup>4</sup> Interview of March 10, 2022, in Gagnoa, from 15:25 to 16:00.

<sup>5</sup> Interview of July 25, 2022, in Korhogo, from 14:21 to 16:00

The wearing of this outfit imposes on women and men spiritual values that are reflected in the respect of the grand master, guardian of the altar of the brotherhood called the dankun or frankun.

In other words, for both women and men, the values and qualities of knowledge are earned by their knowledge and knowledge. Even if women are exempt from the physical practice of hunting art, they intervene in traditional medicine, thanks to the gift of healing received during their training. In his thesis, showing the importance of deities in the lives of the Dozo, (Datro; 2015, p.118) writes:

In the thought of the initiated, the sacred is omnipresent, there is no place for a profane life. Everything is linked, everything involves the forces of life. For them, the Dozo, there is one supreme being, whom they call maa ngala (or master of everything), the eternal creator of all that exists, dwells in heaven and escapes human intelligence.

Clearly, membership in the dozoya is a determining factor in the social categorization of women within the brotherhood. On the one hand, we have Dozo women and ordinary or uninitiated women, on the other. As mentioned in the first lines, we are interested in dozo women in this article. What are their functions within the brotherhood? This is the concern that opens the second part at this level of our analysis.

#### Dozo women in their apparatuses



Spring: <https://www.bing.com/images/search?view>, site visited on March 21, 2022

#### 1.1.2. Organisation of women's initiatory practices

The wearing of the Dozo apparatuses is the physical sign showing their integration into the brotherhood. Therefore, they are subject to the operating principles summed up in a set of codes of conduct within the company. However, the question that interests us at this level of our analysis is related to the organization of initiatory rites to which these women are subjected. In other words, how does the initiation of women candidates for *dozoya* take place? It should be noted that their initiation is the competence of the *dozoba* endowed with a certain mystical power and a perfect knowledge of medicinal plants. That said, do not initiate to the values dozo who wants. Training is a long process that involves several steps and tests to undergo. It is done in three stages, including the first level which receives adolescent candidates aged 18 to 25 years commonly known as the *Pousses*, the second level of training is reserved for young adults whose age varies between 25 and 50 years. The last level concerns *dozoba*, old dozo or old dozo whose age is beyond 50 years. These three stages of formation highlight the social stratification of the brotherhood, in general and that of Dozo women, in particular. Thus, we have in dozo women as in men, Shoots, young adults and *dozoba*.

The training is practiced successively in sacred places, especially in caves, at the foot of large trees, under an appatam strictly forbidden to the uninitiated and to the profane to the Dozo culture. But well before the start of the training, according to the testimonies drawn from the field surveys, a working session and explanation of the process is organized for the candidates already mobilized at the home of the master trainer, two or three days before.

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<sup>6</sup> Interview of July 25, 2021 in Bouaké, from 14h to 16h 00

However, back from their training that marks their integration into the brotherhood, what are the new functions of these new initiates? This is the central concern that opens the following pages.

## 1.2. The ancestral functions of the women of the brotherhood

The functions of Dozo women are of two types; mystical and artistic functions within the brotherhood and domestic and educational functions in the homes.

### 1.2.1. Mystical and artistic functions

Among the Dozo, as a reminder, the layman has no place. All life is related to the deities. Traditional hunting also plays a central role here. Indeed, the integration of women in the dozo gives them a special status, and therefore imposes on them certain activities and special missions with Dozo men. As a reminder, at the forefront of these activities forbidden to women, is traditional hunting. Better, the beaten are exclusively the business of men, within the brotherhood, because it requires a good dose of physical strength, courage, tenacity and a mastery of the strategies and mechanisms of taking game. However, they are involved at several levels in traditional hunting. They intervene mystically in the manufacture of the hunting arsenal, in the preparations and for the cooking of the game of the ritual hunt<sup>7</sup>.

The hunting arsenal is of various kinds and each tool has a specific function. For example, the Dozo outfits are handcrafted and the material of manufacture is of plant origin. In their manufacture, fundamental principles and rules are well defined from which no one can escape within the brotherhood. It is in this context that (Amselme 2010, p.45) writes that: in the manufacturing chain, each actor has a well-defined role in the manufacturing chain.

In the same vein, (Datro, 2018) identifies four types of outfits among the Dozo<sup>8</sup>, in this case, the *kôrôdréké*, the *bassidréké* or *drékédéni*, the *donsodréké* and the *donkèdréké*. At the same time, he specifies that women of a certain mystical power and initiated into dozo culture intervene in the manufacturing process. They collect the bark of wood, clean it before making it available to men, who, in turn, take over until the final manufacture of the outfit.

At the level of ritual hunting, the initiates are solicited for the cooking of game taken for their mystical power received during their training. Generally, this type of hunting is organized to ward off evil fate and ask the invisible deities for the protection of the community.

The consumption of game is also not allowed to anyone. Only Dozo women are allowed to consume them. The meat is eaten at the places of rituals and worship of the geniuses of the bush; hence the testimonies of Konaté Sidi Ahmed<sup>9</sup> :

Our women who have joined the brotherhood are important for the stability and protection of our villages. They are solicited, in several respects, for the preparation of the game that we have killed during the ritual hunt, because of the mystical powers that characterize them among the women of the Dozo villages.

### 1.2.2. The functions of women domestic servants and educators in households.

Of Mandé-Bambara, Malinké and Sénoufo origin, the dozo universe is modeled on the culture and civilizations of the peoples who live in this vast geographical space. Heir to a type of political, economic and social organization of the Mali Empire, the Brotherhood of the Dozo of Côte d'Ivoire is constituted as autonomous communities and Kafu or chiefdoms. In particular, Kafu is a restricted territory over which the power of the dozoba is exercised. Its authority extends to several villages. But he is himself a vassal of a more important political authority, the chief and he is assisted by a council of notables. It is in this living environment that dozo women in Côte d'Ivoire take their place, alongside the men of the brotherhood and hold preponderant positions.

In the economic structure of the Malinké-Dioula and the Senoufo, agriculture and trade occupy a prominent place. Primarily, agriculture is based on the cultivation of cereals, such as millet, fonio, rice, etc. and the harvesting of *néré*, shea and baobab (Kipré, 1992). Culturally close to these traditional societies, the Dozo whose women also practice trade and agriculture.

Kola, agricultural and picking products, vegetable salt and smoked and dried fish animate the markets in the villages. The testimonies of Coulibaly Saganfowah Ramata<sup>10</sup> clearly elucidate our analysis:

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<sup>7</sup> Ritual hunting exists among all traditional hunters in Africa including the Dozo. It is organized to ward off evil spells and to seek clemency and protection from supernatural deities. Game killed during this type of hunting is not cooked and consumed by anyone in the village. Those who are able to consume them are individuals endowed with a certain mystical power.

<sup>8</sup>Despite the social stratification of the brotherhood into three distinct classes (Dozoba, young adults and shoots), there are four types of Dozo uniforms. They are related to the function of each of them. The *Kôrôdréké* is carried by the great masters, the dozoba of the brotherhood. *Bassidréké* or *drékédéni* is a small outfit in terms of size. It is carried by the last social class of the Dozo, the *Pousse*. The *donsodréké* or the simple *boubou*. This outfit can be worn by all Dozo regardless of their age, their level of initiation and their social class, while the *donkèdréké* is the dance outfit. It is worn during the ceremonies of dances of rejoicing.

<sup>9</sup> Interview of 29 July 2021, in Korhogo, from 15:21 to 16:00

<sup>10</sup> Interview of 21 July 2021, in Kassoumbara (Korhogo), from 12:20 to 13:45

We women of the Dozo are at the center of economic activities in the brotherhood. We find ourselves in an association of women initiated or not dozoya to work in the fields and we sell the surplus of our agricultural products to buy what we do not have enough in our attics to ensure the food needs of our husbands and children.

The role of women in the Dozo world also consists in the education of children and the supply of water, firewood, food and the maintenance of a personal field cleared by men.

They handcraft household equipment, namely, containers for the preservation of spring water, cereals and in the extraction of cow's milk which also serves as commercial products in the villages. Kamagaté Awa<sup>11</sup> evokes this function of women well :

If our young children watch and feed the cattle in the village. We women, from a social stratum, intervene to milk cows. Milk is not only consumed for the food needs of our families but also serves as a commercial product in the markets of the surrounding villages.

All in all, in view of the above, it must be noted that among the women of the brotherhood, the functions assigned to them are enormously influenced by their new status as initiates which makes them women with diverse mystical functions and attached to the moral values that characterize all women in traditional African societies. Unfortunately, these ancestral functions tend to crumble gradually, in a world in full mutation and in the grip of multifaceted crises at the top of States.

1. The intrusion of the Dozo on the national political scene, a catalyst for the changes in the functions of the women of the Brotherhood

In Ivory Coast, Houphouët-Boigny's rapprochement with the Dozo and their interference in the national political debate in recent decades are the factors explaining the upheavals observed among women within the brotherhood.

#### 2.1. The birth of fraternal relations between Houphouët-Boigny and the Dozo in Ivory Coast

The use of the Dozo in the management of state affairs dates back to the mandate of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny, before it took on a much more significant and violent dimension at the initiative of an Ivorian political class in recent decades, precisely, from September 2002. Indeed, the experience of the revolt of Sanwin against his government, and in order to avoid experiencing such an event, President Houphouët-Boigny then decided to get closer to the Dozo brotherhood. To do this, he regularly entrusts missions unofficially to one of his faithful collaborators, the minister, Laurent Dona Fologo, a native of Korhogo, one of the Dozo's residential areas. Houphouët's undeclared aim was to prevent possible attempts against his authority. He does so very well, because during his tenure, the Dozo did not pose any threat to Côte d'Ivoire and its government. They were called upon for security in the north, to respond to the lack of military forces to carry out certain security and order maintenance missions, during certain official and solemn events organized by the Ivorian State. He goes even further to entrust them with peace missions towards their peers, alongside Minister Fologo (Datro and Bley, 2018). As such, the Brotherhood has regularly received special treatment from the Houphouët government in view of Diarrassouba Brahim's<sup>12</sup> edifying remarks:

The taste for modernism thus gradually took shape in our habits. Because we are men and we also live like others in society. It is true that our living environment is precarious and is often compared to primitive life, because we do not need modern infrastructure of equipment, including village hydraulic pumps, markets and schools. Ce n'est pas notre éducation. But we must recognize that the kindness of Houphouët-Boigny was very useful to us and changed, in one way or another, our habits and we began to live a little differently. This has had an impact on the functioning of our brotherhood, and consequently, on the lives of our women.

In addition, the socio-political crisis has given rise to a new function for Dozo women, to the detriment of the ancestral values embodied by the Brotherhood.

#### 2.2. Dozo women, training agents of enlisted *militias*

The national socio-political and military crisis, from the rebellion of September 2002 to the post-electoral crisis of 2011, gave rise to two categories of Dozo in Côte d'Ivoire, namely, the original Dozo and the "circumstantial" Dozo. The original Dozo are those who have undergone all the stages of initiation to dozoyza. They are therefore subject to the brotherhood's own code of conduct. Their initiation is the business of the dozoba in the pure Dozo tradition. Next to this first category of Dozo, there are those who could be called the "circumstantial" Dozo. Their initiation took place in a conflictual context, far from the culture of the brotherhood.

The main objective of this second form of initiation is to protect oneself against the enemy during the crisis. Insiders are, in the majority of cases, young people enlisted in subjugated villages and localities, in the southern half of the country, government zone in the early hours of rebellion and during the post-election crisis to build up military cattle against the incumbent government. In addition to the men, the few Dozo women who descended into the areas under rebel control,

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<sup>11</sup> Interview of 22 July 2021, in Kassoumbagra (Korhogo), from 15:12 to 16:00

<sup>12</sup> Interview of March 28, 2022, in Boundiali, from 12:41 to 13:21.

with their spouses, intervened in their initiation. Since war was not the domain of women, within the Brotherhood they were not on the front lines of the fighting.

On the other hand, in the headquarters of the rebellion, in the NOC areas, especially in the villages, the young people forcibly conscripted by the army of the rebellion, to make them soldiers, by the hundreds, were made available to these women for rituals of mystical purification. Once the first-degree training is completed with the women, these young people are made available to the men, for another stage of initiation, based on the handling of weapons and many other rituals. Highlighting this new function of Dozo women within the brotherhood, Affoussata Maïmouna<sup>13</sup> says:

We have been next to our husbands, we Dozo women, in the areas controlled by our soldiers, to participate in the training of young people forcibly conscripted or volunteered to join the rebellion. It had to be done because we were solicited by our husbands who know well our mystical abilities to carry out this kind of action.

Dozo women have also acted as facilitators and mediators in conflict management or when village security is threatened in besieged areas.

### 2.3. The birth of a new class of women within the brotherhood: women Militias

The dozo's interference in the political affairs of the state gave rise to a new category of women within the Brotherhood. Indeed, recruited as auxiliary soldiers for the army of the rebellion, the Dozo (men) did not hesitate to integrate Dozo women into their military expeditions. Although they were not physically on the front lines of hostilities, because war and the handling of weapons were not within their competence, the Dozo women still fully played the roles assigned to them, as militias. They were now prepared for war with very specific missions, to the detriment of the functions of a normal woman in society. Habits, their way of behaving, relationships with others are undergoing a significant evolution. Testimonies reveal that they were sometimes compared to the Amazons of the warrior fleet of the conqueror Samory Touré.

They were perceived as carriers of violence and dishonor. For lady Gnandré Sohoun Georgette<sup>14</sup>, these women are in disgrace and out of phase with not only the primary functions of a woman in traditional African society, but also, their own supernatural deities to whom the Dozo, in their entirety grant obedience, devotion and adoration are flouted. Why are they among the men who make war on us? They are simply mean like their own Dozo husbands. These women have lost our moral and societal values.

Through these testimonies, we must also understand the acts of violence with which these women are associated during the crisis. This new category of women is at the origin of the social fractures between women within the brotherhood.

### 3. The impact of mutations, issues and political tensions among Dozo women

In contact with external civilizations, in a deleterious socio-political and military climate, women in the Dozo brotherhood have seen their ancestral functions deteriorate in favor of new habits, in several respects.

#### 3.1. A function of mediator and facilitator in the settlement of disputes in the besieged areas

Between 2002 and 2011, political tensions and issues plunged Côte d'Ivoire into unprecedented moments of unrest at the top of the State, leading, in several localities of the country, both rural and urban, to the escalation of violence marked by the birth of intercommunal conflicts, armed robbery and insecurity, due to the proliferation of small arms. In the management and peaceful settlement of disputes between different communities in areas under the control of the rebellion, more and more Dozo women are associated, and their role has been very remarkable.

En effet, les femmes Dozo intervenaient exclusivement dans les cas de vol de vivres et de bétail comme médiateurs et facilitateurs. Les affaires étaient portées à leur connaissance par les hommes qui s'occupaient des problèmes les plus cruciaux tels que les affrontements armés entre les communautés. The role of these women was, in the settlement of disputes, to conduct trials between the two parties involved. Generally, they were placed under the control of a Dozo, head of the Headquarters where the tensions were taking place. They were particularly concerned with disputes involving young people and adolescents, both girls and boys. They never intervened in problems concerning men of a certain age. The information gathered from Affoussata Maïmouna<sup>15</sup> clearly reflects the preponderant role played by Dozo women during the socio-political and military crisis in the besieged areas:

We were regularly involved in the peaceful settlement of disputes between communities, in Duékoué, for example. Cases of theft of food, crops, livestock were sent to our manager. It was he, depending on the nature of the problem, who guided us on how we should proceed. Even if the final decision or verdict was up to him, we were at the forefront of the trials. What must be said is that in our Dozo villages, we have never been associated with such events. It is here that we do it because the men are very concerned about the missions entrusted to them by the chiefs.

À Gnonhou Siaba Solange<sup>16</sup> d'ajouter, allant dans le même ordre d'idée :

<sup>13</sup> Interview of 31 July 2021, in Korhogo, from 14:21 to 15:00

<sup>14</sup> Interview of September 21, 2021, in Duékoué, from 10:21 am to 11:41 am

<sup>15</sup> Interview of 31 July 2021, in Korhogo, from 14:21 to 15:00

<sup>16</sup> Interview of 24 August 2021, in Duokoué, from 13:20 to 15:18.

It was our first time, to see the Dozo women. The war showed us many things in Duékoué. Even these women were in our villages, in Duékoué, involved in the settlement of disputes. Cases of theft and destruction of crops were brought to their attention. They played the role of judge alongside the Dozo men. They were of a certain age.

Ultimately, at the current state of our analysis, it must be understood that tensions and political issues have created several forms of violence in Côte d'Ivoire, especially in NOC areas, leading to inter-communal conflicts. Particularly in the management of these disputes, dozo women have been very active, alongside their spouses, as mediators and judges, for a peaceful and peaceful resolution. All these facts have impacted the life of the brotherhood and women in several ways.

### 3.2. The social divide between the two categories of women within the Brotherhood.

We showed in the first pages of our work, the social stratification in Dozo women. But all of them coexist. Unfortunately, in their daily relationships, there are stumbling blocks and disputes sometimes causing sharp tensions between them, the war having negatively impacted them. When the war returned, these women-militias found themselves facing problems in managing their respective homes or no longer maintaining good relations with their co-wives with whom they had been in holiness before, before the crisis. The feeling of superiority is invited into their daily lives for the benefit of the women-militias who think that the war has given them a new status of warrior, and therefore, they must control everything in their homes, thus relegating, at times, certain privileges of their co-wives to the background. Touré Kadidjatou Mariame<sup>17</sup> clearly explains the deconstruction of social cohesion among women, when she says:

the war has stripped the women among us of their social values of our traditional African societies. The war has negatively changed the behavior of some of the women among us, so much so that they think they are above all the women in the brotherhood. Their husbands having killed during the clashes or having decided to settle in the south of the country, after the war, quarrels became daily between the two types of women. Such acts do not honour our society. Women must be re-educated in dozoya, and kept away from wars.

In view of these testimonies and the recurrent cleavages, we are able to say that the primary functions of women, whether or not they are initiated into dozoya, are in perdition, because of the intrusion of the women of the brotherhood into the national political debate, for the assigned missions. The fundamental principles of the brotherhood are undermined and therefore does not honor the brotherhood.

## Conclusion

The question of the place of women in traditional African society is still at the center of debates and the life of States in Africa and elsewhere in relations between communities. It is more interesting when it comes to those who belong to a secret and initiatory society such as that of the Dozo brotherhood in Côte d'Ivoire, a country that has experienced at some point in the history of its socio-political and military life, conflicts and tensions over electoral subjects. These moments of incessant unrest did not spare the Dozo and with them their wives who were very active in the ranks of the armed rebellion against the government in place. In addition, the functioning of the brotherhood highlights two types of women with specificities at the level of their functions. Beyond the usual functions that are known and devolved to them, Dozo women enjoy a special status that allows them to take part in certain ritual ceremonies alongside Dozo men. Ce statut particulier est, certes, la logique de leur adhésion au dozoya, mais il est porteur de discorde et de bouleversement des habitudes dans les rapports qu'elles entretiennent avec les autres, dans leur univers fondé sur des règles et principes. En clair, les femmes au sein de la confrérie sont prises dans un engrenage et sont sous le poids des changements profonds au contact des civilisations extérieures et des problèmes politiques au niveau national. These changes in women's functions gradually contributed to the loss of the moral and cultural values of the Brotherhood, because now Dozo women are perceived as militias in the service of the rebellion in the same way as men, their spouses.

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<sup>17</sup> Interview of 2 July 2021, in Korhogo, from 13:54 to 14:20



## Indicative Bibliography

### 1. Sources

#### Oral sources

N°	Enquirystubborn	Age	Status / Function	Survey Subjects	Location, date, time of interviews
01	Affoussata Maïmouna	45	Dozo woman	Role of women in the brotherhood	Korhogo, 31 July 2021, 14h21-15h00
02	Diarrassouba Brahima	35	Young adult dozo	Impact of Western civilizations and political tensions on the Brotherhood and on women within the Brotherhood	Boundiali, 28 february 2022, 12h41-13h21
03	Diarrassouba Fousséni	35	Young adult dozo	Impact of Western civilizations and political tensions on the Brotherhood and on women within the Brotherhood	Gagnoa, 10 March 2022, 15h23-16h00
04	Coulibaly saganfowah Ramata	54	Woman not initiated to dozoya, spouse of a Dozo	The reasons for the rejection of dozoya	Kassoumgbara, (Korhogo) 21 July 2021, 12h20-13h45
05	Gnadré Sohou Georgette	49	1st Vice-President of the agricultural cooperative of the women's association of Duékoué	The impact of the Dozo's involvement in the socio-political war on the life of the country	Duékoué, 22 september 2021, 10h21- 11h 41
06	Gnonhou Siaba Solange	50	President of the Women's Association of Duékoué	The role of Dozo Women in conflict resolution during	Duékoué, 24 august 2021, 13h20-15h18
07	Kadidjatou Mariame	-	Dean of age of Dozo women of the village of Povogo	The functions of women in the Dozo brotherhood	Korhogo, 2 july 2021, 13h54-14h20
08	Kamagaté Awa	61	Woman not initiated to dozoya, spouse of a Dozo	The functions of women in the Dozo brotherhood	Kassoumgbara (Korhogo), 21 juillet 2021, 15h 12-16h00
09	Kassoum Kaddy	55	Dozo woman	Women's initiation to dozoya	Korhogo, 21 july 2021, 14h21-15h 18
10	Kattié Youssouf	45	Dozo	Impact of Western civilizations and political tensions on the Brotherhood and on women	Gagnoa, 10 march 2022, 15h25-16h00

				within the Brotherhood	
11	Konaté Sidi Ahmed	78	Resident of Povogo (Dozo's village) uninitiated in <i>dozoya</i>	The relationship between Dozo women and women not initiated into <i>dozoya</i>	Povogo (Korhogo), 29 July 2021, 15h21-16h00
12	Touré Krotoum	52	Dozo woman	Women's initiation to <i>dozoya</i>	Korhogo, 10 July 2021, de 18h00-18h45
13	Zoungrana Bazo	74	Dozoba (old dozo)	Women's initiation to <i>dozoya</i> Types of women in the Dozo	Korhogo, 25 July 2021, 14h21-16 h00

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RTI 1, (2008), documentaire télévisé de juin, Connais-tu mon beau pays ? le *dozoya* en Côte d'Ivoire, 22h10-22h25  
<https://www.bing.com/images/search?view>, site visité le 21 mars 2022.

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