Baoule is the language of the Akan people who inhabit Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire. Three hundred years ago they migrated westward from Ghana when the Asante rose to power. Their oral and historical traditions are passed down through the language of Baoule, including the tale of how they broke away from the Asante.

Studying Baoule language in the U.S will help communication, culturally and economically, with the over 2 million people who speak Baoule. In this part of the world, education is very competitive and schooling is a privilege, and not a right like in the American Education system. Only the families that can afford sending their children to private school will receive a formal education, including the learning of foreign languages. Therefore, much of the less fortunate feel much more comfortable speaking in their mother tongue - Baoule, than an ill-taught second language. Studying the language will allow the story and culture of the indigenous people of Ivory Coast to become available.

The study of the Baoule language also helps understand their religion and culture. The Baoule speakers believe in a god called *Alouroua* as their creator and in *Asie* as a god who controls human and animals. Baule religion includes ancestor worship and a hierarchy of nature gods. These nature spirits, or *amuen*, are represented in sculpture and masked figures. However, their creator god, *Alouroua*, is not represented but remains omnipresent. The foundation of Baule social and political institutions is the matrilineal lineage; each lineage has ceremonial stools that embody ancestral spirits. Paternal descent is recognized, however, and certain spiritual and personal qualities are believed to be inherited through it.
WHAT'S THE NATURE OF THEIR LANGUAGE AND CULTURE?

The Baoule are notable for their art and craft work which reflects a strong Asante influence. Apart from creating sculptures made of wood, gold and brass they also engage in carving masked figures that have been greatly influenced by their neighbors: the Senufo, Malinke and Guro. Masks correspond to several types of dances: the gba gba, the bonu amuen, the mblo and the goli. They never represent the ancestors and are always worn by men. The gba gba is used at the funerals of women during the harvest season. It celebrates beauty and age. The bonu amuen protects the village from external threats; it obliges the woman to certain discipline; and it appears at the commemorations of death of notables. Mblo is the name of a performance category that uses face masks in skits and solo dances. Mblo masks, used in entertainment dances are one of the oldest of Baule art forms. These refined human face masks are usually portraits of particular known individuals. Goli is the day-long spectacle that normally involves the whole village and includes the appearance of four pairs of masks, music played on special instruments, and, ideally, the joyous consumption of a great deal of palm wine. Goli can be performed both as an entertainment and for the funeral of important men.

In addition sculptures are used to honor the families' spiritual spouse. Baule figures answer to two types of devotion: one depicts the “spiritual” spouse who, in order to be appeased, requires the creation of a shrine in the personal hut of the individual. A man will own his spouse, the blolo bian, and a woman her spouse, the blolo bla. The Baule believe that before they were born into the world they existed in a spirit world, where each one had a mate. Sometimes that spirit mate becomes jealous of their earthly mate and causes marital discord. When this happens, a figure depicting the other world spouse is carved and placated with earthly signs of attention.

One of the favorite pastimes of the Baoule is the game Atte, which is similar to the North American game of marbles, however they utilize nuts not marbles.