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Seeking Freedom in the Sahel: Frontiers of Liberation and Geographies of Belonging in an Atlantic-Saharan Crossroads

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Seeking Freedom in the Sahel:
Frontiers of Liberation and Geographies of Belonging
in an Atlantic-Saharan Crossroads

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in
History

by

Madina Thiam

2022

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Seeking Freedom in the Sahel:

Frontiers of Liberation and Geographies of Belonging in an Atlantic-Saharan Crossroads

by

Madina Thiam

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2022

Professor Ghislaine E. Lydon, Chair

This dissertation probes historical intersections between space, freedom, and political change in the West African Sahel, particularly the area of the Inland Delta of the Niger river, in today's Mali. The semi-arid Sahel region forms the southern shore of the Sahara Desert, stretching from the Atlantic coast of West Africa to the Red Sea. The Sahel has long been characterized by its connectivity, fueled by its people's short-and-long-range travels, as well as the expansive religious, commercial, and intellectual communities they formed. Because of these circulations and of its geographical location, the West African Sahel is a unique space where the production of race and Blackness, and political economies stemming from both the Atlantic and Saharan worlds, intersected. Sahelian networks through which people, words, and ideas circulated, spanned the lands tucked between the Senegal and Niger rivers,

but also the expanse between the Caribbean and Red seas. Framing the West African Sahel as a nodal region in world history, the dissertation proposes an account of the coercive regimes that overlapped there, through the seemingly disparate trajectories of three Sahelian Muslims who had to navigate them. Indeed, from the early-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, the West African Sahel underwent deep mutations stemming from the impact of three world-making political projects. These were the Atlantic political economy of capitalism and colonialism (sixteenth-twentieth centuries); Islamic revolutions and the rise of West African theocratic states (1804-1880s); and African decolonial struggles and political construction (1940s-1960s). The dissertation provides a layered and textured account of how Sahelian Muslims sought to emancipate from the systems of slavery, conquest, and colonialism that impacted them. It argues that they built freedom by relying on memory, intimacy, place-making, and the building of expansive cross-border communities. The dissertation is based upon research conducted in Mali, Senegal, France, Jamaica, Ireland and England.

The dissertation of Madina Thiam is approved.

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à TENIN DIARRA (1953-2022),
pour sa gaieté contagieuse et sa générosité

à ADAM SEYDOU THIAM (1954-2021),
mon maître et complice

à BINTOU SANANKOUA, MADINA LY-TALL, et TAMARO TOURÉ,
qui montrent l'exemple

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avec amour et gratitude

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TRANSLITERATION AND ORTHOGRAPHY

Translations are mine unless indicated otherwise.

Spelling of Arabic words
For ease of reading, I only transliterated with full diacritics the first instance in which an Arabic term or name appears. For all subsequent uses of these names or terms, I removed the diacritics. For instance, after the first fully transliterated mention, Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq Waṭara becomes Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Watara, Ḥamdallāhi becomes Hamdallahi, etc.

Spelling of Pulaar/Fulfulde words
For Pulaar or Fulfulde names and terms, I have followed the conventions layed out in the lexicon of Donald W. Osborn et al.[1] Whenever possible, for historical figures who were speakers of the Fulani language, I have preferred Fulani spelling over French or Arabic spellings. Thus Mamadou Thiam (French) becomes Mamadu Caam; Oumar Tall (French) or ʻUmar Tāl (Arabic) become Umar Taal, etc.

[1] Donald W. Osborn, David J. Dwyer, Joseph I. Donohoe, Jr., *A Fulfulde (Maasina) - English - French Lexicon: A Root-Based Compilation Drawn from Extant Sources Followed by English - Fulfulde and French - Fulfulde Listings* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1993).

ACRONYMS AND GLOSSARY

Acronyms

ANM: Archives Nationales du Mali

ANS: Archives Nationales du Sénégal

AOF: Afrique Occidentale Française (French West Africa)

CFAO: Compagnie Française d'Afrique Occidentale (French Company for West Africa)

JARD: Jamaica Archives and Records Department

PSP: Parti Progressiste Soudanais (Progressive Soudanese Party)

US-RDA: Union Soudanaise-Rassemblement Democratique Africain (Soudanese Union-African Democratic Rally)

Glossary

Fulbe/Fulani (interchangeable): pastoral people of West Africa

Fulfulde/Pulaar: variants of the language of the Fulbe people

Fuuta Tooro: region in today's northern Senegal

Fuutaŋke (sing.)/Fuutaŋkooɓe (pl.): person from Fuuta Tooro, usually Pulaar speaker

Hamdallahi: Capital of the caliphate Seeku Amadu Lobbo founded in the Inland Niger Delta (Mali)

Maasina: Area within the Inland Niger Delta, main province of Hamdallahi

Maasinaŋke (sing.)/Maasinaŋkooɓe (pl.): person from Maasina, unusually Fulfulde speaker

Characters

Seeku Aamadu Lobbo: Founder and first caliph of Hamdallahi

Aamadu Aamadu: Grandson of the latter, last caliph of Hamdallahi

El Hajj Umar Taal: scholar and jihad leader from Fuuta Tooro

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I am indebted to other UCLA professors. Bill Worger— the visionary who introduced several of us to zoom before it was a thing—has been a constant cheerful and encouraging presence. The door to Sanjay Subrahmanyam's office was always open, and I never walked out of there without news ideas to think through, and references to consult. Jemima Pierre and Peter Hudson organized the incredible Emancipation & Empire: Africa and the Project of Black Studies seminar series, which turned out to be seminal to my graduate studies. Michael Cooperson made me fall in love with translation.

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Coulibaly, Djibril Diabate, Aboubacar Sidibe, Mme Bagayogo and Mme Mariam Nientao. I thank the staff at the Archives Nationales du Senegal, with special thanks to Albert Diatta, and Mr Sylla. I thank the staff at the Royal Irish Academy, with special thanks to Sophie Evans, who looked into Abu Bakr al-Siddiq's Arabic manuscript even after my departure. I thank the staff at the Jamaica Archives and Records Department, and the Royal Geographic Society. I thank the editors of the Oxford University Press. Portions of Chapter 3 have previously appeared in Madina Thiam, "Women in Mali," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African Women's History*, ed. Dorothy Hodgson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016–) https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.530; and Madina Thiam and Gregory Mann, "The History of Mali: Connectivity and State Formation since the 18th Century," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, ed. Thomas Spear (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016–) https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.715.

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Lastly, this work is dedicated to the memory of Nancy Ruvimbo Tinoza.

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INTRODUCTION

Connectivity, Memory, and Belonging under Slavery and Colonization

O traveller to Gao, turn off to my city.
Murmur my name there and greet all my dear ones,
With scented salams from an exile who longs
For his homeland and neighbours, companions and friends.
—Aḥmad Bābā of Timbuktu, written in exile in Morocco (c. 1594-1608)[1]

In October 1935, upon returning from a tour of the Mopti region, Félix Eboué wrote to his direct superior, the Governor-General of French West Africa. At the time, Eboué was the Lieutenant-Governor of the French Soudan—a two-year stint bracketed between similar appointments in Martinique and Guadeloupe.[2] During his tour he had stopped by Ḥamdallāhi, a small Soudanese village which, in the nineteenth century, had been the capital city of a powerful West African state: the Hamdallahi Caliphate. In Hamdallahi, local chiefs had him visit ruins, which they explained were the resting place of four eminent figures in the caliphate's history: the founding ruler Seeku Aamadu, his son and successor Aamadu Seeku, and his trusted counselor Alfa Nuhum Tahiru. After the visit, Eboué wrote to the Governor-General to propose that the ruins be renovated. Restoring them, he argued, would cause "negligible spending from the local budget," yet would most definitely "lift the spirits of the colony's Muslim populations." Building a proper tourism infrastructure for the site would even bring in revenue, as African Muslims already engaged in a yearly pilgrimage to the

[1] John Hunwick, *Timbuktu & the Songhay Empire: Al-Sa'dī's Ta'rīkh Al-sūdān down to 1613 and other Contemporary Documents* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), vi and 316-18.

[2] During the colonial period, the French Soudan was the name of today's Republic of Mali. Throughout this dissertation, I will utilize "Soudan" to refer to colonial Mali, and "Sudan" to refer to the East African country.

Hamdallahi.[3] Omitted in Eboué's letter—and perhaps in the chiefs' guided tour—a fourth person laid resting in the same burial grounds: Wèlorè, an enslaved woman who had been Seeku Aamadu's concubine. Wèlorè's erasure stands in contrast to a much-publicized aspect of Eboué's own life story: he was himself the grandson of slaves.[4] His great-grandparents, who had toiled on spice plantations in French Guiana, were born on the African continent. They were likely captured in West Central Africa, near today's Congo, Angola, or Mozambique, around 1815-1824—the same years that Seeku Amadu erected his caliphate. As such, Eboué embodied both the continuities and tensions inherent to France's imperial encounter with Africa: a Black man, he was both a product of the French Atlantic trade in slaves, and an arm of French colonization.

The story of Eboué's visit to Hamdallahi encapsulates the main theme this dissertation explores, namely: the entanglement and tensions embedded in the encounter between several systems of slavery,

[3] ANOM 15G 19, 22 October 1935: Affaires Politiques—L'administrateur en chef des Colonies, Eboué, Lieutenant-Gouverneur du Soudan Français, à Monsieur le Gouverneur Général de l'Afrique Occidentale Française, Dakar.

[4] Eboué is arguably the most commemorated French man of African or Caribbean descent. His body is buried in a vault at the Panthéon. This state monument in Paris was erected to be the resting place of "Great Men" to whom "the Nation is Grateful," as the inscription on the Panthéon's entrance states. Since the end of World War II, the French state has been adamant to frame Eboué's life as a paragon of French social mobility and of the proof of the promise of French liberal democracy. The fact that his grandparents were enslaved, and that he became a top state official, is usually framed as proof of France's equalitarian citizenship model. In a 2004 ceremony honoring Eboué, an official from the Ministry of the Overseas (the former Ministry of the Colonies), stated about him: "A grandson of slaves was promoted thanks to the Republic. He became a high-rank public servant, and one of the very first Free French Fighters. He was secretary-general of Martinique, and more importantly, later became governor of Guadeloupe, in 1936. He left a strong impression there, because he was the first Black governor in the Caribbean. His appointment was thus proof of a strong drive towards social progress." The expression "Free French" refers to French people who, during World War II, defected from the official, pro-Nazi government based at Vichy, and joined the French resistance. See Pierre Julien, "Félix Eboué, "premier resistant de l'Empire,"" *Le Monde*, October 16, 2004, https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/2004/10/16/p-felix-eboue-premier-resistant-de-l-empire-p_4302010_1819218.html. For more on Eboué, see René Maran, *Félix Eboué. Grand Commis et Loyal Serviteur (1884-1944)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007, nouvelle édition avec une introduction de Bernard Mouralis) ; Josette Rivallain and Hélène d'Almeida-Topor, eds., *Eboué, soixante ans après. Actes du colloque organisé en 2004 à la demande du Ministère de l'Outre-Mer* (Paris: Publications de la SFHOM, 2008) ; and Brian Weinstein, *Eboué* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).

and colonialism, as it played out in the Muslim Sahel in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[5] As a representative of the French Empire in the Soudan, Eboué contended with the region's heritage of Muslim expansion and state-building, and the necessity to govern African Muslim colonial subjects. In this particular case, he addressed it by advocating for a state-sponsored site of memory, which he hoped would help placate the colonized, and benefit the empire.[6] Doing so, he also had to contend with the legacy of overlapping slavery systems, represented that day by the haunting presences of Wèlorè and of Eboué's own African ancestors. The dissertation examines how Sahelian Muslims, enslaved like Wèlorè or colonized like those Eboué governed, pursued freedom against slavery and empire.

"Seeking Freedom in the Sahel: Frontiers of Liberation and Geographies of Belonging in an Atlantic-Saharan Crossroads" is a study probing historical intersections between space, freedom, and political change in the West African Sahel, particularly the area of the Inland Delta of the Niger river, in today's Mali. The semi-arid Sahel region forms the southern shore of the Sahara Desert, stretching from the Atlantic coast of West Africa to the Red Sea. The Sahel has long been characterized by its connectivity, fueled by its people's short-and-long-range travels, as well as the expansive religious, commercial, and intellectual communities they formed. Because of these circulations and of its geographical location, the West African Sahel is a unique space where the production of race and Blackness, and political economies stemming from both the Atlantic and Saharan worlds, intersected. Sahelian networks through which people, words, and ideas circulated, spanned the lands tucked between the Senegal and Niger rivers, but also the expanse between the Caribbean and Red seas.

[5] I employ the expression Muslim Sahel to encapsulate the region's centuries-old Islamic tradition.

[6] On sites of memory see Pierre Nora (ed.), *Les Lieux de mémoire*, 3 volumes (Paris: Gallimard, 1984).

Framing the West African Sahel as a nodal region in world history, the dissertation proposes an account of the coercive regimes that overlapped there, through the seemingly disparate trajectories of three Sahelian Muslims who had to navigate them. Indeed, from the early-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, the West African Sahel underwent deep mutations stemming from the impact of three world-making political projects. These were the Atlantic political economy of capitalism and colonialism (sixteenth-twentieth centuries); Islamic revolutions and the rise of West African theocratic states (1804-1880s); and African decolonial struggles and political construction (1940s-1960s). The dissertation provides a layered and textured account of how Sahelian Muslims sought to emancipate from the systems of slavery, conquest, and colonialism that impacted them. It argues that they built freedom by relying on memory, intimacy, place-making, and the building of expansive cross-border communities.

Plural Slaveries

Slavery looms large as the main thread connecting sociopolitical developments in the Sahel throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the region, slavery operated at once as a profit-driven system, a social institution, and the basis for the production of variegated systems of race, class, and social hierarchies. Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, European powers enslaved and forcefully migrated millions of Africans, to expand their empires and accumulate wealth on both sides of the Atlantic. And as early as the sixteenth century, Muslim scholars in northwest Africa and the Sahara began debating the legitimacy of enslaving Black Muslims. Both the trans-Atlantic and the trans-Saharan trades in slaves were enforced through legal debates and specific processes of racialization

aimed at imbuing Blackness with enslaveability. These processes, and the meanings ascribed to Blackness, differed in the Atlantic and the Sahara, and were constantly contested and redefined. Nevertheless, they overlapped in the Sahel, and impacted its peoples.

By the early nineteenth century, the gradual end of the Atlantic slave trade fueled existing internal circuits of slavery in West Africa—both within the region and across the Sahara. West African Muslim scholars, rulers, and revolutionaries, all grappled with the issue of slavery, with different intentions and outcomes. In 1776 in Senegambia, banning the enslavement of fellow Muslims by European Christians and Arabs was the main drive behind Sulayman Baal and Abdul Qadri Kan's Toorobe revolution. Further east, in today's northern Niger and Nigeria, the rise of Usman Dan Fodio's Sokoto Caliphate in 1804 was also triggered by his fight against the enslavement of Muslims. Yet, once the Fuuta and Sokoto revolutionaries became rulers and established theocracies, slavery and slave-raiding, particularly that of non-Muslims, became among the primary motors of their states' economies and societies. Throughout the nineteenth century, conflicts, conquests and jihads led by West African rulers in the Sahel triggered widespread insecurity, displacements, and enslavements. By century's end, France would frame its colonial enterprise as a "civilizing mission" aimed in part at emancipating enslaved Africans on the continent, while at the same time coercing African colonial subjects into labor. As Africans contested and fought French colonialism, they grounded their struggle in the brutality of racial slavery and forced labor borne out of France's imperial encounter with Africa. To free themselves from colonialism, they asserted, was to free themselves from slavery.

Arguments and Terms of the Study

Through three micro-historical case-studies, "Seeking Freedom in the Sahel" analyzes the quests for freedom of four Sahelian Muslims whose lives were engulfed in the deep social and geopolitical reconfigurations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The study reconstructs the social and intellectual worlds of two enslaved and one colonized individuals, along with a web of surrounding characters—scholars, caliphs, traders, political advisors, poets, pilgrims, Sufi clerics, women and men enslaved in the Sahel or across the Sahara and Atlantic, and anti-colonial activists. I argue that Sahelian Muslims relied on memories of the local past, intimacy and kinship, as well as cross-territorial circulation and information networks, to negotiate spaces of freedom against enslavement and colonization. They anchored their sense of self in cross-border and cross-temporal communities, and in doing so, sought to secure more autonomy and safety. In sum, to build freedom, they relied on communal belonging, rather than legal manumissions or colonial granting of rights. Importantly, enslaved and colonized Sahelian Muslims constructed alternative visions of space, place, and connectivity, to maneuver across slaving and imperial geographies and stretch the frontiers of legal fictions of liberation, such as emancipation laws or colonial citizenship-granting. In developing these arguments, the dissertation makes three contributions.

Atlantic-Saharan Crossroads

As previously noted, this study theorizes the West African Sahel, particularly the adjoining Inland Delta and Niger Bend regions, as a node simultaneously impacted by modes of race-making stemming from overlapping processes of the trans-Atlantic and trans-Saharan slave trades. This framing of the Sahel as an Atlantic and Saharan crossroads, allows me to tease out the contrasting ways

in which race and vulnerability to enslavement, displacement, and violence were manufactured in the region. I utilize the case-study of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq Waṭara, a Timbuktu-born man enslaved in Jamaica, to provide an in-depth, historically situated examination of socially-produced Blackness and vulnerability in the Atlantic and Saharan worlds. As Cedric Robinson noted, racial regimes—such as slavery and colonialism—perpetuate by naturalizing themselves, concealing their origins, histories, and inner-workings.[7] Analyzing the specificities of overlapping processes of racialization and practices of slavery in the Sahel, is thus necessary in order to denaturalize hierarchies and social difference in the region.[8]

Seeking Freedom

This study queries the category of "freedom," shared by multiple actors throughout Sahelian history, with different meanings. Each chapter lingers upon rhetorics of oppression and freedom, especially when they emerged during moments of turbulence, rupture, and reconfiguration of slavery and colonization. In these moments, groups with different interests at stake would mobilize shared idioms of freedom and oppression with different purposes, giving rise to tensions, ambiguities, and contradictions. In one telling instance in 1948, which I discuss in chapter 5, Moroccan Sufi leader Si Benamor was sent by the French administration on a West African tour. Addressing audiences of Black Muslims in Niger, Soudan, and other territories, Si Benamor asserted that "France did not seek to treat

[7] Cedric Robinson, *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning. Blacks and the Regimes of Race in American Theater and Film before World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), xii.

[8] See Alden young and Karen Weitzber, "Globalizing Racism and De-provincializing Muslim Africa," *Modern Intellectual History* (2021), 1-22.

them as slaves, but rather as friends."[9] Si Benamor's choice of words was not innocuous. He was well aware that African colonial subjects constantly reasserted the continuities between France's practice of racialized slavery, and French colonization. Yet, by indirectly shining light on the afterlives of trans-Atlantic slavery, Si Benamor eschewed trans-Saharan slavery, and his own practice of racial slavery. Indeed, he himself owned several Black slaves, and the French administration had even, at one point, placed him under house arrest for "grave abuse inflicted on three female negroes working in [his] Sufi lodge."[10] Si Benamor, who enslaved Black Africans, thus tapped into the rhetoric of freedom and oppression to promote the idea of a pan-Muslim allegiance to France to a Black audience. Laying a foundation to better understand such tensions, chapter 2 discusses some connections between Islam, slavery and race-making in the Maghreb as they played out in the nineteenth century.

Glaring contradictions were at work in instances when imperial powers coated new forms of coercion with emancipatory language.[11] For instance, the French Empire framed itself as a champion of freedom for Africans. This was in the case in France's early twentieth century simultaneous abolition of slavery and imposition of forced labor in colonial West Africa, which chapter 4 goes over. By mid-century, after the end of World War II, France would even commemorate Felix Eboué as "Empire's Foremost Freedom Fighter" (see Figure 14). Eboué earned the title for fighting against Nazi Germany's occupation of France, while successfully enforcing the French occupation of Africa. Indeed, as

[9] El Hadji Samba Amadou Diallo, "Le rôle de l'Administration française dans les conflits de succession dans la Tijāniyya nord-africaine: répercussions sur les marabouts sénégalais," *French Colonial History* 9 (2008), 165.

[10] Ibid, 159 and 165.

[11] Historians of the French empire have studied the antinomies of colonial discourse on humanism and rights. See e.g. Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) ; and Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

governor of the French East African colonies, Eboué decided to defect from the legal, pro-Nazi French government at Vichy, and support Charles de Gaulle's dissident government. In 1944, Eboué welcomed Charles de Gaulle for a conference at Brazzaville, which sealed the colonies' support for the French resistance. During the conference, de Gaulle reasserted that independence for African colonies was out of the question.

Imperial powers also sought to define the parameters of acceptable emancipation, framing freedom as something they needed to first teach to enslaved and colonized Africans, before it could be fully granted. For instance, when the British crown abolished slavery in 1833, it did not free the enslaved. Instead, the Crown coerced them into a mandatory period of "apprenticeship," during which they were forced to work, and which Britain claimed was necessary to train Africans into freedom.[12] Chapter 1 describe one Sahelian's bid to secure full freedom, after having secured his legal release from both slavery and apprenticeship. Over a century later, when the French National Assembly voted to transfer powers to locally-controlled territorial assemblies in 1957, a French official likewise argued that the aim was to offer Africans an "apprenticeship" into an independent government.[13]

Frontiers of Liberation, Geographies of Belonging

Beyond the restrictive legal and imperial definitions of what freedom meant, Sahelian peoples came up with their own theories and practices of freedom, effectively expanding the frontiers of liberation. Sahelian Muslims relentlessly tethered their sense of self to meaning-infused places and

[12] The apprenticeship was applied throughout the British Caribbean, save for one exception, Antigua, which moved directly from slavery to emancipation. On the end of slavery in Antigua See Natasha Lightfoot, *Troubling Freedom. Antigua and the Aftermath of British Emancipation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015). Lightfoot argues that Antigua's formerly enslaved population did not achieve full freedom, even after legal emancipation.

[13] Gregory Mann, *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel: The Road to Nongovernmentality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 63n. 93.

memories, intimacy, kinship and community, as well as intellectual traditions and situated knowledge. These practices constituted geographies of belonging, which countered dominant geographies characterized by borders and imperial regimes. In doing so, they rejected the oppressive practices and inner-workings of imperial and slaving regimes. As such, the epitaph which opens this chapter is an example of geographies of belonging. Taken into exile for fifteen years in the Maghreb following the 1591 conquest of Songhay, Timbuktu scholar Ahmad Baba grounded himself in his community of "companions and friends," and figuratively mobilized trans-Saharan circulation networks to ensure his name would not be forgotten among his "dear ones." A nod to his own geographies of belonging, Ahmad Baba's poem is also an indictment of the brutality Moroccan rulers unleashed upon him, by tearing him away from his community. In chapters 4 and 5, I analyze the travels and migrations of Sahelian Muslims who rejected bondage, and political borders.

In tracing Sahelian geographies of belonging, this study follows the lead of Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods, who argued that "the situated knowledge of [Black] communities and their contributions to both real and imagined human geographies are significant political acts and expressions."[14] Sahelians embedded themselves within communities that crossed over geographical and even temporal limitations, and in doing so, they maintained spaces free of imperial impositions and slavery's yoke. In chapters 1 and 4, I discuss the importance of one's *isnad*—a chain of knowledge transmission in Islam, which lists the name of one's teacher, teacher's teacher, and so on. Asserting one's isnad, was to put oneself into conversation with a cross-temporal community of past and present

[14] Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods, "No One Knows the Mysteries at the Bottom of the Ocean," in *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*, ed. Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods (Toronto: Between the Lines and Cambridge: South End Press, 2007) , 4.

Islamic scholars. Sahelian Muslims who had undertaken religious training, clung to their isnad to assert their belonging into communities of knowledge—a space-time which slavery or colonization could not affect. In crafting arguments about freedom-seeking, space, place, and belonging in the Sahel, the dissertation draws from several strands of historiography, which I outline below.

Historiographical Engagements

Interrogating Freedom

This dissertation draws from the work of scholars who have explored the theories and practices of freedom that people in Africa and the African diaspora have constructed. An important feature of this scholarship is to reject the premise that, within imperial and slaving regimes, legally-granted manumission or emancipation resulted in freedom for the disenfranchised. As such, these scholars do not define freedom as a legal condition, but rather as a process in the making through the struggles and visions of disenfranchised and formerly enslaved peoples. This scholarship includes Jessica Marie Johnson's study on Black women's freedom practices in eighteenth-century West African and Caribbean worlds. Johnson highlights the distinction between free status, which "did not define freedom," and the intimacy and kinship practices through which African women and women of African descent sought to "endo[w] free status with meaning."[15] Thomas Holt, and Natasha Lightfoot, have explore tensions and struggles following the British emancipation from slavery in the

[15] Jessica Marie Johnson, *Wicked Flesh. Black Women, Intimacy and Freedom in the Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 2-3.

Caribbean in the late 1830s.[16] Expanding upon Eric William's seminal work, Holt's study on Jamaica demonstrates that the end of slavery was a means for Britain to turn the formerly enslaved into a proletarian class, fit to provide labor in a capitalist wage-economy.[17] Not only was the apprenticeship the enslaved had to go through very much akin to slavery, but even full legal emancipation did not result in considerably greater autonomy. In Antigua, contrary to the other Caribbean colonies, Britain declared emancipation in 1834 without going through a period of apprenticeship. Yet, as Lightfoot argues, former slave owners consistently sought to crush Black efforts to establish independent communities and craft new ways of living. Lightfoot highlights how freed people carried out "struggles to claim space, uphold community, acquire property, and reorganize their time and labor," under brutal conditions of ongoing oppression.[18] Anette Joseph-Gabriel's study on Black women in the twentieth century French empire, analyzes how intellectuals and anticolonial activists Suzane Césaire, Paulette Nardal, Eugenie Eboué-Tell, Jeanne Vialle, Andrée Bloin, Aoua Keita, and Eslanda Robson crafted an expansive and emancipatory definition of citizenship. They pushed the frontiers of the

[16] Thomas Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992) ; Lightfoot, *Troubling Freedom.*

[17] The seminal work that ties the end of Atlantic slavery to the rise of industrial capitalism (rather than humanitarian concerns) is Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994, orig. 1944). Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robin D.G. Kelley speak of "Black Globality" to describe the entanglements of slavery, empire, and capitalism in producing overlapping (free and coerced) labor migrations from both Africa and Asia. See "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World," *African Studies Review* 43, no. 1 Special Issue on the Diaspora (2000): 11-45 ; Relatedly, Lisa Lowe has examined "the often obscure connections between the emergence of European liberalism, settler colonialism in the Americas, the transatlantic slave trade, and the East Idies and China trades in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. See Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015). A more recent study is Zach Sell, *Trouble of the World. Slavery and Empire in the Age of Capital* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021). In Africa, processes of Atlantization resulted in the entanglement of the end of trans-Atlantic slavery, continental slavery, the "legitimate trade" in goods, and colonialism. See e.g. Trevor Getz, *Slavery and Reform in West Africa: Towards Emancipation in Nineteenth-Century Senegal and the Gold Coast* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004) ; and Ndubueze Mbah, *Emergent Masculinities: Gendered Power and Social Change in the Biafran Atlantic Age* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2019).

[18] Lightfoot, *Troubling Freedom*, 4.

bounded, restrictive form of belonging that national citizenship entailed. Instead, they proposed an alternative vision of citizenship, grounding their belonging in "multiple cultural and political communities at once: France, Africa, the Caribbean, the African diaspora, the Global South."[19] These scholars' work inform my study, in their foregrounding of the alternative visions of society and community that African peoples on the continent and in the diaspora have imagined and pursued.

Space, Place, and Alternative Geographies

The dissertation draws from the arguments of scholars who have studied various communities' reliance on cross-border mobility and information networks, memory, spirituality, and the imagination, to construct alternative geographies expanding across and beyond nation-states. Engseng Ho has examined the discursive and literary practices of the Hadrami diaspora in the Indian Ocean, across continents. Ho particularly focuses on genealogies, "names circulated through many lines of descent and many territories across the Indian Ocean," which "represent mobile and expansive naming practices."[20] Ketaki Pant embeds her study of the Indian Ocean's connections, mobilities, and imaginaries in merchants' homes peppered across port cities.[21] Sunhil Amrith's study on migrations and travels in the Bay of Bengal, a tightly connected region "by kinship, by commerce, by cultural circulation," highlights the artificial nature of the partitioning between South Asian and South East Asian history.[22] Likewise, Julius Scott demonstrates the vitality of the circulations of free and enslaved

[19] Anette Joseph-Gabriel, *Reimagining Liberation. How Black Women Transformed Citizenship in the French Empire* (Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2020), 7.

[20] Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility Across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 188.

[21] Ketaki Pant, "Homes of Capital: Merchants and Mobility across Indian Ocean Gujarat" (PhD diss., Duke University, 2015).

[22] Sunil Amrith, *Crossing the Bay of Bengal. The Furies of Nature and the Fortunes of Migrants* (Cambridge:

Black people in the late eighteenth century Caribbean. The "common wind" of ideas and words they funneled throughout the region effectively rendered null colonial borders, and European attempts at curtailing revolutionary fervor among enslaved peoples.[23] Christian Bawa Yamba has shown how West African Muslim pilgrims, some of whom fled the colonial invasion, created permanent liminal communities in East Africa, whereby they never completed their physical pilgrimage, yet imagined and asserted themselves to be in perpetual movement towards Mecca, despite never having reached it.[24] Robin D.G. Kelley discusses Black liberation struggles grounded in alternative notions of space, community and belonging, including the idea of a return to Africa, flights to the cosmos, Black internationalism, third-world solidarity, or joined mindscapes through shared music and art.[25] Keren Weitzberg, and David Glovsky, have examined trans-local networks built by Somali and Fulani peoples in East and West Africa, highlighting their contestation and resistance to increasing territorial control and partitions in the colonial and post-colonial eras.[26]

In studying West African circulations, this dissertation frames the West African Sahel, particularly the floodplains of the Inland Niger Delta and Niger Bend region—where most of the

Harvard University Press, 2013), 3.

[23] Julius Scott, *The Common Wind. Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution* (New York: Verso, 2018).

[24] Christian Bawa Yamba, *Permanent Pilgrims: the Role of Pilgrimage in the Lives of West African Muslims in Sudan* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995).

[25] Robin D.G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams. The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002); and Kelley, *Africa Speaks, America Answers. Modern Jazz in Revolutionary Times* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

[26] See David Newman Glovsky, "Belonging Beyond Boundaries: Constructing a Transnational Community in a West African Borderland (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 2020) ; Glovsky, "Medina Gounass: Constructing Extra-National Space in a West African Borderland," African Studies Review 64, no. 3 (September 2021), 569-594 ; Keren Weitzberg, *We do not have borders. Greater Somalia and the Predicaments of Belonging in Kenya* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2017).

dissertations' protagonists lived, departed from, or traveled to—as a crossroads between the Atlantic and Saharan worlds. In doing so, I follow a framework set by historians of the greater Senegambia.[27] These scholars, including Boubacar Barry, Oumar Kane, Madina Ly Tall, and more recently Ousmane Traoré or Idrissa Ba, have traced the dual trans-Atlantic and trans-Saharan outlook of much of Senegambian commerce and diplomacy, from the fifteenth century onwards.[28] Barry, in particular, has framed the encounter of maritime European trade, and African desert-side trade in West Africa, as an encounter between "the caravel and the caravan."[29] John Thornton has also noted that "if water routes were the earliest form of trade, then the streams of the ocean must be joined to land streams if we are to see the full dimensions of the Atlantic world." The notion of a hinterland Atlantic, Thornton continued, was "abundantly demonstrated by the connections of the western Sudan to the Atlantic. Riverine routes going deep into West Africa connected points quite distant from the coast to the Atlantic."[30] When they reached the Inland Niger Delta and the Niger Bend, at Jenne or Timbuktu,

[27] Here I employ Boubacar Barry's definition of Senegambia, which does not refer to the present-day countries of Senegal and Gambia, but rather to "the vast region made up, in the broadest sense, of the two valleys of the Senegal and Gambia rivers, from their sources in the Fuuta Jallon high plains, until the rivermouth in the Atlantic Ocean. This region would actually include all of present-day Senegal, Gambia, and Guinea-Bissau, and part of Mauritania, Mali, and Guinea-Conakry. This region corresponds to this West African peninsula looking towards the Ocean, at the crossroads of the Sahara, Savannah, and forest. Boubacar Barry, *La Sénégambie du XVe au XIXe siècle. Traite négrière, islam et conquête coloniale*, (Paris: Harmattan, 1988), 7.

[28] See e.g., Idrissa Ba, "Le commerce transsaharien et ses logiques d'accommodation par rapport au commerce transatlantique entre le XVe et le XIXe siècle," Varia Historia 36 (May-August 2020), https://doi.org/10.1590/0104-87752020000200004 ; Oumar Kane, *La première hégémonie peule : le Fuuta Tooro de Koli Teŋella à Almaami Abdul* (Paris/Dakar: Karthala and Presses universitaires de Dakar, 2004) ; Madina Ly-Tall, *Un islam militant en Afrique de l'Ouest au XIXe siècle : la Tijaniyya de Saïku Umar Futiyu contre les pouvoirs traditionnels et la puissance coloniale* (Paris: ACCT IFAN / Cheikh Anta Diop and L'Harmattan, 1991) ; E. Ann McDougall, "The caravel and the caravan. Reconsidering received wisdom in the sixteenth-century Sahara," in *The Atlantic world and Virginia, 1550-1624*, ed. Peter C. Mancall (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 143-169 ; Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh, "La caravelle et la caravane: les deux âges du commerce de l'ouest saharien," *L'Ouest saharien* 2 (1990), 29-69, 1999 ; Makroufi Ousmane Traoré, "La diplomatie des femmes au cœur des rivalités impériales européennes et dans la traite atlantique en Afrique de l'Ouest, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles," *French Colonial History* 19 (2020), 39–78.

[29] Boubacar Barry, *Le royaume du Waalo Le Sénégal avant la conquête* (Paris: Karthala, 1985).

[30] John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680*, 2nd edition (New York:

riverine Atlantic routes connected to the desert's edge, where Saharan navigation routes took over. In framing the West African Sahel as an Atlantic-Saharan crossroads, this study thus answers the call of scholars of Atlantic studies who have critiqued the fields' insufficient engagement with continental Africa.[31] It furthers their critiques by adopting an original focus on today's Mali, a landlocked Sahelian-Saharan country, thus departing from Atlantic studies' more frequent focus on coastal regions and ports of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in Ghana or Senegal.[32]

Cambridge University Press, 1998), 17.

[31] For instance, Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993) does not engage continental Africa. For a critique of African Diaspora studies' lack of engagement with African societies, and African studies' lack of critical analysis on racialization processes in Africa, see, Jemima Pierre, *The Predicament of Blackness. Postcolonial Ghana and the Politics of Race. Chicago and London* (University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[32] Scholars who have connected socio-political and economic developments in the African interior and in the Atlantic world during the slave trade include Mariana Candido, *An African Slaving Port and the Atlantic World: Benguela and its Hinterland* (Cambridge University Press, 2013) ; Michael Gomez, Black Crescent: *African Muslims in the Americas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005 ; Paul Lovejoy, *Jihād in West Africa during the Age of Revolutions* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2016).

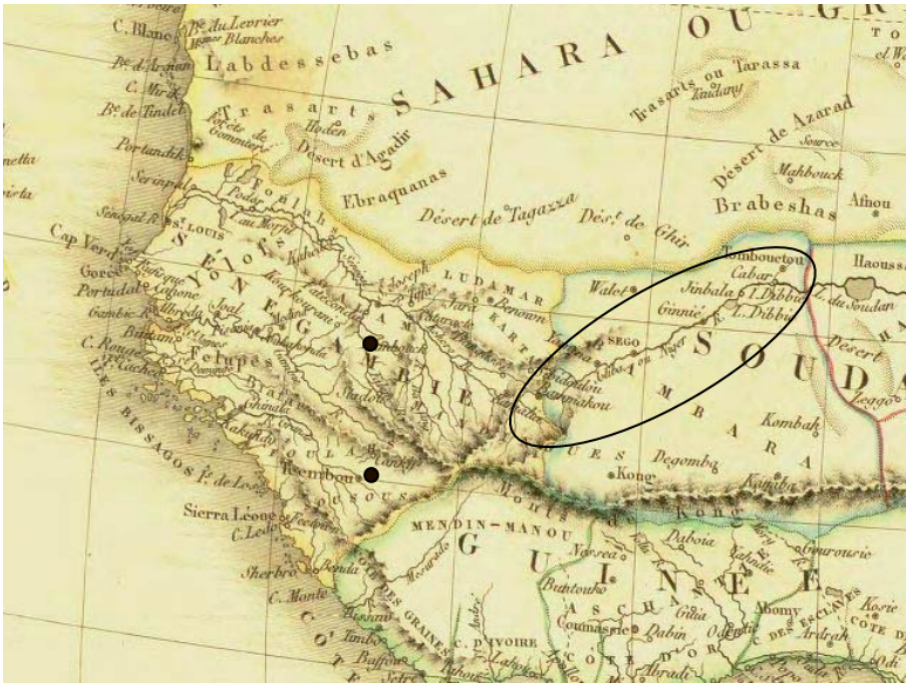

Figure 1. The Inland Niger Delta and Niger Bend, c. 1820[33]

Figure 2. The Inland Delta and Niger Bend in the twenty-first century[34]

[33] Adrien Hubert Brué, Carte de l'Afrique. Paris: chez Chles. Simonneau, 1820. Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/2005625320/. The oval encompasses the Inland Delta, and the Niger Bend near Timbuktu.

[34] Sofie te Wierik, "Conflicting water management in West-Africa; how agricultural development might increase hunger," (B.A. thesis: University of Amsterdam, 2014).

West African Muslims in the Atlantic World

Scores of Africans enslaved in the Americas were Muslim. Islam spread to West Africa, by way of North African traders and scholars, from at least the eighth century. By the eleventh century, several states in the Western and Central Sahel were ruled by Muslim leaders, and in the fifteenth century, the Songhay empire would make Islam its official religion. Over time, the number of followers would not cease to grow, some of whom would fall victim to slave traders, as did Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Watara, whose trajectory I explore in the first two chapters.

Scholars including Allan Austin, Sylviane Diouf, and Michael Gomez, have highlighted that relatively little discussion on Islamic faith and practices has taken place within the broader literature regarding the retention of African cultures in the Americas.[35] In the 1990s, three important studies contributed to filling this gap. João José Reis' monograph discussed the 1835 Malê Muslim uprising in Bahia.[36] Allan Austin's sourcebook presented sources related to the lives of eighteen Muslims enslaved in the Americas.[37] Sylviane Diouf's monograph discussed a wide range of evidence pointing to enslaved Africans' retention of Muslim religion and culture throughout the Western Hemisphere—ranging

[35] The issue of cultural retention and continuity, vs. discontinuity and creolization, has animated a large part of the scholarship on transatlantic African diasporas. While scholars such as Roger Bastide have emphasized continuity between African and diasporic cultural practices, others, such as Sidney Mintz and Richard Price have emphasized the specificity of diasporic identities, borne out of creolization and cultural syncretism. For the latter strand of scholarship, see also Linda Heywood (ed.), *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001) ; and Heywood and John Thronton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas*, 1585-1660 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[36] João José Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: the Muslim Uprising of 1835 in Bahia*, Arthur Brakel trans., (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

[37] Allan D. Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: a Sourcebook*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1984). Austin later published a follow-up, abridged and edited version of this work: Allan D. Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997).

from naming conventions, to ritual practices, or Arabic and Ajami texts.[38] In a monograph dedicated to the manifestations of African cultures among enslaved Blacks in the Americas, and subsequent book entirely devoted to the study of Islam in the United States, Michael Gomez argued that Muslims retained bonds transcending ethnicity.[39] According to Gomez, "Muslims in America, whether Fulani or Mandinka or Hausa, had the capacity to relate to one another and to the non-Muslim world as Muslims."[40] Paul Lovejoy, Muhammad Al-Ahari, or Nikolay Dobronravin, have studied the Arabic and Ajami manuscripts (in the Hausa, Pulaar and Mandinka languages) written by enslaved Africans in various sites throughout the Western Hemisphere, providing useful translations.[41] Their content encompasses a wide range of genres, including autobiographies, memorized excerpts of the Qur'an or other Islamic literature, private correspondences, accounting records, etc. Lastly, in recent publications, Paul Lovejoy and Manuel Barcia have both argued that the nineteenth century West African Fulani jihads had a direct impact on the demographic makeup, rebel actions and warfare practices of enslaved Africans in the Americas.[42]

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[38] Sylviane A. Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*, 15th anniversary edition, (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

[39] Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998) and Gomez, *Black Crescent: African Muslims in the Americas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Besides Muslims, other Bamana and Maninka peoples from the hinterland maintained their religious practice. See Ibrahima Seck, "Du Jolibaa au Mississippi, le long voyage des gens du Komo," Mande Studies 18 (2016), 29-55.

[40] Gomez, *Exchanging our Country Marks*, 60.

[41] Muhammad A. Al-Ahari, ed. *Five Classic Muslim Slave Narratives* (Chicago: Magribine Press, 2006); Nikolay Dobronravin, "West African Ajami in the New World" in Meikal Mumin and Kees Versteegh, eds., *The Arabic Script in Africa: Studies in the Use of a Writing System* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Paul Lovejoy, ed., *Slavery on the Frontiers of Islam*, (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2004).

[42] Manuel Barcia, "An Atlantic Islamic Revolution: Dan Fodio's Jihād and Slave Rebellion in Bahia and Cuba, 1804-1844," *Journal of African Diaspora Archaeology and Heritage* 2:1 (2013), 6-18; Paul Lovejoy, *Jihād in West Africa during the Age of Revolutions* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2016).

Recently, scholars have discussed the existence and actions of a Muslim community in nineteenth century Jamaica. Yacine Daddi Addoun and Paul Lovejoy have investigated an Arabic-language manuscript found on the island, a *Kitāb al-Salāt*, i.e. "Book on Praying," treatise. Its author, Muḥammad Kābā Saghanughu, was a Muslim man allegedly from today's northern Côte d'Ivoire, who lived in Jamaica in the first half of the nineteenth century, and led a Muslim community in Manchester Parish, west of Kingston.[43] Kaba's writings and origin suggest a "connection between the Muslim community of Jamaica and the Qadiriyya" Sufi brotherhood.[44] Sultana Afroz has even argued that the 1831-1832 Jamaican slave rebellion commonly known as the "Baptist War," should be relabeled a jihad. In the 1880s in Jamaica, a *wathīqah* pastoral letter reportedly originating from West Africa in 1789, circulated among some enslaved Muslims on the island. The document "exhorted all of the followers of Prophet Muḥammad to be true and faithful if they wished to enter Paradise."[45] Afroz interprets the circulation of this document, along with the established existence of a Muslim community on the parts of the island where the events of 1831-1832 began, as evidence that the rebellion was Muslim in nature, an argument which Maureen Warner Lewis has thoroughly rebutted.[46]

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[43] Paul E. Lovejoy and Yacine Daddi Addoun, "Muḥammad Kabā Saghanughu and the Muslim Community of Jamaica," in Paul E. Lovejoy, ed., *Slavery on the Frontiers of Islam* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2004), 199. According to R.R. Madden, Muḥammad Kabā Saghanughu and Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq came to know each other, and carried on a written correspondence. These records are not known to be extant.

[44] Ibid, 202.

[45] For a more substantiated discussion of the impact of nineteenth century West African wars and jihads across the Atlantic, see Barcia, "An Atlantic Islamic Revolution"; Barcia, *West African Warfare in Bahia and Cuba: Soldier Slaves in the Atlantic World, 1807-1844* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); and Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprising of 1835 in Bahia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

[46] See Sultana Afroz, "The Jihad of 1831-1832: The Misunderstood Baptist Rebellion in Jamaica," *Journal of Minority Muslim Affairs* 21, no. 2 (2010): 232; Afroz, *Invisible Yet Invincible: Islamic Heritage Of The Maroons And The Enslaved Africans In Jamaica* (London: Austin & Macauley Publishers, 2012) ; and Maureen Warner Lewis, "Jamaica's Muslim Past: Misrepresentations," *The Journal of Caribbean History* 37, no. 2 (2003): 294-316.

West African Muslims in the Saharan world

In the 1960s and 1970s, pan-African intellectuals stressed the importance of moving beyond a supposed Saharan divide in studies on Africa. Most notably, Cheikh Anta Diop's pioneering work situated ancient Egyptian civilization as an integral part of a broader continuum of culturally coherent African civilizations.[47] In an article entitled "Egypt is Africa," Shirley Graham Du Bois rebuked those speaking of "'Africa, South of the Sahara,' 'Africa, North of the Sahara;' of 'Black Africa' and 'Arab Africa,' as if there are long dividing and confining walls stretching in every direction."[48] Building upon these ideas, as well as the work of Fernand Braudel on the Mediterranean, recent scholarship on trans-Saharan movements and exchanges has convincingly pointed to existing biases within the field of African history regarding the geographical partitioning of the continent in Western historiographic discourse.[49] Ghislaine Lydon and Baz Lecocq have argued that Eurocentric biases embedded in early African historiography have led to a dichotomization of North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, leading many to consider the Sahara Desert as a dividing barrier partitioning two distinct cultural and civilizational blocks.[50] This trend has been evolving in recent years. Rather than focusing on North vs.

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[47] Cheikh Anta Diop, *Nations nègres et culture* (Paris/Dakar: Présence Africaine, 1954); Diop, *L'Afrique noire précoloniale* (Paris/Dakar: Présence Africaine, 1960); Diop, *L'Unité culturelle de l'Afrique noire* (Paris/Dakar: Présence Africaine, 1982).

[48] Shirley Graham Du Bois, "Egypt is Africa," *Black Scholar* 2:1 (1970), 31, cited in Vaughn *Rasberry, Race and the Totalitarian Century: Geopolitics in the Black Literary Imagination*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 302.

[49] Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

[50] Baz Lecocq, "Distant Shores: A Historiographic View on trans-Saharan Space" *Journal of African History* 56 (1): 23-36, 2015; Lydon, "Writing Trans-Saharan history: Methods, Sources and Interpretations Across the African Divide," *Journal of North African Studies* 10:3-4 (2005), 255-264 ; Lydon, "Saharan Oceans and Bridges, Barriers and Divides in African Historiographical Landscape" *Journal of African History* 56 (1): 3-22, 2015.

sub-Saharan Africa, a number of recent historical works have treated the Sahara as an integrated space, emphasizing the importance of networks, movements and flows in shaping the region's intellectual, economic and cultural history. Lydon has employed this approach to discuss long-distance trade networks in nineteenth-century "Western Africa", which she defines as "what is typically referred to as West Africa in addition to the Sahara, stretching to its northwestern (southern Morocco, western Sahara, southern Algeria) and central (Niger, southern Libya, Chad) edges."[51] Likewise, in examining contemporary interactions on and around the border between present-day Mali and Algeria, Judith Scheele highlights the deep historicity of the mobilities and interdependence that make this area an integrated space.[52]

A crucial feature of Saharan circulations and the Sahara's integration is that they facilitated production of social hierarchies, race-making, and slavery. An important strand of historiography thus examines aspects of the Saharan trade in slaves and its legacies. Scholars such as Bruce Hall, Khaled Esseissah, Ann McDougall, and Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh, have explored intersections between Islamic law—particularly the Mālikī school of jurisprudence—racial thought, and slavery in the Saharan world. This literature has focused on communities living throughout the desert and its edges, including today's Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Morocco or Tunisia.[53] One conclusion that emerges from

[51] Ghislaine Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails: Islamic Law, Trade Networks, and Cross-Cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Western Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 5. I employ Lydon's definition when discussing "Western African" hereafter.

[52] Judith Scheele, *Smugglers and Saints of the Sahara: Regional Connectivity in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[53] See, e.g., Khaled Esseissah, "Paradise Is Under the Feet of Your Master": the Construction of the Religious Basis of Racial Slavery in the Mauritanian Arab-Berber Community," *Journal of Black Studies* 47, no. 1 (2016), 3-23; Esseissah, "Enslaved Muslim Sufi Saints in the Nineteenth-Century Sahara: The Life of Bilal Ould Mahmoud," *The Journal of African History* 62, no. 3 (2021), 342–357 ; Bernard Freamon, *Possessed by the Right Hand. The Problem of Slavery in Islamic Law and Muslim Cultures* (Leiden: Brill, 2019) ; Chouki El Hamel, *Black Morocco. A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012) ; Bruce Hall, *A History of Race*

this literature is that despite the Islamic tenet that prevents the enslavement of Muslims, in the Sahara and Sahel, Blackness became increasingly imbued with enslaveability from at least the sixteenth century onwards, resulting in the frequent enslavement of Black Muslims. Another conclusion is that even post-emancipation, in many Sahelian and Saharan societies, the stigma of bearing formerly enslaved status, and that of Blackness, remain powerful factors for disenfranchisement.

Lastly, when it comes to trans-Saharan mobilities, historical scholarship has devoted much more attention to those West Africans crossing the Sahel-Sahara area northwards towards North Africa, the Mediterranean and Europe, than those doing so eastwards towards Sudan, the Red Sea and Arabia. Yet, this imbalance in scholarship partially masks historical and current migration trends. For instance, in a 2001 census, the Malian government counted the number of Malian migrants living in Sudan and Egypt to be 200,000, twice as many as the 100,000 Malians estimated to live in France in the same census.[54] Therefore, the importance of works examining trans-Sahelian mobilities and integration, looking at movements along a West-East axis running from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea, cannot be overstated. Recent examples of such work include Chanfi Ahmed's monograph, which is a micro-historical study of the trajectories and writings of Islamic scholars from Mauritania, Mali, and Northern Nigeria, who fled European colonization and migrated to Mecca and Medina in the

in Muslim West Africa, 1600-1960 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011) ; Lydon, "Slavery, Exchange, and Islamic Law: a Glimpse from the Archives of Mali and Mauritania," *African Economic History* 33 (2005), 115-146 ; Ann McDougall, "A sense of self: the Life of Fatma Barka," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 32, no. 2 (1998), 285-315 ; McDougall, "The Politics of Slavery in Mauritania: Rhetoric, Reality and Democratic Discourse," *The Maghreb Review* 35, vol. 3 (2010), 260-86 ; Ismael Musah Montana, *The Abolition of Slavery in Ottoman Tunisia* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013) ; Ould Cheikh, "Géographie de la liberté: émancipation légale, émancipation foncière, et appartenance tribale en Mauritanie," *L'Ouest Saharien: Cahiers d'Etudes Pluridisciplinaires* 10-11 (2020), 109-124 ; Mohamed Yahya Ould Ciré, *La Mauritania: enter l'esclavage et le racisme* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2014); Beneedetta Rossi, *From Slavery to Aid: politics, labor, and ecology in the Nigerien Sahel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[54] Mann, *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel*, 90.

twentieth century.[55] Rémi Dewière's monograph is a political and environmental history of the central Sahelian state of Borno, which takes seriously the role of trans-Sahelian and trans-Saharan mobilities in understanding the geographical, economic, political (diplomatic) and social factors that influenced Borno's history.[56]

To better understand trans-Sahelian mobilities, some historical scholarship has explored the historical significance and influence of Muslim pilgrimage in general, and the *Tarīq-al-Sūdān* (Arabic, Sudan Road) pilgrimage route in particular, in West African history. 'Umar al-Naqar and J.S. Birks' studies on the history and patterns of West African pilgrimage paved the way, as did Christian Bawa Yamba's ethnographic exploration of the geographically settled, yet figuratively transient, West African pilgrim communities in Sudan.[57] Alamin Abu Manga's expansive body of work on the Fulani communities in Sudan documents their place within the broader Sudanese society.[58] Scholars have also pointed out the economic and political ramifications of migration along the Tariq al-Sudan, through their connection with the Gezira irrigation scheme in Sudan, as well as the 1881–1899 Mahdist War.[59]

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[55] Chanfi Ahmed, *West African `Ulamâ' and Salafism in Mecca and Medina: Jawâb al-Ifrîqî, the Response of the African* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015).
[56] Rémi Dewière, *Du lac Tchad à La Mecque. Le sultanat du Borno et son monde (XVIe-XVIIe siècles)* (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2017).

[57] See Umar al-Naqar, "Takrur: the History of a Name" *Journal of African History* 10, no. 3 (1969), 365-74 ; al-Naqar, *The Pilgrimage Tradition in West Africa: a Historical Study with Special Reference to the Nineteenth Century* (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1972); Bawa Yamba, *Permanent Pilgrims.*

[58] See, e.g., Alamin Abu-Manga and Catherine Miller, "The West African (Fallata) Communities in Gedaref State :Process of settlement and local integration" in *Land, ethnicity and political legitimacy in Eastern Sudan,* ed. Catherine Miller (Cairo: CEDEJ, 2005), 375–424 ; Abu-Manga, "Socio-cultural, socio-economic and sociolinguistic diversity among the Fulbe of the Sudan Republic" in *Pastoralists Under Pressure: Fulbe Societies Confronting Change in West Africa,* eds. J.W.M. van Dijk, V. Azarya, A. Breedveld, and M.E. de Bruijn (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 51-68.

[59] Saburi Biobaku and Muhammad al-Hajj, "The Sudanese Mahdiyya and the Niger-Chad Region," in *Islam in Tropical Africa* ed. I.M. Lewis (London: International African Institute, 1966), 226-239 ; Mark R. Duffield, "Fulani Mahdism and Revisionism in Sudan: 'Hijra' or Compromise with Colonialism?," in *The Central Bilad al-Sudan, Tradition and Adaptation: Essays on the Geography and Economic and Political History of the Sudanic Belt, Proceedings of the Third International Conference of the Institute of African and Asian Studies, University of*

More recent scholarship from Sylvia Chiffoleau, Luc Chantre, Baz Lecocq, Anna Madœuf, Gregory Mann, and Jonathan Miran, among others, has explored the ways in which European colonial empires and independent African states sought to control, facilitate, or oversee the flows of West African pilgrims headed towards Arabia.[60] Having laid out the dissertation's historiographical engagements, the next section turns to the methodological tools it employs.

Khartoum, held from 8 to 13 November 1977, ed. Yusuf Fadl Hasan and Paul Doornbos, (Khartoum: El Tamaddon P. Press Ltd., 1979).

[60] Luc Chantre, "Le pèlerinage à La Mecque à l'époque coloniale (v. 1866-1940) : France – Grande-Bretagne – Italie," (PhD diss., Université de Poitiers, 2012) ; Jonathan Miran, "'Stealing the Way' to Mecca: West African Pilgrims and Illicit Red Sea Passages, 1920s-1950s," *Journal of African History* 56 (2015): 389-408; Baz Lecocq and Gregory Mann, "Between Empire, Umma, and the Muslim Third World: The French Union and African Pilgrims to Mecca, 1946-1958" *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27 (2007): 367-383; Baz Lecocq, "The Hajj From West Africa From a Global Historical Perspective (nineteenth and twentieth Centuries)," *African Diaspora* 5 (2012): 187-214.

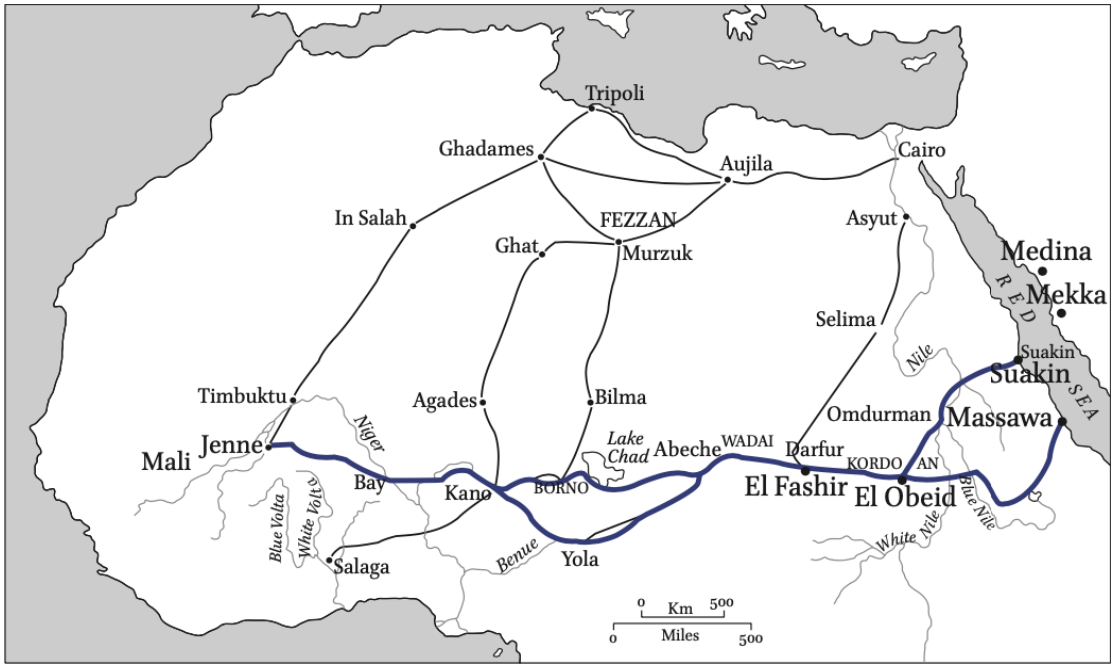


Figure 3. The Tariq al-Sudan, the West-East Trans-Saharan/Sahelian Pilgrimage Route[61]

Figure 4. Jihād States in the Atlantic World, 1850[62]

[61] Bawa Yamba, *Permanent Pilgrims*, xiv.

[62] Courtesy of Henry B. Lovejoy, African Diaspora Maps Ltd. (click here for larger version)

Sources and Methods

Because this dissertation follows itinerant subjects, and attempts to highlight the Sahel's global connections, the research process was multi-sited and multilingual. The dissertation utilizes sources in Arabic, Bamanankan, English and French, which I collected during fifteen months of research in archival repositories, as well as oral interviews, in Mali, Senegal, France, England, Ireland, and Jamaica. These include private correspondence, family records, colonial surveillance files, travelers accounts, and manumission records. In engaging these materials, my heuristic moves between micro and global historical analysis. This dual method allows me to carefully account for the way overlapping notions of race, class, and gender shaped and constrained Sahelian mobilities and emancipatory aspirations, and to highlight connections across spaces that historiography seldom studied in conjunction. Thus, the dissertation breaks away from the partitioning between Anglophone and Francophone African colonies, which still structures much of African historiography, by highlighting colonial-era circulations and connections between Mopti, in the French Soudan, and Kumasi, in the Gold Coast. It underscores Atlantic exchanges by discussing Islamic literacy in Kingston, Jamaica, in relation to Islamic schooling in Kong, in today's Côte d'Ivoire. And it analyzes the circulation of people and words between Hamdallahi, in today's Mali, and Guelmīm, in today's Morocco.

I organized my analysis into three micro-historical case-studies, anchored around the emancipation quest of three main protagonists, and a web of surrounding characters. In choosing a microhistorical approach, my main interest does not lie in reconstructing life-histories for their own sake. In fact, the life history of the case-studies' subjects dips in and out of the analysis. At times, like in chapters 2 and 5, it is very present. At other times, as chapter 3, the historical record is so thin that the

subject's life story barely transpires. Instead, my approach to micro-history matches that of Jill Lepore, who argued that micro-historians' interest in examining a life "lies not in its uniqueness, but in its exemplariness, in how that individual's life serves as an allegory for broader issues affecting the culture." Lepore continues that "most micro historians try to answer important historical—and historiographical—questions, even if their arguments, slippery as eels, are difficult to fish out of the oceans of story."[63] Thus, I am interested in using micro-history as a lens into powerful social forces that shaped individual outcomes in the Sahel.[64] I also use micro-history as a way of better grasping how seemingly disparate ideas, influences, time periods, and territories were "more joined in the lives and minds" of Sahelian peoples "than they are in modern scholarship."[65] I employ each case-study as a window into the local and global ramifications of specific moments of political reconfiguration in the

[63] Jill Lepore, "Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography," *The Journal of American History* vol. 88, no. 1 (2001), 133.

[64] This dissertation is inspired by the contributions of scholars who have written micro-historical scholarship on slavery and indenture. See Gaiutra Bahadur, *Coolie Woman. The Odyssey of Indenture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013) ; Marisa Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives. Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016) ; Lisa A. Lindsay and John Wood Sweet, *Biography and the Black Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013) ; Lindsay, *Atlantic Bonds. A Nineteenth-Century Odyssey from America to Africa* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016) ; Rebecca J. Scott, "Microhistory Set in Motion: a Nineteenth Century Atlantic Creole Itinerary" in George Baca, Aisha Khan, and George Palié, eds., *Empirical Futures: Anthropologists and Historians Engage the Work of Sidney W. Mintz* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Rebecca J. Scott and Jean M. Hébrard, *Freedom Papers: an Atlantic Odyssey in the Age of Emancipation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014); James H. Sweet, *Domingos Álvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011) ; Eve Troutt Powell, *Tell this in my Memory: Stories of Enslavement from Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012) ; Maureen Warner-Lewis, *Archibald Monteah. Igbo, Jamaican, Moravian* (Mona: University of the West Indies Press, 2007). It also takes inspiration from micro-historical scholarship on early-modern Europe, particularly Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms. The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) ; and Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins. Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997). Lastly, it seeks to emulate micro-histories which have put an emphasis on connected histories and mobility across borders and empires. See, e.g., Sebouh Aslanian, "A Life Lived Across Continents: The Global Microhistory of an Armenian Agent of the Compagnie des Indes Orientales, 1666-1688," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales - English Edition* 73, no. 1 (2018), 19-54 ; and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Three Ways to Be Alien. Travails and Encounters in the Early Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

[65] I borrow the wording Francesca Trivellato uses to describe eighteenth century Britons' perceptions of the East and West Indies. See Francesca Trivellato, "Is there a future for Italian micro history in the Age of Global History?" in *California Italian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2011): 6.

Sahel.

Among the sources I engage, I made the decision to work with records from my own family. The dissertation's final two chapters analyzes the trajectory and political choices of Mamadu Caam (c. 1895-1971), a trader and Muslim scholar. Caam was my paternal grandfather. I have never met him, as we were born almost exactly a century apart from each other. I began taking a more substantial scholarly interest in him in 2016, as I was conducting preliminary dissertation research. In the national archives in Dakar and Bamako, I had spent days poring over colonial intelligence files surveilling the ideologies and mobilities of itinerant Muslim men, whom the French administration was generally wary of. Knowing that my grandfather had been one such migrant, born in Senegal but settled in the Soudan, I had hoped that I would eventually come across a file about him that would allow me to know more about the various places his West African peregrinations might have taken him through. I have yet to find this file. It might exist in one of the French colonial archives of West Africa, might have been lost, or might have never been written. In a way, not having encountered it provides a sense of relief. As one might expect, colonial surveillance assessments of these African men were extraordinarily reductive and condescending—and often full of inaccuracies. This was a cause of frequent frustration in the archive, which I suspect I would have felt even more acutely had I witnessed the colonial gaze upon a direct relative.

By 2016, I expressed interest in examining the materials Caam himself had left behind, as a way of counterbalancing the colonial files about itinerant Muslims—men like him—that I had been reading. I was also just curious to learn more about this elusive family figure. In the summer of 2016, my uncle brought over a box of papers that had belonged to Caam, from Mopti, my paternal family's

hometown in Mali, to Bamako. Several relatives pointed out that the small box—a carton previously used to package 1.5-liter bottles of mineral water—only represented a fraction of the papers Caam had left behind at the time of his death. In the 45 years since, his children and grandchildren had slowly discarded and destroyed such documents contained in several suitcases, to make storage room, as needed, in the family house. Opening the box and carefully unpacking and laying out its contents, became a collective process, involving several of Caam's children and grandchildren. His extant papers, which I have been surveying in the years since, include postal and commercial records, tax documents, voting and political party membership cards, a Qur'an, and personal papers and correspondence to and from Caam—mostly in Arabic but including some in French.

Micro-historical writing is "tricky work" that requires the historian to "balance intimacy with distance while at the same time being inquisitive to the point of invasiveness."[66] This is perhaps especially true when historians set out to write about their own kin.[67] Because my grandfather passed away two decades before I was born, I had always felt a great sense of apartness towards him: he felt more like a distant ancestor than a beloved family member. This is not true, for instance, of my paternal grandmother and aunt—whom I grew up around and remember fondly. Perhaps for these reasons, writing about them, in chapter 5, was a more difficult process than writing about Caam. I struggled to give myself permission to make claims on my aunt and grandmother's behalf, or to craft

[66] Lepore, "Historians Who Love Too Much," 129.

[67] Recently, historians have engaged the topic of research and writing about their own family histories. See e.g. Kendra Taira Field, *Growing Up with the Country: Family, Race, and Nation after the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018). Developing or forthcoming monographs by Nemata Blyden, N.D.B. Connolly, Stéphane Gerson, Tao Leigh Goffe and others, also take up the study of one aspect of their authors' family history. Two scholarly conferences have been held on this topic. One was held at Tufts in 2019, organized by Kendra Tara Fields, entitled *Writing Family, Reconstructing Lives*; and the other was held at New York University in 2020, organized by Stephane Gerson, and entitled *Scholars and their Kin.*

arguments about them, a reluctance which I did not experience as much when it comes to him. My sense of distance towards my grandfather has been both confirmed and challenged in the course of researching and writing this dissertation. On the one hand, as chapter 4 shows, the research has made plain that my grandfather inhabited a liminal world, very distant from mine, shaped by experiences of jihad, colonial invasion, conflict and famine in West Africa. On the other hand, micro-historical writing bears the risk of bringing the author into an uncomfortably close, intimate embrace with the subject.[68] In a way, writing micro-histories about my own family has thus shaped how I approached other case-studies, such as Wèlorè or Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Watara—although at times I feel they, too, have become family. In the chapters that follow, I have attempted to convey my understanding of their mindscapes.

Figure 5. Unpacking the papers of Mamadu Caam. Bamako (brought from Mopti), 15 July 2016

[68] Nwando Achebe has explored the tension between distance and proximity to the object of study for historians working within, or in the periphery of, their own community. She frames the latter as an insider-outsider relation. See Nwando Achebe, "Nwando Achebe—Daughter, Wife, and Guest—A Researcher at the Crossroads," *Journal of Women's History* 14, no. 3 (2002), 9-31.

Outline

Like the actors it studies, this dissertation moves across borders, temporal and geographical. Despite following travelers, migrants, and itinerant figures, the analysis remains rooted in one particular region, the Inland Niger Delta in today's Mali, and several of its main cities: Jenne and Hamdallahi in the nineteenth century, and Mopti in the twentieth century. The first part of the dissertation comprises three chapters, which examine the spaces of relative freedom and security two Sahelian Muslims attempted to negotiate. To do so, they had to navigate the shifting terrains of trans-Atlantic, trans-Saharan, and Sahelian slavery, during the long nineteenth century.

The first pair of chapters follows Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Watara, a Timbuktu-born teenager who was enslaved in Jamaica from 1805 to 1834. Upon securing his manumission, Watara undertook a trans-Atlantic and trans-Saharan journey, in a bid to return home. A close examination of Watara's words and writings about him, and a reconstruction of his trajectory, provides insight into the social and political forces that ushered in deep changes in the worlds of the British Atlantic and Muslim Sahel and Sahara, in the first half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, between the 1790s and 1830s, unrest mounted in Jamaica. Galvanized by circulating news of revolution and abolition in the Caribbean, the enslaved fought to achieve freedom. This culminated in the 1831-1832 Baptist War, a large-scale rebellion that the British brutally repressed, and which precipitated the decision to abolish chattel slavery.[69] Meanwhile across the Atlantic, in 1818, a theocratic State, the Hamdallahi Caliphate, rose to impose a new political and social order in the Niger Delta, including upon Jenne and Timbuktu. In a context of Islamic legal debates around race, Blackness, and slavery taking place throughout Northwest

[69] Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 15-16.

Africa, the caliphate seized racial idioms to reconfigure enslaveability in the region. As Watara sought to secure freedom while journeying across the Atlantic and Sahara, which strategies did he leverage? How did larger political changes in 1820s-1830s Sahel, Sahara, and Atlantic render his aspirations to freedom possible, and how did they restrict them? Scholars have previously written about Watara's journey and writings by situating his autobiography within the broader genre of transatlantic slave narratives, and analyzing his trajectory as evidence of the retention of African cultural expressions among enslaved Black Muslims in the Americas.[70] This pair of chapters offers a new interpretation of Watara's articulation and praxis of freedom, framing them in the broader contexts of the end of chattel slavery in the British Atlantic, booming trans-Saharan slave trade, and changing notions of race and enslaveability in the West African Sahel in the era of Islamic revolutions and state-building.

Chapter 1 follows Watara through his upbringing in today's Mali and Ivory Coast, his capture and enslavement in Jamaica, and the strategy he implemented to obtain legal manumission. In authoring an autobiography, Watara did not merely write about his life story. Instead, he wrote himself into Timbuktu's storied past, thus tapping into the sensibilities of his European readership. Further, through the writing choices he made in his autobiography, Watara tied his personhood to his belonging into the wider community of Juula scholars and traders spread across West Africa. Chapter 2 follows his journey from Kingston to Guelmim (Morocco), via London. Back on the continent, despite having been declared "absolutely and utterly free" in the British Atlantic, Watara had to contend with both old and emerging discourses tying Blackness to slavery. These discourses not only emanated from the Maghreb, where he witnessed first-hand the brutality of the trans-Saharan slave trade, but also from his

[70] On the interpretation of slave narratives as historical or literary sources, see Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates Jr. (ed.) *The Slave's Narrative* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1985).

home region of the Niger Delta, where he was seeking to return. Here again, Watara relied on trans-Saharan kinship and information networks to chart the path ahead in his bid to safely return to Jenne as a free man.

As Watara's capture in West Africa and enslavement in the Caribbean were unfolding, the French empire was going bankrupt, having lost lucrative colonies in Louisiana (1803) and Saint-Domingue (1794-1804), and undergone costly Napoleonic wars (1803-1815). France decided to turn to the alluvial plains of the Senegambia, hoping to transform them into crop-producing colonies. From the mid-nineteenth century, France intensified its territorial expansion in Africa, and following the 1885 Berlin treaty, claimed a vast swath of the Sahara and West Africa. By the early-twentieth century, France's eight West African colonies were unified as the Afrique Occidentale Française (French West Africa, hereafter AOF) federation, with the French Soudan at its center. One immediate consequence of colonization was a steep decline in local practices of slavery, which had maintained scores of women and men in bondage through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While coating this measure in emancipatory language as part of its "civilizing mission," France pragmatically recognized the potential that freeing the enslaved held: opening-up a reservoir of cheap labor for the colonial economy, while undermining local elites that derived power from slave-holding. In 1905, the colonial administration outlawed slavery throughout AOF.

Chapter 3 lingers on the elusive traces an enslaved African woman left behind: Wèlorè, the concubine of Hamdallahi's caliph Seeku Aamadu. In the extensive historical record about the caliphate, almost nothing subsides about Wèlorè, save for one major artifact: she was laid to rest in intimate proximity with some of the most important men in the caliphate's history. What can

historians make of Wèlorè's elusive presence in oral and written historical archives on Hamdallahi? The chapter contextualizes the tenuous spaces of safety and freedom Wèlorè attempted to secure. It highlights the erasure of the central role that Wèlorè and other women, free or enslaved, played in Hamdallahi, by providing an overview of women's productive and reproductive labors in the Sahel in the nineteenth and centuries. The chapter shows how a careful engagement with Fulfulde-language poetry, oral traditions, archaeological evidence, and the role of the sensory and sensuousness as categories of analysis, can help analyze the lives of enslaved African women in the nineteenth century.

In 1862, further west from the Delta and closer to the Atlantic coast, a jihad led by scholar and warrior El Hajj Umar Taal expanded from Fuuta Tooro (northern Senegal), and swept much of today's Guinea, Mali and Senegal. In the course of his conquests, Taal deposed and conquered the territories of non-Muslim rulers, as well as Muslims whom he accused of apostasy. Eventually, Taal and the leaders of Hamdallahi developed tense relations over what exactly Islamic governance should look like, escalating to war and the Fuutaŋke conquest of Hamdallahi. However, Fuutaŋke domination in the Delta region remained short-lived, due to gradual European encroachment, and the eventual French colonization and creation of AOF. In part because Taal's followers and the French had clashed through the end of the nineteenth century, by the twentieth century, the colonial state was extremely suspicious of Islam, and of its Muslim subjects. France thus sought to surveil, control, and co-opt where possible, the activities and migrations of their Muslim subjects. The final pair of chapters analyzes the trajectory during colonization, and political decisions during decolonization, of one of these itinerant Muslim. In part, the chapters aim to answer this question: "If citizenship marks a liberation from forms of monarchical and autocratic government...does the very act of individualistic participation separate

people from their particular social connections and their particular histories?"[71]

Chapter 4 follows Mamadu Caam, a Fuuta-born Muslim scholar and trader who traveled for a decade across West Africa before settling in Mopti, French Soudan, by the 1930s. Mopti had been a small tributary of the Hamdallahi Caliphate in the nineteenth century, but turned into a large urban center under colonization. In Mopti, Caam belonged to a class of settlers from Fuuta, the region whose troops had conquered the caliphate in the 1860s. The chapter lays out the liminal social and geographical world Caam inhabited and cultivated. Born on the cusp between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Caam lived between epochs, influenced by both the afterlives of jihad and the reality of French colonization. The liminality of his sense of self expanded beyond the realm of time, into that of space, as Caam traveled extensively throughout West Africa, and even after he settled in Mopti, maintained strong ties to his native Fuuta. Situating Caam in this liminal frame (temporally and spatially) provides the groundwork for the next chapter.

Chapter 5 turns to Caam's choices in the era of decolonization, particularly his decision to join an anti-colonial, pan-African party. I tie his political choices to the cross-spatial and cross-temporal nature of his life. Caam's religious upbringing had led him to operate within trans-regional networks spanning North and West Africa. Thus, his sense of belonging and community was intrinsically archipelagic, as opposed to tied to a specific territory. This helps explain his decision to support a pan-African formation, over the nationalist and local parties that competed in the Mopti political sphere. Moreover, like a palimpsest, Caam carried within him memories of political language that had

[71] Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation. Remaking France and French Africa*, 1945-1960 (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), 4-5.

permeated Sahelian Muslim societies in the long nineteenth century, and integrated them into his vision for a new society. The chapter thus shows how memories of pre-colonial jihad, vulnerability to violence, and emancipatory struggles, were sedimented and lived on in the twentieth century, during the era of decolonization.

PART ONE

NAVIGATING

1804-1853

It seems commonsense to say that different people approach the quest for freedom from different experiences and histories, but we so often forget this, especially when working across Africa and Afro-diaspora…We arrive to how we imagine and pursue freedom in ways that speak to our differences.

–Keguro Macharia[72]

[72] Roberto Sirvent, "BAR Book Forum: Keguro Macharia's *Frottage*," *Black Agenda Report*, November 6, 2019, https://blackagendareport.com/bar-book-forum-keguro-macharias-frottage.

CHAPTER ONE

"Absolutely and Utterly Free:" Abu Bakr's Al Siddiq Watara's Self-Writing Between Timbuktu and Jamaica (1804-1834)

On September 9, 1834, in Kingston, Jamaica, a thick crowd filled the public office of judge Richard Robert Madden. They had gathered to witness landowner Alexander Anderson's manumission of Edward Doulan, a man he lawfully owned. The judge initiated the proceedings by recounting at length the circumstances that had led to the ceremony. As he did so, emotions were running high in the room: the judge noted that Black and White attendees, people "of all complexions," were deeply moved, some even shedding tears of joy.[73] Eventually, Doulan and Madden proceeded to affix their signatures at the bottom of the manumission certificate, sealing Anderson's renouncement of his ownership rights. The document declared Doulan "absolutely and utterly free to all intents and purposes."[74]

The September 1834 ceremony came about as Jamaica was entering a period of intense mutations in its economy and society. From the mid-eighteenth through the early-nineteenth century, the island stood as the British empire's most affluent colony, due to its exports of sugar, coffee and other crops, produced through the labor of enslaved Black women and men. Between 1740 and 1807, British ships stripped an estimated 2.2 million Africans away from the continent as part of the

[73] Richard Robert Madden, *A Twelvemonth's Residence in the West Indies, during the transition from slavery to apprenticeship; with incidental notice of the state of society, prospects, and natural resources of Jamaica and other islands,* Vol II. (London: James Cochrane and Co., 1835), 180-181.

[74] Jamaica Archives and Records Department (JARD) 1B/11/6/69. Manumission Book no. 69, commenced 8 February 1834, p. 90: Alexander Anderson to Doulan Edward. See Figure 1.

trans-Atlantic slave trade.[75] Around 600,000 of them ended up in Jamaica.[76] By 1788, the vast majority of the island's population was either Africa-born or of African descent, and enslaved. In 1807, Britain's legislature formally banned the trade in slaves throughout the British Empire. In 1833, it abolished slavery altogether, instituting the apprenticeship, a nominal period of transition from slavery to formal emancipation whereby the enslaved were being "apprenticed" into freedom, and which effectively amounted to an extended enslavement.[77] As part of this process, the British Crown appointed R. R. Madden, an Irish traveler, writer, and medical doctor, as one of six special magistrates in charge of overseeing the application of the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act in Jamaica.

Edward Doulan, whose release from apprenticeship Madden oversaw in Kingston in September 1834, was born about forty years prior in Timbuktu, in the Niger Bend region of the West African Sahel. His birth name was Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq Waṭara.[78] His birth region was known to be home to several major cities. Two of them in particular, Jenne and Timbuktu, had been cosmopolitan centers of Muslim education and intellectual production, as well as hubs for the trade in humans, salt, gold, and books, since the fourteenth century.[79] Like the vast majority of these cities' inhabitants, Watara was

[75] Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 15.

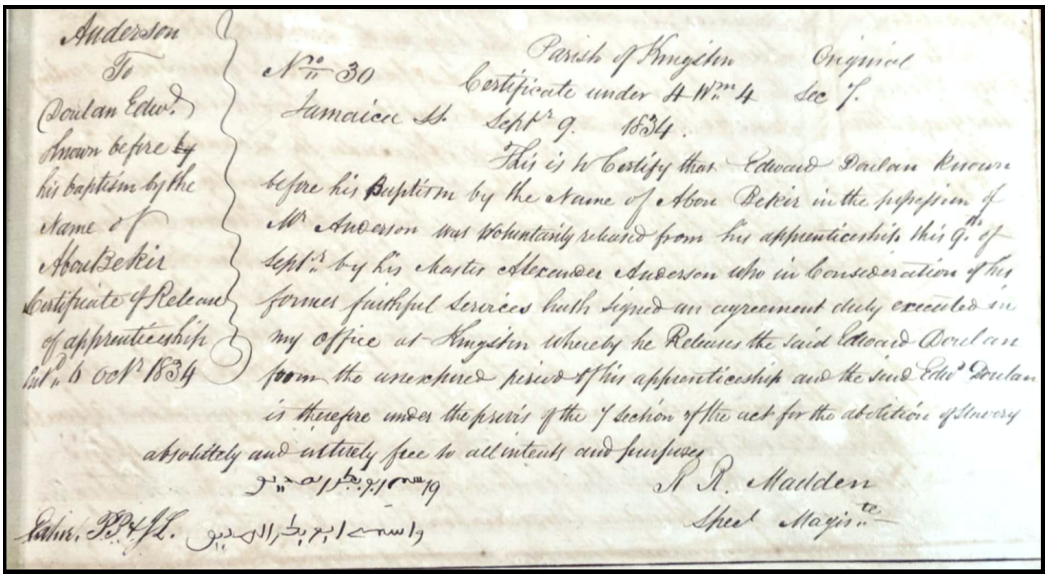
[76] Ibid, 25-26.

[77] See D.G. Hall, "The Apprenticeship Period in Jamaica, 1834-1838," *Caribbean Quarterly* 3, no. 3 (December 1953): 142-66.

[78] Previous scholarly accounts have referred to this man merely as Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq. In a subsequent section of this chapter, I explain why I opted to name him by patronymic Waṭara.

[79] The mosques of Sankoré, Djinguereber, and Sīdī Yahyā—commonly referred to as the university of Timbuktu,—welcomed intellectuals from various parts of the Islamic world, in addition to local scholars and spiritual leaders. Numerous other cities in the Western Sahel and Sahara cultivated a similar tradition of Islamic knowledge production. On the rich intellectual history of the Muslim Western Sahel, see Chouki El-Hamel, *La Vie intellectuelle islamique dans le Sahel ouest-africain (XVIe-XIXe siècles)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002); John Hunwick, "Toward a History of the Islamic Intellectual Tradition in West Africa down to the Nineteenth century," *Journal of Islamic Studies 17* (1997): 4-27; Shamil Jeppie and Souleymane Bachir Diagne, *The Meanings of Timbuktu*, (Dakar:

Muslim, and had been made to adopt a Christian name in slavery. In fact, on the left-hand side of Watara's 1834 certificate of release from apprenticeship, Madden penned the following annotation: "Anderson to Doulan Edward Known before his baptism by the name of Abou Bekir."[80] Within a few months of the 1834 ceremony, Watara embarked on a London-bound ship from Kingston, intending to eventually reach his native Timbuktu.


Anderson
To
Doulan Edwd
Known before by
his baptism by the
Name of
Aboubekir
Certificate of Release
of apprenticeship
dat. 6 Oct. 1834

Parish of Kingston Original
Certificate under 4 Wm 4 Sec 7.
Jamaica ss Sept. 9. 1834.

This is to Certify that Edward Doulan Known before his Baptism by the Name of Abou Bekir in the possession of Mr Anderson was voluntarily released from his apprenticeship this 6th of Sept. by his Master Alexander Anderson who in Consideration of his former faithful Services hath signed an agreement duly executed in my office at Kingston whereby he Releases the said Edward Doulan from the unexpired period of his apprenticeship and the said Edwd Doulan is therefore under the provisions of the 7 Section of the act for the abolition of Slavery absolutely and entirely free to all intents and purposes

N. R. Madden
Spec. Magis.te

Figure 6. Waṭara's manumission certificate, signed: "واسمي ابو بكر الصديق (my name is Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq")[81]

A remarkable amount of information about Watara's life is known, particularly regarding two periods: his upbringing and the years leading up to his enslavement in the Sahel; and his

CODESRIA, 2004); Ousmane Oumar Kane, *Non-Europhone Intellectuals* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2012); Ousmane Oumar Kane, *Beyond Timbuktu: An Intellectual History of Muslim West Africa* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016); Graziano Krätli and Ghislaine Lydon, eds., *The Trans-Saharan Book Trade: Manuscript Culture, Arabic Literacy and Intellectual History in Muslim Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Scott S. Reese, ed., *The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2004); Ivor Wilks, "The Transmission of Islamic Learning in the Western Sudan," in *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, ed. Jack Goody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 161-197.

[80] JARD 1B/11/6/69.

[81] Ibid.

Timbuktu-bound journey from Jamaica in the year following his manumission.[82] This information comes from two sets of sources. The first one is an autobiographical document Watara authored in Arabic, a language he had learned during his upbringing and education in the Sahel. While several English-language translations of the autobiography were produced and are currently available, none of the Arabic originals is known to be extant. Second, more information about Watara is included in the writings of people he encountered. This second set of sources include Madden's memoirs about the year he spent in Jamaica, in which he wrote extensively about Watara, and recorded some of his experiences with other enslaved African Muslims on the island. One of them, Muhammad Kaba Saghanughu, also authored Arabic writings in Jamaica, and corresponded with Watara on at least one occasion. Lastly, John Davidson, a British physician, journeyed alongside Watara from London to the Wād Nūn region (southwestern Morocco) in 1835, and kept lengthy travel notes.

The first section of the chapter lays out a textual history of Watara's autobiography, paying close attention to the role that successive translations, editions, and interpretations, as well as Watara's deliberate choices of self-representation, played in shaping the text. In the second section, set in 1790-1805, I lay out the early life story that Watara described in his autobiography, emphasizing the wide reach of his maternal and paternal families' connections throughout the Sahel—particularly their ties to Jenne and Timbuktu, and to the Juula Kingdom of Kong (today's northern Côte d'Ivoire). Set

[82] Several scholarly accounts have discussed Waṭara's life and autobiography. See Afroz, *Invisible Yet Invincible ;* Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America*, 41-2; David Sebastian Cross, *The Role of the Trickster Figure and Four Afro-Caribbean Meta-Tropes in the Realization of Agency by Three Slave Protagonists* (Ph.D. Diss., University of South Carolina, 2013), 200-312; Diouf, *Servants of Allah ;* Gomez, *Black Crescent,* 56-61. Lovejoy and Daddi Addoun, "Muḥammad Kabā Saghanughu and the Muslim Community of Jamaica" ; Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq Watara and Ivor Wilks (ed., trans.), "The African Travels of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq," in *Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade*, ed. Philip D. Curtin (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), 152-169 ; and Wilks, "The Juula and the Expansion of Islam into the Forest" in *The History of Islam in Africa*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion and Randall L. Pouwels (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 93-116.

across the Atlantic in Jamaica, the third section interrogates the gaps and silences in the archival trail that Watara left behind, highlighting the strategic choices and power dynamics that shaped the production of his writings.

Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Watara's Autobiography: Textual History and Author/Subject Duality

Between 1834 and 1967, Watara's autobiographical manuscript went through multiple translations, rewritings, and editions: these various versions differ in minor yet significant ways. In 1834-1835, Watara penned at least three copies of his Arabic autobiography: one in Kingston, one aboard a Britain-bound ship he had embarked on in New York, and one in London. Based on these, at least four English translations or editions were produced. First, sometime between August and September 1834 in Kingston, Watara performed an oral, Arabic-to-English translation of the document, which Madden transcribed and likely edited. At least two nearly identical copies were produced as a result of this process: one that Madden published, and the other that Howard University historian Charles H. Wesley discovered in London in the 1930s. Within a few months of producing the Arabic and English versions in Kingston, Watara wrote two more Arabic copies, one of which London-based scholar G.C. Renouard translated. Lastly, in 1967, British historian Ivor Wilks published his own English version of the document, based exclusively on previous translations he merged and edited. Currently, while all four English-language texts are accessible, none of the Arabic-language originals is known to have survived. The available English versions differ in small yet significant details. Examining the context in which each version was produced, a textual history of Abū Bakr's autobiography may be laid out.

The first two English copies were the result of a chance encounter. Sometime in 1834 in Kingston, a man by the name of Edward Doulan appeared before Judge Richard Robert Madden "to be sworn in as a constable" on Alexander Anderson's property.[83] That day, Madden realized Doulan was literate in Arabic, and inquired about his life. He later on brought him to his house, where Doulan completed the writing of a first copy of his autobiography. Doulan could write in the Arabic script, but not the Latin one. Therefore, he performed an oral translation of the document he had just penned, reading it out loud first in Arabic, then translating it "word by word," in English.[84] As Doulan dictated, Madden transcribed and, Ivor Wilks presumes, subsequently "had further assistance in preparing the English version for publication."[85] The resulting six pages-long document, entitled "The History of Abon Becr Sadiki, known in Jamaica by the name of Edward Donlan," and dated Sept. 20, 1834, is included in Madden's memoirs about his time in Jamaica.[86] About a hundred years later, Charles Wesley discovered "at the bottom of an old box of slavery and anti-slavery materials at the office of the Anti-Slavery Society, Denison House, London, England," a quasi-identical version of this manuscript, that one dated August 29, 1834.[87] Wesley went on to publish it in a 1936 issue of the *Journal of Negro History.*[88]

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[83] Madden, *A Twelvemonth's Residence in the West Indies*, 157.

[84] Ibid, 190. Madden must have made multiple copies, with slight differences. For instance, a copy currently held at the Royal Irish Academy bears some minor differences with the one Madden published in his journal. MRIA 24 O 11|60.

[85] Watara and Wilks, "The African Travels of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq," 157.

[86] Madden, *A Twelvemonth's Residence in the West Indies*, 183-189.

[87] Cross, *The Role of the Trickster Figure,* 238.

[88] Charles H. Wesley, "The Life and History of Abou Bekir Sadiki, Alias Edward Doulan, Discovered by Dr. Charles H. Wesley." *The Journal of Negro History* 21.1 (1936): 52.

Within a few months of writing the Kingston Arabic manuscript, Watara embarked on a trans-Atlantic and trans-Saharan journey that took him from Jamaica to southern Morocco, via England. Aboard a ship from New York to London, he reproduced a version of his Arabic autobiography, and did so again upon reaching the British capital. There, orientalist G.C. Renouard translated the latter version, and published it under the title "Routes in North Africa, by Abū Bekr eṣ ṣiddīk" in the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*. According to Renouard, the Arabic document Watara wrote in London was "the same in substance as that compiled from his oral communication by Dr. Madden" and "almost word for word" identical to the version he had penned on the ship.[89]

In 1967 Ivor Wilks, one of the most noted historians of West Africa at the time, published his own English-language version of the autobiography by merging and editing the previous two translations. While he did so without ever having accessed the Arabic original–by then already presumaby lost–his text provided important corrections to inaccuracies or inconsistencies the previous translations bore. He described his edition as "based mainly on the Renouard version, though in places Madden's is preferred."[90] Indeed, while Madden had acquired some knowledge of Arabic while traveling through Syria and Egypt earlier in his life, he was not classically trained in the language, as Renouard was. Therefore, while the Watara/Madden and Renouard translations are virtually identical in their content and format, they differ in stylistic variations in the English rendering of the Arabic original, and do bear occasional mismatches, each of which Wilks highlights in his own edition.

[89] Note by Renouard extracted from the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, and included as an appendix in Davidson, *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa*, 102.

[90] Watara and Wilks, "The African Travels of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq," 156.

Moreover, unlike Madden or Renouard, Wilks was highly knowledgeable about the geographical and cultural environment of West Africa's Sahelian and coastal regions, and well-acquainted with the variant of Arabic script Watara likely used.[91] For instance, Wilks was able to correctly identify the town where Watara was educated as Buna (today's northeastern Côte d'Ivoire), whereas Madden and Renouard had incorrectly transliterated it as "Ghona," owing to their unawareness of West African writers' rendition of the town's name.[92] Wilks' version thus stands today as the most accurate one.[93] Long after 1967, Ivor Wilks kept researching Watara's story, occasionally mentioning it in the footnotes of other works devoted to West African Muslim clerical lineages in Ghana, Asante, Kong and Wa.[94] By 2000, Wilks was at work on a monograph entitled *The Life and Times of Abū Bakr es-Siddiq of Timbuktu*, which he claimed would correct "many" inaccuracies in his previous analysis, "in light of further data."[95] Ivor Wilks passed away in 2014 without having published this work.

[91] For an overview of West African scripts, see Mauro Nobili, "Arabic scripts in West African manuscripts: A tentative classification from the de Gironcourt collection," *Islamic Africa* 2, no. 1 (2011): 105-133.

[92] The correct local pronunciation of Buna is Gbona, and local writers transliterated the *gb* sound using the letter Arabic letter غ (ghayn). See Watara and Wilks, "The African Travels of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq," 157, and Ivor Wilks, Nehemia Letvzion, and Bruce M. Haight, *Chronicles from Gonja: a Tradition of West African Muslim Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 57.

[93] I primarily rely on the Wilks edition in this chapter.

[94] I thank Coleman Davidson for referring me to Wilks post-1967 references to Abū Bakr.

[95] Wilks, "The Juula and the Expansion of Islam into the Forest," 111 n. 68.

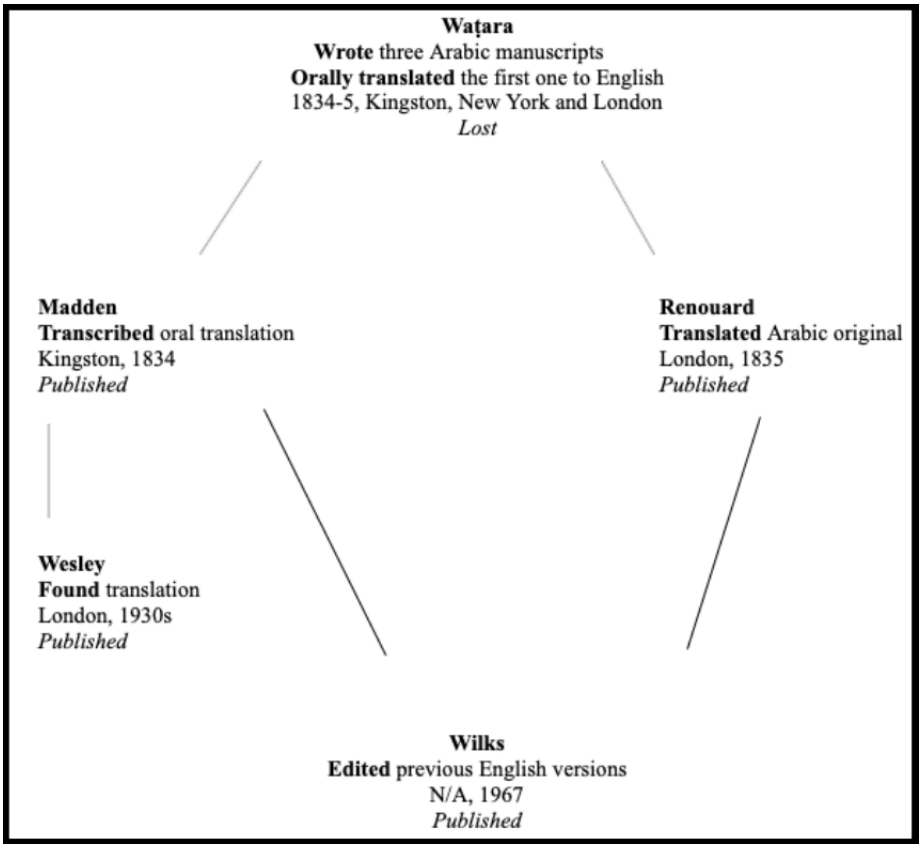

Figure 7. The autobiography of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq Watara: a tentative stemma

The autobiography of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Watara was thus subjected to multiple rewritings, translations, editions and interpretations. While Wilks' version likely stands as the closest to the original, access to Watara's Arabic version would undoubtedly provide more insights into the background and upbringing of its author in the Sahel. Access to the original would also allow for codicological analysis, and hopefully reveal more details regarding Watara's literacy and training, as well as the conditions in which he produced the document in Jamaica.[96] So would access to other writings from Watara: indeed, in addition to the autobiography, Madden and Davidson both made multiple

[96] I was thus far unable to locate any of Watara's original Arabic writings, in the course of two months of research at the Jamaica Archives and Records Department, Royal Irish Academy, and Royal Geographical Society. Due to the security situation in Mali, I have yet to conduct research in Jenne and Timbuktu, where Abū Bakr allegedly returned. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I also have yet to conduct research in the Ivor Wilks papers at Northwestern University's Herskovitz library, but hope to do so in 2022-2023.

mentions of writings Watara produced, including autobiographical documents, personal correspondence, and accounting records. Currently, the only extant writing penned by Watara is his signature at the bottom of his 1834 manumission certificate (see Figure 1). The process through which Watara's autobiography was constructed and the choices that were made in its production are important to unravel, as they provide insights to better interpret key aspects of Watara's narrative.

Indeed, the central premise of an autobiography is usually that the author also stands as the subject of the work, the words and voices of these two figures unified as one.[97] Yet, as literary scholars have shown, this premise can often be moot, as the author carefully constructs a subject through a calculated process of self-representation. I argue this was the case for Watara's text, which was borne out of extended interactions with Madden, and went through both oral and written translations as well as several editions. Annette K. Joseph-Gabriel enjoins readers of life stories to pay careful attention to the "autobiographical "I" that narrates much of the story," particularly as it "gives way to [someone else's] intervention as biographer, translator, and transcriber. This shift," she argues, "exposes the fiction of a unified identity of author and subject that underlies traditional autobiographies.[98]" It follows that Watara—the constructed subject of the autobiography—is distinct from Watara—the author that produced a self-representation text and enlisted Madden's collaboration in the process.

This author/subject duality is further reinforced by the fact that the autobiography itself does not exist as an independent document, but rather, is included in *A Twelvemonth's Residence in the West Indies,* an extensive set of writings authored and/or assembled by Madden, a white Irish

[97] Joseph-Gabriel, *Reimagining Liberation,* 125.

[98] Ibid.

abolitionist. This is significant, bearing in mind Carole Boyce Davies question: "what are the implications of editorial intervention and ordering processes in the textual production of a life story?[99]" In Watara's case, the implication was monumental, namely a chance at shaping his life story to obtain manumission and the possibility of a return to Africa. Though Madden very much took on a self-erasing position in his rendering of how the autobiography came to be, and goes to great pains to clarify that he seldom influenced the conditions of its production, "the interpretive, editorial position must remain an area of close scrutiny.[100]" I argue that as he mobilized Madden to produce this written text, Watara was likely aware of "the capacity of the text to activate spheres beyond the confines of its own textuality; and be implicated in social and political action,"[101] namely, the text's potential to activate freedom. The next two sections of this chapter delve further into this argument. In part 2, I examine the subject that Watara actively constructed in his autobiography: a wealthy, well-connected and educated young West African man growing up in the Sahel. In part 3, I turn to the silences and gaps scattered throughout Watara's narrative, and the purposes those served in his freedom-seeking process of self-representation.

[99] Carole Boyce Davies, "Collaboration and the Ordering Imperative in Life Story Production," in *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography*, edited by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 3.

[100] Ibid, 13.

[101] Karen Barber and Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias, eds., *Discourse and Its Disguises: The Interpretation of African Oral Texts* (Birmingham: Birmingham University, Centre of West African Studies, 1989), 3, as cited in Boyce Davies, 16.

A Privileged Juula Family at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century

> Before all these things happened, my father used to travel about. He went into the land of Katsina and Bornu. There he married my mother, and then returned to Timbuktu, to which place my mother followed him...He then ordered his slaves to make ready for their departure with him to visit his brothers...They therefore obeyed their masters' orders, and did so; and went to the town of Jenne, and from there to Kong, and from there to Buna, where they stopped. There they abode, and continued to serve their master, collecting much gold from him there.[102]
>
> —Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Watara's Autobiography

In his interactions with white abolitionists and orientalists in Jamaica and England, Watara presented himself as the product of a privileged upbringing in a wealthy and politically powerful Sahelian milieu. Following their fortuitous initial encounter in Kingston, Madden described Watara as "a person of exalted rank" and a "nobleman in his own country."[103] To Davidson, the man with whom he traveled to the Sahara from London in 1835, Watara claimed to be related to multiple Sahelian ruling families in Timbuktu, Kong, and among the Hausa.[104] A careful analysis of the information Watara provides in his autobiography about his family and relatives, without taking them at face value, allows for a better assessment of accuracies and embellishments in Watara's self-fashioning. In particular, it proves useful to place Watara's family within the social strata of the Kingdom of Kong, which for a period in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, held under its tutelage some of the major trade routes and hubs of the Sahel. Kong's influence extended, to varying degrees, over the cities of Bobo Juulaso, Buna and Jenne.

Watara's autobiography conveys the image of a family very much embedded in key Sahelian

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[102] Watara and Wilks, "The African Travels of Watara al-Ṣiddīq," 159.

[103] Madden, *A Twelvemonth's Residence in the West Indies*, 157-8.

[104] Thomas Davidson (ed.), *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa by John Davidson, F.R.S. F.S.A., &c* (London: J.L. Cox and Sons, 1839), 194.

commercial and political networks of their era. He writes that he was born in Timbuktu, and raised in Jenne. His lineage was Juula from Kong or Buna through his father Karamo Sa Watara, and Hausa from Borno through his mother Naghodi. His kinship networks thus spread across much of today's central Mali, and northern Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria, along the main eighteenth- and nineteenth-century routes of long-distance trade in West Africa. Following his early years and upbringing in Jenne, Watara traveled south to Buna, then an important trading and intellectual center, to further his schooling. As he was getting ready to leave Buna and embark on a journey to perform the *hajj* (pilgrimage to holy Islamic cities of Mecca and Medina), a war broke out. Watara was captured, and taken to the small port of Lago, near Cape Coast (present-day Ghana), where he was sold to British slave traders and taken to Jamaica. This would have been in the year 1805, when he was around 15 years old.

By the 1790s when Watara was born, the kingdom of Kong stood as a powerful West African state, built and safeguarded through military force.[105] Between 1710 and 1735 two brothers, Seku Watara and Famaghan Watara, had overthrown local rulers of territories between the Bandama and Comoe rivers, in today's northeastern Côte d'Ivoire. They expanded and consolidated their conquests into two centralized states, Kpon Gene and Gwiriko, with Kong and Bobo Juulaso standing as their respective capitals. The federated Kingdom of Kong, made up of both brothers' estates, reached its apogee in the mid-eighteenth century. Through warfare, Kong rulers conquered or held under their tutelage territories from the forest and Black Volta River in the South, to the Niger Delta on the

[105] For the information included in this paragraph, see: George Niamkey Kodjo, *Le royaume de Kong (Côte d'Ivoire), des origines à la fin du XIXe siècle* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006), 93-5 and 134-147.

desert's edge in the North. They controlled the caravan routes of the gold, salt, cloth and kola nut trades, including the key artery from Kong to Jenne, via Bobo Juulaso.[106]

Kong was by and large a mercantile state.[107] Its rulers Seku and Famaghan Watara were Juula, that is, members of an old Muslim trading diaspora spread across West Africa, which had originated in the Mandinka heartlands in the medieval era.[108] As early as the fifteenth century, the Juula were purchasing gold in the upper Black Volta from Akan producers from forest lands, and transporting it to entrepôts in the Western Sahel, for distribution across the Sahara and northern and eastern Mediterranean.[109] In the eighteenth century the Juula language became Kong's lingua franca, and Juula "colonies" and marketplaces flourished throughout the kingdom, such as the bustling Bobo Juulaso market.[110] Desirous to protect the traders class' lucrative activities, the Watara rulers enforced strict protections of commerce and private property. Oral traditions from Bobo Juulaso convey that under Famaghan Watara, "should a foreigner leave his walking stick under a tree and go away for ten years, he should be able to come back and recover the baton untouched."[111] Merchants fit within a three-tier system made up of *jatigiw* (hosts and guarantors), *jagotigiw* (trade lords), and *juula* (salespeople). While the latter carried out dangerous long-distance travel themselves to purchase and sell merchandise, members of the first two groups were wealthy and powerful men or women, who

[106] Ibid, 127.

[107] Ibid, 84.

[108] In fact, the term "juula" usually means "trader" or "merchant" in languages from the Mandinka family.

[109] Wilks, "The Juula and the Expansion of Islam into the Forest," 93-4.

[110] Kodjo, *Le royaume de Kong,* 149.

[111] Ibid, 149.

controlled expansive regional trade networks. The main commodities they traded were gold, kola nuts, salt, salt, ivory, and humans.[112] By the eighteenth century, the city of Kong was one of West Africa's main slave-trading hubs, delivering women, men, and children captured through warfare or raiding to the Bonduku and Kumasi markets. Kong oral traditions speak of the terror that incessant Juula raids brought to the Bobo, Niger Bend, and Ashanti regions: villages would be torched, able-bodied women, men, and children captured, and elders killed. By the eighteenth century, an estimated 70,000 individuals per year were sold in Kong's markets.[113]

Overtime, Kong also cultivated an increasingly strong Islamic culture. Though nominally Muslim, the Kong rulers initially accommodated a range of Mandinka spiritual practices and practitioners within the kingdom, alongside Islam. However, as they grew wealthier, the Kong elite sought to emulate the rich intellectual life of other Sahelian commercial hubs. Under Seku's son and successor Kumbi Watara (r. 1750-1775), Kong underwent a revival of Islamic culture, scholarship, and pilgrimages to Mecca. Upon accessing power, Kumbi allegedly summoned Juula and Jakhanke scholars and imams from neighboring towns, but also as far away as Timbuktu, to come settle in Kong.[114] Among the most notable of these settlers, Al Ḥajj Muḥammad b. Muṣṭafa Saghanugu (hereafter Sitafa, his nickname), who moved to Kong circa 1760. Sitafa was likely one of the authors of the famed *Kitāb Gonja*, an eighteenth century collection of historical annals from Gonja, Kong's neighboring kingdom to the East.[115] In Kong, Sitafa erected a great mosque, turning it into an elementary and higher

[112] Ibid, 181-203.

[113] Ibid, 201-2.

[114] Ibid, 225-6, and 232.

[115] Wilks, Levtzion, and Haight, *Chronicles from Gonja*, 62.

education center that attracted students from throughout the region. The higher education curriculum included hadith, law, grammar, and theology. Those who completed it earned the title of *'ālim* (Arabic, theologist/scholar), or *karamogo* (Juula, man of knowledge and teacher.)[116] By the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, Kong-educated karamogow were erecting their own educational centers in West Africa.[117]

Taking into account the socio-political environment of late eighteenth century Kong helps contextualize the background of Watara's paternal family. His father, Karamo Sa Watara, likely belonged to the *jatigiw* or *jagotigiw* class. The autobiography outlines that he was a wealthy, slave-owning merchant, whose own father had settled in the Niger Bend, but who was originally from the region of Kong and Buna.[118] Thus, it is likely that Watara's grandfather was one of the Kong itinerant merchants who created Juula colonies in Jenne and Timbuktu under Kumbi Watara. He likely held a prominent status, as one of his sons (Karamo Sa Watara's brother and Abu Bakr's uncle) later married the daughter of Soma Ali, a Kong prince.[119] The family's status as Juula settlers in the Niger Bend, related to the royal family of Kong, explains why Watara affixed the Watara patronymic of the ruling dynasty to his father's name in his autobiography, writing: "My father's name was Kara Musa, the Sharif (of a noble tribe), Weterawi, Tafsír."[120] According to Watara, his father possessed

[116] Kodjo, *Le royaume de Kong*, 229.

[117] Ibid, 232.

[118] Arriving in Buna, Watara "[reckoned] this country as our own." Watara and Wilks, "The African Travels of Watara al-Ṣiddīq," 160.

[119] Kodjo, *Le royaume de Kong*, 174 and Wilks, "The Juula and the Expansion of Islam into the Forest," 103.

[120] This is why I have chosen to use the patronymic Watara, as opposed to merely Abu Bakr al-Siddiq. Watara and Wilks, "The African Travels of Watara al-Ṣiddīq," 157.

"horses, asses, mules, and very valuable silks brought from Egypt.[121]" Karamo Sa Watara was also a scholar trained in *tafsīr*, or Quranic exegesis. As his name indicates, he had earned the Juula scholarly title of *karamogo.*

Following his early years in Jenne, the young Watara traveled to Buna (today's northeastern Côte d'Ivoire), an important regional trading and intellectual center, to visit his late father's grave. He describes Buna as a place of dwelling for "many learned men [*'ulamā'*] who are not natives of one place, but each of them having quitted their own country, has come here and settled."[122] Watara in fact opens his autobiography with a lengthy list of the scholars he encountered in Buna, before any mention of his paternal and maternal families, which highlights the capital importance of the isnad, or scholarly genealogy, he wished to inscribe himself within. While there, he also had the opportunity to further his own Quranic education. As he was getting ready to leave Buna and embark on a journey to perform the *hajj* along with one of his teachers, a war broke out between Buna and the neighboring sultanate of Bonduku. As Bonduku's troops defeated and invaded Buna, most inhabitants fled, but Watara was captured, and successively taken to Bonduku, Kumasi, and later the small port of Lago near Cape Coast, where he was sold to British slavers and taken to Jamaica. This would have been in the year 1805, when he was around 15 years old.

[121] Watara and Wilks, "The African Travels of Watara al-Ṣiddīq," 159.

[122] Ibid, 157. During his travels in West Africa in 1857-8, German traveler Heinrich Barth corroborated Buna's reputation as "a place of great celebrity for its learning and its schools." See Heinrich Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa: Being a Journal of an Expedition Undertaken under the Auspices of H.B.M.'s Government in the Years 1849-1855*, 5 vols (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans and Robert, 1857-1858) 5: 239-40.

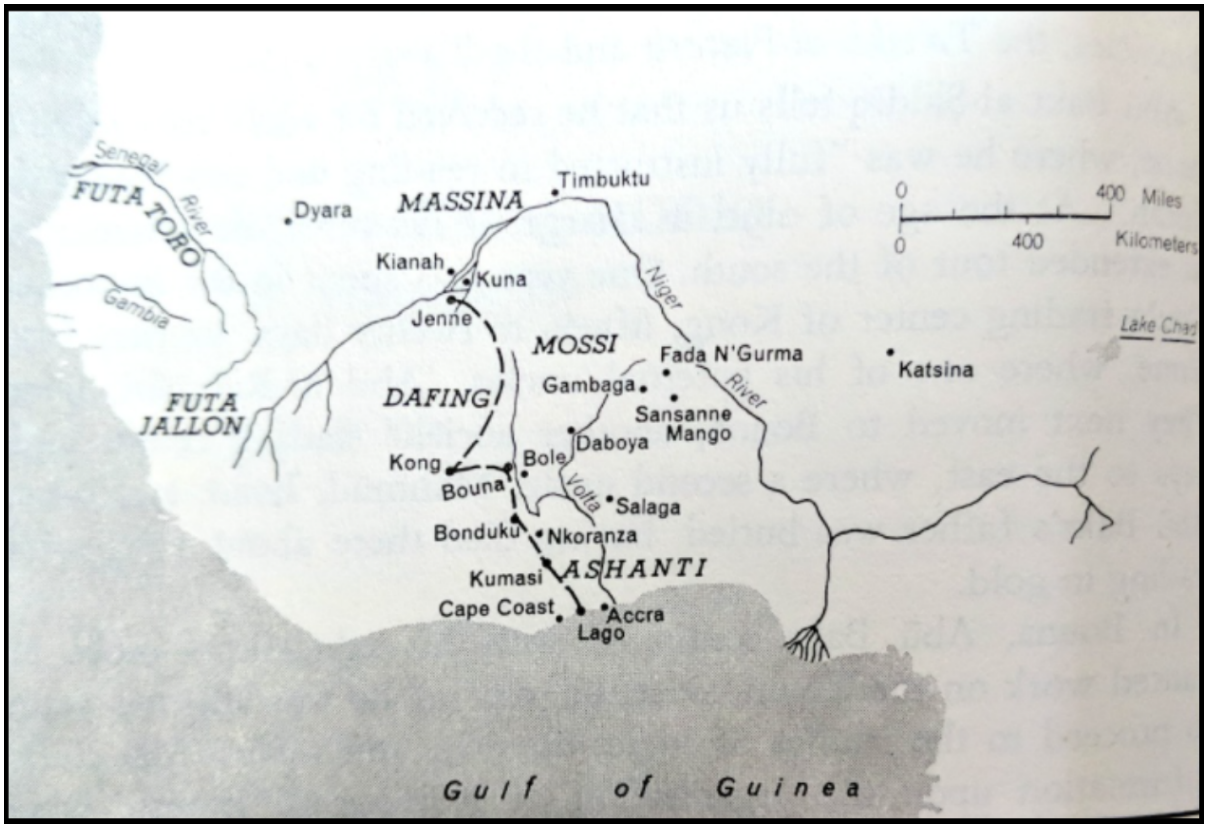

Figure 8. Watara's route to the coast[123]

Silences in Self-Writing: Achieving Manumission in Jamaica

The three decades Watara spent trapped in the world of Atlantic slavery—both in West Africa and in the Caribbean,—largely evade the historical record. While Watara's autobiography exclusively showcases life prior to his enslavement, Madden and Davidson's writings only convey his endeavors and aspirations following his manumission. Whereas Watara was adamant to lay out with extensive details his kin and family connections in the Sahel, he remained silent on the communities and networks he belonged to in Jamaica, and made no mention of any partner, child, family or friends on the island. Further, Watara provided little details about his experience of the Middle Passage, his

[123] Watara and Wilks, "The African Travels of Watara al-Ṣiddīq," 154.

subsequent sale, and his captivity, life and labors on the Caribbean island. How might we interpret Watara's reluctance to relate his experience of slavery? Was it fortuitous? Did it reflect his fear of reliving trauma? Or was it a choice to only provide strategic information—his literacy, formal education and noble upbringing that might elicit Westerner's recognition as someone who they might consider a peer? While the paucity of available sources ultimately render definitive answers unreachable, these questions nevertheless provide fruitful invitations for speculative analysis. Utilizing methodological tools developed by scholars of the archives of Atlantic slavery, including Michel Rolph Trouillot, Saidiya Hartman, and Marisa Fuentes, in this section, I linger on the gaps and silences in the written and oral archive Watara produced as he was trying to get free.[124] I closely analyze five themes that Watara chose not to elaborate upon—or that Madden deemed unworthy of interest—namely: surviving the brutality of Atlantic slavery; navigating Kingston as a slave; dreaming of freedom in Jamaica; building community and affective bonds on the island; and writing himself into Timbuktu's storied past.

First, Watara chose to spare his audience the deadly brutality he experienced in the world of Atlantic slavery, describing in a matter of fact tone the horrors he survived. Following Bonduku's invasion of Buna, he was immediately enslaved: "On that very day they made me a captive. They tore off my clothes, bound me with ropes, gave me a heavy load to carry, and led me to the town of Bonduku, and from there to the town of Kumasi... From there through Akisuma and Ajumako, in the

[124] See Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives ;* Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing The Past : Power and the Production of History* (Boston:Beacon Press, 1995); Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 12, vol 2 (2008): 1-14.

land of the Fanti, to the town of Lago, near the salt sea (all the way on foot, and well loaded.)"[125] Per Wilks' estimates, the journey Watara describes would have taken about a month on foot, with the captives traveling nearly twenty miles daily from Buna to Kumasi, and under ten miles daily from Kumasi to the sea, the pace decreasing as the landscape changed from the drier Sahelian terrain to the dense and humid forests of the Asante country.[126] Watara sticks to a factual description of this strenuous journey, providing only one hint of the suffering he incurred, in a passing mention about the heavy load he had to carry. He reveals nothing of companions who might have gotten too weak and sick, and died en route, or of the conditions in which he was likely exposed, examined and sold at a market fair. He only reveals that upon reaching the coast, "they sold me to the Christians, and I was bought by a certain captain of a ship."[127] Vincent Brown's vivid depiction of the enslaved's ordeal provides a plausible description of the sufferings Watara endured, and further highlights the discrepancy between his lived experience and the words he chose to recount it:

> Wherever in Africa they had started from, a near majority of those captured and sold into the Atlantic trading network died en route. They fell in large numbers at every stage of their enslavement: as slave raiders and warriors first captured them in Africa; as they marched, famished, to inland slave markets, and then again to the dank and over-crowded slave forts and the waiting European ships at the coast; as the heaving Atlantic twisted them in their chains and soaked them in their own filth; as they waited for buyers in Jamaican ports; and as they fanned out onto the plantations and fell in line with their harsh and unyielding work regimes. Even once they had "adjusted" to Jamaican slavery, they could not expect to live longer than two decades.[128]

Watara's description of the Middle Passage is even more perfunctory, recounting in one sentence

[125] Waṭara and Wilks, "The African Travels of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq," 162.

[126] Ibid, 168-169. Wilks estimates 11 to 12 days for the first leg of the journey, and at least 12 days for the second leg, assuming that the captives would average 10 miles a day, which was "generally considered impossible."

[127] Ibid, 162.

[128] Brown, *The Reaper's Garden*, 24.

a cross-ocean sail marked by pervasive death, despair, dislocation, viral infections, social alienation, and loss of any sense of safety and belonging: "We continued on board ship, at sea, for three months, and then came on shore in the land of Jamaica. This was the beginning of my slavery until this day."[129] This writing style, which shields Watara's sensorial and emotional experiences during his capture and captivity, contrasts sharply with the more vivid way Olaudah Equiano chose to recast his own experience of the Middle Passage:

> The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. The wretched situation was again aggravated by the galling of the chains, now become insupportable; and the filth of the necessary tubs, into which the children often fell, and were almost suffocated. The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable.[130]

In London, Watara did tell Renouard that he had formed at least one companionship on board, with a fellow Muslim with whom he discussed his education.[131] Yet, he reveals nothing in his autobiography about this relationship, and the subsequent fate of his companion remains unknown. Between 1740 and 1804, around 2.2 million Africans were taken across the Atlantic to British colonies, and an estimated 300,000 did not survive the journey; among the survivors, Watara was one of 33% who landed in Jamaica.[132]

Secondly, in his autobiography Watara eluded the bulk of his life, namely, his 30-year enslavement in Jamaica from his teenage years through his mid-forties. Upon arriving on the island,

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[129] Ibid.

[130] *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African*, as quoted in Brown, *The Reaper's Garden*, 44.

[131] Note by Renouard extracted from the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, and included as an appendix in Davidson, *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa,* 214.

[132] Brown, *The Reaper's Garden*, 25.

Watara would have survived his "seasoning," the period of one to three years in which recently arrived Africans acclimated to Caribbean diseases, violent labor environments, harsh living conditions, malnutrition and psychological trauma: by the late eighteenth century, an estimated one in two Africans died during seasoning.[133] Watara was first purchased by a stone-mason named Donnellan, and subsequently sold and employed on the estate of Mr. Haynes, an absentee planter residing in Britain. There is no available information about the nature of the labor he provided for Donnellan and Haynes, or where on the island he was enslaved.[134] Regardless, his odds of survival would have been low, particularly if working on a sugar plantation. There, enslaved Africans were worked to exhaustion, which rendered sugar cultivation a particularly deadly occupation for them, and profitable for planters, allowing British Jamaica to achieve remarkably high preindustrial plantation agriculture productivity rates.[135] The cultivation of coffee and other spices were also extremely trying, lethal and profitable. In the year 1805, when Watara arrived on the island, Jamaica exported a record 100,000 tons of sugar; and by 1810, it stood as the largest coffee producer in the Americas.[136] While no empirical evidence confirms that Watara worked on a plantation, it is likely that he did—especially in his early years as a healthy young man,—as did between 50 and 75% of those enslaved on the island.[137] In a rare instance

[133] Ibid, 50.

[134] I have not been able to locate Donnellan and Hayne's residence on the island. Hayne's estate was likely not located in Kingston. According to the Legacies of British Slave Ownership Database, three planters bearing this last name were awarded compensation in 1835-6 following manumission, with estates located in St-John parish, Trelawney parish, and St-Thomas parish, respectively.

[135] Brown, *The Reaper's Garden*, 51; and Trevor Burnard, *Planters, Merchants and Slaves. Plantation Societies in British America, 1650-1820* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 188.

[136] Burnard, *Planters, Merchants and Slaves*, 208.

[137] Brown, *The Reaper's Garden*, 52.

of expression of grief about his fate, Watara explicitly alluded to his sufferings toiling on Hayne's estate: "It was then," he wrote, "that I tasted all the bitterness of slavery."[138] He remained there until 1823, at which point he was sold again, to Alexander Anderson of Kingston, who employed him as a bookkeeper, having him "take an account of all that came or was issued from his slave yard."[139] Working as a bookkeeper was a more enviable and less dangerous occupation than agriculture. Still, navigating Kingston as an enslaved man, Watara would have "encountered various reminders of the looming violence of slavery."[140] The slave yard he monitored was likely one of the thousands such yards lining Kingston's Port Royal, Orange, and Harbour streets, "the most densely slave-populated streets in eighteenth century British America.[141]" These streets were therefore arenas for countless "scenes of subjection," such as the one Madden witnessed on July 29, 1834, on the eve of emancipation. Near the intersection of Harbour Street and King Street, Kingston's busiest arteries, "on the steps of Harty's Tavern...a young woman, strong and healthy," a collard circling her neck, was being auctioned to the highest bidder to levy part of her owner's debt (see Figure 9.)[142] Moving around town, Watara would have constantly experienced traumatic reminders of the "bitterness" he had himself experienced.

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[138] Renouard reports that Watara wrote this on the boat that he traveled on to reach London, following his manumission. Note by Renouard extracted from the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, and included as an appendix in Davidson, *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa,* 213.

[139] Ibid.

[140] Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 21.

[141] Burnard, *Planters, Merchants and Slaves*, 205. Yards were enclosures surrounding domestic dwellings, where the enslaved carried out activities such as "food production and preparation, care and maintenance of animals, domestic chores, storage, recreation, and aesthetic enjoyment." See Barbara J. Heath and Amber Bennett, "'The little Spots allow'd them:' The Archaeological Study of African American Yards," *Historical Archaeology* 34, no. 2 (2000): 38. I thank Thabisile Griffin for pointing me to this article and Burnard's work.

[142] Madden, *A Twelvemonth's Residence in the West Indies*, 218.

Figure 9. Harbour Street, Kingston, c. 1820. Harty's Tavern is on the right side, under the flag.[143]

Thirdly, though he achieved visibility in the archive of British chattel slavery partly because he managed to legally win freedom, Watara's writings never betray what he himself understood freedom to mean. He never states whether he dreamed of it or deemed it achievable; if he considered it a collective or individual pursuit; and what he hoped a free future might entail. Yet, he must have nurtured specific theories and desires around freedom. Indeed, Watara's enslavement aligned almost exactly with a pivotal period in Jamaica, when more than ever, the enslaved were talking, thinking, and plotting about freedom. This period was the nadir of British trans-Atlantic slavery, bookended by the

[143] James Hakewill, *A Picturesque Tour of the Island of Jamaica From Drawings Made in the Years 1820 and 1821* (London: Hurst and Robinson, Pall Mall; E. Lloyed, Harley Street, 1825), "View Of Harbour St, Kingston, Looking Eastward" https://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/carviews/v/022zzz01486gg11u00004000.html

1807 abolition of the slave trade and 1833 abolition of slavery throughout the West Indies, and marked by multiple insurrections and revolts. Moreover, this period came on the heels of two major developments of the late-eighteenth century Atlantic world, both of which enslaved Africans had caught wind of: the intense abolitionist debates on the parliament floor in London, and the numerous slave revolts throughout the greater Caribbean, including the watershed Black revolution for independence in Saint Domingue.[144] As Thomas Holt writes, the circulating news of the abolition debates of the 1780s, slave trade abolition of 1807, and successful Haitian revolution, all "harbored the seeds of slavery's violent destruction."[145] In fact, just after Christmas on December 27, 1831, and lasting into the end of January, thousands of enslaved Jamaicans—one fifth of the slave population—organized a widespread uprising and work stoppage that came to be known as the Baptist War.[146] Linton, one of the chief rebels of the Baptist War, confirmed the sense of purpose that rumors of abolition and freedom swarming the island conferred upon the enslaved. As the British authorities put down the rebellion and arrested him, before his execution, Linton predicted: "in about three or four years the negroes will break out again, for they cannot help believing that the King has given them freedom, especially as they hear so much about it from newspapers."[147] Regardless of where Watara stood during the Baptist War—whether he participated in it, silently wished for its success, or aided the

[144] In his seminal study on information circulation in the late eighteenth century Caribbean, Julius Scott demonstrates that the enslaved and disenfranchised throughout the region heard and circulated the news of the Haitian revolution. See Scott, *The Common Wind.* There were also major revolts in eighteenth century Jamaica, including the Marooon Wars, and Tacky's Revolt. On the latter, see Vincent Brown, *Tacky's Revolt: The Story of an Atlantic Slave War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020).

[145] Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, 19.

[146] Ibid, 14.

[147] Ibid, 20.

authorities in quelling it—the events of 1831-2, and the freedom-charged atmosphere of his times in Jamaica, would have prompted him to engage with the prospect of what a free future might entail.

Specific conceptions of what freedom meant and should entail, were in fact heavily contested. Linton's ominous warning was warranted, and the Baptist War reportedly precipitated British lawmaker's decision to abolish slavery in 1833, and the subsequent August 1, 1834 official proclamation of emancipation. Yet, emancipation, which opened with a mandatory period of apprenticeship intended to "fit [the formerly enslaved] for freedom," as the British governor proclaimed, failed to bring them real independence.[148] In effect, this meant Britain intended to make them fit to be productive in a capitalist wage-labor economy. Madden, a forceful advocate for abolition, supported this ideology, encouraging the formerly enslaved to be "industrious, peaceable and patient during this term of apprenticeship."[149] Even to those who overcame apprenticeship, freedom remained elusive. As Watara confessed to Davidson, though his 1834 release from apprenticeship legally rendered him "absolutely and utterly free," freedom as defined by British colonial society was not a desirable condition. "After his liberation," Davidson wrote, "he continued in the same employment, but his condition could hardly be said to be improved, as his employer merely gave him his board, and appears to have withdrawn most of the former influences, without substituting wage in their stead."[150] This confession Watara made to Davidson upon reaching Morocco shows that his prospect for a free life in Jamaica, having achieved the highest possible legal freedom he could be afforded, remained grim.

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[148] Madden, *A Twelvemonth's Residence in the West Indies,* 256.

[149] Ibid*,* 208.

[150] Davidson, *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa*, 213.

Fourthly, the extant historical record does not reveal any information about the kinship or family bonds Watara formed in the land where he spent thirty years. As an enslaved Black man in Jamaica, Watara achieved relative notoriety by way of his Islamic education, literacy, and family connections in West Africa. These aspects of his person acquired hyper-visibility in the archive, dwarfing the bonds he formed in Jamaica, the place where he lived most of his adult life. Did he form romantic relationships, build a family, or have children? Did he have friends and companions? Did he maintain a connection with fellow West Africans, and fellow Muslims? Current empirical limits render these aspects of Watara's life unrecoverable, because either him or his Western contemporaries chose not to disclose them, or deemed them unimportant. Watara did return to Africa alone, and there is no record of him requesting the manumission or repatriation of family members.[151] He might have abandoned his family on the island, or he might have chosen a celibate life. If he did have children at any point of his enslavement, they might not have been alive by the time he departed the island: child mortality rates were high for the enslaved, and into the early nineteenth century, 25% to 50% of infants under the age of one died.[152] As for friends or companions, the only hint Watara provided is elusive, and emerges in a scant mention by Renouard of a conversation he had with Watara about how he managed to maintain his Islamic knowledge and literacy after such a long time spent away from home. Renouard reported that in Jamaica, "two or three negroes" helped Watara "[revive] his remembrance of what he had

[151] This contrasts with the known attempts (with varying degrees of success) of other freed Black people in the Americas who tried to secure freedom and a return to Africa for their family members. These include for instance, in the late 1820s and early 1830s, George Erskine of Tennessee, or Abdul-Rahman ibn Ibrahim Sori of Mississippi. See Nemata Blyden, *African Americans and Africa. A New History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 90; and Terry Alford, *Prince Among Slaves: The True Story of an African Prince Sold into Slavery in the American South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

[152] Brown, *The Reaper's Garden*, 54-56.

learned" in school as a teenager, which suggests Watara met fellow West Africa-educated Muslims on the island.[153] This is plausible, given dynamics in the island's demographics. Recently arrived Africans in their mid-twenties and thirties historically constituted the bulk of the enslaved population of Jamaica. Though their numbers declined after the abolition of the trade, they remained significant: by 1817, still 37% of the enslaved were Africa-born.[154] This renders the chance of Watara encountering fellow Muslims who had been educated in West Africa prior to their capture and deportation to Jamaica more likely, though there is no way to know the frequency of their encounters, or depth of the relationship they formed. There is however historical evidence of the existence of a West African Muslim community on the island in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, though we do not know whether Watara belonged to it.

Indeed, sometime during the anxiety-filled weeks between Christmas 1831 and late-January 1832, as the Baptist War was raging, an enslaved woman living on the coffee estate of Spice Grove, west of Kingston, destroyed an Arabic-language manuscript she held in her dwelling.[155] The letter belonged to her husband, an elder in the enslaved community of Spice Grove and active member of the Moravian Mission, who went by the name Robert Tuffit.[156] His birth name was Muhammad Kaba Saghanughu, and he was a West African Muslim from a Jakhanke community from Buka (today's northern Côte d'Ivoire). Yacine Daddi Addoun and Paul Lovejoy have uncovered and analyzed an

[153] Note by Renouard extracted from the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, and included as an appendix in Davidson, *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa,* 213.

[154] Burnard, *Planters, Merchants and Slaves*, 170.

[155] Madden, *A Twelvemonth's Residence in the West Indies*, 199.

[156] Ibid. Alias Robert Peart. Kaba himself wrote that his name was Robert Tuffit, but Benjamin Angell, a Jamaica planter and fellow member of the Moravian Mission, calls him "Robert Peart (or Tuffit)."

Arabic-language treatise Kaba authored in 1823 in Jamaica, entitled *Kitāb al-Salāt* (*Book on Praying*), which demonstrates that despite his conversion to Christianity in 1812, Kaba in fact lead a small Muslim congregation on the island.[157] This strategy was neither uncommon, nor exclusive to enslaved Muslims. For instance, the leaders of the 1831-2 rebellion, including Sam Sharpe, were Baptist leaders who had "drawn on that authority to build up an invisible church outside the control of the English Baptist missionaries, including separate services and an independent organizational network."[158] Likewise, Kaba used the guise of the Moravian Mission he was an active member of, to lead his Muslim congregation.[159] Kaba addressed his Kitab al-Salat, which he penned in a mission notebook, to the "*jamā'at al-muslimīn wa al-muslimāt*" (community of Muslim men and women).[160] He discussed various matters including eschatology and daily prayers, citing from memory classical works from the Islamic canon for reference, an indication of the standard education he received prior to his enslavement.[161] Kaba also disclosed to planter Benjamin Angell, a fellow member of the Moravian Mission, that in the early 1830s, he had received an Arabic pamphlet authored in West Africa around 1786, which "exhorted all the followers of Mahomet to be true and faithful, if they wished to go to

[157] Yacine Daddi Addoun and Paul Lovejoy, "Muḥammad Kabā Saghanughu and the Muslim Community of Jamaica," in Paul E. Lovejoy, ed., *Slavery on the Frontiers of Islam*, (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2004), 199 and 209.

[158] Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, 16.

[159] Daddi Addoun and Lovejoy, "Muḥammad Kabā Saghanughu and the Muslim Community of Jamaica," 208 and 212. Madden also corresponded with other enslaved Muslims on the island. See Madden, *A Twelvemonth's Residence in the West Indies*, 214.

[160] Daddi Addoun and Lovejoy, "Muḥammad Kabā Saghanughu and the Muslim Community of Jamaica," 204.

[161] Ibid, 204-5. For more on Islamic education in Kaba hight have received, see Scott Resse ed., *The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2004); Bruce Hall and Charles C. Stewart, "The Historic "Core Curriculum" and the Book Market in Islamic West Africa," in *The Trans-Saharan Book Trade*, ed. Krätli and Lydon, 109–79; and Kane, *Beyond Timbuktu*, 75-95.

Heaven."[162] He added that his wife had destroyed the letter, for fear of it being used as incriminating evidence in the wave of arrests and killings that followed the Baptist War.[163] While it is unclear how this letter had reached the island in the first place—likely through an enslaved Muslim who had managed to conserve it through the Middle Passage,—the fact that it was then entrusted to Kaba, transmitted "by the hands of a little boy," is a testament to the preeminent position he held within the Jamaican Muslim community.[164]

In 1834, Kaba reached out to Watara in writing, having heard of his story and manumission through the newspapers, which he said caused him "heartfelt joy."[165] Kaba opened his short letter, dated October 7, with Muslim greetings, introduced himself, and congratulated Watara on having secured his freedom. On October 18, Watara responded by specifying his birth name, and producing a summary of the autobiography he had written for Madden. Watara concluded his letter with an invitation for further correspondence: "Whenever you wish to send me a letter, write it in Arabic language ; then, I will understand it properly."[166] Watara's invitation to write in the script they had both learned in childhood, rather than English, was thus pragmatic, but perhaps also hints to a desire for more private and intimate interactions with his "countryman," as he called Kaba.[167] The

[162] Madden, *A Twelvemonth's Residence in the West Indies*, 198.

[163] For comparison, in the 1835 Mâle rebellion in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, Arabic writings were used as incriminating evidence against Muslim rebels and non rebels alike. See João José Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: the Muslim Uprising of 1835 in Bahia*, Arthur Brakel trans., (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.)

[164] Madden, *A Twelvemonth's Residence in the West Indies*, 198.

[165] Ibid, 199.

[166] Ibid, 200-201.

[167] Ibid, 200.

introductory set of letters they exchanged was reproduced in Madden's journal, and it is unknown whether their correspondence subsequently carried on, if they met, or if Watara was able to join the Spice Grove Muslim community.

Weaving together the four silences highlighted above, the fifth and most salient silence in Watara's writings is how intentional and deliberate he was in crafting the series of events that would lead up to his freedom. Specifically, in Jamaica, Watara wrote himself into Timbuktu's storied past to maximize his chances of achieving positive outcomes, leading up to his manumission and return voyage. Through his writings, preserved and discussed both in the archives of British chattel slavery, and in historical scholarship about this era, Watara achieved a considerable visibility that the vast majority of enslaved people were not afforded. In other words, his written production does not belong to what Marisa Fuentes has called the usual "historical genre of the enslaved in the colonial archive," that is, the cries and screams of brutalized, violated, and enslaved humanhood that British abolitionists wrote, talked about, and circulated *ad nauseam*.[168] What function, then, did Watara's writings serve in the colonial archive? And how to interpret his relative hyper visibility both in his lifetime and in historiography?

Watara evidently made use of his literacy for pragmatic purposes, in an attempt to improve his lot. As he explained to Renouard, working as a bookkeeper for Anderson, he "put down everything in negro English and in the Arabic character, (for he never had an opportunity of learning to read or write

[168] Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 143.

English,) and read it off' to the overseer in the evening."[169] As Kaba's wife's fear during the Baptist War confirms, revealing literacy in a script that enslavers could not understand, carried a risk of being considered suspicious or potentially seditious. Yet, Watara chose to continue doing so, perhaps because Anderson considered the financial profit he gained from Watara's skills greater than any risk, or perhaps encouraged by positive reactions to what Westerners deemed a sign of "civilized condition of part of Central Africa, and of the capacity of the negro for learning."[170] Watara even built a reputation in Kingston, as one planter wrote to Madden: "I had often heard the man spoken of, but I never see him until he stood before you. I had often heard, too, of the beauty of his penmanship."[171] Therefore, it is possible that Watara's observation of Western interest in Timbuktu and Islamic literacy encouraged him to theorize ways to leverage his connection to the city, and enact strategic performances of literacy to provide evidence for this connection. Already, around 1829, a French aristocrat to whom Watara had demonstrated his literacy, and likely provided the same narrative he did Madden, had attempted to obtain his freedom. Louis-Napoleon Lannes, Duke of Montebello, encountered Watara on the island while traveling back from South America. Montebello sought to obtain Watara's manumission, and made a formal appeal for assistance to the Colonial Office, but his request was declined. [172]

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[169] Note by Renouard extracted from the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, and included as an appendix in Davidson, *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa*, 213. Watara, who had knowledge of at least three languages (juula, arabic, and english), was adamant that although he retained full knowledge of the arabic script, he never learned to master the latin script.

[170] Madden, *A Twelvemonth's Residence in the West Indies*, 196. Other comments show that Western abolitionists considered Islam to be a proof of civilization. See Madden, Madden, *A Twelvemonth's Residence in the West Indies*, 158; Note by Renouard extracted from the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, and included as an appendix in Davidson, *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa,* 215.

[171] Madden, *A Twelvemonth's Residence in the West Indies*, 192.

[172] Madden briefly mentions this episode. See Madden, *A Twelvemonth's Residence in the West Indies*, 178. Though

Eventually, Madden wrote to the Royal Geographical Society of London "at [Watara's] urgent request" to have him hired as a guide to Timbuktu.[173] Though Watara was merely born in the city and had hardly spent any formative time there, he was likely acutely aware of the fascination that Timbuktu triggered in European minds, and how he might leverage Timbuktu's global reputation. Indeed, European geographical and historical imaginaries had long exoticized Timbuktu as a site of mystery and immense riches.[174] At the time Watara was enslaved in Jamaica, the island even harbored a "Timbuctoo estate" named after the fabled city.[175] In 1824, the *Société de géographie de Paris* had put up a cash prize for any foreign traveler who would be able to reach the city. By 1828, at least two European travelers would manage to do so.[176] Major Alexander Gordon Laing, a Scottish officer who had fought in the British army in Barbados, Sierra Leone, and the Gold Coast; and René Caillié, a French traveler. Ultimately, despite Madden's plea, the Royal Geographical Society denied Watara's application.[177] Following Madden's departure from Jamaica, Watara persevered and eventually

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Madden does not specify the date, this episode likely occurred after April 1829. That month, Montebello went on a secret diplomatic mission to Bogota on behalf of the French crown. See George Lomné, "Bolivar, l'homme qui ne voulait pas être roi," in *L'échec en politique, objet d'histoire,* ed. Fabienne Bock, Geneviève Bührer-Thierry, and Stéphanie Alexandre (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2005): 129-149.

[173] Ibid, 193.

[174] See Frank T. Kryza, *The Race for Timbuktu : In Search of Africa's City of Gold (*New York: Ecco, 2006).

[175] The estate, which included 19 enslaved people, belonged to Benjamin Angell, who acquired it in 1832. See 'Timbuctoo[Jamaica|Manchester]', *Legacies of British Slavery database*, http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/estate/view/16827 [accessed 13th October 2021].

[176] While Gordon Laing was slain shortly after reaching the city in 1826, René Caillié, who reached it in 1828, made it back to Europe. Both Laing and Caillé were awarded the French Geographic Society's Gold Medal for Explorations and DIscovery Voyages in 1830. See René Caillié, *Journal d'un voyage à Temboctou et à Jenné, dans l'Afrique centrale, précédé d'observations faites chez les Maures Braknas, les Nalous et autres peuples ; pendant les années 1824, 1825, 1826, 1827, 1828 : par René Caillié. Avec une carte itinéraire, et des remarques géographiques, par M. Jomard, membre de l'institut.* Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1830.

[177] Madden, *A Twelvemonth's Residence in the West Indies*, 193-4.

successfully convinced another Westerner, captain Olden, to sponsor his travels from Kingston to London, via New York. In England, where he arrived in 1835, he managed to get hired as a guide for a private expedition to Timbuktu.

Ultimately, Watara boasted his Islamic education and silenced his own sufferings and trauma; did not disclose his bonds on the island and highlighted instead his West African connections; and downplayed his freedom dreams or active involvement in the production of favorable outcomes, instead highlighting the fateful interventions of benevolent Westerners. Though these decisions might not have been part of an active strategy on his part, it is possible that they amounted to it. In any case, they all contributed to securing his freedom and return to Africa.

Conclusion

Throughout July 1838, Jamaica's colonial officials (the governor and his subordinates) toured the island's parishes ahead of the August 1st proclamation of emancipation that would put an end to apprenticeship and herald formal abolition.[178] In each parish, assemblies were convened to celebrate the proclamation, during which the formerly enslaved were expected to deliver oral addresses and written messages of gratitude to the British Crown for granting them freedom.[179] At one such gathering in Manchester parish, the day immediately following emancipation, an elderly, ninety-years old Muhammad Kaba Saghanughu was among the community leaders and representatives who delivered

[178] Elizabeth A. Dolan and Ahmed Idrissi Alami, "Muhammad Kabā Saghanughu's Arabic Address on the Occasion of Emancipation in Jamaica," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 76, no. 2 (April 2019): 291.

[179] Ibid. Parishes are administrative units that constitute Jamaica's territorial divisions.

an address thanking Queen Victoria and Britain.[180] Shortly thereafter, a written version of his address, likely transcribed and edited by the governor's office, was published in the *Liberator*, a Boston abolitionist newspaper; the governor also supplied an identical copy of that text to the Colonial Office.[181] However, a newly-uncovered source found among the governor's personal papers in Belfast, Northern Ireland, reveals that Kaba had in fact initially drafted his speech himself, penning the address in Jamaican patois using the Arabic script.[182] Kaba's original text, written on a fourteen by fourteen inches piece of paper, is mostly similar to the edited versions that ended up in the *Liberator* and the Colonial Office, barring one significant difference: their censorship of part of his speech. Halfway through his text, having expressed indebtedness and thankfulness to the British authorities, Kaba called his community's former status a form of "chainhood;" a few lines down, assessing the significance of emancipation, he concluded: "on this day had the torture ended."[183] When they edited and transcribed his speech into the Latin script, the governor's office erased these two mentions, emphasizing instead his expression of gratitude to the Crown. Stripped from Kaba's voice in the abolitionist and colonial archives, are thus two eloquent indictments of the barbarity of British slavery.

Much like the published version of Kaba's emancipation address, the nineteenth-century

[180] Ibid, 308. It is unclear whether Kaba in fact got a chance to deliver his address aloud that day; however he was adamant that his written, Arabic-script statement be transmitted to the governor, which evidently ended up being the case, since the governor conserved it among his papers.

[181] Ibid, 290.

[182] The practice of using the Arabic script to write non-Arabic languages is known as 'ajami, and is fairly commonplace within West African Muslim communities, who use it to transcribe Fulani, Mandinka, and other languages. See e.g. Dobronravin, "West African Ajami in the New World (Hausa, Fulfulde, Mande Languages)" ; Fallou Ngom, *Muslims beyond the Arab World: The Odyssey of Ajami and the Muridiyya* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[183] Dolan and Idrissi Alami, "Muhammad Kabā Saghanughu's Arabic Address on the Occasion of Emancipation in Jamaica," 301.

document known as the autobiography of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Watara is a fraught text that was mediated to its readers through multiple translations, re-transcriptions, and editions. Unlike Kaba's first-hand draft which has now been published, the location of Watara's original Arabic writings remains unknown. By directly denouncing his "chainhood" and "torture," Kaba openly indicted white officials as they were orchestrating a self-congratulatory ceremony to celebrate British abolition, granted under a "humanist liberal guise."[184] In that sense, Kaba's move parallels the "shrieks and cries" of violated enslaved women, which Marisa Fuentes has described as the "rhetorical genre of the enslaved, that (at once) demands our attention as it communicates an historical and human condition in response to routinized violence."[185]

In contrast, Watara's rhetorical genre in his self-writing mostly concealed the subjugation and violence he suffered. Watara crafted his text in 1834 Kingston, at the request of—and in dialogue with—Richard Madden, an Irish abolitionist overseeing emancipation and enforcing apprenticeship. It is perhaps because of this particular context that Watara chose to silence the violation of his humanhood under slavery and instead, shift the focus to an autobiographical subject (his childhood-self) that was well-integrated within African social elites and intellectual circles. This might have been a pragmatic strategy on his part, as he was likely aware of Western fascination for his birthplace, Timbuktu. Emphasizing his connections to the city's storied reputation, as opposed to the violent reality of British Jamaica, might have improved his chances of obtaining manumission, and a return to Africa, which he eventually secured, and which the next chapter explores.

[184] Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 143.

[185] Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO

Securing Freedom in the Age of Hamdallahi: Islam, Slavery, and Race-Making in the Maghreb and the Niger Delta (1834-1836)

Watara's eventual return to the continent did not occur via the West African coast, as was usually the case for other returning Africans. Instead, he took a Saharan route, traveling from London to Morocco, where he resided for half a year. Thus far, scholars who have studied aspects of Watara's life have only devoted perfunctory attention to his time in Morocco. For instance, in Wilks' critical edition of Watara's autobiography, he devoted a mere paragraph to the Moroccan journey, speculating that Watara's situation there was "probably less arduous" than that of the British traveler who accompanied him.[186] This oversight is illustrative of Watara's framing thus far, in scholarship, exclusively as the author of a transatlantic slave narrative, and literate West African Muslim enslaved in the Americas. Though extremely useful to understand the context in which Watara's writings were produced, as well as some dynamics in the early-nineteenth-century West African Sahel, this framing has limitations. In particular, it overshadows the significance of evolving meanings of racial slavery in the Sahara and the Sahel, enacted through Islamic discourse, that were occurring precisely at the time Watara was attempting to return home. As I demonstrate in this chapter, these Saharan and Sahelian evolutions had significant bearings upon Watara's freedom project.

[186] Waṭara and Wilks, "The African Travels of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq," 155.

Guelmim and Racialized Slavery in the Maghreb

In the Fall of 1835, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Watara reached African soil. He had gotten hired as part of a Timbuktu-bound expedition that Scottish traveler John Davidson was organizing.[187] In September, following an eight-days sail from London, he disembarked in Gibraltar where he remained for two months, before crossing the straight to Tangiers. By December, the Davidson expedition had secured an indispensable passport from Sultan 'Abd al-Rahmān of Morocco, guaranteeing them safe passage throughout the country, and a small military escort.[188] The party proceeded south along the Atlantic coast, journeying through Tetuan, Rabat, Casablanca, Mogador, and Agadir, before reaching the bustling market town of Guelmim in April 1836. A nexus between maritime and cross-desert commerce, Guelmim was located in the Wad Nun region of southwestern Morocco, on the Sahara's northeastern shore.[189] Watara and Davidson spent six months in town before leaving for Timbuktu, a sojourn extensively documented in Davidson's journal entries. During this time, they eagerly awaited the arrival of an expected caravan from Timbuktu, and the authorization to embark on the strenuous journey across the desert. Following his three-decades long Caribbean enslavement, Watara's return to Africa was thus spent immersed in the world of 1830s Wad Nun, where caravaners, sailors, brokers, market women, desert dwellers, slaves, fugitives, pilgrims, hostages, and diplomats circulated. In this cosmopolitan environment located at Saharan and Atlantic crossroads, exchanges were brokered through multiple languages and currencies, and various clans and religious groups interacted. Slavery

[187] We know about the Davidson expedition from the notes that his brother posthumously compiled into a book. See Davidson, *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa* .

[188] Davidson, *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa*, 18.

[189] For a detailed historical study of the Wad Nun trans-Saharan trade networks, see Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails,* 160-205.

was also a pillar of the town's economy, owing to its status as a trans-Saharan trade hub.

An old and established practice in the Maghreb, slavery had undergone a shift stemming from royal policy, and acquired increased racial meaning between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Prior to the sixteenth century, in accordance with Islamic law, only non-believers could be enslaved, irrelevant of their origins. Although Blackness was already stigmatized, non-Muslim captives of all skin colors, from throughout the Mediterranean lands and beyond, had been enslaved in the Maghreb. However, starting in the sixteenth century, the primary de facto threshold used to determine if a person could be enslaved incrementally shifted from whether or not they were Muslim, to whether or not they were Black.[190] Under the Saʿdī dynasty, Moroccan rulers captured and enslaved increasing numbers of West Africans through the trans-Saharan slave trade, to fuel the growing and labor-intensive sugar production. West African enslavements and forced migrations peaked with Morocco's 1591 invasion of the West African state of Songhai, and through the seventeenth century, Blackness became increasingly encoded with a new meaning: enslave-ability. Importantly, racial identities and slave status in Morocco were exclusively inherited through the patrilineal line. For instance, once a sultan's concubine birthed a child, her status changed to that of *umm walad* (mother of a son): the umm walad effectively manumitted, and the child was born free and ultimately able to assume power.[191]

Moroccan slavery's racial shift was enacted through legal arguments, debates, and reinterpretations. Indeed, though Islamic law forbade the enslavement of free Muslims, Moroccan

[190] See El Hamel, *Black Morocco.*

[191] For instance, the mother of Sultan Mawlay Isma'il, the instigator of the Black army, was an enslaved Black woman. See El Hamel, *Black Morocco*, 164.

rulers renegotiated these legal prescriptions and practices to maintain the southern Sahara, including its Black Muslim populations, as a labor reservoir.[192] One of the best-known legal opinions in this regard is that of Aḥmad Bābā, a Timbuktu scholar who had been captured and exiled to Morocco for fifteen years in the wake of the 1591 conquest. Upon his release and return to Timbuktu, he authored the *Mi'raj al-Su'ud ila nayl hukm mujallab al-sud* (Arabic, *The Ladder of Ascent Towards Grasping the Law Concerning Imported Blacks*), a legal treatise demonstrating the illegality of enslaving Black Muslims.[193] As historian Chouki El Hamel has demonstrated, despite Ahmad Baba's strong condemnation of racial slavery, the process of legalizing the enslavement of Black Muslims in Morocco continued, and culminated during the long reign of Mawlay Isma'il (r. 1672–1727). When he assumed power, this Alaouite Sultan undertook a massive, centralized state-building project to bring scattered Amazigh, Haratin, Arab, Jewish and other communities under his dominion, and consolidate Moroccan borders and sovereignty in the face of increasing European encroachment upon coastal towns. To achieve it, he conceived of a loyal and powerful Black slave-soldiers army, modeled after the Ottoman janissaries. Mawlay Isma'il thus conscripted hundreds of thousands of enslaved West Africans as well as free Black Moroccans, including Haratin—a population made up of indigenous free North Africans and descendants of freed West Africans.[194] To justify the forced conscription and enslavement of Black Moroccans, Mawlay Isma'il argued that notwithstanding their current free status, their skin

[192] See Samia Errazzouki, "Between the 'yellow-skinned enemy' and the 'black-skinned slave': early modern genealogies of race and slavery in Sa'dian Morocco," The Journal of North African Studies (2021), DOI: 10.1080/13629387.2021.1927557.

[193] Hunwick, John, and Fatima Harrak (eds., trans.) *Mi'rāj al-su'ūd. Aḥmad Bābā's Replies on Slavery*. Rabat: Université Muhammad V Souissi, 2000.

[194] El Hamel, *Black Morocco*, 161-165.

color constituted evidence of servile origins, effectively rendering them slaves. He sought out fatwas (legal opinions) from scholars in Fes and Cairo to support his argument, subsequently ignoring, shunning, or persecuting scholars who issued dissenting opinions.[195] By the turn of the eighteenth century, Mawlay Isma'il had gathered, enslaved and conscripted some 220,000 Black women, men, and children.[196] Through this process, racial boundaries were manufactured along the institution of slavery: being racialized as Black trumped other modes of belonging, and rendered one highly vulnerable to enslavement, irrelevant of their origins, religious beliefs, or prior status.

The category of slave in Morocco was not homogenous, and depending on the type of labor they provided—in households, agriculture, commerce, or public service— enslaved people were subjected to varying degrees of subjugation. Forcefully conscripted Black soldiers, and Black civil servants—who might be tasked with tax collection, treasury work, or palace stewardship—held some degree of autonomy and even political power.[197] In official writing, the *makhzan* (Moroccan government) did not refer to them as *'ābid* (slave), but instead used the term *wasif* (servant). Though stopping short of calling them *khādim* (free civil servant), this use of terminology signals an official desire to distinguish those enslaved by the makhzan from those enslaved by private families.[198] They were not considered property, therefore could not be sold, and free Moroccans owed them the deference due to state representatives. Likewise, Black eunuchs were influential at the court, tasked with "guarding the gates

[195] Ibid, 165-174.

[196] Ibid, 174.

[197] Ibid, 201.

[198] Ibid, 200.

of the palace, keeping security, providing a link to the outside world, and serving as intermediaries between the master and his wives and concubines."[199] The chief eunuch served as chamberlain for the sultan. Irrelevant of their relative power, what seems to have remained a common ground for anyone bearing slave status was their high vulnerability to legally-sanctioned violence, including sexual violence. Black soldiers whose loyalty to the sultan was in question were castigated and executed.[200] Concubines were enslaved in the sultan's palace, "forced to fulfill [his] sexual desire," bartered for political alliances, and forbidden to leave their enclave.[201]As for eunuchs, who usually came from West Africa and numbered in the hundreds or thousands, they had been castrated at a young age.[202]

By the time Watara arrived in Morocco in late 1835, about a century had passed since the forced conscription of the Black army, which had since been disbanded; yet the violence of racial slavery and the pervasive stigma of Blackness' association with slave status continued. As a result, early on, Watara's experiences in Morocco would have made plain to him that own freedom, legally secured in Jamaica and the British Atlantic, remained tenuous in Morocco and the Saharan world. Interlocutors made implicit and explicit reference to his former slave status.[203] One official in Marrakesh, boasting his own humane treatment of two enslaved Black women he owned, told Davidson: "we take as great care of our slaves as you have done of Abu."[204] Despite being aware of Abu's free status, Muslim faith, and

[199] Ibid, 198.

[200] Ibid, 202.

[201] Ibid, 192

[202] Ibid, 199.

[203] Davidson, *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa*, 32.

[204] Ibid, 41.

claims to a noble ancestry, the framework of reference the official relied on to discuss Davidson and Watara's relationship was thus still one of master-slave.[205] A few weeks after their first encounter, the same official attempted to barter Davidson's gold watch in exchange for "two negroes."[206] Slavery was omnipresent in Marrakesh, and in fact by the second half of the century, the city would come to stand as Morocco's largest slave market.[207] In 1836, going around town, Watara would thus have encountered and interacted with enslaved Black women and men in the streets, at the sūk, inside the Sultan's palace and adjacent gardens, or in wealthy households.[208]

While Watara witnessed slavery in the Moroccan towns he journeyed through, his six-months sojourn in Guelmim, where the expedition arrived in late April 1836, would have brought to the fore the magnitude and violence of the trans-Saharan slave trade. Indeed, in the first decades of the nineteenth century, the centuries-old Saharan trade was at its apex, and the town of Guelmim, in the Wad Nun region of Morocco, was one of its hubs. Nicknamed "Bāb al-Ṣaḥrā" (Door of the Sahara), the town's geographical location—a 45-days journey to Timbuktu by camel and 10 days to the port of Essaouira by donkey—made it ideally situated to broker maritime and desert-side trade.[209] Wad Nun also maintained an autonomous relationship vis-à-vis the makhzan, who had not quite managed to

[205] In Morocco, Davidson appears to have consistently discussed Abu's life story and identity to his interlocutors, which leads me to believe this official's comments were intentional. Davidson also notes that in Watara was "an object of great suspicion" for interlocutors in Morocco, who perhaps questioned the veracity of his account and identity. See Davidson, *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa*, 6, 184, and 191.

[206] Ibid, 56.

[207] Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails*, 192.

[208] Davidson, *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa*, 48.

[209] Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails*, 162-3. According to Davidson's estimates in the 1830s, Guelmim was a mere five or six hours from the Atlantic coast. See Davidson, *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa*, 84.

bring the southern land under its dominion. The region's inhabitants were also known to kidnap Western shipwreck victims, hold them captives for up to several years, and ransom them to Morocco-based European and American diplomats.[210] One of them, Robert Adams, a Black sailor from New York, claimed to have visited Timbuktu in the course of his Wad Nun captivity, which would have made him the first Western traveler to reach the city.[211] This ransoming intensified in the nineteenth century under the leadership of Tikna confederacy chief Shaykh Bayruk, Wad Nun's main political and commercial leader. Moreover in that time period, the combined effects of a dwindling Atlantic slave trade, increasing commodities exchange between West Africa and Western Europe, and Sahelian conflicts triggering widespread insecurity and population displacements, all led to a spike in the volume of the transcontinental trade in goods and enslaved people.[212] What's more, the 1830 French colonial invasion of Algeria redirected a large volume of caravan trade towards Timbuktu, Morocco, and Libya.[213] Guelmim, which had long been a caravan hub, became the "largest camel market in northwest Africa" by the nineteenth century, and one of the region's main slave markets.[214] An estimated 2,000 enslaved West Africans were imported and sold in the city, about half of the total

[210] Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails*, 166.

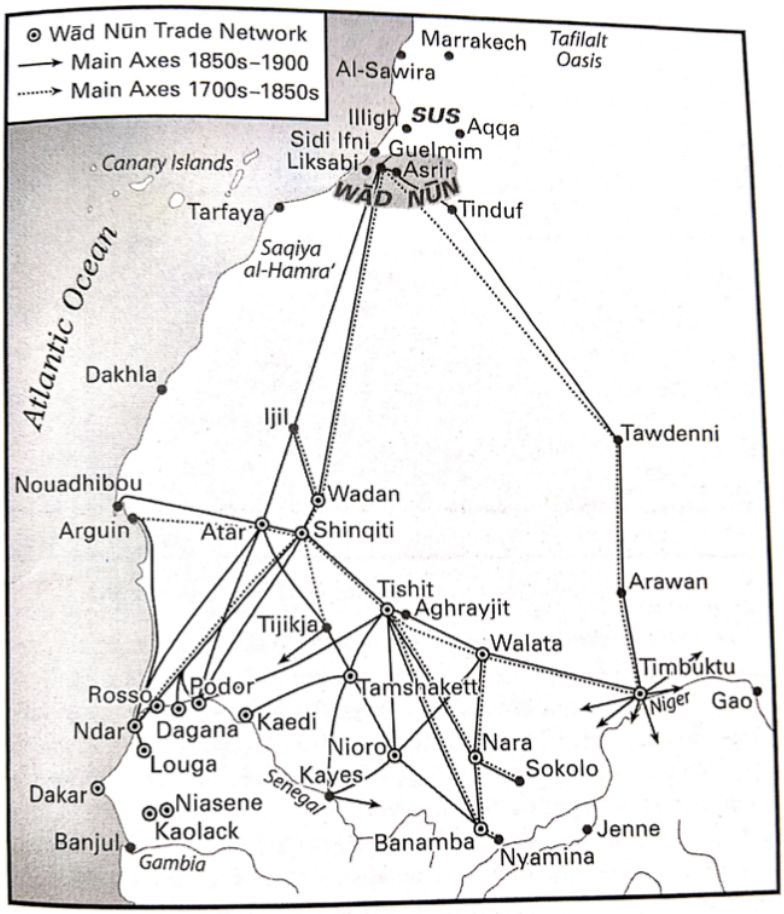
[211] Though considered credible by contemporaries, this account is now contested. See Samuel Cook ed., *The Narrative of Robert Adams, an American Sailor Who Was Wrecked on the Western Coast of Africa in the Year 1810; Was Detained Three Years in Slavery by the Arabs of the Great Desert, and Resided Several Months in the City of Tombuctoo. With a Map, Notes, and an Appendix* (Boston: Wells and Lilly, 1817).

[212] Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails*, 108.

[213] Ibid, 110.

[214] Ibid, 129 and 164. In interviews Lydon conducted with Guelmim merchants, they stated that the town remained an important slave market into the early 1900s.

Moroccan trade for that period.[215] According to Davidson, four caravans made up of three hundred to one thousand slaves departed Guelmim each year.[216]



MAP 5. Main markets and caravan routes of the Wād Nūn trade network from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century.

Figure 10. Markets and Caravan Routes of Wad Nun and their West African connections[217]

It was on a Friday, April 22, 1836, that Watara and his party finally reached Guelmim, in the time of the year that would have marked the close of caravan season, and the beginning of spring slave fairs.[218] The expedition likely made its way through the thousands of tents and huts that formed the

[215] Ibid, 129-130.

[216] Davidson, *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa*, 88.

[217] Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails*, xxvii

[218] Ibid, 129 and 133. Caravan season was in the winter, October-March.

walled city's outer rim, before entering through one of Guelmim's five gates and meeting their host, Shaykh Bayruk.[219] The Tikna chief's house, Davidson noted, "swarm[ed] with slaves, who form a large item of property," which by his assessment made Watara feel "very helpless."[220] Consistent with nineteenth-century European abolitionist discourse, Davidson's writing often took an appalled and righteous tone when describing the many iterations he witnessed in Guelmim of "slavery in its most abject form."[221] His short time in Guelmim thus re-immersed Watara into a world of publicly displayed corporeal and sexual violence inflicted upon Black women, men, and children, and constant re-affirmations of their status as property. His host Shaykh Bayruk owned forty female slaves, and as Davidson repeatedly hinted, subjected many to forced sexual encounters, fathering numerous children.[222] In mid-May 1836, Shaykh Bayruk captured a fugitive man and had him chained, a "fifty six-pound weight fastened to his leg." The man was left in the sun for at least two days without water, a staged punishment presumably meant to deter further fugitivity attempts from this man and instill fear in others.[223] On May 19, a caravan arrived carrying "gold, cloth, and twenty slaves" from West Africa. Watara identified the group of enslaved people as being "from the neighborhood of the place where his family resided."[224] The next day, Watara endured a "trying scene," as four of the enslaved

[219] Ibid, 164.

[220] Davidson, *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa*, 85.

[221] Ibid, 88.

[222] Ibid, 93, 95, and 99. Davidson writes that he "witnessed a very disgusting scene with the SheÏkh; he has three wives all living, but he still likes his slaves" Later, he calls Shaykh Bayruk a "universal lover" who has fathered numerous children by his wives and slaves.

[223] Ibid, 96.

[224] Ibid, 100 and 101.

women were brought to Shaykh Bayruk, and six other women were violated—examined, appraised, and sold—at the market, including one who had given birth during the Saharan crossing.[225] In early June, Watara spent several days caring for a young enslaved boy who a man named Sudy Salaam (likely his enslaver) had beaten, pushed off a roof and left to die, with open wounds and multiple broken bones and teeth.[226] One evening a week later, he looked after a group of enslaved men and women suspected of theft who had been tied up, stripped of their clothes, and publicly flogged. Here again, such a public spectacle was meant to terrorize and dissuade other enslaved Black people.[227] On the morning of June 19, Davidson describes how a woman was made the object of a bid. The bargained sale was settled with the buyer offering 130 mithqal and "throwing in a little boy" to seal the deal.[228]

Watara and Davidson stayed in Wad Nun until the end of 1836, as more West African captives kept arriving, at least through the summer. It can only be assumed that Moroccan racial slavery targeting Black Africans, including Muslims, rendered Watara particularly vulnerable to insecurity and enslavement. He would have also been constantly retraumatized by the brutal racial slavery he witnessed. Yet, as he had already done in Jamaica, Watara found ways in Morocco to build community and nurture belonging with other West Africans. Specifically, spending time in Guelmim allowed him to become part of information networks that spread across Northwest Africa, both among the elites and the enslaved. Through these networks, which funneled news of social-political upheaval

[225] Ibid, 101.

[226] Ibid, 108-109.

[227] Ibid, 111.

[228] Ibid, 116.

throughout the Western Sahel and Sahara, Watara got word of monumental changes that were underway in his native land, namely: the emergence of a new regional power.

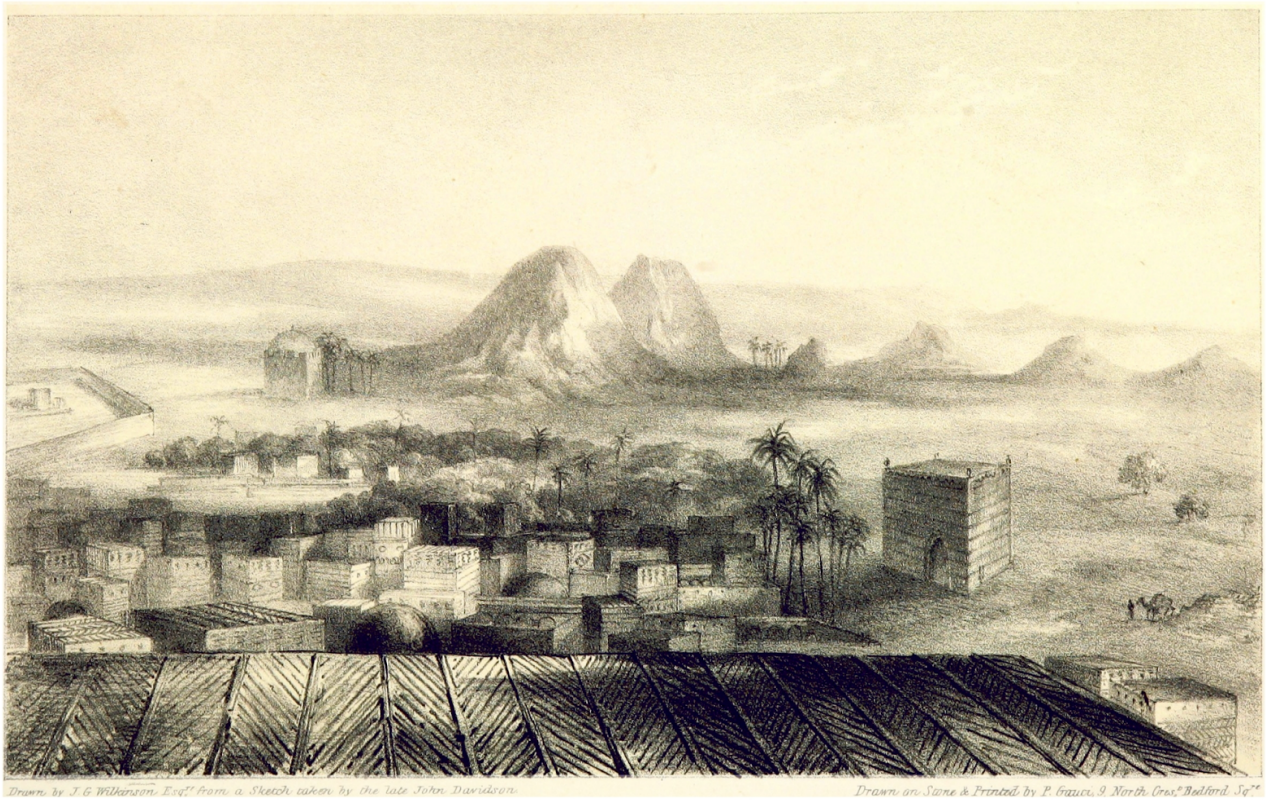


Figure 11. Wad Nun, c. 1816[229]

Sahelian Currents in the Age of Hamdallahi

> We know that, within the present day, the greatest revolutions have taken place in his country, and the Fellatah [Fulani] province, in particular, which is now the dominant one...He would be thus a stranger himself among his countrymen, rather than any assistance to another stranger.
> —Royal Geographical Society of London, Letter to R.R. Madden, April 6, 1835.[230]

> This is a warning for you, a notification, an enlightenment, a reminder, and an admonition to the Sultan of the West in Fes and Marrakesh, and his wards in Timbuktu, Araouane, Boujbeiha, Taoudenni, the people of the far and hither Sousse, Touat, Ghadamis, all the way to Tunis, Algiers and Berber, to

[229] Davidson, *Notes taken during Travels in Africa*, 14. Original held and digitized by the British Library https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary/11016535476

[230] Letter from the Royal Geographical Society of London to R.R. Madden, dated April 6, 1835, in Madden, *A Twelvemonth's Residence in the West Indies*, 193-4.

> Egypt, Kairouan, Tlemcen, al-Andalus, until the far end of the abode of Islam...know that shaykh, the amīr al-mu'minīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr [Seeku Aamadu], the one who stood up to revive the religion of God the Most High and jihād in His path in the land of Maasina and its surrounding territories to the east, west, south and north, is the twelfth caliph and renewer of the faith after whom the mahdī will emerge. If it was asked where is the source [for this statement], I would say it is documented in *The chronicle of the inquisitive researcher on the information of the lands* [*Tārīkh al-fattāsh*] by the shaykh, jurist, and scholar, Maḥmūd Kaʿti.
> —Alfa Nuhum Tahiru, Letter on the appearance of the twelfth caliph, c. 1836-1840[231]

In the 1830s in the Sahel, on the fertile floodplains of the Inland Delta of the Niger River, the Fulani leaders of an emerging power were manufacturing race and reconfiguring slavery through Islamic discourse.[232] In 1818, they had successfully led a revolution. Seeku Amadu, a Fulani Muslim scholar of humble origins, started an uprising that subdued regional political and intellectual elites: the Bamanan king of Segu, the Fulani warlords of Maasina and Kunari, and Timbuktu and Jenne's scholarly and trading elites. The insurgents created a new state, the *laamu diina* (Fulfulde, theocratic state), a caliphate centered around a new city, Hamdallahi.[233] To consolidate their regional dominion, the Hamdallahi Caliphate's leadership implemented a conventional arsenal of military, diplomatic, and economic expansion, and built a strong central administration. Hamdallahi grew strong, and would

[231] Alfa Nuhum Tahiru as cited in Mauro Nobili (ed. and trans.), "Letter on the appearance of the twelfth caliph" (Risāla fī ẓuhūr al-khalīfa al-thānī 'ashar). Edition of the Arabic Text with English Translation, *Afriques* 7, L'écrit pragmatique africain (2016), https://doi.org/10.4000/afriques.1958.

[232] A pastoral people of the Sahel, the Fulani have played an important role in the eighteenth and nineteenth century spread of Islam in West Africa through state-building, jihad and Islamic revolutions, sufi networks, and intellectual and literary production.

[233] The Hamdallahi Caliphate has received sparse attention from scholars. Only four comprehensive studies have been published since 1955. The first three studies are mainly based on oral sources, and the last one uses written Arabic sources from Hamdallahi. See Amadou Hampâté Bâ and Jacques Daget, *L'empire peul du Macina* (Abidjan: Les Nouvelles Éditions Africaines, 1984); William Allen Brown, "The Caliphate of Hamdullahi, ca. 1818–1864: A study in African history and tradition" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1969); Bintou Sanankoua, *Un empire peul au xixe siècle: la Diina du Maasina* (Paris: Karthala – ACCT, 1990); and Mauro Nobili, *Sultan, Caliph, and the Renewer of the Faith. Ahmad Lobbo, the Tārīkh al-fattāsh and the Making of an Islamic State in West Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

come to control a vast domain in the Niger Delta, until its fall in 1862.

As the caliphate rose to prominence, to buttress Seeku Aamadu's authority and diplomatic influence, Hamdallahi employed an original strategy: a literary creation. Hamdallahi scribe and political counselor Alfa Nuhum Tahiru crafted the Tārīkh al-fattāsh (Arabic, Researcher's Chronicle), an lengthy forged document purporting to be a seventeenth century historical chronicle written by scholar Maḥmūd Ka'ti following the fall of Songhai.[234] A key fragment of Alfa Nuhum Tahiru's Tarikh al-fattash, the *Risāla fī ẓuhūr al-khalīfa al-thānī 'ashar* (Letter on the appearance of the twelfth caliph, hereafter Risala), was a pamphlet containing an apocryphal prophecy, a "warning ..., a notification, an enlightenment, a reminder, and an admonition" to leaders throughout the Western Sahara and Muslim world. It heralded the rise of Seeku Aamadu as the centennial *mujaddid* (renewer of the faith) and twelfth caliph of Islam, and fashioned him as symbolic heir to sixteenth century Songhai ruler Askia al-Hajj Muhammad.[235] The forgery made sense in the political and religious context Seeku

[234] Since 1913 the *Tārīkh al-fattāsh* has been the subject of extensive scholarship. While its authorship has always been a contested question, and part of the forgery identified early on, colonial-era administrators and post-colonial historians nevertheless used it as a source for medieval West African History, particularly the Songhai empire. In 1913, Octave Houdas and Maurice Delafosse published an edition and translation of a composite manuscript from Timbuktu, which they titled *La Chronique du Chercheur*. They presented it as a sixteenth century work by Maḥmud Kati, completed in the seventeenth century by Ibn al-Mukhtār, and apocryphally altered in the nineteenth century to bolster Seeku Aamadu's rule. Since then, Joseph Brun, John Hunwick, Madina Ly, Nehemia Letzion, Harouna Almahadi Maiga, and others, have come up with further interpretations. While they diverged on the authors' identity and date of production, they generally agreed that a nineteenth century forgery had soiled the original chronicle. Nobili's monograph offers the first full interpretation of the chronicle as a nineteenth century document and source for the history of Hamdallahi. See Joseph Brun, "Notes sur le Tarikh el-Fettach," *Anthropos* 9 no. 9 (1914): 590-596; Octave Houdas and Maurice Delafosse, *Tarikh el-fettach fi akhbâr el-bouldân oua-l-djouyouch oua-akâbir en-nâs, ou Chronique du chercheur pour servir à l'histoire des villes, des armées et des principaux personnages du Tekrour par Mahmoûd Kâti ben El-Hâdj El-Motaouakkel Kâti et l'un de ses petits fils* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1913); John O. Hunwick, "Studies in the Ta'rīkh al-fattāsh, I: Its authors and textual history", *Research Bulletin, Centre of Arabic Documentation, Ibadan* 5, no. 5 (1969): 57-65; Nehemia Levtzion, "A seventeenth-century chronicle by Ibn al-Mukhtār: A critical study of Ta'rīkh al-fattāsh", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 3, no. 3 (1971): 571-593, doi : 10.1017/S0041977X00128551; Madina Ly, "Quelques remarques sur le Tarikh el-Fettach," *Bulletin de l'Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire* 34, no. 3 (1972): 471-493; Mauro Nobili and Mohamed Shahid Mathee, "Towards a New Study of the So-Called Tarikh al-fattash," *History in Africa* 42 (2015): 37-73.

[235] I follow Nobili's argument that the ultimate aim of the *Tarikh el Fattash* was to anoint Seekku Aamadu as a thrice legitimate ruler: West African sultan, twelfth caliph of islam, and *mujaddid*.

Aamadu operated within. The Tarikh al-fattash was meant to legitimize his rule in the broader Islamicate world, with particular attention to the Western Sahara and the West African Sahel, including Hamdallahi's patron turned antagonist: the powerful Sokoto Caliphate.

After the initial focus on Seeku Aamadu, however, the remainder of the Risala's text was devoted to a different purpose. It delved into social status in the Niger Bend and Niger Delta, ascribing permanent hereditary slave status to twelve specific Sahelian communities. In the document, still pretending to be a seventeenth century writer, Alfa Nuhum Tahiru narrates an alleged discussion between Songhai ruler Askia El Hajj Muhammad, and a prescient shaykh the Askia encountered in Mecca. Following the shaykh's prophecy about the coming of the twelfth caliph, their conversation carried on :

> Then the askiyà also asked about the issue of the twenty-four tribes that he had found owned by shī Bāru as bond people, who had in turn inherited them from his ancestors. The shaykh asked him: "Describe them," and he did. Then the shaykh told him: "Half of them belong to you by right. As for the second half, it is better that you leave them because there is doubt about them."[236]

With his uprising, Seeku Aamadu had upset the political order of the Delta, and introduced forms of shared governance based on Islamic law. However, as the second portion of the Risala shows, he certainly did not envision a complete dissolution of existing social structures, and stood firmly against the abolition of caste and slavery.

In addition to crafting a forged historical chronicle to lay claim to certain populations as enslaveable, Seeku Aamadu also mobilized and blended discourse stemming from traditional Fulani hierarchies, and Saharan Muslim racial discourse. Fulani oral traditions have crystallized Seeku

[236] Nobili, *Sultan, Caliph, and the Renewer of the Faith,* 215.

Aamadu's upholding of social hierarchies into an evocative tale. The tale narrates a meeting of the *batu mawɗo,* Hamdallahi's main governing body—an assembly of forty men that gathered daily to debate and adjudicate administrative and government matters in accordance with Islamic law:

> The councilmen of the batu mawɗo, following the Quranic tenet whereby "all believers are brothers," had petitioned to abolish caste. The next day, Seeku Aamadu had his cooks stew lizards, frogs, fish, chicken and mutton together, and presented the stunned councilmen with the dish. As he invited them to dig in, they hollered:
> "- Why would you want us to taste this repugnant mixture?
> - Well, does the Qur'an forbid the consumption of any of these meats?
> - No! But even though their consumption is licit, the thought of eating lizards and frogs, or mixing them with those meats we are indeed accustomed to eating, is disgusting!
> - Well, as with these meats, even though the Book doesn't forbid it, the thought of mixing noble people and caste people, or abolishing the barriers we have erected to separate them, is disgusting to me."
> And thus continued the distinction between *rimbɛ* (free people), *rimbɛ bɛn'agatākɔ* (noble people, who do not demand gifts), and *rimbɛ n'agatākɔ* (caste people, who demand gifts or retribution for their work).[237]

The above tale relies upon Fulani idioms and references, to uphold Fulani social hierarchies and relations of production that predated the nineteenth century.[238] This made sense, since Hamdallahi's rulers and most of its population were Fulani. However, the caliphate did claim an Islamic identity rather than a Fulani one, and its rulers were seeking to establish regional hegemony and recognition from other Islamic entities. Therefore, in addition to Fulani audiences, the authorities decided to spread their message using a register that would be legible in the shared Islamic discourse of the nineteenth-century Sahel and Sahara which, as the example of Mawlay Ismail illustrates, had become increasingly racialized. It was thus in this spirit that the Hamdallahi rulers, though themselves

[237] Hampâté Ba and Daget, *L'empire peul du Macina,* 67-8.

[238] Fulani society distinguishes the free *riimbe* class (including nobles and occupational castes) from the enslaved *riimaybe* class. For an analysis of customary slavery in the caliphate, see Sanankoua, *Un empire peul au XIXe siècle*, 107–114.

racialized as Black by Arab Muslim contemporaries, utilized racial terms in the Risala and other portions of the Tarikh el Fattash to designate some of the Sahelian communities they sought to enslave: the Arabic "*Zanj*" and the Songhai "*Arbi*," both denoting Blackness.[239] As Bruce Hall compellingly demonstrates, through such rhetorical devices, "collective heritable social status was defined in the legal literature of the Sahel, and...blackness was made into a marker of permanent *de jure* inferiority" in the nineteenth century.[240] These rhetorical devices had practical consequences, and entire Sahelian communities were enslaved or displaced on the basis of this racialized Islamic discourse.[241]

Another illustration of the interweaving of Blackness and slave-status comes from the writings of a Fulani scholar, Aḥmad ibn al-Qāḍī b. Yūsuf b. Ibrāhīm al-Fūlānī al-Timbuktāwī, who in the early nineteenth century called for perpetual enslavement for large swaths of Black Muslims living in Mediterranean lands. First, it is worth noting that Al-Timbuktawi's early trajectory bears many similarities to Watara's. Al-Timbuktawi was born in Diakha, a scholarly town in the Niger Bend, within a preeminent family (his father was an Islamic judge). He was educated in Jenne, and later moved to Timbuktu where he became a 'ulama (scholar).[242] Sometime in the first decade of the 1800s, having reached a suitable level of Islamic education, al-Timbuktawi, like Watara, made plans to go on hajj to Mecca. While Watara's hopes were crushed by his 1804 abduction and enslavement in Jamaica,

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[239] On the adoption of racialized discourse to justify slavery by West African Muslims, and specifically in the *Tarikh el Fattash*, see Hall, *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa*, 69-74.

[240] Hall, *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa*, 69.

[241] Nobili, *Sultan, Caliph, and the Renewer of the Faith*, 216-17.

[242] Ismael Musah Montana, "Aḥmad ibn al-Qāḍī al-Timbuktāwī on the *Bori* Ceremonies of Tunis" in *Slavery on the Frontiers of Islam*, ed. Paul E. Lovejoy (Princeton: Marcus Wiener Publishers, 2004), 174-5; and Lamin Sanneh, *The Jakhanke Muslim Clerics: a Religious and Historical Study of Islam in Senegambia* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1989), 1-2.

al-Timbuktawi was able to carry out the pilgrimage in 1807, precisely when British lawmakers were formally banning the slave trade.

On his way back from Mecca, al-Timbuktāwī sojourned in Tunisia and Morocco, where he encountered communities of freed and enslaved Black Muslims. In Tunisia these people were called *wusfān*, and were, according to historian Ismael Musah Montana, "largely descendants of slaves, but some were stranded pilgrims and even traders from various parts of the Bilād as-Sūdān."[243] Within the larger wusfān group, the Sūdān Tūnis (Blacks of Tunis) were West Africa-born, having been enslaved and brought through the trans-Saharan slave trade—likely including from al-Timbuktawi's home region. During his stay, al-Timbuktawi noted the preeminence among the *wusfān* of the bori cult, a set of diasporic West African religious rituals that enslaved Black Muslims throughout the Mediterranean practiced. Bori was an especially important social institution for enslaved women, in which they cultivated healing practices to cure physical ills, tend to trauma, and engage in sorority-building.[244]

When he encountered bori practitioners, al-Timbuktawi decided to author two treatises, the *Hatk al-Sitr ʿAmmā ʿAlayhi Sūdān Tūnus min al-Kufr* (1808), and the *Shikāyat ad-Dīn al-Muḥammadī ilā Rʿāyat-i al-Muwakkalīna bihi* (1809), respectively addressed to Tunisian and Moroccan authorities, declaring bori a practice of unbelievers. Though al-Timbuktawi claimed that it was "not [his] intention to brand all *ʿabīd* (slaves) *kuffār* (unbelievers)," he nonetheless went on to

[243] Montana, "Aḥmad ibn al-Qāḍī al-Timbuktāwī on the *Bori* Ceremonies of Tunis," 176.

[244] In their study on Sokoto scholar Nana Asma'u, Beverly Mack and Jean Boyd wrote: "Bori, by casting out spirits, was believed to relieve the problems of sick women, especially those suffering from psychological disorders. Furthermore in bori, women found themselves linked to a sisterhood, under the command of the Inna [mother/female chief], which offered them moral and physical support in times of hardship." Beverly B. Mack and Jean Boyd, *One Woman's Jihad: Nana Asma'u, Scholar and Scribe* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), 36. Asma'u demonized and sought to root out bori among enslaved women in Sokoto.

stress: "it is scarce to uncover anyone of those slaves blameless from these manners."[245] Al-Timbuktawi thus effectively labeled as infidels thousands of freed and enslaved Black Muslims in North Africa, and also called for their perpetual enslavement: "it is also obligatory upon every mufti to issue a fatwa ordering that no one should set a slave free if he knows that that slave will join them [masu bori].[246]" Montana situates Al-Timbuktawi's reactionary and dogmatic intervention within larger debates between sufi and wahabi doctrines of his time, and in the context of rising jihad in the West African Sahel, notably in the Delta region. In addition, his call for perpetual enslavement of practitioners of the bori, a Black diasporic ritual in the Mediterranean, further illustrates the intertwining of Blackness and enslaveability within nineteenth century Western Sahelian literature that Bruce Hall has written about.

Two decades after Al-Timbuktawi's admonition, when they crafted their Risala, the Hamdallahi authorities did not merely re-write enslaveability and race in the Niger Bend: they ensured the news would spread as far and wide as possible, by written word and word of mouth.[247] The full Tarikh el-Fattash chronicle was stored in the *beembal dewte* (Fulfulde, books attic), Hamdallahi's library where people would come to consult and copy manuscripts.[248] Two versions of the manuscript were spread: while the body of the text was identical, one was addressed to rulers of the Muslim world at large (op.

[245] Al-Timbuktawi, *Hatk al-Sitr*, as cited in Montana, "Aḥmad ibn al-Qāḍī al-Timbuktāwī on the *Bori* Ceremonies of Tunis," 187-8.

[246] Ibid, 188-9.

[247] Mohamed El Mansour and Fatima Harrak have suggested a possible connection between Al-Timbuktawi's return to Maasina and the outbreak of an Islamic revolution in the region, which occurred shortly after his return. However this connection has not been established with certainty. See Montana, "Aḥmad ibn al-Qāḍī al-Timbuktāwī on the *Bori* Ceremonies of Tunis," 175.

[248] Hampâté Ba and Daguet, *L'empire peul du Masina*, 62; and Sanankoua, *Un empire peul au XIXe siècle*, 83. The library, which Hampâté Ba calls the *beembal kitabu*, was located on Seeku Aamadu's compound.

cit.), and the other specifically to Moorish, Tuareg, and Arab communities of the Western Sahara.[249] What's more, the body of the text itself instructed whoever might come across it to disseminate its contents. The Risala—the segment of the chronicle that ascribed servile status to specific communities—concluded with the following injunction from the author:

> I, Nūḥ b. al-Ṭāhir [Alfa Nuhum Tahiru], urge and press all those who receive this letter of mine to make a copy of it and to send it to everybody who they think did not receive what is included in it...I also urge and press the carrier of the letter to gather the Muslims of the towns, the villages, and hamlets that he passes through and he thinks did not hear of it to read the letter to them or inform them orally, according to his capability.[250]

The latter practice was likely common in nineteenth-century Muslim West Africa: in 1828, French traveler René Caillié had witnessed a similar letter reading assembly in Fuuta Jallon (present-day Guinea).[251] Similarly, Al-Timbuktawi had also called for a large circulation of his treatises, advising Moroccan scholars to "warn the people of Fez" and "send out a letter to the Pasha of Algiers and Tripoli and to other towns and warn them to prevent their slaves from such practices."[252] Nineteenth-century manuscripts found in archives and libraries of the Western Sahel and Sahara reveal reverberations of the Risala's arguments, and the debates those arguments triggered. They include legal questions and fatwas about whether it was licit for White Muslim Saharan communities to pay allegiance to a Black Muslim ruler, and an extensive rebuttal of Seeku Aamadu's claim of being the

[249] Nobili, "Letter on the appearance of the twelfth caliph."

[250] Alfa Nuhum Tahiru as cited in Nobili, "Letter on the appearance of the twelfth caliph."

[251] Caillié, *Travels through Central Africa*, vol. 1, 218. As cited in Nobili, *Sultan, Caliph, and the Renewer of the Faith*, 211.

[252] Al-Timbuktawi, *Shikāyat ad-Dīn*, in Mohamed El Mansour and Fatima Harrak, *A Fulani Jihadist in the Maghrib: Admonition of Aḥmad ibn al-Qāḍī al-Timbukti to the Rulers of Tunisia and Morocco* (Rabat: Institute of African Studies, 2000), 12, as cited in Montana, Montana, "Aḥmad ibn al-Qāḍī al-Timbuktāwī on the *Bori* Ceremonies of Tunis," 189

mujaddid and twelfth caliph of Islam that the Fodiawa of Sokoto wrote in response to Alfa Nuhum Tahiru.[253] As these examples show the Risala was circulated widely, making it, per Mauro Nobili's assessment, "one of the most widespread documents of precolonial Islamic West Africa."[254] Thus in the age of Hamdallahi's dominion in the Niger Bend, Seeku Aamadu's attempted reconfiguration of political power, religious legitimacy, and slavery through a racialized Islamic discourse did circulate and spread through communities of the Western Sahel and Sahara.

Could the news of ongoing momentous socio-political change in the Niger Delta have reached Watara in Guelmim? Nobili dates the writing and circulation of the Risala to the second-half of the 1830s or first half of the 1840s, possibly as early as 1836.[255] This would have been right around the time Watara was in the Sahara, getting ready to cross the desert and return to the Niger Bend. Given Nobili's date estimates for the Tarikh el Fattash's writing and circulation, it is impossible to ascertain whether Watara heard of the Risala itself—though it certainly remains possible that he did. Nevertheless, three elements strongly suggest that he did manage to keep himself apprised, if not of the claims brought forth in the Risala, at least of the magnitude of the socio-political upheaval Hamdallahi had ushered in in his home region, and acted accordingly.

First, in all likelihood, Watara heard about Seeku Aamadu's uprising before even crossing the Atlantic, while still in Jamaica. He may have adapted his self-fashioning before his European

[253] See Hall, *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa*, 98-101. Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails*, 309-10; Nobili, *Sultan, Caliph, and the Renewer of the Faith*, 203-234.

[254] Alfa Nuhum Tahiru as cited in Nobili, "Letter on the appearance of the twelfth caliph."

[255] Mauro Nobili, "A propaganda document in support of the nineteenth century Caliphate of Ḥamdallāhi: Nūḥ b. al-Ṭāhir al-Fulānī's "Letter on the appearance of the twelfth caliph" (Risāla fī ẓuhūr al-khalīfa al-thānī 'ashar)," *Afriques* 7, L'écrit pragmatique africain (2016), doi https://doi.org/10.4000/afriques.1922.

interlocutors accordingly. Initially, in his 1834 autobiography, Watara had presented himself as related to the Juula rulers of Kong, as outlined in chapter 1. However in 1835 in Kingston, Madden received a letter from a member of the Royal Geographical Society of London (RGSL). Mr. Angel, the author, tried to dissuade Madden from helping Watara leave Jamaica for Timbuktu. Angel informed Madden about "the greatest revolutions" that had occurred in the Niger Delta and Niger Bend and ushered in a new political order. Angel thought the revolution would render Watara "a stranger among his countrymen," and consequently recommended that Madden dissuade Watara from leaving Jamaica.[256] In his memoirs and correspondence, Madden brought up his frequent meetings with Watara, whose company he enjoyed and sought out in Kingston.[257] It is therefore very likely that Madden would have informed Watara of this new development, and brought forth the RGSL's concerns.

If this was indeed the case, it would explain why by the late 1835 in Morocco, Watara had slightly modified his discourse around his kinship. Having probably learned the names of the authors of "the greatest revolution," in the Delta, Watara started recasting his lineage by claiming family ties with Seeku Aamadu, the founder of the new caliphate. "My companion Abu's family is still on the throne of Timbuctoo," Davidson wrote, "Hamed Libboo the present king, being one of his cousins."[258] While Watara's previously stated connections to the rulers of Kong, and Jenne's elite, do not preclude other kinship ties to the new Fulani leaders of Hamdallahi, this connection remains unlikely.[259] At the time

[256] Letter from Mr. Angell of Manchester to R.R. Madden, dated April 6, 1835. Madden, *A Twelvemonth's Residence in the West Indies*, 194.

[257] Madden writes that Watara "became a frequent visitor of [his] in his master's leisure-time." Madden, *A Twelvemonth's Residence in the West Indies*, 158.

[258] Davidson, *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa*, 194.

[259] The connection remains possible through matrimony, through Watara's Hausa mother, or through one of his uncles who left Jenne to settle in Maasina, although it would still be more tenuous than Watara let others believe.

Watara was growing up in Jenne, Seeku Aamadu would have been a marginal figure, a cattle herder who was not part of the region's scholarly elite. What's more, Seeku Aamadu's first act of sedition prior to his uprising, was to challenge Jenne intelligentsia, which Watara's family would have belonged to.[260] The new kinship Watara started claiming after having learned of the new political setting in the Niger Bend thus seems doubtful, and in fact, triggered contradictory reactions in Morocco: while some corroborated his claimed lineage, others remained doubtful of it.[261] In any case, if Watara had been able to glean some news about the Sahel while in Jamaica or early in his Moroccan journey, they were likely thin compared to the volume of information he would have collected living half a year in Guelmim.

Indeed, a caravan town par excellence, Guelmim was a trans-Saharan information hub and a key stop on the "cultural highway" funneling news, stories and rumors between West and North Africa, and even the Mediterranean and the Sahel.[262] Ghislaine Lydon writes that caravans "supplied much more than provisions, merchandise, and enslaved laborers. They opened trans-Saharan lines of communication, bringing stories of faraway places and news about distant relatives, political events, and the latest fashions."[263] Couriers roamed around the ever-connected Saharan, Sahelian, and

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See Waṭara and Wilks, "The African Travels of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq," 158.

[260] Hampâté Ba and Daguet, *L'empire Peul du Masina*, 24. Moreover, Seeku Aamadu authored a lengthy treatise, the *Kitāb al-Iḍṭirār,* a work of jurisprudence admonishing the populations of Muslim West Africa on their religious innovation. Brown situates the writing of this treatise around the time Seeku Aamadu engaged in a conflict with Jenne's elite, and Nobili argues that it was intended as a condemnation of said elite. See Brown, "The Caliphate of Hamdullahi," 21; and Nobili, *Sultan, Caliph and the Renewer of the Faith*, 137-141. For a full edition and French translation of the *Kitāb al-Iḍṭirār*, see Hiénin Ali Diakité (ed. and trans.), "Edition et traduction du *Kitāb al-Iḍṭirār* d'Aḥmad Lobbo" (M.A. Thesis, Ecole Normale Superieure de Lyon, 2011).

[261] Davidson, *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa*, 185, 197, and 214.

[262] Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails*, 108.

[263] Ibid, 107.

Mediterranean lands, delivering manuscript and printed news, information, and updates to the various merchants, diplomats, rulers and others they had been dispatched to.

In his journal Davidson describes many instances of information circulation across Northwest Africa. In March, while in Marrakesh, Watara and Davidson "received the names" of current Fulani, Hausa, and Bamanan rulers. In Wad Nun in May 1836, a traveler returning from Timbuktu told Davidson about ongoing battles between Hamdallahi forces and Tuareg clans. According to the traveler, in one instance, four thousand Tuaregs had been killed. The traveler also informed Davidson about remaining Tuareg strongholds in the Niger Bend.[264] Four days later, a caravan brought reports of a battle in which Bamanan forces had defeated Fulani forces, as well as news of failed crops, both developments having allegedly triggered large population displacements.[265] In late June, Davidson received newspapers including reports of the Moroccan sultan's ongoing battles against the French, which Watara then orally translated into Arabic for local audiences.[266] Not all news was political or military. In one instance, Shaykh Bayruk was furious about a roaming rumor of fraudulent business he allegedly partook in: the rumor had originated in Essaouira, reached Wad Nun, and eventually traveled all the way to Fes.[267] These examples, extracted from Davidson's journal, reflect the news that he would have been privy to. However, it is likely that Watara had access to additional information networks,

[264] Davidson, *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa,* 97.

[265] Ibid, 100. I haven't found specific evidence to corroborate a 1835 battle between Fulani and Bambara forces. However, oral traditions report numerous tensions and conflicts between the Hamdallahi leadership on the one hand, and the Diarra of Segu, and Massassi of Kaarta on the other hand, in that time period. See Brown, "The Caliphate of Hamdullahi," 17-21; and Hampâté Ba and Daguet, *L'empire Peul du Masina*, 173-182.

[266] Davidson, *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa*, 118.

[267] Ibid, 154.

which the Briton was aware of, as he instructed Watara to "collect whatever information he [could] pick up."[268] Indeed unlike Davidson, in Morocco and Guelmīm, Watara was constantly in touch with West Africans, free or enslaved.

Watara's embeddedness within a variety of Black networks in Morocco might have provided him with additional opportunities to gather news and intelligence pertinent to his project of returning to the Niger Delta. In January in Rabat, people that Davidson described as Watara's "countrymen" visited him and asked for "his blessing."[269] Likewise, some of the soldiers that formed part of the expedition's escort were also Watara's "countrymen," and had specific interactions with him.[270] In February in Marrakech, Watara was summoned on three different occasions by Abd ar-Rahman's chief eunuch—who, given his function, was likely a West African who had been captured as a child.[271] Davidson does not report what was discussed in these meetings, nor is it clear the extent to which he knew the actual content of their exchanges, but it is possible that Watara and his interlocutors discussed cross-desert developments. Beyond these fleeting encounters on the road to Wad Nun, in Guelmim, where they spent half a year, Watara likely built more sustained relationships with West

[268] Ibid, 156.

[269] Ibid, 28. This request implies that Watara's countrymen believed he was someone whose blessings carried great worth. This belief from his interlocutors might have either stemmed from Watara's direct family relation to famous Watara scholars of Buna, or from his *isnād* (the chronological chain of scholars who taught Islamic sciences, leading down to Watara). Wilks mentions famous Watara teachers of Buna, including Muhammad Watara, who was one of the Buna-based scholars Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Watara mentioned in his autobiography. See Wilks, "The Juula and the Expansion of Islam into the Forest," 102.

[270] Davidson, *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa*, 29.

[271] Ibid, 54-56; El Hamel, *Black Morocco*, 198-199. Based on a late-eighteenth century report, El Hamel writes that "it appears that the eunuchs were not part of the black army but imported from the land of Bambara and Tuwat. The emasculation procedures were possibly done in that region." Therefore, while it is possible that the chief eunuch may have been born into slavery in Morocco, it seems more likely that he would have been born, captured, and mutilated in West Africa.

Africans, and thus obtained news about the social changes in his home region. In Guelmim he frequented the market, a place humming with encounters, discussions and exchanges.[272] He met West Africans who had recently been enslaved and forced to cross the desert, including some from Kong who informed him that one of his relatives and former classmate was now Kong's ruler.[273] Such interactions between Watara and people from his home region might have been extensive, and the nature of the news they would have exchanged varied.

Yet, what transpires in Davidson's journal is a necessarily limited description of these conversations that fails to convey their full extent. First, Davidson could only write about what Watara would have shared with him, which excludes any willful or fortuitous omissions. Moreover, Davidson only wrote down news that would have been both of interest and legible to him, specifically, political information about powerful men. More nuanced news such as family matters, or information that would have helped Watara evaluate the finer grain of the changing social fabric of his home region, thus were likely exchanged in his conversations with fellow West Africans, but did not make it to Davidson's journal and therefore remain lost to the historical record.

As an illustration, Davidson's recounting of an evening when "a set of niggers [sic] arrived from Tumbuktú [and] kept the whole town alive and awake through the whole night with their music and singing," betrayed his poor understanding of music and rituals as community-building and

[272] Davidson, *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa,* 92 and 154.

[273] Ibid, 124. Wilks has corroborated the info of Kotoko Watara, who succeeded Soma Ali as ruler of Nzan. See Wilks, "The Juula and the Expansion of Islam into the Forest," 104.

communication channels in Black communities in Morocco.[274] El Hamel provides a compelling description of the complexities of Gnawa music, which "represents a fascinating syncretism and a mixture of resistance to enslavement, the rigors of forced migration, and the challenges of integration into their new social landscape," and is an embodiment of "their specific historic and cultural memories."[275] Likewise, as discussed above, freed and enslaved Black people throughout the Islamic Mediterranean world commonly held *bori* ceremonies—a set of rituals involving music, drums, and trance originating from Hausa religious practices—throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Through shared music and ritual, freed and enslaved West Africans in Morocco thus negotiated spaces of privileged exchanges and interactions that strangers such as Davidson could not penetrate.

Writing about about information networks among the enslaved in the Caribbean in the wake of the Haitian revolution, Julius Scott has encouraged historians to examine "the rich world which these mobile fugitives inhabited—the complex (and largely invisible) underground which the 'mariners, renegades, and castaways' of the Caribbean created to protect themselves in the face of planter consolidation." For Scott, paying careful attention to these undercurrents is "crucial to understand how news, ideas, and social excitement traveled in the electric political environment of the eighteenth century.[276] Much like the interconnected environment Scott describes, the densely interwoven world of the nineteenth-century Western Sahel and Sahara was swarming with caravans carrying travelers,

[274] Davidson, *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa,* 109. Another European account mentions the West African music and dance performance Shaykh Bayruk hosted. See Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails*, 398.

[275] El Hamel, *Black Morocco*, 272-3.

[276] Scott, *The Common Wind*, 4.

couriers, traders, refugees, or enslaved women and men, who acted as vessels for tales of jihad, insurgencies, war and societal upheaval. The Hamdallahi statesmen, seeking to spread propaganda, tapped into these networks to fan a common wind channeling news of a new social and political order. We cannot ascertain whether Watara learned about the specific language of racial slavery the Hamdallahi leadership actively sought to spread in their Risala. However, through fleeting interactions, shared conversations, prayers, or rituals with other West Africans in Morocco and Guelmīm, it is clear that he would have acquired a more refined and textured sense of the magnitude of socio-political change that was underway in his home region. What implications would this have held for Watara's project to return home?

Three conclusions emerge from a contextualized reading of Watara's stay in Wad Nun in 1835-6, given ongoing racial slavery in Morocco, and the information circulating about the revolution in Hamdallahi. Firstly, having escaped chattel slavery and apprenticeship in Jamaica, if Watara wanted to remain both free and secure, it would be against his best interest to remain in Morocco. There, despite his being Muslim and thus having some degree of nominal protection from enslavement, being racialized as Black effectively rendered him vulnerable. Moreover, even if he were to escape re-enslavement, living in the bustling caravan town of Guelmim and bearing witness daily to racial slavery against Black people might have become too painful a reminder of the trauma and violence of his own enslavement. Therefore Watara would have been anxious to leave Morocco: in fact, Davidson wrote that during Watara's aforementioned visits to the chief eunuch in Marrakesh, there emerged "some symptoms of a wish to keep him here, of which he is sadly afraid."[277] Whatever the reasons that

[277] Davidson, *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa*, 56.

prompted the chief eunuch to try to keep Watara around—be it his aura as a spiritual leader or the appeal of his extraordinary travels—the prospect of remaining in Morocco was evidently frightening for Watara.

Second, having grasped the range of socio-political change ongoing in the Niger Delta, Watara might have calculated that despite Hamdallahi's new political order, he personally did not incur significant risks returning to his home region (beyond the inherent risk involved in undertaking a journey across the desert). Indeed given Watara's belonging to an established and recognized West African Muslim lineage—the Watara of Kong and Juula diaspora in Jenne and Timbuktu— the new Hamdallahi social order would not have posed a significant risk of enslavement to him, as it did to members of the twelve communities named in the Risala.

Third, despite being relatively safe from enslavement in Hamdallahi, what might have constituted a significant liability for Watara vis-à-vis the Hamdallahi authorities was his association with Davidson, a white Christian. As stated in chapter 1, by 1836, only two Europeans had been able to reach Timbuktu: Gordon Laing in 1826, and René Caillié in 1828. In one of Laing's last letters before dying in the Sahara, dated September 21, 1826 and addressed to the British consul in Tripoli, he wrote: "My situation in Tinbūctū [has been] rendered exceedingly unsafe by the unfriendly disposition of the Foolah [Fulani] of Massina, who have this year upset the dominion of the Tuaric [Tuareg] and made themselves patrons of Tinbūctū, and whose Sultan has expressed his hostility towards me in no unequivocal terms."[278] While Seeku Aamadu's general sentiment towards Christian travelers or

[278] Alexander Gordon Laing's letter to Harmer Warrington, quoted in Edward William Bovill, *Missions to the Niger*, vol. 1 (London: (Hakluyt Society, 1962-1966), 312. As quoted in Nobili, *Sultan, Caliph and the Renewer of the Faith*, 160.

diplomats cannot be inferred solely from Laing's impressions, the hostility the Hamdallahi ruler expressed certainly remained a poor precedent for Davidson, and by extension, Watara. The liability posed to Watara by his relationship with Davidson would have only been exacerbated by one of Davidson's decisions early in their Moroccan journey : "A courier has been dispatched to Tumbuktu to say that a Christian is coming, accompanied by the cousin of the King Hamad Libbu."[279] This letter, of which we have no extant record, would have situated Watara squarely at the center of a white Christian mission, in the eyes of the Hamdallahi rulers.

All in all, the dangers of enslavement in Morocco, the appealing perspective of settling in a land ruled by fellow West African Muslims, yet the risks of making an unfavorable impression because of Davidson, might explain why towards the end of their stay in Guelmim, Watara appeared "half anxious and half afraid to proceed."[280] In contrast, Davidson's resolve to reach Timbuktu was unwavering, and by year's end the expedition departed Guelmim. On December 18, 1836, shortly after they had left Wad Nun, their caravan was attacked, and Davidson killed. Watara's fate remained unknown, though by the estimates of the British consul in Morocco, he would likely have been either killed or enslaved by the El Harib clan in the Sahara. However, in a subsequent letter to the consul, Shaykh Bayruk wrote that oral reports had reached him, alleging that Watara had been able to carry on the trip with the remainder of the caravan.[281]

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[279] Davidson, *Notes Taken during Travels in Africa*, 9.

[280] Ibid, 177.

[281] Ibid, 205. The consul wrote the following to Davidson's brother: "Considering there was a great probability Abou might have been taken by the tribe of El Harib, and detained as a slave, I directed the Sheikh to procure his release, and to send him to me. By the answer he has returned, he appears to believe that Abou had gone on with the caravan, in which case there is not much likelihood of the horsemen despatched from the station of the Tajacanths overtaking it."

Conclusion

In January 1841, Queen Victoria named a Special Commissioner of Inquiry into the British Settlements on the West Coast of Africa. The Commissioner was to lead an investigation into the slave-trading activities of British merchants on the West African coast, and produce a report for the House of Commons. The appointed commissioner was none other than Judge R.R. Madden, who had published Watara's autobiography in Jamaica. While in Gold Coast, Madden sought to find out whether Watara had survived the Wad Nun attack. He dispatched leaflets throughout West Africa, offering monetary rewards in exchange for information about him. By June 1841, a caravan reached Mogador from Timbuktu. One of the travelers approached the British vice-consul in Morocco. Introducing himself as "a friend of [Watara]," he reported that Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Watara had successfully returned to his hometown of Jenne.[282] Some 35 years had passed since his abduction.

In Jamaica, Watara's certificate of release from apprenticeship had declared him "absolutely and utterly free." Nevertheless his freedom remained very much fraught and tentative, particularly in the racialized world of the Moroccan Sahara, where he spent several months in the course of his journey back to the Sahel. While immersed in the world of 1830s Guelmim—a hub of for the trans-Saharan slave trade,—Watara was able to tap into cross-desert information networks, some of them exclusive to free and enslaved Black people. Through these networks he likely got a better sense of the political upheaval sweeping the Sahel, particularly following the rise of the new Caliphate of Hamdallahi in his home region. The rise of Hamdallahi was part of a series of Islamic revolution in nineteenth-century West Africa, which ushered in new legal writings, debates and semantics around Blackness and

[282] Watara and Wilks, "The African Travels of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq," 156.

ensleavability, emanating from Muslim actors—both Saharan and West African. Thus, despite the theological prescription that Muslims could not be enslaved, Watara would have acutely felt the precariousness of his freedom in North Africa. Eventually, he departed with the intention of returning to his family and hometown. Even if Watara did reach the Niger Delta, as is alleged he did, the weight of slavery in the region would have been ubiquitous. Women, in particular, bore the brunt of the insecurity that plagued the region in the nineteenth century, which resulted in heightened vulnerability to enslavement. This was likely the fate that had met the enslaved women Watara encountered in Wad Nun. Set in Hamdallahi, the next chapter examines the freedom-seeking strategies of an enslaved woman during the caliphate's apex.

CHAPTER THREE

Wèlorè's Tenuous Spaces of Safety: Intimacy, Piety and Women's Work[283]

"Social status is passed along with breast milk."
—*Makori, The Triumph of the Slaves*. Fulfulde folksong[284]

If trans-Saharan rumors about Watara's return home are true, the environment he would have encountered was markedly different from what he might have reminisced from Jamaica. Indeed by the late 1830s, the Inland Niger Delta and Niger Bend region was marked by Hamdallahi's dominance, under the rule of Seeku Aamadu. At its apex, the caliphate controlled both Jenne and Timbuktu, which along with Hamdallahi, were nodal points of networks sprawling across Northwest Africa.[285] On the backs of camels, Saharan merchants traded commodities including "gold, ostrich feathers, cloth, and slaves" from Timbuktu toward Ghadames and from there, to Tripoli or Tunis.[286] Juula, Mossi, or Yarsé merchants conducted the trade in gold, kola nuts, and salt, from Jenne and Timbuktu southward toward the Volta Basin, via Kong. The towns of Kaka (near Sofara) and Konna, on the

[283] Portions of this chapter were previously published in Madina Thiam, "Women in Mali," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African Women's History*, ed. Dorothy Hodgson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016–), DOI https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.530 ; and Madina Thiam and Gregory Mann, "The History of Mali: Connectivity and State Formation since the 18th Century," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, ed Thomas Spear (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016–), DOI https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.715.

[284] Nditi Ba, Omar Ndongo (trans.) and Christiane Owusu-Sarpong (trans.), "Makori, Le Triomphe des Esclaves," in *Des femmes écrivent l'Afrique: L'Afrique de l'Ouest et le Sahel*, eds. Esi Sutherland-Addy, Aminata Diaw, Judith Miller and Christiane Owusu-Sarpong (Paris: Karthala, 2007), 198-201.

[285] Hamdallahi controlled the five ley'de (provinces) of Maasina, Jeenneri, Kunaari, Fakala, and Guimbala, and controlled two tributary areas, Jelgooji and Timbuktu. Sanankoua, *Un empire peul au XIXe siècle*, 66–76.

[286] Bruce Hall, "How slaves used Islam: The letters of enslaved Muslim commercial agents in the nineteenth-century Niger Bend and Central Sahara," *Journal of African History* 52, no. 3 (2011), 281–282.

banks of the Niger, were large marketplaces where caravans from the South ferried "kola nuts, slaves, glass beads, iron, cloth, and manufactured European products from Gulf of Guinea trading posts." Caravans from the north brought "Timbuktu salt, silk, and various objects from North Africa and Egypt." To regulate this flourishing trade, the batu mawɗo, Hamdallahi's governing body, came up with uniform measuring units, and determined fixed costs for foodstuff.[287] To enforce the batu mawɗo's measures, Hamdallahi was connected to the provinces through a constant flow of paper that circulated across the region. Indeed, the caliphate produced a large corpus of administrative, legal, and diplomatic literature. These included land-deeds, judicial rulings, or political writings. They also included religious commentaries and epistolary exchanges between the Hamdallahi Caliphate and its ally turned antagonist, the powerful Caliphate of Sokoto (across parts of today's Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon).[288]

Visiting Hamdallahi about a hundred years after Watara's return, in 1935, Guyanese colonial administrator Eboué would have seen almost no physical artifacts attesting to the city's former standing. Though the caliphate had remained deeply entrenched in local memories, its only tangible traces were ruins of its surrounding walls, portions of Seeku Aamadu's compound, and a handful of graves (Figures 12 and 13).[289] These were the resting places of powerful men who had governed the

[287] Hampâté Bâ and Daget, *L'empire peul du Macina*, 79-80.

[288] On the relationship between Hamdallahi and Sokoto, see Nobili, *Sultan Caliph, and the Renewer of the Faith*, 182-201.

[289] On the destruction of Hamdallahi, the remaining ruins, and the graves, see Sanankoua, *Un empire peul au XIXe siècle*, 90-2. Sanankoua names eight individuals buried in Seeku Aamadu's compound. There might be more graves than those of these eight individuals. For instance, one Boubacar Karabenta, whom Sanankoua does not mention, appears to be also buried there. Archaeological digs have also uncovered the side of a mass grave elsewhere in Hamdallahi, which contains the remains of at least twelve individuals, including one child. It is likely that these individuals perished in the last days of war in 1864, as Hamdallahi was besieged. Their bodies were not immediately buried, but left exposed in the street, and a mud wall collapsed on them, creating the mass grave. See Anne Mayor, "Les rapports entre la Diina peule du Maasina et les populations du Delta intérieur du Niger, vus au travers des

caliphate: the founder Seeku Aamadu himself, his son Aamadu Seeku; and his counselor Alfa Nuhum Tahiru. Standing out among the graves in the compound, is the burial site of a woman: Wèlorè, Seeku Aamadu's enslaved concubine. In 1935, Eboué would have walked by all the graves. Yet his report back to the Governor General only mentioned that of the men, omitting Wèlorè.

Wèlorè, the focus of this chapter, is almost entirely absent from the historical archive of Hamdallahi—an absence reflected in much of the historiography on the caliphate.[290] By Hamdallahi archive, I mean the scriptural, oral, and material records the caliphate produced and left behind.[291] Using insights from scholars such as Bintou Sanankoua, Amadou Hampâté Bâ, Saidiya Hartman, and Lisa Lowe, this chapter charts two analytical paths. It focuses on recovery by "trespassing the boundaries of the archives" to provide a sketch of what Wèlorè's world might have looked and felt like; and it focuses on loss, by highlighting the depth of what cannot be recovered about her. The chapter draws from Fulfulde orature, the poetry of Sokoto scholar Nana Asma'u, photographic and archeological evidence, and available research on slavery and women's work in the nineteenth and twentieth century Sahel, to contextualize the tenuous traces of Wèlorè in the historical record. I attempt to answer the following questions: What might have shaped Wèlorè's sense of self and guided

traditions historiques et des fouilles archéologiques," in *Peuls et Mandingues. Dialectique des constructions identitaires*, eds. Mirjam de Bruijn & Han van Dijk (Paris: Karthala, 1997), 40-1.

[290] Hampâté Bâ and Daget briefly discuss the oral tradition's rendering of Wèlorè. In the secondary literature, Sanankoua and Ba-Konaré mention Wèlorè. See Hampâté Bâ and Daget, *L'empire peul du Macina*, 52; Ba-Konaré, *Dictionnaire des femmes célèbres du Mali*, 131; and Sanankoua, *Un empire peul au XIXe siècle*, 91.

[291] As scholars have noted, much of Hamdallahi's scriptural archive has not been adequately researched, and would certainly yield more knowledge in the future should it be exploited. See Hienin Ali Diakité, "An Inventory of Arabic Manuscripts from Dalla, Central Mali (1800-1980s)," *Islamic Africa* 9 (2018): 256-268 ; and Nobili, *Sultan, Caliph, and the Renewer of the Faith*, 31-34.

her quest for relative safety, as an enslaved woman in Hamdallahi? And, what does the figure of Wèlorè, as she briefly appears in the Hamdallahi archive, reveal about Hamdallahi's self-fashioning?

First, I situate Wèlorè within the Hamdallahi archive. Second, I offer a broad overview of insecurity, vulnerability to enslavement, and women's work in the West African Sahel region, and attempt to map these developments specifically in Hamdallahi. Lastly, I contextualize Wèlorè's use of intimacy through touch and taste, and piety by way of prayer and knowledge-seeking, as spaces where she sought to secure safety and protection. The chapter then proposes a path ahead for further research by arguing that Wèlorè became a conduit through which a narrative of Hamdallahi, and of its caliph, were crafted.

Wèlorè in the Hamdallahi Archive

Wèlorè occupies a simultaneously overexposed and negligible space within the Hamdallahi archive—the manuscripts, orature, and ruins. After she died, Wèlorè's remains were buried in a single grave in Seeku Aamadu's compound, turning her burial site into one of the most visible relics of the caliphate. The decision to place her body there for posterity, effectively thrusted Wèlorè into perpetual historical significance, a distinction which most inhabitants of Hamdallahi, particularly the enslaved, could not aspire to. Despite the centrality of Wèlorè's burial site in Hamdallahi, little is known about her as a person. To my knowledge no extant manuscript discusses Wèlorè's life. In the oral traditions, she is only mentioned in passing. In 1962, scholar Amadou Hampâté Bâ published a history of Hamdallahi based on oral tales he had been collecting in the region for some fifteen years. In the course of his investigations, Hampâté Bâ gathered about 1,000 testimonies, and distilled them into 80

trustworthy narratives, which he then assembled into his historical account.[292] From this multitude of sources, Hampâté Bâ only makes a cursory mention of Wèlorè. The thin oral archival fragment is buried within a long description of Seeku Aamadu's character and qualities:

> Oral tradition has retained one name, Wèlorè, as the only female servant, and right-hand woman, of Seeku Aamadu. We assume she was his sole concubine. This woman could recite the Qur'an by heart, and had studied Islamic law. These qualities propelled him to make her his confidante. She was in charge of safekeeping his personal books, and of preparing his food.[293]

Aside from the burial site, this excerpt is the only extant historical source on Wèlorè. She only appears insofar as she helps buttress the caliph's own piety and studiousness. Indeed, the only lens through which Seeku Aamadu is portrayed to have viewed Wèlorè is that of piety, rigor, and trustworthiness. Nothing else is revealed about her character, deeds, and circumstances. What can we make of Wèlorè simultaneous exposure in the graveyard, and erasure in the oral archive? And, how might we expand this archival fragment to get a better glimpse of Wèlorè, the woman buried in Hamdallahi? In the following sections, I use Hartman's methodological tool of critical fabulation. Juxtaposing Fulfulde poetry from Sokoto, archaeological records of Hamdallahi, and available research about women's lives in nineteenth-century Sahel, I "[labor] to paint as full a picture" of Wèlorè's sense of self, situated knowledge, and aspirations.[294] These three components of Wèlorè's character would have been deeply shaped by the insecurity and vulnerability she would have witnessed and lived through as a woman in the nineteenth century Sahel.

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[292] Hampâté Bâ and Daget, *L'empire peul du Macina,* back cover.

[293] Ibid, 52.

[294] Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 11.

Insecurity and Vulnerability to Slavery in the nineteenth century West African Sahel

Raiding and conflicts triggered insecurity and population displacements in eighteenth and nineteenth-century West Africa, fueling growing slavery and bondage systems to which women were central. In wealthy towns and powerful states in particular, enslaved people became the backbone of economic production, performing agricultural, commercial, military, or domestic labor. According to colonial reports, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the enslaved made up as much as 30–40 percent of the Kayes region's population, 40 percent of Nioro's, and 50 percent of Gumbu's.[295] A large proportion of them were women, forming the majority in some areas, such as Timbuktu or Goundam, by the 1890s.[296]

In the Caliphate of Hamdallahi erected in 1818, slavery was a key institution. As noted in the previous chapter, Hamdallahi's Fulani ruler Seeku Aamadu insisted on maintaining strict social hierarchies, despite his advisors' desire to complete the Hamdallahi revolution by abolishing classes and castes. Further, Seeku Aamadu sought to racialize as Black, and enslave, non-Muslim peoples living in the region, using as a foundational source of jurisprudence a historical chronicle his counselor Alfa Nuhum Tahiru had forged. The chronicle ascribed servile or vassal status to a number of communities, including the Tombo, Dogon, Bobo, and Somono peoples. Through war and raiding, the ruling classes of Hamdallahi captured prisoners from these groups, and rendered them riimayɓe (Fulfulde, slaves).

[295] Marie Rodet, *Les migrantes ignorées du Haut-Sénégal (1900–1946)* (Paris: Karthala, 2009), 50; and Claude Meillassoux, "État et conditions des esclaves à Gumbu (Mali) au XIXe siècle," *Journal of African History* 14, no. 3 (1973): 432.

[296] Martin Klein, "The Slave Trade in the Western Sudan during the Nineteenth Century," *Slavery and Abolition* 13, no. 1 (1992): 41.

Eventually, Hamdallahi's riimayɓe population outgrew the rimɓe (Fulfulde, freeborn).[297] Historian Bintou Sanankoua has laid out the divisions, responsibilities, and rights of riimayɓe according to Hamdallahi law. The majority of riimayɓe were owned by the State, and the rest labored for individual families. The State would assign riimayɓe specific tasks including agriculture, construction and masonry, weaponry-making, fishing and waterways navigation, or soldiering.[298] Hamdallahi law stated that they could not be killed, beaten, or sold unless they had committed a grave offense. They could own goods and animals, and yield the product of the lands they cultivated. Whether they cultivated fields to the State or to families, they owed a tax called the *jangal* to the landowner, and had to renovate the landowner's house yearly.[299]

It is difficult to evaluate what these laws meant in practice for riimayɓe, as Hamdallahi's slavery policy was not applied uniformly, but pragmatically. Either way, their subaltern status rendered them highly vulnerable to violence. Vanquished Bozo peoples who refused to submit to Hamdallahi's authority, or Somono peoples who were targeted in the forged chronicle, were all enslaved.[300] The State claimed that those among them who would "earnestly embrace Islam" would be freed.[301] For instance,

[297] Sanankoua provides an overview of Hamdallahi's social structure. The rimɓe (free people) included nobles, and occupational castes. See Sanankoua, *Un empire peul au XIXe siècle,* 106-114.

[298] Riimayɓe who were conscripted for war, received a portion of the booty, which became a topic of contention between the Hamdallahi rulers and the Kunta scholars of Timbuktu. Hamdallahi insisted on this measure, which the Kunta deemed contrary to Islamic law. See Hampâté Bâ and Daget, *L'empire peul du Macina*, 277-280. Masonry is a recurring activity mentioned as assigned to rimayɓe. For instance, Hamdallahi elites had riimayɓe and free workers build Tenenkou, the capital city of the Maasina province. See Sanankoua, *Un empire peul au XIXe siècle,* 68 and 109.

[299] Ibid, 112.

[300] Ibid*,* 109.

[301] Hampâté Bâ and Daget, *L'empire peul du Macina*, 279.

all the riimaybe who had participated in Seeku Aamadu's winning battle at Nukuma, paving the way for the caliphate's founding, were immediately freed. But in the following years, while there is evidence of conversions happening, it is unclear to what extent the State did in fact recognize conversions and apply this policy.[302] Further, Sanankoua notes that liberation was not conditional upon a mere conversion, but upon a demonstrated knowledge of Islamic precepts and prayers. Given the strenuous agricultural work they carried out, few riimaybe would have been able to free up the time needed to adequately study, and there is no evidence of massive liberations under Hamdallahi.[303] On the other hand, certain Dogon groups who submitted to Hamdallahi's authority, were in some cases allowed to maintain their religious practice, for pragmatic political reasons.[304] The Dogon dwellings in the cliffs were ideal observation posts, and the mastery of the Dogon blacksmiths in the crafting of weapons made them prized allies. This policy of tolerance was also not uniform, and other Dogon villages have preserved memories of terrible abuse and violence Hamdallahi inflicted upon them.[305]

Scholar of slavery and capitalism Lisa Lowe has written about her reluctance to merely reconstruct lost histories through "recovery and recuperation." Instead, Lowe lingers in "the space of a different kind of thinking, a space of productive attention to the scene of loss."[306] Wèlorè illustrates the depth of what was lost in the production of the riimaybe class. As Bintou Sanakoua explained, the

[302] Sanankoua, *Un empire peul au XIXe siècle,* 108.

[303] Ibid, 111.

[304] In their debate with the Kunta of Timbuktu, Hamdallahi portrayed this measure as a gesture of magnanimity and tolerance towards their Dogon allies, but it appears to have stemmed out of pragmatism. Hampâté Bâ and Daget, *L'empire peul du Macina*, 280-1.

[305] Mayor, "Les rapports entre la Diina peule du Maasina et les populations du Delta intérieur du Niger, vus au travers des traditions historiques et des fouilles archéologiques," 38-9.

[306] Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, 40-41.

riimaybe "lost their identity from the moment of their captivity."[307] There is no record of Wèlorè's family name, which would have helped recover her community and origins. The fact that she was enslaved suggests that she was likely from one of the communities Hamdallahi conquered—born within a Tombo, Dogon, Bobo, or Somono family. There is no clear or even approximate indication of when she was born. To try and establish a timeline of her life, requires situating it in relation to Seeku Aamadu's lifetime. While his own birth date is contested, possible years range from 1771 to 1776.[308] His first son was born around 1815. Seeku Aamadu then founded his caliphate in 1818, and three years later, having completed the construction of a new capital city, the community moved to Hamdallahi. He passed away in 1845.[309] As Seeku Aamadu's concubine, Wèlorè would have likely been younger than him–they might have had an age gap of multiple decades. She could have been born around the turn of the century or later, before or after Seeku Aamadu's son, and before or after the move to Hamdallahi. Whether she passed away before or after him, is also unknown. Wèlorè might have become enslaved as a direct consequence of Seeku Aamadu's policies. She also could have been captured in the course of another war, experiencing violent rupture from her family and displacement, as did the women Watara encountered across the Sahara in 1836. On the contrary, perhaps her parents were also riimaybe living in Hamdallahi, and she managed to maintained affective bonds with them.

[307] Sanankoua, *Un empire peul au XIXe siècle,* 110.

[308] Nobili provides an overview of the dates various scholars have provided. Nobili himself settles on 1771. See Nobili, *Sultan, Caliph, and the Renewer of the Faith*, 133.

[309] For the dates of Seeku Aamadu's death, see Sanankoua, *Un empire peul au XIXe siècle*, 33 ; for Hamdallahi's construction around 1820-1821, see Mayor, "Les rapports entre la Diina peule du Maasina et les populations du Delta intérieur du Niger, vus au travers des traditions historiques et des fouilles archéologiques," 38.

Wèlorè's desires, feelings of belonging and community, aspirations and sense of possibilities, cannot be recovered.

Amidst this loss, one thing remains certain about Wèlorè: like all women in the West African Sahel, free or enslaved, she supplied labor that was central to her society. However, as an enslaved woman, as she worked, she bore even greater vulnerability to violence and abuse.

Women's Work in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the West African Sahel, women played a critical role in the region's economy, supplying labor and developing expertise in a variety of fields. The type of labor they performed or specialized in often varied along lines of ethnicity, class, caste, or religion. It was also affected by mutating regional political economies, as well as seasonal and environmental changes.

In the nineteenth century, enslaved women were valued more than men, for their productive and reproductive labor. Their status also rendered them more vulnerable to sexual violence.[310] The Segu state, for instance, was a slave society where enslaved women performed all kinds of work. They primarily supplied domestic and agricultural labor, but also performed other tasks, such as construction work during the building of mud fortifications.[311] Some young enslaved women resided in a designated, walled area of town called *sifinso* (Bamanan, black hair dwelling or youth dwelling).

[310] Klein, "The Slave Trade in the Western Sudan," 41; Rodet, *Les migrantes ignorées*, 50; and Meillassoux, "État et conditions des esclaves à Gumbu," 444. In Mandé cultures, wolosow (literally, born-in-the-home) children of an enslaved woman inherited slave status and were tied to her owner's household. Unlike jonw (people acquired through purchase or war), wolosow could usually not be sold.

[311] Kevin C. MacDonald, "'The Least of Their Inhabited Villages Are Fortified': The Walled Settlements of Segou," *Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa* 47, no. 3 (2012): 348.

There, they remained sexually available to their co-residents, the *ton jonw* (male soldier-slaves). Through matrimony and child-rearing, they were expected to reproduce a new generation of soldier-slaves that would fuel Segu's powerful military.[312]

Free women also supplied large amounts of labor, the nature of which varied according to their rank within social hierarchies, or the occupational castes they belonged to. Agricultural, pastoral, fishing, or commercial work, intertwined with domestic labor, often made up the bulk of women's activities. In agricultural regions, women and men worked on shared fields, following a gendered division of labor that generally involved men sowing, and women weeding and harvesting.[313] Women's supplementary labor off the communal field allowed men to devote more time to daily rest, leisure, or social activities.[314] Indeed, women also often owned and cultivated their own personal field for household-level production, as well as sale and profit. Additionally, they bore the brunt of childcare and other domestic work. Lastly, they were responsible for cooking, supplying the morning and evening meals at home, and bringing the communal midday meal to the field. Food preparation was a taxing process, involving water and wood fetching, spice collection, condiment preparation, grain grinding, and other activities.

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[312] Kevin C. MacDonald and Seydou Camara, "Segou, Slavery, and Sifinso," in *Power and Landscape in Atlantic West Africa: Archaeological Perspectives*, ed. J. Cameron Monroe and Akinwumi Ogundiran (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 182–183.

[313] Madina Ly, "La femme dans la société mandingue précoloniale," in *La femme africaine dans la société précoloniale*, ed. Achola O. Pala and Madina Ly (Paris: UNESCO, 1979), 158–176; Richard Roberts, *Two Worlds of Cotton: Colonialism and the Regional Economy in the French Soudan, 1800–1946* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 55; and Chantal Rondeau, *Les paysannes du Mali: Espaces de liberté et changements* (Paris: Karthala, 1994).

[314] Ly, "La femme dans la société mandingue précoloniale," 159–160. Chantal Rondeau provides detailed descriptions of daily schedules for women and men in Senufo, Miniyanka, and Dogon communities: see Rondeau, *Les paysannes du Mali*.

In carrying out agricultural and domestic work, women made strategic choices around their use of technology. Bamanan *numumusow* (women blacksmiths or potters) came up with inventions and innovations aimed at improving domestic work. Passing on intricate molding, firing, and embellishing techniques from mothers to daughters, *numumusow* imbued their creations with local, and specifically female, knowledge and expertise.[315] However, women's choices over which technologies to use could also spark social tensions. By the twentieth century, for instance, women held differing views on the emancipatory potential of technologies deemed Western, such as the grain mill. On the one hand, younger women prized such machines for being less labor intensive and more time efficient than other instruments, thus affording them opportunities to pursue other activities. On the other hand, elderly women feared these innovations stripped women of the social value they derived from performing slower and more strenuous work, which they argued constituted women's exclusive domain of expertise.[316]

Across cotton cultivation regions, women's labor was critical to textile production: *bɔgɔlan fini* (Bamanan, mud cloth) and indigo-dyed cloth, in particular, came to embody wider societal and gender dynamics. For centuries, Bamanan women and men have been among the main producers and wearers of mud cloth, crafted by dipping cotton cloth in a herbal dye and decorating it with fermented mud. Etching intricate symbols onto the cloth, Bamanan women in the Beledugu region expressed gendered

[315] See Barbara Frank, "Marks of Identity: Potters of the Folona (Mali) and Their Mothers," *African Arts* 40, no. 1 (2007): 30–41 ; and Frank, *Griot Potters of the Folona: The History of an African Ceramic Tradition* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021) ; For a selection of photographs of women's creations, see Barbara Frank, "Bamana Women's Pottery," *Art and Life in Africa*.

[316] Laura Ann Twagira, "Machines That Cook or Women Who Cook? Lessons from Mali on Technology, Labor, and Women's Things," *Technology and Culture* 61, no. 2 Supplement (2020): preprint ; and Twagira, *Embodied Engineering. Gendered Labor, Food Security, and Taste in Twentieth-Century Mali* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2021).

knowledge or ideas that social conventions deemed unsuitable for the spoken word, including commentary on matrimony.[317] Unlike mud cloth, indigo cloth was not merely a local commodity, but also circulated across the Indian Ocean, Atlantic Ocean and trans-Saharan commercial networks.[318] Consequently, in the nineteenth century, changes in indigo demand and production led to gendered social tensions and changes in household relations in Maraka towns of the middle Niger river valley.[319] Previously, free Maraka women had been the primary local producers of indigo-dyed cloth. However, an increasing reliance on enslaved laborers for large-scale cotton and indigo cultivation, coupled with an increased market demand for indigo cloth, led slave-owning Maraka men to gain control of the textile's production and sale. By the early twentieth century, free Maraka women had lost control of indigo production as an economic resource.

Female professionals provided reproductive healthcare and sexuality counseling or operations to other women.[320] Occurring at key stages of a woman's life, these professionals' interventions tied women's social integration to their abiding by certain sexual norms.[321] First, boys and girls underwent circumcision prior to reaching puberty, an operation which frequently caused severe damage to the

[317] See Sarah Brett Smith, *The Silence of the Women: Bamana Mud Cloths* (Milan: Five Continents Press, 2014).

[318] See Jody A. Benjamin, "The Texture of Change: Cloth, Commerce and History in Western Africa 1700–1850" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2016).

[319] See Richard Roberts, "Women's Work and Women's Property: Household Social Relations in the Maraka Textile Industry of the Nineteenth Century," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26, no. 2 (1984): 229–250.

[320] For a history of biomedical maternal and reproductive health programs and practitioners in colonial and postcolonial Mali, see Devon Golaszewski, "Reproductive Labors: Women's Expertise and Biomedical Authority in Mali, 1935–1999" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2020) ; and Golaszewski, "Last Acts of Mothering: Nuptial Counseling in Colonial Mali" *Past & Present* 246, Issue Supplement_15 (2020), 239–262.

[321] Assitan Diallo argues that the bólokoli kɛlaw and màŋɔmaga, despite their seemingly contradictory interventions with regards to female pleasure, in fact hold complementary roles. See Assitan Diallo, "Paradoxes of Female Sexuality in Mali: On the Practices of Magnonmaka and Bolokoli-Kela," in *Re-Thinking Sexualities in Africa*, ed. Signe Arnfred (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell Tryckeri AB, 2004), 173–189.

girls' health and sexuality.[322] In Maninka communities, *bólokoli kɛlaw* (women practitioners of female genital mutilation, or FGM) from the blacksmiths caste performed the operation using special metal blades.[323] They generally did so on a cluster of girls, as part of a series of initiation rituals marking formal entry into womanhood. Later in life, as young women became brides, they were assigned a *màɲɔmaga* (nuptial counselor), whose main task was to promote harmonious sexual and marital relations.[324] The màɲɔmaga counseled the bride in the days immediately preceding and following her wedding ceremonies, including the consummation night. Lastly, female birth attendants and caregivers assisted women in managing pregnancies and deliveries.

In the highly stratified Soninko society, certain women served as historians, custodians, and conveyors of knowledge about the community.[325] This was of course true of the *laxaranto* ("mouth-endowed") caste members and specialists in oral traditions, as well as *jelimusow* (female griots) in other communities in general.[326] But among the Soninko, enslaved women stood as the main historians. Indeed, female slaves were less likely than their male counterparts to have their offspring taken away. They would therefore spend time transmitting community and family histories to children—particularly the girls, who, in turn, did the same with the following generation. Moreover,

[322] FGM remains prevalent in Mali, though the practice is subject to numerous prevention campaigns.

[323] See Kateri Donahoe, "Female Genital Cutting in Mali: Portrait of a Traditional Practitioner," *Pulitzer Center*, May 18, 2016, https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/female-genital-cutting-mali-portrait-traditional-practitioner.

[324] See Diallo, "Paradoxes of Female Sexuality in Mali"; and Bruce Whitehouse, "The Manyamagan," *Bridges from Bamako* (blog), June 3, 2019, https://bridgesfrombamako.com/2019/06/03/the-manyamagan/.

[325] Mamadou Diawara, *La graine de la parole: Dimension sociale et politique des traditions orales du royaume de Jaara (Mali) du XVème au milieu du XIXème siècle* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1990), 119–145.

[326] On griots see, for example, Thomas Hale, *Griots and Griottes: Masters of Words and Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); and Barbara Hoffman, *Griots at War: Conflict, Conciliation, and Caste in Mande* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

two specific types of tales within the Soninko oral repertoire are the exclusive domain of enslaved women: the *tanbasire* a capella chants, sung by female crown slaves; and the *worson suugu*, which veteran female slaves sing while executing dances and memes to the rhythm of percussions. Though sung by women, the *tanbasire* and *worson suugu* nonetheless exclusively celebrate the deeds of men, and do not preserve the memory of female ancestors.

Marisa Fuentes speaks of the "mutilated historicity" of Black women in the archives of Atlantic slavery to refer to "the violent condition in which enslaved women appear in the archive disfigured and violated."[327] The overview of women's work, expertise, and knowledge in the broader region, makes plain the paucity of Wèlorè's description within the Hamdallahi oral archive, and the depth of the loss that comes along with her and other women's mutilated historicity. Still, the archival fragment hints to Wèlorè's productive, intellectual, and intimate labors in Hamdallahi, which I now turn to.

Intimacy and Piety: Seeking Safety in the Now and the Hereafter

As an enslaved woman in Hamdallahi, Wèlorè navigated precarious terrains in her everyday life. In this section, I attempt to map the spaces of tenuous safety and security Wèlorè tried to inhabit, through practices of intimacy and piety.

[327] Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 16.

Wèlorè had intimate, sensuous access to Seeku Aamadu.[328] The oral histories Hampâté Bâ collected introduce Wèlorè as Seeku Aamadu's concubine and cook, pointing to a relationship rooted in touch and taste. Having fetched wood and water, Wèlorè would prepare couscous, rice, fish, or meat, in stoves located in Seeku Aamadu's courtyard, the scent of simmering stews filling his chambers. Her muscles sore from grinding grains and churning cream, she would pour out fresh or curdled cow milk across calabashes, to be served to guests. She had likely perfected her recipe of *tatiiri maasina*, his favorite dish, made up of the best quality rice from the Maasina province, topped with fresh fish and smooth butter.[329] Aroma, savor, and appeal to the senses were thus key components of Wèlorè's labors, and of her relationship with Seeku Aamadu.

It is possible that Wèlorè pursued intimacy with Seeku Aamadu as a means to secure more safety and protection as an enslaved woman, and freedom for her children. This space of tenuous safety, constructed though intimacy, touch, and taste, would of course have been fraught with risk–nothing transpires in the available historical record about Wèlorè's wishes, desires, and consent.

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[328] My thinking on sensuousness in Hamdallahi was triggered by Bianca Beauchemin. In her study on the Haitian revolution and its afterlives, Beauchemin asks: "what can be uncovered by paying close attention to the role of women, sexuality, sensuousness, alternative gender formations and spirituality in the arduous process of gaining freedom?" See Bianca Beauchemin, "Arousing Freedoms: Re-Imagining the Haitian Revolution through Sensuous Marronage" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2021), 2.

[329] To construct this speculative description of Wèlorè and Seeku Aamadu's interactions, I have relied on archeological digs at Modjodjé, in the house that Seeku Aamadu inhabited during the construction of Hamdallahi, show that "in the courtyard, angled between the facade of the house and the compound's wall, a large double hearth served as the main kitchen. It allowed for simultaneous cooking of the rice and stew." See Mayor, "Les rapports entre la Diina peule du Maasina et les populations du Delta intérieur du Niger, vus au travers des traditions historiques et des fouilles archéologiques," 45. Another dig at Hamdallahi has uncovered animal bones, the analysis of which demonstrated that Hamdallahi's butchers primarily supplied cow meat, followed in second position by medium-sized bovids (sheeps or goats). See Isabelle Chenal-Vélardé, "Etude taphonomique, observations ethnologiques et interprétations archéozoologiques: Essai sur les techniques de boucherie à Hamdallahi (Mali, XIXe siècle)," *Anthropozoologica* 23 (1996): 85-95. Lastly, Hampâté Bâ mentions that although oral traditions portray Seeku Aamadu as a man of frugal taste, he did indulge in tatiiri maasina, his favorite dish. See Hampâté Bâ and Daget, *L'empire peul du Macina*, 51.

Despite exposing herself to potential danger and abuse at the hands of a powerful man, pursuing intimacy with him would have made sense. In her study on Black women's freedom practices in the eighteenth century world of Atlantic slavery, Jessica Marie Johnson writes that "understanding the role intimacy and kinship played in black women's lives highlights black women's everyday understanding of freedom as centered around safety and security for themselves and their progeny."[330] In Hamdallahi, the offspring of concubines born of a free father inherited their father's status—they became free. Their status as free people carried stigma, and they often had to cut ties with their maternal kin.[331] Nevertheless, it was effective and their free status could not be questioned. Thus, even if her intimacy with Seeku Aamadu entailed violation and abuse, Wèlorè might have hoped it would yield freedom for her children. The historical record mentions no offspring born from Wèlorè and Seeku Aamadu. Since the date of Wèlorè's death is unknown, it is possible that she passed before Seeku Aamadu. Should that be the case, it is also possible that she died from complications from pregnancy or childbirth.

The orature of Goggo Addi, a Fulani storyteller from Garoua (northern Cameroon), includes a repertoire of tales that gives listeners a window into nineteenth century Adamawa, a province within the Sokoto Caliphate. Sokoto, like Hamdallahi, was a Muslim polity that Fulani rulers had founded in the early nineteenth century. The two states had a shared culture and language, maintained diplomatic

[330] Johnson, *Wicked Flesh*, 3.

[331] Among Fulani peoples, children's relationship to their *kaw* (maternal uncle) is of paramount importance. Yet the social stigma of slavery forced concubines to severe any relationship between their free children and their maternal uncle, which caused wounds within the maternal family. Sanankoua notes that such stigma did not exist in Sokoto, where a "manumitted slave could freely mary a free man. Nobody, be it her husband, her co-wife, or anybody else, could remind her after her marriage of her formerly enslaved condition, and if they did she was entitled to bring them before a judge." See Sanankoua, *Un empire peul au XIXe siècle*, 114. This notion of stigma helps explain the citation in the chapter's epitaph, which mentions that "social status is passed along with mother's milk.". Normally, under Maliki law, free status was effectively passed from the father (see discussion on Morocco in chapter 2). However in Hamdallahi some stigma evidently remained.

and epistolary relations, and were connected through the circulations of scholars and pilgrims. A recurring figure in Goggo Addi's tales is the *korgel* (Fulfulde, sweet-slave), a word made up of *kordo* (female slave), and the suffix –el which signals endearment. In the tales, the korgel serves either a male or female member of the royal family, and is generally portrayed as youthful and beautiful. When serving a princess or queen, the korgel addresses her using a deferential title that means mother. She acts as the royal woman's "confidante and accomplice." When serving a prince or king, she cooks his food. By feeding him, she figuratively fulfills marital duties the princess owes the prince but denies him. In such tales, the prince usually ends up marrying both the korgel and the princess—the hierarchy between them remaining, as the former is a concubine and the latter a wife. Literary scholar Ursula Baumgardt, who analyzed Goggo Addi's tales and interviewed Fulani women in twentieth century Adamawa, argues that such fictional tales encapsulate, to an extent, the rivalry and tensions between royal wives and concubines. The rivalry still does not place them on equal footing, as the social hierarchy is maintained. In the tales, some royal wives ask the king with contempt: "Did you spend the night wallowing with your korgel?"[332]

How can a literary trope help us read Wèlorè in the Hamdallahi archive? Goggo Addi's tales gives a glimpse of the social and intimate world of Fulani Muslim polities in nineteenth century West Africa, as imagined by their elites. The elite discourse is encapsulated by the construction of the term korgel, which coats exploitation and oppression with a suffix signifying endearment. The korgel tales encapsulate the entanglement of sensuousness, intimacy, and hierarchical social relations that

[332] Ursula Baumgardt, "La représentation de l'Autre. L'exemple du répertoire d'une conteuse peule de Garoua," *Cahier d'études africaines* 34, no. 133-135, L'archipel peul (1994): 305-6.

concubines had to navigate. This was dangerous terrain for them, fraught with potential abuse from both male and female elites, as illustrated by the final question the princess asks the prince. In Hamdallahi, Seeku Aamadu had two wives. The first was his cousin Adya, and the second was his brother's widow. These two wives bore him four sons; no mention appears of any daughters.[333] Whatever the exact nature of Wèlorè's rapport with Seeku Aamadu, she would have had to navigate her relationship with his wives as well, adding an additional layer of risk to her quest for relative safety for herself, and freedom for her unborn children, through intimacy. Ultimately, Adya outlived both Seeku Aamadu and Wèlorè, and played an influential role in succession struggles in the caliphate.[334] We cannot know how she treated his korgel.

Seeku Aamadu was very aware of his self-representation. Through oral and written records, he relentlessly crafted his image as an austere and pious man who disdained earthly matters.[335] Inevitably, the sensory bonds he shared with Wèlorè—touch, taste, smell—are thus downplayed in the Hamdallahi archive. In Hampâté Bâ's wording, their concubinage is "assumed," rather than asserted. On the other hand, while the oral tradition withdraws references to sensuousness in describing Wèlorè,

[333] Hampâté Bâ mentions, but does not name, Seeku Aamadu's second wife. Levirate marriages were a common practice, to be able to provide resources and care to the widow and the children. Hampâté Bâ and Daget, *L'empire peul du Macina*, 52.

[334] Adya reportedly wielded maternal authority to avert a political crisis that threatened to shake the caliphate in 1853. Adya was consecutively the wife, mother, and grandmother of the three rulers who succeeded each other on the throne: Seeku Aamadu (r. 1818–1845), his son Aamadu Seeku (r. 1845–1853), and grandson Aamadu Aamadu (r. 1853–1862). In the wake of Aamadu Seeku's sudden death, a succession conflict ensued, as three candidates put forth claims to assume power: Aamadu Seeku's older cousin Ba Lobbo, his younger brother Allay Seeku, and his son Aamadu Aamadu. Ultimately, Ba Lobbo gave up his bid. According to local testimonies, to quell a potential conflict between her son and her grandson, Adya summoned the former and declared: "these breasts fed you . . . to honor the milk you sucked out of them, I demand that you renounce your claim to Aamadu Aamadu's throne." In a society where submission to maternal authority was of the utmost importance, Allay Sēku had no choice but to comply. Sanankoua, *Un empire peul au XIXe siècle*, 122–123.

[335] See Georges Bohas, Abderrahim Saguer, Bernard Salvaing, and Djamel Eddine Kouloughli (eds. and trans.), *L'inspiration de l'éternel: Éloge de Shékou Amadou, fondateur de l'empire peul du Macina, par Muhammad b. 'Alî Pereejo* (Brinon-sur-Sauldre: Grandvaux Vecmas, 2011).

it explicitly underscores her piety and knowledge. Women's education was common in the caliphate. School was mandatory for both free girls and boys. However, girls generally completed their schooling in a shorter time, in order to then submit to marital obligations. Some girls were occasionally able to pursue further training, and Wèlorè appears to have been among those. This may have been related to her enslaved status, which may have afforded her some relief from the stricter marital duties of free noblewomen, and allowed her to devote more time to studying.[336] According to Hampâté Bâ, Wèlorè trained in *usūl* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence) and attained hafiza status, having memorized the entirety of the Qur'an.

As a believer, Wèlorè would have devoted her energies towards seeking safety and retribution in the afterlife. Precisely, obedience to the caliph's temporal authority was highlighted as the prerequisite towards satisfying God's eternal authority, and as such, as a means of securing heaven.[337] The writings of Wèlorè's contemporary Nana Asma'u, the scholar-poet and daughter of Sokoto Caliphate founder Usman Dan Fodio, shed light on the kind of oral and written literature Wèlorè might have derived her ethics from—or might have produced herself. As previously noted, Sokoto and Hamdallahi bore similarities. Though the polities' relationship eventually grew tense, the circulations of travelers, scholars, manuscripts, words and ideas circulating across Muslim Africa still bound the two spaces. It is not impossible that Wèlorè might have read, or listened to, some of Nana Asma'u works of literature

[336] Interview with Adam Thiam, 18 october 2018.

[337] In fact, Nobili argues that Seeku Aamadu fused his temporal and religious authority under a "triple-layered authority," at once political, temporal and spiritual. See Nobili, *Sultan, Caliph, and the Renewer of the Faith*, 107-114.

and orature, including her poem *Be sure of God's Truth*, an injunction of obedience towards temporal rulers as a means of pleasing God:

> No matter how pious you are,
> Nor how godly and saintly,
> Nor how profoundly learned,
> All who refuse to follow the commands of the Caliph
> Will be without excuse in Hereafter[338]

In Wèlorè's relationship with Seeku Aamadu, piety and intimacy might have thus fused as tenuous spaces of safety, which she used to negotiate fleeting freedoms in the now and eternal freedom in the hereafter, both for herself and her future children.[339]

Conclusion

When placed at the center of the analysis, the short archival fragment on Wèlorè no longer appears as marginal to the Hamdallahi oral archive. Instead, Wèlorè emerges as a central figure of Hamdallahi, key to the caliphate's self-fashioning.[340] Indeed, in the caliphate's portrayal of itself as a legitimate Islamic state, and of Seeku Aamadu as a rightful Muslim ruler, piety and religious

[338] Mack and Boyd, *One Woman's Jihad,* 39.

[339] On elites' appeal to piety and submission to God to maintain oppressive social structures, see Esseissah, "Paradise is Under the Feet of your Master."

[340] My thinking here is influenced by Ann McDougall's interpretation of Fatma Barka, a woman she interviewed in Morocco in the 1990s. Barka had been born around 1900-1910, and taken into slavery in Morocco by a man named Mohamed. She was his concubine. Upon analyzing Fatma's interpretation of, and arguments about, her own life history and of that of Mohamed, McDougall notes: "To the extant that we can see Mohamed Barka through Fatma's eyes and voice, he emerges as the epitome of that 'Muslim man of benevolence.' And to the extent that she lends tone and depth to that picture of him, she gives shape and permanence to her own role within the creation of his authority." McDougall, "A Sense of Self: the Life of Fatma Barka," 21.

knowledge were cardinal values.[341] Seeku Aamadu clearly harbored deep attachment towards Wèlorè—Hampâté Bâ asserts it twice, calling her his "right-hand woman" and "confidante"—and at least part of this attachment was rooted in taste and touch. The erasure of all facets of Wèlorè's personhood save for her piety and religious knowledge, the decision to bury her next to the caliphate's elites, and the stripping of Seeku Aamadu's sensuous appeal towards her, are consistent with Hamdallahi's self-narratives. Wèlorè served as a vessel for Hamdallahi to simultaneously uphold gendered class oppression, demonstratively perform compassion and magnanimity towards those not afforded societal protection, and manufacture a hagiographic rendering of Seeku Aamadu.[342]

By 1862, less than five decades after its revolutionary founding, the caliphate that Seeku Aamadu had painstakingly built in the Inland Niger Delta would be destroyed. Ironically, the destruction would occur at the hands of another Fulani Muslim ruler, who levelled a charge of apostasy Hamdallahi: he deemed them bad Muslims, like Hamdallahi had done to the Jenne scholars and others to justify their revolution. The next two chapters explore the conflict between the two Fulani Muslim theocracies, and the ripples it would engender all the way into the twentieth century, as European conquest and colonialism unfurled.

As for Wèlorè, the available record remains silent about the kinship ties she built and nurtured with others, outside of hierarchical relations. After she died, as the custom demanded, other women

[341] Besides Wèlorè, the only other woman granted the honor of being buried in Seeku Aamadu's compound was Mariam Batuuli, a learned woman who ran a Qur'anic school and cared for orphans. Sanankoua, *Un empire peul au XIXe siècle*, 91.

[342] This strategy mirrors another decision the caliphate made: forcefully conscripting riimayɓe for war, while providing them a portion of the booty. According to the second caliph of Hamdallahi, the booty sharing was aimed to "prove to the riimayɓe that we treat them on equal footing when they share our pains and struggles. In this manner, even freed, they will remain our loyal siblings." Hampâté Bâ and Daget, *L'empire peul du Macina*, 280.

would have cared for her, washed her, and wrapped her in a white cloth. Men would have then taken over, digging the earth, praying over her body, and laying her to rest. Those among the mourners who could not contain their tears would have been gently reprimanded, and reminded of believers' obligation to resign themselves to God's will. Perhaps one of her friends murmured her name and promised herself she would compose Wèlorè a poem.

She prayed, and persevered:
Generous, joyous,
Endurant, and tolerant.
I sing my sorrow.
My heart's heaviness,
Fuels the wells in my eyes.
Water flows through the wells,
Flooding for women,
Who have left this world.
–Nana Asma'u, *A Lament for Zaharatu* (Fulfulde), Sokoto, 1857[343]

[343] Nana Asma'u, and Christiane Owusu-Sarpong, Jean Boyd , and Beverly Mack (trans.), "Elégie pour Zaharatu," in Sutherland-Addy, Diaw, Miller and Owusu-Sarpong (eds.), *Des femmes écrivent l'Afrique*, 195-196.

Figure 12. Pictured above: The grave of Wèlorè. Pictured below: The graves of Seeku Aamadu, his son Aamadu Seeku, and his counselor Alfa Nuhum Tahiru.
Hamdallahi, Mali. Courtesy of Alexandre Magot.

Figure 13. Ruins of the caliphate's surrounding wall. Hamdallahi, Mali. Courtesy of Alexandre Magot.

PART TWO: **REMEMBERING**

1862-1958

A term often used for colonialism, *jonyajuru*, literally means the "rope" or "debt" of slavery, suggesting that people became in effect the "slaves" of the French, to whom they owed their lives. This debt would be repaid through taxes, or *nisongo* (soul price). Solo Sanogo noted: "They imposed *nisongo* on our people. They called it the price of one's soul because when the French had come and saved us from the other invaders, we owed them our lives."
–Brian Peterson, "History, Memory, and the Legacy of Samori in Southern Mali"[344]

[344] Brian Peterson, "History, Memory, and the Legacy of Samori in Southern Mali, c. 1880-1898," *Journal of African History* 49 (2008): 261-79.

CHAPTER FOUR

Between Fuuta and the Delta, Between Jihad and Colonization: Mobility in the Liminal World of Mamadu Caam (1862-1930s)

In the Fall of 1946, Mamadu Caam received a letter. On the white envelope framed with blue stripes—a staple piece of French stationery—the postage stamp bore the effigy of colonial administrator Félix Eboué, with the mention "*Premier resistant de l'Empire* (Empire's Foremost Freedom Fighter)" (see Figure 14.) Inscribed in Arabic on top of the envelope were details about the sender, Ceerno Baba Caam in Matam (Senegal) and recipient, Ceerno Mamadu Caam in Mopti (French Soudan).[345] The letter itself was also written in Arabic. After warm greetings, Ceerno Baba confirmed receipt of a package Ceerno Mamadu had mailed him, expressing delight at the "beautiful cloth" it contained. He continued with numerous blessings, asked for news of the Mopti Caam household, and confirmed that in Matam everyone was in good health. He concluded by enjoining Ceerno Mamadu to take care of his dwelling and kin, and above all to continue to honor "the victor who opened what had been closed." This last reference may not have been legible to any reader, but would have been obvious to any disciple initiated into the Tijaniyya *tarīqa* (Sufi brotherhood).[346] It was a reference to the prophet Muhammad, used as the opening verse of the *Ṣalāt al-Fātiḥ* (Salutation of the Victor), a keystone litany that members of the Tijaniyya recite daily.[347]

[345] Ceerno Mamadu Caam Papers, 17 September 1946: Letter from Semme (Matam region), Senegal.

[346] The Salutation of the Victor is one of several prayers that make up the Tijani litany, which Tijani disciples recite at specific times, in addition to their five daily prayers. For the litany of Tijani prayers see Louis Brenner, *West African Sufi. The Religious Heritage and Spiritual Search of Cerno Bokar Salif Taal* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 193-4.

[347] The Salutation of the Victor:

The two men corresponding in the letter were paternal cousins, and had by that point been living apart for decades. The significance of the connection between the Caam households of Senegal and Soudan, goes beyond their shared name and use of Tijani idioms. Instead, it points to the transitional nature of the era they were living in, their lives straddling two overlapping epochs marked by distinct worldmaking political projects: the nineteenth-century jihad and state-building of Tijani warrior-scholar El Hajj Umar Taal; and the twentieth-century French colonization of West Africa.

Set in this transitional world, this chapter explores the cross-temporal and cross-territorial threads that ran through the life of Ceerno Mamadu Caam, a West African scholar and trader. Caam was born in the Fuuta Tooro region of the Senegal River on the eve of colonization, and settled in the Niger Delta region of what had become the French colony of Soudan by the 1930s. The first section lays out the jihad of El Hajj Umar Taal, a Tijani scholar and warriot from Fuuta Tooro, whose conquest ushered in the fall of the Caliphate of Hamdallahi, in the Niger Delta region, in 1862. The second section analyzes the trans-Atlantic developments that led to gradual French colonial encroachment of Senegambia and West African hinterland in the second half of the nineteenth century, in the long wake of the Haitian revolution. The third section zooms in on Fuuta Tooro, from the colonial invasion to World War I, to analyze the upbringing and migrations of Mamadu Caam. Growing up in a Fuutaŋke Tijani community, Caam was raised amidst remembrances of the Umarian jihad, yet also had to navigate the world around him as a French colonial subject. Caam left Fuuta and

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلى سيِّدنا مُحَمَّد الفَاتِحِ لِمَا أُغْلِق والخَاتِمِ لِمَا سَبَقَ نَاصِرِ الْحَقِّ
بالْحَقِّ والْهَادِي إلى صِراطِكَ المُسْتَقِيم وعَلى آلِهِ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ ومِقْدَارِهِ الْعَظِيمِ
"O God, bless our master Muhammad, who opened what had been closed; who sealed what had gone before; who ascertains the truth through the truth; and who guides to Your straight path. Bless his family in accordance with his rank and tremendous grandeur."

migrated for years, eventually settling in the Soudan's Niger Delta, in the very region that the caliphate of Hamdallahi once ruled over, and where Umar Taal perished. The bustling city of Mopti, an inland port city and commercial hub of the colonial economy, where Caam settled and made a living as a trader, is the focus of the chapter's final section.

Figure 14. Ceerno Baba Caam's letter to Ceerno Mamadu Caam, 17 September 1946.

The Jihad of El Hajj Umar Taal and the Fuutaŋke Invasion of the Delta

In 1862 in the Niger Delta, the troops of El Hajj Umar Taal entered Hamdallahi, following a seven-days long battle at Cayawal.[348] The caliphate was a young state that Seeku Aamadu, a local Fulani

[348] David Robinson, *The Holy War of Umar Tall* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 295-6.

scholar and his followers had founded merely fifty years prior, after successfully leading an Islamic revolution in the Delta.[349] During the era of Hamdallahi's hegemony in the region, another Islamic polity began expanding from territories further west and closer to the Atlantic coast, led by Umar Taal, a Tijani scholar from Fuuta Toro (northern Senegal). Starting in 1852, Taal led his followers through an armed jihad throughout West Africa, attacking non-Muslim communities as well as Muslims whom he accused of apostasy.[350] Taal's 1862 invasion of the Hamdallahi Caliphate—his final conquest prior to his death—arguably stands as the most controversial aspect of his jihad. First, the conflict appeared hardly justifiable in light of the Islamic precepts Taal himself proselytized, as the Hamdallahi leaders had built an ostensibly Islamic state governed through Islamic law. Moreover, the Fuutaŋke and Maasinaŋke (the Fulani communities of Fuuta Toro and the Niger Delta, respectively) boasted a shared Fulani language and cultural heritage.[351] Why, then, did they enter into conflict, and how did this conflict shape the Delta region at the dawn of European colonization?

Umar Taal was born around 1796 in the town of Halwar, Fuuta Toro, within a tooroɓɓe family—a clerical Islamic class of northern Senegal.[352] Around 1820, Umar Taal was initiated into the

[349] Around 1512, Fulani leader Koli Teŋella conquered the former Mali empire's Takrūr kingdom, establishing Fuuta Tooro under a line of Deeniyaŋkooɓe rulers—one of several West African states that the Fulani established between the sixteenth and nineteenth century. These states include Fuuta Jallon, Fuuta Bundu, Maasina, and the Sokoto Caliphate. In Fuuta Tooro, the Deeniyaŋkooɓe eventually collapsed in the eighteenth century, in the wake of the tooroɓɓe Islamic revolution.

[350] The Fuutaŋke are a primarily Muslim, Fulani-speaking people of Fuuta Tooro, in northern Senegal. Amadou Hampâté Bâ defined the Fuutaŋke as a "West African people, living for the most part in Senegal and Guinea (in the ancient Fuuta Tooro kingdom.) They are not an ethnic group, but rather a homogenous cultural ensemble, Islamicized and fulophone, i.e. pulaar-speaking." Amadou Hampâté Bâ, *Vie et enseignement de Tierno Bocar, le sage de Bandiagara* (Paris: Points, 2014 orig. 1957).

[351] According to Amadou Hampâté Ba, Maasina's elites were in fact descendants of old Fuuta Toro communities that had migrated to Maasina. See Hampâté Ba and Daguet, *L'empire peul du Masina*, 235. Hampâté Ba discusses this as part of his narration of a Maasina oral tradition, evidently apocryphal, which recounts the two stays of a young Umar Taal in Hamdallahi, on his way to, and back from, the Hijaz.

[352] The tooroɓɓe were a class of Fuuta Tooro scholars and clerics, educated in Islamic science and law. In 1776 tooroɓɓe cleric Sileymaan Baal's led a revolution to establish a theocracy in Fuuta Tooro. Beyond his desire to

Tijaniyya, a Muslim tariqa (Sufi order) which had originated in the Algerian Sahara in the eighteenth century, characterized by practices of communal devotional prayers, and a tradition of travel in the pursuit of knowledge and religious education.[353] As Taal traveled and underwent religious education in several cities in West Africa, he increasingly acquired a reputation throughout the Western and Central Sahel as an erudite scholar. In the late 1820s, Taal undertook a lengthy journey across the Sahara to perform the hajj in Mecca, stopping along the way in Sahelian Islamic learning hubs, including Sokoto and Borno, and producing his own growing body of scholarship. In the Hejaz, where he arrived in 1827 and stayed for two years in Mecca and Medina, Taal was named khalifa (deputy) of the Tijaniyya for all of West Africa.[354]

Upon returning to the region after his hajj, he settled along with a growing body of followers in the town of Dinguiray, Fuuta Jallo (Guinea). The local ruler who had initially granted him and his community land and patronage grew increasingly weary of Taal's expanding Tijani community, leading to an open conflict in 1852. Taal's military victory and conquest of part of Fuuta Jallo marked the official beginning of his jihad, an armed struggle to defend Muslim communities and expand the realm

consolidate Islamic rule in the region, one Baal's chief aspirations was to put an end to the tax-levying and frequent slave raids that neighboring White Moorish clans from Bilād Shinqīt (today's Mauritania) imposed upon Fuuta Tooro. Following Baal's successful revolution, Abdul Qadiri Kan was elected almaami (leader) of the new Fuuta Tooro theocracy. Kan's short reign was marked by multiple conflicts with Wolof states to the South, Moorish clans in the North, and increasing French penetration, until his eventual defeat in 1807. See Kane, *La première hégémonie peule*, 26.

[353] Travel in pursuit of religious education is not merely characteristic of the Tijaniyya, but many Muslimn communities. The Tijaniyya was founded by *shaykh* Aḥmad al-Tijāni . On the Tijaniyah's history, see David Robinson and Jean-Louis Triaud, *La Tijâniyya. Une confrérie musulmane à la conquête de l'Afrique*, (Paris, Karthala: 2005); and Zachary Wright, *Realizing Islam: The Tijaniyya in North Africa and the Eighteenth-Century Muslim World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020).

[354] Brenner, *West African Sufi,* 18.

of Islam.[355] Taal pursued his jihad, and by the 1860s, consolidated a dominion that expanded across West Africa, through swaths of today's Senegal, Mali, and Guinea. In the Niger Delta, the non-Muslim Bamana state of Segu, and the Hamdallahi Caliphate, both wary of Taal's expansionism, entered an unlikely alliance against him, which ultimately proved unsuccessful. In 1861, El Hajj Umar Taal conquered Segu, and on May 17th, 1862, following a siege and a victorious battle against Maasinaŋke troops, he entered Hamdallahi.[356]

[355] Ly-Tall, *Un islam militant en Afrique de l'Ouest au XIXe siècle,* 128-132.

[356] Robinson, *The Holy War of Umar Tall*, 297.

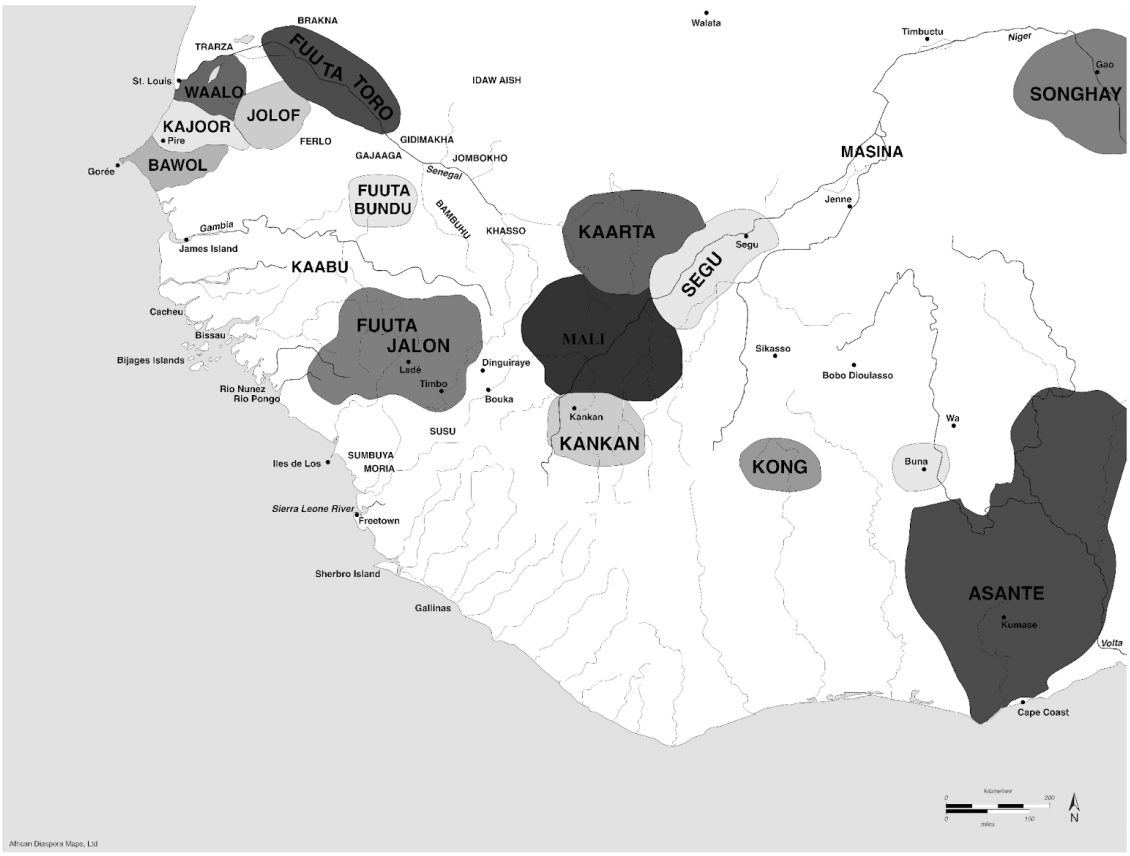

Figure 15. West African States, including Fuuta Tooro, Maasina (Hamdallahi), and Segu, c. 1795[357]

From its inception, the Fuutanke-Maasinanke conflict generated much scholarly attention, arguments, and debates, including from the main protagonists: Umar Taal and Aamadu Aamadu, third caliph of Hamdallahi and grandson of Seeku Aamadu. Umar Taal's invasion of Hamdallahi, a state that explicitly defined itself as an Islamic theocracy, seemed at odds with his own rhetoric of only waging his jihad to protect the realm of Islam against non-believers. Indeed, in his own body of work, Taal had forcefully argued against intra-Islamic conflict. In the 1830s, while traveling through the Fezzan on his way back to West Africa from the Hijaz, Taal had learned of a conflict between the neighboring Islamic states of Sokoto and Borno. In response, he had composed the *Tadhkirat*

[357] Lovejoy, *Jihād in West Africa during the Age of Revolutions*. Courtesy of Henry B. Lovejoy, African Diaspora Maps Ltd.

al-ghāfilīn ʿan qubḥ ikhtilāf al-muʾminīn (A Reminder to the Negligent on the Ugliness of Discord among Believers), a lengthy manuscript vindicating unity among Muslim communities, and leveling a severe charge against conflict between their leaders.[358] Decades later, how, then, did Taal justify his own attack on Hamdallahi, despite the striking parallel it bore with the Sokoto-Borno conflict? In a series of letters exchanged with Aamadu Aamadu from the mid-1850s onwards—when Taal began laying claims upon the Niger Delta,— and in one of his lengthiest works, *Bayān mā waqaʿa baynanā wa bayna amīr al-Māsina Aḥmad ibn Aḥmad* (Regarding What Happened between Myself and Amadu Amadu, Emir of Maasina), Taal laid out his rationale. The legal argument he constructed revolved around the question of Islamic authority and legitimacy: according to him, Hamdallahi was not a legitimate Islamic polity, nor could Aamadu Aamadu be considered an authority on Islamic matters.[359] Taal argued that Aamadu Aamadu's knowledge of Islam was scant, that Hamdallahi's elite was morally and intellectually bankrupt, and that Hamdallahi's alliance with the non-Muslims Bamanan State of Segu against him effectively rendered them apostates.[360] Against Aamadu Aamadu's claim that Taal had no ties to—therefore no political legitimacy to rule in—the Delta region, Taal countered that his legitimacy as a religious scholar and leader prevailed over Aamadu Aamadu's political claims. Eventually, in 1862, Taal besieged and attacked Hamdallahi, securing victory in the final battle of

[358] Amir Syed, "Al-Hajj Umar Tal and the Realm of the Written: Mastery, Mobility and Islamic Authority in nineteenth Century West Africa" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2017), 100-110.

[359] Ironically, as discussed in chapter 2, the claim of Islamic legitimacy was precisely the premise upon which Hamdallahi's founder and first caliph, Seeku Aamadu, had consolidated his rule and quelled opponents. To solidify his claims to legitimacy, Seeku Aamadu had his counselor Alfa Nuhum Tahiru craft a forged historical chronicle, the *Tarikh al-Fattash*..

[360] For a lengthy analysis of the arguments Taal deployed, see Syed, "Al-Hajj Umar Tal and the Realm of the Written," 181-212.

Cayawal, in which some 30,000 Maasinaŋke troops and 10,000 Fuutaŋke troops perished.[361] Aamadu Aamadu, who had been wounded in the battle, was evacuated and killed a few days later under obscure circumstances.

Despite his victory, Taal's decision to attack Maasina ultimately cost him his life. After the fall of Hamdallahi in 1862, Taal settled in the region to fend off attacks from Maasina opponents and consolidate the conquest. Yet in February 1864, a coalition of Maasina and Timbuktu loyalists defeated the Fuutaŋke troops near the town of Bandiagara, and Taal vanished, likely killed, in a cave in the nearby Degembere cliffs. Taal's sons and nephew—Ahmadu Sheku in Segu, Muntaga in Nioro, and Tijani in Bandiagara,—painstakingly maintained his dominion until the 1890s.

Overall, Taal's campaigns left a long-lasting impact on the regions he conquered, particularly the Delta. They triggered widespread death, insecurity, displacements and enslavements. Thus, an estimated 22,000 people were made captive during the conquest of Segu and repression of subsequent revolts.[362] The jihad also contributed to profound socio-cultural changes through the spread of Tijani networks and Fuutaŋke settlers who formed communities in conquered areas. The town of Nioro in Kaarta, formerly Massassi (non-Muslim Bamanan rulers) grew considerably to become "an important political, military, and commercial center of Islam."[363] Moreover, whereas the Qadiriyya had previously been the prevalent Sufi tariqa in the Delta, in the twentieth century, Tijani leaders such as Shaykh

[361] Robinson, *The Holy War of Umar Tall*, 297.

[362] Martin Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 51.

[363] John Hanson and David Robinson, *After the Jihad: the Reign of Ahmad al-Kabīr in the Western Sudan* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1991), 5. On Kaarta after the invasion, see John Hanson, *Migration, Jihad, and Muslim Authority in West Africa. The Futanke Colonies in Karta* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

Hamallah in Nioro, and Ceerno Bokar Taal in Bandiagara, amassed considerable followings.[364] Upon entering Hamdallahi, Taal had declared that the dominion he had built now expanded "from Timbuktu to Fuuta."[365] His victorious assessment however, failed to account for global developments, as gradual European encroachment was rapidly changing the political setting of West Africa.

French Colonial Conquest and Surveillance of Itinerant Muslims in French West Africa

In the first decade of the nineteenth century, following the 1803 sale of the Louisiana territory, the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), and costly Napoleonic wars (1803-1815), France was bankrupt, and started showing interest in the potential that the Senegambia's alluvial plains, including in the Fuuta Toro, held for cash crop production.[366] In 1817, Julien-Désiré Schmaltz, familiar with the Dutch East Indies where he had previously worked, was appointed governor of France's Senegal colony—then mainly consisting of forts and trading posts in Gorée and Saint-Louis. Schmaltz's main task was to revive gum arabic and gold exports in the region. As soon as he took office, he also started designing plans for cotton, coffee, and sugar production in the Senegal River valley, with the support of the Ministry of Maritime Affairs. The Minister himself, Pierre-Victor Malouet, was a former Saint-Domingue planter.[367] Schmaltz's plans ultimately failed, due to environmental unsuitability and

[364] Hamadou Boly, "Le Soufisme au Mali du XIXe siècle à nos jours. Religion, politique et société" (PhD. Diss.: Université de Strasbourg, 2013). On Ceerno Bokar, see Amadou Hampâté Bâ: *Vie et enseignement de Tierno Bokar, Le sage de Bandiagara* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1980) and Louis Brenner, *West African Sufi: The Religious Heritage and Spiritual Search of Cerno Bokar Saalif Taal* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1984).

[365] Robinson, *The Holy War of Umar Tall*, 297.

[366] Ly-Tall, *Un islam militant en Afrique de l'Ouest au XIXe siècle*, 49. On the profit that bourgeois French mercantile families derived from Saint Domingue, see C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins*. *Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989 orig. 1938).

[367] Ibid, 49-50.

political resistance from several Fuuta leaders. Still, France kept intensifying its territorial expansion eastward toward the Niger river valley, through military conquest and the extension of treaties offering protectorates as a hedge against British or other influence. In the years following the 1885 Berlin treaty, France staked a claim to a great swath of territory of the Sahara and Sahelian West Africa, as well as coastal territories. By the early twentieth century, France's eight West African colonies were unified as the *Afrique Occidentale Française* (French West Africa) federation, with the French Soudan (colonial Mali) at its center.

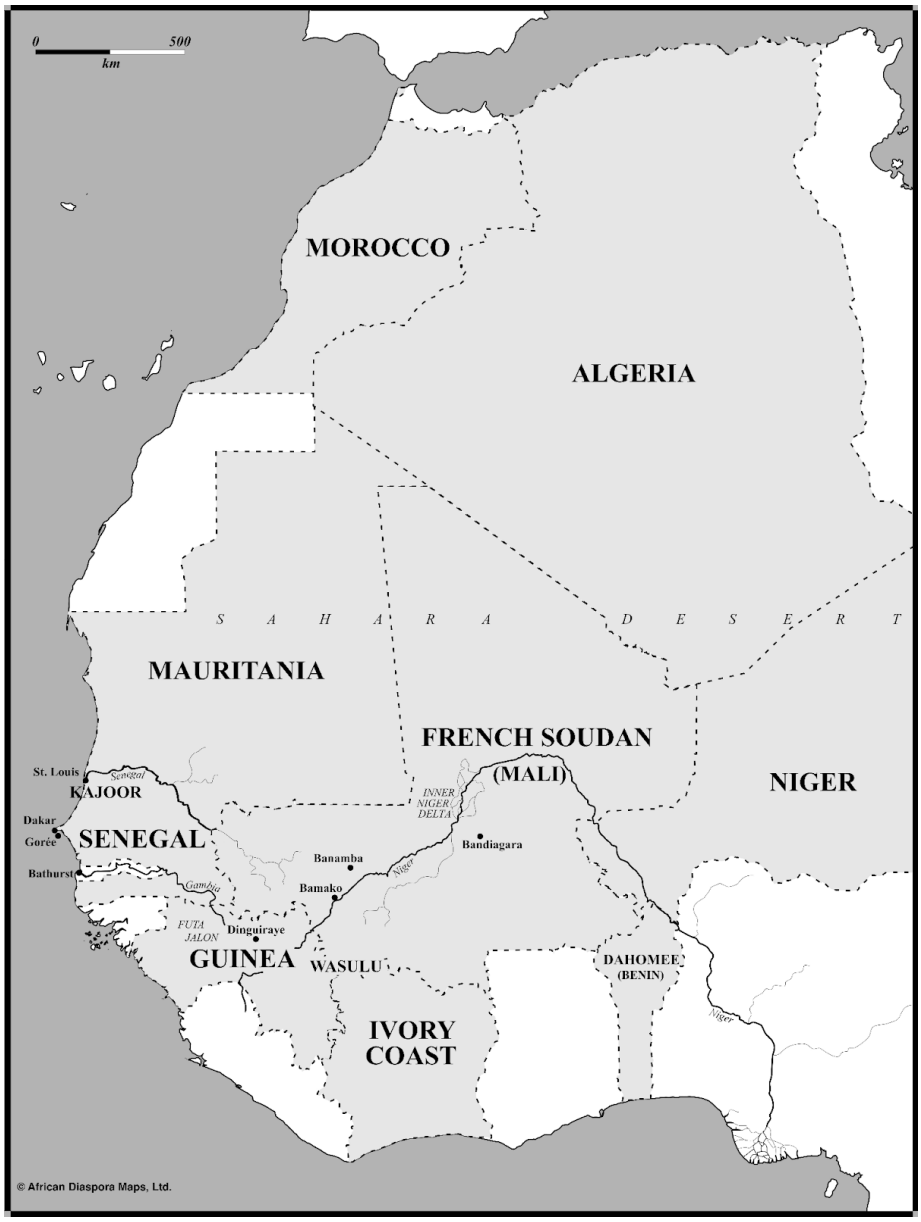

Figure 16. French West Africa, with the Soudan and Inland Niger Delta at the center[368]

In the course of the conquest, the French contended with several African states and leaders who hindered their progression, including Umar Taal, with whom they occasionally clashed, and who

[368] Martin Klein, "The End of Slavery in French West Africa," in Hideaki Suzuki, ed., *Abolitions as a Global Experience* (National University of Singapore Press, 2016), 200. Courtesy of Henry B. Lovejoy, African Diaspora Maps Ltd.

disrupted French trading posts.[369] In an 1855 letter to the French Minister of Maritime Affairs, Senegal Governor-General Louis Faidherbe called Taal "a fanatic Negro who nurtured his hatred of Christians in Mecca."[370] Faidherbe warned that French "influence and trading activities" in the region risked being "annihilated" due to Taal's wars.[371] Faidherbe's words reflect France's deep suspicion towards Muslim leaders and anxieties regarding their potential ability to foment revolts, which largely had roots in the colonization of Algeria.[372] Thus in the three decades following Taal's death in 1864, the French kept tracking down and fighting his heirs and followers, ultimately dismantling what remained of his dominion.[373]

This legacy of suspicion towards Islam nurtured a culture of colonial surveillance, and triggered forms of governance geared towards placating Muslims subjects. Thus, from the late nineteenth

[369] Several Muslim leaders led armed conflicts in mid-to-late nineteenth century West Africa, such as El Hajj Umar Taal, Mamadu Lamin Drame, or Samori Ture, which to varying degrees hindered the French colonial encroachment. Rather than explicitly anti-colonial, these movements were reformist or expansionist in nature. On Mamadu Lamin Dramé see Abdoulaye Bathily, "Mamadou Lamine Dramé et la résistance anti-impérialiste dans le Haut-Sénégal (1885-1887)," *Notes africaines* no. 125 (January 1970), 20-32. On Samori Ture campaigns see Yves Person, *Samori: Une Révolution Dyula*, 3 vols. (Dakar: IFAN, 1968–1975) ; Brian J. Peterson, *Islamization from Below: the making of Muslim communities in rural French Sudan*, 1880–1960 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 40–56 ; Soumaïla Sanoko, *Le Royaume du Kénédougou, 1825–1898* (Bamako, Mali: La Nouvelle Imprimerie Bamakoise, 2010). On the memory and impact of Samori's wars and slavery, see Marie Rodet, "Mémoires de l'esclavage dans la région de Kayes: Histoire d'une disparition," *Cahiers d'études africaines 197* (2010), 263–291 and Marie Rodet, *The Diambourou: Slavery and Emancipation in Kayes—Mali* (2014).

[370] Ly-Tall, *Un islam militant en Afrique de l'Ouest au XIXe siècle*, 416.

[371] Ibid.

[372] France either repressed the activities and influence of Muslim leaders, or sought to quell their potential opposition by granting them perfunctory governance roles. These two orientations were each illustrated in the French attitudes towards two of El Hajj Umar Taal's sons. While the administration named Agibu king of Bandiagara (an honorific title which did not carry actual power), they chased Ahmadu out Segu and Nioro. On French attitudes towards African Muslim religious leaders, see Cheikh Anta Babou, *Fighting the Greater Jihad. Amadu Bamba and he Founding of the Muridiyya of Senegal*, 1853-1913 (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007); David Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation. Muslim Societies and French Colonial Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880-1920* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000).

[373] Upon being defeated by the French in the conquest of Segu, Taal's son Ahmadu Sheku first retreated in Nioro, then fled towards the East. He himself settled in Sokoto, but a number of his followers eventually reached the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, and some settled in Mecca. See Robinson, "The Umarian Emigration of the Late Nineteenth Century," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 20, no. 2 (1987): 245-270.

century onwards, the colonial administration either surveilled, co-opted, or sought to control, West African Muslims. These practices coalesced into formal policy through the creation of the Muslim Affairs bureau, which governor-general Ernest Roume established in 1905-6.[374] Starting in 1911, Roume's successor William Merlaud-Ponty, also launched the construction of a vast and detailed repertoire of thousands of individual surveillance files tracking the movement of itinerant Muslims—ranging from leading Sufi scholars to modest Quran school teachers to marginalized mystics.[375] According to Ponty's instructions, each surveillance file was to track, at minimum, the "family, ethnic, and religious origins, wealth, employment status, relationships, and travels" of targetted African Muslim men.[376] Because these men circulated throughout and beyond the territories the French administered, by 1918, the administration also sought to establish identity cards for all indigenous mobility, both as a form of control and a way to generate cash through the imposition of issuance dues.[377] The systematization of identity cards for itinerant subjects ended up proving largely unsuccessful, as most mobilities escaped colonial control.[378]

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[374] Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation,* 39.

[375] ANS 19G1, 15 January 1913: Surveillance de l'Islam—Répertoire du prosélytisme islamique en Afrique Occidentale française. Ultimately, throughout the twentieth century, Muslim subjects were not the only ones to come under colonial suspicion or surveillance: so did many foreigners, or those deemed communist or pan-African agitators. See Kathleen Keller, *Colonial Suspects: Suspicion, Imperial Rule, and Colonial Society in Interwar French West Africa* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018).

[376] ANS 19G1, 15 January 1913: Surveillance de l'Islam—Répertoire du prosélytisme islamique en Afrique Occidentale française.

[377] ANS 21G 31, 27 March 1918: "Institution d'une carte d'identité pour les déplacements indigènes." The specifics of this policy—i.e. whether or not such cards should be mandatory, restricted to traders, or expanded to all itinerant subjects—were subject to much discussion between administrators, and was not applied uniformly across colonies. In the Soudan, starting August 1918, anyone traveling outside of their circle of origin was supposed to purchase and carry an identity card. By 1925, the issuance fees were increased. ANOM 61COL 156, 1st December 1925: "Présentation d'un arrêté du Lieutenant-Gouverneur du Soudan Français, modifiant l'arrêté local du 24 Avril 1918, instituant une carte d'identité pour les indigènes se déplaçant hors de leur circle d'origine."

[378] For instance, administration took little notice or interest in women's mobilities, which were nevertheless frequent. See Marie Rodet, *Les Migrantes Ignorées du Haut-Sénégal, 1900-1946* (Paris: Karthala, 2009). Eventually, in the

The surveillance files on itinerant African Muslims reflected colonial officers' skewed and reductive assessment of ordinary men. Each file included the officer's assessment of the subject's intelligence or lack thereof, shrewdness or lack of judgment, loyalty to the administration or seditious potential, etc. With the stroke of a pen, colonial administrators therefore affixed character and personality traits to men whose complex social, intellectual and intimate lives,—most of which evaded the gaze of the administration—they were not equipped to comprehend. The next section shifts the scale and perspective of analysis on such men. I look into Muslim mobilities and network building through the perspective and itinerary of a single Tijani scholar and trader from the Senegal colony, who settled in French Soudan following years of travels across West Africa, and left behind a paper trail.

Mamadu Caam (c. 1895-1971):[379] Itinerancy of a Fuutaŋke Ceerno and Merchant in AOF

Around the time the Umarian domain collapsed (1850-60s), and as French rule consolidated in West Africa, Mamadu Caam was born in the town of Oogo, in the eastern portion of Fuuta Tooro—his mother's first child and his father's last, born just a few months after the latter's death. Caam's life spanned the entire colonial period, and his travels and correspondence expanded across several French colonies in Africa including Senegal, Soudan, Guinea, Haute-Volta (Burkina-Faso), and Algeria. This section provides a brief biographical sketch I assembled through interviews with Caam's

post-World War II era of liberalization in the French empire, the administration launched an identity card programme. See Séverine Awenengo Dalberto, "La première carte d'identité d'Afrique occidental française (1946-1960) Identifier et s'identifier au Sénégal au temps de la citoyenneté impériale," *Annales HSS* vol. 75 no. 1 (2020): 113-151.

[379] Caam's exact birth date is not known. Various administrative papers include the following birth years: 1890, 1895, 1897. I have decided to settle with the middle year of the 1890s, to be understood as an approximation, rather than a certainty.

surviving relatives.[380] I analyze in their broader historical context his emigration from Fuuta as a teenager or young man; and his settlement in the Delta region of the Soudan where he married, started a family, and established himself as a scholar and trader. The analysis of Caam's biography and itinerary will then help lay the foundation for understanding his political choices in the era of decolonization.

Growing up in a clerical family at the turn of the century, Caam would have been raised amid remembrances of the Umarian jihad, in a context of growth of the Tijaniyya in Fuuta. Indeed, though Umar Taal and his followers had spread the Tijaniyya by pen and sword through other parts of West Africa in the 1840s-1860s, the tariqa had remained somewhat subdued in Taal's home region of Fuuta. However, in 1891 and 1893, as France completed the conquest of the Soudan, Governor Louis Archinard expelled some 15,000 Umarian settlers from the Soudan territory—primarily Nioro, but also Segu, Konyakari and other Fuutaŋke centers—towards Fuuta, in Senegal.[381] Known as the *fergaŋkoo*ɓ*e* (those who had emigrated to support the Umarian jihad), many among these returnees had been born in Fuuta, and others in Nioro. Their forced relocation was a traumatic event, the arduous journey on foot marked by death, starvation, disease, exhaustion, and exposure to wild animals and plunderers.[382] Those who did make it to Fuuta received an enthusiastic welcome, as they were perceived as having followed Taal's call, fought a righteous fight, and resisted the French as much as possible.[383] The settlement of tens of thousands of returnees thus led to Fuuta Tooro's emergence, at

[380] Aly Thiam, Saint-Louis, Senegal, 10 July 2018 ; Thierno Moustapha Thiam, Semme, Senegal, 12 July 2018; Amadou Thiam, Oumar Thiam, and Ousmane Thiam, Bamako, Mali 2 September 2018. Interviews by the author.

[381] Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, 158.

[382] Both colonial sources and oral accounts from Fuuta recorded the trauma of the fergaŋkooɓe's relocation. Mouhamed Moustapha Kane, "A History of Fuuta Tooro, 1890s-1920s: Senegal under colonial rule. The protectorate. (Volumes I and II)," PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1987), 105.

[383] Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, 157-8 ; and David Robinson, "The Umarian Emigration of the Late

the turn of the century, as a "vital foyer" of the Umarian Tijaniyya.[384] It is therefore in this newly colonized Fuuta environment, imbued with the faraway tales and Tijani teachings of the ferganjkooɓe returnees, that Mamadu Caam initiated his religious education.

Sometime during the years surrounding 1915, Caam emigrated from his village and home region. In interviews, his sons expressed uncertainty about the specific year or time period when he left the region. However, they all presented the reason for his departure as the pursuit of further religious training. In doing so, Caam would have followed a longstanding Islamic tradition of itinerant study under renowned teachers.[385] Lamin Sanneh has explained the importance of *safar* (travel) among West African Muslim clerical communities: "a scholar rarely finishes his education without having undertaken a rigorous, extensive travel regime that brings him into personal contact with important clerical centers and with their *barakah* (Arabic, blessing)."[386] In Fuuta, Caam's home region, an Islamic learning center is called a *dudal* (Pulaar, pl. *dude*). Through travel and study in specific clerical centers, scholars-in-training did not merely seek to acquire knowledge; they sought to acquire scholarly legitimacy, by associating themselves with specific scholars. Indeed, study under specific teachers granted trainees the backing of an *isnād*. As noted in chapter 1 with regards to Watara's self-introduction in his autobiography, an isnad is a sequential list of trustworthy transmitters of

Nineteenth Century," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* vol. 20, no. 2 (1987): 262.

[384] Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, 157.

[385] William A. Graham, "Traditionalism in Islam: an Essay in Interpretation," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* XXIII:3 (Winter 1993), 502.

[386] Lamin Sanneh. *Beyond Jihad: The Pacifist Tradition of West African Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 10.

religious prescriptions, which stood as a scholarly genealogy.[387] As the latest chain of an isnad, the trainee turned scholar received an *ijāza* (license) authorizing them to, in turn, pass on specific teachings, prayers or practices to trainees of their own. As I previously explained, the importance of safar, isnad, and ijaza had been key to Umar Taal himself in his spiritual and intellectual journey.[388] Thus to Caam, born into a clerical Tijani family of Fuuta Toro and raised amidst remembrances of Taal's teachings, emulating him would have been of the utmost importance.

Though his sons stress religious education as his main reason for leaving Fuuta, the global context of World War I might have also spurred the initial impetus for Caam's emigration. Indeed, in Fuuta Tooro the war led to food shortages and even famine, and the war effort involved conscriptions. As documented in colonial reports and local histories, both phenomena triggered outward migrations of young men.[389] In 1912, a law had established compulsory military service throughout French West Africa, with one yearly conscription.[390] After the war started, conscription occurred twice a year, and cast a wider net: while previously, only men between the ages of 18 and 28 could be drafted, starting in 1915, the window included those between the ages of 18 and 35.[391] Conscription bred desertion, and many young men fled to the north bank of the Senegal river, or to neighboring colonies, to evade

[387] It is worth noting that this was likely the reason why Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Watara, writing his autobiography in Kingston in 1834, cited the names of his teachers prior to that of his family. See chapter 1 of this dissertation.

[388] Syed, "Al-Hajj Umar Tal and the Realm of the Written," 45-6.

[389] While administrative correspondence describes the lack of food as a mere shortage, Mouhamed Moustapha Kane convincingly combines colonial records and local oral histories from the period to argue that the situation was in fact akin to famine. See Kane, "A History of Fuuta Tooro, 1890s-1920s," 419-420.

[390] Ibid, 285.

[391] Starting in 1915, France also increased the percentage of the population to be levied from two men per thousand inhabitants, to three men per thousand inhabitants. Kane, "A History of Fuuta Tooro, 1890s-1920s," 379 and 382.

war.[392] What's more, from 1912 to 1917, Fuuta experienced environmental calamities including "locust swarms, drought, grain and cattle diseases," which put a strain on available food resources.[393] Yet because of the war, the colonial administration needed additional revenue, and enacted tax increases as well as mandatory reimbursement for food relief programs they had implemented to assist people through the natural catastrophes. Thus in 1917, "despite one of the worst cattle epidemics that Fuuta Tooro ever experienced, along with the havoc caused by grain disease, a 50% tax increase was imposed."[394] As Mouhamed Moustapha Kane has argued, fiscal pressure combined with natural disasters culminated in full-fledged famine in Fuuta: oral histories from this era report people resorting to eating leaves and carcasses, or digging holes in ant-hills in search for food, due to the lack of grain.[395] Young people, particularly young men, emigrated *en masse* from the region to seek relief and revenue to send to their family.[396]

Whether Caam's emigration was initially triggered by the pursuit of religious education, by the threats of hunger and conscription, or by these two factors coalescing, remains unclear. What his family does know is that sometime in the few years before, during, or after World War I, Caam left his home region, never to resettle in Fuuta. He did seek and acquire additional spiritual training, as attested by his earning of the title of *Ceerno* at some point, in the course of this journey. In Fulani

[392] Ibid, 395-6.

[393] Ibid, 399-400 and 416-7.

[394] Ibid, 399.

[395] Ibid, 419.

[396] Ibid, 422. The famine was not limited to Fuuta. Amadou Hampate Ba also describes scenes of famine and mass death he witnessed as a child in the Niger Delta in 1913-4. See Amadou Hampâté Bâ, *Amkoullel, l'enfant peul. Mémoires* (I) (Arles: Actes sud, 1991).

environments, a ceerno is a scholar learned in Islamic law, who can "administer justice, lead prayer, and teach the children."[397] While I was not able to parse details about the specifics of his itinerary, including which teachers Caam studied under, his sons recalled some of the cities they knew him to have sojourned in. First, he traveled to other cities in Senegal, including Podor and Saint Louis. Then, he left the Senegal territory altogether and journeyed through other colonies, including Bobo Juulaso (Upper Volta), and Kayes, Segu, Nioro, Sofara, and Bandiagara (Soudan).[398] Caam's descendants in Mali and Senegal also could not provide a specific estimate of the time he spent in each locale, though they conveyed their sense that the journey lasted many years. Discussing the fuzzy chronology of the scholarly journey of an earlier Fuutaŋke scholar named Cerno Amadu Mukhtar Sakho (c. 1867-1934), Ibrahima-Abou Sall explained that in Fuuta Tooro, "where religious education is an ancient and widespread practice, one may encounter disciples who remained with the same teacher for several years, some even for the rest of their life."[399] In Sakho's case, Sall ultimately estimated that his training might have lasted between thirteen and eighteen years. It is thus entirely plausible that Caam's journey throughout West African learning centers, in the course of which he became a ceerno, lasted several years and even over a decade.

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[397] Kane, *La première hégémonie peule*, 508.

[398] Upper Volta was the colonial name of today's Burkina-Faso. I believe it is also likely that Caam also spent time in Mauritania, as the north bank of the Senegal River (which today divides northern Senegal and southern Mauritania) was considered to be part of Fuuta, prior to France's colonial creation of Mauritania (and the redrawing of the colonial border with the Soudan in the 1940s). Both banks of the Senegal river, which forms the official border between Senegal and Mauritania, retain strong cultural bonds to this day. On the partition of the Fuuta Tooro territory under French colonization, see Kane, "A History of Fuuta Tooro," 147-216. Many scholars resided on the north bank, and established learning centers there.

[399] Ibrahima-Abou Sall, "Cerno Amadu Mukhtar Sakho Qadi supérieur de Boghe (1905-1934) Fuuta Toro," in *Le temps des marabouts. Itinéraires et stratégies islamiques en Afrique occidentale française v. 1880-1960*, ed. David Robinson and Jean-Louis Triaud (Paris: Karthala, 1997), 221-245.

When he first reached the Delta region of the Soudan, settling in Bandiagara, Caam married one Maimuna Tala, with whom he had a daughter, Kadel. After some years, Tala passed away. Caam remarried, but his second wife also died shortly after their marriage.[400] His third wife, Fatumata (Kumba) Bari (c. 1915-2013) was his deceased second wife's cousin, about twenty years his junior. Together, they had eight children born between 1938 and 1957, two of whom died before reaching adulthood. By 1931, Caam was settled in Mopti, where he remained for the next four decades, until his death.[401] In Mopti, he sustained his growing family as a trader, shipping various commodities, including amber and cloth to clients throughout AOF. Though Caam was a trained scholar and by then a ceerno, his commercial undertakings made sense in the context of the colonial economy, particularly of the interwar era. Indeed the French colonization deeply disrupted the economic structure of the Soudan, forcing many to seek new sources of sustenance. As Louis Brenner highlighted, because religious education no longer provided sufficient means to maintain sustenance and pay colonial taxes, "many teachers and scholars found it necessary to abandon their studies and seek their livelihoods in other ways," often resorting to commerce.[402] Even regardless of the particular conjecture of the early colonial era, Muslim scholars in West Africa had for centuries supplemented their livelihoods through trading activities. Mopti, where Caam opted to eventually settle following years of travels, offered the perfect setting for his commercial ventures.

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[400] Caam's second wife was an older sister of Obbo Barri. For more on Obbo Barri see Adame Ba Konaré, *Dictionnaire des femmes célèbres du Mali (des temps mythico-légendaires au 26 Mars 1991) précédé d'une analyse sur le rôle et l'image de la femme dans l'histoire du Mali* (Bamako: Editions Jamana, 1993), 184.

[401] I have not determined with certainty the specific year when Caam settled in Mopti. The earliest letter from his set of papers that is addressed to him in Mopti dates from 1931, which I have decided to use as a starting point.

[402] Brenner, *West African Sufi*, 37; Louis Brenner, ed., *Muslim identity and social change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 61.

Soudan's Venice: Mopti, an Inland Port in the Colonial Economy

By the 1930s, the city of Mopti had grown under colonial impetus into a major center of the Soudan's economy, carrying on the centuries-long tradition of commerce and Atlantic-Saharan brokerage of the Niger Delta region. Unlike more storied cities of the Sahel such as Segu, Jenne, Timbuktu, or Gao, Mopti only grew into a major urban area in the twentieth century, under colonization. Prior to that, Mopti (then named Saga by Bozo fishermen) had been a small fishing and trading settlement built on a knoll.[403] When René Caillié journeyed through the region in 1827-8, he described it as a village of seven or eight hundred people, and noted the "great quantity of dried fish, an item in which the inhabitants traffic considerably. They carry it to Jenne and other neighboring markets."[404] Indeed, since at least the fifteenth century, Jenne had been the city dominating the regional trade—as illustrated through the commercial activities of Juula trader Karamo Sa Watara, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq's father.[405] Jenne's prior success was imputable to its crossroads location connecting three major West African commercial routes: two hinterland routes connected the city to the forest and coastal regions (via Kankan in the southwest and Bobo Dioulasso, Kong, and Kumasi in the southeast); and a riverine route linked it to Timbuktu in the north.[406] However, towards the 1890s, Jenne's

[403] See Jean Gallais, "Le Delta intérieur du Niger, Etude de Géographie Régionale, Vol. 2" (PhD diss., Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire Dakar, 1967), 488; and Elisabeth Dorier and Cécile van den Avenne, "Traditions orales et citadinité: Les enjeux de l'histoire urbaine à Mopti (Mali). Patrimoines et développement dans les pays tropicaux," *Colloque du Comité national français de géographie*, *La Rochelle, France* (2001), 557 ⟨halshs-00723774⟩.

[404] As cited in Gallais, *Le Delta intérieur du Niger*, 488.

[405] See discussion of Karamo Sa Watara's activities and network in chapter 1 of this dissertation.

[406] Gallais, *Le Delta intérieur du Niger*, 475-482.

importance in the trade progressively waned as other regional markets grew.[407] Mopti, which had expanded under Hamdallahi and become a military outpost under the Fuutaŋke, was nested at the confluence of the Niger and Bani rivers. After the conquest, the French sought to harness Mopti's unique geography and exploit its waterway connection to the town of Kulikoro, the last stop on the Dakar-Niger railway stretching from the landlocked Soudan to the Atlantic coast.[408] In the first decades of the twentieth century, Mopti grew to supplant Jenne as the trade hub of the Delta region.

Figure 17. Navigating the terraqueous floodplain at the Bani-Niger confluence on the way to Mopti, c. 1897[409]

[407] Ibid. Gallais shows that Jenne's fall was not triggered by Mopti's rise. Rather, the process was one of gradual replacement over the course of the 1890s-1920s. The growth of other markers more directly impacted Jenne's decline: These include Sansanding, Sofara, Korientze, Konna, and Baramandugu.

[408] Gallais, *Le Delta intérieur du Niger*, 489-90. The Kulikoro portion of the rail was finalized in 1904. Up until 1919, discussions were underway to stretch the rail all the way to Mopti.

[409] Félix Dubois, *Tombouctou la Mysterieuse* (Paris: Flammarion, 1897).

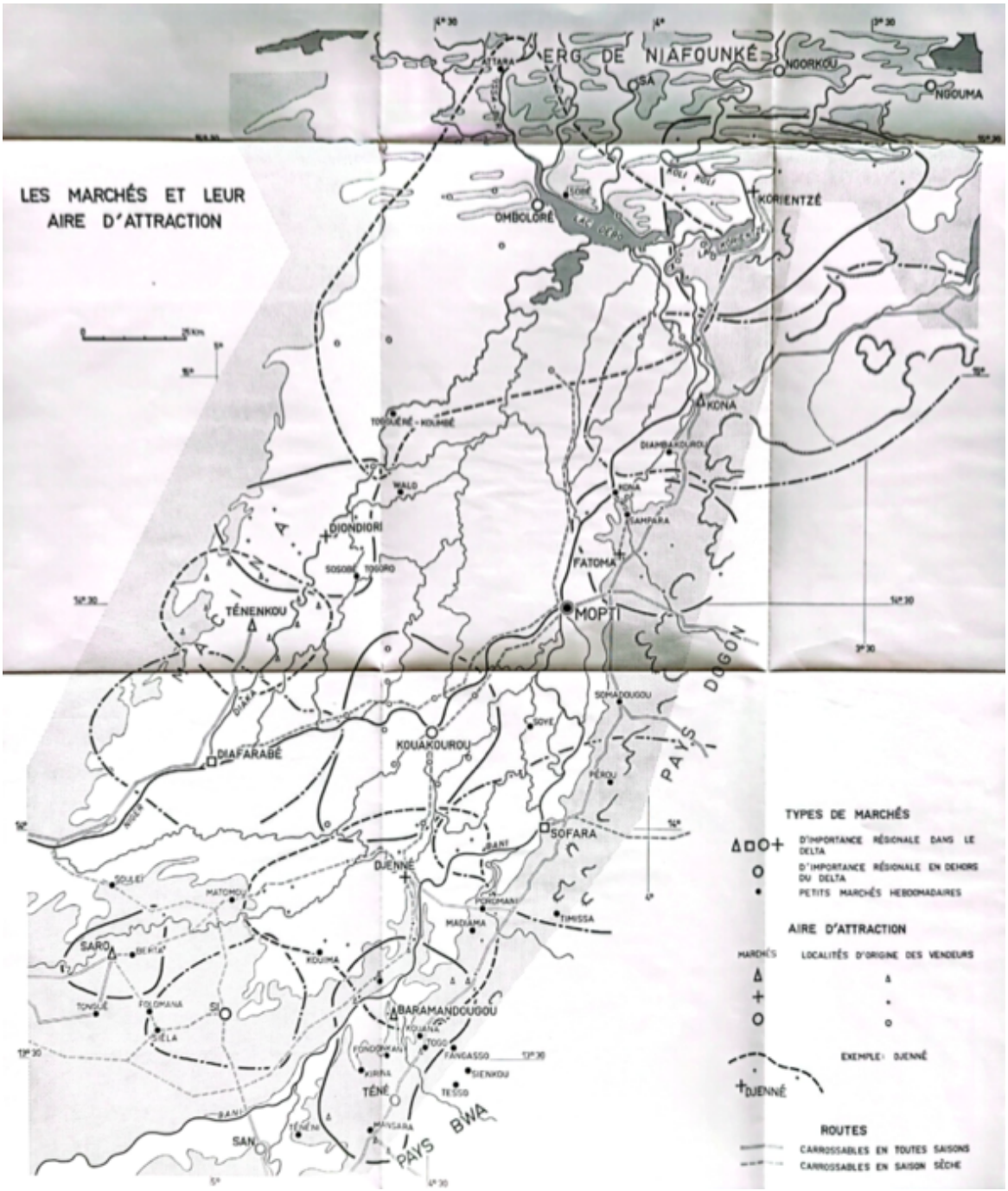

Figure 18. Major Markets and Trade Routes in Mopti and the Delta Region, c. 1960[410]

[410] Gallais, *Le Delta intérieur du Niger*, v. 2

For this to happen, Mopti needed to be turned into a metropolis that could support and stimulate long-range commerce and the regional capitalist cash crop economy, reflecting wider dynamics happening throughout French West Africa. Indeed, the colonial enterprise demanded the remodeling of the diverse people and societies that made up the Soudan's territory into one society composed of governable and exploitable subjects. To that end, France imposed a French-controlled, export-oriented economy enacted through the *mise en valeur* (optimal exploitation) of conquered lands. France also enforced the *indigénat*, a loose legal and administrative regime designed to entrench the power and authority of the colonial state, which enabled and normalized abuse and violence such as corporeal punishment, prison, forced labor, or even obliging women and men to forgo sleep.[411] In Mopti's case, optimal exploitation meant building a very large city on a floodplain and protecting it from river spills. This was achieved by first displacing Mopti's indigenous population, then requisitioning forced labor for construction, as the indigénat allowed for.[412] Because the site was flooded once a year during the rainy season, Mopti is "one of the rare cities in the world for which a ground level had to first be erected in order to erect walls."[413] Thus, turning it into a large urban settlement demanded backbreaking, and likely deadly, labor, with construction initiated from the 1900s and continuing for decades.[414] Every single day during the two decades of the interwar years,

[411] To illustrate the arbitrariness and violence the indigénat enabled in the Mopti region and throughout French Africa, historian Bakari Kamian recounted a telling anecdote: "men and women spent long nights along the marshes of the inland delta of the Niger slapping the water with their hands in order to quiet the frogs that troubled an administrator's sleep." See Gregory Mann, "What was the Indigénat? The 'Empire of Law' in French West Africa," *Journal of African History* vol. 50 (2009), 334. Canton and village chiefs the colonial administration named often enforced colonial violence the indigénat legalized.

[412] Gallais, *Le Delta intérieur du Niger*, 493.

[413] Ibid, 563.

[414] Deaths on other major construction sites in the Soudan and French West Africa built through forced labor are better documented, such as the high death rates on the the Sansanding/Markala dam. see Monica M. van

thirty to fifty villagers from neighboring areas toiled on elevated foundations, bridges and embankments, including the road-embankment connecting Mopti to Sévaré, the nearest town built on dry lands to the East.[415] Their duties included excavating rubble, dragging it to the river bank some 15 kilometers away, and carrying it to the city by dugout canoe.[416]

As the construction of the "Soudan's Venice" carried on—as the French dubbed it owing to its terraqueous terrain—the city witnessed a population boom, its dynamic river harbor and related commercial activities attracting an ever-increasing crowd. From 900 inhabitants in 1905, Mopti's population tripled by the early 1920s, and reached 5,000 by the beginning of WWII, turning it into a major cosmopolitan hub connected to cities across French and British West Africa.

Beusekom,"Colonisation Indigène: French Rural Development Ideology at the Office du Niger, 1920-1940," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 30, no. 2 (1997): 299–323; Catherine Momane Bogosian, "Forced labor, resistance and memory: The deuxième portion in the French Soudan, 1926-1950" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2002); J.P. Daughton, *In the Forest of No Joy. The Congo-Océan Railroad and the Tragedy of French Colonialism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2021); Isaïe Dougnon, *Travail de blanc, travail de noir: la migration des paysans dogon vers l'Office du Niger et au Ghana*, 1910–1980 (Paris: Karthala, 2007); Babacar Fall, *Le travail forcé en Afrique Occidentale Française* (Paris: Karthala, 1993); and Jean Filipovich, "Destined to fail: Forced settlement at the Office du Niger, 1926–1945," *Journal of African History* 42, no. 2 (2001), 239–260.

[415] Gallais, *Le Delta intérieur du Niger*, 563. Sevare essentially functioned as an extension to Mopti, and eventually became the site where the Mopti airport was constructed. The road-embankment was completed between 1905 and 1910. See Gallais, *Le Delta intérieur du Niger*, 490. By 1948, some in Jenne expressed the wish to also have an embankment built to connect the city to dry lands during the rainy season, but the *commandant de cercle* evaluated the expense to not be worthwhile unless the construction were to be incorporated within larger agricultural schemes aimed at turning Jenne into a rice producing area. In contrast with Mopti, the administration deemed trade to be a non-priority for "Jenne's future." See ANM 1E-31, Cercle de Mopti,"Tournée effectuée… par M. Barlet Commandant de Cercle," 24-26 August, 1948.

[416] Ibid, 563 and 563 n. 1. Gallais reports that according to a 1937 colonial report, inhabitants from neighboring villages were requisitioned for ten days, three times a year.

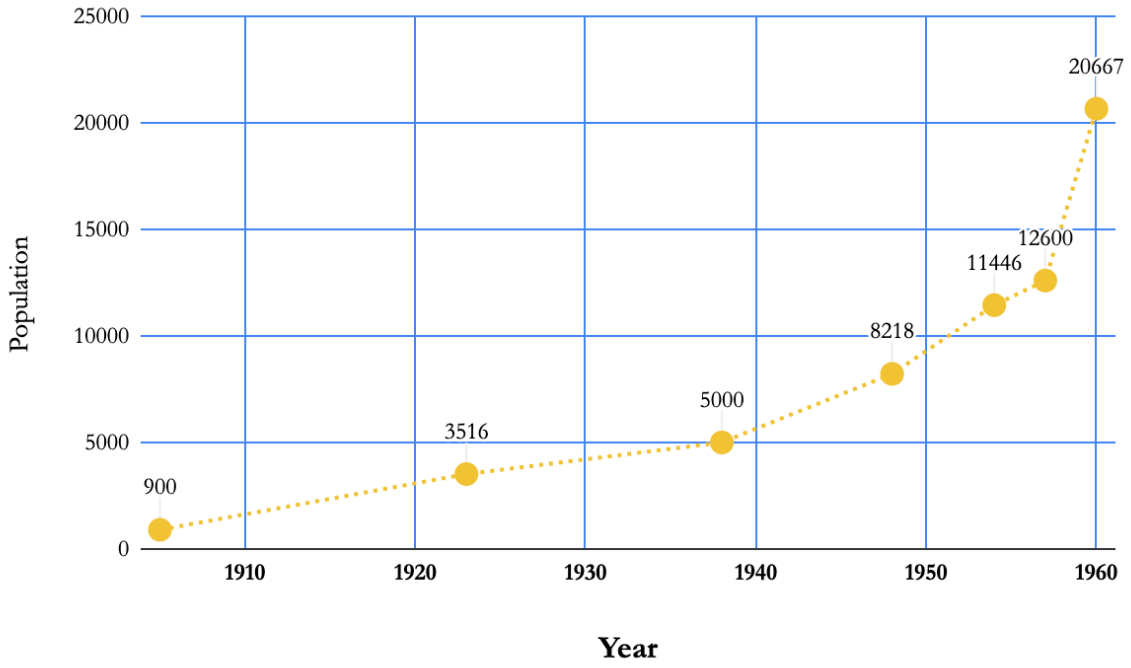

Figure 19. The evolution of Mopti's population from 1905 to 1960[417]

By the 1930s, among Mopti's inhabitants, a small but significant group of about a hundred French settlers controlled the lion share of the economy, and a cluster of around sixty Syrian-Lebanese immigrés engaged in local, regional, or long-distance trade.[418] Large European trade houses extracted considerable profit from the import of cloth, hardware, sugar and transformed foods, and the export of plumes, leather, wool, gum and rice, among others, as well as industrial activities.[419] These trade houses included three standalone commercial posts, as well as the local branches of fourteen transnational French corporations—often from the Bordeaux region—such as the Compagnie Française d'Afrique Noire (CFAO, founded in Bordeaux in 1852).[420] In order to facilitate the expansion of French trading

[417] The figures I used for this graph are based on census data found in Gallais, *Le Delta intérieur du Niger*, 561.

[418] Gallais, *Le Delta intérieur du Niger*, 493.

[419] Ibid, 495.

[420] Gallais, *Le Delta intérieur du Niger*, 493. The Bordeaux region of France many families and companies engaged in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and later in the colonial economy. The ones settled in Mopti included Maurel &

houses in Mopti, the administration displaced Mopti's African population from the river banks between 1910 and 1914: once the displacement was completed, as Jean Gallais puts it, "commerce remained the sole master of old town Mopti, and could be exercised more comfortably."[421] The corporate ventures of the Simon family, also of Bordeaux, illustrate the profits that French corporations derived from the Mopti trade. By 1907, the Simon owned a trading post in Mopti, as well as in Jenne, Kulikoro and Bamako.[422] They sold salt, cloth, and glass jewelry, and purchased or transformed rice, wool, plumes and skins. By the late 1930s, their export-import activities were booming, fueled by the large fleet of ships they owned. By the early 1950s, they had accumulated enough capital to open the only movie theater in the Mopti cercle.[423]

In addition to the French, a group of Levantine immigrants also pursued commerce. From the late-nineteenth century onward, France had facilitated the migration and settlement of a significant Lebanese-Syrian diaspora in French West Africa.[424] In Mopti, up until the end of World War II when their business waned, they specialized in supplying retailers with various goods, as well as in export trade to other colonies.[425] In particular they carried out dried and smoked fish export trade—which had

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Prom, Peyrissac, Buhan & Teisseire and Chavanel. ON CFAO see"Our History," CFAO Group, accessed January 26, 2022, https://www.cfaogroup.com/en/our-history/.

[421] Gallais, *Le Delta intérieur du Niger*, 493.

[422] Stéphane Richemond, "Cartes postales soudanaises de Marcel Simon," *I&M Bulletin* no. 24 (Printemps 2010), 15.

[423] ANM 1E-31, 23 September 1952: "Rapports Politiques et Rapports de Tournées, Cercle de Mopti."

[424] For a history of Levantine migrant communities in French West Africa, see Andrew Arsan, *Interlopers of Empire: The Lebanese Diaspora in Colonial French West Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). Lebanese-Syrian merchants were not just settled in the city of Mopti, but throughout the region, including in the satellite markets of Korientze and Konna. ANOM 15 G 19, 12 April 1938: "Inspection du Cercle de Mopti."

[425] ANM 1E-31, 3rd trimester 1948: "Bulletin Politique Trimestriel, Cercle de Mopti."

prior to colonization been a staple yet small-scale regional commerce—purchasing their product from local Bozo or Somono fishermen and shipping it by truck all the way to Côte d'Ivoire's Atlantic coast.[426]

By the early 1930s Mamadu Caam, the Fuutaŋke migrant, had settled in Mopti—one of roughly 3,000 Africans living in the city—where he sustained his family practicing commerce. Like others, Caam and his family resided in the city's designated African quarters—the neighborhoods of Komoguel and Gangal. Mopti's central market opened in 1914 and became the central node connecting other regional markets such as Konna, Korientze, Sofara, or Baramandougou (see Figure 18). African merchants—women and men,—moving between these markets traded in a variety of items such as fish, shea and kola nuts, baobab and néré fruits, onions, wax, cloth, or jewelry.[427] For instance, two items Caam traded in were amber-yellow beads, a popular item of jewelry in the region; and handcrafted textiles, including the Fulani cotton-wool blankets: *kassa* and *kosso*.[428] Two letters from his papers show that he shipped, and was sent, such items as far as Guinea.

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[426] Ibid; and Gallais, *Le Delta intérieur du Niger*, 494.

[427] Ibid, 496. Néré was a sought after fruit, and its picking was regulated. In 1933 a Bobo village and neighboring Fulani village had a conflict over néré fruits that had been picked from the tree prior to the agreed-upon date, which triggered an intervention from the commandant de cercle and from Seydou Nourou Tall. ANS 1 E 17, 2nd trimester 1933: "Rapport Politique, Cercle de Mopti."

[428] Two letters among Caam's remaining papers refer to him as "Mamadou Thiam, *marchant d'ambres*" (amber merchant) on the enveloppe, and discuss the shipment of amber beads. Ceerno Mamadu Caam Papers, 16 July 1931: "Letter from Bamako, French Soudan" ; and 30 April 1945: "Letter from Kindia, Guinea." One letter addresses the shipment of cloth and other small items including shoes, hats, and wallets. Ceerno Mamadu Caam Papers, 22 June 1948: "Letter from Labé, Guinea." Jean Gallais explains the process of kassa production, whereby Fulani women produced and sold cotton threads, which was one of their source of personal income, to Fulani *mabube* artisans who then wove the wool blankets. See Jean Gallais, *Hommes du Sahel. Espaces-Temps et Pouvoirs. Le Delta intérieur du Niger, 1960-1980* (Paris: Flammarion, 1984), 133. On the importance of textile production and trade in the greater Senegambia, Soudan and Guinea, see Jody Benjamin, "The Texture of Change: Cloth, Commerce, and History in Western Africa 1700-1850" (PhD diss.: Harvard University, 2016) ; and Richard Roberts, *Two Worlds of Cotton: Colonialism and the Regional Economy in the French Soudan, 1800–1946* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1996).

Mopti's diverse and cosmopolitan African population reflected the occupational and cultural makeup of the broader Delta region, including among others Bozo, Somono, Dogon, Marka, Arma, Songhay, and Fulani speakers from Maasina and Fuuta. Various West African migrants and travelers, including Mecca pilgrimage returnees, Al-Azhar bound students, Islamic scholars from the Gold Coast, or Yoruba photographers from Northern Nigeria, to cite a few, also settled in or transited through Mopti.[429] As Caam's example shows, Mopti was a migrations node, generating inwards and outward flows. Failure to pay colonial taxes resulted in punishment, therefore taxation spurred migrations from the countryside and rural areas onto Mopti, the regional capital, and from there to other cities and colonies. Families would send their sons to the city hoping they would find work and send back much needed cash. Boucary Poudiogou, a Dogon migrant who left his village in 1939, explained that "tax money was hard to earn," prompting men of his generation to "go fetch it in Mopti," where he himself took to selling grass to horse stables.[430] From Mopti, some Dogon migrants continued on to Kumasi in the Gold Coast looking for work opportunities, as Poudiogou himself did. Mirroring these migrations, some 150 fishermen and traders from the Gold Coast left their home regions of Ada and Kumasi to settle in Mopti where they organized smoked fish exports back to the Gold Coast.[431]

[429] Wary of the spread of Wahhabism, the administration also monitored West African scholars who had studied in the Hijaz and North Africa, including Algeria and Egypt, and sojourned in Mopti. Their monitoring also highlights the importance of Mopti's connections with the Gold Coast. Indeed according to one file: "it seems that those who propagate modernist islamic ideas arrive in Accra, and from there go to Kumasi, which functions as the meeting and spreading point of wahabi missionaries throughout French and British West Africa." ANM 1E-31, 2nd trimester 1952: "Revue Trimestrielle, Cercle de Mopti." Later on, a cluster of Yoruba photographers from Nigeria settled in Mopti and developed successful practices: those included El Hadj Bassirou Sanni who settled in 1962, then brought in his brother Latifu Sanni, and a friend Eh Hajj Tijani Adigun Sitou. See Allison Moore, *Embodying Relation. Art Photography in Mali* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2020), 290 n. 71.

[430] Dougnon, *Travail de Blanc, travail de Noir,* 71.

[431] ANOM 15G 19, 14 December 1938: "Inspection du Cercle de Mopti."

Thus by the late 1930s, Mopti had turned into a major, connected metropolis and transit point for people and goods from throughout French and British West Africa. After World War II, Mopti's society would undergo a rapid series of mutations, reflective of larger changes occurring throughout the French empire. Caam, born a colonial subject in Senegal on the cusp of French colonization, would become a colonial citizen of the Soudan, as politicians in the colonies and the metropole would attempt to first reform, then dismantle, the colonial empire. As I lay out in the next section, Caam readily seized the new postwar political opportunities.

Conclusion

On Bastille Day, July 14 1933, thousands of African colonial subjects gathered in Komoguel, Mopti's African quarter, for the inauguration of the city's brand new Great Mosque.[432] Caam lived in the neighborhood, and it is likely that he would have attended the event. The guest of honor that day was Tijani leader Seidu Nuuru Taal (c. 1880-1980), a grandson of El Hajj Umar Taal, the nineteenth century warrior and scholar. Seidu Nuuru Taal had been born in Kita (Soudan) but by the 1930s he was living in Tivaouane (Senegal).[433] The colonial administration, seeking to capitalize on the influence that descendants of El Hajj Umar still enjoyed in the Delta region of Soudan he had invaded in the mid-nineteenth century, invited Seidu Nuuru Taal to the mosque's inauguration. Taal did not

[432] ANM 1E-31, 2nd trimester 1933: "Rapport Politique, Cercle de Mopti." The report mentions 10,000 attendees, which seems an exaggerated number given the figures of Mopti population Gallais provides.

[433] Sylvianne Garcia nuances the idea that Taal was a cog in the French colonial enterprise, and instead highlights how he pragmatically used various alliances to safeguard and expand the Tijaniyya in West Africa. On the life and career of Seidu Nuuru Taal, see Sylvianne Garcia, "Al-Hajj Seydou Nourou Tall "grand marabout" tijani. L'histoire d'une carrière," in *Le temps des marabouts. Itineraries et strategies islamiques en Afrique occidentale française v. 1880-1960*, ed. David Robinson and Jean-Louis Triaud (Paris: Karthala, 1997), 247-275.

disappoint. Before the crowd he gave a speech extolling the virtues of "obeying chiefs and France's representatives and intensifying agriculture and industrialization," prompting a French administrator in attendance to laud the Tijani leader for his "excellent advice" and "propaganda."[434] Born in the era of the Umarian empire, Taal had witnessed its dismantlement at the hands of the French during the colonial conquest. He then navigated the entire colonial period straddling two seemingly antagonistic worlds: he derived prestige from his Taal lineage and scholarly religious training, as well as influence from his linkages to the French. As such, he embodied many of the ambiguities and tensions intrinsic to the transitional world that Mamadu Caam also moved through, between the eras of jihad and colonization.

This chapter has laid out the post-Umarian jihad and early colonial world of the first three decades of the twentieth century in French West Africa, focusing on the regions of Fuuta Tooro (Senegal) and the Inland Niger Delta (Soudan). These regions were connected by shared experiences of Muslim theocratic experiments led by Fulani communities in the nineteenth century. Then, they had become antagonists when Fuutaŋke leader Umar Taal launched a conquest of the Caliphate of Hamdallahi and wider Delta region by mid-century, accusing the Hamdallahi leaders of apostasy. Taal's violent conquests, which he branded a jihad, left thousands dead or enslaved in their wake, while his scholarship and proselytizing led to the spread of the Tijaniyya. By century's end, Taal's vision of a new, Tijani-bound dominion expanding "from Timbuktu to Fuuta" had collapsed as French colonial encroachment spread.[435] For communities across Fuuta, Taal's home region, the conquest and early

[434] ANM 1E-31, 3rd trimester 1933: "Rapport Politique, Cercle de Mopti."

[435] The expression is quoted in Davidson, *The Holy War of Umar Tal*, 299.

decades of colonization were traumatic. In these years, many migrate to seek revenue, escape harsh living conditions, or acquire religious education, including a young Mamadu Caam. After years of travels across multiple religious centers in West Africa, Caam, now a merchant by trade, and a Tijani scholar, settled in Mopti. The city was an inland port built on the Delta's region's terraqueous land, prompting the French to dub it the Soudan's Venice. Mopti was a booming city where commerce flourished. In the postwar era, Mopti would be the theater of political campaigns and electoral battles, as Soudanese politicians sought to first reform, then dismantle, the colonial empire. In the turbulent years between 1956 and 1960, a lot unraveled. The next chapter establishes how the pre-colonial past of Fuuta Tooro echoed through twentieth century Mopti, and might have played a role in Caam's political choices during the era of decolonization.

CHAPTER FIVE

Archipelagic Belonging and Historical Echoes: Decolonization in Mopti (1946-1958)

In January 1956, at a polling station set up in their neighborhood of Komoguel, Fatumata Bari and her husband Mamadu Caam each cast their vote for the French National Assembly election. They had gained the right to vote as part of a wave of liberalization that had gradually swept the French empire in the decade following World War II, when a series of political and legal changes altered the nature of governance, policy-making, and political membership in France's African territories.[436] First in December 1945 the indigénat, "the obscure core of the French colonial state" and the key tool that had legalized arbitrary violence, was repealed.[437] Then, in the Spring 1946, two bills were voted in the National Assembly—crafted by Ivorian representative Félix Houphouët-Boigny and Senegalese representative Lamine Guèye respectively,—abolishing forced labor in the colonies and extending citizenship to all their residents. With the latter move, African colonial subjects became French colonial citizens, and the empire refashioned itself as a new entity named the French Union. Lawmakers gradually granted suffrage to groups of colonial citizens, initially prioritizing those with direct ties to the colonial state, such as veterans, civil servants, or licensed merchants.[438] In 1951, more groups

[436] These changes were ushered in in the context of looming anticolonial struggles in Indochina and Algeria, as well as a post WWII economic crisis whereby European powers sought to placate African colonial subjects to ensure continued access to, and control of, African resources. See Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*, 33-45.

[437] Mann, *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel,* 42.

[438] Ibid, 56. I do not know whether Caam was a licensed merchant, but my working assumption is that he was not, as various French administrative papers from the same cluster of years indicate various professions for him—head of household, farmer, or merchant—rather than consistently indicating the merchant category.

obtained the right to vote, including mothers of two children—alive or killed while serving in the French army,—and tax-liable heads of households.[439] It is thus likely in these capacities that Bari, a mother of seven children, and Caam, a head of household, headed to the polls in 1956.[440] Later that year, the *Loi Cadre* (Framework Law) handed over policy-making power to locally elected African territorial governments, who from that point on effectively held control over internal affairs.

As discussed in chapter 4, Caam was a religious scholar, trader, and migrant, who had settled in Mopti after a decade of itinerancy, who did not speak nor write French, and whose tenuous connections to the colonial administration were mostly limited to his fiscal and administrative obligations. In other words, he largely sought to avoid, rather than engage with, the state.[441] Why did he decide to partake in elections stemming from a French political culture that was not as legible to him, as it would have been to French-educated Africans? What compelled him to engage in electoral party politics, when 35% of registered voters in Mopti abstained?[442] What meaning or resonance did debates held in the Soudan territorial assembly and National Assembly in Paris, hold for him? And what motivations lied behind his choice to support the US-RDA, the party that French administrators labeled as "communist, anticolonialist, anti-French and anti-capitalist" over the PSP, which explicitly

[439] Ibid, 56-62.

[440] Ceerno Mamadu Caam Papers, 21 June 1956:"Carte d'électeur: Coumba Sangaré"; 30 October 1956: "Carte d'électeur: Coumba Sangaré"; 17 December 1955: "Carte d'électeur Mamadou Thiam."; 22 June 1956: "Carte d'électeur Mamadou Thiam."

[441] This is the general sense that Caam's family conveys in discussions about him. Additionally, in the archive Caam left behind, the most represented category of state-related documents is taxation papers, showing his deep concern with the colonial state's most direct and coercive form of engagement with him.

[442] ANM 1E-31, 29 March 1957: "Rapport Politique: Les partis politiques—Les elections."In fact it is possible that Caam's interest in politics began as early as 1951—at a time when political participation in Mopti was much lower,—as he kept among his papers a US-RDA leaflet dating from that year.

championed indigenous African customs and chastised African assimilation into French culture?[443]

The previous chapter demonstrated that Mamadu Caam very much lived in a liminal world still marked by the afterlives of the nineteenth century jihad, which colored his experience of twentieth century French colonization. In the present chapter, my analysis moves across spatial, temporal and historiographical borders. Straddling the social histories of Islam in the precolonial and colonial Sahel, and political histories of decolonization in French West Africa, the chapter provides a novel perspective on political activism in the Soudan during decolonization. Previous scholarship has highlighted the role of party politics, trade unions, social scientists and French-educated classes in bringing about the end of colonization in French West Africa through their political mobilization.[444] Some works have particularly emphasized the participation of people with less or no direct ties to the colonial state, including market women.[445] This chapter expands this latter area of scholarship by zooming in on the political choices of a Muslim colonial citizen who would have harbored little familiarity with the realm of French electoral political discourse.

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[443] Ophélie Rillon "Quand les militantes de quartier 'jouent les gros bras': Genre et violences politiques au tournant de l'indépendance du Soudan français," *Le Mouvement Social* 255, no. 2 (2016): 87. Fily Dabo Sissoko, the PSP's founder, was a customary chief and scholar, In his writings, Sissoko was a staunch critic of cultural assimilation, whereby colonized Africans were losing their traditional values and culture to French education. Because of such writings, he was subjected multiple times to disciplinary actions from the French administration. See Pierre Kipré, *Le congrès de Bamako ou la naissance du RDA* (Paris: Afrique Contemporaine, 1989), 43. On early assimilationist French policy in West Africa, see Mamadou Diouf, "The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation and the Civility of the Originaires of the Four Communes (Senegal): A Nineteenth Century Globalization Project," *Development and Change* vol. 29 (1998), 671-696. While the US-RDA and the PSP were the main two parties competing in the Soudan, other local Mopti parties competed in elections, including the or one of Mopti's local parties—the Bandiagara Populations Union, or the Dogon Peul Action.

[444] Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) ; Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation* ; Elizabeth Fink, "Elections and Political Participation in the Time of Decolonization: Voting in Postwar French West Africa," (PhD diss.: New York University, 2015) ; Gregory Mann, *Native Sons. West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006) ; Mann, *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel*.

[445] See Aoua Keita, *Femme d'Afrique: La vie d'Aoua Kéita racontée par elle-même* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1975) ; Rillon, "Quand les militantes de quartier 'jouent les gros bras'" ; Elizabeth Schmidt, *Mobilizing the Masses: Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in the Nationalist Movement in Guinea, 1939–1958* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2005).

I argue that Caam developed a political vision for decolonization grounded in local histories and epistemologies. This argument takes seriously the resonance and relevance of trans-local pre-colonial history in shaping Caam's decolonial politics. Specifically, ideals of archipelagic, cross-border belonging and community Caam had cultivated, and ideas about just and legitimate rulers borne out of eighteenth and nineteenth century Sahelian political language, rendered the US-RDA's ideology more legible and relatable to him. In this chapter, I first show how Caam's travels and networking across French West and North Africa relied on what I term a Tijani archipelago, a trans-local formation spreading across territorial partitions. Moving through the Tijani archipelago, and experiencing its impact even after settling in Mopti, would have eroded, in Caam's mind, the relevance of colonial borders. It instead reinforced his own sense of anchoring into cross-border communities tied together through kinship, spirituality, and shared epistemes. Second, I show how through intimate relations and continuously revived memories of the pre-colonial past, Caam and his household effectively lived in a space where Fuuta, Senegal, and the Delta, Soudan, formed a single unit, despite their territorial apartness. Third, I highlight how he further reinforced the connection between these two spaces located in two different colonial territories, through his membership into Mopti's Senegalese-Soudanese association. The fourth section weaves together these three strands of Caam's life to craft an argument about Caam's political choices in Mopti in the era of decolonization.

A Tijani Archipelago: Place-Making and Belonging Across Colonial Borders

Prior to his settling in Mopti, Caam's decade-long journey across various clerical centers throughout French West Africa was rendered possible by what might be termed a Tijani archipelago: a

set of connected Tijani places dispersed across West and North Africa, thus trumping the logic of colonial borders erected to separate distinct territories.[446] Itinerant Tijanis like Caam cultivated their belonging into trans-territorial and trans-generational Tijani communities by traveling across the archipelago, connecting to specific Tijani places as well as to a particular isnad. Their geographical imagination was less likely to be bound to separate colonial territories, and more likely structured around a string of Tijani communities strung together like prayer beads, breaking across colonial borders through a shared culture, language, history, memory, and religious practice. My conceptualizing of Tijani places and of a Tijani archipelago mirrors Cheikh Anta Babou's theorization of transnational Murid place-making from the nineteenth- through the twenty-first century.[447] Babou contends that a Murid place, as opposed to a mere space, "draws its significance from infused meaning and value," and that "it is the transformative power of people, practices, objects and symbols that turns space into place."[448]

In this sense, Tijani places may have been a village or town where returning fergaŋkooɓe had left their imprint, a *zawiya* (Tijani lodge), a scholar's library, a family home, a saint's resting place, a Quranic school, and other meaning-infused spaces. The towns Caam traveled through, first in Fuuta Tooro, then Bobo Juulaso, Kayes, Segu, Nioro, Sofara, Bandiagara, and eventually Mopti, were key locales of the Umarian Tijaniyyah, and therefore harbored significant Tijani communities. These

[446] I thank Oumar Tatam Ly for his evocative mention of "*un archipel Toucouleur*" (a Fuutaŋke archipelago), to which I owe my framing and understanding of the Tijani archipelago. Oumar Tatam Ly, discussion with author, Dakar, July 2018.

[447] Cheikh Anta Mbacké Babou, *Fighting the Greater Jihad: Amadu Bamba and the Founding of the Muridiyya of Senegal, 1853-1913* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007), 165-8.

[448] Cheikh Anta Mbacké Babou, *The Muridiyya on the Move. Islam, Migration, and Place Making* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2021), 36.

places were infused with Tijani semiotics, which were then continuously re-inscribed through the "accumulated biographical experiences" of itinerant Tijani disciples such as Caam.[449] Such semiotics could include, for instance, the memories of Aḥmad al-Tijani—the eighteenth century North African founder of the tariqa,—and El Hajj Umar Taal, and the continuous murmur of Tijani litanies disciples recited daily, such as the Salat al-Fatih that Baba Caam concluded his letter to Mamadu Caam referencing.[450] Thus, across the Tijani archipelago, a stranger could seek shelter, community, and education, allowing people like Caam, as a young man of no means, to engage in cross-border mobility in the colonial era, in the pursuit of knowledge and economic opportunities.

The Dudal

Arguably, one of the most essential cogs in archipelagic Tijani place-making was the *dudal* (Pulaar, quranic school). In explaining the tariqa's expansion under colonial rule, Ibrahima-Abou Sall argued that "the mesh network of quranic schools throughout the colonial territories of Mauritania, Senegal, Soudan, Gambia and Guinée, proved to be an asset to the Tijaniyya."[451] Sall's extensive description of one such school, the Dudal Galle Sakhobe of Boghe, in Mauritania, is instructive. Operating between 1906 and 1934 under the stewardship of Ceerno Amadu Mukhtar Sakho, the Dudal Galle Sakhobe was a multilingual and cosmopolitan "regional crossroads where students who had come from Fuuta Toro, Walo, Trarza, Brakna, Ngalam, Gidimaka, Xaaso, Bundu, Ferlo, Karta,

[449] Ibid.

[450] See chapter 4.

[451] Ibrahima-Abou Sall, "Cerno Amadu Mukhtar Sakho Qadi supérieur de Boghe (1905-1934)," in *Le temps des marabouts. Itineraries et stratégies islamiques en Afrique occidentale française v. 1880-1960*, ed. David Robinson and Jean-Louis Triaud (Paris: Karthala, 1997), 241.

Cayor, Jolof, Sin, Salum, and Fuuta Jalo, all interacted."[452] Ceerno Sakho, a polyglot, reportedly routinely addressed students in their respective native language. The string of West African regions Sall lists, though spread across multiple colonial territories, were thus connected through the interwoven paths of students, with the dual Sakhobe—a Tijani place par excellence—acting as a node.

After spending years in the dudal, students would disperse and "create their own centers in their villages and countries of origin, thus further sprawling the network of [Ceerno Sakho's] islamic teaching."[453] One such student was Seidu Nuuru Taal, the influential grandson of El Hajj Umar Taal, who spent about a decade in the Dudal Sakhobe of Boghe around the 1910s, and would end up inaugurating the Mopti mosque in 1933.[454] In the course of Mamadu Caam's own tribulations from Semme to Podor, it is entirely plausible that he also would have passed through the dudal Sakhobe, located just across from the Senegalese Fuuta, on the opposite bank of the Senegal river.[455]

Domesticating the Tijaniyya

The French colonial administration in West and North Africa understood the archipelagic—trans-Saharan and trans-local—nature of the Tijaniyya, and leveraged it in their efforts to domesticate the tariqa. Here, I employ Samuel Anderson's framework of "domestication" in his

[452] Ibid.

[453] Ibid.

[454] Ibid, and n. 34. On Taal's speech on the occasion of the inauguration of the Mopti Komoguel mosque, see chapter 4.

[455] I have not been able to establish this point with certainty. However borth the south and north bank of the Senegal river in this region were part of Fuuta Tooro prior to the colonial creation and partition of the two territories of Senegal and Mauritania, with the river as the border. If Caam sojourned through the major Tijani centers of Fuuta, this dudal would likely have been on his itinerary.

analysis of a trans-Saharan colonial institution—the *médersas* French Muslim schools.[456] Anderson demonstrates that the French administration constantly adjusted its policies to account at once for both the highly localized environment in which each médersa operated, and the large-scale imperatives of imperial governance, "through a diffuse and informal process of negotiation."[457] Likewise, in their efforts to domesticate the Tijaniyya, the French engaged at once in surveillance and persecution of certain Tijani communities and individuals, co-optation of others, and direct intervention in succession disputes for some of the tariqa's leaders. An extensive body of literature has analyzed the various positioning of a number of Tijani leaders of the tariqa with regards to colonization, ranging from resistance to collaboration or breaking out of this paradigm altogether.[458] This is not my focus here.

Instead, I wish to further demonstrate the archipelagic nature of the Tijaniyya by highlighting how the colonial power sought to leverage it. One example is the French sponsorship of the travels of two North African leaders of the tariqa. Si Benamor based in Ain Madi, Algeria, and Si Tayyīb based in Fes, Morocco, were cousins, and descendants of Ahmad al-Tijani. The two men had been engaged in a bitter succession rivalry to be recognized by France as the head of the Tijaniyya.[459] To solidify their

[456] Samuel D. Anderson, "Domesticating the Médersa: Franco-Muslim Education and Colonial Rule in Northwest Africa, 1850-1960" (Phd diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2018).

[457] Ibid, 1 and 16.

[458] See for instance Babou, *Fighting the Greater Jihad* ; Brenner, *West African Sufi* ; Sean Hanretta, *Islam and Social Change in French West Africa: History of an Emancipatory Community* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) ; Ly-Tall, *Un islam militant en Afrique de l'Ouest au XIXe siècle* ; Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation ;* Robinson and Triaud, eds., *La Tijaniyya ;* Jean-Louis Triaud, *La légende noire de la Sanûsiyya : une confrérie musulmane saharienne sous le regard français (1840-1930)*(Paris : Editions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1995) ; Triaud and Robinson, eds., *Le temps des marabouts.*

[459] Diallo, "Le rôle de l'Administration française dans les conflits de succession dans la Tijāniyya nord-africaine: répercussions sur les marabouts sénégalais," 147-174.

influence, in 1947-8 they each separately traveled to West Africa to strengthen ties with local Tijani branches. Si Tayyib visited the Soudan, the Gambia, and Senegal—where he met Seidu Nuuru Taal and other leaders.[460] A few months later, Si Benamor, equipped with an official nomination as French Head of Mission, traveled through French Africa (Soudan, Benin, Tchad, Upper Volta, Côte-d'Ivoire, Congo, and Gabon) and British Africa (Ghana, Liberia, Sudan, Nigeria). Not unlike Seidu Nuuru Taal's message to the Mopti crowd in 1933, the Algerian shaykh's message to Tijani leaders in all these places was one of unequivocal support for the colonial power:

> You must love France, and you must rally behind its representatives. Ever since France has taken an interest in our lands, you have ceased to be mistreated, France has only brought you good things, and has respected our beliefs. *France has not sought to treat you like its slaves*, but like its friends, and you all are France's sons.[461]

Eschewing his own practice of racialized slavery (for which the French had previously prosecuted him, as noted in the introduction), Si Benamor tapped into the language of slavery to promote a pan-Tijani allegiance to France.

Mopti in the Tijani Archipelago

Mopti, the inland port city where Caam and his family resided, was a key node of the Tijani archipelago. Mopti's status as an important Tijani place first derives from the regional history in which the city was inscribed, the Fuutaŋke jihad and its afterlives having triggered an influx of Fuutaŋke migrants to the Niger delta from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, including Caam. In the colonial era, the Tijaniyya's importance was reinforced and reinscribed through the visits of Tijani leaders of

[460] Ibid, 163-4. Emphasis my own.

[461] Ibid, 165. Diallo highlights that such official speeches should not be read as face value in evaluating Si Benamor's use as a propaganda pawn by the administration, as the Tijani shaykh actively sought to derive profits and influence from such activities, and often succeeded.

various origins to the city. As previously noted, Senegalese Tijani leader Seidu Nuuru Taal was a frequent visitor to Mopti from the 1930s onwards, giving addresses or conducting conflict mediation at the request of the colonial administration. On June nineteenth, 1954, the secretary of the Moroccan Tijaniyya, Mahamoud Mahamoud, held a large gathering at Sévaré before numerous disciples. With Mopti's imam himself in attendance, Mahamoud conducted a brief prayer, blessed the crowd, and collected donations.[462] Unlike Taal's, Mahamoud's visit appears to have been self-initiated, and neither organized nor sponsored by the French administration. Tijani leaders from other territories thus spread their ideas and influence in Mopti through speeches, but also through text: in November 1951 in Mopti, Mamadu Caam was granted an ijaza from Si Benamor. The main excerpt from the document reads:

> God's servant, our master El Hajj Benamor hereby grants our brother Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Fallāta permission to recite the Tijāni litany, as outlined below. The Lāzim formulae, to be recited once in the morning, and once in the evening ... The Waẓīfah formulae, to be recited at least once between sunset and sunrise (though preferably once in the morning, and once in the evening) ... The Hailalah invocation, to be recited as many times as desired on Fridays after the afternoon prayer (within the hour preceding sunset)
> ...
> Sheikh Sidi El Hajj Benamor
> Tijāni Lodge
> Aïn Madhi district, Laghouat province
> ALGERIA[463]

The stand-alone document is decontextualized and disembodied among Caam's papers, thus not providing any context as to the conditions in which he received the ijaza. Caam's children are adamant

[462] ANM 1E-31, 2 September 1954: "Cercle de Mopti, Revue trimestrielle du 1er juin au 1er septembre 1954, VIII Vie religieuse."

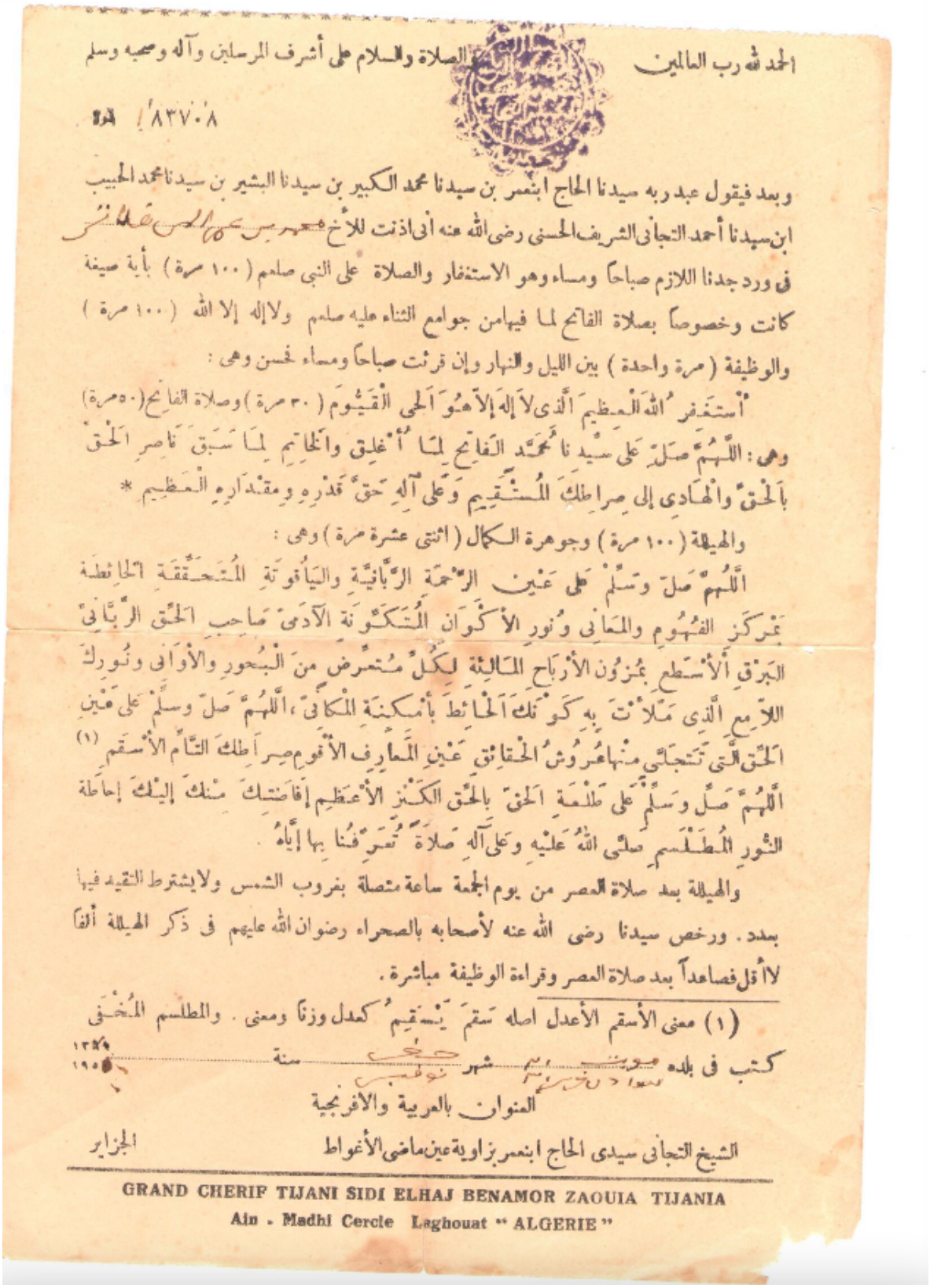
[463] The document also mentions El Hajj Benamor's isnad, going all the way back to the founder of the Tijaniyya: "Chain of paternal descent and initiatic transmission: Master Ahmed Al Tijani Al-Sharif Al-Hasani (may God be pleased with him) → Master Mohamed El Habib → Master El Bashir → Master Mohamed El Kabir → Master El Hajj Benamor" Ceerno Mamadu Caam Papers, 20 November 1951: Ijaza from Ain Madhi Tijani lodge, Algeria, signed in Mopti, French Soudan.

that he never traveled to Algeria, and it is thus likely that it was delivered to him in Mopti.[464] As an object, the document was clearly designed to be generic, an easily copyable and spreadable template. The entirety of the text on the document is printed, save for two handwritten portions on dotted lines: the one stating the name of the initiated disciple, Muhammad b. Umar al-Fallata, and the place and date the document was signed: Mopti, French Soudan, November 20, 1951.[465] Yet the bilingual, Arabic and French Tijani licensing document, is still instructive. The generic, administrative form-like nature of the document hints at a large-scale dissemination process. El Hadji Samba Diallo has found that during Si Benamor's official trip to West Africa as a French head of mission, he informally distributed ijazat to West African Tijanis, which Diallo interprets as "subterranean acts...which rendered possible the large-scale dissemination of the tariqa, hence its trans-local north-African, and transnational northwest African, nature."[466] Such subterranean acts were thus conducted through colonial networks, yet escaped the administration's orbit of influence. The subterranean distribution of ijazat thus serves as a reminder of the vitality of Tijani networks in generating and sustaining types of connectivity and cross border relationships that the colonial state recognized, leveraged, and intervened in, but could not fully co-opt.

[464] Amadou Thiam, Oumar Thiam, and Ousmane Thiam, interview by the author, Bamako, 2 September 2018.

[465] Muhammad, son of Umar, the Fulani. Caam's father was named Umar.

[466] Diallo, "Le rôle de l'Administration française dans les conflits de succession dans la Tijāniyya nord-africaine," 166.



الحمد لله رب العالمين والصلاة والسلام على أشرف المرسلين وآله وصحبه وسلم

٨٣٧٠٨ / ٢٨

وبعد فيقول عبد ربه سيدنا الحاج ابنعمر بن سيدنا محمد الكبير بن سيدنا البشير بن سيدنا محمد الحبيب ابن سيدنا أحمد التجاني الشريف الحسني رضي الله عنه أني اذنت للأخ محمد بن عمر بن علي قلاتر في ورد جدنا اللازم صباحاً ومساء وهو الاستغفار والصلاة على النبي صلعم (١٠٠ مرة) بأية صيغة كانت وخصوصاً بصلاة الفاتح لما فيها من جوامع الثناء عليه صلعم ولا إله إلا الله (١٠٠ مرة) والوظيفة (مرة واحدة) بين الليل والنهار وإن قرئت صباحاً ومساء فحسن وهي :

أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللهَ الْعَظِيمَ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيَّ الْقَيُّومَ (٣٠ مرة) وصلاة الفاتح (٥٠ مرة) وهي : اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ الْفَاتِحِ لِمَا أُغْلِقَ وَالْخَاتِمِ لِمَا سَبَقَ نَاصِرِ الْحَقِّ بِالْحَقِّ وَالْهَادِي إِلَى صِرَاطِكَ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ وَعَلَى آلِهِ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ وَمِقْدَارِهِ الْعَظِيمِ *

والهيللة (١٠٠ مرة) وجوهرة الكمال (اثنتي عشرة مرة) وهي :

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ عَلَى عَيْنِ الرَّحْمَةِ الرَّبَّانِيَّةِ وَالْيَاقُوتَةِ الْمُتَحَقِّقَةِ الْجَامِعَةِ بِمَرْكَزِ الْفُهُومِ وَالْمَعَانِي وَنُورِ الْأَكْوَانِ الْمُتَكَوِّنَةِ الْآدَمِيِّ صَاحِبِ الْحَقِّ الرَّبَّانِيِّ الْبَرْقِ الْأَسْطَعِ بِمُزُونِ الْأَرْبَاحِ الْمَائِلَةِ لِكُلِّ مُتَعَرِّضٍ مِنَ الْبُحُورِ وَالْأَوَانِي وَنُورِكَ اللَّامِعِ الَّذِي مَلَأْتَ بِهِ كَوْنَكَ الْجَامِعَ بِأَمْكِنَةِ الْمَكَانِيِّ، اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ عَلَى عَيْنِ الْحَقِّ الَّتِي تَتَجَلَّى مِنْهَا عُرُوسُ الْحَقَائِقِ عَيْنِ الْمَعَارِفِ الْأَقْوَمِ صِرَاطِكَ التَّامِّ الْأَسْقَمِ (١) اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ عَلَى طَلْعَةِ الْحَقِّ بِالْحَقِّ الْكَنْزِ الْأَعْظَمِ إِفَاضَتُكَ مِنْكَ إِلَيْكَ إِحَاطَةُ النُّورِ الْمُطَلْسَمِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَى آلِهِ صَلَاةً تُعَرِّفُنَا بِهَا إِيَّاهُ .

والهيللة بعد صلاة العصر من يوم الجمعة ساعة متصلة بغروب الشمس ولا يشترط التقيد فيها بعدد . ورخص سيدنا رضي الله عنه لأصحابه بالصحراء رضوان الله عليهم في ذكر الهيللة ألفاً لا أقل فصاعداً بعد صلاة العصر وقراءة الوظيفة مباشرة .

(١) معنى الأسقم الأعدل اصله سَقَمَ يَسْقِمُ كعدل وزناً ومعنى . والمطلسم المُخْفَى

كتب في بلده عين ماضي شهر نوفمبر سنة ١٣٧٠ / ١٩٥١

العنوان بالعربية والافرنجية

الشيخ التجاني سيدي الحاج ابنعمر بزاوية عين ماضي الأغواط الجزائر

GRAND CHERIF TIJANI SIDI ELHAJ BENAMOR ZAOUIA TIJANIA
Ain - Madhi Cercle Laghouat " ALGERIE "

Figure 20. Ijaza from Ain Madhi lodge of Sheikh Benamor, November 1951

The Tijani archipelago formed a nexus of places, where relationships among colonial citizens were nurtured across borders, as was the case among students of the dudal Sahkobe, or with Caam's possession of an ijaza from an Algerian shaykh. Through visits, speeches, and the spread of materials, Tijani shaykhs from Algeria, Morocco, and Senegal actively courted Mopti's Muslims—including Mamadu Caam himself—thus nurturing a sense of cross-border community. The Soudanese inland port city therefore served as an important node within the Tijani archipelago, a status which the city also owed to the violent pre-colonial history of the Delta region. In the next section, I turn to the afterlives of this history of violence, examining how they also reinforced a sense of connectivity across borders in the colonial era.

After the Jihad: Liminal Lives through Intimacy and (Im)Mobility

> The pain this war had caused was acutely and deeply felt in both communities. Nevertheless, each side avoided talking about it, so as to not awaken long accumulated resentments."
> –Ibrahima Barry, "Le Pouvoir, le Commerce et le Coran dans le Soudan Nigérien au XIXe siècle"[467]

> "We cannot assume that the precolonial past was significantly less marked by rupture and crisis than the present."
> –Rosalind Shaw, *Memories of the Slave Trade*.[468]

In this section I examine the social and affective geographies that shaped the Caam household in Mopti. I argue that those geographies, in addition to the Tijani archipelago, formed another layer of the cross-border community building that characterized Mamadu Caam's sense of self and of

[467] "Les douleurs consécutives à cette guerre se ressentaient alors de part et d'autre et au plus profond des deux communautés. Mais aussi, les uns et les autres évitaient d'en parler comme pour ne pas réveiller des rancunes longtemps accumulées." Ibrahima Barry, "Le Pouvoir, le Commerce et le Coran dans le Soudan Nigérien au XIXe siècle. Le Royaume de Bandiagara (1864-1893)" (Phd diss., Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1993), 8.

[468] Rosalind Shaw, *Memories of the Slave Trade. Ritual and the Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 5.

belonging.[469] These social and affective bonds, borne out of the afterlives of the 1864 Fuutaŋke invasion of the Delta region, conjured up histories of pre-colonial violence still salient in twentieth century Mopti. Indeed, though often eschewed in discussions, the trauma and tensions of the nineteenth century Fuutaŋke-Maasinaŋke conflict in the Niger delta were never erased. By the colonial era, the wound was still fresh in both communities' memory, as historian Ibrahima Barry has suggested. If these wounds were not erased, in what ways did they continue to show up in the colonial era? I frame Caam's household in Mopti as a crucible where intimate relationships were used as a tool to process the region's recent history of crisis, violence, and rupture. For Caam, a pre-colonial past marked by fraught entanglements between Fuuta, Senegal, and and the Delta, Soudan, sedimented into a set of interpersonal relations and intimate decisions in the colonial era. The past was thus rendered into a constant presence in Caam and Bari's daily life in Mopti, rendering their home into a liminal space connecting Fuuta and the Delta, and the precolonial past to the colonial present.

Affective Geographies and Sedimented Histories

Caam's marriages and family life in Mopti bore echoes of the Fuutaŋke invasion the Delta and of the deep societal reconfigurations of the Delta region prior to the colonial conquest. Upon settling in Bandiagara towards the end of his travels, Caam had first married Maimuna Tala, a delta-born Fuutaŋke woman, and the daughter of a combatant in Umar Taal's invading army. Together, they had one daughter. The town of Bandiagara had become one of the main Fuutaŋke strongholds in the Delta

[469] The notion of affective geographies refers to the intertwines of the territorial and emotional in the making of place, as well as "a sense of intimacy across distance." See Naomi Greyser, *On Sympathetic Grounds. Race, Gender, and Affective Geographies in Nineteenth-century North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

after Umar Taal's death, under the rule of his nephew Tijani Taal.[470] Thus, Caam's marriage into a prominent Fuutaŋke family in Bandiagara likely consolidated his insertion into the region's Fuutaŋke community. Following his wife Maimuna Tala's passing, Caam remarried, this time to a Maasinaŋke woman from the Bari clan, that is, the former ruling family of Hamdallahi that had been ousted through Taal's invasion. However, as noted in Chapter 4, Bari passed away shortly after their marriage, and Caam remarried for the last time, to another woman from the same family, Fatumata (Kumba) Bari (c. 1915-2013). They remained married until Caam's passing in 1971, with two daughters and six sons born out of their union.[471] Within just a few years of settling in the Niger Delta, Caam thus married first into a Fuutaŋke family that had settled in the region through conquest, then into a Maasinaŋke family that had lost power because of the Fuutaŋke invasion.

Though each community cultivated silence to avoid unearthing dormant animosity, marriage served as a repository for these unspoken feelings, and as a constant reminder of Caam's liminal position between two epochs and two regions. I read the reluctance to "awaken long accumulated resentments" Barry evokes, coupled with the matrimony of Fuutaŋke-Maasinaŋke couples, as an example of shunning discursive memory of the war to privilege instead practical memory—a distinction that Rosalind Shaw has drawn. Adapting Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus—past

[470] Bandiagara became a major Fuutaŋke city in the period following the fall of Hamdallahi and the death of El Hajj Umar Taal. It remained so throughout the colonial period. Despite the city's importance to the Fuutaŋke rule in the Delta, little work has been devoted to this historical episode or its aftermath. See Barry, "Le Pouvoir, le Commerce et le Coran dans le Soudan Nigérien au XIXe siècle" ; Joseph Bradshaw, "The Bandiagara Emirate: Warfare, Slavery and Colonization in the Middle Niger, 1863 - 1903" (Phd diss., Michigan State University, 2021) ; Brenner, *West African Sufi* ; Amadou Hampâté Bâ, *Vie et enseignement de Tierno Bokar, le Sage de Bandiagara* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1980).

[471] Of these, one daughter died as an infant, and one son died as a teenager, leaving six children who reached adulthood. Two more passed away of illness in the 2000s. By the time I began this research in 2017, only four sons remained out of the eight Bari-Caam siblings.

histories sedimented into day to day habits which become second nature—to environments marked by dislocation and rupture, Shaw contends that practical memory constitutes "a different way of "remembering" the past, in which not only everyday choices (marriage strategies, ethnic identifications, and alliances...) but also violently dislocating transregional processes (conquest, colonialism, migration, war, wage labor) are rendered internal, are (literally) incorporated into people and their social and cultural practice."[472]

In fact, the idea that marriages would serve as receptacles for sedimented histories of violence, migrations and societal upheaval had been deliberately crafted, as policy, in the immediate aftermath of the war. According to Amadou Hampâté Bâ, after the jihad and subsequent death of Umar Taal, the new Fuutaŋke authorities in the Delta pursued policies of reconciliation through "mixed" Fuutaŋke-Maasinaŋke marriages. Taal's successor Tijani ordered that widowed women from each community, who had lost their husband in the war, marry men from the other community.[473] This policy had shaped Hampâté Bâ's own family history, as he was born in Bandiagara at the turn of the century to a Maasinaŋke father and a Fuutaŋke mother.[474] The pre-condition that rendered such marriages possible was the Fuutaŋke jihad and subsequent rule in the Delta, from 1864 until the colonial conquest at the turn of the twentieth century. Much like the union of Hampâté Bâ's parents one generation earlier, both the Tala-Caam and Bari-Caam marriages were thus manifestations of the

[472] Shaw, *Memories of the Slave Trade*, 5. For more on interpretative methodologies that recover the past from rituals, shrines, and embodied practices, see Andrew Apter and Lauren Derby, *Activating the Past: History and Memory in the Black Atlantic World* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010).

[473] Hampâté Bâ, *Amkoullel, l'enfant peul*, 39. Ibrahima Barry also mentions the "multiple marriages between the two communities," see Barry, "Le Pouvoir, le Commerce et le Coran dans le Soudan Nigérien au XIXe siècle," 20.

[474] Ibid, 67. Hampâté Bâ posits he was likely born in January or February 1900, "among the cohort of the century's firstborns." Therefore, he and Caam were likely born just a few years apart.

tight yet fraught entanglements that bound the Fuutaŋke and Maasinaŋke communities in the Niger Delta.[475]

In particular, Bari and Caam's Fuutaŋke-Maasinaŋke marriage and household represented a condensation of the trauma of this pre-colonial conflict, seldom spoken of, but ever present. Living in Mopti, speaking different variants of the Fulani language (Fulfulde/Pulaar), and maintaining family relations with both Bari's kin in the Delta, and Caam's kin in Fuuta Tooro, would have triggered daily reminders of the proximity of this entangled past, continuously rendering it current.[476] In the household interactions of such families, silence was often cultivated around the wounds and trauma the conflict had caused. Of course, at times, the trauma would erupt, as conveyed by the anecdote of a Maasinaŋke woman whose family taunted her when she came to introduce her newborn, a son bearing the name Tijani.[477] But more often, silence was the norm. Hampâté Bâ recalls that as a child, it took pressing, insistent inquiries on his part, to be told about atrocities that happened to his paternal family at the hands of his maternal family's community, including how he lost "forty of his forebears" in a massacre Tijani Taal orchestrated in 1864 to avenge his uncle's death.[478] While the trauma was generally avoided in daily discussions, the history that led to the war is openly brought up in specific

[475] Matrimony was also used as a means of expanding the Tijani archipelago. El Hadji Samba Diallo writes that preeminent scholar and Tijani leader Ibrahim Niass utilize marriage relationships to spread the tariqa and "break through French-British borders, which instead turned into passageways for tens of millions of disciples." Diallo, "Le rôle de l'Administration française dans les conflits de succession dans la Tijāniyya nord-africaine," 165.

[476] Caam and Bari's youngest child referred to their family dynamic as one of "metissage," and to the linguistic collisions between Pulaar and Fulfulde, the variants of the Fulani language Caam and Bari respectively spoke, as an "explosive mix." There was thus a clear sense of frictions generated by two distinct communities coming together through their marriage and family. Aly Thiam, interview by the author, Saint Louis, 10 July 2018.

[477] This particular anecdote circulates in my own extended family.

[478] Hampâté Bâ, *Amkoullel, l'enfant peul*, 32, 34-5. According to Hampâté Bâ, upon learning of his uncle's death, Tijani rushed back to Hamdallahi and had all male members of the most preeminent families of the caliphate executed, including forty members of Hampâté Bâ's family in Sofara.

and circumscribed forums, such as the rich body of oral and written texts celebrating the main male belligerents in the conflict, including El Hajj Umar Taal, Tijani Taal, Seeku Aamadu, and Ba Lobbo.[479] A culture of public celebrations of charismatic men who fought in the Fuutaŋke-Maasinaŋke conflict thus cohabits with an eschewing of the trauma the conflict caused.[480] Likewise, the Caam-Bari household in Mopti conjured up affective geographies linking the Senegalese Fuuta to the Soudanese Delta. These intimate, affective bonds rested upon sedimented and silenced traumas brought about by the precolonial Fuutaŋke invasion of the Delta.

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[479] From the immediate aftermath of the conflict until the present day, a considerable body of work, including academic and intellectual productions, as well as oral and written literary works, have tackled various aspects of the Fuutaŋke-Maasinaŋke conflict, though the lion share of these works focuses on the Fuutaŋke side. In the aftermath of the invasion, El Hajj Umar Taal produced a lengthy justification for his attack on the Maasinaŋke, somewhat contradicting his prior work condemning intra-muslim conflicts. For a translation and critical edition of the manuscript, see Sidi Mohamed Mahibou and Jean-Louis Triaud, *Voilà ce qui est arrivé – Bayân mâ waqa`a d'al-Hâgg `Umar al- Fûtî: plaidoyer pour une guerre sainte en Afrique de l'Ouest au XIXe siècle, Fontes historiae Africanae* (Paris: Centre régional de publication de Paris, Editions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1983). On the other side of the conflict, an author named Mohamed b. Ahmad b. Ahmad b. Ahmad produced a manuscript providing a Maasinaŋke perspective on the Fuutaŋke invasion. Only one version of this manuscript is currently extant. For a translation and critical edition of the manuscript, see Boubacar Sissoko, "Bayân ma jara: édition, traduction et commentaire" (MA Thesis: École normale supérieure de Lyon, 2014). In 1993, Ibrahima Barry wrote that audio cassettes of oral performances celebrating various aspects of the Hamdallahi Caliphate and of its rulers "flooded the marketplaces in Bamako, Segu, and above all, Mopti." Barry's observation still holds today, though reflective of current mediums of music sharing, video and audio recordings of sung performances by Bara Sambarou, Yero Askoula, Demba Hamet Guissé, Farba Sally Seck and others flood YouTube and various social media. Hagiographic accounts of El Hajj Umar Taal's life abound, and form their own literary genre. Among them, Mohammadu Aliyu Caam, *La vie d'el Hadj Omar, qacida en poular* (Paris: Institut d'ethnologie, 1935) ; Cheikh Moussa Camara, *La Vie d'el Hadji Omar* (translated by Amar Samb) (Dakar: Hilal, 1975) ; Muntaga Taal, *Al-Jawāhir wa al-Durur fī Sīra al-Ḥājj ʿUmar (Les Perles Rares sur la Vie d'El Hadji Omar)* (Beirut: Dar Albouraq, 2005). For an analysis of the role of the Umarian textual tradition in the making of Muslim sainthood in colonial and postcolonial West Africa, see Wendell Hassan Marsh, "Compositions of Sainthood: The Biography of Ḥājj ʿUmar Tāl by Shaykh Mūsā Kamara" (Phd diss: Columbia University, 2018). There is one main written hagiographic account on Seeku Amadu. See Bohas, Saguer, Salvaing, and Eddine Kouloughli (eds. and trans.), *L'inspiration de l'éternel.*

[480] Both communities cultivate an ambiguous balance of celebrating big men deeds, while silencing the trauma of the conflict. Amadou Hampâté Bâ, himself the product of a mixed family, famously never published the second volume of his acclaimed historical account on Hamadallhi's history, *L'Empire peul du Macina*, even though he had completed a full manuscript. According to Bintou Sanankoua, he did so out of fear of reviving tensions between the two communities. Hampâté Bâ held onto the manuscript, which remains unpublished, until his death in 1991. Starting in June 1977, official reconciliations between the main families representing the Fuutaŋke and Maasinaŋke sides were organized in Hamdallahi. Interestingly, where Barry lauded the positive effect of mixed Fuutaŋke-Maasinaŋke marriages towards fostering lasting peace, he deemed these outspoken attempts at processing the tensions of competing memories around the conflict as "null and potentially counterproductive." See Barry, "Le Pouvoir, le Commerce et le Coran dans le Soudan Nigérien au XIXe siècle," 11 and 21.

Hawly's Letter

Practical memory also manifested in Caam's continued cultivation of affective geographies between the Fuuta and Delta regions of Senegal and Soudan. Though settled in Mopti for decades, he constantly re-inscribed himself in the liminal space between Fuuta and the Delta, even as he envisioned and shaped his family's future. One such instance was Bari and Caam's decision-making on the occasion of their eldest daughter's wedding. On Thursday, February 8th, 1962 Caam gathered with several witnesses, including one of his sons and a trusted neighbor, to seal the terms of the marriage of Hawly Caam, his and Bari's firstborn and only living daughter. That day, Caam signed a marriage contract for Hawly. As usual for such documents, the contract settled the matter of the dowry payment, but also included a more unconventional clause. Writing in the first person, in Arabic, Caam specified the following regarding Hawly's betrothed Mahmudu Ba:

> I notified him that I would not grant him my daughter's hand in marriage unless he complies with the following condition: if he marries her, he shall not lead her away from Mopti, ever. He shall not take her with him on any journey, to any land. Should he wish to visit his hometown, he shall not go with her; he shall leave her here. Having both agreed upon this condition, I gave him my daughter's hand in marriage.[481]

The inclusion of this strongly worded immobility clause in the contract begets questions: Who came up with it? Why were the couple's future migrations centered in their marriage contract? And, why were Hawly's migrations to be prevented?

It is unclear who came up with the immobility clause in the contract. Since Caam penned the document himself in the first person, it is tempting to deduce the decision to restrict his daughter's travels was his. However, the possibility that Bari instructed her husband to include this clause cannot

[481] Ceerno Mamadu Caam Papers, 8 February 1962, Marriage Contract of Hawly Caam and Mahmudu Ba, Mopti, Mali.

be ruled out, nor is it implausible that Hawly herself persuaded her father to do so.[482] The absence of Bari and Hawly's voices from the document can be deceiving, and is no reliable indication of the actual extent to which they participated in the decision-making process. In the colonial Soudan, women's mobility was not uncommon, and there are numerous examples of women asserting their migratory decisions.[483] For instance in 1926, Mariama Fulani, a Mopti woman whose husband Belali Wangara was an itinerant trader, traveled with him from the Soudan to the Gold Coast, but after five years she decided to leave him.[484] In a written complaint Belali lodged at the Asantehene's court in Kumasi, he explained that he had obtained her hand "from her parents," and insisted that he had traveled to the Gold Coast along with his wife "with the consent of her parents," Braima and Belemenyima.[485] Belali's repeated emphasis on both parents' involvement in deciding the modalities of Mariama's marriage and migration, as opposed to merely her father, is insightful. It suggests that even though Bari was not explicitly mentioned in Hawly's marriage contract, she also may have been instrumental in shaping it.

The decision to center migrations in the marriage contract was a consequence of the

[482] Hawly Caam passed in 2009, and I was unable to interview her for this research. In interviewing her remaining brothers, and one of her daughters, they were unsure as to what Mamadu Caam's motivations might have been for the immobility clause, but did suggest that Hawly herself may have asked for it, out of fear of having to leave her family.

[483] See Rodet, *Les Migrantes ignorées du Haut-Senegal*. In the same communities that the Bari and Caam were part of, Hampâté Bâ described in his memoirs his mothers numerous journeys, including how she followed and supported her husband who had been jailed by the colonial administration.

[484] Here, "Fulani" and "Wangara" are not last names, but monikers indicative of Mariama's community (Fulani) and Belali's occupation (much like the term Juula, the term Wangara designated a trading diaspora). Asantehene's Archives in Manhyia, Kumasi, Collection 20, Box 2, Folder 81, 3 January 1939: Belali Wangara's appeal to the Asantehene and The District Commissioner. Gracia Clark; MATRIX: Center for Humane Arts, Letters, and Social Sciences Online; Michigan State University, accessed online https://aodl.org/islamictolerance/kumasi/object/166-600-7/

[485] Ibid. Belali further explains that Mariama's parents explicitly demanded that he never travel back to Mopti without her. This makes sense given the many dangers of the journey on foot, which was the primary mode of travel between the region and the Gold Coast during the years 1910-1940. Travelers risked being attacked by wild animals, looters, or enslavers. See Dougnon, *Travail de Blanc, travail de Noir*, 92-4 and 207.

mobility-driven, archipelagic mode of belonging and community-building that Caam had cultivated for decades. First, Hawly's betrothed, Mahmudu Ba, was also a migrant from Fuuta Tooro who had settled in Mopti one generation after Caam, their home villages neighboring each other in northern Senegal. Hawly's marriage was thus, to an extent, a strengthening of the ties that bound the Bari-Caam household in Soudan to Caam's home region in Senegal, even though Caam had by then been a resident of Mopti for three decades. Second, in Caam's mindset, his son in law and daughter's potential future migrations were not a mere possibility; they were a given that needed to be anticipated. In both the husband's choice and the anticipation of migrations, the logics of the archipelago, or connected clusters of Tijani places that favored connectivity and mobility, were thus on display.

Lastly, Bari and Caam's gendered anxiety to let their sole daughter on the road—they never sought to restrict their sons' migrations in this manner—could have been partly due to the trauma engendered by the violence and societal ruptures of the second half of the nineteenth century, which had largely affected women. As previously noted, this trauma was an integral, if unspoken, part of their quotidian family life in Mopti and formed the bedrock of the practical memory of the Bari-Caam household. The gendered fear of having a daughter live an itinerant life was in a way justified. Indeed, conflicts in the nineteenth-century Soudan had rendered women the primary target of capture and enslavement.[486] During El Hajj Umar Taal's wars in the Niger Delta, tens of thousands were thus killed or captured and subjected to abuse. Memories of this time of widespread insecurity would likely have

[486] See Martin Klein, "Women in Slavery in the Western Sudan," in *Women and Slavery in Africa*, ed. Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 67–94; Klein, "The Slave Trade in the Western Sudan during the Nineteenth Century," *Slavery and Abolition* 13, no. 1 (1992): 41; Claude Meillassoux, "État et conditions des esclaves à Gumbu (Mali) au XIXe siècle," *Journal of African History* 14, no. 3 (1973): 432.

been cultivated in Bari's family environment. Likewise, Caam was born in the era of the forced migration of the ferganjkooɓe to Fuuta, and the stories surrounding their exodus emphasized the many hardships women among them suffered.[487] Thus, Caam strengthened his connection to his homeland through his son-in-law, and kept the mobilities that were likely to result from these connections as a central preoccupation ahead of Hawly's wedding. The immobility clause of the marriage contract, whether it originated from Hawly herself or from her parents, may hint to fears related to memories of insecurity and vulnerability decades of war had triggered in the region. Writing about Dogon communities in the Bandiagara region in the 1950s, scholar Isaïe Dougnon states that "the specter of slavery and servitude remained vivid in the memory of local villagers."[488] A traumatic recent past, sedimented in Bari and Caam's household, thus echoed through their day to day life and decision-making in colonial Mopti. The translocal sense of self that Caam had cultivated manifested beyond the religious, memorial, and affective terrains. In the 1950s, it would take on a new form, influenced by the language of political debates around citizenship for Africans in the French empire.

[487] Kane, *A History of Fuuta Tooro*, 105.

[488] Dougnon, *Travail de Blanc, travail de Noir*, 217.

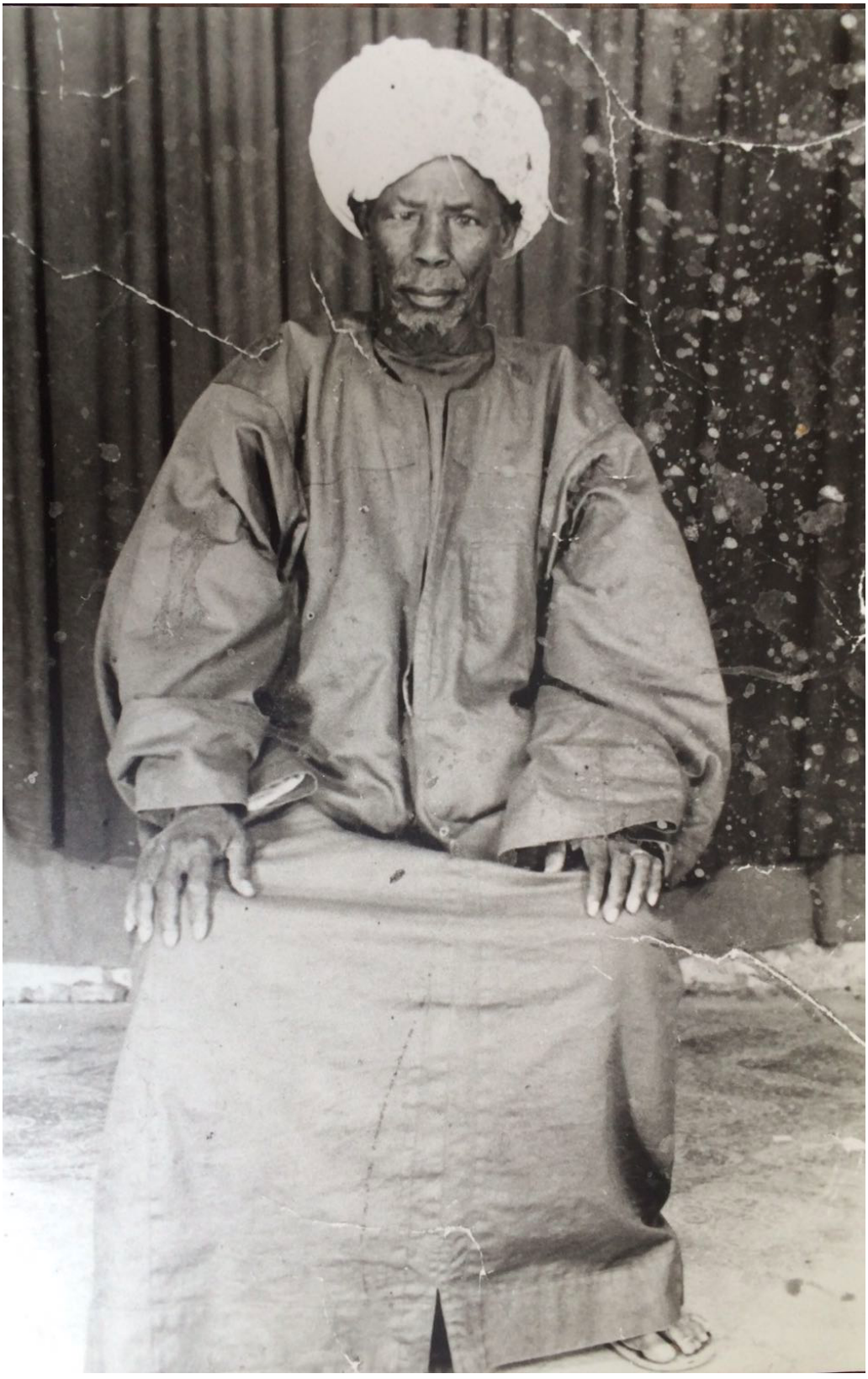

Figure 21. Mamadu Caam in Mopti, circa 1960, photographer unknown. Courtesy of Aly Thiam

Before the Federation: Mopti's "Senegalese-Soudanese" Association

A worn-out notebook stands out among Caam's papers, its pink cover bearing water damage, ink stains, and scribbled numbers and notes. Series of identically formatted tables written in French fill its pages: columns mark the twelve months of the Gregorian calendar, rows are labeled with a first and last name, and each cell bears a number. Though the notebook was kept among Caam's belongings, it does not bear any clear indication of its owner, and in fact, it may not have had a single owner. Instead, its palimpsest qualities—some inscriptions are crossed off or written over, and multiple ink colors and handwritings are visible—suggest that a succession of scribes jotted notes down in its pages over time. What the notebook reveals, is that between 1950 and 1954, Caam was among a group of Mopti residents who had created a mutual aid association. Its members held meetings, paid dues, and elected leaders.[489]

The association was self-organized and collectively-ran, and at its height spanned Mopti, Konna, and Korientze.[490] The notebook says little about the hierarchies and rules that governed the association, save for one information: on August 12 1950, during the general assembly, one Ousmane Sy was elected as the association's internal judge.[491] The accounting tables show that membership

[489] Ceerno Mamadu Caam Papers, 1950-1954, Notebook entitled "Senegalo-Soudanais," Mopti, Mali. The notebook is in French, save for one sheet which bears Arabic numbers.

[490] Ibid, "En caisse au 16 avril 1950, Mopti, Konna, Korientze: 11 490." Mutual aid groups had increasingly become commonplace in postwar Soudan. On veterans associations see Mann, *Native Sons*, 103-5. Mann also writes that in the Senegal's four communes, associations were commonly found long before they blossomed elsewhere in French West Africa after World War II. It is thus possible that some of the members of Mopti's Senegalese-Soudanese association, who might have hailed from the four communes, were more familiar with this culture of institutionalized associations.

[491] Customary Fulani associations included a judge. Amadou Hampate Ba describes the structure of the associations as follows: "Besides the mawdo, an elder and honorary president exogenous to the association, there had to be a chief (amiru), one or several vice-chiefs (diokko), one judge or qadi (alkaali), one or several officers in charge of discipline and public accusations, and one or several griots who would act as emissaries or spokespersons." Hampâté Bâ, *Amkoullel, l'enfant peul*, 244. I have not found mentions of other roles that members of the

oscillated between forty and fifty participants, all male, who paid monthly dues of 50 francs. When members missed a monthly payment, they could make up for it later—for instance Caam skipped the April and May 1950 payments, but contributed a combined 150 francs in June. As the reader flips the pages, the succession of tables gives way to notes outlining monthly revenues, and spending. The latter in particular uncover the social world that the 50 francs contributions supported: throughout the year, members were able to access the collective pool of money to cover expenses relating to weddings, baptisms, illness or death. The association thus functioned as an undercurrent running both parallel and counter to the colonial fiscal system—admittedly at a much smaller scale. Where French taxation was by and large a coercive and oppressive tool, the mutual aid association provided to its members welfare that the state did not.

In addition to providing a social security fund, the association might have also functioned as a tontine. At once financial and social institutions, tontines are rotating savings and credit associations commonly found across West Africa, which may have emerged in the region prior to colonial rule.[492] In tontines, each member contributes a periodic (often monthly) sum of money to the collective, and for each period, one rotating member is handed the total amount of money pooled, to be used at their discretion. As a form of collective saving and fundraising, the tontine thus guarantees financial security, as well as the periodic opportunity for each member to benefit from a large sum of money that they would otherwise not be able to mobilize. At its core, the tontine system fosters solidarity, reciprocity,

Senegalese-Soudanese association might have been elected to. There is one mention of a griot named Oumar N'Diaye, but it is unclear whether he took on a formal griot role as part of the association.

[492] Robin Law, "Finance and Credit in Pre-Colonial Dahomey," in *Credit, Currencies and Culture. African Financial Institutions in Historical Perspective*, ed. Endre Stiansen and Jane I. Guyer (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1999), 38-9.

and equal sharing. As such, it reflects a "monetarization of traditional habits of collectivization" within West African communities.[493] Organizations based on age group and gender, such as the Bamanan *ton* or the Fulani *waalde* or *fedde* systems, were widespread in this region of West Africa and their origins date back centuries. Just like other non-fiduciary associations, West African tontine or mutual aid group members usually share social or occupational characteristics, be it women merchants, children from the same age group and neighborhood, male farm workers, veterans, or others.

Besides gender, what was the common denominator for the members of the Mopti mutual aid association? It is plausible that like Caam, all members were merchants, an occupational background that would make sense in explaining why the association was created in the first place. As previously noted, the Mopti economy was dominated by local and transnational French colonial corporations who crushed the activities and profit margins of African traders. In the pre-WWII period, a number of Lebanese businesses came second to the French in profits from commercial activities. In the postwar era, a handful of African merchants managed to make profits margins on par with, or superior to, some Lebanese traders. Participating in a tontine could have been a way for African merchants to raise the capital needed for key investments and business expansion.

However it is not clear whether all the associations' members were merchants. In the notebook the only information provided about their identity is their first and last name. On a few instances the names are followed by an occupation, but these seem to have only been included to distinguish homonyms, as was the case of "Oumar N'Diaye carpenter," "Oumar N'Diaye no. 1," and "Oumar

[493] Jeanne Semin, "L'argent, la famille, les amies: ethnographie contemporaine des tontines africaines en contexte migratoire," *Civilisations (online)* 56 (2007), DOI : https://doi.org/10.4000/civilisations.636.

N'Diaye griot," who all paid dues in 1950.[494] This leaves open the question of whether the overwhelming majority of members whose occupation was left out, such as N'Diaye no. 1, should be assumed to have been merchants, or if a shared profession was not the primary criterion for inclusion into the association altogether.[495] While the question of a shared occupational background remains open, the notebook does point to one identity marker the members had in common.

Penciled in a larger font at the center of the pink cover, the inscription "Senegalo-Soudanais" catches the eye. The display and design choices make it clear it should be read as the notebook's title, hence understood as the association's name. If so, who qualified as a Senegalese-Soudanese in 1950s Mopti? It is unclear whether the moniker applied to migrants born in Senegal, or whether a person born in Mopti, but claiming kinship and ancestry in Senegal (as many members of the Fuutaŋke community did) would have also counted as a Senegalese-Soudanese. Either way, the fact that the association members chose a demonym that tied their identity to colonial territories, is telling. When it comes to Caam in particular, the label Senegalese-Soudanese fuses the old and the new. It goes beyond other forms of belonging he had cultivated up to that point, namely traveling and corresponding across the Tijani archipelago, fostering memories of the pre-colonial past, and nurturing affective geographies linking Fuuta and the Delta. These forms of belonging ignored colonial borders and territories, and were instead grounded in regional history and geographical imagination. Adopting Senegalese and Soudanese as joint markers of identity thus marked both continuity and rupture in Caam's logic of identification, by acknowledging the possibility of identification based on colonial partitions.

[494] Ceerno Mamadu Caam Papers, 1950-1954, "Senegalo-Soudanais" Notebook.

[495] I hope to conduct further interviews with children of the members to establish more certainty around the nature and activities of the association.

This shift likely reflected emerging nationalist and federalist discourses in the politicized environment of postwar French West Africa that Caam and his peers would have been exposed to. Indeed, in the postwar period, ongoing heated debates and discourse from West African politicians or workers' unions, demanding equal citizenship within the changing French empire, permeated from the political and labor spheres into the public space.[496] As such, Mopti's Senegalese-Soudanese association illustrates the notion that the public space, rather than being made up of pre-constituted groups, is precisely where "collective belonging crystalizes as it becomes mobilized in discourses, and by actors, projects, and interest groups."[497] While still reflecting Caam's belonging to cross-border, trans-local communities, the association and its moniker acknowledged the coming into being of a mode of self-identification based upon colonial territories.

Postwar Party Politics in the Soudan and Mopti

Mopti's Senegalese-Soudanese association blossomed in the midst of a period of deep political change across French West Africa, in the wake of the indigenat's abolition and the Gueye Law's adoption. African colonial subjects had become colonial citizens, their national identities—Senegalese, Soudanese, Ivorian, etc.—thus becoming the basis allowing them to make claims upon the colonial state, including the right to elect representatives. Political parties looking to capture these votes flourished. In the Soudan, the two main parties competing for seats in the French National Assembly

[496] See for instance Frederick Cooper, "'Our strike': Equality, Anticolonial Politics, and the 1947-48 Railway Strike in French West Africa," *The Journal of African History* 37, no. 1 (1996), 81-118 ; and Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation,* 1-25 and 165-213.

[497] Jean-Hervé Jezequel, "Le 'nationalisme officiel' du Parti Progressiste Soudanais (PSP). Histoire d'un projet politique inabouti," *Anales de Desclasificación* vol. 1: La défaite de l'aire culturelle (2003): 181.

and territorial elections were the Soudanese Union—African Democratic Rally (US-RDA), and the Progressive Soudanese Party (PSP). In major Soudanese cities, local parties also emerged, including Mopti's Dogon-Fulani Action, and Bandiagara Populations' Union. Throughout the Soudan, the US-RDA and the PSP increasingly developed a bitter rivalry anchored in their radically diverging ideologies.

In 1946 two French-educated teachers, Hamadoun Dicko and Fily Dabo Sissoko, founded the PSP. The main party line was a form of nationalism, whereby Soudanese people were to rally behind aristocratic elites—Sissoko and Dicko themselves hailed from such families—deemed the custodians of pre-colonial traditions, best equipped to lead the rest of the population.[498] By the time he founded the party, Sissoko was a literary scholar, canton chief of Namiba, and elected representative in the National Assembly. He had also long been a staunch opponent to the cultural assimilation of colonized populations by France, and the PSP thus strongly promoted imagined notions of a national past and national traditions in their discourse.[499] In postwar political debates about the future of colonial governance, Sissoko argued for "a line of evolution appropriate for the Soudan."[500] Given its leadership and political message, the party naturally appealed to elites and chiefs: not only did the PSP incorporate large numbers of them into their ranks—earning the nickname *faama ton* or "big men's party"—the party sought to legitimize chiefs' power in colonial governance. Sissoko argued that chieftaincy was a "millennial institution" with deep roots in the Soudan, and called for the "restoration

[498] Mann, *Native Sons*, 121.

[499] Jezequel, "Le 'nationalisme officiel' du Parti Progressiste Soudanais," 181-2.

[500] Mann, *Native Sons*, 121.

of chiefs' prestige, and consequently, the broadening of their responsibilities."[501]

Where the PSP claimed strong Soudanese roots, the US-RDA was the Soudan branch of a wider, pan-African formation: the RDA, which spanned French West and Equatorial Africa. Founded in October 1946 when delegates from leftist political parties from across the French territories had gathered in a congress in Bamako, the RDA outlined two main goals in its manifesto: meaningful and equal citizenship for France's colonial and metropolitan citizens alike; and African federalist governance of all French territories, rather than nationalist fragmentation along colonial borders.[502] Initially allied with the French Communist party (they would split in 1950), the RDA evolved in the decade following its creation.[503] While the citizenship aspirations gradually waned in favor of anticolonialism, the federalism ideals sustained, until their brutal collapse in 1960 with the fall of the Mali Federation.[504] The party's Soudan branch, the US-RDA, was headed by schoolteacher Modibo Keita, and like him, many US-RDA members were low-rank African public servants in the colonial systems: workers in the postal service, railways, docks, and other industries, nurses and doctors, and large numbers of teachers.[505] The US-RDA also strove to recruit supporters outside of the French-educated classes or the ranks of trade unions, across a larger swath of the rural and urban

[501] Ibid, 182-3.

[502] Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*, 166. From its creation until 1950, the RDA was allied with the French Communist party.

[503] Sékéné Mody Cissoko, *Un combat pour l'unité de l'Afrique de l'Ouest. La fédération du Mali (1959-1960)* (Dakar: Les nouvelles éditions Africaines du Sénégal, 2005), 27.

[504] The Mali Federation was a short-lived attempt by the two French colonies of Senegal and Soudan to head into indepence together, as a federation of two States. The project failed because of political differences between the Senegalese and Soudanese leaders. See Cissoko, *Un combat pour l'unité de l'Afrique de l'Ouest.*

[505] Robert Donald Francis Nathan, "Socialism and the Nation: Mali, 1957-1968" (PhD diss.: Dalhousie University, 2015), 55-56.

populations, including the peasantry.

During the years 1946-1956, there were constant cycles of campaigns and elections in French West Africa.[506] In the Soudan, from 1946 onwards the PSP generally won more seats in all elections, but starting in 1951 the US-RDA slowly and steadily started consolidating its appeal among voters. That same year, Mamadu Caam received a US-RDA leaflet listing the party's candidates in the upcoming election, which he conserved among his papers.[507] In Mopti specifically, the US-RDA and PSP initially held equal numbers of supporters in the city, and the PSP dominated the surrounding rural areas.[508] However throughout the first half of the 1950s, the US-RDA reversed this tendency, becoming the majority party by 1956.[509] That year, three separate elections were held in Mopti.[510] In January, registered voters throughout the French Soudan were called to elect their representative at the French National Assembly. The following July, they went again to the polls after long standing Soudanese representative Mamadou Konaté of US-RDA, who had been just reelected in the January election, unexpectedly died in May, leaving his seat vacant. Baréma Bocoum of US-RDA, a Mopti native, was elected. In October, when he returned to his hometown for the first time since his election,

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[506] Tony Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa. France's Successful Decolonization?* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2002), 147.

[507] While it is unclear if Caam did vote in the 1951 election, it is significant that he held onto US-RDA paperwork from that time period. At the very least, it indicates an awareness of the party from early on, before it became a majority force. I have not found PSP paperwork among Caam's belongings, although he may well have possessed some as well.

[508] ANM 1E-31, 3rd trimester 1948: "Bulletin Politique Trimestriel."

[509] This Mopti figure reflects Soudan-wide trends. By 1956 the US-RDA was the major party across the colony. Mann, *From Empires to NGOs*, 61-2.

[510] ANM 1E-31, 29 March 1957: "Rapport Politique: Les partis politiques—Les elections."The Mopti percentages are remarkably aligned with the national percentages of votes for each party. See Mohamadoun Baréma Bocoum, *Baréma (Kissorou) Bocoum: Un homme d'Etat malien: Vie et parcours* (Self-published, 2001), 13.

now a representative at the French National Assembly, Bocoum drew massive crowds.[511] Lastly in November, Mopti residents were asked to elect their local assembly. Extent papers in the family archive show that Caam voted in both national elections, and Bari voted in the second national election and the local election. The US-RDA consolidated their domination in all three elections—the last one likely galvanized by Bocoum's timely visit—though the PSP remained a serious opponent.

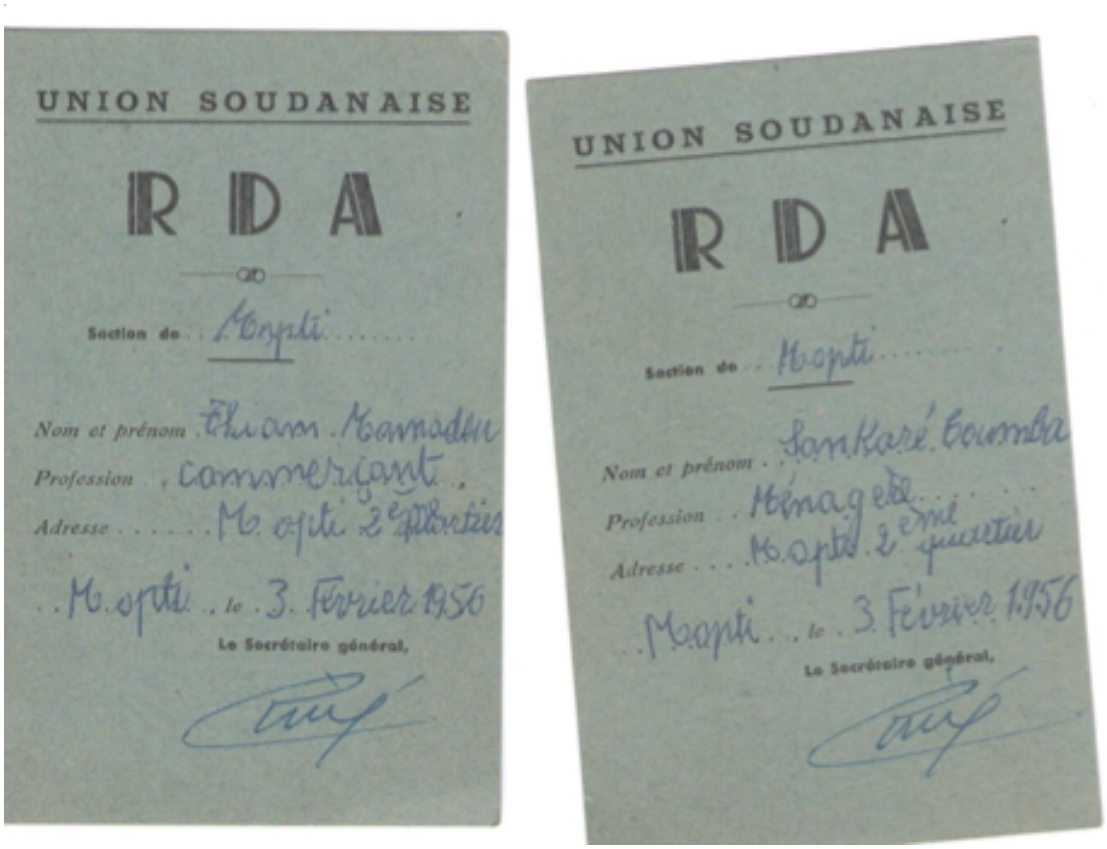

Figure 22. Caam and Bari's US-RDA membership cards. The surnames "Bari" and "Sangaré/Sankaré" are interchangeable in Fulani culture.

In voting for US-RDA in 1956, Caam certainly looked after his own interests. The US-RDA actively courted African merchants, and would highlight the trade monopolies and outsized profits of

[511] ANM 1E-31, October 1956: "Revue Politique Mensuelle."

French and Lebanese firms, a discourse that Caam, a trader, would likely have welcomed.[512] Besides, by 1956, the US-RDA was the party that a majority of Mopti's voters embraced, and Caam's vote might have been mimetic. His vote could have been further linked to personal relationships, as Robert Cissé, a key member of the local US-RDA section, was one of his neighbors in Komoguel and frequently hosted US-RDA meetings at his home.[513]

Yet, I believe Caam's occupation or social network only partially explain his activism within US-RDA. An over-determining focus on these factors obfuscates the key role that local histories played in local-level politics, while downplaying the intellectual and ideological choices behind the political decisions African actors made in the era of decolonization. Indeed, not all merchants voted US-RDA in Mopti, as some threw their support behind the PSP, and others traded sides. Caam was not French educated, and neither a civil servant nor a trade unionist: thus, he was likely not as conversant in the Western political culture and lexicon US-RDA leaders cultivated. As such, he could have found the traditionalist discourse of the PSP more familiar. His joining the US-RDA was therefore a deliberate political choice that deserves careful analysis. The final section of this chapter sets out to understand Caam's choices in the era of decolonization. To do so, the section at once looks back at Sahelian Muslim political thought with roots in the precolonial past that still had deep resonance in Caam's daily life; and looks ahead to the future he would have imagined for his community based on the expansive notion of archipelagic belonging he had cultivated.

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[512] Nathan, "Socialism and the Nation, 56-8. Sean Hanretta makes a similar point in the Ivorian context. See Hanretta, *Islam and Social Change in French West Africa,* 107. Other groups voted along their interest lines. For instance, Mann notes that the "gross majority of veterans were considered anti-US-RDA after 1950" in Mopti and Bandiagara. See Mann, *Native Sons*, 134.

[513] Robert Cisse was a schoolteacher, who rose the ranks of the Mopti US-RDA local, eventually becoming secretary-general. ANM 1E-31, 4th trimester 1952: "Revue Trimestrielle."

Caam's Decolonization

Belonging beyond Borders

As a political formation, the US-RDA embodied Caam's vision of expansive, archipelagic communities united by shared spiritualities, epistemes and ontologies, and crossing over territorial partitions. Where the PSP championed a strictly Soudanese identity, the US-RDA was the local branch of the larger pan-African RDA party. From the onset, the RDA made it clear it aimed to transcend colonial borders, and reach as many colonized African peoples as possible. Upon publishing the party's founding manifesto in 1946, two of the main authors, Houphouët-Boigny and Gabriel d'Arboussier, penned a letter addressed to "all political parties, associations and organizations, trade unions, and major individual figures of French West and East Africa, Cameroon, Togo, French Somaliland, Madagascar, and French islands of the Indian ocean."[514] Houphouët and d'Arboussier encouraged the letter' recipients to relay the RDA manifesto to the local press, and to spread the news of the upcoming Bamako meeting—where the RDA was to be formally inaugurated—as far and wide as possible, "by any means necessary." Their call was taken up. In Dakar, newspapers wrote about the upcoming founding meeting. In Conakry, archivist Madeira Keita and trade unionist Ahmed Sekou Touré—who would later become the first president of Guinea,—both organizers of the Communist Study Group, prepared to travel to Bamako.[515] Across Côte d'Ivoire, political leaders in urban and rural areas sent delegates: a caravan of some fifty trucks ferried waves of attendees from various Ivorian regions to

[514] Kipré, *Le congrès de Bamako ou la naissance du RDA*, 89-90.

[515] Gregory Mann, "Anti-Colonialism and Social Science: Georges Balandier, Madeira Keita, and "the Colonial Situation" in French Africa," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 55 no. 1 (January 2013): 97.

Bamako.[516] From Mopti where he was residing, Caam perhaps directly witnessed some of the local preparations ahead of the Bamako meeting, or some repercussions of its aftermath.

But more crucial than the RDA activities that Caam would have seen in Mopti, is what he would have heard from other places. Indeed, the energy generated by the RDA's creation reverberated throughout all colonial territories across French Africa. Given Caam's own sprawling cross-border network, his commercial activities, and his correspondence, word of mouth about the RDA's founding and subsequent actions in various colonies would have likely reached him. His world would have been filled with discussions and debates about the RDA from other traders, travelers transiting through his house, interlocutors at the marketplace, members of the Senegalese-Soudanese association, and acquaintances from various locales in West Africa. In Mopti, travelers and migrants carried political news and literature—for instance in early 1953, a Senegal-based veterinarian nurse, who was on holiday at home in Mopti, received in the mail a pamphlet authored by d'Arboussier titled "the RDA is still anti-colonialist!"[517] And in the following years, even though no official union local was known to exist

[516] Kipré, *Le congrès de Bamako ou la naissance du RDA*, 91 and 113.

[517] ANM 1E-31, 1st trimester 1953: "Revue trimestrielle, Cercle de Mopti —Doctrine et thème de propagande." French surveillance intercepted the document. By then, d'Arboussier was no longer a member of the RDA. After a feud with Houphouët in 1952, he was expelled from the party. Where Houphouët was more moderate, d'Arboussier represented the more radical wing of the RDA, and had close ties to the French Communist party. He was also among the most staunch advocates of African unity and federalism within the party. The pamphlet that French surveillance intercepted in Mopti was a series of open letters d'Arboussier had written to Houphouët following their falling out. Eventually, the two men reconciled in 1955 and joined the party again. D'Arboussier authored several works, including Gabriel d'Arboussier, *Le R.D.A. est toujours anticolonialiste : lettres ouvertes à Félix Houphouet-Boigny* (Dakar: Unknown Publisher, 1952) ; and d'Arboussier, *L'Afrique vers l'unité* (Issy: Editions Saint-Paul, 1961). For more on d'Arboussier, see Françoise Blum and Ophélie Rillon, "Mémoires sensibles, mémoires métisses de la colonisation. Les réflexions intimes de Gabriel d'Arboussier," *Socio-anthropologie* no 37 (2018), 51-70, DOI https://doi.org/10.4000/socio-anthropologie.3262 ; Blum and Rillon, "Mémoires, correspondances, photographies, entretiens : à propos de Gabriel d'Arboussier," in *Encyclopédie des historiographies : Afriques, Amériques, Asies*: *Vol, 1: sources et genres historiques (Tome 1 et Tome 2)*, ed. Nathalie Kouamé , Éric P. Meyer and Anne Viguier (Paris: Presses de l'Inalco, 2020), 1177-1187 ; Blum and Rillon, "Une histoire de famille dans l'empire colonial français. Penser les trajectoires individuelles et familiales au prisme de l'intersectionnalité," *20 & 21: Revue d'Histoire* vol. 2, no. 146 (2020), 39-52 ; Ibrahima Thioub, "Gabriel d'Arboussier et la question de l'unité africaine (1945-1965)," in *AOF: réalités et héritages. Sociétés ouest-africaines et ordre colonial, 1895-1960,* ed. Charles Becker, Saliou Mbaye, and Ibrahima Thioub (Dakar: Direction des

in Mopti, word would consistently get around about organized labor actions the Mopti workers would then join, which Mopti colonial administrators attributed to the US-RDA's "underground political action."[518] It is no surprise that Edmond Louveau, Governor of the Soudan between 1946-1952, exhibited outright hostility towards the party.[519]

Likewise, traders such as Caam, due to the nature of their activities, were often well exposed to the propagation of political news, debates, and rumors—in fact until the 1930s the colonial administration had closed down certain markets in the Mopti area due to their potential for breeding revolts.[520] To be sure, many people Caam would have been in contact with through the late 1940s and early 1950s would have been PSP supporters, and would have circulated news, debates and discussions about that party as well. The difference however, was that the PSP strictly targeted the Soudan and those they defined as Soudanese—US-RDA activists had ironically dubbed them "the most Soudanese party out there."[521] In contrast, the circulation of RDA-related discourse throughout West Africa only amplified through the mid-1950s, as the pan-African party gained more and more traction—by 1957, the party had the majority vote in Soudan, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Haute-Volta. Thus over the years, Caam's would have developed a growing understanding of the party as a commonly shared resource for

Archives du Sénégal, 1997), 346-357.

[518] ANM 1E-31, 3rd trimester 1953: "Revue trimestrielle, Cercle de Mopti —Répercussions politiques de l'action syndicale."

[519] Mann, *Native Sons*, 135-6. According to Mann, Louveau's European subordinates very much feared him, which may explain why the writers of Mopti region reports initially appeared to downplay the reach of the US-RDA's appeal within the population.

[520] Gallais, *Le Delta intérieur du Niger*, 499.

[521] Mann, *Native Sons*, 121.

Africans across colonial borders, rather than a strictly Soudanese enterprise.[522] Since his youth, Caam had held an itinerant lifestyle and cultivated cross-border community-building, and by the 1950s his identity as Senegalese-Soudanese had crystalised. As such, the US-RDA was more relatable, and would have had more resonance, than strictly national or regional parties competing in Mopti. Beyond the nature of the RDA's organizing structure as a pan-African, cross-border formation, the substance of the party's ideology and political language would have also resonated with Caam.

Old Language, New Struggles Against Chiefs

Since the eighteenth century, the true legitimacy of rulers had been a core concern of Sahelian Muslim political thought, and the claim to free Muslims from the yoke of illegitimate chiefs a leitmotiv in Sahelian Muslim political language. Here, I borrow Gregory Mann's use of political language as an analytical category. Writing on idioms of debt, obligation, and sacrifice that the French colonial state and West African veterans both mobilized—albeit with different meanings in mind—in their interactions with one another, Mann defined the messy, common basis for their divergent arguments as their shared political language. In this sense, political language refers to the "words, images, ideas, and expressions of sentiment that compose a common rhetoric animating uneven and inconsistent relations of power that exist between various parties." The shared idioms and ideas "form a repertoire of argument that is both in constant flux and reliant on a series of important precedents in order to generate meaning."[523] Likewise, generations of Sahelian Muslim scholars, warriors and revolutionaries

[522] Ironically, this particular strength of the US-RDA was a weakness of the RDA's Senegal branch. There, political life was older and more established, and people were suspicious of non-local parties they weren't already acquainted with. See Christian Roche, *Le Sénégal à la conquête de son indépendance, 1939-1960. Chronique de la vie politique et syndicale, de l'Empire français à l'Indépendance* (Paris: Karthala, 2001), 119.

[523] Mann, *Native Sons*, 4-5.

mobilized the political language of (il)legitimate rule, to justify their power and authority, or justify their dissent. This was particularly true in Caam's home regions, the Senegalese Fuuta where he was born, and the Soudanese Delta where he lived.

In both regions, generations of Muslim reformers and revolutionaries had challenged the authority of established chiefs by tapping into the political language of legitimate and just rule. In the 1770s, a class of Fuuta Tooro scholars and clerics known as the tooroɓɓe overthrew the hereditary rulers of Fuuta, the saltigis.[524] Tooroɓɓe scholar Sulayman Baal, who led the revolution, argued that the saltigis had lost legitimacy as rulers because they allowed the enslavement of fellow Muslims by Europeans and Arabs. Then, in the late 1810s in the Delta, Seeku Aamadu led a popular movement of disenfranchised Muslims against the religious and political establishment of the region. One of his main grievances against Jenne's aristocracy was that they engaged in *bid'a* (blameworthy innovations), including the imposition of illegitimate hierarchies during communal prayers—in one occasion, Seeku Aamadu himself had been expelled from the Jenne mosque when he had tried to pray in a space that turned out to be reserved for local elites.[525] And by the early 1860s, the caliphate that Seeku Aamadu had founded at Hamdallahi, by then ruled by his grandson, fell to El Hajj Umar Taal. In his written justification of his war, Taal castigated the Hamdallahi chiefs as illegitimate and having deviated from the path of Islam, a line of argument he had mobilized throughout his jihad. Taal also explicitly framed

[524] On the tooroɓɓe revolution see Kane, *La première hégémonie peule,* 499-604 ; and Rudolph T. Ware III, *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge, and History in West Africa* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 110-162.

[525] Nobili, *Sultan, Caliph, and the Renewer of the Faith*, 137-141 ; Sanankoua, *Un empire peul au XIXe siècle*, 38-40.

himself as the heir to the vision of the early tooroɓɓe revolutionaries.[526] And in the 1870s in Fuuta Tooro, two brothers tapped into widely shared grievances against Fuuta Tooro chiefs' abuse and alliance with the French, to lead an unsuccessful popular movement against powerful Fuutaŋke chiefs.[527]

Decades later, the thread of Sahelian political language vindicating the oppressed from iniquitous chiefs resurfaced. Indeed in Mopti in the 1950s, Mamadou Caam would have heard such language often, in the speeches of US-RDA officials. One of the key issues US-RDA elected officials organized against was forced labor. In principle, France had banned the administration's use of forced labor along with the indigénat in 1946. Yet even after the abolition of the indigénat, many chiefs still employed forced labor. Where the administration turned a blind eye, the US-RDA watchdogged. In 1949, after the administration congratulated the canton chiefs of Kunari, Sebera, and Fakala for the "remarkable punctuality" they had exhibited in recruiting laborers for rice fields cultivation, road maintenance, and school construction, the Mopti US-RDA bureau countered that the chiefs' punctuality was merely the result of forced labor mobilization. The accusation forced the administration to launch an official investigation, which concluded that the workers "had at least consented to the work, even though they hadn't strictly speaking volunteered for it, indeed."[528] In 1952, Mopti's US-RDA bureau and political allies also helped organize the desertion of workers on

[526] Moustapha Kane, trans., and David Robinson, ed., *The Islamic regime of Fuuta Tooro : an anthology of oral tradition / transcribed in Pulaar and translated into English* (East Lansing: African Studies Center, Michgan State University, 1984), 115.

[527] Kane and Robinson, *The Islamic Regime of Fuuta Tooro*,129-147. The revolt, known as the Maadiyanke movement, targeted the Wan chiefs and the Laam Tooro.

[528] ANM 1E-31, 2nd trimester 1949: "Bulletin Politique Trimestriel, Cercle de Mopti—État d'esprit des populations."

construction and canal digging sites.[529]

The US-RDA also intervened in land disputes opposing chiefs and riimaybe—the customary Fulani servile caste Wèlorè had belonged to—advocating for riimaybe rights.[530] In principle, France had emancipated customary serfs and slaves in its colonies in 1903-1905. However on the ground, emancipation had been worked out with compromises. In the Delta region for instance, the French struck a deal with Fulani nobility to allow them to keep collecting a share of the riimaybe's harvest.[531] Into the 1950s, tensions and conflicts over who owned the land and who should reap its fruits, kept simmering between the riimaybe and the nobility, and the US-RDA Mopti bureau intervened on behalf of the former. When the bureau publicly supported riimaybe engaged in a land dispute against the canton chiefs of Korombana and Sebera, one colonial administrator commented that the US-RDA only got involved to fulfill one of the party's "essential foundations:" their goal of "sapping the chieftaincy once and for all."[532] The administrator had a point.

Indeed, in Mopti and throughout the Soudan, as the struggle around land and labor both illustrate, chiefs became one of the US-RDA's main targets. For decades, chiefs had been in charge of forced labor and taxation requisitions, and as such, had been the key instrument through which colonialism's brutality was enforced upon the population. The confrontation between the chiefs and

[529] ANM 1E-31, 2nd trimester 1952: "Revue Trimestrielle, Cercle de Mopti—Vie sociale."

[530] The US-RDA's advocacy for people bearing slave status, or caste members, did not translated into the party's leadership structure. All the US-RDA leaders were of horoon (free/noble) lineage, save for Seydou Badian Kouyaté, who was of griot lineage. They were also all men. Though the US-RDA made a deliberate effort to attract women's votes, including rural women, they rapidly removed women from the party's leadership. US-RDA activist Aoua Keita, who was the sole female elected representative in the National Assembly at independence, was removed from leadership by 1967. Within a few years of independence, US-RDA had also dismantled all women's organizations.

[531] Brenner, *West African Sufi*, 36 ; and Klein, *Slavery and French Colonial Rule*, 179-185.

[532] ANM 1E-31, March 1957: "Rapport Mensuel, Cercle de Mopti—Justice."

the USRDA grew bitter. In late 1956, the canton chief of Korombana orchestrated an attack on a griot and US-RDA activist whom he deemed too outspoken in his critiques, sacking and burning his house and expelling him from his village.[533] In 1957, on the occasion of Soudanese minister and PSP leader Hamadoun Dicko's visit to Mopti, a coalition of notables and chiefs complained to him about the action of Mopti US-RDA representative Barema Bocoum in the region. They felt Bocoum alienated them and eroded their authority by encouraging "public disobedience" through his "propaganda." When Bocoum decided to visit a village where no US-RDA member had ever set foot, a furious canton chief threatened to disrupt his visit and make use of force if necessary.[534] Bocoum preemptively logged an official complaint against the chief, and proceeded with his visit—which neighboring riimayɓe villages sent delegates to attend.[535] On June 6th that year, both PSP and US-RDA Mopti representatives sat down in the audience of a tribunal where a canton chief was being judged. Two years earlier , after a man had an altercation with the chiefs' servant, the chief had him tied up and thrashed. Oumar Sy and Belco Tamboura for PSP, and Barema Bocoum for US-RDA, were in attendance in the tribunal, when the chief was declared guilty and jailed: he PSP representatives expressed clear discontent, while the US-RDA celebrated the verdict. By 1958 in Mopti, chiefs were so hated, and their authority so eroded,

[533] ANM 1E-31, 4th trimester 1956: "Rapport Politique, Cercle de Mopti—Questions Politiques."

[534] ANM 1E-31, February 1957: "Revue politique mensuelle, Cercle de Mopti—Vie Politique." This was not an empty threat. In the 1950s, the opposition between US-RDA and PSP occasionally turned violent, with street fights, orchestrated attacks, and even murder. In 1959, the village chief of Signé verbally attacked and attempted to assault US-RDA representative Aoua Keita who was campaigning there. See Aoua Keita, *Femme d'Afrique*, 389-90. The colonial administration had also told chiefs that they would lose their jobs should US-RDA come to power, which fueled animosity. By the end of 1958, at a congress in Bamako, the US-RDA announced that all canton chieftaincies would be abolished. By June 1960, the process had been fully implemented, and the chieftaincy was effectively gone. See Mann, *From Empires to NGOs*, 62-77.

[535] ANM 1E-31, January 1957: "Revue mensuelle, Cercle de Mopti—État d'esprit des populations."

that they needed an armed escort to collect taxes.[536]

In highlighting the continuities in political language between nineteenth century Sahelian Muslim leaders, and 1950s US-RDA politicians, my goal is not to undermine the deep rupture and reshaping of West African social relations that colonialism had entailed, nor to provide a triumphalist account of justice and democracy in the region.[537] The grievances that US-RDA leveled against chiefs did not have much in common with pre-colonial quests for legitimate and just Islamic governance.

Instead, I aim to suggest a more careful reading of how Mamadu Caam lived through, and made choices in, the era of decolonization in French West Africa. This reading is attuned to the intellectual, spiritual, and social spaces Caam inhabited, in order to understand how he would have *heard* and interpreted political discourse during decolonization. In Mopti in the 1950s, a core part of the US-RDA political language echoed an earlier thread of Sahelian Muslim political thought, particularly the rhetoric of unseating unjust and illegitimate chiefs who oppressed Muslims. US-RDA politicians unwittingly tapped into this variegated archive, mobilizing a political language that would have been familiar to Mamadu Caam. Indeed, as Caam listened to Bocoum or other RDA members' criticism of chiefs' iniquities in political meetings, debates at Robert Cisse's house, or informal discussions with acquaintances, the rhetoric did not ring hollow. Caam was in a unique position to draw parallels between social texts borne out of US-RDA decolonial activism, and those that emerged from

[536] ANM 1E-31, August 1958: "Revue des événements, Cercle de Mopti—État d'esprit des populations."

[537] A triumphalist account would be inaccurate. For instance, the tooroɓɓe regime, once in power, carried on slave raiding and trading, and maintained slavery as a key institution. Thus my aim is not to suggest a progression that led to more egalitarian societies. Rather, I am interested in how the *memory* of this era, which, particularly among the dominant Fuutaŋke nobility, emphasizes the tooroɓɓe's early crusade against the enslavement of Muslims, has preserved and mobilized in later times. On conflicting memories of slavery in Fuuta Tooro, see Traoré, "Memories of Slavery and the Slave Trade from Futa Toro, Northern Senegal."

pre-colonial Islamic revolutions and state-building. To a trained Muslim scholar with deep ties to Fuuta and the Delta, and to the region's history and memory of Islamic state-building, US-RDA's charges against chiefs had a genealogy than ran deep.

Conclusion

On September 26, 1958, Soudanese Minister of the Interior Mamadou Madeira Keita landed by special plane in Sévaré, where the Mopti airport was located.[538] Keita had been a key figure in anticolonial politics across French West Africa for over a decade, having co-founded the Guinea branch of the RDA with Ahmed Sékou Touré.[539] By the late 1950s Keita had returned to his native Soudan where he was named cabinet-member: in that capacity, he visited the Mopti region ahead of the much anticipated September 1958 constitutional referendum held throughout France and its overseas territories. In this referendum, France's African citizens were being polled to determine whether they wished to remain part of the French Community—a set of autonomous republics bound with France—or reject it altogether and acquire full independence right away. In Guinea, Touré had made his position clear: he would lead the country into a No vote."There is no dignity without freedom," he had famously retorted to French president Charles de Gaulle during a public event; "we prefer poverty in freedom to riches in slavery."[540] Addressing the Sévaré crowd a mere two days before the referendum,

[538] ANM 1E-31, "Rapports Politiques et Rapports de Tournées, Cercle de Mopti," 17 October 1958.

[539] Mann, "Anti-Colonialism and Social Science," 96-7.

[540] "Il n'y a pas de dignité sans liberté […] nous préférons la pauvreté dans la liberté à la richesse dans l'esclavage." Ahmed Sékou Touré, "Allocution en réponse à la proposition de communauté de De Gaulle," recorded in Conakry, 8 August 1958. https://www.ina.fr/ina-eclaire-actu/audio/phz09010864/allocution-du-president-sekou-toure-en-reponse-a-la-proposition-de.

Keita also appealed to ideas of African dignity, but to support the opposing choice, urging his audience to vote Yes and remain part of the French Community: "as descendants of Seeku Amadu, El Hajj Umar, and Mamadu Lamine, you can keep you head high as you participate in this enterprise!"[541]

Keita's plea was a stretch. Leveraging the legacy of African sovereignty and aura of anti-colonialism these three pre-colonial leaders elicited, he promoted a vote in favor of the French Community—which Touré had dismissed as voluntary servitude just weeks earlier.[542] With references to Seeku Amadu and Umar Taal in particular, tailored to his audience that day, Keita was deliberately tapping into the local history of the Mopti region. Yet, despite the obvious demagoguery of Keita's rhetoric, there was some truth to the idea that memories of nineteenth century West African jihads and state-building mattered to the conduct of decolonial politics in Mopti in the late 1950s.. Connections between these two time periods, however, have seldom been explored in the historiography on pan-Africanism and decolonization.[543]

In this chapter, I have argued that Mopti in the first half of the twentieth century was first and foremost a post-jihad society, marked by the afterlives of the 1862-1893 period of Fuutaŋke jihad and expansion in the Delta region, a time of great violence, socio-political ruptures, and reconfiguration. As

[541] "Les descendants de SEKOU AMADOU, EL HADJ OUMAR, et MAMADOU LAMINE, peuvent sans déchoir s'associer à cette œuvre." Two days after Madeira Keita's speech, the Mopti region, as did the rest of the French Soudan, voted Yes in the referendum. Two days before Madeira Keita's speech, US-RDA leader Modibo Keita, the future president of independent Mali, had taken a harsher approach and in a speech in Mopti, threatened all those who would vote NO with exclusion from the party. ANM 1E-31, 17 October 1958: "Rapports Politiques et Rapports de Tournées, Cercle de Mopti."

[542] The US-RDA's choice to vote Yes may seem paradoxical given the party's anticolonial politics, especially in contrast with Touré's choice in Guinée. But the rationale is to be found elsewhere: by 1958, the US-RDA took future independence as a given, and primarily sought to ensure colonies would head into independence as a collective political formation, rather than individual territories. It was in order to get time to work on heading into independence as a "multi-territorial grouping" that the US-RDA pushed for a Yes vote. Eventually this would succeed, if briefly, in the form of the short-lived Mali federation. Mann, *From Empires to NGOs*, 79.

[543] One of the main works to do so is Hanretta, *Islam and Social Change in French West Africa*.

such Caam's Mopti, was a liminal space intimately connected to both the Soudanese Delta and the Senegalese Fuuta, and to both the recent past and the colonial present. In Caam's day-to-day life, the trauma of the Fuutaŋke war in the Delta was seldom explicitly talked about. But the connection the conflict had fostered between the two regions was continuously reasserted, through migrations, cross-border community building, marriage choices, a mutual aid group, and indeed, political decisions. First, I showed how Mamadu Caam's trajectory, decade-long travels across colonial West Africa and across these various clerical centers in key Tijani cities were illustrative of a Tijani archipelago, which expanded across West and North Africa, and which trumped the logic of the colonial partitions that the French had erected. The form of archipelagic, cross-border belonging Caam had cultivated, facilitated his adherence to an explicitly pan-African party, over the nationalist or local formations that also competed in the Mopti political sphere. Second, I showed how for Caam, nineteenth century Sahelian Muslim political discourse against despotic chiefs, echoed through US-RDA's discourse against canton chiefs, who the party targeted as an essential cog in the workings of colonial exploitation and abuse.

In 1960, the semi-autonomous governments of Soudan and Senegal, decided to head into full independence from France together as one territory, which they called the Mali Federation as a reference to a medieval West African Empire. The federation rested on fragile foundations. Divergences quickly emerged between the conservative Senegalese, led by Leopold Sedar Senghor and eager to preserve a relationship with France, and the socialist Soudanese, led by Modibo Keita, adamant to sever all ties with the former colonizer. The relationship eventually grew too tense to sustain, and on August 21st, 1960, a sealed train sped across the border region separating the Federation's two partner

countries, carrying Keita and other Soudanese officials. Just the night before in Dakar, Senghor had ordered Keita and his associates, jailed, and deported back to Bamako. The two former colonies went into independence separately as Senegal and Mali, putting an abrupt end to dreams of federation. As they sat on the train, and began crafting nationalist speeches about their new independent African nations, it is likely that neither the Soudanese nor the Soudanese leaders were not pondering nineteenth-century histories of jihad, caliphates, conquest, and Tijani archipelagos. Yet, at least to a group of Senegalese-Soudanese residents in Mopti—who had dubbed themselves as such long before the Federation emerged—the memories of these pre-colonial developments had cemented their imaginings of post-colonial futures.[544] Away from politicians and preeminent intellectuals, taking these ordinary Africans' views on community and belonging into consideration, is important. Assessing their imaginings, yields a richer understanding of alternative African visions of worldmaking after empire.

[544] Brandon County and Marie Rodet have written about the rupture that the Mali Federation's break-up engendered in the border region of Kayes. See Marie Rodet and Brandon County, ""Old homes and new homelands: imagining the nation and remembering expulsion in the wake of the Mali Federation's collapse," *Africa* 88, no. 3 (2018): 469-491.

EPILOGUE

Seeking Freedom in the Sahel

> Ahmadu's Fuutaŋke [followers]—the last remnants of these hardliners who never accepted to submit to our domination—the former Sultan of Sokoto's supporters, and the malcontents from Northern Nigeria, are going away towards the East, with no hope of ever returning ... It will be up to the Anglo-Egyptian authorities to watch these.
> –French colonial office in Chad, "Note on the Fuutaŋke recently arrived in Fort-Lamy"[545]

In a 2001 census, the government of Mali counted the number of Malian migrants living in Sudan and Egypt to be 200,000, twice as many as the 100,000 Malians estimated to live in France in the same census.[546] These numbers may seem surprising. Indeed, media attention and historical scholarship alike have devoted much more attention to those West Africans crossing the Sahara northwards towards the Mediterranean and Europe, to the detriment of those doing so eastwards towards the Nile and Red Sea. Yet, as noted in this dissertation's introduction, the eastwards mobilities of West Africans via the Tariq al-Sudan (Sudan road) are an old phenomenon, rooted in the emergence of pilgrimage routes towards Mecca since at least the fourteenth century.

In the colonial era, migrations from the West African French Soudan to the East African Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, accelerated, as the 1906 French colonial note quoted in the epitaph shows. On February 17, 1907, another brief note went out, this time from the Dakar office of the

[545] ANS 17G "Note sur les Toucouleurs récemment arrivés à Fort-Lamy" from Chef de Bataillon Signé-Caden, Fort-Lamy, August 10, 1906.

[546] Mann, *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel,* 90.

Governor-General of French West Africa. Alarmed by recent newspaper coverage of African migrations, the governor inquired additional information:

> *Le Temps* and *La Politique Coloniale* note that, according to a report on Northern Nigeria written by High Commissioner Sir W. Wallace, and published by the Colonial Office, thousands of Fulanis from the [Niger Delta] might be migrating from the French territory and heading towards the Nile valley. I would be grateful for any further information you might provide me with on this topic.[547]

The French administrators' notes reveal European anxieties about a set of African mobilities that trumped the logic of colonial borders erected between British and French Africa. Indeed, in the late 1890s and the early 1900s, West African Muslims who did not wish to live under colonial rule, fled their lands via the Sudan Road. Key to their decision was the Islamic notion of *hijrah* (emigration), a doctrine whereby Muslims, should they find themselves in an environment hostile to their faith, should leave. In the French Soudan, members of communities such as the Gabero or the Kel el Suq migrated east, settling in multiple locations along the Sudan Road, including Nigeria, Chad, Niger, Sudan, Egypt, and some going all the way to Mecca. Their migrations illustrate the struggles of Sahelian peoples against coercive systems. These struggles were rooted in notions of belonging across spatial and political borders; the ability to negotiate tenuous spaces of freedom and safety ; and the mobilization of practical memory and situated knowledge to build more desirable futures.

This dissertation has explored the trajectories of three protagonists who, similar to the colonial refugees on the Sudan Road, undertook freedom-seeking struggles: Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Watara, Wèlorè, and Mamadu Caam. Watara was a Timbuktu-born man enslaved in Jamaica in 1804, who undertook a trans-Atlantic and trans-Saharan journey in a bid to return to the Niger Delta region in

[547] ANS 17G:39, Correspondence from the AOF Governor General to the Dahomey Lieutenant-Governor, February 17, 1907.

the mid-1830s. As Watara was crafting ways to safely return home while navigating the racial geographies of the Atlantic and the Saharan worlds, a woman named Wèlorè was also enslaved in the Niger Delta. She was the concubine of the man who ruled much of the region at the time, during the dominion of the Caliphate of Hamdallahi. As an enslaved woman and a concubine, Wèlorè barely surfaces in the archive of Hamdallahi. Much like Watara, the historical record about her life has mainly retained her literacy and Islamic knowledge, shuning what their aspirations, theories, and practices towards freedom might have been.

It is plausible, though unlikely, that Watara and Wèlorè met. As for Caam, born on the cusp between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it is impossible that he would have crossed paths with either of them. Yet, just like both of them, his life was shaped by the dual forces of the Atlantic political economy of capitalism and colonialism; and Islamic revolutions and the rise of West African theocratic states. As decolonization was underway, Caam grounded his understanding and aspirations of what a post-colonial world should look like, in a knowledge-system and geographical imagination borne out of the world Watara and Wèlorè had lived through.

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