

“DANGEROUS VAGABONDS”: RESISTANCE
TO SLAVE EMANCIPATION AND THE
COLONY OF SENEGAL

by

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DEDICATION PAGE

For my dear parents.

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ABSTRACT

In 1848, when slavery was abolished across greater France, slavery remained virtually intact in the French colony of Senegal on the west coast of Africa. Slavery continued to be practiced in the colony and in its expanding borderlands until at least 1905, when this study ends. This thesis challenges traditional interpretations of illicit slavery in Senegal by demonstrating the power that French imperial culture played in the problem of continued captivity. While post-emancipation slavery in the colony was due to economic and logistic pressures in West Africa, as well as a strong indigenous tradition of forced labor, this study will show that it was also true that inherent factors within the culture of French colonialism made abolishing the institution exceedingly difficult. This thesis examines three aspects of French imperial culture after 1848 that mitigated slave freedom in Senegal: the views of race and slavery maintained by Senegal's influential *métis* (mixed-race) population; French cultural assessments of the aptitude and capabilities of West Africans; and a trend within French political culture to deny metropolitan rights to the colonized—a phenomenon that intensified in far-flung French territories that were not completely under French control, and where few whites resided. An examination of each of these themes will lead to a deeper understanding of the persistence of slavery in Senegal between 1848 and 1905, revealing greater nuance within the French imperial project overall.

INTRODUCTION

In November 1892, despite considerable discouragement from family and friends, twenty-four-year-old Raymonde Bonnetain set sail from France to Dakar with her young daughter in tow. Bonnetain planned to join her husband, Paul, a journalist living in French Sudan (modern-day Mali). A writer herself, Madame Bonnetain chronicled her year-long adventure into the interior of Africa in a memoir entitled *Une française au Soudan: sur la route de Tomboctou, du Sénégal au Niger* (1894). The journal featured accounts of the West African terrain, indigenous culture, as well as descriptions of reckless French soldiers hell bent on expansion and exploitation. While it was not the central theme of the publication, *Une française au Soudan* gave considerable attention to the presence of wide-spread slavery in French West Africa. Bonnetain even observed white French personnel engaged in buying, owning and selling slaves. At the French river post of Matam in Senegal's eastern borderlands, Madame Bonnetain watched French soldiers purchasing slaves for the colonial army. "The post," she described, "is a recruiting station... where masters sell their slaves to the French."¹ Madame Bonnetain described rampant slavery and the flourishing slave trade in slaves in the colony's expansive hinterland. She also, however, documented slavery in Senegal's cities, where it was publicly viewed by Europeans.² Madame Bonnetain's memoir therefore offers a vivid account of the

¹ Madame Paul Bonnetain, *Une française au Soudan: sur la route de Tomboctou, du Sénégal au Niger* (Paris: Librairies imprimeries réunies, 1894), 65-68.

² *Ibid.*, 20, 68-69, 76.

continuation of slavery in French West Africa in spite of its official abolition by the 1848 Decree Concerning the Abolition of Slavery. Slavery continued in French West Africa until at least the first part of the twentieth century. While slaves were most numerous in Senegal's interior, where few Europeans ventured, it was also true that slaves who fled to the colony's cities seeking liberty were denied freedom by the French, expelled as criminals, and referred to as "dangerous vagabonds."

The fact that French officials tolerated slavery and, at times, participated in the illegal practice raises questions about French imperial culture. Why did the majority of the white French who governed West Africa capitulate to local attitudes regarding slavery? Was it only due to economics, logistics or a strong West African Muslim tradition of forced labor? Or, could there have been other reasons for the persistence of bonded labor in the colony after 1848? This thesis complicates the narrative of slavery between 1848 and 1905 in Senegal by deconstructing the French culture of slaveholding in the colony.³ Traditional accounts of slavery in Senegal after 1848 stress the pressures of fragile French economic and military presence and a dominant West African custom of bonded labor. The pages that follow will show that there was more going on in the colony that should not be underestimated.

³ The process of challenging views of an historical phenomenon by way of deconstructing the culture surrounding the movement or event is perhaps best visible in Ussama Makdisi's, *The culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California University Press, 2000). In this volume, Makdisi challenges the previously-held assumptions regarding the rise of sectarianism in Ottoman Lebanon during the nineteenth century. Makdisi adds complexity to the story of Lebanese sectarianism by showing that it was more than simply the consequence of a long-held competition between rivaling religious groups. According to Makdisi, the story of sectarianism is not complete without an examination of other factors that contributed to the phenomenon, such as local responses to the Ottoman reform movement (from 1839), increasing European encroachment of the Middle East, and modernity.

Deconstructing the story of failed slave emancipation will reveal a culture formed in the crucible of local and metropolitan pressures which made abolishing slavery exceedingly difficult. An examination of French imperial culture with regard to the themes of race and slavery will lead to a deeper understanding of the persistence of slavery in Senegal between 1848 and 1905, demonstrating greater nuance within the French colonial project overall. With this in mind, Raymonde Bonnetain was unabashed about proclaiming the inferiority of the native population, even suggesting that slavery was the best-suited role for the colonized West Africans. Bonnetain goes on to describe the indigenous as lazy and unreliable, beings who only understood force. At one point she referred to Africans as “monkeys” who were nothing but beasts of burden.⁴ However, as this study will show, Bonnetain was not the only French citizen to maintain a paradoxical attitude toward slavery. This perspective was just as pervasive in France, as it was among French visitors to the colony. Moreover, deconstructing the French culture of slavery in Senegal will illustrate that despite a decline in traditional mixed-race⁵ power in the era, the colony’s coastal *métis* population yet wielded influence over the issues of race and slavery, affecting the perpetuation of slavery in the colony after 1848. Dismantling the French culture of slaveholding in Senegal will therefore shed light on previously marginalized themes that were important contributors to the continuation of an illegal

⁴ Bonnetain, *Une française au Soudan*, 81.

⁵ The term “mixed-race” refers to those individuals who were the descendants of sexual unions between Europeans and Africans. Throughout this thesis, the terms mixed-race, Euro-African, mulatto and *métis* will be used interchangeably to refer to this population in Senegal.

practice in a French overseas territory, while providing greater depth to historians' understanding of French attitudes toward colonial peoples.

Historiography and Methodology

Studies of Senegalese history have noted the existence of slavery after its official abolition in 1848, including most prominently, François Renault's *L'abolition de l'esclavage au Sénégal* (1972), Martin Klein's *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa* (1998), and Trevor Getz' *Slavery and Reform in West Africa: Towards Emancipation in Nineteenth Century Senegal and the Gold Coast* (2004). These studies featured different concerns and approaches, however, each addressed the problems of economic viability and military security that deterred colonial authorities from ending slavery upon its legal abolition, as well as a powerful West African custom of bonded labor that was not easily overcome by French ideals and law. For instance, François Renault has argued that between 1848 and the early twentieth century, French colonial administrators were afraid to disrupt slavery in Senegal for fear of losing economic prosperity in a growing colony. For his part, while focusing most on the changing nature of forced labor under the auspices of Islam in the colonies of Senegal, Guinea, and French Sudan (Mali) between the years of 1876 and 1922, Martin Klein has contended that the French emancipation decree largely failed in French West Africa. Then, while demonstrating the slow demise of slavery in the British colony of the Gold Coast and French Senegal during the nineteenth century, Trevor Getz has argued for an irregular commitment to

emancipation among European colonial administrators since the consensus seemed to be that it was more important for economic security in imperial territories. To a certain degree, these studies collectively maintained that more often than not, colonial officials defied Parisian leaders' directives to abolish slavery in West Africa.⁶ In contrast, while reinforcing the argument that slavery persisted in Senegal after the 1848 decree of slave emancipation, this study will offer additional rationale for why slavery persisted in the decades after 1848, shedding light on forces that have hitherto been marginalized, if not altogether absent in the traditional story of failed emancipation in the colony.

Deconstructing the French culture of slavery in Senegal will demonstrate three key factors that mitigated slave freedom: First, how a mixed-race social hierarchy that required the enslavement of Africans for its survival limited slave liberty in the colony; secondly, how the "colonial gaze" of French administrators, explorers, soldiers, and travelers to West Africa defined the indigenous as uncivilized beings not ready for the European concept of human liberty, which, therefore, reinforced a culture of captivity; and third, how a French metropolitan tradition to situate the colonies at a philosophical distance from France created an ideological barrier for the implementation of republican principles of human rights in French colonies, including in Senegal.

⁶ François Renault, *L'abolition de l'esclavage au Sénégal, l'attitude de l'administration française, 1848-1905* (Paris: Société française d'histoire d'outre-mer, 1972); Martin A. Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Trevor Getz' *Slavery and Reform in West Africa: Towards Emancipation in Nineteenth Century Senegal and the Gold Coast* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004).

A close examination of local as well as metropolitan sources complicates the story of failed emancipation in Senegal by showing that if it was the colony's mixed-race that historically engaged the French in the Atlantic slave market, following the British abolition of the slave trade in 1807, the *métis* found it exceedingly difficult to relinquish both a traditional business in, as well as a reliance upon, slavery. The fact that for hundreds of years, slavery had served not only as a wealth generator but as a symbol of racial superiority (over black West Africans) meant that this community would not be easily separated from this institution. While traditional scholarship of Senegal argues for a neutralization of mixed-race social capital by the nineteenth-century—all but imploding with the 1848 emancipation decree—this thesis offers an alternative interpretation. This study will argue for a resiliency in the mixed-race population which, as a result, reinforced a colonial culture of slavery after 1848. This thesis will show that the *métis* retained relevance through at least the third quarter of the nineteenth century: by way of miscegenation with a new class of French migrant merchants; by shifting to new economic pursuits after the British abolition of the Atlantic slave trade; by continued political activity; and importantly, by owning slaves, and by persisting in the business of slave trading. This interpretation underscores the argument that cultural tradition is not easily overcome.

Furthermore, though studies of French West Africa have, to varying degrees, addressed French perceptions of West Africans during the era, their examinations did not directly link the French ethnographic enterprise to failed emancipation in the decades after 1848. French “spectatorship” is the term this study employs to describe

this aspect of colonial culture as it suggests a certain “distance” between she/he who observes in order to assess the activities and aptitudes of the imperial subject. This thesis will argue that a philosophical detachment resulted from the activity of colonial spectatorship that permitted the French to mentally distance themselves from the plight of West African slaves, and which, likewise, empowered them to act as the agents of “superior” civilization in the colonial space. French “spectators” in Senegal perceived West African slavery as a sign of an “inferior” civilization. However, the fact that it was they who would dictate when and where slavery would be eliminated, only stood to reinforce an unequal relationship between ruler and ruled, one which dictated to the black colonized, first what “*évolué*” meant—or the state of being “evolved,”—and second, the way in which this achievement could be had.

Moreover, this thesis will illustrate a longstanding trend in French metropolitan political philosophy to deny rights to the non-white colonized which reinforced the culture of bonded labor in French colonies, especially in French territories that were considered “unstable,” where few whites resided. Studies of nineteenth century French West Africa often portray a disjuncture between French metropolitan opinions and the reality of oppression in Senegal, contending that the French in France expected for human rights to be extended to West Africans, but that colonial leaders deviated from these wishes. This thesis offers a different interpretation. This study will demonstrate that attitudes in France during the nineteenth century were, at best, lukewarm, regarding slavery in French colonies, including in the highest ranks of the government. In this way, if scholars agree that

there was censure from the metropolitan press during the early 1880s concerning the presence of slaves in Senegal, this thesis will reexamine this historical episode to show that this criticism did not represent the majority of French opinion, nor was this indignation sustained. Instead, the French in France demonstrated little concern about the plight of colonial peoples, focusing their attention on more pressing matters at home. Hence, the problem of slavery in French colonies was left to a small cadre of abolitionists, who were themselves conflicted about when and where colonial slavery should come to an end. With this in mind, this thesis shares a philosophical link with the scholar, Alice Conklin, who, for a later period, examined the ways in which French Third Republican leaders at home and in West Africa envisioned and managed empire. Conklin's, *A Mission to Civilize: France and West Africa, 1895-1930*, surveyed a broad number of subjects—from public works to politics in the French West African Federation of Colonies (AOF).⁷ However, while there are some scholarly connections between this study and Conklin's work, this thesis looks at the particular themes of race and slavery for an earlier period of French colonial history.

Indeed, as with Conklin's publication, the bulk of scholarship of French West Africa has centered on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Third Republic has been an obvious area of concentration since Third Republican leaders launched a massive invasion of West Africa's interior in the late 1870s and 1880s, followed by an attempt to "civilize" the indigenous. Furthermore, the post-1870

⁷ Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

period signaled a change from military to civilian rule, and rights briefly gained during the Second Republic were restored to the colony. This included the formalization of the four communes of Saint Louis, Gorée, Rufisque, and Dakar, French West African towns that shared the same privileges of communes in metropolitan France. Likewise, the increased French presence led to greater numbers of documents exchanged between France and the growing colony, allowing scholars a clearer lens through which to see the historical process unfold. Yet the history of the pre-1870 era, in comparison, is more complicated and harder to access. Before the 1870s, French Senegal was little more than two small coastal settlements and a few trading posts up the Senegal River. At mid-century, the French were just beginning to turn their sights on the interior. Looking at the evolving practice of slavery in Senegal beginning in the 1840s thus provides an earlier view of Senegal's colonial culture. Senegal was not entirely "French" in the period but instead was an environment of cultural hybridity between the indigenous, an evolving mixed-race population, and Europeans that featured its own set of distinctive features and challenges. An earlier view of French slave emancipation reveals tensions in Senegal and its borderlands between Euro-African culture and metropolitan law; between French perceptions of West Africans and the universal nature of rights ensconced in the *Rights of Man*; and, more broadly, between trends in French political philosophy and practice in the imperial space.

The majority of this examination will focus geographically on Senegal and its borderlands between 1848 and 1905, when France successfully extended control from

French coastal settlements into the interior. However, in order to complete the deconstruction of the French culture of slavery in the colony, it will be necessary to examine views of the colonized and slave labor in the French *métropole* during the era, since it was there, in the real and metaphorical “motherland,” that the colonial enterprise was conceived.⁸ This study will show that on the eve of slave emancipation during the 1840s, the issue of slave emancipation was viewed in France through the lens of industrialization and calls from the working class for greater political participation. The fact that the 1848 Second Republic was short-lived, however, meant that discourses about liberty and equality in the colonies played out against aborted attempts to extend republican ideals of citizenship and universal rights at home in France. Likewise, French perceptions of the colonies and slavery between the 1850s and the 1870s were influenced by metropolitan events. The tensions surrounding the empire of Napoleon III, the disastrous Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, the socialist experiment of the 1871 Paris Commune, and a growing geopolitical competition in Europe, for instance, not only influenced French thought regarding colonial expansion but also informed politicians about whom in French overseas territories was worthy of rights. No doubt, events and movements at home in France altered the *milieu* within which the French weighed the issue of colonial slavery, as well as the ability of anti-slavery supporters to influence public discourse.

⁸ The term “*métropole*” refers to a geographical and philosophical space where the colonial environment is conceived, envisioned, and institutionalized. As the scholar Frederick Cooper argues, the *métropole* is a space where “national” leaders institutionalize “a set of practices that both defined and reproduced over time the distinctiveness and subordination of a particular people in a differentiated space.” Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 26.

This thesis therefore argues that French actions in the colonies cannot be separated from French political philosophies regarding non-whites in French territories overseas. Hence, while this study was influenced by scholars of West Africa, it was equally inspired by scholarship concerning the trajectory of French human rights. A number of works were helpful in this regard, including studies from Lawrence Jennings, David Geggus, Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison, Lynn Hunt, Joan Wallach-Scott, and Robin Blackburn.⁹ Jennings' work, *French Anti-Slavery: The Movement for the Abolition of Slavery in France, 1802-1848*, was particularly instructive for this thesis, providing considerable detail about the long, winding, and often pot-holed road that was French abolitionism in the *métropole* during the first half of the nineteenth-century.¹⁰ More than anything else, Jennings lent expediency to the idea that "timing is everything." Jennings showed that the French movement to abolish slavery was regularly stymied and, at times, almost snuffed-out altogether by the chaos that was French politics in the era. Reformers during the Great Revolution may have rallied round the concept of human rights—including for colonial slaves—but Jennings' account reveals the resilience of the *ancien régime* culture of privilege that influenced even the most ardent nineteenth-century-republicans to argue that

⁹ Lawrence C. Jennings, *French Anti-Slavery: The Movement for the Abolition of Slavery in France, 1802-1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); David Geggus, "Racial Equality, Slavery, and Colonial Secession During the Constituent Assembly," *American Historical Review* 94, No 5 (December, 1989): 1290-1308; Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison, *Les citoyennetés en révolution* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992); Lynn Hunt, *The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History* (Boston, Bedford Books, 1996); Joan Wallach-Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); and Robin Blackburn, "Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of Democratic Revolution," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 63, No 4 (Oct, 2006): 643-674.

¹⁰ Jennings, *French Anti-Slavery*.

slaves should be sacrificed for the greater good of France. While Jennings' study focused on the anti-slavery movement in the *métropole* that concluded in 1848 when the Second Republic passed the Decree Concerning the Abolition of Slavery, in contrast, this thesis examines metropolitan views of race and slavery between the 1840s and 1905, and further, how perceptions in the *métropole* affected the state of labor in the French Empire, including in Senegal. No doubt, a metropolitan culture of exclusion and domestic instability slowed the extension of human rights to the colonies. However, this thesis expands Jennings' argument to demonstrate that it was also true that a French tradition of philosophically framing the colonial world as a "distant" and "irrelevant" space meant that republicans' claims of universal equality and liberty need not apply in French territories overseas, even during the more than half century following promulgation of the emancipation decree.

To argue, as I do, for a connection between ideas and activities in the French *métropole* and goings on in the empire is not new in French historical writing. The last few decades witnessed several studies linking France and her overseas possessions. Some have stressed a stark demarcation between principles in the *métropole* and reality in the colonies, including works by Raymond Betts, Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard, and Françoise Vergès.¹¹ Collectively, these scholars have showed that the 1789 principles of *liberté, égalité, and fraternité* failed in French

¹¹ Raymond Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960); Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard, and Françoise Vergès, *La République coloniale: Essai sur une utopie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2003).

territories overseas. Other scholars, however, have argued for a greater fluidity of ideas between France and her empire. For instance, a more complex and porous relationship between the *métropole* and colonies has been demonstrated in the works of James P. Daughton, Claire Salinas, Gary Wilder, Miranda Spieler and Elizabeth Foster. In his study, *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880-1914* (2006), Daughton found variation in how French administrators and Catholic missionaries interpreted republicanism and national identity in French Indochina, Madagascar, and Polynesia during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, similar to philosophical inconsistencies at home in France. At about the same time, Salinas' dissertation, entitled *Colonies Without Colonists: Colonial Emigration, Algeria, And Liberal Politics in France, 1848-1870* (2005), investigated the effect of the republican ideal of inclusive citizenship with respect to colonization during the Second Republic (1848-1851) and the Second Empire (1851-1870). Salinas argued that French leaders attempted to reconcile the exclusion of poor workers at home from full citizenship rights by sending them to Algeria for colonial settlement. Salinas examined the different ways that leaders and poor workers interpreted republican principles regarding colonization, which tended to conflate the impoverished in France with the colonized subjects. Wilder's *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (2005) further contributed to the complexity of French colonial historiography by arguing for a profound contradiction within the national imperial state itself, particularly concerning the themes of culture, nationality and citizenship.

Wilder demonstrated that France underwent a period of crisis in the inter-war years when the legal and political condition of the colonial indigenous intensified public debate surrounding the issue of political universality versus particularity. Spieler's *Empire and Underworld: Captivity in French Guiana* (2012) showed that in the century following 1789, the forces of industrialization and urbanization at home led to a "purge" of French cities resulting in an "extra-constitutional zone" in the colony of Guiana where the civil rights of "undesirables" were denied. And finally, Foster's *Faith in Empire: Religion, Politics, and Colonial Rule in French Senegal, 1880-1940* (2013) revealed interconnectivity between France and the *outré-mer* with an examination of religion *vis à vis* interpretations of civilization. Concentrating on Third Republic Senegal, Foster argued that French clerics and administrators' actions towards the indigenous not only created a contested environment regarding rights for the West African colonized, but she also demonstrated profound differences in French colonial ideology that was also present at home, in France.¹² Daughton, Salinas, Wilder, Spieler, and Foster's approaches reflected a trend in French colonial historiography to link imperial territory with the *métropole* while further revealing a cultural interconnectedness throughout Greater France. If, however, these histories brought more nuance to the study of French colonial history, a deconstruction of the

¹²James P. Daughton, *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Claire Salinas, *Colonies Without Colonists: Colonial Emigration, Algeria, And Liberal Politics in France, 1848-1870* (PhD diss. Stanford University, 2005); Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), Miranda Spieler, *Empire and Underworld: Captivity in French Guiana* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), and Elizabeth A. Foster, *Faith in Empire: Religion, Politics, and Colonial Rule in French Senegal, 1880-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

French culture of slavery in Senegal between the 1840s and the turn-of-the-century, which illustrates the tensions and fluidity between colony and *métropole*, has not been done.

Examining the cultural forces in French imperial history that limited slave liberty in Senegal is part of the particular history of France, however, it is also part of the much larger story about the rise and fall of global European slavery. The extensive literature on the transatlantic trade spearheaded by the work of Philip Curtin, Paul Lovejoy, and David Geggus has made invaluable contributions to our understanding of the capture and export of African men, women, and children to “New World” colonies in the Atlantic. From the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries Africans were transported from the shores of Western and Central-West Africa to work on plantations that produced sugar, coffee, tobacco, cotton, and rum. The countries of Portugal, England, France, Spain, Holland, Denmark and eventually the United States were the primary slavers, together shipping as many as twelve million Africans across the ocean in what has been called the “Middle Passage.” Sickness, brutality, and despair meant that close to 1.5 million slaves never made it to the colonies.¹³ By the end of the eighteenth century, moral movements and economic developments led to the abolition of the global slave trade followed by an end of slavery in European colonies during the nineteenth century. As the studies of

¹³ Philip D. Curtin, “Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade Once Again: A Comment,” *The Journal of African History* 17, No 4 (1976): 595-605; Paul Lovejoy, “The Volume of the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Synthesis,” *The Journal of African History* 23, No 4 (1982): 473-501; and David Geggus, “Sex Ratio, Age and Ethnicity in the Atlantic Slave Trade: Data from French Plantation and Shipping Records,” *The Journal of African History* 30, No 1 (1989): 23-44.

Christopher Brown, Seymour Drescher, Robin Blackburn, and David Brion Davis have shown, the French briefly abolished slavery during the French Revolution, but it was the British who ultimately led the charge to end transatlantic slave commerce, initially gaining public support by the 1790s, ending with the passage of a bill in parliament in 1807. After the fall of Napoleon in 1815, the Congress of Vienna imposed a ban on Atlantic slave traffic, which for the next thirty years was largely policed by the British Royal Navy. In 1833 (and through 1838 in a transitional process) slavery was ended in the British colonies followed by the rest of Europe, including France in 1848. By the mid-nineteenth century, while slavery was officially outlawed in the majority of European colonies, it was not banned everywhere. As Drescher, Blackburn, and Davis have well documented, legal slavery persisted in Spanish Cuba, Puerto Rico and the former Portuguese colony of Brazil through the late 1880s.¹⁴

Moreover, the fact that slaves were officially emancipated by mid-century in most European colonies did not mean that illicit labor no longer existed. With respect to the issue of forced labor in French West Africa between 1895 and 1930, Alice Conklin has argued that the French chose to look at indigenous labor in ways that “created the illusion that basic human rights in the colonies were being respected... [but nonetheless] conspired equally, and tragically, to legitimate a regime based on

¹⁴ Christopher Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Anti-Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* (London: Verso, 1988); and David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

force in the age of democracy.”¹⁵ Indeed, the French tolerance of forced labor maintained a long shelf-life. Slavery was not only present in Senegal in the decades after the 1848 official emancipation, but, as scholars of West Africa have shown, illicit captivity continued into the twentieth century. Yet outlawed slavery was not just a phenomenon of Senegal. Gyan Prakash’s *Bonded Histories*, which studied the relationship between landlords and laborers in British India, demonstrated the persistence of bonded labor on the sub-continent throughout the colonial period. Likewise, Miranda Spieler’s aforementioned *Empire and Underworld* revealed that slavery remained an integral aspect of French colonial culture in Guiana until at least 1870. Prakash and Spieler stressed the fact that slavery could look decidedly different from the typical West Indies’ plantation forced labor of the eighteenth century. In the colonial *milieux* of India and Guiana, slavery varied widely, including states of indentured servitude, identification within a laboring class from which there was no escape, or conditions of captivity devoid of civil rights. Prakash and Spieler’s studies are therefore relevant models for my study because an important element of the French culture of illicit slavery in Senegal between the 1840s and 1905 was a French practice of employing alternative terminologies for forced labor, thus redefining and, at times, shifting what it meant to be a slave.¹⁶

¹⁵ Conklin, “Colonialism and Human Rights, A Contradiction in Terms? The Case of France and West Africa, 1895-194,” *The American Historical Review* 103, No 2 (April, 1998):419-442, p. 420.

¹⁶ Gyan Prakash, *Bonded Histories: Genealogies of Labor Servitude in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Spieler, *Empire and Underworld*.

Continued slavery after official emancipation in European imperial holdings was most prominent in Africa. Martin Klein, Suzanne Miers, and Richard Roberts have demonstrated that slavery in European African possessions persisted through at least the early years of the twentieth century—in some areas more than sixty years after official emancipation.¹⁷ Captivity was such a problem in European territories on the continent that in 1890 a trans-national conference was convened in Brussels to determine how best to address the problem. It was not until the first third of the twentieth century that Europeans made significant headway in the control of slavery in Africa.¹⁸

Sources

This history of the French colonial culture of slavery in Senegal grew out of my examination of documents at the *Archives nationales de France* (Paris, France), the *Archives nationales de France, centre outre-mer* (Aix-en-Provence, France), the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* (Paris, France), the *Archives nationales du Sénégal* (Dakar, Senegal), the American and French Research on the Treasury of the French Language (on-line), and the *Assemblée nationale de France* (on-line). The archival documents include official and non-official correspondence exchanged between the

¹⁷ Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*; Suzanne Miers, “Slavery and the Slave Trade as International Issues, 1890-1939” in Miers and Klein, eds., *Slavery and Colonial Rule in Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1999); and Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts, eds., *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988).

¹⁸ See Klein, *Colonial Slavery in French West Africa*; Miers and Roberts, eds., *The End of Slavery in Africa*.

métropole and the colony, internal memos and reports in the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies, colonial surveys and petitions, travel journals, colonists' memoirs, political speeches and tracts, and the popular press in France and in French West Africa. My historical actors include members of Senegal's mixed-race population, French military officials, colonial leaders in Senegal and its growing borderlands, European explorers, missionaries, abolitionists, politicians, scientists, and theorists, as well as the wife of a French author who later became an imperial official stationed in Senegal's eastern frontier. What unites these individuals is that each in their own way had to come to terms with French rule in Africa and the issues of race and forced labor in a colonial context. Notably, readers of this thesis will find very little of the West African perspective regarding slavery. While, at times, the views of West Africans are relevant to the larger issue of deconstructing the French culture of slavery in the colony, the author recognizes an inherent limitation within the discipline of European history to reconstruct the indigenous "voice" *vis à vis* conditions of forced labor. Fortunately, this important endeavor has already been largely completed by historians of West Africa, most notably, Martin Klein, James Searing, and David Robinson.¹⁹

Surprisingly, the process of reconstructing French perceptions of slavery among Europeans and the mixed-race was the most rich when forced labor was not

¹⁹ For the perspective of labor from West Africans during the French colonial rule see Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*; James F. Searing, *God Alone is King: Islam and Emancipation in Senegal, The Wolof Kingdoms of Kajoor and Bawol, 1859-1914* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2002); and David Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation: Muslim Societies and French Colonial Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880-1920* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000).

the central theme of a given document, but rather an afterthought or auxiliary reflection on colonial military campaigns, commerce, education, politics, law, or culture. In this manner, petitions, economic white papers, political treatises, notes from missionaries and explorers, newspaper articles, popular histories, scientific pamphlets, as well as the aforementioned travel journal of Madame Bonnetain from the 1890s, were particularly valuable. But there were others. Louis Blanc's 1840 socialist tract on slavery in the colonies, Jules Ferry's speeches during the 1880s to the National Assembly, and books written about Senegal, its borderlands and the region's indigenous between the 1840s and 1900 by General and Governor Louis Faidherbe, the memoir of the naval officer Victor Verneuil, and the naval officer and explorer, Anne Raffenel, as well as that of the explorer and military officer, Eugène Mage, were each, in their own way, instructive in providing French views of race and slavery, the region and native peoples of French West Africa, and rights concerning the non-white colonized, generally.

Chapter Overview

Following this Introduction, Chapter Two will provide a general overview of the French presence in Senegal from the fifteenth century to the early twentieth century. Emphasis will be placed on the indigenous groups that interacted most with the French regarding slavery and how a French interest in acquiring more territory and growth in colonial exports impacted the institution of slavery. Chapter Three demonstrates that the ideas and activities of Senegal's mixed-race population resulted

in an environment that was ill-suited for extending rights to slaves for several decades following promulgation of the 1848 abolition law. Special attention will be given to the power of this community which was built on the backs of slaves. In spite of declining mixed-race social capital in the era, the fact that the colony retained Euro-African traditions led to considerable resistance to slave liberty. Chapter Four analyzes the problems of extending French law to the colony and its borderlands against the backdrop of French racial thinking toward the indigenous population. Colonial officials, military officials, explorers, and French travelers to Senegal are portrayed not as mere men and women confronting an otherwise illegal practice but rather as individuals attempting to come to terms with “difference” in a far-flung territory of empire, where few whites resided. Chapter Five shows that a failure to extend the right of liberty to slaves in French West Africa fell in line with a French political tradition of viewing the colonies and the colonized as decidedly “different” from the *métropole*, such that French ideals and rules could not always be applied. This chapter’s examination of individuals’ perspectives of slavery and the colonies between the 1840s and the late nineteenth century will demonstrate that despite the rise of republicanism in France, the non-white colonized—especially slaves in Africa—did not benefit. Furthermore, this chapter will reveal how movements and events in France affected French discourse regarding colonial slavery. Finally, Chapter Six is a concluding chapter and as such will restate the thesis argument and reiterate how examination of the evidence supported the overall thesis. Chapter Six will assess what this thesis revealed about the French colonial project as a whole.

Senegal was a veritable slave environment between the 1840s and 1905.

During this period, slavery and products harvested by slaves were the primary sources of income for the French and the indigenous living in Senegal. Deconstructing the French culture of slaveholding in Senegal therefore reveals an atmosphere fraught with the tensions of shifting from an insignificant French backwater to a full-blown European colony. No doubt, problems ensued. As will be shown, the Western concept of slave emancipation was frustrated by a persistent mixed-race social hierarchy, French perceptions of West Africans, and a trend in French political philosophy to deny rights to the colonized. Indeed, the complicated French culture that surrounded forced labor in the colony should not be minimized. As the reflections of Madame Bonnetain suggested, the slave law exposed not only French perceptions regarding the inherent worth of non-white countrymen in overseas French territories, but also spoke to the precarious intersection between democratic ideals and deep-seeded colonial traditions that was the complex project of French imperialism in the era.

SENEGAL ON THE FRINGE OF EMPIRE

Senegal's colonial history was shaped by its distance from France, its environmental conditions—which posed great risk for Europeans, the culture of the minority *métis* community, and the region's primary inhabitants—black West Africans. Located more than 3,800 kilometers from France, on a disease-infested African coast, the colony was a forgotten French territory where few Europeans traveled and even fewer settled. Consequently, when in 1848 a small cadre of zealous republicans in Paris abolished colonial slavery, there was a strong likelihood that bonded labor would persist in the colonial outpost. Slavery was supported by West African Muslims, whose religion sanctioned the practice, as well as by a small coastal population of Catholic mixed-race individuals, whose socio-political influence was a by-product of centuries of slavery and the trade in slaves. Without doubt, colonial administrators wishing to abolish slavery faced considerable odds in Senegal. But few considered such a goal realistic anyway. If the majority of Europeans in Senegal were not permanent residents but rather itinerant military personnel who possessed little interest in the welfare of West African slaves, the fact that the French never came to terms with applying metropolitan ideals in the colonial setting also informed the way in which the issue was addressed. As a result, management of the new law in Senegal was characterized by inconsistent policing and endless rationalizations for the continuation of forced labor.

It is the aim of this chapter to set forth the broad historical framework for the failure of the slave abolition law in Senegal. Firstly, this chapter will discuss the

historical evolution of the French presence in Senegal before and after the promulgation of the abolition decree of 1848. It will trace shifts in the colony's economy, social structure, and politics with a focus on the slaveholding groups which interacted the most with the French. Recognizing that slavery is not a monolithic term, this chapter will then discuss the types of forced labor that existed in traditional West African culture, detailing which variations were more likely to be affected by the French presence. Finally, this chapter will offer an overview of French imperial expansion between the 1850s and the end of the century which, in its own way, shaped the institution of slavery.

Senegal, Early French Presence, and Slavery

From perhaps as early as the fourteenth century onward, Senegal's shores provided convenient landfalls for adventurous and enterprising Europeans sailing down the West African coast in search of commercial opportunities.²⁰ The Senegal River was particularly alluring for Europeans seeking access to the African gold trade. Accessible from the sea, Portuguese, Dutch, French, and English merchant

²⁰ It is generally understood that the Portuguese were the first Europeans to establish permanent presence along the West African coast during the fifteenth century, but Doctor Béranger-Féraud's article, "Études sur la Sénégambie," *Moniteur du Sénégal et dépendances*, 836, March 19, 1872, suggests a different interpretation. Doctor and Chief of the Health Service in Gorée at the time, Béranger-Féraud contended that the Senegambian coast was first explored by the French and not the Portuguese. He wrote: "Senegambia is the oldest French colony—dating back to the fourteenth century with the Dieppois, who, leaving Dieppe, in the month of November, 1364 on two ships, arrived near the *île du Cap Vert*, in a bay, which they called *Baie de France*... The commerce was good [there] for these Dieppois, who, in 1365 united with those from Rouen for an exploration, which resulted in establishing several trading posts from *Cap Vert* to the Gulf of Benin." It is not clear from this article, nor from the doctor's subsequent submissions to the newspaper, whether he possessed evidence to support his claim, or if this was mere French bravado.

sailors engaged with Mauritians or Moors, including the Trarza, Brakna, and Douaïch, who inhabited the banks of the river. From the Senegal River southward, extended a valley to the Gambia consisting of the Walo, Cayor, Baol, Sine and Salum regions that primarily included the Wolof, Sereer and Poular populations. South of the Gambia were the Casamance, Futa Jallon, and Bure areas, where the Diola, Malinke, and more Poular lived. To the east was the empire of the Tukolor. The northern half of Senegal is Sahel with its landscape of arid brush and dry grass. Steppe in the north rapidly gives way to Sudan savanna which ends in tropical vegetation in the most southern region of the country where there is more rainfall (see Map 1). By the 1620s, the French were competing with other Europeans in Senegal's growing coastal trade centers of Saint Louis and Gorée (see Figures 1 and 2) as well as at trading posts and factories that dotted the Senegal River. By the mid-eighteenth century France was the dominant European power in Saint Louis and Gorée, however England regularly threatened (and, at times, succeeded) in wresting authority from the French, a trend that continued in the enclaves until after the fall of Napoleon Bonaparte.²¹

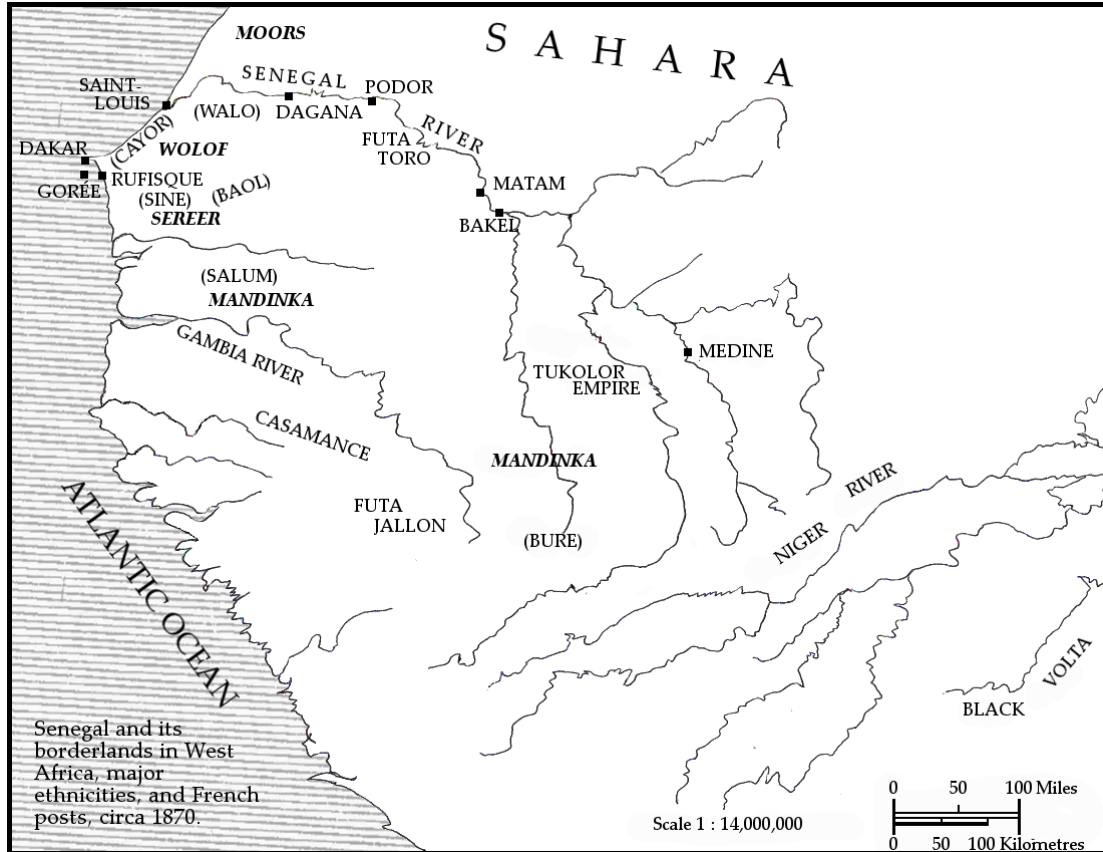
From the seventeenth century, a triangular connection between blacks, the mixed-race and Europeans was firmly in place in Saint Louis and Gorée. This alliance was rooted in the business of the slave trade, an arrangement that could generate

²¹ M.L. Faidherbe, *Notice sur la colonie du Sénégal et sur les pays qui sont en relation avec elle* (Paris: Arthurs Bertrand, Éditeur, Librairie de la Société de géographie, 1859), 6-7; Marcel Olivier, *Le Sénégal* (Paris: Émile LaRose, Librairie-Éditeur, 1907), 4; and J.D. Fage, *A History of West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 67-68, 72.

considerable profit for Europeans in a growing Atlantic market.²² The mixed-race and blacks in the two cities traded with Europe-based firms such as *La Compagnie du Sénégal*, *La Compagnie française des Indes occidentales*, *La Compagnie normande*, and *La Compagnie d'Afrique*.²³

²² Boubacar Barry, *La Sénégambie du XV^{ème} au XIX^{ème} siècle: traite négrière, Islam et conquête colonial*. (Paris: Éditions l'Harmattan), 1988, 87; Robert Louis Stein, *The French Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 144-147. Notably, while Boubacar Barry argues for considerable profitability of the Atlantic slave trade at West African shores, Robert Louis Stein contends that, taken as a whole, the French slave trade was a decidedly unprofitable business, leaving many slavers and suppliers in debt.

²³ Faïdherbe, Le Général. *Le Sénégal, La France dans l'Afrique occidentale* (Paris: Librairie Hachette et compagnie, 1889), 19-20; Barry, *La Sénégambie du XV^{ème} au XIX^{ème} siècle*, 85-86, Klein, "Slaves, Gum, and Peanuts: Adaptation to the End of the Slave Trade in Senegal, 1817-1848," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 66, 4 (Oct, 2009):895-914.



Map 1. Map of Senegal and its borderlands, circa 1870. Map from author.



Figure 1. Sketch rendering of Saint Louis focused on the Guet N'Dar bridge. Image from M.L. Faidherbe, *Le Sénégal, La France dans l'Afrique occidentale* (Paris: Librairie Hachette et compagnie, 1889). Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF). Paris, France.



Figure 2. Sketch rendering of the island settlement of Gorée. Image from Paul Gaffarel, *Le Sénégal et le Soudan français*. (Paris: Librairie Ch. Delagrave, 1893). Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF). Paris, France.

European merchant company employees were young males who sought profit, romance, and excitement at West Africa's shores. Company employees who traded throughout lower Senegal could return to Europe with overflowing pockets and stories of adventure that included descriptions of exotic animals such as elephants, gazelle, and antelope—most of which Europeans hunted to extinction by the nineteenth century. The effect of itinerant Europeans was more than ecologically devastating, however. The indigenous also suffered from European presence. At the heart of this destruction was the transatlantic slave trade. At first, slaves for Atlantic

export came from the coast, but increasingly captives were sought hundreds of kilometers up the Senegal River.²⁴

One cannot underestimate the effect of European demand for slaves in the Senegambia. African raids for slaves interfered with interpersonal relationships and resulted in the loss of human labor in the West African interior. Dramatic changes to indigenous societies as a result of the Atlantic slave market prompted the colony's most celebrated general and governor, Louis Faidherbe, to describe the entire affair as "odious."²⁵ But if European demand for slaves decimated African lifeways, what was the nature of West African slavery before the onset of European demand? How was it justified—politically, culturally and religiously? And was it more or less harsh and disruptive in comparison with European slavery and the trade in slaves? To begin with, slaves were valued in Africa since land was more abundant than humans. Emily Osborn has pointed to the fact that in the pre-colonial period, West Africans accumulated slaves, both male and female, as a symbol of wealth and prestige. Slaves were purchased, traded, negotiated for in marriage contracts and secured in warfare. Slavery and the ability to acquire slaves were important components of West African Muslim wars and raids since captives provided the capital to purchase arms, horses, and luxury goods—each of which strengthened African communities.²⁶ Slavery was widespread in pre-colonial Africa, but it was not the exclusive means by which

²⁴ James F. Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce: The Senegal River Valley, 1700-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 4-5, 93-95.

²⁵ Le général Faidherbe, *Le Sénégal, La France dans l'Afrique occidentale*, 19.

²⁶ Emily Lynn Osborn, *Our New Husbands Are Here* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011), 7-8.

production was accomplished. Free (wage) labor was also available, but usually only seasonally. J.D. Fage has demonstrated that slavery was a crucial component of traditional West African society since it proved to be the most efficient means to generate productivity for the aggrandizement of African states.²⁷ According to David Robinson, slaves were therefore utilized in a variety of ways: as *laptots*, or in Wolof, intermediary “translators” up-river, as tradesmen, in agricultural and domestic roles, and as warriors.²⁸ In Wolof society (the major ethnicity in Saint Louis and its surrounds), Bernard Moitt has pointed to a distinction between slaves. The *jaam-sayoor* were slaves that were acquired through trading and warfare, while *jaam-juddu* were domestic captives with greater social status, who were generally born in the master’s household.²⁹

Female slaves were the most numerous in West Africa and possessed a measure of social mobility. Paul Lovejoy has shown that if African slave owners accepted paternity of children born to a slave woman, the female captive and her children could be liberated.³⁰ Marriage, concubinage or bearing a master’s child might result in freedom for females, however, there was also the possibility of an improvement in social status for male slaves. David Robinson has described the

²⁷ Fage, “Slavery and the slave trade in the context of West African history,” *Journal of African History* 10 (1969): 393-404.

²⁸ Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, 14-15.

²⁹ Bernard Moitt, “Slavery and Emancipation in Senegal’s Peanut Basin: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 22, No 1 (1989): 27-50.

³⁰ Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 214.

privileged *ceddo* class of male captives that were crown soldiers in West African states while Martin Klein has pointed to the fact that preferred male slave assistants of merchants could garner considerable prestige.³¹ Klein has further shown that all West African slave owners maintained the right to free slaves of either gender at any time, and that slaves could purchase manumission.³² The *Qur'ân* prescribed that free individuals were not to be enslaved and that non-Muslims could live as free-individuals under Islam as long as they paid taxes. However, Fage, Searing, and Klein have revealed that, owing to the spread of Islam between the eighth and thirteenth centuries in West Africa, attitudes towards slavery became harsher in the region. Free individuals were regularly enslaved and non-Muslims became targets for slaving raids.³³

Islam in West Africa justified the practice of slavery, but the growth of the European Atlantic System increased African-organized slave raiding and European demand destroyed traditional West African trade networks. By the seventeenth century, slaves, gold, hides, ivory, and gum Arabic, the majority of which beforehand was caravanned by Africans across the Sahara Desert to buyers in the north and east, was now floated downriver to meet European ships anchored at bay in the Atlantic.

³¹ Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, 15; Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, 9.

³² Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, 12-13.

³³ For a review of West African labor, including slavery, in the pre-Atlantic slave trade era see J.D. Fage. "Slaves and Society in Western Africa, 1445-1700," *Journal of African History* 21, (1980): 289-310; Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce*; and Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*.

Scholars of West African slavery point to the fact that it was not uncommon for privileged classes of slaves, e.g. (*ceddo*, *laptots*, and later, *tirailleurs sénégalais*, for example) to themselves possess slaves.

Of all export items to Europeans, slaves were the most valuable. Growth of the transatlantic slave trade fed the coffers of coastal kings who financed violent dynastic wars with the sale of slaves to the Atlantic market.³⁴

French trade in the area was motivated by economic profit, but it was also driven by rivalry with other Europeans. The French were the dominant force in Saint Louis and Gorée, however the English exercised authority in the adjacent Gambian region, while the Portuguese controlled the southern rivers farther south. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Senegambia was of paramount importance for Europeans since it offered a consistent supply of slaves to work on plantations in the Americas and the West Indies. Scholarship on the Atlantic plantation complex is plentiful, spearheaded by Philip D. Curtin, Robin Blackburn, and John Thornton, whose studies collectively argued that millions of African slaves were exported to Atlantic colonial plantations producing items such as sugar, coffee, tea, indigo, rum, and cotton for Europeans.³⁵ By the eighteenth century, black slavery had become a central aspect of European imperial culture with millions of captives forming the basis of Atlantic labor. Financial interests of slave traders in West Africa were thus entangled with French mercantilist *compagnies*, colonial planters, and port merchants in the Antilles and in France. Therefore, by the late eighteenth century when

³⁴ Barry, *La Sénégal du XV^{ème} au XIX^{ème} siècle*, 128; Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce*, 68-69, 144.

³⁵ For a review of the Atlantic plantation complex, see Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*; and John D. Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

European abolitionists first attempted to end slavery, stakeholders tied to a lucrative Triangle Trade managed to overpower those who supported emancipation.³⁶ As it happened, only the onset of international pressure affected the flow of slaves to French plantations, but even then, the export of slaves to the Atlantic market from West Africa, though significantly reduced, continued well into the nineteenth century.

Led by the British after the fall of Napoleon in 1814-1815, Congress of Vienna bans on slave trafficking meant that Senegal's merchants now focused less on slave trafficking and more on the export of other products such as animal skins, ivory, leather, horns, gold, indigo, coffee, millet, cotton, nuts and the all-important gum Arabic.³⁷ Prior to the ban on slave export, gum Arabic had already become a key export from Senegal, as it was utilized in the production of fabric patterns and printmaking processes in an industrializing Europe.³⁸ By the end of the 1830s, approximately 3,000 people from the colony were engaged in the trade.³⁹ Small numbers of French were migrating to Senegal, but this increase was chiefly due to the

³⁶ Stein, *The French Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century*, 113; Gerard Thélér, *Le grand livre de l'esclavage: des résistances et de l'abolition: Martinique, Guadeloupe, La Réunion, Guyane* (Paris: Éditions Orphie, 1998), 85-86.

³⁷ Faidherbe, *Notice sur la colonie du Sénégal et sur les pays qui sont en relation avec elle*, 8; Anne, Raffeneil, *Nouveau voyage dans le pays des nègres. Suivi d'études sur la colonie du Sénégal et de documents historiques, géographiques et scientifiques, Tome II* (Paris: Imprimerie et Librairie centrales de chemins de fer, 1856), 201; Olivier, *Le Sénégal* 8; Barry, *La Sénégambie du XVème au XIXème siècle*, 199-202; and George E. Brooks, "Peanuts and Colonialism: Consequences of the Commercialization of Peanuts in West Africa, 1830-1870," *Journal of African History* 16, No 1 (1975): 29-54, pp. 37-38.

³⁸ Barry, *La Sénégambie du XVème au XIXème siècle*, 99; James L.A. Webb, Jr., "The Trade in Gum Arabic: Prelude to French Conquest in Senegal," *Journal of African History* 26, No 2 (1985): 149-168.

³⁹ Webb, Jr., "The Trade in Gum Arabic: Prelude to French Conquest in Senegal," 155-156.

arrival of Africans with their slaves who came to Saint Louis to work in the gum Arabic business from the neighboring states of Walo and Cayor.⁴⁰ Despite the beginnings of a gum crisis (largely owing to an influx of guinée, the blue cloth from India which served as currency up-river),⁴¹ by 1840, over three million kilograms of slave-harvested gum Arabic were sold to the French, growing to over four and a half million in 1859.⁴² Saint Louis' location at the mouth of the Senegal River, with access to the interior gum *escales* or river trade fairs, meant that the city was Senegal's most important colonial settlement. What contemporaries called *la fièvre de la gomme* or gum fever not only reflected an economic boom for the colony, but also reinforced French administrators' role as the economic and military rulers of a colonial territory that was no longer beholden to charter merchant firms.⁴³

Moors on the northern banks of the Senegal River were the principal suppliers of gum Arabic from acacia forests, utilizing thousands of slaves in the process.⁴⁴ Each dry season, Moors raided river villages forcing Africans into captivity to harvest gum (see Figure 3). An observer, the French naval officer and explorer Anne Raffenel, complained during the 1840s that French gum profits could have been more

⁴⁰ Ibid., 155.

⁴¹ Ibid., 163-167.

⁴² Paul Gaffarel, *Le Sénégal et le Soudan français* (Paris: Librairie Ch. Delagrave, 1893), 21.

⁴³ Georges Hardy, *La mise en valeur du Sénégal de 1817 à 1854* (Paris: Émile LaRose, Librairie Éditeur, 1921), 253-254; Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce*, 163-164.

⁴⁴ Olivier, *Le Sénégal*, 87; Barry, *La Sénégalie du XV^{ème} au XIX^{ème} siècle*, 99; Margaret O. McLane, "Commercial Rivalries and French Policy on the Senegal River, 1831-1858," *African Economic History* 15 (1986): 39-67; and Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, 21, 26.

abundant at the *escales*, but the *laptots* working for Saint Louis merchants up-river were fearful to be out in the open since the Moors planned slave pillages each year in time for harvest.⁴⁵



Figure 3. Sketch rendering of a Trarza Moor. Image from Paul Gaffarel, *Le Sénégal et le Soudan français*. (Paris: Librairie Ch. Delagrave, 1893). Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF). Paris, France.

⁴⁵ Gaffarel, *Le Sénégal et le Soudan français*, 20-21; Raffanel, *Nouveau voyage dans le pays des nègres*. Tome I, 79.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, the French had managed to create a thriving economy in Senegal and its borderlands driven less by gum Arabic, and more by another slave-harvested product: the peanut.⁴⁶ Nut export from primarily Cayor and Baol was enhanced by the completion of the Saint Louis-Dakar railroad line, which relied upon slave labor for its construction.⁴⁷ By 1889, French West Africa generated 46,762,657 francs in total commerce.⁴⁸ In 1899, the colony of Senegal alone, generated 73,000,000 francs in total commerce.⁴⁹ For nuts, gum Arabic, millet, coffee, indigo, and animal products, Europeans traded mirrors, combs, alcohol, guns, horses, and the blue cloth *guinée*. If the *guinée* gained importance in the period, it was also true that West Africans continued to seek guns and horses from Europeans for protection and enhanced status in indigenous culture. A study by Robin Law has shown that West Africans adapted to the shift from transatlantic slave commerce to legitimate exchange in the nineteenth century without significant social,

⁴⁶ Archives nationales de France, centre outre-mer, Aix-En-Provence, France, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15a, 50. Documents from this archive will be hereinafter referenced as ANOM. Letter from Governor A. Baudin to the Minister of the Navy and Colonies regarding diverse subjects, February 12, 1849; Brooks, "Peanuts and colonialism;" and C.W. Newbury, "The protectionist revival in French colonial trade: The case of Senegal," *Economic History Review, New Series* 21:2 (Aug., 1968): 337-348.

⁴⁷ Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, 112. For more on the process of construction of the Saint-Louis-Dakar railway, see Paul Pheffer, "Railroad and Aspects of Social Change in Senegal, 1878-1933" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1975).

⁴⁸ *Archives nationales de France* AP 148/4, Fonds Ernest Noirot. Financial report from 1905. Documents from this archive will be hereinafter referenced as ANF. Noirot's totals reflect the commerce of French West Africa, including Senegal, French Sudan, Guinea, Ivory Coast, and the gulf of Benin.

⁴⁹ In an examination of the rise of the black vote in Senegal, in 1901 Pierre Mille noted that 1899's total French commerce in the colony was 73,000,000 francs, see Pierre Mille and E.D.M., "The 'Black Vote' in Senegal," *Journal of the Royal African Society* 1, No 1 (Oct. 1901):64-79.

political, or economic disruption.⁵⁰ However, while a transition from transatlantic slave commerce did not lead to widespread political and economic crisis for West Africans, as with European imperialism and colonialism elsewhere, French commercial exchange with West Africans was nevertheless exploitative. For instance, referring to French Sudan in the 1880s, Governor Faidherbe boasted that French merchandise was sold to Africans at “100 times what it cost the French to buy it.”⁵¹ The literature regarding an exchange inequity between Europeans and the colonial indigenous is considerable. Scholars have shown that Europeans not only disproportionately profited from West Africans, but were relatively uninterested in developing colonial infrastructure, instead focusing on extraction of natural resources to the point of environmental exhaustion. Europeans targeted the most easily accessible products: millet, gum Arabic, elephant tusks, nuts, and rubber—most produced with forced labor.⁵²

By the second half of the nineteenth century, forced labor was still the primary source of agricultural production in French territorial West Africa and French leaders largely supported the continuation of worker oppression. According to colonial

⁵⁰ For a review of the effect of European transition from the transatlantic slave trade to agricultural exchange in West Africa, see Robin Law, *From Slave Trade to Legitimate Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth Century West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁵¹ Faidherbe, *Le Sénégal, La France dans l'Afrique occidentale*, 8.

⁵² For a review of European commercial exchange with Africans during imperialism and colonialism as well as its long-term effects on Africans see Edward Reynolds, “Economic Imperialism: The Case of the Gold Coast,” *The Journal of Economic History* 35, No 1 (March, 1975): 94-116; Paul Kennedy, “*The Cost and Benefits of British Imperialism, Past and Present*” 125 (Nov, 1989):186-192; and Nobuhiro Mizuno and Ryosuke Okazawa, “Colonial Experience and Post-Colonial Development in Africa,” *Public Choice* 141, Nos 3/4 (Dec., 2009): 405-419.

administrators, captivity was too widespread in Senegal to be eliminated since Africans would not give up their slaves and white free and indentured labor was an impossibility given the deadly diseases and heat in the area. Imperial officials further claimed that the colony's exports would implode if merchants could not obtain agricultural products from Africans who utilized bonded labor, and that neighboring African states would revolt against any French who freed slaves. All of these arguments were accepted and, at times, repeated by leaders in Paris. Not much changed regarding conditions of slave labor in Senegal after the 1848 emancipation decree. In fact, during the 1850s, when French territory expanded into the interior, slavery actually increased.

The Role of Slavery in the French Conquest of Senegal's Interior

Martin Klein has shown that an increase in the enslavement of West Africans during the nineteenth century reflected the social and political chaos associated with French invasion of the hinterland.⁵³ Imperial conquest drove slave raids and the expansion of slavery among Africans resisting French incursion of the interior. However, it was also the case that French colonial armies included large numbers of slave soldiers. Why did the French move into Senegal's backcountry in the first place? What areas came under French control and when? And finally, how did

⁵³ For Martin Klein's review of the spread of slavery in West Africa during the nineteenth century, see his aforementioned volume, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in West Africa*.

slavery play into the consolidation and economic development of new French territory?

By the mid-nineteenth century, French leaders determined that political dominance of the hinterland was a pre-condition for greater profits in Senegal. Invasion could more easily be accomplished since the French now had access to better weaponry as well as a desire for military conquest. Repeated complaints from Senegal's merchants that the Moors (especially the Trarza) were extorting the colony's trading vessels up-river was the spark that ignited French campaigns in the interior. In December of 1854, the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies appointed General Louis Faidherbe, as governor (see Figure 4), with explicit instructions to use force if necessary to suppress Africans who challenged French commercial interests in Senegal's backcountry.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Gaffarel, *Le Sénégal et le Soudan français* 88-100; Faidherbe, *Le Sénégal, la France dans l'Afrique occidentale*, 119-122; and Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, 61.



Figure 4. Sketch rendering of General Louis Faidherbe. Image from Paul Gaffarel, *Le Sénégal et le Soudan français*. (Paris: Librairie Ch. Delagrave, 1893). Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF). Paris, France.

By 1855, Faidherbe managed to annex and divide the Walo region, creating the framework for a French advance inland.⁵⁵ By 1858, after a protracted war with the Trarza and Brakna, the general achieved peaceful trade of gum Arabic at the

⁵⁵ Leland Barrows, "Faidherbe and Senegal: A Critical Discussion," *African Studies Review* 19:1 (April 1976): 95-118, pp.100, 108; Pierre Gentil, *Les Troupes du Sénégal de 1816 à 1890* (Dakar: Les nouvelles éditions africaines Dakar-Abidjan, 1978), 38, 42, 45; and Jean-Pierre Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal: mémoire d'un métissage* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1987), 117.

French posts of Dagana and Podor, 110 and 270 kilometers respectively from Saint Louis.⁵⁶ Then in 1859, Faidherbe formed treaties with the Futa on the Senegal River which prohibited Moor raids.⁵⁷ The official then proceeded with the same strategy farther up-river. By 1859, French control extended as far as Medine—786 kilometers from Saint Louis—a location Faidherbe believed could serve as a point of French departure for central Saharan and northwest Africa.⁵⁸ Importantly, conquest of Senegal's interior was accomplished with the help of slave soldiers, first under General Faidherbe, a great enthusiast of West African participation in the military, and then more or less thereafter, through the first years of the twentieth century.⁵⁹

French conquest up-river meant cessation of the *escales*, liberating traders and their agents from the dreaded extortion of the Trarza Moors.⁶⁰ However, the extension of French control into the colony's backcountry also meant that Europeans came into conflict with *jihâd*.⁶¹ Muslim jihadist campaigns could be a potent

⁵⁶ Faidherbe, *Le Sénégal, la France dans l'Afrique occidentale*, 45.

⁵⁷ Barrows, "Faiderbe and Senegal: A Critical Discussion," 95, 101. Already in 1852 the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies consented to launching a conquest of the locations of trade along on the Senegal River. However, not until Faidherbe's military victories in the late 1850s was the lower Senegal River firmly under French control.

⁵⁸ Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, 30.

⁵⁹ Gentil, *Les Troupes du Sénégal de 1816 à 1890*, XI, XIV, 41-42; Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, 80.

⁶⁰ Gaffarel, *Le Sénégal et le Soudan français*, 100-138.

⁶¹ Scholars of the Islamic world, such as Marshall G.S. Hodgson and John Esposito, have pointed to the complexity of the term "*jihâd*" within the history of Muslim communities. According to Hodgson, *jihâd* did not always mean an outburst of violent conflict, but could simply have taken the form of an ideological "struggle" against an outside force. Hodgson thus defines *jihâd* in the following manner: "war in accordance with the *Shari'ah* against unbelievers; there are different opinions as to the circumstances under which such war becomes necessary. Also applied to a person's own struggle against his baser impulses." For more on the variational nuances of the term, see Marshall Hodgson,

political force. Historically, *jihâd* was invoked among African communities, but from the eighteenth century some West African Muslims were not just focused on the spread and consolidation of Islam among Africans but began to resist Atlantic slave exports and European intrusion of the interior.⁶² Notably, French conquest of Senegal's backcountry did not deter the spread of Islam. In fact, the second half of the nineteenth century experienced Islamic growth in the region.⁶³ The earliest and most feared Tijaniyya was El Hajj Umar Tal. A Fulani from Futa Toro, Tal studied in the mountains of the Futa Jallon and completed a *hajj* to Mecca. Observations from the French explorer and military officer Lieutenant Eugène Mage in the 1860s provides insight into Tal's Tukolor (of predominantly Fulani, Moor, and Soninke origin) culture. Mage told how Tukolors were "farmers...intelligent [and] war-like... sometimes fanatical, and always more or less in a struggle with the local government of Senegal."⁶⁴ Tal forged a West African empire in western Sudan between 1852 and 1864.⁶⁵ Given Faidherbe's eastward advance at the time, Umarians and the French eventually clashed. After virtually continual outbursts of warfare between 1857 and

The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 75, 269, 292, 515; and John Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁶² Christopher Harrison, *France and Islam in West Africa, 1860-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 10; Robinson, *The Holy War of Umar Tal*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), Introduction; Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, 42; and Barry, *La Sénégalie du XVème au XIXème siècle*, 83.

⁶³ Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, 37.

⁶⁴ Eugène Mage, *Voyage dans le Soudan occidental*, Rev. ed. (Paris: Hachette, 1971), 4.

⁶⁵ Robinson, *The Holy War of Umar Tal*, 3-4.

the early 1860s—resulting in widespread agricultural and commercial devastation—negotiations between Tal and Faidherbe took place. Tal did not acquiesce to French sovereignty, but an understanding emerged that amounted to free trade with French dominance of lower Senegal while Umarian authority remained in the eastern interior.⁶⁶

As was the case with Tal, other West African insurgents, including Ma Ba, Mamadu Lamine, Amadu Sheku, and eventually, the pacifist colonial resister, Amadu Bamba, utilized slaves as laborers, soldiers, or both. West African Muslims could not justify slavery based on specific approval in the *Qur'ân*, but as Humphrey J. Fisher has demonstrated, the theme of slavery was present in *Sharî'ah*, where the regulation of practices such as marriage dowry, tax assessment or sales transactions contained references to slaves.⁶⁷ Under *Sharî'ah*, Muslims were not to enslave other Muslims, but raiding for slaves amongst apostates, deserters, or marauders was justified.⁶⁸

French invasion eastward was eventually accompanied by expansion southward from Saint Louis in the Cayor, Baol and Sine and Salum regions. Beginning in 1863, with the help of slave soldiers, French officers launched several attempts to conquer Cayor—from both the north and south—an important area of nut

⁶⁶ For more on El Hajj Umar Tal's campaigns with the French and his ultimate death in 1864, see *ibid.*, especially chapters 7-9.

⁶⁷ Humphrey J. Fisher, *Slavery in the History of Muslim Black Africa* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 158.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

production.⁶⁹ While only some of Faidherbe's campaigns in the Cayor succeeded, before his departure in 1865, the governor had managed to divide the entire region of the Senegambia into three administrative units with a total of twelve *cercles*, or local divisions. It would be his overall plan that remained the schematic for expansion of French power in Senegal through the end of the century.⁷⁰ By the late 1860s, after Faidherbe's departure however, it was Governor Émile Pinet-Laprade, who began consolidation of newly conquered territory in West Africa. Pinet-Laprade and not Faidherbe developed the southern port town of Dakar (now Senegal's capital); the general had never foreseen the southern coastal village's key international maritime benefit for the colony.⁷¹

In the early 1870s, enthusiasm for conquest of the West African interior stalled because the French were reeling from problems at home. Despite the government of Napoleon III's transition from authoritarianism to moderate liberalism, republican opposition to the emperor's rule intensified. Though the emperor was captured by the Prussian army at Sedan in September 1870—setting off a series of

⁶⁹ See Gaffarel, *Le Sénégal et le Soudan français*, 100-138 for the complete chronology of the French colonial campaigns in West Africa during the 1850s and 1860s.

⁷⁰ C.W. Newbury and A.S. Kanya-Forstner, "French Policy and the Origins of the Scramble for West Africa," *Journal of African History* 10, No 2 (1969): 253-276, pp. 255-256. Newbury and Kanya-Forstner note that "Governor Faidherbe was the first to grasp the relevance of the Algerian precedent for the western Sudan." Unlike some of his superiors in the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies, the governor boldly called for the elimination of the Tukolor Empire along with the establishment of French forts all the way to the Niger. Faidherbe saw these measures as a necessary precedent for the foundation of a French empire in Africa.

⁷¹ Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 125, 130, 141. For more on the development of Dakar, see Jacques Charpy, *La Fondation de Dakar* (Paris: LaRose, 1958).

events that led to the founding of the French Third Republic—the new government was immediately destabilized by the twin threats of the Paris Commune and a pro-monarchist revival. Only after the spring of 1877, when attempts to reinstall a monarchy backfired, were Third Republic institutions consolidated, allowing the French to finally gaze outwards once more and resume imperial expansion.⁷²

Beginning in the late 1870s under Governor Louis Brière de l'Isle, French imperial expansion thus recommenced. In 1879, the appointment of Senegal's former governor Jean Bernard Jauréguiberry to Minister of the Navy and Colonies in Paris reinforced French conquest, since Senegal's "French" migrant merchants, who for some time had sought greater economic control inland, now possessed the political ammunition in Paris to further the colony's interests in the interior.⁷³

With renewed conquest of Senegal's backcountry, French commanders continued to utilize slaves as soldiers in the colonial army while slavery was permitted in areas conquered by the French.⁷⁴ By the late 1870s, Senegal maintained

⁷² For more on the ideological basis for French expansion from the late 1870s see the previously-noted volume from Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize* as well as Patricia Lorcin, *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice and Race in Colonial Africa* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995); Kanya-Forstner, *The Conquest of the Western Sudan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Douglas Porch, *The Conquest of the Sahara* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005); Henri Brunschwig, *French Colonialism, 1870-1914: Myths and Realities* (London: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966); T.W. Roberts, "Republicanism, Railway Imperialism, and the French Empire in Africa, 1879-1889," *The Historical Journal* 54, No 2 (June 2011): 401-420; Robert Aldrich, *Greater France: A history of French overseas expansion* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); and Frederic Quinn, *The French Empire* (Westport: Praeger, 2000).

⁷³ Michael Crowder, *West Africa Under Colonial Rule* (Northwestern University Press, 1968), 53-55.

⁷⁴ Victor Schoelcher, *L'Esclavage au Sénégal en 1880* (Paris: Librairie centrale des publications populaires, 1880), 92; Crowder, *West Africa Under Colonial Rule*, 75-80, 93-107, 182; and Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, 79-81.

a population of approximately 1,200,000 individuals, a number that would swell by more than a million when especially Haut-Sénégal or French Sudan was completely subdued. Slavery and the trade in slaves were greatest in the French hinterland. Through at least the end of the century, in high-density slave regions, captives were traded alongside items such as horses, salt, grain, and cloth.⁷⁵ Persistent French expansion would only exacerbate this trend. In 1883, a campaign eastward towards the French Sudan was reinvigorated first with the establishment of a French post at Bamako.⁷⁶ After 1887, Salum was completely under French dominance.⁷⁷ In 1890, French authority was substantial enough in French Sudan and Guinea to warrant separation from the colony of Senegal.⁷⁸ By 1891, African rebels in Wolof and Futa Toro were subdued.⁷⁹ Then by 1897, Futa Jallon was under French control.⁸⁰ By the late 1890s, Senegal's officials could claim victory over insurgents as far east as the Niger Buckle, as far north as Mauritania, and as far south as Portuguese Guinea in the Casamance.⁸¹ In 1907, the French colonial administrator Marcel Olivier announced

⁷⁵ Faïdherbe, *Le Sénégal, La France dans l'Afrique occidentale* 8,106; Gaffarel, *Le Sénégal et le Soudan français* 68; Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, 53-56, 59.

⁷⁶ Crowder, *West Africa Under Colonial Rule* 78.

⁷⁷ Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, 63.

⁷⁸ Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, 145.

⁷⁹ Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, 63.

⁸⁰ ANF, AP 148/4, 70 Fonds Ernest Noirot. Notes from the colonial administrator of the Futa Jallon regarding French sovereignty over the region during the years of 1896 through 1897, dated June, 1897.

⁸¹ Olivier, *Le Sénégal*, 31; Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, 59, 63; and Barry, *La Ségambie du XV^{ème} au XIX^{ème} siècle*, 284. The decree of October 18, 1904 created the French colony of Mauritania.

that the French now possessed uncontested authority of the entire Senegal region.⁸²

In this way, though the transatlantic trade had ended, a growing colonial nut economy together with an almost constant state of European military campaigns in the interior during the last decades of the nineteenth century led to the perpetuation of slavery in Senegal and its hinterland.

The phase of French military conquest did little to end slavery in Senegal, yet neither did the introduction of plans to consolidate and modernize French colonial territory. If French administrators exhibited a lackluster attitude regarding slave emancipation, it was also true that local diseases largely kept French workers out of West Africa. From the 1880s through the first years of the twentieth-century, a cadre of slave laborers were thus utilized to construct the railways, first between Saint Louis and Dakar, followed by the route connecting Dakar to the Niger River. Likewise, the laying of telegraph wire—a project first begun in the 1860s—which by the 1880s, extended to the region’s most important French posts—relied heavily on slave labor.⁸³ Moreover, though during the 1880s French leaders added to Saint Louis and Gorée the settlements of Dakar and Rufisque in the legal category of commune, which were mandated to share in the privileges and legal expectations of French communes in metropolitan France—this is not what happened. Each of the

⁸² Olivier, *Le Sénégal*, 184.

⁸³ Faidherbe, *Le Sénégal, La France dans l’Afrique occidentale*, 6-8; Bonnetain, *Une française au Soudan*, 24; Pheffer, “Railroad and Aspects of Social Change in Senegal, 1878-1933”; Barry, *La Sénégambie du XV^{ème} au XIX^{ème} siècle*, 288-289, 300; Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, 59, 65; and Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 47, 137, 141.

towns maintained a *conseil municipal* (municipal council) and a *maire* (mayor),⁸⁴ but the illegal practice of slavery continued. Even the fact that by the 1880s Dakar had become the site of significant international presence (a result of its more conducive location to trans-Atlantic shipping than Saint Louis and its proximity to peanut centers), what the French historian at the time, Paul Gaffarel, described as a “real European city,” did not mean that slaves were no longer a presence in the settlement.⁸⁵

While the last quarter of the nineteenth century represented a period of extensive French military conquest of the West African interior, followed by efforts to consolidate and administer newly acquired territory, it is important to remember that imperial expansion in Africa was not unique to France. Between the 1880s and World War I, Europeans engaged in an unprecedented race to conquer and rule Africans. Slavery remained a common characteristic throughout European African colonies, but metropolitan governments showed little concern. European governments were more focused on competition with one other than on human rights in their African possessions. Regular disputes erupted over what constituted colonial possession, resulting in the collective call for an international meeting to settle the issue. The Berlin Conference of 1884-85 set forth rules for the colonization of Africa. Conference attendees, which included representatives from European nations as well

⁸⁴ Olivier, *Le Sénégal*, 121, 125-126.

⁸⁵ Bonnetain, *Une française au Soudan*, 76; Faïdherbe, *Le Sénégal, la France dans l'Afrique occidentale*, 17-18; and Gaffarel, *Le Sénégal et le Soudan français*, 66.

as the United States (no Africans were in attendance), decided that physical occupancy should be the key determinant for possession. As opposed to the informal merchant naval presence which had hitherto prevailed, now treaties with local chiefs and actual European physical presence were made prerequisites for territorial claims.⁸⁶

The Berlin Conference signified the early stages of the era referred to as “high colonialism” which featured a change in imperial administrative structure. For most of the century, the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies had authority over French West Africa, but from 1884 onward, oversight became the responsibility of civilians selected by the Direction of the Colonies in Paris. A shift from military to civilian rule allowed for increased power from Paris. By 1895, the entire region became known as *Afrique occidentale française*, or AOF, with its first Governor-General stationed in Saint Louis, relocated in 1902 to Dakar. By 1900, French possessions in the region extended far to the south and east, prompting the French administrator Ernest Noirot in 1903 to boast that French West Africa had grown considerably to include Senegal, Senegambia-Niger, French Guinea, Ivory Coast, and Dahomey.⁸⁷ However, despite increased French presence in Senegal and its borderlands and greater coordination with Paris, slavery remained a prominent characteristic of French West Africa. The fact that slavery persisted in French territory more than fifty years

⁸⁶ For more on the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 see Förster Stig, Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Ronald Edward Robinson, *Bismarck, Europe, and Africa: The Berlin Africa Conference 1884–1885 and the Onset of Partition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

⁸⁷ ANF, AP 148/4, Fonds Ernest Noirot, notes undated; Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 23.

after its official abolition spoke to the logistical problems of freeing slaves in a vast territory where captivity was pervasive and approved of in West African culture, and where hinterland French conquest and a need for labor in a growing imperial territory relied upon conscripted slaves. However, as this thesis will demonstrate, the failure of the French emancipation law in West Africa also suggested the challenges of introducing slave liberty in a colony where a mixed-race social hierarchy prevailed, where the white French perceived the region's blacks to be incapable of observing metropolitan principles of human rights, and where inherent contradictions within republicanism itself plagued slave liberty.

Conclusion

On April 27, 1848, the provisional republican government hastily declared the end of slavery. French officials announced that colonial slaves were to be freed, but through at least 1905, when this study ends, slavery not only remained a feature of the four French communes in Senegal, but it was rampant in French territory in the interior. As late as 1893, Gaffarel observed that slaves in Senegal were used to harvest gum Arabic.⁸⁸ Between 1848 and 1905, the emancipation decree was manipulated by the colony's administrators to steer away from the decree's pronouncement of freedom for all black slaves on French soil to an environment of haphazard liberation.

⁸⁸Gaffarel, *Le Sénégal et le Soudan français*, 20-21.

The fragile nature of the French presence in Senegal and its borderlands, which was home to millions of slaves, made the emancipation decree difficult to implement. Unlike France's island colonies in the Antilles, which were bounded by water, there were few clear borders in Senegal. In the 1880s, Gaffarel observed that "our colony of Senegal does not have set borders, except to the west with the Atlantic ocean."⁸⁹ Porous borders in the colony made slavery almost impossible to control since large slaveholding populations regularly traveled in and out of French territory. As French territory expanded in West Africa, Klein and Robinson have shown that certain areas were particularly challenging for slave emancipation. First, north of Senegal River, where Moors utilized slaves for herding and agricultural labor, which included the harvesting of gum Arabic. Second was the route to Sudan, where Saint Louis was at least partially dependent on slave-owning Futa Toro Africans for food supplies. And finally, in and around Senegal's settlements were Wolof and Sereers, Africans that supplied important food and export products to the French.⁹⁰

The situation was complex for Senegal's administrators charged with enforcing the French abolition law. But for all the challenges that West African tradition, geography, and imperial goals for profit and conquest presented colonial officials, there were other factors that made freeing Senegal's slaves virtually

⁸⁹ Gaffarel, *Le Sénégal et le Soudan français*, 5.

⁹⁰ Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, 26-27; Robinson, "Ethnography and Customary Law," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 32, No 126 (1992): 221-237, p. 223. Here, the findings of Klein and Robinson reinforce the economic argument stressing that the French overlooked conditions of forced labor since the success of the colony was dependent on products produced by slaves.

impossible. With this in mind, we will now turn our attention to a discussion of the colony's mixed-race, a fitting place to continue a deconstruction of the French culture of slavery in Senegal since for all intents and purposes it was the lure and utility of Euro-Africans which anchored the French to Senegal in the first place.

RACE, RESISTANCE, AND *PUISSANCE*

In 1847, the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies in Paris requested that officials in Senegal conduct a survey regarding the prospect of slave emancipation in the colony. In the main settlement of Saint Louis, a colonial administrator observed that the mixed-race “protested against all measures of abolition,” even with an indemnity payment. The response was similar on the island of Gorée.⁹¹ Senegal’s mixed-race wealth and prestige had been built on slavery which meant that any ideas threatening the institution encountered severe opposition from this population. This chapter argues that in spite of the onset of an unrecoverable decline of Senegal’s old mixed-race families, a colonial environment influenced by a *métis* racial and social hierarchy inhibited the implementation of the emancipation decree in Senegal between 1848 and the turn-of-the-century.

This chapter offers an alternative interpretation to the traditional representation of Senegal’s mixed-race during the last half of the nineteenth century. Normally, Senegal’s *métis* culture has been portrayed as no longer relevant in the period, and, as a consequence, unable to exert influence on illicit slavery. Such a perspective generally follows from a series of assaults on Senegal’s old mixed-race families that began in the 1820s with the emigration of French merchants to the colony; followed by pressure from the French state and the Catholic Church to end “country marriages,”

⁹¹ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 14. Report dated October 4, 1847, sent to the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies. Under direction of the Duc de Broglie, the Colonial Ministry asked colonial authorities to examine the questions and issues surrounding abolition. The returned report states that the Senegal colony had already begun such a survey five years before, as per ministerial instructions dated June 17, 1842.

from especially the 1830s; a gum Arabic crisis during the early 1840s; and an official emancipation of slavery in 1848.⁹² No doubt, these events weakened Senegal's old Euro-African families. However, this chapter will demonstrate a surprisingly resilient mixed-race social hierarchy in Senegal after 1848, especially with respect to the continuation of a culture of slavery in the colony.

But why were Euro-Africans important to the French in the first place? How did this population retain relevance in the face of attacks on its socio-economic foundations? Further, how did this population resist the abolition law? Moreover, how were colonial officials' responses to the metropolitan decree reflective of mixed-race interests regarding slavery? This chapter will address these questions by focusing on three key themes: the rise and perpetuation of mixed-race influence based on European desires for trade, sex, slaves, and the commodities that slaves harvested; mixed-race attitudes towards race (and by extension, black slaves); and finally, the specific ways in which this community's attitudes towards slavery prevailed in the decades after 1848.

Sex, Trade and Race in Senegal

The fact that by the mid-nineteenth century leaders in Paris were interested in the opinions of Senegal's mixed-race had to do with not only the population's legacy

⁹² For the general interpretation of the trajectory of *métis* power during the nineteenth century in Senegal, see Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 103, 109; Hilary Jones, "From *mariage à la mode* to weddings at town hall: Marriage, Colonialism, and Mixed-Race Society in Nineteenth Century Senegal," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 38, No 1 (2005):27-39, p. 36; and Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce*, 163, 175-176.

of prestige, but also with its evolving influence. Yet how did this community come into being in the first place, and what was its relationship to the French and the institution of slavery? Further, what characterized the connection between Euro-Africans, the French, and slavery on the eve of official French slave emancipation in the 1840s? To begin with, a European interest in sex and profitable trade in West Africa created a powerful mixed-race community. By the eighteenth century, well-established Euro-African enclaves spanned the West African coastline, the result of sexual relationships between West African women and Europeans who had come to trade at the shores for hundreds of years. Much of authority in traditional mixed-race society was based on the status of the female or *signare*, whose primary responsibility was to increase the standing of her family by way of advantageous social and economic liaisons with European men (see Figure 5). Over time, successful *signares* developed vast political and economic networks that extended hundreds of kilometers into the West African interior. Senegal's *signares* and their children, located in the coastal settlements of Saint Louis and Gorée, not only possessed knowledge of the West African backcountry but spoke African languages which fostered their entrepreneurial excellence in the businesses of slaves, gum Arabic, animal hides, and gold in the hinterland. Conversely, their fluency in European languages and customs granted authority to the mixed-race over exports to the Atlantic market.⁹³

⁹³ Olivier, *Le Sénégal*, 3; Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 47-49; Owen White, *Children of the French Empire: Miscegenation and Colonial Society in French West Africa 1895-1960*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 7-8; and Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender, and Religious Observance from the sixteenth to eighteenth century*. (Oxford: James Currey, Ltd., 2003), xi, 124.



Figure 5. Sketch rendering of a *signare* of Saint Louis. Image from M.L. Faidherbe, *Le Sénégal, La France dans l'Afrique occidentale* (Paris: Librairie Hachette et compagnie, 1889). Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF). Paris, France.

On the eve of slave emancipation during the 1840s, most French came to Senegal in their capacity as navy soldiers.⁹⁴ The health dangers of West Africa, especially malaria and yellow fever, kept European women and children from

⁹⁴Olivier, *Le Sénégal*, 8; Webb, Jr., “The Trade in Gum Arabic: Prelude to French Conquest in Senegal,” 156.

traveling to the colony. This meant that the lure of Senegal for French males was what it had always been: a place for risky adventure, profitable trade, and perhaps most enticing, the potential for exotic intimate encounters with local women. The colony had a reputation among Europeans for being a white man's playground. In the 1840s the navy officer Victor Verneuil claimed "adventures" were inevitable in Senegal. According to the officer, French males engaged in intimate relationships with Senegalese females as young as thirteen years old.⁹⁵ Sexually available is how Verneuil described Senegalese women.⁹⁶ European men commonly projected their own fantasies onto African women, depicting Senegalese females as soft, tender and faithful with a penchant for love and sensual pleasure.⁹⁷ To be sure, French depictions of romantic relationships in Senegal followed a pattern of imperial discourse that conveyed the "exoticism" and "seductive powers" of indigenous women, which as Ann Stoler has argued, simply reinforced the power politics of European rule. As it was, fewer themes were discussed more by Europeans in the colonial environment than sex. Tangentially, according to Stoler, "no subject was more frequently invoked to foster the racist stereotypes of European society."⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Victor Verneuil, *Mes aventures au Sénégal, souvenirs de voyage* (Paris: Hachette, 1858), 34, 39-40. Verneuil was a French naval officer assigned to Senegal in the 1840s. Verneuil's account provides description of the colony between 1843 and 1845 (on the eve of official slave emancipation). Fanciful cultural anecdotes make it evident the publication was intended for a popular audience in France. Verneuil also wrote *Deux années au désert* (1845), a publication that featured the zoology, meteorology and botany of the Senegambia region.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 25-30.

⁹⁷ Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 49.

⁹⁸ Ann L. Stoler, "Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th Century Colonial Cultures," (Review) *American Ethnologist* 16, No 4 (Nov, 1989): 634-660, p. 635.

While French relationships with black female slaves were most likely coerced, and required a period of negotiation with the slave's owner,⁹⁹ there was a long history of European men seeking the wealthy mixed-race *signares*, since they represented one of the surest methods to gain riches in the colony.¹⁰⁰ French engagement with Senegalese women may not only have been sexual and economic in nature, however. It appears to have been likewise companionate, referred to by the French as “*mariages à la mode du pays*” or “country marriages.”¹⁰¹ Apparently, having a wife and family in France had rarely deterred Europeans from contracting local marriages in the colony, leading former Governor Faidherbe to describe that Europeans had long “preferred to marry women of the Euro-African race, but only for the length of time they were in Senegal...[T]hese women, while young, often married several times,” he explained, “replacing one husband who had just left Africa, with another arriving, which led to the local expression, *femmes de l'emploi*, or working women.”¹⁰² Verneuil observed that “all men sent to Senegal engage in *mariage à la mode du pays*... transferring their wife like a table, some rugs and account ledgers...”¹⁰³ Country marriages were frequent, however this did not mean that these relationships were problem-free. Verneuil complained that *signares* liked “European

⁹⁹ Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 51.

¹⁰⁰ Faidherbe, *Le Sénégal, La France dans l'Afrique occidentale*, 99; Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa*, 126-127.

¹⁰¹ Jones, “From *mariage à la mode* to weddings at town hall,” 27, 34-36, 40.

¹⁰² Faidherbe, *Le Sénégal, La France dans l'Afrique occidentale*, 99.

¹⁰³ Verneuil, *Mes aventures au Sénégal*, 25, 35.

liquor too much, particularly *l'eau de vie*, [brandy],” and were known for “excessive spending...capable of ruining a Rothschild.”¹⁰⁴ Some *signares* owned hundreds of slaves at a time, all part of what the French described as *signares*’ lavish lifestyle, which reputedly included elaborate balls where these women could “attract” new European mates.¹⁰⁵

French soldiers were almost never assigned for more than three years to the colony, but few survived even that long. While European males were drawn to Senegal for the possibility of sexual and economic exploits, the realities of life in West Africa could be far from exciting, prompting Verneuil to comment that many French soldiers assigned to Senegal perished from depression, “while still others die from debauchery [with] women, alcohol, [or] too much hunting.”¹⁰⁶ The observations of the navy officer, Anne Raffenel, were just as gloomy. He explained that a “miserable” life waited for Europeans in Saint Louis: “[They] live on an island of sand without water, without soil, without trees... a little island of sand bathed for seven months [each year] by salty water.”¹⁰⁷ Equally disastrous were West African torrential storms and floods. The French explorer and naturalist Antoine-Alfred Marche portrayed the terrible force of a tornado in the region, when he described vessels that were “thrown by fierce winds onto bystanders caught unawares at the

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 42.

¹⁰⁵ Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 53-54.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 75-79; Gaffarel, *Le Sénégal et le Soudan français*, 84; and Verneuil, *Mes aventures au Sénégal*, 68.

¹⁰⁷ Raffenel, *Nouveau voyage dans le pays des nègres. Tome II*, 2-3.

shoreline, killing many.”¹⁰⁸ Catastrophe lurked under capricious sub-Saharan skies, but there was no greater threat to Europeans in Senegal than sickness. Raffanel announced that French naval soldiers came with pain and left with joy, “happy to have stayed healthy despite the fevers, the dysentery, the hepatitis, or death from despair.”¹⁰⁹ Particularly lethal was the wet season or *l’hivernage* when the onset of disease was most prevalent.¹¹⁰ One chronicler noted that “most Europeans could not take two winters in a row in Senegal...eighty percent of all Europeans suffer from yellow fever and half of those die.”¹¹¹ The likelihood of death meant that West African females stood to gain a small fortune from deceased or departing French “spouses,” prompting Faidherbe to describe how *signares*’ families had become “rich in gold and slaves.”¹¹²

The slave-owning mixed-race families had a long history of imitating the white French. They dressed in Western clothes, constructed European-style homes, converted to Christianity, wearing crucifixes and rosary beads, and insisted that all

¹⁰⁸ Antoine-Alfred Marche, *Trois voyages dans l’Afrique occidentale* (Paris: Librairie Hachette et compagnie, 1879), 50.

¹⁰⁹ Raffanel, *Nouveau voyage dans le pays des nègres. Tome II*, 3.

¹¹⁰ For more on French mortality due to disease in Africa see William B. Cohen, “Malaria and French Imperialism,” *Journal of African History* 24, No 1 (1983): 23-36.

¹¹¹ Gaffarel, *Le Sénégal et le Soudan français*, 18; Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 47; and Faidherbe, *Notice sur la colonie du Sénégal et sur les pays qui sont en relation avec elle*, 7-8. Governor Faidherbe pointed to the inhospitable environment of Senegal when he noted that between 1817 and 1854 (in the space of just thirty-seven years) thirty-two governors came and went in Senegal.

¹¹² Faidherbe, *Le Sénégal, La France dans l’Afrique occidentale*, 99; Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 48-49, 53; and White, *Children of the French Empire*, 9.

members of their household be baptized Catholic.¹¹³ The scholar H.O. Idowu has argued that Senegal's mixed-race could demonstrate dynastic ties to white Catholics who fled the *métropole* during the French Revolution.¹¹⁴ *Mariage à la mode du pays* may therefore have served as more than a means to achieve wealth through matrimony. It was also a way to demonstrate racial equality. The mixed-race were proud to be "civilized" Christians, to be legally on par with whites under French law, and to be civil servants or employed in the French commercial trade. Crucially, they were not black nor did they engage in physical labor like their slaves. As in other parts of the world (like St. Domingue, or modern-day Haiti), the mixed-race had carved out a privileged "third race" between native peoples and Europeans. They took great pains to distance themselves from black slavery, accumulating large numbers of slaves as an indication of their superior racial status.¹¹⁵

Slaveholding was a central element of Euro-African social hierarchy in Senegal and challenges to this community's customs did little to alter this population's standing. For instance, an effort by the French state and Catholic missionaries to end *mariage à*

¹¹³ Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 54; Olivier, *Le Sénégal*, 227; Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa*, 128; and Klein, "Slaves, Gum, and Peanuts."

¹¹⁴ H.O. Idowu, "The Establishment of Elective Institutions in Senegal, 1869-1880," *Journal of African History* 9, No 2 (1968): 261-277, p. 264.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., Jones, "From *mariage à la mode* to weddings at town hall," 28; Kristin Mann and Richard Roberts, Eds. *Law in Colonial Africa* (London: James Currey, Ltd., 1991), 133; and Stein, *L'égér Félicité Sonthonax: The Lost Sentinel of the Republic* (London: Associated University Press, 1985), 30. The *métis* in Senegal maintained a precarious history relative to the issue of citizenship. In Article 59 of Louis XIV's 1685 *Code Noir*, all free men in the colonies gained the same rights and privileges of free French individuals, however the mixed-race was excluded from noble status. Then during the 1790s (Great Revolution), the mixed-race population gained equal citizenship rights to the white French. This privilege, however, was repealed during the early Napoleonic period, only to be renewed in 1830 and 1833, respectively.

la mode du pays, especially pronounced from the 1830s, may have threatened a core mixed-race custom,¹¹⁶ but this did not end the practice of miscegenation between French males and West African females, nor did it fully unseat the population from a traditional position of social and economic power. In the 1840s, Raffanel thus emphasized the continuing importance of the mixed-race in the colony's economy when he observed that the critical export of gum Arabic to France still "can only be traded at the *escales*, where Europeans are excluded from direct participation." The French had to rely on "intermediaries," who Raffanel termed "mulattos."¹¹⁷

While traditional Euro-African families yet maintained social and economic prestige in Senegal on the eve of French slave emancipation, it was also the case that this population was evolving, to include the progeny of "French" migrant merchants. From the French Revolution, but especially by the 1820s, the colony's traditional Euro-African race was bolstered by descendants from miscegenation between French migrants and West African females. The famous *négociant* enterprise of Maurel and

¹¹⁶ Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce*, 174-175; Barry, *La Ségambie du XVème au XIXème siècle*, 198-201; White, *Children of the French Empire*, 9; Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 97; and Jones, "From *mariage à la mode* to weddings at town hall," 36-37. In the 1830s Paris broadened the Napoleonic Code to include the colonies—as Jones has argued—to "extend the cultural values of the French empire." The Civil Code meant all French living overseas and *métis* and black African Christians living in Saint Louis and Gorée were expected to comply with French legal and social standards. Jones has noted that "*métis* men and women, in particular, met the requirements for French civil status because they carried the surnames of the European fathers, had some French education, owned property and practiced Christianity." The Christian population of the two settlements thus increasingly adhered to the teachings of the Church after 1830. This was further facilitated, according to Jones, by the appointment of permanent ecclesiastical staff. Jones adds that "the Church warned against unions that produced illegitimate offspring and promoted concepts of dowry over that of bridewealth." In this regard, Owen White added that the Catholic Church "rarely" approved of *mariages à la mode du pays*.

¹¹⁷ Raffanel, *Nouveau voyage dans le pays des nègres. Tome II*, 172.

Prom demonstrates the newer trend of creolization in Senegal. During the 1820s, the cousins Hubert Prom and Hilaire Maurel migrated from Bordeaux to Gorée to work in trade. Marrying the *signare* sisters Sophie and Constance La Porte granted the young Frenchmen a necessary financial base as well as approval to launch a *métis* company in the colony. Maurel and Prom would eventually extend operations to include Gorée and Saint Louis and later Rufisque and Dakar as well as other West African locations such as Bathurst in Gambia.¹¹⁸ Maurel and Prom were Senegal's most important "French" *négociants* by mid-century, but within one generation this French "Bordeaux" merchant family, which maintained factories and offices back in France, was also a mixed-race family in Senegal.¹¹⁹ Other French migrants followed a similar pattern, leading to the successful enterprises of, for instance, Déves and Chaumet as well as Delmas and company. As was the case with Maurel and Prom, Déves and

¹¹⁸ For more on the *créolisation* of French merchants during the nineteenth century in Senegal, see Jean-Luc Angrand, *Céleste ou le temps des signares* (Paris: Éditions Anne Pépin, 2006); François Manchuelle, "Métis et colons: la famille Devès et l'émergence politique des Africains au Sénégal, 1881-1897," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 24, No 96 (1984):477-504; Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, 108-109; and Idowu, "The Establishment of Elective Institutions in Senegal, 1869-1880," 264. Manchuelle and Robinson have noted the prominence of the Saint Louis Euro-African family, Devès, which Robinson argued was due to the ambition of the mixed-raced son of the Frenchman, Justin Devès, who in the 1820s, despite being married to a Frenchwoman in France, took a Fulbe mistress in the colony and fathered a son, Gaspard. As with the above-mentioned Maurel et Prom, Gaspard Devès went on to found a successful trade network in Senegal.

¹¹⁹ The interest of Bordeaux merchants in Senegal was not new after the French retook possession of the colony from the British in 1816/1817. Pierre Biondi points to a long history between Bordeaux merchant houses and Euro-African traders in Senegal, particularly active during the Atlantic slave trade. During the nineteenth century, Bordeaux French migrants simply replaced the old chartered Bordeaux companies, shifting interests in slaves to agricultural commodities, see Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 61; Webb, Jr., "The Trade in Gum Arabic: Prelude to French Conquest in Senegal," 56; and McLane, "Commercial Rivalries and French Policy on the Senegal River, 1831-1858," 40-41. McLane stresses the supremacy of Bordeaux trading firms in France by the mid-nineteenth-century for trade with Senegal. Before this time, Bordeaux firms especially competed with trading houses in Marseille for the colony's exports.

Chaumet and Delmas and company were influential French “Bordeaux” merchants, but within one generation, they were also mixed-race. Moreover, these firms were founded not in France but in Senegal, and would not be based in France until approximately 1900.¹²⁰

Traditional scholarship of the “French” Bordeaux merchant has pointed to a rivalry with the old *signarial* mixed-race families.¹²¹ Competition notwithstanding, the “French” Bordeaux merchants in the colony maintained striking similarities with Senegal’s traditional Euro-African culture: While some migrant French merchants maintained wives and children in France, they nevertheless “married” African females, with their descendants in Senegal of mixed-race descent; they were focused on commodity export; they were based out of the colony’s port cities; and crucially, they continued to be heavily reliant upon slaves for domestic labor as well as agricultural production and harvests in the interior.¹²² Therefore, while the arrival of French migrant merchants was one of the factors in the unrecoverable decline of signarial authority, an evolving Euro-African race proved to be resilient. The age-old process of miscegenation and creolization meant that the *métis* continued to be power brokers in

¹²⁰ Manchuelle, “Métis et colons: la famille Devès et l’émigration politique des Africains au Sénégal, 1881-1897».

¹²¹ For examples of this trend in scholarship, see Barry, *La Sénégambie du XVème au XIXème siècle*, 201; G. Wesley Johnson, Jr., *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal: The Struggle for Power in the Four Communes, 1900-1920* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971), 97-99.

¹²² Raffanel, *Nouveau voyage dans le pays des nègres. Tome I*, 18-19; Idowu, “The Establishment of Elective Institutions in Senegal, 1869-1880,” 264; Webb Jr., “The Trade in Gum Arabic: Prelude to French Conquest in Senegal,” 27; and Brooks, “Peanuts and Colonialism: Consequences of the Commercialization of Peanuts in West Africa, 1830-1870,” 42, 44-47. Brooks points to the importance of Euro-African merchants in the export of peanuts in the Senegambian region, well beyond the emancipation law of 1848.

the colony, shifting—over time—to a model led by patriarchs instead of *signares*, now boasting stronger ties to mainland facilities in France with capitalization to ride out fluctuations in the market (such as the gum crisis during the 1840s).¹²³ No doubt, the prospect of free slaves threatened the racial, economic, and social standing of the colony's mixed-race—matriarchal or patriarchal.

Slave Emancipation and the Perpetuation of a Mixed-Race Culture of Slavery

When in the early spring of 1848 republican lawmakers in Paris freed slaves in the French Empire, Senegal's mixed-race population chose not to accept a new status for slaves. Instead, they continued to see emancipated blacks as subordinates and property. That begs a number of questions. What characterized *métis* response to the new law? Further, how did French officials' response to the edict reflect mixed-race culture of slaveholding in the colony? Finally, what was the state of slavery and slave response in Senegal during the spring and summer of 1848 and how did post-emancipation slave conditions mirror the racial, economic, and social interests of the mixed-race population?

On the eve of official emancipation in the late 1840s, Senegal's population numbered as many as 30,000 individuals, consisting of several thousand free blacks, a

¹²³ Webb, Jr. "The Trade in Gum Arabic: Prelude to French Conquest in Senegal," 164-165. McLane, "Commercial Rivalries and French Policy on the Senegal River, 1831-1858," 40-41. McLane has shown that especially after the gum Arabic boom during the 1830s, more French merchants migrated to Senegal. Numbers are difficult to estimate, however, her study argues that before the 1830s there were approximately four or five migrant French merchants with factories in Saint Louis, swelling to a minimum of 36 by 1841.

few thousand coastal mixed-race, a few hundred European naval soldiers, and between 6,000 and 10,000 slaves. The colony's population was spread across the settlements of Saint Louis and Gorée, the small posts of Merinaghen in the Walo, the small river posts of Dagana, Bakel and Sènou-débou on the Senegal River, Albreda in Gambia, Sedhiou in the Casamance area, and some factories.¹²⁴ Slaves were everywhere. They worked at French factories, as *laptots* on the Senegal River, as *engagés à temps* or black indentured servants, on plantations, or as colonial soldiers for the French. Slaves toiled in the dusty white-hot streets of Saint Louis and on the small breezy island of Gorée as construction workers, laundry maids, *domestiques*, grain grinders, cooks, day laborers and skilled artisans.¹²⁵ As was always the case,

¹²⁴ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15a, 50. Letter from Governor Baudin to the Minister of the Navy and Colonies, February, 1849 [Day unclear]; ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 14. Report dated October 4, 1847, sent to the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies. Under direction of the Duc de Broglie, the Colonial Ministry asked colonial authorities to examine the questions and issues surrounding abolition; ANOM, FM, K2,K3,K8. Commission of the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies, instituted to prepare the rule of indemnity for the owners of slaves, several sessions during the spring and summer of 1848; Faidherbe, *Notice sur la colonie du Sénégal et sur les pays qui sont en relation avec elle*, 13; Olivier, *Le Sénégal*, 255; Renault, *L'abolition de l'esclavage au Sénégal*, 6; and Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, 22-24.

A population figure of 16,500 to 20,000 free individuals and between 6,000 and 10,000 slaves in Senegal in 1848 is my estimate drawn from a number of primary and secondary sources. In correspondence from Governor Baudin in February, 1849, the governor estimated the population of Saint Louis at 12,000 to 13,000 people. (For this same year, Klein estimates a figure of 4,500 Goréens.) In 1854, Governor Faidherbe estimated a total population of 17,466 in Senegal. It does not appear from his computation tables, however, that he included in this figure the inhabitants of the island of Gorée off of Cape Verde, which for a brief period between 1854 and 1859 was a separate French colony, or the populations at small river posts and factories. For the year 1878, Olivier estimated 3,243 *habitants* in Gorée, and 15,980 in Saint Louis. The term *habitants* usually referred to free individuals of a settlement, therefore it is likely that these totals did not include the towns' slave populations. By 1878, Dakar was fast becoming an important port for the French and thus a decline in Saint Louis population began to occur. See the aforementioned, Renault, *L'abolition de l'esclavage au Sénégal*, 6, for the breadth of the colony's territories as well as his slave total estimates in 1848.

¹²⁵ J. Malcolm Thompson, "Colonial Policy and the Family Life of Black Troops in French West Africa, 1817-1904," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 23:3 (1990): 423-453, p. 426; Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 75-85, 91-92.

slave markets existed throughout the colony. Buyers scrutinized captives' skin, teeth and noses; females were in great demand since they could be used as concubines and *domestiques*.¹²⁶

Despite a slave-ridden environment, on April 27, 1848 the republican provisional government in Paris declared the end of slavery across the French realm. The Decree Relating to the Abolition of Slavery in French Colonies and Possessions read as follows:

Considering that slavery is an attack against the dignity of human beings; that by destroying man's free will, it abolishes the natural principle of rights and obligation; that it is an outright violation of the republican principles of: Freedom, Equality, Brotherhood.

Considering that if measures did not soon follow the proclamation already made by the principle of slave abolition, the most pitiful disorder could result in the colonies,

Decree:

Art. 1.

Slavery will be altogether abolished in all colonies and in all French possessions, two months after the promulgation of the present decree. From the promulgation of the present decree in the colonies, all corporal punishment, and any sale of non-free persons, will be absolutely forbidden.

Art. 2.

The system of indenture established in Senegal is abolished.

Art. 3.

The governors or the administrators of the French Republic are ordered to apply appropriate measures for slave freedom in Martinique, in

¹²⁶ Verneuil, *Mes aventures au Sénégal*, 106, 108; Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 91.

Guadeloupe and dependencies, on the island of Reunion, in Guyana, in Senegal and in the other French territories on the West coast of Africa, on Mayotte island and in its protectorates and in Algeria.

Art. 4.

Pardoned are former slaves who were condemned for crimes which, if having been committed by a free person, would not have resulted in punishment. Any individuals who were deported by the French colonial administration are to be returned.

Art 5.

The National Assembly will determine the amount of indemnity that should be distributed to the colonists.

Art. 6.

Colonies cleansed of slavery and possessions of India will have the right of representation in the National Assembly.

Art. 7.

The principle that French soil frees the slave who touches it, is now applicable in all colonies and possessions of the Republic.

Art. 8.

In the future, even in foreign countries, it is forbidden for any French individual to possess, to buy or to sell slaves, and to participate, either directly, or indirectly, in any traffic or exploitation of this sort. Any infraction will result in the loss of French citizenship.

Nevertheless, the French individual who will become aware of this law at the time of the promulgation of the decree, will have a period of three years in which to conform to it. Those who will become owners of slaves in foreign countries, by inheritance, or gift of marriage, must, under this same restriction, free them or become disassociated from them, within the ascribed time-frame, from the day ownership began

Art. 9.

The Minister of the Navy and Colonies, and the Minister of War are ordered, each one in his line of duty, for the execution of the present decree.

Executed in Paris, in council of the Government, on April 27, 1848¹²⁷

Two months earlier, when the February 1848 revolution broke out in the *métropole*, some of the colony's mixed-race read the writing on the wall, taking matters into their own hands by trying to sell slaves up-river with the belief that more money could be made by immediately selling slaves rather than waiting for an indemnity from France. This idea, the colony's governor, Auguste Baudin, recorded, originated from "some *signares* with old customs who are fanatic in their slave-owning ways."¹²⁸

Baudin's off-handed statement belied the fact that colonial officials' response mimicked mixed-race attitudes regarding the necessity of maintaining good relations with Africans in the interior for commodity production and its transport into Senegal. Later in June, (during the two-month waiting period between the promulgation and the introduction of the law), interim Governor Léandre du Chateau wrote in a dispatch to Paris authorities that freedom and protection for any slave who touches French soil at the river posts or coastal settlements "will put the local government ... in a compromising position and very possibly lead to war with all the states that

¹²⁷ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15a. Decree Concerning the Abolition of Slavery in the Colonies, April 27, 1848.

¹²⁸ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15a, 172. Letter from Governor A. Baudin to the Minister of the Navy and Colonies, April 25, 1848.

surround us.” The governor warned Paris authorities that since Senegal bordered tribes in Mauritania, the Walo, the Futa and the Cayor, that trade between the colony and these lands would be put at risk with emancipation since it was conducted almost exclusively by slaves who carried commercial supplies into Senegal. Once the decree became known to neighboring tribes, du Chateau claimed slaves would “rush” to Senegal to seek freedom: Slaves, he announced, “will not care about the business needs of their masters” but instead “will desert everywhere and will come here to take refuge under the protection of the French government.” According to the governor, terrible reprisals would be carried out by slave’s masters upon the colony’s inhabitants. No one would be able to leave Senegal, du Chateau complained, without the risk of “being taken by the Moors and the blacks in replacement for the souls our generosity will have given protection.” According to the governor, the main settlement of Saint Louis faced the greatest danger. He cautioned Paris leaders that if the colony followed through on freeing slaves, Saint Louis would become “a citadel, blocked on all sides and unceasingly exposed to attacks and deprivations.”¹²⁹

Further reminders of a mixed-race social hierarchy in the colony emerged when the governor complained to Paris authorities that Senegal’s social structure would be overturned with slave liberation, only to end in complete chaos. Freeing slaves would create a large population of black paupers in Senegal. Du Chateau warned: “the morals of slaves, as well as free [blacks] are to give women all they

¹²⁹ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15a, 233. Letter from interim Governor L.B. du Chateau to the Minister of the Navy and Colonies, June 10, 1848.

make and possess...” He threatened that once liberated, former slaves were destined to become derelicts and a danger to the colony since they were rather like children, in need of guidance and supervision. “Former slaves,” he argued, with freedom, “will not know how to provide for themselves.”¹³⁰ While the official’s claims reflected a culture of mixed-race superiority over blacks, how did the slaves themselves react to impending liberty, and did republican notions of liberty and equality factor into slave responses?

When the colony’s slaves learned of approaching freedom, many ceased to work entirely. Matters became so desperate that in early June slave owners demanded that the governor invoke slave freedom at once (foregoing the two-month delay) as well as for an immediate distribution of government slave indemnity; complaining that they were “no longer the masters on their properties anyway.”¹³¹ Some slaves registered their rage through violence. Du Chateau recorded that slaves were committing “reprehensible acts,” the worst of which were the actions of a twenty-year-old male slave who, aware of his impending manumission, killed his female owner, *Signare* Madame Labouré, who owned a large number of slaves. Wishing to deter further slave rebellion, the governor imprisoned the slave-murderer, issuing a

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid. For the 248,310 slaves throughout the empire, slave owners in Senegal received between 60 and 500 francs indemnity per captive. Of the two installments paid, one was to be in a cash settlement and the other was to be in *rente*, which could have been an annuity, pension, or some sort of other revenue income. No payment was made for slaves under five or over sixty years of age. See ANOM, FM, SG, K3, July 29, 1848; Notes of the project relative to the indemnity accorded to colonists after the abolition of slavery; Notes undated; ANOM, FM, SG, K2. From the Commission to Prepare the Rules of Indemnity. 11 sess.

proclamation to all slaves that “until the time of liberation, even though it is approaching, [you] must respect [your] masters,” and further, that “even free men cannot hit other free men...”¹³² This, however, did not quell slave insubordination. Moreover, questions about what “freedom” would mean led five hundred male slaves in July in Saint Louis to form an emancipation club. The club’s delegates requested an audience with the governor, to inquire about the meaning of the words “*liberté*” and “*égalité*.”¹³³

It does not appear that the governor defined the terms “liberty” and “equality” for the slaves, but something of an explanation of emancipation was provided to slaves when, as directed from Paris, the new law was published and distributed on broad sheets/posters in the colony. At eight o’clock in the morning on August 23rd, posted in the capital of Saint Louis, the proclamation read:

Today, the 23rd of August, 1848 there are no more slaves in Senegal. From this day forward, former slaves no longer have masters...All are citizens of Saint Louis. Vice and virtue, ignorance and merit, idleness and love of work are from now on the only way to distinguish between inhabitants of this country.

All are now equal before the law and enjoy equal protection.

But all have obligations to fulfill: respect for the laws and respect for persons and property. However, work and devotion to family are the most important of all responsibilities.

¹³² ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15a, 233. Letter from interim Governor L.B. du Chateau to the Minister of the Navy and Colonies, June 10, 1848.

¹³³ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15a, 306. Letter from interim Governor L.B. du Chateau to the Minister of the Navy and Colonies, July 25, 1848.

Signed: L.B. du Chateau, Commissioner of the Republic¹³⁴

Response from slaves was immediate. At 11 o'clock that morning, a large crowd of male former slaves assembled in the square outside the gate of the governor's compound carrying flags, which according to the governor, signified "joy and liberty." A few slaves approached the gate to ask for authorization to enter into the court "to testify to me," recorded du Chateau, "of their joy and appreciation toward France, which had made them men." A crowd of people pressed into the compound shouting loud cries of "*vive la France, vive la liberté.*" Soon dancing began to the sound of drums. A new group then entered with a white flag inscribed with the words *liberté, égalité, fraternité*. Later that day, the governor commented that "most of the men went to wash in the ocean, to purify from so many years of slavery."¹³⁵

While slaves showed gratitude for emancipation, the fact that the colony's settlements were steeped in a culture of slavery presented considerable obstacles to slave liberty. This was true not only in Saint Louis and Gorée (and the later coastal settlements of Rufisque and Dakar), but between the 1850s and the turn-of-the-century, as the colony expanded into the interior, even more so in the French West African hinterland. In 1848, between 6,000 and 10,000 slaves were officially emancipated in Senegal, yet many remained forced laborers and few saw dramatic

¹³⁴ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15a. Emancipation Proclamation of August 23, 1848 posted in Saint Louis.

¹³⁵ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15a, 355. Letter from interim Governor L.B. du Chateau to the Minister of the Navy and Colonies, August 23, 1848.

changes in their lives. In Saint Louis and Gorée, some slaves managed to shift to wage labor.¹³⁶ However, as a rule, forced labor remained a general practice all over French West Africa—settlements and backcountry—until at least the end of century.¹³⁷

Pierre Desalles claimed that slaves in the French West Indies benefitted most from the 1848 law. According to him, agricultural slaves on Caribbean islands simply walked away from plantations and work contracts between planters and wage laborers were thereafter overseen by municipal councilmen.¹³⁸ Matters were considerably different in Senegal. An 1848 notice in the colony proclaiming that “vice and virtue, ignorance and merit, idleness and love of work”¹³⁹ were to be the only distinguishing elements among Senegal’s races was not realized. Reflecting a traditional racial, economic, and social hierarchy, many former masters continued to use blacks as forced laborers and “freed” slaves retained the lowest economic status in the colony. Even social services for liberated blacks, which the republican government in Paris mandated for the settlements, proved exceedingly difficult to establish since,

¹³⁶ Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, 33.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 28; Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 107.

¹³⁸ Pierre Desalles, *Sugar and Slavery, Family and Race: The Letters and Diaries of Pierre Desalles, Planter in Martinique, 1808-1856* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 219-224.

¹³⁹ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15a. Emancipation Proclamation of August 23, 1848, posted in Saint Louis and throughout the colony.

according to the colony's officials, slave owners did not perceive freed blacks as equals.¹⁴⁰

Administrators' treatment of slave matters mirrored a tradition of mixed-race privilege in the colony but even leaders in Paris became less concerned about the plight of slaves in French overseas territories. Republicans soon lost favor at home and, following the metropolitan coup of December 1851, Napoleon III's government focused on the growth of colonial commerce to the detriment of slaves. In March of 1852, Paris leaders thus permitted planters in the Antilles to import *engagés à temps* from Senegal. Under this arrangement, black *engagés* "agreed" to work for five years. The system of *engagés à temps* had already been abolished in 1845,¹⁴¹ yet as Robin Blackburn has pointed out, the 1852 *engagé* measure was simply a legitimization of slavery and slave trading after official emancipation.¹⁴² Exports of Senegal's *engagés* continued until approximately 1860 by which time roughly 16,000 Africans were sent to work on French plantations in the Antilles.¹⁴³ A lackluster attitude towards slave emancipation in the *métropole* only reinforced a slave culture begun in the old mixed-

¹⁴⁰ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15a, 233. Letter from interim Governor du Chateau to Minister of the Navy and Colonies regarding slave emancipation issues, June 10, 1848.

¹⁴¹ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 17, 5. Record of the Administrative Council of the Senegal colony, session of June 25, 1845 nominating an assessor to survey the affairs of the slave trade for the year of 1845—conforming to ministerial instruction number 82, March 4, 1845. At this point in time, this system of black *engagés à temps* was to cease, except for use in the colonial military—an exception that was removed altogether with the 1848 abolition decree.

¹⁴² Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, 503.

¹⁴³ Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, 503. Blackburn has argued that African *engagés* who were sent to labor on plantations in the French Antilles between approximately 1852 and 1860 were probably victims of slave-raiding expeditions.

race settlements of Saint Louis and Gorée in the colony. After 1848, therefore, slavery largely continued as before in Senegal: as a dominant source of labor; for the colony's protection; for transfer of export products from the interior to the colony's towns; as a sexual source; and, as in the case of the 1852 *engagé* law, as an export commodity across the Atlantic.

Over time, a loophole developed in the abolition law in Senegal allowing colonists to purchase slaves if captives were freed and registered within 24 hours.¹⁴⁴ Officials rationalized that this could promote the liberation of Africans being sold outside the colony. What occurred, however, could not have been more different. "Freed" captives were forced into conditions of bondage in Saint Louis and Gorée. Young girls were in particular demand for use as domestic laborers and later as sex slaves and French authorities often turned a blind eye to such abuses.¹⁴⁵

The Mixed-Race, Slavery, and a Culture of Black Exclusion in the Colony after 1848

That the 1848 law was even introduced in Senegal was a blow to *métis* prestige, but the population remained resilient. After 1848, Senegalese women continued to engage with French males in *mariages à la mode du pays* as well as increasingly in Catholic ceremonies, producing mixed-race descendants.¹⁴⁶ Through

¹⁴⁴ Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, 29.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Jones, "From *mariage à la mode* to weddings at town hall," 27, 38-39; Manchuelle, "Métis et colons: la famille Devès et l'émergence politique des Africains au Sénégal"; and Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, 108-109.

at least the 1860s, it was the mixed-race that dominated Atlantic exports of gum Arabic,¹⁴⁷ while it was also true that the mixed-race became involved in the newer profitable nut business.¹⁴⁸ Therefore, just when the French state was intensifying its territorial grasp on Senegal, a racial power structure prevailed, evident not only in a mixed-race economic and social resiliency, but likewise in the ways by which the population thwarted the erstwhile slaves' official new status as free individuals.

After 1848, the *métis* continued to buy, sell, and possess slaves, many of which lived in captivity in the four communes.¹⁴⁹ This population became notorious for permitting “freed” minors to work in the homes and businesses of the colony’s *habitants*—or free individuals—under the auspices of the *tutelle* and patronage

¹⁴⁷ Faidherbe, *Le Sénégal, La France dans l'Afrique occidentale*, 116; Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 105-106; Idowu, “The Establishment of Elective Institutions in Senegal, 1869-1880,” 264; Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, 60-61; and McLane, “Commercial Rivalries and French Policy on the Senegal River, 1831-1858,” 45, 55-56. Robinson’s study shows the importance of French dominance of the river trade, especially after 1854. Furthermore, that Faidherbe relied on the “more permanent” inhabitants of Saint Louis to assist him to expand the commercial system. While the *habitants* could be both the free black and mixed-race of Saint Louis, McLane’s study shows the ascendancy of newer “Bordeaux” merchant settlers in Saint Louis at the detriment of black Senegalese and traditional mixed-race families, especially after Faidherbe’s conquests up-river from the mid-1850s, which effectively ended the floating African-controlled *escales*, replaced by land-based French posts for commodity exchange.

¹⁴⁸ McLane, “Commercial Rivalries and French Policy on the Senegal River, 1831-1858,” 52. Manchuelle. “Métis et colons: la famille Devès et l’émergence politique des Africains au Sénégal, 1881-1897». Manchuelle points out that the mixed-race first in Gorée, and then in Rufisque and Dakar were most involved in the nut trade, due to their proximity to nut agriculture in the Cayor.

¹⁴⁹ Bonnetain, *Une française au Soudan*, 76; Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, 114; Barry, *La Sénégambie du XV^e au XIX^e siècle*, 192; Webb, Jr., “The Trade in Gum Arabic: Prelude to French Conquest in Senegal,” 27; and Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce*, 121. While observations from the era reveal that the mixed-race in the communes continued to own slaves until at least the 1890s, it was also the case that until the 1860s and 1870s, the mixed-race traded in slaves controlling a significant slave trade business in the southern rivers region of the Senegambia. Furthermore, Webb, Jr. points to the persistence of slave labor in nut production through the early years of the twentieth century—a business within which the mixed-race engaged as traders and exporters.

program. Ordered by the provisional government in Paris and carried out by Governor Baudin in the early spring of 1849, the *tutelle* and patronage program's objective was for the mixed-race women of Saint Louis and Gorée to oversee the assignment of freed slave orphans to homes "to be raised in the principles of work and morality."¹⁵⁰ But instead of ensuring that liberated slaves would have protection and an opportunity for educational and social improvement, it appears that the program served as simply another method for the mixed-race to perpetuate a culture of slaveholding in the colony. Monsieur Villeger, a French cleric operating a Protestant mission in Senegal, observed that when those in Saint Louis wanted good domestic help, they "buy children... and bring them to Saint Louis."¹⁵¹ Girls were in particular demand for use as domestic slaves. Many complaints were filed with the local commander of Gorée that inhabitants of the settlement were "buying young slaves in the interior and bringing them to Gorée... Then these children are later taken

¹⁵⁰ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15b, 106. Order of the *tutelle* regarding the process for liberation of minors under the age of twelve, June 21, 1858. Once liberated, girls were to be under the protection of families in the colony (mostly signarial mixed-race) while especially boys between the ages of seven and eighteen were to learn to work in a profession. It was the opinion of French leaders that the patrons as well as freed children would benefit from such a patronage and educational arrangement: patron families would receive payment from the colonial government and free labor from the child, while the orphans would benefit from food, shelter, protection and an opportunity for education in a local professional environment. A scoring system was to be used to grade the child's labor progress. Once a minor achieved "class three," the child then owed the master another thirty months of work, but then could begin to earn one-quarter salary to pay for lodging and food. Apprentices were not permitted to leave a master nor had the right to change vocation. If an apprentice was eighteen years of age and wished to leave, but had not furnished thirty months of labor, the now "freed" slave with majority, was obligated to pay 500 francs to the master before departure.

¹⁵¹ Schoelcher, *L'esclavage au Sénégal en 1880*. Included in this publication is a letter from the cleric Monsieur Villeger of the Free Church to Victor Schoelcher regarding an environment of slavery and the trade in Senegal, dated September 17, 1879.

outside of French territory to be resold.”¹⁵² Apparently, conditions were worse in French territory farther south. French officials noted an ongoing problem in Gabon where “patrons for freed slaves” were taking “advantage of having free labor under their roof and [keeping] the person beyond eighteen years of age—essentially maintaining slave-like conditions for a supposedly ‘free’ human being.” A particular letter stands out. On August 28, 1862, Rear Admiral Fleuriot de Langle described that “certain Europeans who have settled in Gabon possess slaves and have even bought and sold them here in Gabon.”¹⁵³ This observation reinforces one of this chapter’s central arguments that French migrants to West Africa simply perpetuated the traditional mixed-race custom of slavery. First-hand reports demonstrate that not only did this trend continue for several decades after 1848, but likewise reveal an attitude of defiance. For instance, in the early 1890s, Madame Raymonde Bonnetain observed that in Dakar, “wealthy and influential *métis* possess slaves—inside the city limits and right in front of the prosecutor.”¹⁵⁴

Indeed, mimicking mixed-race attitudes towards slavery French authorities often ignored violations of the *tutelle* and patronage program. One of the most egregious cases was that of a French judge in Saint Louis. In the 1860s, Chief

¹⁵² *Moniteur du Sénégal et dépendances*, No 831, February 13, 1872; ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15b, 5. Notes from a session of Gorée’s Administrative Council, October 3, 1860.

¹⁵³ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15b, 314. Letter from the head of the naval division of the West African coast to the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies, August 28, 1862; ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15b. Letter from Rear Admiral Fleuriot de Langle to the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies, September 12, 1867.

¹⁵⁴ Bonnetain, *Une française au Soudan*, 76.

Magistrate Bazot was sent to Senegal with the duty to oversee the mixed-race freed slave program. However, the official was reported not only to have neglected his role to supervise the *métis*, but seemed to distance himself from the problem of continued slavery altogether.¹⁵⁵ The situation deteriorated so badly that the governor at the time, Émile Pinet-Laprade, wrote to leaders in Paris complaining that the chief magistrate “completely failed” to administer the program. It appears that Bazot avoided even the basic task of publishing the names of freed slaves in the colony’s newspaper—leading Pinet-Laprade to record that “from [Bazot’s] arrival, [he] has shown the greatest repugnance to deal with anything having to do with slavery.”¹⁵⁶

However, it was not just the *tutelle* and patronage plan that was plagued by a mixed-race social hierarchy in the colony; the *métis* opposed *any* type of educational improvement for blacks—even for the free sons of West African chiefs. In Saint Louis during the 1850s, Governor Faidherbe opened the *école des otages*, or The School for Hostages (see Figure 6).¹⁵⁷ Faidherbe’s goal was to provide instruction in the French language and in mathematics to the male children of hinterland chiefs, as a

¹⁵⁵ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15a, 644, December 5, 1857. Decree relating to slaves being freed in Saint Louis. Article Number 1 stated that “those captives purchased for manumission and brought to Saint Louis to be freed, must be placed, the same day of their arrival ... into the hands of the chief of the Judiciary Service.”; ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15b. An internal note of the Ministry of Navy and Colonies regarding President of the Judiciary Service Monsieur Bazot’s failure to oversee the process of *tutelle* assignments, January, 1868 [Day illegible].

¹⁵⁶ Archives nationales du Sénégal, Dakar, Senegal, K11, 13. Documents from this archive will be hereinafter referenced as ANS. Letter from Governor Émile Pinet-Laprade to the minister of the Navy and Colonies regarding Chief Justice Bazot, November 23, 1867.

¹⁵⁷ Gaffarel, *Le Sénégal et le Soudan français*, 141-142. In the late 1880s, Gaffarel wrote that during the 1850s, Faidherbe asked the region’s most important chiefs to turn over their sons to the French for instruction, “to make them part of French civilization.” Some of the young males were rebellious and were thus considered to be hostages. This is how the *L’école des otages* got its name.

means to introduce French culture and pacify Senegal's Muslim population.¹⁵⁸ Yet when Faidherbe left his post as Senegal's governor in the late 1860s, the mixed-race convinced French officials to close the *école des otages* altogether, with the explanation that educating a race of former slaves could only create danger for the colony.¹⁵⁹

While the mixed-race in the settlements both resisted slave emancipation and engaged in tactics to perpetuate a culture of slavery, it is important to stress that many of Senegal's blacks continued to acquire and maintain slaves after 1848, as well. Furthermore, as was the case with the *métis*, many free Africans opposed French educational programs for "freed" slaves. The scholar Joseph de Benoist has demonstrated that, more than anything else, black resistance to French schooling was tied to a perceived risk that French education would convert Muslim children to Christianity. Schools in Senegal that welcomed blacks were thus regularly shunned by the colony's majority black population. Until the turn-of-the-century French officials complained that Senegal's schools made "very little progress" with African Muslims.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ ANF, AP 148/3,108, Fonds Ernest Noirot, private notes without a date, most likely between 1897 and 1905. Administrator Noirot wrote that one of the first things Faidherbe did after he pacified Senegal, was "to create some rudimentary schools in Saint Louis under his personal watch." Noirot noted that the *école des otages* was useful in the growth and usage of the French language and as such, "would be useful to train future interpreters for the French."

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. While Noirot does not specifically name the mixed-race community in this report, his language is highly suggestive of such. To this point, he believed that the closing of the *école des otages*, following Faidherbe's departure, was "due to the French being influenced by the locals to see the black man as yet a slave and that there could be a danger in educating blacks. It would be better to leave him in his native ignorance, so that he will be easier to dominate."

¹⁶⁰ Joseph Roger de Benoist, *Histoire de l'église catholique au Sénégal: du milieu du XV^e siècle à l'aube du troisième millénaire*, (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2008), 135, 142, 157.



Figure 6. Sketch rendering of the School of Hostages. Image from M.L. Faidherbe, *Le Sénégal, La France dans l'Afrique occidentale* (Paris: Librairie Hachette et compagnie, 1889). Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF). Paris, France.

Conflict over educational assimilation brings our attention to internal differences that emerged over native instruction in other French African colonies at the time. The problem of including all races of the population in colonial educational

institutions was not peculiar to Senegal. In Algeria—the most important French African territory in the era—few colonial subjects received an education either. However, while in Senegal, it was attitudes maintained by the mixed-race and blacks that posed threats to French instruction for black children, in Algeria, significant opposition to indigenous education came from a growing community of white settlers called the *pieds noirs*. Europeans in Algeria openly rejected education for the indigenous, arguing against assimilation of North Africans into the French nation.¹⁶¹ The issue of educating non-white colonial populations in Africa seems to have created significant conflict. The implementation of French republican principles of equality for all peoples of the French Empire was therefore regularly challenged.

Mixed-race opposition to republican ideals in Senegal was also evident in the ways the *métis* thwarted citizenship for blacks in Senegal. In theory, the Second Republic granted both liberty and political equality to all men throughout the empire. Yet republican principles did not always translate into political equality in Senegal. The very thought that blacks *could* become citizens was not well-received by Senegal's mixed-race. *Métis* in Senegal expressed displeasure on the grounds that Africans would be unable to benefit from citizenship rights such as voting since a large number did not speak French.¹⁶² The history of citizenship rights for West

¹⁶¹ Leanne M. Bowlan, "Civilizing gender relations in Algeria," in Gouda and Clancy-Smith, eds., *Domesticating the Empire*, 179; Colonizers in Algeria especially resisted the assimilation of Arabs, describing the region's Kabyles (Berbers) as lighter skinned with light eyes and with a superior temperament to Arabs, more democratized societies, and thus closer to Europeans on the scale of civilization. For more on this phenomenon of colonization in Algeria, see Lorcin, *Imperial Identities*.

¹⁶² Saliou M'Baye, "La représentation du Sénégal au parlement français sous la seconde république (1848-1851)" *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'Afrique noire* 38 (1976): 517-551. Even before slavery

Africans after 1848 reflects this attitude. Blacks were a vast majority in Senegal before and after 1848, but only in the settlements would they be able to participate in the franchise, but not as full citizens.¹⁶³ In fact, despite a black majority—even in the settlements—the first deputy elected from Senegal to go to the National Assembly in 1848 was a mixed-race individual, Durand-Barthélemy Valantin.¹⁶⁴

Because mixed-race prestige was founded on a racial distinction between the mixed-race and blacks, *any* new legal equity served to undermine the privileged status that the mixed-race enjoyed. As Hilary Jones has argued, after 1848, Senegal's mixed-race maintained a firm goal of shoring up their station as French "citizens" of the Republic, while at the same time distancing themselves from blacks in the colony who increasingly were referred to by the mixed-race as "subjects."¹⁶⁵ To be sure, republican egalitarian principles were ill-suited to a mixed-race *milieu* of racism. In the decades after 1848, a resilient social hierarchy of the *métis* became increasingly

was officially abolished, just after the outbreak of the February revolution, universal manhood suffrage was proclaimed throughout the French Empire on March 2, 1848.

¹⁶³ Jones, "From *mariage à la mode* to weddings at town hall," 33.

¹⁶⁴ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 14. Report dated October 4, 1847, sent to the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies. Under direction of the Duc de Broglie, the Colonial Ministry asked colonial authorities to examine the questions and issues surrounding abolition; Faidherbe, *Notice sur la colonie du Sénégal et sur les pays qui sont en relation avec elle*, 13; Olivier, *Le Sénégal*, 255; Gaffarel, *Le Sénégal et le Soudan français*, 68; Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 103; G. Wesley Johnson, "The Ascendancy of Blaise Diagne and the Beginning of African Politics in Senegal," *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 36, No 3 (July, 1966): 235-253, p. 236; and Jones, "From *mariage à la mode* to weddings at town hall," 33.

In 1848, Africans born in the colony's settlements were extended the privileges of French citizens with civil and legal rights. Referred to as *originaires*, these same individuals retained their *statut personnel*, or a concession to seek justice before a Muslim judge for family and property disputes. As French sovereignty extended to the interior, hinterland blacks were relegated to the status of "subject" and therefore did not receive French citizenship rights, which included the vote.

¹⁶⁵ Jones, "From *mariage à la mode* to weddings at town hall," 28.

evident in the limits that French authorities placed on the colony's blacks. Some blacks were provided education and some served as interpreters and functionaries in the colonial administration in the four communes. The majority of blacks in the growing colony of Senegal, however, continued to fill the same roles that they had before: as subordinates, while on the other hand, the mixed-race, a population the French viewed as "assimilated," excelled in business, politics, and in the professions.¹⁶⁶

The fact that the mixed-race limited black opportunity in Senegal was not peculiar to French Africa. In the French colony of Guiana a similar phenomenon of political exclusion of blacks took place. As Miranda Spieler has shown, in spite of the fact that the 1848 decree conferred legal personhood and citizenship rights on emancipated slaves, in Guiana, these rights became "weapons of racial abasement" where elites, both white French and the mixed-race, engaged in activities to suppress civic engagement.¹⁶⁷ From the outset, therefore, black integration in colonial institutions was never a foregone conclusion but was instead elusive, suggesting a tension between republican ideals and non-white colonial populations across the empire.

Between the early 1850s and the 1870s, when republicanism was suppressed in France during the authoritarian Second Empire, representation for Senegal at the

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 39, 44-46.

¹⁶⁷ Spieler, *Empire and Underworld*, 149-150. Author's note: While the research of Miranda Spieler regarding Guiana reveals strikingly similar conditions to Senegal in the post-1848 era, the man who presided over Senegal when the Emancipation Decree was announced, Governor Auguste Baudin, would go on to rule Guiana in the 1850s.

Chamber of Deputies in Paris was denied. Only Senegal's local assemblies remained intact, but they were no longer elected bodies. Political liberties for Senegal were reinstated during the Third Republic, when the full municipal and legal status granted to Saint Louis and Gorée was extended during the 1880s to the growing communities of Dakar and Rufisque.¹⁶⁸ But while the colony regained political liberties, again it was the coastal mixed-race who benefited most. Black Muslims in the communes were yet not considered "full" citizens and were subjected to rigorous tests of French acculturation in order for such status to be granted, while blacks outside the four communes were still relegated to subject status.¹⁶⁹ Then, in 1887, the *code de l'indigénat*, or the Colonial Indigenous Code, was decreed, formalizing perceived racial and cultural disparities which reinforced mixed-race and, increasingly, European beliefs, that Africans were irremediably inferior beings. First put into practice in Algeria and later extended to the rest of the French Empire, the code was in full force in Senegal's interior by the late 1880s. The *l'indigénat* consisted of

¹⁶⁸ Olivier, *Le Sénégal*, 121-122, 125-126; Idowu, "The Establishment of Elective Institutions in Senegal, 1869-1880," 269; Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 142; Jones, "From *mariage à la mode* to weddings at town hall," 33; Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, 31; and Mamadou Diouf, "Assimilation colonial et identités religieuses de la civilité des originaires des Quatres Communes (Sénégal)," » *Canadian Journal of African Studies, Revue Canadienne des études Africaines* 34, No 3 (2000): 565-587.

On April 2, 1852 during the Second Empire, a decree ended representation in the National Assembly in Senegal, Algeria and other colonies. A Deputy from Senegal would not be restored until 1870-1871, again abolished between 1876 and 1879, and not reestablished until April 8, 1879.

In 1907 Marcel Olivier noted municipal status was reconfirmed for Saint Louis and Gorée in 1872, Rufisque was instituted as a commune in 1880, and Dakar achieved commune status in 1887. For more on the early economic and political stages of the important port in Dakar specifically, see Charpy, *La fondation de Dakar*. Dakar was taken by France as a possession by the commander of Gorée on May 25, 1857.

¹⁶⁹ For more on the condition of black politics in Senegal from 1848 through the inter-war period, see Johnson, Jr., *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal*.

sanctioned forced labor (slavery), punishment for insubordination to the French, onerous taxes, and severe restrictions on black legal provisions outside the Four Communes. Hence, despite a legal end to slavery and a mandate for civil and political rights to be extended to colonial blacks, the *l'indigénat* reinforced Senegal's mixed-race attitudes that Africans were not meant to be on the same civil, legal, or social level as whites or the mixed-race.¹⁷⁰

Conclusion

The 1847 responses to the French survey regarding the possibility of slave emancipation in Senegal were far from arbitrary. The colony's mixed-race protested every aspect of slave liberty, reflecting a mixed-race social hierarchy that was not easily overcome. By the middle of the nineteenth century, though Senegal was developing a French bureaucratic structure, the colony remained beholden to a culture of black exclusion (and slavery), ensconced in the foundations of the coastal mixed-race. It was precisely this setting, influenced by Euro-African customs in the old settlements of Saint Louis and Gorée that continued to serve as a lure for many French males during the period. An environment informed by local traditions meant the perpetuation of a culture of slaveholding, and conversely, an almost impossible transition to French law. Pervasive slavery, set-backs that beset the freed-slave *tutelle* and patronage program, the problems of creating schools for black children, as well

¹⁷⁰ For more on the Indigenous Code see Mann and Roberts, *Law in Colonial Africa*, 17 and Crowder *West Africa Under Colonial Rule*, 185-187. Crowder notes that not until at least 1946, were aspects of institutionalized forced labor lessened in the interior of French West Africa.

as the tensions surrounding former slave (and black) citizenship restrictions in the growing colony, all show that despite republican principles which dictated the inclusion of non-white colonial populations into the French state, persistent prejudices and traditions founded in the colony's mixed-race customs of race and slavery resulted in strict limits to slave and black assimilation. By 1905 when this study ends, the vast majority of Senegal's black population were still not full citizens of the French nation. It was not until World War I that the population began to access full rights of citizenship—in the communes under the Blaise Diagne Laws.

However, it was also the case that as the colony expanded into the backcountry, African slave owners opposed slave freedom which posed its own challenges to republican ideas of liberty and equality. Between the 1850s and the turn-of-the-century, mixed-race slavery culture in the old settlements of Saint Louis and Gorée therefore merged with hinterland African traditions of bonded labor. Since ancient times slavery was the primary source of labor throughout the Senegambia as well as an important form of West African currency. Not much changed by the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁷¹ Slaves continued to be exchanged by Africans for weapons, luxury products, and agricultural goods in the colony's interior. The next chapter will examine how, over time, French administrators, who themselves demonstrated racial thinking towards blacks and slaves, became less willing to prosecute offenders of the emancipation law, even creating new ways to “legally” access the labor of slaves for themselves. Republican rhetoric concerning

¹⁷¹ Barry, *La Sénégalie du XV^{ème} au XIX^{ème} siècle*, 65.

the end of slavery and an integration of non-white colonial peoples into the French nation was not successful in West Africa. The fact that legal, social, and political rights for slaves were not introduced set a precedent for the development of a distinctly separate French republicanism in Senegal.

FRENCH SPECTATORSHIP AND SLAVERY

Onboard ship off the coast of Senegal in the 1840s, the French naval officer Victor Verneuil likened Saint Louis to ancient Athens, complete with “gracious terraces [and] immense columns shining in the sun.” Verneuil was enchanted with the white brick buildings that dazzled in the sunlight.¹⁷² New arrivals had long remarked that, when viewed from the sea, the town glistened so brilliantly that it could injure the eyes.¹⁷³ Closer to the shore, however, Verneuil’s visions of a classical Greece vanished. Rounding the channel Verneuil recorded that “old nude *nègresses* with pendulant breasts smoking pipes peered at the newcomers amidst trash and huts that covered the riverbanks.” Africans shouted and danced at the wharf prompting Verneuil to add: “my earlier illusions are now gone.”¹⁷⁴ Verneuil’s travel memoir, *Mes aventures au Sénégal, souvenirs de voyage* went on to depict the Senegalese as barbarians—a people steeped in backwardness. As it turns out, Verneuil’s derogatory descriptions of West Africans were not unusual in the era. If Senegal’s mixed-race social hierarchy posed problems for the introduction of slave liberty, the perceptions of the white French in the colony likewise placed blacks at both a real and philosophical distance from colonizers. If, at times, some Europeans in West Africa noted admirable traits among the indigenous, the fact that paternalistic racial thinking

¹⁷² Verneuil, *Mes aventures au Sénégal*, 4.

¹⁷³ J.B. Henry Savigny and Alexander Corréard, *Narrative of a Voyage to Senegal in 1816; undertaken by the order of the French government*, Rev. ed. (London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1968), 352-353. First published in 1818.

¹⁷⁴ Verneuil, *Mes aventures au Sénégal*, 8, 10.

was persistent and pervasive affected imperial policy—including the law of slave emancipation. Indeed, the practice of French spectatorship in Senegal served as a means to rationalize racialized hierarchies and determine what it meant to be a Frenchman, placing at odds the universal principles of the *Rights of Man* and practice in Senegal.

This chapter expands the scholarship of French ethnography in West Africa¹⁷⁵ to link the endeavor with the incremental and severe limitation of the Emancipation decree in Senegal and its growing borderlands in the decades after 1848. This chapter offers the interpretation that a further challenge to the emancipation law stemmed from a French view of West Africans as “inferior” beings. Against the backdrop of initial French invasion of Senegal’s backcountry during the 1850s and 1860s, followed by a period of imperial conquest and consolidation between the 1870s and the end of the century, this chapter will reveal how French observations of West

¹⁷⁵ David Robinson and Alice Conklin’s studies are most relative to French ethnographic practices in West Africa, especially Robinson, “Ethnography and Customary Law” and Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*. Notably however, while Robinson reviews the French ethnography in Senegal during the nineteenth century, his work is less-concerned about the problems of slave emancipation in the years immediately after 1848 as a consequence of French assessments of the indigenous and more focused on conditions in the Senegalo-Mauritanian zone between 1880 and 1920. Likewise, Conklin’s treatment of colonial ethnography and the problem of the French denying human rights in French West Africa also centers on a later period—from the *fin de siècle* through 1930. Other studies address the practice of French ethnography in colonial West Africa, however, as with the work of Robinson and Conklin, they do not link French «on the ground» observations of the indigenous with the specific problem of slave emancipation. For instance, though Martin Straum’s article, «Nature and Nurture in French Ethnography and Anthropology, 1859-1914,» *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65, No 3 (Jul, 2004): 475-495 attends to the era researched for this thesis as well as to the French ethnological enterprise overall, it was less concerned about West Africa specifically or the French toleration of slavery. Instead, Straum focused on the debates between pseudo-scientists concerning nature versus nurture in non-white populations throughout French colonial territories. Further, as part of his article, «Imperialism, Islam, and Independence in Senegal and Mali,» *Africa Today* 46, Nos 3-4 (Summer-Autumn, 1999): 149-167, Andrew F. Clark looked at the French ethnographic exercise in Senegal during the colonial period, but his study was more concerned with the early twentieth century and more specifically, the way in which administrator/scholars engaged with Islam in the region.

African culture influenced a state of prolonged captivity for the region's slaves. Slavery, in the end, provides us with an unusual example of how the French "colonial gaze" led to distinct socio-political clefs between the colonizers and colonized—boundaries that reinforced institutional inequality in Senegal.

"Humanity is in its Infancy in Africa"

While the initial period of slave emancipation coincided with the French conquest of the West African interior, beginning in the 1850s, conceptions of the colony evolved from a heterogeneous setting where Europeans interacted with the mixed-race and blacks in the old coastal towns of Saint Louis and Gorée to the French finding their way in a foreboding, and at times, hostile hinterland, populated entirely by blacks. Certainly Europeans had traveled to Senegal's frontier before the mid-nineteenth century; Atlantic trade from at least the 1700s required a working knowledge of West Africa and its peoples. However, with imperial expansion the French gained a more intimate view of West African blacks. "On the ground" French assessments informed local officials as well as, by extension—the *métropole*—about the culture and capabilities of the region's inhabitants. The fact that few French traveled to Senegal in the era meant that first hand observations served as a means for many in France to form opinions of places they would never themselves experience. Importantly, French exposure to the Senegalese convinced leaders that despite the 1848 emancipation decree, the principle of universal liberty could only be applied when West Africans "improved" and adopted superior European civilization.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the soldier and explorer, Anne Raffenet, whose travels took him from Saint Louis deep into the West African interior, often described the indigenous in a paternalistic manner. In his *Nouveau voyage dans le pays des nègres. Suivi d'études sur la colonie du Sénégal et de documents historiques, géographiques et scientifiques*, Raffenet depicted a backward and uncivilized culture—a people that was “avid, demanding, always wanting, [and] selfish.” The Frenchman described the blacks as childlike beings who could not reason, at one point claiming that: “A black man cries when he doesn’t get what he wants... sometimes taking hours before he gets to the answer of a question.” Neither, however, did Raffenet consider West Africans to be the most loyal or honest individuals. He wrote that blacks are “not generally loyal and [they] don’t feel a compunction to keep commitments...they are more or less liars.” Raffenet’s assessment of the Senagalese was steeped in the rhetoric of infantilization, even going so far as to proclaim that “humanity is in its infancy in Africa.”¹⁷⁶

Yet Raffenet’s condescension toward West Africans was not an isolated circumstance. Other Europeans in Senegal viewed blacks as qualitatively “different” from whites, including the colony’s governor, M.L. Faidherbe, whose appraisal of the indigenous set forth the ideological basis for slave policy in the colony.

Similarly to Raffenet, Faidherbe perceived dissimilarity between white Europeans and black West Africans. But the official was also keenly interested in shedding light on the physiological and mental differences that he believed existed

¹⁷⁶ Raffenet, *Nouveau voyage dans le pays des nègres*. Tome I, 83,90-93,250, Tome II, 239-240.

between different groups of West Africans. Faidherbe was so intent on categorizing and comparing the region's indigenous that he devoted an entire volume to this purpose. *Notice sur la colonie du Sénégal et sur les pays qui sont en relation avec elle* described the ethnicities with which the French engaged. For instance, for the governor, the Malinke; the Wolof (and the Sereer); and the Poular (or Peul) while all West Africans, nonetheless possessed different characteristics that influenced their appearance and lifeways. The Malinke in the Gambia and the Casamance regions were comparatively more "negroid" than any other West Africans according to Faidherbe, while the Wolof and Sereer in the realms of Walo, Cayor and the adjacent Baol were distinct from all others, especially in terms of personality and language. Notably, the official regarded the Poular in the Futa Toro in many ways as more advanced than other West Africans as a result of lighter skin, straighter hair, as well as what Faidherbe described as a relatively developed intelligence.¹⁷⁷ But while these ethnological markers signified a superior ethnicity for Faidherbe, not even this

¹⁷⁷ Faidherbe, *Notice sur la colonie du Sénégal et sur les pays qui sont en relation avec elle*, 17-30. While Faidherbe depicted Senegal's Peul (Poular) as possessing lighter skin than the region's Malinke and Wolof, he categorized Senegal's Berbers and Arabs as part of the «white race,» not from Senegal, he claimed, but from the north and east of the continent. Though Faidherbe maintained a special affection for the Wolof—the ethnicity in and around the administrative capital of Saint Louis—he nevertheless acknowledged that the Wolof were not as committed to Islamic teachings, especially, as it were, with respect to alcohol consumption.

Faidherbe's ethnological examinations reveal the governor's belief in «difference» between Europeans and Africans. However, in paradoxical fashion, in spite of his setting forth the legal basis for the denial of human rights in the colony's interior, he was comparatively less «racist» than his contemporaries, believing that the fruit of the unions of whites and blacks was an impressive result. See Mille, "The 'Black Vote' in Senegal," 71-72. Tangentially, Faidherbe's seemingly antithetical perceptions—that black West Africans were qualitatively «different» from white Europeans, but nonetheless able, with time, to become acculturated to «superior» European principles—was a pillar of the French *mission civilisatrice*, examined in greater detail in the next chapter. In other words, for Faidherbe, the *Rights of Man* were universal, but not instantaneous. The French were required to proselyte these ideals to the indigenous heathens, who would, over time, assimilate «superior» civilization.

group's paler skin and absence of "crinkly hair" meant that this population was on par with the French for him—an attitude that was reflected in the official's reluctance to fully implement the slave emancipation law in the colony.

In fact, as early as 1855, Faidherbe modified the slave emancipation law to permit the continuation of forced labor in Senegal. Faidherbe claimed that his amendments to the law for the colony "better explained" the emancipation decree of 1848:

Article 1

The populations that come to settle under the protection of our posts, other than Saint Louis, will have the right to keep captives, and the emancipation decree will not apply to them under any circumstances.

Article 2

Europeans and those of Saint Louis remain submitted to the dispositions of the decree. Only those who settle around our river posts will have the right to rent their slaves, either to business establishments or in agriculture. They will maintain on this slave the same rights a master possesses over his workers who are free or indentured.¹⁷⁸

To accomplish this, the governor bifurcated the population, labeling West Africans whose territory came under French sovereignty after the 1848 Emancipation Decree as "subjects" rather than as French "citizens," and referring to them as residents of *dépendances* or "protectorates." Creating a cultural and legal distinction between French citizens and French subjects, Faidherbe was able to argue that the French were adhering to the "spirit" of the principle of liberty. It appears that an idea

¹⁷⁸ ANS, K11, 198. Order signed by Governor Faidherbe on October 18, 1855 "conforming to the spirit of the dispatch of June 21, 1855 which explains the Decree of Emancipation of April 27, 1848."

of providing the indigenous subjecthood instead of French citizenship had already been applied in French Algeria during the late 1840s. On the suggestion of Senegal's chief justice Frédéric Carrère, Faidherbe introduced the same idea in Senegal. In this way, protectorate populations existed outside the normal realm of the empire and were not subject to the same legal codes as the rest of the French colonies. Over the course of the next several decades, as French territorial claims expanded in the region, the concept of a protectorate became the *prima facie* legal basis for the French to deny rights to West Africans.¹⁷⁹

Should there have been any question about Faidherbe's intentions regarding slavery in Senegal, just two years later, in 1857, the governor reiterated his position on the emancipation law in a confidential *circulaire*, announcing to the colony's administrators that the emancipation law of April, 1848 only applied to the city of Saint Louis, its suburbs of Guet-N'Dar, Bouët, and N'dar Toute, and to military posts on the Senegal River. Everywhere else, Faidherbe declared, Africans under French sovereignty would "have the right to keep their slaves, to sell them and to buy them."¹⁸⁰ The *circulaire* reaffirmed Article 8 of the emancipation law which forbade all French to directly or indirectly traffic in slaves, but Faidherbe added that when the

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.; ANOM FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15c. Letter from the governor to the Minister of the Navy and Colonies, August 22, 1878; Schoelcher, *L'Esclavage au Sénégal en 1880*, 30; and Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, 61.

¹⁸⁰ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15, confidential *circulaire* of November 14, 1857, limiting the abolition decree of April 27, 1848. As of 1854 Gorée was separated from Senegal and called the colony of Gorée and her *dépendances*, ruled by the Commander of the Naval Division of the Western Coasts of Africa. However, by November 16, 1862 Governor J.B. Jauréguiberry extended Faidherbe's confidential *circulaire* of November 14, 1857 to include Gorée and other factories, military installations, and French protectorates in Senegal.

French were at war, the colony's governor had the authority to decide whether slaves seeking freedom from the enemy should be provided protection and freedom in French settlements. Faidherbe further announced that if slaves escaped from African states that were at peace with the colony, French officials would "expel them as dangerous vagabonds to maintain order and public peace."¹⁸¹ Masters would be free to reclaim fleeing slaves with the caveat that slave owners had to show that they had sought their captives "within a reasonable amount of time."¹⁸²

Faidherbe's observations of West African lifeways led him to maintain that slavery was a "natural" part of the region's culture that should be preserved. To liberate all slaves in French West Africa "would not be understanding the ways of the people of Senegambia," he announced. "Captives make up a well-known class of society...an inferior class...but not without rights and guarantees that customs sanction." The governor argued that slaves led satisfactory lives since "a slave can marry and gain personal profit half the day by working another field where the produce belongs to him alone." For instance, "amongst the Cayor, captives are almost all free spirits," he claimed. "They are only required to return to the master at

¹⁸¹ Ibid.; ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15b. Confidential *circulaire* from Governor Faidherbe issued to the chief justice, the prosecuting attorney, the directors of Indigenous Affairs, and portions of the *circulaire* (Articles 3,4, and 8) were to be communicated to commanders of French posts; and ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15c. Letter from the governor to the Minister of the Navy and Colonies, August 22, 1878.

¹⁸² ANS, K11, 2. Confidential *circulaire* regarding the limitations to the April 27, 1848 emancipation decree, November 14, 1857. Addressed to the chief justice, the prosecuting attorney, to the directors of Indigenous Affairs, and in part (Articles 3,4 and 8) to commanders of French posts in the colony; ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15, confidential *circulaire* of November 14, 1857 limiting the abolition decree of April 27, 1848.

the beginning of the rainy season...and they do come back; this proves their lot isn't too hard." Hence, only later, Faidherbe announced, "when Africans have deeper roots in our soil and a taste for our morals and customs will it be possible to modify their ideas and their rules...[T]here is reason to let [Africans] act upon their laws, without imposing upon them ours."¹⁸³

The head of the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies in Paris agreed with the governor's assessments of West African culture as well as the official's decision to restrict human rights in the colony. In 1858, Minister Admiral Ferdinand Hamelin wrote to Faidherbe, concluding that the governor had dealt with the issue in a "wise" manner.¹⁸⁴ By all accounts, Faidherbe had garnered the admiration of many Parisian officials who came to perceive Senegal as a difficult and challenging colony, where few governors lasted long. Also to Faidherbe's advantage was the fact that the French back home maintained interest in, if not anxiety toward, the forces of Islam in Africa. Faidherbe's willingness to address the problem of the "barbarous" Trarza Moors on the north banks of the Senegal River as well as his interest in checking the advance of El Hajj Umar Tal's *jihād* in western Sudan had turned him into a French hero who was battling Islam in West Africa.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15b. Administrative Council session of Senegal, April 10, 1855.

¹⁸⁴ ANS, K11, 10. Letter from Minister Admiral Hamelin to Governor Faidherbe, February 5, 1858.

¹⁸⁵ Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 117-118; Robinson, "Ethnography and Customary Law," 224; and Julia Clancy-Smith, "Islam, Gender, and Identities in the Making of French Algeria," in Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda, eds., *Domesticating the Empire*, 154. From 1830, officials in Algeria confronted Muslim rebels who were regularly depicted as religious fanatics, resisting the invasion of white Europeans.

Faidherbe's move to forestall slave liberty in Senegal also helped him to accomplish his goal of conquering the colony's interior. In 1857, he famously formed the colonial African military regiment, the *tirailleurs sénégalais* or Senegalese Light Infantry, a corps of five hundred Senegalese.¹⁸⁶ The creation of this unit was not only an infringement of Article 2 of the 1848 Emancipation Decree, ending Senegal's system of *engagé à temps* or indentured workers—even for military service—but also Article 8, which forbade French individuals in the colonies or in foreign lands anywhere else “to possess, to buy or to sell slaves, or to participate directly or indirectly in any slave trafficking.”¹⁸⁷ Faidherbe's ethnological observations in West Africa led him to claim that the indigenous were perfectly suited for warfare, announcing that “all the people of Senegal...are warriors.”¹⁸⁸ What's more, Faidherbe contended that black recruits “volunteered.” The governor's statements were not entirely accurate, however. If some Senegalese did wish to participate in the colonial militia, this was a minority.¹⁸⁹ In fact, before promulgation

¹⁸⁶ The *tirailleurs sénégalais* were created by Governor Faidherbe in 1857, but *engagés à temps* had fought for the French in Senegal since 1817, see Thompson, “Colonial Policy and the Family Life of Black Troops in French West Africa, 1817-1904.” In all, black troops made up almost half the full-time soldiers in Senegal during in the second half of the nineteenth century, see Gentil, *Les troupes du Sénégal de 1816 à 1890*, XIV.

¹⁸⁷ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15a. Decree Concerning the Abolition of Slavery in the Colonies, April 27, 1848.

¹⁸⁸ Faidherbe, *Notice sur la colonie du Sénégal et sur les pays qui sont en relation avec elle*, 13.

¹⁸⁹ While the French, most notably Faidherbe, claimed that West Africans actively sought enlistment in the colonial army, if not for recruits among slaves, it is doubtful native troops would have existed at all. In the three years following the 1848 emancipation decree—which forbade a French enlistment of captives—only three volunteers came forward to join the colonial forces, see Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, 74.

Apparently, this sentiment continued. Myron J. Echenberg's “Les Migrations militaires en Afrique occidentale française, 1900-1945,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 14, No 3 (1980): 429-450, demonstrated the reluctance of West Africans to enlist as colonial soldiers, despite remuneration. In

of the decree in 1848, slaves in Saint Louis expressed concern that the French concepts of “liberty” and “equality” might simply mean forced labor in the French army, many equating soldiering with a type of slavery.¹⁹⁰ The governor’s *tirailleurs sénégalais* consisted of many individuals who had been captured in warfare or purchased from slave traders at hinterland slave markets by French military officials and then granted freedom under condition of servitude in the colonial army.¹⁹¹ Colonial officers stationed near river markets were allotted funds with which to purchase slaves for the military. At an average cost of 300 francs each, the French paid the enslaver—not the newly initiated *tirailleur*. Between six and fourteen years of service in the *tirailleurs* was the common price for freedom.¹⁹²

Lieutenant Eugène Mage’s publication, *Voyage dans le Soudan occidental*, described the expansive area in which the French acquired Africans for soldiering. The *tirailleurs sénégalais*, Mage noted, “are made up of negroes from the coast of Africa, from the interior of Senegal, as well as from Niger.”¹⁹³ Among those who

fact, this attitude was so widespread and pronounced that Echenberg was able to track large patterns of migrations between 1900 and 1945, correlating to the flight of West African males from villages where the French were engaging in forced conscription.

¹⁹⁰ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15a, 306. Dispatch from Governor duChateau to the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies regarding concerns expressed by slaves prior to promulgation of the emancipation decree in Senegal, July 25, 1848; Gentil, *Les troupes du Sénégal de 1816 à 1890*, 43.

¹⁹¹ Gentil, *Les troupes du Sénégal de 1816 à 1890*, XI-XIV, 41; Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 117.

¹⁹² Schoelcher, *L’esclavage au Sénégal en 1880*, 92; Thompson, “Colonial Policy and the Family Life of Black Troops in French West Africa, 1817-1904,” 426; and Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, 74-75. In some cases, the newly initiated *tirailleurs* could receive from the French a small «recruitment» bonus of approximately 40 francs.

¹⁹³ Mage, *Voyage dans le Soudan occidental*, 3-4.

assisted the officer during the 1860s was a slave by the name of Mamboye. Taken by the Trarza Moors in infancy, the Wolof, Mamboye, was freed by the French under condition he serve in the *tirailleurs* for a period of fourteen years.¹⁹⁴ Slaves turned soldiers became an important means of French conquest in the West African interior.¹⁹⁵ Between 1858 and 1867 alone, the *tirailleurs* grew from two to eight companies.¹⁹⁶

French spectatorship in West Africa rationalized the primacy of French goals for territory over the extension of human rights. Consequently, slaves who believed that French principles of liberty meant they would be freed were mistaken. Even in the older French settlements of Saint Louis and Gorée, slaves seeking manumission were regularly returned to masters by the French.¹⁹⁷ Following in the footsteps of Faidherbe, official after official ignored the emancipation law. Drawing on Faidherbe's modification of the Emancipation Decree, ordinances that permitted

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.. By all accounts, the French sent black soldiers into military operations fraught with extreme danger, and sometimes without armament. Faidherbe described that in the early 1860s, the African Second-Lieutenant M. Alioun-Sal was ordered on a two-year mission by the French that included travel into hazardous enemy territory eastward to Timbuktu and from there through the Sahara Desert to Algeria. Alioun-Sal succeeded in the first part of his mission but was taken prisoner between Timbuktu and Oualata by agents of the Tukolor warrior, Umar Tal. With help from nomadic desert Moors, Sal was able to escape, but not before he was ordered by his captors to join the army of the "prophet." For this account, see Faidherbe, *L'Avenir du Sahara et du Soudan* (Paris: Librairie Challamel Ainé, 1863), 1.

¹⁹⁵ One rationalization for a breach of the abolition law *vis à vis* slaves turned soldiers, took the form of an amelioration of native troops' living and working conditions. Faidherbe thus provided 50 *centimes* per day, colorful uniforms (though rarely available), traditional West African food, and a prestigious unit referred to as the colony's *thiédos*, or the governor's elite warriors. See Gentil, *Les troupes du Sénégal de 1816 à 1890*, 38, 44-45; Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 117.

¹⁹⁶ Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 117.

¹⁹⁷ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15b. Letter from Governor Jauréguiberry to the colonel and commander of the Army in Gorée, March 6, 1863; ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15d, February 23, 1880.

slavery were simply extended as the colony grew. In 1862, Governor Jean Bernard Jauréguiberry expanded Faidherbe's earlier order to include all villages and territories annexed to the colony. Administrators in newer French territory were told to return slaves to owners who were sought within eight days of flight.¹⁹⁸ In 1867, both the colony's governor, Pinet-Laprade, and chief justice, Monsieur Bazot, outrightly refused to grant liberty to slaves who fled to Saint Louis for manumission, the former declaring that "in no uncertain terms would slaves be freed if their owners requested them."¹⁹⁹ Curiously, during the 1860s, in the newer colonial settlement of Dakar, French officials claimed that all old African traditions were eliminated, but the tradition of captivity persisted. In fact, it was in Dakar that French officials at the time used black *engagés à temps* to construct what soon became Senegal's most important sea port. These restrictions on freeing slaves in Dakar must have worked because in 1865 Faidherbe claimed that for a long while locals in the town had been "left alone" in matters of slavery and the trade.²⁰⁰

Throughout the 1850s and 1860s, Faidherbe's *circulaires* permitting slavery in Senegal were approved by the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies, demonstrating consensus to deny human rights in West Africa even among the most senior

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ ANS, K11, 13, November 23, 1867. Letter from Governor Émile Pinet-Laprade to the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies.

²⁰⁰ ANF, GG, 4, B27; ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15b, 3. Letter from Governor Faidherbe to the Commander over Dakar, February 22, 1865; ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15d, February 23, 1880; Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 128; and Charpy, *La fondation de Dakar*, 131.

government officials in France.²⁰¹ In this way, when the Ministry was briefed about slaves and slave trading farther south along the French West African coast,²⁰² authorities did not outrightly condemn slavery, but instead responded with inconsistency. In January of 1864, Minister de Chasseloup-Laubat thus ordered the colony's officials to prosecute traders under an Atlantic slave trade law of March 4, 1831, while at the same time, advocating tolerance in matters of slavery. De Chasseloup-Laubat cautioned that administrators needed to respect political necessities as well as the social condition of the local people.²⁰³

²⁰¹ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15, confidential *circulaire* of November 14, 1857, limiting the abolition decree of April 27, 1848. Extended by Governor J.B. Jauréguiberry to additional territories in Senegal on November 16, 1862; ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15c, August 22, 1878. In correspondence between the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies and Senegal's governor it was claimed Faidherbe's confidential *circulaire* from November, 1857 that permitted the expulsion of slaves who come to Senegal seeking manumission as well as the policy of allowing slavery among French subjects in the region was approved by the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies on February 5, 1858.

²⁰² ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 6a, 176. Letter from Governor Baudin to the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies, April 6, 1850; ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15b, 209. Letter from the Chief of the Naval Division for West Africa to Ministry of the Navy and Colonies, May 2, 1862; ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 16, 413. Letter from governor Faidherbe to the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies, October of 1863 [day illegible.]; ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15b, 19. Letter from Minister Chasseloup-Laubat of the Navy and Colonies to the governor of Senegal; January 18, 1864; ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15b, 4, correspondence to the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies from the *Commissaire général* of the French Navy to the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies, February 20, 1864; ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15b. Letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies, May 17, 1867; ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15b, correspondence to the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies from the rear-admiral of the French West African Naval Division, June 20, 1867.

²⁰³ ANOM FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 6, March 4, 1831; ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15b, 19. Letter from Minister Chasseloup-Laubat of the Navy and Colonies to the governor of Senegal, January 18, 1864.

"Diabes de nègres"

Three decades after French slave emancipation, the French abolitionist, Victor Schoelcher, argued that in the years following the 1848 decree, French authorities in Senegal became less rigorous in applying the abolition law.²⁰⁴ The fact that officials' observations of West Africans concluded that slavery was a normal state for the indigenous served to naturalize a perceived superiority of white French colonizers over non-white colonial subjects. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, what the French viewed as distinct dissimilarities between European and West African culture concretized a philosophical chasm between republican notions of universal rights and slave practices in Senegal. The French in West Africa continued to perceive the local population as an inferior people—a population that was perfectly suited for labor in a growing French territory. More than anything else, it was the pernicious perception of an infantile, unstable, and "backward" West African that remained a constant rationalization for the colony's administrators that Senegalese slaves were not like Europeans and thus could not understand the principle of liberty.

The statistical evidence of persistent slavery in French West Africa is stunning. In the late 1870s, while the settlements totaled approximately 200,000 individuals, there were an estimated 1,000,000 West Africans in the colony's hinterland, the majority of whom were slaves who lived under French sovereignty.²⁰⁵ Dagana, Richard-Toll, Mérinaghen, Lampsar, Gaé, Dimar, Cayor, Baol, Saloum and

²⁰⁴ Schoelcher, *L'esclavage au Sénégal en 1880*, 8-9.

²⁰⁵ Gaffarel, *Le Sénégal et le Soudan français*, 68.

the Casamance region were all predominantly slave areas while markets at French posts in Medine, Dagana, Bakel, Senedubu and Carabane sold captives alongside agricultural products. During the 1870s, the price of an adult male slave averaged between 250 and 300 francs while children fetched between 150 to 200 francs. It was not uncommon for slaves to be traded for animals or agricultural products. Slaves were pervasive in the colony's hinterland, however, they were also present in French cities.²⁰⁶ Then, further complicating matters, when Senegal's former governor, the imperialist Jean Bernard Jauréguiberry, was appointed as Minister of the Navy and Colonies in Paris, the French launched a large-scale invasion of Senegal's backcountry, which included the conquest of French Sudan and the southern rivers regions—areas where slaves were apprehended and sold downriver.²⁰⁷ With renewed conquest and attempts to consolidate the French West African interior, the primary means of domestic work, soldiering, and agricultural endeavors continued to be supplied with various forms of forced labor. The explorer and naturalist, Antoine-Alfred Marche, who chronicled his travels during the 1870s across West Africa, noted pervasive slavery throughout the region.²⁰⁸ Similarly to other Frenchmen, Marche's colonial spectatorship in West Africa, depicted the indigenous as “inferior” to Europeans.

²⁰⁶ Béranger-Féraud, “*Études sur la Sénégalie*”; Schoelcher, *L'esclavage au Sénégal en 1880*, 14, 17.

²⁰⁷ René Lanson and Jules Desseignet, *La France et sa civilisation de la révolution à nos jours* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1922), 250; Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 130; and Barry, *La Sénégalie du XV^{ème} au XIX^{ème} siècle*, 284-285, 340.

²⁰⁸ See Marche *Trois voyages dans l'Afrique occidentale*.

During the 1870s Marche compared European civilization to West African society in his *Trois voyages dans l'Afrique occidentale*. Whether in French settlements or in the colony's hinterland, Marche perceived that the indigenous only stood to benefit from white influence. For him, the antithesis of a white European was a cunning black African devil. He made it clear that his appraisal of West Africans was similar to other Frenchmen when he noted that it was commonplace for Europeans to refer to the region's natives as "*diabes de nègres*" or "negro" devils.²⁰⁹ A particularly telling passage sheds light on Marche's conclusions:

If you know one negro, you know them all...liars by nature, flatterers to the core, especially with those [Europeans] who are newly arrived in the colony. Whether in Saint Louis...or elsewhere, a white newcomer is immediately surrounded and sized up by the blacks. Blacks are quick to find a white man's weaknesses...For a black, the best white is always the one to whom he is speaking and if there are several together, [the black] recognizes the strongest, or the one with the most authority, this is to say the most money...[in order to] move in, flatter and exploit.²¹⁰

Marche was just one of many Europeans to complain about the West African "exploitativative" nature. French merchants had long criticized Senegal's blacks who traded in the interior on behalf of French firms for regularly stealing "large sums of money."²¹¹ No doubt, Marche's negative assessments of the indigenous maintained uncanny similarity to earlier French observations of West Africans, and significantly, neither did his opinions articulate a disjuncture between the French principle of slave liberty and the presence of so many slaves in French territory. In fact, more often than

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 4.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 12-13.

²¹¹ Ibid., 46.

not, Marche described slavery with obfuscation, rendering confusion about its illegality.

Ambiguity was a common characteristic of French discourses about slavery in West Africa. For instance, on December 1, 1877, the military commander Henri Canard reported to Governor Brière de l'Isle that "as of today, there are no more slaves in the region, or at least none who are recognized as such."²¹² When the French acknowledged slavery the word *esclave* or slave was not regularly employed. It was replaced by more innocuous terms such as *engagé à temps*, *tirailleur sénégalais* or *captif*.²¹³ These euphemisms obscured a colonial environment rife with slavery. *Engagé à temps* forcibly toiled for the colony's European, *métis* and free-black populations in French settlements, and, as we saw, the *tirailleur sénégalais* were often slave soldiers in the French colonial military. *Captifs* or captives, were simply chattel slaves laboring for Africans in the colony's interior. However, if the French rarely articulated that forced black labor constituted the prevailing organization of work in the colony, what is certain is that West Africans did not always want to labor for the French, even if this work was no longer termed slavery, or even if forced laborers were being financially compensated. Faidherbe claimed that with emancipation, slaves were "tasked to stay voluntarily... as workers... in Saint Louis

²¹² ANS, K11, 30, December 1, 1877. Letter from Commander Canard of the Second District to Governor Brière de l'Isle.

²¹³ See Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 107; François Zuccarelli, "Le régime des engagés à temps au Sénégal (1817-1848)," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 2, No 7 (1962): 420-461.

and Gorée.”²¹⁴ Faidherbe’s seemingly contradictory words: “tasked” and “voluntarily” raise questions about coercion, especially given the fact that slaves in the settlements as well as in the colony’s borderlands complained about forced labor. Close scrutiny reveals that the indigenous themselves were confused about the meaning of France’s slave emancipation law.

For instance, in 1877, the cleric Monsieur Villeger recorded that slaves were mistaken when they believed that the French would give them freedom.²¹⁵ Then, in 1878, a French prosecutor by the name of Batut described the anguish of a slave in Dakar who believed that he was supposed to be freed in French territory. The slave, Tiebothe, heard the French would give slaves “liberty.” “As for me,” the slave’s letter to the prosecutor read, “I am not well here where all sorts of miseries are heaped upon me.” Tiebothe then pled “for the love of God...could you give me liberty?” That same month Batut received a similar note from the slave, Foli Sarre. Sarre was an orphan from Salum who was kidnapped and brought to Dakar to be sold. A mixed-race female had purchased him as a young boy and over the course of the next ten years forced him to live under what he described as “abominable domination.” The enslaver, “had no pity... on me,” the slave wrote. Apparently, Sarre was worked from morning until night, during which time he was often hit and

²¹⁴ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15b, 3. Letter from Governor Faidherbe to the commander over Dakar, February 22, 1865; Schoelcher, *L’esclavage au Sénégal en 1880*, 17.

²¹⁵ Schoelcher, *L’esclavage au Sénégal en 1880*. Included in this publication is a letter from the cleric Monsieur Villeger of the Free Church regarding an environment of slavery and the trade in Senegal, dated September 17, 1879.

insulted. Sarre's letter conveyed that at one point his enslaver announced to him, "I am your mistress and I could kill you at any time."²¹⁶

For the fortunate slaves that were emancipated, "liberty papers" were the proof of official freedom (see Figure 7). The process, however, was drawn-out and often unreliable. Though the 1848 emancipation law stated that "French soil immediately frees a slave who touches it,"²¹⁷ the slave seeking liberty papers had to complete bureaucratic requirements that in some cases were impossible to fulfill. While the slave had to register with the colony's Political Affairs Bureau, if a master sought the fugitive slave within eight days, the slave was denied freedom and returned to the slave owner.²¹⁸ Over time, a ninety-day waiting period became the accepted duration for liberty papers. Yet even the ninety-day stipulation was a moving target since a slave's registration form included the slave's intended whereabouts for the three-month delay. A slave's owner who appeared within this period was permitted to view the slave's registration, which often led the master directly to his escaped slave. When masters arrived to reclaim a slave, French administrators could be seen assisting the owner in the return of his captive.²¹⁹ On just one day in February 1878 the French returned five slaves to masters in Saint

²¹⁶ Ibid., 88-90.

²¹⁷ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15a. Decree Concerning the Abolition of Slavery in the Colonies, April 27, 1848.

²¹⁸ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15b. Letter from Governor Jauréguiberry to the colonel and commander of the Army in Gorée, March 6, 1863. Freeing slaves after an eight-day waiting period began in 1862, Schoelcher, *L'esclavage au Sénégal en 1880*, 9.

²¹⁹ Schoelcher, *L'esclavage au Sénégal en 1880*, 9-11.

Louis, calling them “dangerous vagabonds.”²²⁰ Furthermore, long waiting periods for manumission could end in tragedy.



Figure 7. Photographic reproduction of "Liberty Papers," 1881. Image from Archives nationales du Sénégal (ANS). Dakar, Senegal.

Official government reports reveal that slaves were severely mistreated upon return to their owners—some to the point of death. In Dakar, in 1871, the cleric, Villeger, observed that when French officers led a Senegalese from Gandiole to reclaim his female slave and her child who fled to the settlement for liberation, the slave woman cried out: “I am going to die.” As soon as the master had the slave and

²²⁰ Ibid., 13.

child outside of Dakar's city limits, the slave woman was shot and killed and the master left the scene with the child. This incident was never investigated by French authorities. Villeger wrote that "slaves who are returned to their masters are always mistreated afterwards."²²¹ Legal challenges associated with the purchase of liberty, delays for manumission, and the return of slaves to their masters were just some of the bureaucratic challenges that informed the culture of slavery in Senegal in the decades after 1848. The case of the slave woman Marianne Gueyre demonstrates another example. In Dakar in 1877, an African by the name of Kourbaly purchased freedom for his wife, Marianne Gueyre. French officials issued Gueyre liberty papers for Marianne, but only one of her four children was allowed manumittance. French law stipulated that any liberation of a female slave was to include freedom for the slave's minor children, but this was not what happened, and as a result, three of her four children were told they would remain enslaved following their mother's liberation.²²²

It is not known exactly how many slaves asked for liberation or how many were freed in the colony. In theory, manumissions were supposed to be recorded in Senegal's newspaper, the *Moniteur du Sénégal et dépendances*. Names, ages, dates of liberation, to whom the individuals were surrendered, followed by which colonial office processed the liberations were posted under the heading "Administration of Justice." Liberated adults were listed as being "turned over to themselves." In the

²²¹ Ibid. Included in this publication is a letter from the cleric Monsieur Villeger of the Free Church regarding an environment of slavery and the trade in Senegal, dated September 17, 1879.

²²² Ibid., 17.

1870s, emancipations averaged between 200 and 300 per year, most often slaves from the Moor (especially Trarza), Damga, Baol, Dimar, and Cayor areas.²²³ If there was any question about the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies' continued knowledge and tolerance of slavery in the colony, communication between Senegal and Paris proves otherwise. In December of 1878, Governor Brière de l'Isle boasted to Minister Pothau that "not one slave had been freed that accompanied his master to Saint Louis since 1848."²²⁴ Then, in January of 1879, an unnamed mid-level official within the ministry commented that when it comes to slavery, "Senegal is an exceptional case for the French Empire."²²⁵ In the fall of 1881, the colonial Villeger recorded that nothing had changed in the colony regarding slavery and that local authorities maintain "little sympathy for the suppression of slavery in [the colony's] settlements."²²⁶ On February 18, 1882, a senior legal official in the colony wrote: "there is much evidence of the [slave] trade not only in French territory, but at the doors of our cities, even in Saint Louis where trades occur frequently."²²⁷ In a letter written the next month, the official added: "unfortunately, it is more than certain that slavery not only continues in Senegal and in French territories, but also at the posts and in Saint Louis...not one

²²³ *Moniteur du Sénégal et dépendances*, No 795, June 6, 1871; Schoelcher, *L'Esclavage au Sénégal en 1880*, 36, 76.

²²⁴ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15c. Correspondence between Senegal's Governor, Brière de l'Isle and Minister Pothau of the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies, December 8, 1878.

²²⁵ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15d. Internal memo between the Director of the Colonies and the Minister of the Navy and Colonies, January, 1879 [day illegible].

²²⁶ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15°. Ministry of the Colonies internal memo with an attached note from Victor Schoelcher, describing Villeger's findings, November 7, 1881.

²²⁷ ANS, K12, 8. Letter from Senegal's president of the court of appeals to the governor, February 18, 1882.

improvement has been made in this area in many years.” Further investigation led the prosecutor to state that the reason slavery and the trade continues in Senegal “is due to the lack of consistent aggressive response on the part of French officials.”²²⁸

During the final decades of the nineteenth century, in spite of the Third Republic’s colonial policy of *mission civilisatrice* which, as we recall, maintained the ideal of extending French republican culture and values to the colonial indigenous, an attitude of moral and intellectual condescension continued to inform French officials’ assessments of West Africans, reinforcing a real and philosophical distance between the indigenous and the universal principles of the *Rights of Man*. For instance, in May of 1882, Governor Henri Canard wrote to the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies that while he freed a number of slaves during previous months, he doubted that liberating slaves was contributing to the goal of civilizing Africa. Emphasizing a particular French attitude of an “unalterable ignorance” among West Africans, he added that even when liberated, former slaves “remain in a slave-like state...and remain foreign to our morals and customs...Most of the women and the children now serve new masters.”²²⁹ Likewise, five months later, in October of 1882, Admiral Aristide Louis Vallon, who would soon become Senegal’s governor, wrote to the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies that in the previous three months, 336 slaves were freed, but “not one of the liberated accepts our law...and it is vain that we speak to them of right to

²²⁸ ANS, K12. Letter from Senegal’s president of the court of appeals (chief of the judiciary service), March 18, 1882.

²²⁹ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15°, 366. Letter from Governor Henri Canard to the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies, May 23, 1882.

be free ...[since] not one of them understands this meaning.”²³⁰ Then, with striking similarity to earlier French conclusions of a debased morality in West Africans, that same year, Governor Canard wrote that when slaves presented themselves for liberation at French posts and in Saint Louis they showed “very bad character...they do not want to work and they live by lying and stealing and are the [regular] cause of incidences in Saint Louis [and its suburbs: Bouëville, Guet N’Dar and N’ Dar Toute.]”²³¹

From 1886 onward, slaves captured in warfare or who fled owners were regularly placed into what the French referred to as “liberty villages” in Senegal, Upper Senegal and in the Niger River area of the Sudan.²³² Rules were rigid and conditions of captivity prevailed. To begin with, slaves were forced to work for the French and could not leave liberty villages of their own free will. Then, even though after 1891 a slave enlisted as a colonial soldier in a liberty village could be “freed” within thirty days, all others—especially women and children who were the majority in liberty villages—remained particularly vulnerable to apprehension. In the four liberty villages in Upper Senegal, French administrators permitted slave owners to apprehend close to half of the slaves in camp.²³³

²³⁰ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15e. Letter from Governor A.L. Vallon to the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies, October 11, 1882.

²³¹ ANS, K12, 2. Letter from Governor Canard to Minister Jauréguiberry of the Ministry of Navy and Colonies, March 20, 1882.

²³² Bonnetain, *Une française au Soudan*, 79-80; Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Anti-Slavery*, 399.

²³³ Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, 85-87; Crowder, *West Africa Under Colonial Rule*, 184-185.

By the end of the century, French protectorate territory expanded, now to include Bakel, Matam, Podor, Dagana, Louaga, Tivaouane, Thiès, Sine and Saloum, Niani-Ouli, and the Casamance region.²³⁴ According to earlier local amendments to the emancipation law bonded labor was only to be permissible in protectorate territory. However, as late as the 1890s, slaves were still present in the colony's cities, deemed *communes de plein exercices* or French communes which were to adhere to the metropolitan French legal code.²³⁵ As we recall, in the early 1890s, Madame Raymonde Bonnetain observed slavery among the wealthy and influential mixed-race in Dakar, while she further described that on the island of Gorée, "slaves still live and work on the properties of former masters."²³⁶ Madame Bonnetain's claims of continued slavery on French soil are echoed by off-handed remarks by French administrators in the period. In 1891, for instance, Governor H.F. de Lamothe announced that individuals who live in the larger region of Saint Louis are "all around in excellent spirits since indigenous customs have been respected...we don't bother them in terms of slavery or polygamy... and they don't bother us."²³⁷ Slavery was still a prominent feature of Senegal's settlements in the 1890s, yet both slavery and the trade in slaves persisted in Senegal's northern, eastern and southern borderlands. In 1892, Madame Bonnetain described the French "appraising slaves like cattle" at

²³⁴ Olivier, *Le Sénégal*, 131-132.

²³⁵ Biondi, *Saint Louis du Sénégal*, 132. Saint Louis and Gorée became *communes de plein exercice* in 1872, Rufisque in 1880, and Dakar when it was detached from Gorée's administration in 1887.

²³⁶ Bonnetain, *Une française au Soudan*, 20, 76.

²³⁷ "Renseignements coloniaux for Senegal," *L'expansion coloniale: Moniteur des colons français*, 414 (1891). Without signature.

the French river post of Matam, where officials regularly purchased slaves for the colonial army.²³⁸

On July 2, 1890 European governments passed the “Convention Relative to the Slave Trade and Importation in Africa of Firearms, Ammunition, and Spirituous Liquors.” Referred to as the Brussels Act, the agreement stressed that Europeans were to rule indigenous populations responsibly and in a way which would bring about European-style civilization. The Act spoke to a growing concern in Europe about illicit arms, alcohol, and slave trading in Africa. Major signatories were Russia, Spain, Portugal, France, Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Great Britain, and the United States. Signatories agreed to bring to an end both slavery and the slave trade in slaves on land as well as on the high seas, and to ameliorate the conditions of the indigenous.²³⁹ For all its good intentions, however, the Brussels Act maintained no terms or mechanisms for slave abolition enforcement and did not require European governments to end slavery in African colonies within a specific timeframe. The Ministry of Navy and Colonies in Paris seemed rather unmoved by the international accord and in Senegal, compliance was weak. In a dispatch from April 13, 1892, Senegal’s governor, Henri Lamothe thus reprimanded regional administrators for not putting the prescriptions of the Brussels Conference into effect “well enough.”²⁴⁰

²³⁸ Bonnetain, *Une française au Soudan*, 65-67; Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in west Africa*, 198-199.

²³⁹ Miers, “Slavery and the Slave Trade as International Issues, 1890-1939” in Miers and Klein, eds., *Slavery and Colonial Rule in Africa*.

²⁴⁰ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 17, 830. Enclosed with a letter to the under-secretary of state from the governor of Senegal, dated July 6, 1892, was a notice from Governor Henri Lamothe of Senegal reprimanding regional authorities regarding the Brussels Act, dated April 13, 1892.

This attitude persisted into at least the spring of 1900, when Governor-General of French West Africa, J.B. Chaudié, received a complaint from the French deputy of Guadeloupe, Gerville-Réache, about first-hand accounts of captivity and the trading of women and children in the colony's hinterland.²⁴¹

Eventually, an official distinction between the longstanding perception of a “superior” Frenchman and an “inferior” black West African was legitimized in Paris with a shift from the colonial ideal of *assimilation*—or the civilizing mission's idea of full adoption of the indigenous into the French nation—to *association*. *Association*, or the policy that the indigenous should progress along his own lines and, as a result, was not subject to French law and culture, now provided colonial administrators with a policy justification for decades of an interminable distance between French principles of human rights and practice in West Africa. To be sure, a transition to *association* concluded that all men were not equal and that only those who demonstrated signs of being *evolué* would enjoy the rights and privileges of French citizens in France. Scholars of the French colonial world note this shift during the 1890s (firmly in place by World War One), however the fact that officials in Senegal failed to free slaves immediately following the 1848 Emancipation Decree signifies a move to *association* much earlier in the colony. Further, the onerous 1880s *code de l'indigénat* which permitted regional commanders to wield extensive powers over the

²⁴¹ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 28 bis, 469. Letter from Governor-General J.B. Chaudié to Deputy Gerville-Réache of Guadeloupe, April 4, 1900.

indigenous in the French hinterland—including slave labor²⁴²—simply reinforced what had taken place all along in Senegal: the denial of rights on French soil—*ex legem*. Moreover, while it is true that French ethnographic endeavors in West Africa increased by the end of the century,²⁴³ the newer work of Islamicists, Arabists, and orientalist (often one in the same) should not be regarded as the sole fodder for a policy shift to *association*. What is more accurate is that decades of French spectatorship in West Africa that depicted the indigenous as “inferior” beings provided continual stimulus and eventual legitimization for a longstanding French denial of equality to the non-white colonized—including slaves. In this way, decades of French officials, naturalists, explorers, and travelers’ racialized narratives of West African culture simply reinforced a growing pseudo-science in the *métropole*²⁴⁴ by lending “on the ground” justification for undermining French humanistic principles of equality in the colonial space.

²⁴² ANF, AP 148/5, 9, Fonds Ernest Noirot. Undated; Olivier, *Le Sénégal*, 148-155, 160, 171; and Crowder, *West Africa Under Colonial Rule*, 168-170.

²⁴³ Robinson, *Ethnography and Customary Law*,” 228-230; Idem., *Paths of Accommodation*, 38. The work of Islamicists and orientalist was contemporaneous with final stages of French conquest of the interior, a separation of borderland colonies from Senegal, and the shift to a general-governorship.

²⁴⁴ By means of anthropological measurements and assessments of language, literacy, and culture, pseudo-scientists and philosophers such as Arthur de Gobineau, Herbert Spencer, and Paul Broca compared and categorized races, resulting in a conclusion that populations were inherently different. For a better understanding of racial thinking in the colonies and its link to pseudo-scientific arguments see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, *Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Pamela Pattynama, “Secrets and Danger: Dutch colonial culture,” in Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda eds., *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 88 and Annie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture, and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

From the 1880s, records show that slaves from the Walo and Futa began to migrate to French settlements in greater numbers, demanding emancipation from the French.²⁴⁵ From 1881 through 1889, an estimated 1058 to 2198 liberations occurred.²⁴⁶ *Association* simply endorsed a well-worn French apathy towards slavery in West Africa, but paradoxically, the turn-of-the-century brought greater attention to the emancipation decree from French officials who themselves increasingly articulated a contradiction between the universal principles of the *Rights of Man* and practice in West Africa. Directives stand out. In 1900, the colonial ministry ordered administrators in West Africa to stop slave caravans travelling through French territory,²⁴⁷ and, as of 1904, French officials reinforced a policy of voluntarism for colonial troops—the result of which was a decline of slave induction into the *tirailleurs sénégalais*.²⁴⁸ During the first years of the twentieth century, large numbers of slaves had departed from the area of Bakel on the Senegal River, and between 1905 and roughly 1914, numerous slaves fled masters throughout Senegal's eastern and southern borderlands. In 1905, the governor-general of French West Africa, Ernest Roume, set out new measures intended to finally end slavery in the slave-ridden area of Senegal's eastern frontier of Sudan. Roume's mandate was that all sales of persons were to cease. From this point forth, French administrators in the

²⁴⁵ Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, 113.

²⁴⁶ ANS, K12, 83, January 18, 1889; ANS, K12, 81, January 21, 1889; ANS, K12, 77, January 22, 1889; and ANS, K12, 75, January 26, 1889.

²⁴⁷ Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 97.

²⁴⁸ Olivier, *Le Sénégal*, 187.

region were no longer supposed to recognize the category of slave nor were fleeing captives to be returned to owners.²⁴⁹

Principled language aside, the work of especially Martin Klein has shown that new French directives to finally end slavery in French West Africa were neither completely effective, nor were they expected to be. While slavery remained particularly entrenched in Senegal's eastern and southern borderlands (in the newer break-off colonies of Sudan and Guinea), it was more the activity of slaves fleeing captivity, which led to slave freedom and alternative forms of labor—not, French intervention in the lives of slaves. It appears that during the first years of the twentieth century, more often than not, the extent of French official activity in the matter was to refuse to recognize the status of a slave. Indeed, as had been the case since 1848, rarely did French officials get between a slaveowner and his human property in West Africa.²⁵⁰

Conclusion

In his 1907 book, *Le Sénégal*, the colonial administrator, Marcel Olivier, proclaimed that “the indigenous have very simple natured characters and cannot comprehend the complexity of our [French] existence.”²⁵¹ Olivier's appraisal of West Africans followed a long tradition of French spectatorship in West Africa that, by

²⁴⁹ Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, 159-162, 198.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 197-198.

²⁵¹ Olivier, *Le Sénégal*, 101. By 1919, the colonial administrator would be promoted to lieutenant-governor of French Sudan (previously Haut-Sénégal et Niger) and later to governor-general of Madagascar.

way of assessment of the characteristics and capabilities of the indigenous, rationalized an attitude of paternalistic racism. The fact that few Europeans published first-hand observations of West Africans meant that the views of French soldiers, naturalists, explorers, officials, and travelers to the region were important for how the *métropole* would understand the colony and its native population. An ideological construction of the indigenous in Senegal is largely attributable to the French “colonial gaze.” It was “on the ground” French assessments that propelled forth arguments of the worth and aptitude of the Senegalese as well as how West Africans should be ruled. Undoubtedly, the ways in which the French perceived the humanity of West Africans stood in the way of full execution of the emancipation law. French depictions of the Senegalese only reinforced an ongoing ideological discourse regarding the indigenous which, at core, naturalized artificially constructed differences. Faidherbe’s division of French territory between areas of *plein exercices* and *dépendances* may have been a legal sleight of hand which reinforced that empire was somehow not “French soil” and that indigenous populations that came under French sovereignty were not equal to French citizens in France. However, it was also true that the late nineteenth century transition to the colonial policy of *association* simply legitimized this French perception. This civilizational disparity, founded on ethnological conclusions of racial and cultural differences, served to reinforce the paradoxes of an emancipatory yet oppressive republican culture in Senegal—a contradiction that was magnified with respect to the issue of slavery. Yet this phenomenon was not only present in Senegal. As the next chapter will demonstrate,

the imperial experience strained universalistic claims of republicanism in the French *métropole*, as well. And if French citizens perceived the colonies as separate spaces where French principles did not always apply, nowhere was this more apparent than with respect to the issue of slavery.

METROPOLITAN POLITICAL CULTURE: THE COLONIES, RACE AND THE EMANCIPATION OF SLAVES

Slave emancipation was thwarted in Senegal by French colonists' paternalistic racism toward West Africans. However, this attitude was not dissimilar to French perspectives of the colonies and the colonized at home, in France. Deconstructing the French colonial culture of slavery in Senegal thus reveals a dominant strain in French political culture to perceive the colonial world as an environment so apart from Europe that French principles did not apply. This argument complicates the traditional narrative of continued slavery in Senegal by linking French colonial perspectives of race and forced labor in Senegal with attitudes maintained in the *métropole*. Indeed, the common understanding regarding continued slavery portrays a disjuncture between the metropolitan French who expected human rights to be extended in the colonies and French administrators in West Africa who, for utilitarian reasons, ignored these expectations.²⁵² This chapter offers an alternative

²⁵² Renault, *L'abolition de l'esclavage au Sénégal* 78; Crowder, *West Africa Under Colonial Rule*, 182; Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, 16-17. The studies of François Renault, Michael Crowder, and Martin Klein, and are emblematic of this argument. For instance, Crowder has contended that during the nineteenth century, there was "strong" humanitarian pressure at home in France to abolish slavery in West Africa, but that French colonial administrators did not do so, while Klein has argued that "there was pressure from metropolitan opinion, which considered slavery immoral..." and further, that "French colonialists [were] caught between European public opinion and the conviction that their goals could only be achieved if they tolerated slave-trading and slave use." Similarly, François Renault has maintained that after 1848, French administrators in Senegal capitulated to local customs of slavery for French survival in what could be a hostile country, and that only when leaders in Paris became more firm on the subject as a result of a press scandal during the early 1880s, did colonial officials make more of an effort to comply with the emancipation law.²⁵² While this thesis' argument is closer to that of Renault: that following a period of press reaction during the early 1880s regarding continued slavery in Senegal, there was more pressure on French colonial administrators to enforce the slave law, there yet exists profound difference. This chapter will demonstrate a longstanding trend in French political culture to ignore rights in the colonies, perceiving the non-white colonized as "outside" republicans' claims of universal liberty and equality; a

interpretation by demonstrating a metropolitan philosophy of “difference” towards the colonies and the non-white colonized, setting the stage for French officials’ lax attitude towards slave emancipation between the 1840s and the turn-of-the-century in Senegal. Tangentially, this chapter will reveal that French metropolitan discourses about race and slavery, while rare, were nevertheless informed by events and movements in France, altering the way in which the French interpreted these themes.

In order to fully deconstruct a French colonial culture of slaveholding in Senegal, we therefore must now shift our gaze from the colony to the *métropole* where the French had a tendency to severely limit rights for non-whites overseas. Questions arise concerning the application of the revolutionary ideals of “*liberté, égalité, fraternité*”: Were hallowed French declarations of rights universal? Were they supposed to be in practice at all times and in all places? And if not, on what grounds were “natural” rights viewed as “unnatural”? An examination of French perspectives on slavery and the colonies will show that republican ideals were never fixed, but were often in flux, reacting to concerns of the day. On the eve of French slave emancipation in the 1840s, a discourse about slave liberty and equality played out against the problems of industrialization, the invasion of Algeria, and increasingly, calls from liberals and workers for greater political participation. While these events altered the *milieu* within which the French weighed the issue of colonial slavery before 1848, after the revolution’s failure, new metropolitan transformations

phenomenon that intensified during the last decade of the nineteenth century in West Africa with a shift from the colony policy of *assimilation* to *association*.

affected the ways in which the French addressed the issue. A return to authoritarian rule during the Second Empire (1851-1870), followed by the disastrous Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, the socialist experiment of the Paris Commune during the spring of 1871, the founding of the Third Republic (1870-1940), each in their own way influenced French mentalities toward forced labor in overseas French territories.

Abolitionism, Slave Emancipation, and Racial
Theories during the July Monarchy (1830-1848)

Metropolitan views of colonial slavery during the July Monarchy demonstrate a particularist strain of the *Rights of Man*, which while promoting the general idea of slave liberty, nonetheless maintained limits on when and how emancipation should occur. The fact that colonial slavery was only abolished in 1794, as a result of slave uprisings in Saint Domingue (modern day Haiti) and the exigencies of international war, and not in 1789, with the publication of the *Rights of Man*, set an important precedent for the ways in which slave emancipation was interpreted and managed during the nineteenth century. In the years leading up to the 1848 slave emancipation decree, the French were trying to come to terms with the pangs of early industrialization as well as a political transition from absolute monarchy to an emerging democracy. The conservatism of Louis Philippe's "July Monarchy" government showed that the Great Revolution ideas of liberty and equality were met again by a repressive government.²⁵³ This conservative attitude carried over to

²⁵³ For a review of the conflicts surrounding political authority and popular representation after the Great Revolution, see Martin Lyons, *Napoleon Bonaparte and the Legacy of the French Revolution* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Publishers, Limited, 1994) and Sheryl Kroen, *Politics and Theater: The*

discussions about colonial slavery. The positions articulated by François Guizot, Alexis de Tocqueville, Louis Blanc, and Victor Schoelcher are most instructive for examining tensions between the universal language of the *Rights of Man* and the realities for slaves in French colonies during the July Monarchy.

The historian François Guizot, a key politician during the July Monarchy—whose career achievements included leading the Foreign Ministry, heading up the Education Ministry, and serving as French ambassador to England and eventually as Prime Minister—was also a member of the small abolitionist group, the *société de la morale chrétienne* or the Christian Moral Society. For a time, Guizot was even the group's leader. However, for Guizot there were limits to revolutionary progress, which included restricting rights for colonial slaves. Guizot's overall attitude of political restraint was evident from his statements to the Chamber of Deputies: "A spirit of insurrection is contrary to liberty," and further that, "liberty is [only] found at the heart of the constitution...and as a result of observing laws."²⁵⁴ Regarding slavery, he maintained that an end to the institution should only occur moderately and cautiously. Guizot's beliefs about colonial slavery can be found in his *Histoire générale de la civilisation en Europe depuis la chute de l'empire jus-qu'à la révolution française*. In his compilation of history lectures delivered at the Sorbonne,

Crisis of Legitimacy in Restoration France, 1815-1830 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). In pursuit of greater representation, in 1830, workers and liberals toppled the second monarch of the Bourbon Restoration, King Charles X. In his stead was placed King Louis Philippe, a member of the Orleans family. Yet if many French believed Louis Philippe's authority would depend on the support of the people, this was not the case.

²⁵⁴ *Les Grands discours parlementaires du XIX siècle* (Paris: Assemblée nationale, 2005), 129-134. Excerpt from December 29, 1830 session of the Chamber of Deputies (François Guizot).

Guizot described that in order to bring about a change in outlook toward white serfdom and black slavery, Europeans had required the influence of Christianity, as well as a “great development of new ideas [and] of new principles of civilization.” In what appears to be a recognition of the political and economic realities of his own era, however, Guizot argued that the fact that slavery was always “so closely connected with the industrial life of the world” meant that it could not be completely removed “until a change could be made in general economic habits.”²⁵⁵ For Guizot then, slave emancipation in an industrializing France was not prudent. More than anything else, Guizot linked the problem of slave emancipation with what he believed would be a costly government indemnity to colonial planters, which, for him, was an untenable prospect given France’s goals for economic growth. In this way, any abolitionist ideals maintained by Guizot were mitigated by the economic and political realities of the day. Guizot’s version of rights was therefore particularist. Changes to colonial slavery should only occur at an incremental pace. Guizot only advocated improvements to colonial slavery—a view that was shared and analyzed in greater detail by another July Monarchy politician, Alexis de Tocqueville.

Tocqueville’s *De la Démocratie en Amérique* was a study of American institutions and mores. The publication was written to provide the French with a guide for democratic reform, but for our purposes, it was also a treasure-trove of the abolitionist’s views of slavery, which revealed a resignation toward the practice.

²⁵⁵ François Guizot, *Histoire générale de la civilisation en Europe depuis la chute de l’empire jus-qu’à la révolution française* (Bruxelles: Lacrosse, 1838), 73-87.

Tocqueville began with declaring that for centuries, there were those who supported slavery while others fought, often with little hope, for freedom. “And even now in our day,” he noted, “we often encounter noble and proud men...who speak highly of servitude, a state which they have never themselves known.” For Tocqueville, it was “the very [presence] of bonded labor...[that] dishonored work...[and] encouraged idleness...[as well as] ignorance, pride, [and] poverty in society.” “The black in the United States,” he argued, “has lost the memory of his native country.” In the event, “he no longer can hear the language spoken by his fathers... [and] he has forsaken their religion and forgotten their culture.” While no longer belonging to Africa, Tocqueville then explained that a black man “acquires no access to the good things of Europe...[but instead]...is stranded between two cultures...[H]e is sold by the one and rejected by the other.”²⁵⁶

Moreover, according to Tocqueville, slaves did not comprehend their hardship: “Viciousness subjected him to slavery...[and]...a life of servitude has instilled in him the thoughts of a captive.” In this way, the slave “esteems his masters even more than he detests them, and finds his peace and his identity in submissive imitation of those who dominate him.” The slave was thus “without desires [and] without any peace, and [therefore] of no use to himself.” Hence, the slave comprehends from the very beginning that he has become property of another being, “whose duty is to watch over his labor... [and]...he understands that the care for his own future has not passed to him.” Hence, “the very activity of thinking appears to

²⁵⁶ Alexis de Tocqueville, *De la Démocratie en Amérique I* (Gallimard, Paris, 1835), 9, 24, 132.

him a useless gift from Providence, and he passively enjoys all the circumstances of his servility.” For Tocqueville, the institution of slavery had irrevocably altered the bound individual, leading him to argue that liberty for a slave was problematic. Freedom, he held, often appeared to be more arduous than slavery; since during his lifetime, the slave “learned to succumb to all, except to reason.” Therefore, “when reason becomes his only guide, he cannot recognize its voice.” Tocqueville further claimed that: “servitude brutalizes [the slave] and freedom destroys him.” He then declared that the American black “makes a thousand luckless efforts in order to enter into a society that rejects him.” [H]e bows to the tastes of his masters, assumes their opinions, and hopes, by way of imitation, to be one of them,” but since “he has been told that his race is inferior” he will always feel shame.²⁵⁷

Notably, Tocqueville’s *De la Démocratie en Amérique* not only spoke to a seemingly irreversible backward state among slaves, it also pointed to a “difference” between whites and blacks that had become for the philosopher, irremediable. Thus, while Tocqueville considered himself an abolitionist, it did not mean that he believed that black slaves should be given the rights of whites, nor that whites and blacks were equals. Moreover, Tocqueville’s tenor conveyed a fear of social instability should rights be extended to blacks. Tocqueville was writing his book just as France was conquering Algeria—an invasion that included violent subjugation and brutal forced labor of the indigenous. It may therefore have been difficult for Tocqueville to separate his ideals of liberty and equality from his belief in the necessity of subduing

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 132-133.

fearsome “erratic” non-white populations. Historian Margaret Kohn has shown that Tocqueville believed that colonial subjects required subjugation followed by a period of tutelage before they could be granted equality with Europeans and further that Europeans had a duty to eradicate barbarism among the indigenous in order to lay the foundations for an enlightened civilization under European tutelage and rule.²⁵⁸ In this way, for Tocqueville, “barbaric” non-whites, were contextualized in the idea of a European “siege rule” overseas. As Miranda Spieler has demonstrated for French Guiana, French civilian rights were regularly not implemented in territories that were considered unstable.²⁵⁹ Anti-slavery ideals could thus be expressed while at the same time advocating the suspension of such principles when it came to populations that were deemed inferior and volatile.

Tocqueville’s book raised the problem of extending rights to blacks and slaves overseas, however it may very well have likewise reflected the author’s concerns regarding social stability in a growing democratic environment at home in France. The scholar Thomas Clark has argued that *Democracy in America* revealed Tocqueville’s anxiety about the perils that mass democracy could bring in France. Clark suggests that while Tocqueville’s goal was to examine the American democratic system, his unease regarding French popular will, concerns about how to instill the impoverished classes with virtue and self-discipline, and the question of

²⁵⁸ Margaret Kohn, “The Other America: Tocqueville and Beaumont on Race and Slavery” *Polity* 35, No 2 (Winter, 2002): 169-193; Idem., “Empire’s Law: Alexis de Tocqueville on Colonialism and the State of Exception,” *Canadian Political Science Association* 41, No 2 (June, 2008): 255-278.

²⁵⁹ Spieler, *Empire and Underworld*, 171-172.

how to deter unrealistic desires among industrial laborers were never far from his mind.²⁶⁰ Tocqueville's views of slavery may therefore have been informed not only by his perceptions of racial inequality and an interest in French sovereignty in unruly colonial territories, but they may have equally reflected the theorist's views of class disparity in Europe. Tocqueville was committed to human rights, but he had problems with difference—in this case, his perceived inequalities surrounding race and class.

The abolitionists Guizot and Tocqueville appeared to break from the universal claims of the *Rights of Man*, but a complex interpretation of French revolutionary ideals was also evident in leaders on the far left of the political spectrum during the July Monarchy. By all accounts, an industrializing France had led to the loss of worker control over the labor environment. But in contrast to revolutionary *sans-culottes* during the 1790s, who sought legal and political equity, socialists during the July Monarchy focused on the improvement of labor conditions. The far left criticized modern capitalism for the challenges wrought by factory mechanization which not only devalued the skills of artisanal workers but often resulted in inadequate wages. Yet if socialism articulated worker anxiety in an industrializing France, the primacy of improving the lot of poor white workers at home took precedence over the condition of black slaves in the colonies. With this in mind, the historian and socialist, Louis Blanc, expressed sympathy for the plight of colonial slaves, but argued that a biological defect in black slave populations meant that slaves could not

²⁶⁰ Thomas Clark, "The American Democrat" Reads "Democracy in America": Cooper and Tocqueville in the Transatlantic Hall of Mirrors" *American Studies* 52, No 2 (2007): 187-208.

comprehend the depravity of their oppression. For Blanc, a psychological impediment in black slaves meant that the plight of white workers was comparably worse than colonial slavery. Nowhere was this idea more evident than in Blanc's short tract "De l'abolition de l'esclavage aux colonies." In this publication, Blanc argued that the superior intelligence of poor white workers meant that in comparison to slaves in the colonies, white laborers at home more fully experienced the intense horror of their circumstances. His perception that "slavery dulls the sensitivity of blacks and obscures their intellect," led Blanc to contend that "at least [slaves] do not feel the torment of a free and dignified soul oppressed by the shame of poverty...[unlike] the impoverished [white who] hemorrhages from wounds of the heart, the most excruciating of all!" Blanc further argued that since black slaves were not permitted to engage in the domestic pleasures of marriage or raising children—at least with any permanence—this meant that they did not experience the emotional effects of the loss of family members as a result of the inherent instability within the institution.²⁶¹

Taken together, Blanc's belief in the superior intelligence, reasoning, and emotional capability of whites, meant for him that the industrial factory system in France was worse than forced black labor in the colonies. Hence while he did not support colonial slavery, Blanc's view of the distinction between the two races led him to argue that the plight of oppressed white industrial laborers should be prioritized over the freeing of black slaves overseas. In fact, Blanc expressed

²⁶¹ Louis Blanc, "De l'abolition de l'esclavage aux colonies," *La Revue du Progrès*, January 15, 1840, 4-5.

contempt for abolitionists who refused to recognize what he asserted was yet more deplorable than colonial slavery, or in other words, “metropolitan slavery.”²⁶² Scholar Naomi Andrews has argued that French socialist theory in the era simply reinforced a racial alterity that from its beginnings informed the colonial ordered system and at its foundation the institution of slavery itself.²⁶³ In this manner, if conditions within colonial slavery were unsatisfactory for Blanc, his perception of psychological and emotional deficiencies in the black population did not permit slaves in the colony to fully understand the degree of depravity in which they existed.

Guizot, Tocqueville, and Blanc’s views of colonial slavery reflected a trend in French political philosophy that placed the colonies outside the scope of republican ideals. But due to consistent British abolitionist pressure, legislation was nonetheless introduced during the July Monarchy to improve conditions for colonial slaves, the most important of which were the Mackau Laws. Passed in 1845, the Mackau Laws provided for the right of self-purchase and ordered masters to feed sick slaves, even if they were dying and could not work. Female and child slaves were not to be whipped, slaves of different owners were allowed to marry, and religious and elementary instruction was permitted. Working hours were restricted to twelve hours per day, from six in the morning to six at night, with a required rest period of two and a half hours. Finally, labor assignments were to take into account age, health status and

²⁶² Ibid., 5.

²⁶³ Naomi Andrews, “Breaking the Ties: French Romantic Socialism and the Critique of Liberal Slave Emancipation,” *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 85, No 3 (September 2013): 489-527.

gender.²⁶⁴ Unsurprisingly, many colonial planters objected to the Mackau legislation, with the usual complaints that slaves were well-treated, that the new legislation interfered with private property and the free market economy, and that the laws could mean that the government was preparing not to pay planters in the event of a future general emancipation.²⁶⁵ However, there were those in France who believed that the Mackau Laws had not gone far enough, the most outspoken of whom was the abolitionist—Victor Schoelcher.

In his *Histoire de l'esclavage pendant les deux dernières années*, Schoelcher's anti-slavery "immediatist" views were clearly articulated. Claiming that the Mackau Laws were just a small concession for a much larger problem, "a drop of water thrown on an arid desert of slaves," Schoelcher held that "the means of preparation for freedom will have no effect," and furthermore, that "there can be no intermediate step between slavery and liberty." Schoelcher complained that application of the new laws "will only prove that there is no other means to end slavery than to abolish it altogether." He accused the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies as well as the colonial mixed-race communities of being behind the times. Indeed, he lamented that "as long as the colonies have existed, the creoles have always eluded [and] avoided the introduction of metropolitan orders to help slaves...the wishes of the government

²⁶⁴ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 13, Mackau Laws, July 18, 1845. Notably, the Mackau Laws mandated that the new twelve-hour work limit could be extended by two hours during harvest periods, and in the event of a slave purchasing manumission, five years of labor was expected thereafter.

²⁶⁵ Jennings, *French Anti-Slavery*, 210-213.

have never maintained adequate authority over local [mixed-race] power.” We fear, he wrote, that “conditions will remain the same.”²⁶⁶

Curiously, the fervor of now-immediatist Victor Schoelcher was only matched by the mixed-race Martiniquais (residing in France), Cyrille Bisette. In his political organ *La Revue des colonies*, Bisette announced that the liberty that whites possessed should be extended to both the mixed-race and blacks in French territories overseas. He then added that slavery should end immediately. However, while Bisette was an abolitionist “immediatist,” this did not mean that he believed in racial equality.²⁶⁷ Similar to the mixed-race in Senegal, the *métis* Bisette did not consider the mixed-race to be racially black. Accordingly, universal rights were to be afforded to the colonial mixed-race who, for Bisette, was a racially white population, whereas, once emancipated, former black slaves were to remain in a position of inferiority. Like Guizot, Tocqueville, and Blanc, therefore, Bisette supported a longstanding French view of racial inequality, but in this case, a mixed-race strain of racial prejudice toward blacks.

In the last years of the July Monarchy, even if French anti-slavery sentiment was gaining a bit more support, few abolitionists invoked republican principles of universal rights as the basis of their advocacy. This had to do with a popular French political philosophy that placed the colonies at a socio-political distance from the

²⁶⁶ Schoelcher, *Histoire de l'esclavage pendant les deux dernières années*, 1 (Paris: Pagnerre, 1847), 8,10.

²⁶⁷ Kelly Duke Bryant, “Black but not African: Black Diaspora and the *Revue des colonies*, 1834-1842” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 40, No 2 (2007): 251-252.

French mainland. To be sure, French ideals were considered unsuitable for the colonies by a large number of French in the period as evidenced by the anti-slavery petition campaigns in 1844, 1845, 1846 and 1847 that generated less than 50,000 signatures combined.²⁶⁸ Fears about the colonial economy, racial thinking, and the potential perils of mass democracy were ever-present in the minds of even the most progressive metropolitan French. Therefore, if colonial lobbyists argued that the colonies were not ready for slave emancipation and that free labor was not feasible,²⁶⁹ even for liberals who, at least in theory, supported the idea of slave emancipation, a looming question seemed to be: if a law were passed which banned slavery in the colonies, what would happen with workers' demands for more rights at home? Consequently, an anti-slavery campaign limited its demands. Even individuals who were moving away from the gradualist platform were therefore willing to compromise on the immediate emancipation of slaves.

While the exigencies of revolution led to the first emancipation of colonial slaves in 1794, what can only be described as growing political unrest in France in 1848, led, in its time, to another revolution and a second abolition of colonial slavery. In 1847, a terrible economic depression and widespread unemployment led to a banquet campaign that demanded immediate reforms such as labor opportunities, an uncensored press, and greater political representation beyond the middle class. In

²⁶⁸ Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and AntiSlavery*, 281; Jennings, *French Anti-Slavery*, 197-200, 230-232, 238-240.

²⁶⁹ Jennings, "La Presse havraise et l'esclavage," *Revue historique* CCLXXII (1984): 68-71; Idem., *French Anti-Slavery*, 210-211.

what became a politically-charged environment, Louis Philippe's cancellation of a massive banquet in Paris in February 1848 led to the outbreak of revolution and the eventual ousting of the July Monarchy. In the aftermath, the Second Republic was proclaimed by bourgeois republicans and socialists who, as opposed to revolutionaries during the First Republic in the 1790s, were focused on the social problems brought on by industrialization and the development of a modern democracy.²⁷⁰ Within a matter of weeks, the new eleven-member provisional government had managed to abolish slavery, reestablish universal suffrage in French overseas territories, and allow for colonial representation in the *métropole*. As Undersecretary of Marine Affairs in the new government, the outspoken abolitionist Victor Schoelcher pushed through the law freeing colonial slaves.²⁷¹ The emancipation decree was signed by every member of the provisional government but it was never presented to the Constituent Assembly for ratification. While this reflected a French political culture of apathy towards rights in the colonies, it may have also been ignored because in the spring of 1848 the provisional government maintained increasing concerns regarding its legitimacy, and may therefore have focused instead on preserving the new Republic.

²⁷⁰ For a review of the Revolution of 1848 and its aftermath, see John Merriman, *The Agony of the Republic: The Repression of the Left in Revolutionary France, 1848-1851* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978); William Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); and Maurice Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment, 1848-1852* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

²⁷¹ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15a. Decree Concerning the Abolition of Slavery in the Colonies, April 27, 1848; Jennings, *French Anti-Slavery*, 281.

The elections that took place in April of 1848 demonstrated that most French rejected the left-leaning direction of the provisional government, instead supporting moderates and conservatives. A final reckoning came in June when the new government closed the socialist “right to work” National Workshops. A workers’ revolt was put down, and in what became known as the “June Days,” as many as 10,000 Parisians were killed in the space of three days. The suppression of the Left during the June Days demonstrated that the liberal trajectory of the 1848 Republic was irretrievably rerouted in a conservative direction. The December 1848 presidential election of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, Napoleon I’s nephew, only confirmed this fact.²⁷²

By the end of 1848, therefore, the majority of French citizens believed Bonapartism to be the best solution for France. President Louis Napoleon quickly restored order by placating conservative political factions, especially Legitimists and Orleanists, at the exclusion of liberals. After the *coup d’état* of December 1851, Napoleon III all but silenced republicanism, and critically, in the early days of the Second Empire, he ended legal and political parity between the *métropole* and the colonies.²⁷³ After 1851, only the law abolishing slavery remained intact.

²⁷² François Furet, *Revolutionary France: 1770-1880*. (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., 1992), 398, 404-405, 412-416; Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment 1848-1852*.

²⁷³ For more on the failure of liberalism between 1848 and the early Second Empire, see the aforementioned, Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment 1848-1852*.

French Views of Colonialism, Race, and Forced Labor After 1848

A longstanding trend in French political culture situated the colonial world at a real and philosophical distance from the *métropole*, which meant that even after official slave liberation, rights for slaves were minimal, if not altogether non-existent. Yet as we have seen during the years leading up to 1848, this division between the *métropole* and colonies was not just the result of a Euro-centric republican political philosophy. In the decade following the Revolution of 1848, an apathy to colonial slavery in France was also bound up in French interpretations of contemporary events and movements, including the launching of the Second Empire, a humiliating military defeat at the hands of the Germans, and the founding of the Third Republic in 1870.²⁷⁴

While in the years immediately following the 1848 official slave emancipation, Napoleon III suppressed the extension of rights in the colonies, by 1852, he went so far as to restrict the colonies from sending deputies to Paris. Then, in 1854, the emperor sanctioned “particular laws for the colonies”—which meant that all colonies except for Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Réunion were ruled by decree, effectively exempting the colonies from the democratic process. This legal framework permitted colonial

²⁷⁴ For a review of the Second Empire and the early Third Republic, see Theodore Zeldin, *The Political System of Napoleon III* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Publishers, Limited, 1958); Ronald Aminzade, *Ballots and Barricades, 1830-1871* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); and James R. Lehning, *To Be A Citizen: The Political Culture of the Early French Third Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

administrators to do as they wished in imperial territory with little public accountability, including their management of slavery.²⁷⁵

Eventually, Napoleon III's regime transitioned from an authoritarian to a more liberal form of rule. However, political reforms could not secure the survival of his regime, which crumbled suddenly during the Franco-Prussian War with the newly-unified German Empire from 1870-1871. The Third Republic that replaced Napoleon III's regime was immediately faced with the fall-out from the military defeat, but it also had to cope with the upheaval of the socialist Paris Commune in 1871 and a growing realization that a monarchy was no longer possible.²⁷⁶ In this atmosphere, the core of early Third Republic politicians stood for order, the sanctity of private property, economic-liberalism, anti-clericalism, greater access for the lower classes to politics, education, and social institutions, and, importantly, many were imperialists who supported the oppression of the colonized in the French empire.

While the Third Republic is widely known as a regime that supported the *mission civilisatrice*, or a "civilizing mission" which called for the integration of colonized subjects into the French political sphere, curiously, the leading politicians

²⁷⁵ Spieler, *Empire and Underworld*, 161. "Special laws for the colonies" was a concept that, as this chapter has argued, had, for some time characterized the relationship between France and her off-shore territories—but which prior to 1854, was most recently evoked in November of 1848, when a "suspension" of some social guarantees of the April decrees emerged. Indeed, the new constitution of the Republic set forth in December, 1848 specifically articulated "special laws" for the colonies—a phrase that was employed to suggest a denial of some rights to citizens in the colonies which would otherwise be enjoyed in France.

²⁷⁶ Sudhir Hazareesingh, *Intellectual Founders of the Republic: Five Studies in Nineteenth Century French Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 51, 106; Agulhon, *The French Republic, 1879-1992* (Paris: Hachette, 1990) 1, 74, 130-186; and Furet, *Revolutionary France, 1770-1880*, 429-431, 487-489, 496-537.

of the Third Republic supported the restrictions of rights for non-whites in French territories overseas, including slaves. This all came to a head when in 1879-1880 there was a collision between the ideals of the republican “civilizing mission” and reality in the colonies over the problem of continued slavery in Senegal. As it happened, the rumblings of a French lawyer, Prosper Darrigrand, were just the sparks needed to generate a public discussion about the contradictory relationship between the universal claims of the *Rights of Man* and the practice of slavery in an overseas French territory. Notably, in contrast to traditional representations of this clash, which generally argue that the colony’s administrators were finally brought to justice by metropolitan leaders who expected republican principles to be carried out in the colonies, the current analysis will offer an alternative interpretation reinforcing what has been stated throughout—that more often than not, French leaders at home were acutely aware of slavery in the colony after 1848, tacitly sanctioning the practice. Moreover, this interpretation will stress that, as was previously the case, contemporary events and movements in Europe informed this discourse.

As the story goes, in 1874, Prosper Darrigrand arrived in Senegal as the colony’s new chief justice. Observing the overwhelming numbers of slaves in the colony, Darrigrand reminded the governor at the time, Louis Brière de l’Isle, of French administrators’ duty to end slavery on French soil. A contest of wills ensued that resulted in Darrigrand announcing to the governor in October of 1877 that “the [Justice] Department has not ceased to proclaim that it does not allow slavery where

[French] authority is present and permanent.”²⁷⁷ Tension between the two only further increased when in 1878 Darrigrand brought charges against slave traders in Saint Louis, declaring:

...the law as well as the instructions from the ministry do not make any distinctions between French CITIZENS and those who are not citizens – when it comes to infractions of this type committed in our territory...[We cannot tolerate] in the heart of our settlements such an odious traffic that for quite some time is not acceptable to European civilization...”²⁷⁸

Brière de l’Isle complained to Paris leaders about Darrigrand’s actions, but Minister Pothau of the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies stated that French African subjects who traded in slaves in Senegal should not be prosecuted. Simply mirroring the perspectives of French leaders at home and administrators in Senegal, Pothau commented that “their ignorance does not permit them to comprehend neither the legality nor the morality of the issue.”²⁷⁹ While the minister’s reasoning that the indigenous in French West Africa were “ignorant,” and, as a result, could not comprehend the nature of human rights, mimicked a longstanding French attitude about the depraved mental aptitude of slaves in the colonies, it was also true that Pothau’s defense of illicit slavery reflected a philosophy of integral nationalism, popular during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Growing French

²⁷⁷ ANS, K11, 31, October 30, 1877. Letter from Chief Prosecutor Prosper Darrigrand to Governor Brière de l’Isle regarding officials’ failure to apply the emancipation decree from April, 27, 1848 in Senegal.

²⁷⁸ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15c, 5 R.G. Dispatch from Chief prosecutor Darrigrand to Senegal’s interim governor, August 2, 1878.

²⁷⁹ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15c. Letter from Minister Pothau of the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies to Senegal’s interim governor, August 11, 1878.

nationalism—heightened by Germany’s victory over France in 1870-71—only amplified an environment of pseudo-scientific thinking that categorized and classified individuals across the world, placing whites at the top of the “tree of superiority.”

Matters became even more complicated in January of 1879, however, when Darrigrand charged two more Senegalese with slave trading.²⁸⁰ If the chief justice was anxious about his defiance of the governor, the surviving records provide no evidence of it. In fact, Darrigrand never stopped bringing charges against slave traders in the colony.²⁸¹ As a result, Brière de l’Isle pled for the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies to remove the chief justice from Senegal with the rationale that Darrigrand would be better suited for “a larger more calm colony without as much at stake politically.”²⁸² Then, on February 4, 1879, when the former governor of Senegal, Jean-Bernard Jauréguiberry, took over the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies, he personally intervened in the dispute and within less than two weeks,

²⁸⁰ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15d. Correspondence between Senegal’s Governor, Brière de l’Isle and Minister Pothau of the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies, January 25, 1879. While Darrigrand showed an uncommon interest among French officials in the colony to address the problem of slavery, the fact that the chief justice focused his prosecutorial efforts on slave traders reflected European discourse regarding abolition, which, prioritized ending the trade in slaves, with the view that slavery as an institution would naturally die out. In French West Africa, this was distinguished as *captifs de traite* or those slaves who were bought or seized versus *captifs de case* or those born in slavery. For more on this French distinction, see Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, 5.

²⁸¹ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15d. Correspondence between Senegal’s Governor, Brière de l’Isle and Minister Jauréguiberry of the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies, February 17, 1879.

²⁸² ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15d. Internal memo between the Director of the Colonies and the Minister of the Navy and Colonies, January, 1879 [day illegible]. Letter from Governor Brière de l’Isle is included in this internal memo.

Jauréguiberry directed Darrigrand to “listen to the advice” of the governor, and refrain from pursuing slave traders in the colony.²⁸³

The fact that slavery and the trade in slaves persisted in French West Africa had already become fodder for an insatiable press, however, forcing the issue of the *Rights of Man* and the problem of slavery on French soil. In this way, on October 3, 1879, the republican pro-colonial organ, *La France*, published an article by Charles Laurent, entitled “Slavery in France,” which began with the question: “[S]hould our colonies be considered as extensions of France in which one must apply all laws that regulate the mother country?” Slavery was tolerated in Senegal in “broad daylight,” Laurent wrote. Slave markets were everywhere in French West African territory: “in all cities and in all villages we rule over on the West African coast...” If that weren’t enough, Laurent then rehearsed how French administrators were complicit in these crimes, announcing that French officials in Saint Louis, Gorée and Dakar did little to stop slavery and the trade on French soil, “which is supposed to free black slaves—not enslave them.”²⁸⁴

Overnight, Laurent’s article was picked up by other papers. Within less than twenty-four hours Jauréguiberry wrote to Brière de l’Isle that the press was “attempting to show our wrongful tolerance of slavery... and our toleration of cruelty towards blacks...” Jauréguiberry then warned the governor that matters could get out

²⁸³ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15d, 67. Correspondence between Minister Jauréguiberry of the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies and Governor Brière de l’Isle, February 17, 1879.

²⁸⁴ Charles Laurent, “L’esclavage en France,” in *La France*, Friday, October 3, 1879.

of hand and that slaves should no longer be returned to masters.²⁸⁵ Brière de l'Isle seemed rather unmoved, however, rehearsing the fact that there were many years' worth of documents in Senegal that pointed to the administration's tolerance of slavery, and that it only occurred to him when he arrived in Senegal "how much this form of communication is dangerous and not in accordance with the spirit of confidentiality maintained by the department on the matter..." The governor then stated that he had recently given orders "to destroy all those documents..."²⁸⁶

But the situation worsened. On October 5, 1879, the colonial-interest paper *Marseillaise marine* announced that thirty-one years after the official end of slavery, captives still existed on French soil and that Louis XIV's "*Code Noir* [was] still in effect..." According to the article, when a female slave who fled to Saint Louis for liberation was being returned by colonial officials to the owner, the captive leapt into the river. French officials pulled the woman out of the river and then proceeded to put her into the hands of the enslaver, who attached the slave to a camel and departed. "All," the article claimed, "...in a territory that flies the French flag."²⁸⁷ That same day the colonial lobbyist newspaper *La France* maintained that "the horror of reality for those poor human beings under our protection is worse than one can imagine." Slaves who fled to French territory with the belief they would be freed, the newspaper

²⁸⁵ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15d. Correspondence Minister Jauréguiberry and Governor Brière de l'Isle, October 4, 1879.

²⁸⁶ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15d. Correspondence between Governor Brière de l'Isle and Minister Jauréguiberry, October 23, 1879.

²⁸⁷ George Villers, "Résistez avec la France, pour obtenir la répression de tout vestige d'esclavage au Sénégal," in *Marseillaise marine*, October 5, 1879.

observed, were “handed back to misery, to slavery and to torture.” The only way a slave could be freed in Senegal, *La France* announced, “is if he becomes a *tirailleur sénégalais*.” “That’s right” the article read, “France offers slaves fleeing their owners for liberty only one alternative: serve France or die in slavery.”²⁸⁸

Then on January 10, 1880, the opposition journal *La Lanterne* pointed to Minister Jauréguiberry perpetuating slavery when he was governor of Senegal.²⁸⁹ That same day a republican newspaper in Lyon, *Le Progrès*, suggested Jauréguiberry should resign.²⁹⁰ On January 11, 1880, in the Radical Republican paper, *Le Rappel*, the journalist and politician, Camille Pelletan, argued that France was just now clearly seeing who Jauréguiberry was, and that the “minister’s crony,” Senegal’s governor, Brière de L’Isle, was also complicit in repressing French law so that slavery and the trade in slaves could continue in Senegal after 1848.²⁹¹ The next day the republican journal, *Le petit parisien*, announced that when Jauréguiberry was Senegal’s governor he ordered slaves who fled to French territory for freedom to be expelled as “dangerous vagabonds.” This principle of liberty, the article read, “...this sacred principle, Monsieur Jauréguiberry altogether misunderstood.”²⁹²

²⁸⁸ Laurent, “L’esclavage en France,” in *La France*, October 5, 1879.

²⁸⁹ “Ce bon Jauréguiberry” in *La Lanterne*, January 10, 1880. Without signature. The author cited Jauréguiberry’s *circulaire* from 1862, which approved slavery in the colony.

²⁹⁰ “Le Ministère” in the Lyon journal, *Le Progrès*, January 10, 1880. Article signed by « M. »

²⁹¹ Camille Pelletan’s column accusing Minister Jauréguiberry of perpetuating slavery in Senegal in *Le Rappel*, January 11, 1880.

²⁹² “Jauréguiberry et les esclaves” in *Le petit Parisien*, January 12, 1880. Without signature.

The series of articles brought the problem of continued slavery in Senegal to a metropolitan audience that, as has been shown, had never been particularly concerned about the legal or political condition of non-whites in the colonies, least of all slaves. But perhaps the man who was most bothered was Victor Schoelcher, one of the few longstanding activists for the abolition of slavery in the French Empire. With outrage, the now Senator Schoelcher—called for an interpellation into the matter in the Senate—focused on Minister Jauréguiberry’s role in allowing slavery to continue in Senegal during the 1860s. On March 1, 1880, Senator Schoelcher began his discussion with the statement: “the reason for my interpellation concerns the humanity and morality of our country.” Article 7 of the law of April 27, 1848, he stated, “frees all those who touch French soil... [and this law] applies to all colonies and possessions of France...Any slave [therefore] who touches any part of French territory in Africa becomes a free man.” On October 26, 1848, he claimed, “a ministerial order was issued to Senegal’s governor to notify the chiefs and populations of the surrounding areas who [came] to our territories accompanied by their slaves to leave their captives at the entry of Saint Louis and Gorée, if they [did] not want to risk losing them.” Schoelcher then told how the colony moved away from this rule. So much so, he lamented, that if slaves from the outside came to French territory, and slave owners attempted to rescue them, those slaves were expelled from French territories and labeled “dangerous vagabonds.” As a result of colonial officials’ actions, Schoelcher maintained, French soil no longer provided slaves with a “miraculous privilege.” Further rehearsing the way in which French

administrators dealt with slavery in Senegal, he announced that the slave who came to French soil was only freed if his owner “did not come to retrieve him in a reasonable period of time...a delay that was later fixed at three months!” In order to put in play this “bizarre arrangement,” Schoelcher explained, “the fugitive slave [was required to] register at a special office, because otherwise...we cannot determine when he should be freed, if his master does not come for him.” Schoelcher then complained that “in effect, when a slave owner comes to Saint Louis to find his captive...all he has to do is go to the said bureau, [look at the registry], find the location of his slave, and take him outside [French] borders, where he is no longer free.”²⁹³

“There is no need to emancipate a slave when slavery does not exist,” exclaimed Schoelcher. “This child or man to whom we provide a piece of paper that says they are free...they should have no need of such in the colony of Senegal... It is apparent that they are free because they are there.” Nevertheless, it did not stop there for authorities in Senegal, according to Schoelcher: “They even protected the trade in slaves” in the colony. He announced, that “with the exception of Saint Louis, Gorée, and Dakar, [as late as September of 1879], slave trade caravans traveled freely and openly throughout French territory.” Then, closing in on Jauréguiberry, Schoelcher stated: “I have the honor of asking the Minister of the Navy and Colonies...is it true ...that we allow slave traders to freely travel in French territory with their human merchandise?” Citing numerous examples of violations of the 1848 decree in

²⁹³ Proceedings of Senate session from March 1, 1880. *Journal officiel de la République française*, March 2, 1880.

Senegal and its protectorates, Schoelcher then proceeded to voice that he believed that he had provided adequate evidence that the French in the colony “were not only content with just tolerating slavery, but that they also officially participated in the act.” Should “we want to civilize Africa,” he argued, “let us start by being respectable and not being deceptive regarding our slave laws.” “Laws form the foundation of society [and] in a republic they replace the majesty of the kings of the *ancien régime*...” “[The laws] become the true sovereign [and] as soon as the government, which must first be charged with observing them, violates one, they violate all of them.” In such instances, Schoelcher contended, the government “commits an assault against society, which it then weakens.”²⁹⁴

In response, Minister Jauréguiberry argued that in light of the substantial expansion of French territory beyond the settlements of Saint Louis and Gorée, “we formally committed to respect the mores, the habits, the personal statutes, and the traditions of all the tribes that came under our annexation...the most important of which was slavery.” Then with similarly to the perspectives uttered by the Governor Faidherbe as well as Minister Hamelin in Paris from as far back as the 1850s, Jauréguiberry then maintained that slavery was an important West African custom that required respect from French authorities. West African slavery was not slavery in the traditional sense, he argued. Instead, in West Africa, slavery was “in more exact terms, a type of hereditary servitude.” The individuals that “make up the workers in

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

the population constitute[s] all the *domestiques*, laborers and workers who enjoy privileges and guarantees for which the Senegalese population maintains significant respect.” Then demonstrating how officials skirted French law, he pointed to the fact that “populations in annexed territories [were] not French citizens, but rather French subjects, allowing self-rule of [the indigenous] according to their traditional institutions.”²⁹⁵

Jauréguiberry’s argument that West African slaves were not enslaved, but instead represented a “peculiar” class in Senegal, was further reinforced with his contention that slavery was required for the economic survival of the colony. Reflecting a surge of French nationalism in the period,²⁹⁶ Jauréguiberry then announced that “in order to keep the colony...we must remain on good terms with the colony’s neighboring populations.” The minister asked: “Can you imagine the inconveniences that could result from the application of [French] laws?”²⁹⁷ The Muslim *marabouts*, he pointed out, “in their fanatic hate of France never cease to say that the French wish to take over all of Africa in order to end slavery.” This “rumor,” he insisted, would only serve to “excite” the local indigenous. And, if the French

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ For more on intensified European nationalism (and more specifically, French imperialism) that was fueled by intense competition for colonies, evident in the “Scramble for Africa” between the 1880s and World War I see Stig, et al., *Bismarck, Europe, and Africa*; Kanya-Forstner, *The Conquest of the Western Sudan*; Brunschwig, *French Colonialism, 1870-1914*; and Roberts, “Republicanism, Railway Imperialism, and the French Empire in Africa.

²⁹⁷ Proceedings of Senate session from March 1, 1880. *Journal officiel de la République française*, March 2, 1880.

were forced to confront the Moors in totality, he argued, “we would end up ruling over a desert.” Then, in yet another expression of French nationalist imperialism, the minister argued that if the French freed slaves, West African populations would easily desert to the [British] Gambia or to Portuguese areas “where they turn a blind eye to matters of slavery.”²⁹⁸ If the French therefore intended to extend power in the region, slave labor would be necessary, he maintained. In order for the colony to expand towards the Niger River and to connect the cities of Saint Louis and Dakar as well as to connect Saint Louis to the fort of Medine by railway without slave labor, Jauréguiberry explained that the colony required African slaves: “We all know that whites can’t work in this burning climate...especially when during the summer, a large part of the area is flooded.”²⁹⁹

In defense of Schoelcher’s accusation that fleeing slaves were directly handed over to masters upon request, Jauréguiberry responded that these accusations had no foundation in truth. “Never are slaves released into the hands of their masters,” he announced. “When a slave owner comes [to the colony] to retrieve a fleeing slave, “we take them at night to the limits of our territory, at a time and location unknown to the master, and once arrived, the expelled slave is free to choose the road which is most suited to his plans...[and] one never permits the master to seize [the slave].” Jauréguiberry further retorted that if a fleeing slave joined the *tirailleurs sénégalais*,

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

“the fact of having donned a French uniform places them outside the possibility of [master] pursuit.”³⁰⁰

Jauréguiberry seemed unmoved by the fact that slavery on French soil violated the republican principle of universal liberty as well as French law, never even addressing these issues. Further, Jauréguiberry did not shy away from the part he had played in allowing slavery in Senegal and its protectorates. Moreover, the minister defended his actions with the claim that slavery in Senegal was common knowledge in France; that officials in Paris knew about conditions of captivity and had tolerated slavery from the very moment that the emancipation decree took effect.³⁰¹ While Jauréguiberry’s defense of illicit slavery in Senegal articulated a well-worn belief that the imperial environment was somehow so different from the *métropole* that it could not possibly be expected to abide by French laws, his arguments also reflected a prevailing fear concerning France’s loss of international prestige after the loss of the Franco-Prussian War. For him, imperial growth was the answer to Germany’s looming threat, even if it meant refusing republican rights to the “inferior” colonial indigenous in order for the French to be successful. As it happened, these justifications resonated with the senators in the chamber. The Senate voted for business as usual in the colony with respect to slavery: the rights of slave owners to retrieve captives as well as the three-month-delay for emancipation of a fled slave were approved by the Ministry of Navy and Colonies. Indeed, policies

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

continued as they had before except for the fact that Jauréguiberry and Brière de l'Isle recognized that slavery in Senegal was now under closer scrutiny.³⁰²

It is not surprising that the Senate agreed with Minister Jauréguiberry's defense of continued slavery in Senegal after official abolition. The idea that republican political philosophy did not need to be applied in the colonies enjoyed a long shelf life. But, as was shown, there were also new reasons for Jauréguiberry's rationalization for continued slavery, namely a nationalist-inspired concern for imperial industrial expansion which, it was believed, required the labor of the naturally "inferior" indigenous. There was no Third Republic pro-colonialist politician at the time who linked these two themes together more closely than Jules Ferry.

On July 28, 1883, Prime minister and staunch republican Ferry famously presented his pro-colonial argument to deputies in the Chamber, beginning with a detailed rationale for French expansion beyond her natural borders: "Modern populations of Europe and especially those of our own wealthy and industrious country...require export markets." Ferry insisted that French expansion was "the cry of the [French] population," particularly since France's neighbor, Germany, was "surrounded by [trade] barriers" and "beyond the seas, the United States of America

³⁰² Ibid.; ANS, K11, 40. Letter from Governor Brière de l'Isle to Commander Canard, August 11, 1880. Notably, this thesis challenges the traditional understanding of the Darrigrand Affair. In contrast to existent scholarship, this thesis argues that the results of the Darrigrand Affair—the tacit approval of administrators' resistance to free slaves after 1848—demonstrated a longstanding and deep-seeded sanction of slavery, not only in Senegal, but also in France. And if slavery was more closely watched after 1880, it was also true that shifts occurred in colonial policy that reinforced a culture of oppression in Senegal, including the approval of slavery in the colony's hinterland with the code de *l'indigénat*, as well as a move to *association*, which held that the indigenous were not expected to implement French law.

had also become protectionist.” That both markets had become more challenging to engage in trade for Ferry meant that France should increase its colonial territories to sell French industrial products. “Today, as you see,” he announced, “competition, the law of supply and demand, trade freedom, the results of speculation, all radiate to the ends of the earth... This is a great problem, a great economic challenge; [and] an extremely serious complication.” “Nothing can be more serious...there can be no greater concern; and these challenges are intimately linked to colonial policy.”

Colonial expansion, Ferry proclaimed, would create more “refueling stations, shelters, and ports of defense” for French naval forces. “A policy of peaceful isolation or abstention is simply the road to ruin.” “Nations are only great in this day as a result of their accomplishments; it is not simply by peaceful institutions that they are great at this time.” He reinforced that, “France cannot merely be a country of liberty...she must also be a preeminent people, exercising all of her natural influence over...

Europe [as well as] throughout the globe...[carrying] all over her language, her culture, her flag, and her genius.” The official then insisted that it was incumbent upon France, as a civilized people, to engage in humanitarianism in French territories overseas, adding that “superior races have an obligation to civilize inferior races.”³⁰³

In March 1884, Ferry repeated his argument that higher races possess natural rights over “lower” races. Europeans that did not uplift “inferior” races, according to him, were negligent in what he described as a “superior civilizing duty.”³⁰⁴ For

³⁰³ See Jules Ferry, *Speech before the French national assembly on 28 July 1883* translated by A. J. Andrea and J. H. Overfield (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990).

Ferry, then, the Third Republic's *mission civilisatrice* was a rhetorical justification for a pro-colonialist program of imperial expansion. As we have seen in Senegal, this meant maintaining forced black labor to modernize the colony. However, if Ferry was the most vocal Third Republic politician to link the themes of nationalism, imperialism, and subjugation of the indigenous by "superior" Europeans, it was the political economist Paul Leroy-Beaulieu who wrote the most exemplary Third Republic economic labor statement in support of the French colonial project: *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes*.

Prefiguring Ferry's later pro-colonialist admonitions, in 1874, Leroy-Beaulieu's *De la colonisation* argued that France's revival as a great nation depended upon colonial expansion for national economic growth and that "superior" nations maintained a "duty" to impart superior civilization to the "inferior" indigenous. The political economist insisted that an extension of European civilization abroad would serve to enlighten populations otherwise relegated to "barbarism, savagery, and endless micro-wars." In other words, for Leroy-Beaulieu, there was a state of "backwardness" that could only be overcome with "permanent European presence." Moreover, for the theorist, Europeans had a moral imperative to bring progress to peoples abroad whose civilizations had remained stagnant. The situation at the time implied "a right to intervene on the part of civilized peoples." "It is certain," he wrote, "that in these [regions]... civilization must be imported from outside." That

³⁰⁴ See Jules François Camille Ferry, "Speech Before the French Chamber of Deputies, March 28, 1884," *Discours et opinions de Jules Ferry*, ed. Paul Robiquet (Paris: Armand Colin & cie., 1897), 199-201, 210-11, 215-18.

Europeans considered the continent of Africa to be ripe for European imperial conquest in the period meant that no region of the world was more compelling for French supporters of colonialism. French presence in Algeria served as the blueprint for Leroy-Beaulieu's prescriptions for the rest of the African continent and European seizure of land and slave labor was the basis of this model. Leroy-Beaulieu thus argued that it was incumbent upon "superior" Europeans to seize unused indigenous land, exploit the natural resources, and *force* the "natives" to work. He further announced that under state power the indigenous could labor on industrial projects such as "railroads, canals, factories, and clearing land," all of which, over time, could be the source of considerable profit for metropolitan investors.³⁰⁵

If Jauréguiberry, Ferry, and Leroy-Beaulieu, envisaged that forced labor in Africa not only served the ambitions of France but could instruct the indigenous in "superior" European standards of civilization, there were some French that did not see any means by which Africans could be "improved." The historian Alfred Rambaud, the colonial commentator Alfred Durdan-Labourie, , the explorer Marcel Decressac-Villagrand, and the colonial administrator Marcel Olivier, each in their own way, warned that the black indigenous could *never* be raised to the level of the "superior" French due to their innate nature. A few examples are instructive. To start, in 1892, in a publication about French education for Muslim children in Algeria, Alfred Rambaud wrote that the Arab indigenous are "...lazy and...resist our ideas

³⁰⁵ Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes*, 4^{ème} édition (Paris: Guillaumin et compagnie, 1891), 713, 716-719, 738, 842-843.

and our morals.”³⁰⁶ That same year an article published in the *Bulletin et mémoire de la société africaine de France* by Durdan-Laborie claimed that “blacks in Africa can be instructed and receive education ...but it cannot be given in the same doses given to European children.”³⁰⁷ At about the same time, describing the lazy nature of West Africans, Decressac-Villagrands wrote that “one day of a white man’s work easily equals three days of a black man.”³⁰⁸ As we saw in the last chapter, after official emancipation, one of the ways French administrators in Senegal justified continued slavery was with the argument that blacks in West Africa chose to live in squalor, with no ability to live like Europeans in the modern world. Similarly, in 1907, the colonial administrator Marcel Olivier remarked that Senegal’s villages were dirty and chaotic: “with rare exceptions [black villages] are in a state of [astounding] filth, and one would not want to venture into their huts to sleep; a tent would be preferable to an indigenous hut.”³⁰⁹ As we recall, it was Olivier who announced that French assimilation of the Senegalese could never have been successful anyway since blacks would never be able to rise to the level of French civilization.³¹⁰

³⁰⁶ Alfred Rambaud, *L’enseignement primaire chez les indigènes musulmans d’Algérie* (Paris: Librairie chez Delagrave, 1892), 20.

³⁰⁷ Alfred Durdan-Laborie, «De l’éducation et de l’instruction du noir,» *Bulletin et mémoire de la société africaine de France* (Paris: Augustin Challamel-Librairie coloniale, 1892), 13.

³⁰⁸ Marcel Decressac-Villagrands, *Souvenirs du Sénégal. Lettres sur la Gambie et la Casamance*. Gueret, Imprimerie P. Amiault, 1891, 70.

³⁰⁹ Olivier, *Le Sénégal*, 109.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 101.

More than anyone else during the earlier July Monarchy it had been Tocqueville in his *De la Démocratie en Amérique* who made a philosophical connection between the non-white colonized and the poor at home. By the last two decades of the nineteenth century, however, linkages between blacks overseas and the impoverished in France became even more prevalent. For instance, during his speech about education at the 1889 Colonial Congress, the psychologist and sociologist Gustave Le Bon announced: ‘we are in the same situation with respect to these colored peoples as we are with our peasants.’³¹¹ Moreover, in his 1895 volume, *La Psychologie des foules*, Le Bon drew parallels between the colonial indigenous and the poor masses in the *métropole*, arguing that there was a certain barbarism in both:

...by the mere fact that he is part of an organized crowd, a man descends several rungs in the ladder of civilization...he is a barbarian—a creature who acts solely on instinct. He possesses the spontaneity, the violence, the viciousness, and also the eagerness and heroism of primeval beings, whom he tends to resemble by the ease with which he allows himself to be influenced by words and images...³¹²

An assignation of savagery to both the non-white colonized and the poor at home in France meant that rights could be denied to both populations, and both could be subjected to conditions of oppression. However, as we saw in the writings of Durdan-Laborie, Rambaud, Villagrand, and Olivier, there was a strain of French discourse that maintained that the colonial indigenous were so “different” from the

³¹¹ *Receuil des deliberations de congrès colonial national, Paris, 1889-90* (Paris, 1890), vol. 1, 90-91, cited in Martin Deming Lewis, «One Hundred Million Frenchmen: The ‘Assimilation’ Theory in French Colonial Policy, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 4 (Jan, 1962):129-153, p. 140.

³¹² Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1896), 3, 6-13.

French at home, such that they could *never* mature sufficiently to be on par with the white French. In this way, if the impoverished in the *métropole* were perceived as having the ability to “grow up” and eventually enjoy all the rights of French citizens, the non-white colonized were in a state of legal and political limbo that denied them the rights of Frenchmen, indefinitely.

Conclusion

Tracing metropolitan views about slavery in the colonies between the 1840s and the turn-of-the-century has revealed a longstanding French tradition to see French territories overseas as a decidedly “different” environment where republican ideals of liberty and equality did not always apply. However, this chapter has also demonstrated that a hesitation to extend the *Rights of Man* to the French Empire was more complex than a real and metaphorical division between the *métropole* and the *outré-mer*. Between the 1840s and the early twentieth century, republican discourses revealed that liberty and equality were equally influenced by other factors, such as dramatic wars, revolutionary events, and new social and nationalist movements, which, in their own way, constantly altered and shaped French views of the colonized and the specific issue of slavery. The changing political and economic challenges that beset French culture over the course of the nineteenth century created an important philosophical lens through which metropolitan French viewed slavery in French territories overseas, including, as it were, in Senegal.

CONCLUSION

“To blacks, we recommend that you have confidence in whites,”³¹³ the leftist newspaper *La Réforme* declared on the heels of the February 1848 Revolution:

Soon, there will no longer be masters or slaves in the colonies. These are new citizens the Republic will give to France. But, it is important that each one understands the rights and the duties that the role of citizen requires. It is necessary that with an attitude of moderation and calm, that we show not only France, but the whole world, that we are capable of the largest sacrifices...in order to have liberty...”³¹⁴

If the 1848 Decree Concerning the Abolition of Slavery in the Colonies was supposed to free colonial slaves and make them French citizens, this edict failed in Senegal. No doubt, matters were complex. However, a deconstruction of the French culture of slavery in Senegal has shown that between 1848 and 1905 not all slaves were freed in Senegal and its borderlands for reasons beyond the challenges of a precarious French economic and military setting, and a strong West African tradition of slavery. Though from the law’s inception, the colony’s officials (as well as leaders in Paris) claimed that these factors would not permit the freeing of Senegal’s slaves, this thesis has examined three forces that, in their own way, contributed to the continuation of slavery in Senegal after 1848. In chapter three, I demonstrated how a *métis* racial hierarchy in the colony’s settlements presented a significant barrier to slave emancipation. In chapter four, I expanded upon this theme to show how French spectatorship of West Africans in the colony’s settlements, and especially in the

³¹³ A.F. Perrinon, “À nos frères des colonies,” *La Réforme*, February 28, 1848.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

hinterland, convinced French soldiers, officials, explorers, and travelers that slavery was a “natural” state for West Africans, thereby legitimizing the continuation of slavery for the colony’s labor needs. Moreover, in chapter five, I addressed a trend in French political culture to reject republican concepts of human rights for colonial peoples. Taken together, these realities represented a lethal combination for slaves in French West Africa.

Scholars often portray the core problem of continued slavery in Senegal as the result of a fragile French presence in West Africa and a cultural dissonance between Muslim slave-owning Africans and Europeans. That it certainly was. However, the story of failed slave emancipation in the French colony was a more nuanced story. As was illustrated in chapter three, the mixed-race believed that they were the “French” *bourgeoisie* in Senegal, creating a distance from blacks—and slaves. In spite of the decline of signarial authority, mixed-race prestige persisted after 1848, partly as a result of the creolization of the powerful migrant “French” merchant families, which meant the prolonging of a mixed-race social hierarchy towards blacks and slaves in the colony’s important urban centers. This resilient social status is highlighted with Governor Faidherbe’s opinions of the population during the 1850s and 1860s, which described a particular intelligence and honesty among the mixed-race, further explaining how the *métis* identified with Europeans. Moreover, he believed the future of the colony was in the hands of the mixed-race, depicting the population as gentle, kind, and possessed with “active energy.”³¹⁵ As it happened, the

³¹⁵ Faidherbe, *Notice sur la colonie du Sénégal et sur les pays qui sont en relation avec elle*, 30.

governor himself contributed to the mixed-race population, when during the 1850s he engaged in *mariage à la mode du pays* with the black 15 year-old Dioucounda Sidibe, producing *métis* children, including the future military officer in the colony, Louis Léon Faidherbe.³¹⁶

As was demonstrated, a long history of mixed-race authority persisted during the nineteenth-century. On the eve of slave emancipation in the late 1840s the *métis* maintained significant influence in the colony. Between 1829 and 1847, the *métis*, Jean-Jacques Alin served as mayor of Saint Louis.³¹⁷ Furthermore, as was pointed out, in 1848, the first deputy to serve in Paris was a mixed-race businessman, Durand-Barthélemy Valantin. Contrary to the traditional understanding that the 1848 emancipation decree neutralized *métis* influence in Senegal, this thesis has argued that mixed-race customs played an important role in the colony's culture well into the late nineteenth century. As was stressed, the age-old practice of *mariage à la mode du pays* continued until at least the third quarter of the nineteenth century. When peanuts gained ground in the colony, the mixed-race engaged in the profitable trade, especially as *négociants* in the colonial settlements. Likewise, by the 1860s, it was the mixed-race that dominated the colony's gum exports that would again flourish for a time. But perhaps no better example of Euro-African influence existed than in the power this community continued to wield over the issue of liberty and equality for

³¹⁶ White, *Children of the French Empire*, 11. White conveys the rumor that as soon as the governor returned to the government palace in Senegal following his trip to France where he had married his 18-year old niece, he immediately called for his African concubine to be brought back to Saint Louis from her homeland.

³¹⁷ Manchuelle, "Métis et colons: la famille Devès et l'émergence politique des Africains au Sénégal, 1881-1897», 479.

slaves. As we saw, the *métis* voiced opposition to slave emancipation by way of Paris surveys, and when the abolition law was passed in 1848, the mixed-race refused to acknowledge that slaves were actually freed individuals. What's more, the mixed-race took great pains to reinforce that they were "citizens" of France, unlike the majority of the black Senegalese, who were relegated to the status of "subject." Then, the mixed-race women in Saint Louis and Gorée failed to administer the former-slave patronage and *tutelle* program making it impossible for the apprenticeship system to function. In fact, matters became so desperate that in the fall of 1862, Senegal's Chief Justice Carrère wrote to Governor Jauréguiberry that Paris' plan for the education of young liberated slaves had simply not worked; that the 1849 order that required Senegal's mixed-race females to act in the role of overseers and caretakers of emancipated minors had never gained enough support to function properly. Carrère made it clear that the patronage and *tutelle* program had been unsuccessful "since the ladies of Saint Louis and Gorée vehemently refused to participate." Just eight months after the ordinance was issued, the women held no further *tutelle* meetings, which meant the effective end to *signarial* involvement in the program.³¹⁸ Moreover, as was demonstrated, during the second half of the nineteenth century, this population continued to buy and sell slaves, using captives as a domestic and sexual labor source as well as a labor source for profitable commodity exports.

³¹⁸ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15b, 4. Correspondence between Chief Justice Frédéric Carrère to Governor Jean Bernard Jauréguiberry regarding the problems of Senegal's *conseil de tutelle*, fall of 1862 [Date illegible].

While Euro-Africans certainly shaped a resilient French colonial culture of slavery in Senegal, chapter four demonstrated that it was also true that French appraisals of the aptitude of West Africans reinforced that not only were slaves ill-suited for emancipation, but that free blacks were not ready for French citizenship. The “colonial gaze” served to naturalize a constructed difference between whites and blacks. My research uncovered particularly telling assessments of West African culture from the officers and explorers, Anne Raffenel and Alfred Marche. For instance, Raffenel described his disgust when upon visiting a Peul village, he was directed to sleep near a large collection of cattle excrement—a privileged location he learned—since cattle excrement “was a sign of wealth” in their society. More revolting for the officer and explorer, however, was when he was told that the eleven-year old chief was made the village leader because, he had killed his father one day “when he got mad.”³¹⁹ For his part, of particular repugnance to Marche was a West African (Casamance) ritual called the “tali,” where before a man could be crowned chief he had to undergo great tests of endurance and bravery, one of which consisted of drinking a concoction made from leaves, fruit, human blood, a male human heart, brain matter, liver and venom, all of which had fermented over the course of twelve months’ time.³²⁰ As chapter four pointed out, however, the perspectives of West African culture from Raffenel and Marche were not unique in the era. The French in Senegal were more often than not uneasy with West African lifeways, part of the reason why for several decades

³¹⁹ Raffenel, *Nouveau voyage dans le pays des nègres*. Tome I, 90.

³²⁰ Marche, *Trois voyages dans l’Afrique occidentale*. 71-73.

following official emancipation, the majority of the Senegalese were excluded from French republican principles of liberty and equality.

As chapter four reinforced, race could rarely be separated from French assessments of West Africans. For instance, Faidherbe's idea that the lighter-skinned Poular possessed a developed intelligence as well as a marked sensitivity to culture and "European" traits, revealed a subconscious preference for a people that was not (entirely) black.³²¹ However, if the lighter-skinned Poular were perceived to be more advanced to Faidherbe, this did not translate into the extension of French rights for to this ethnicity, evident in the official's move to restrict West African rights for all blacks in the interior. It is thus not surprising that Faidherbe's *Le Sénégal, la France dans l'Afrique occidentale*, published in 1889, revealed no concern about the governor's part in the continuation of illicit slavery in Senegal, focusing instead on his accounts of French military conquests in West Africa.³²² Decades of French observations emphasized that republican values were ill-suited for the indigenous. This attitude was perhaps best exemplified in the words of the colonial administrator, Marcel Olivier, who in the first years of the twentieth century, announced that French assimilation of the Senegalese could never have been successful anyway since "the indigenous have very simple natured characters and cannot comprehend the complexity of [French] existence."³²³

³²¹ Faidherbe, *Notice sur la colonie du Sénégal et sur les pays qui sont en relation avec elle*, 23-26.

³²² Faidherbe, Le Général. *Le Sénégal, La France dans l'Afrique occidentale*.

³²³ Olivier, *Le Sénégal*, 101.

The fact that contemporary observers in Senegal rarely voiced concerns about the denial of liberty and equality to blacks reveals a particular interpretation of the principle of human rights. As this thesis has argued, the denial of human rights to the indigenous in Senegal was strongly linked to a trend in France to view the colonies as places where metropolitan rules did not need to apply. Hence, as chapter five pointed out, an important component of the French colonial culture of slaveholding in Senegal had to do with a philosophical strain in France to situate the colonial world at a legal and political distance from metropolitan France. Miranda Spieler has contended that the colonies were perceived as a place of “legal oddity”—on the outside of French law.³²⁴ Much has been written about the failure of the Great Revolution to extend rights to colonial slaves. According to David Geggus, exclusionary racism became closely tied to France’s economy since revolutionaries were reluctant to reconcile racial inequality since slavery was directly connected to property rights and to the economic success of the colonial system.³²⁵ Yet if non-whites in the colonies were left-out of the universal claims of the *Rights of Man*, Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison, Lynn Hunt and Joan Wallach-Scott showed that in 1789, “liberty” and access to “active” citizenship was based on an individual’s utility in the public sphere, which included: possession of property, gender, age, civil status, religion and race. Therefore, only adult white males who owned property (and were not a convict, prisoner, insane, Jewish, or Protestant) could vote or become a

³²⁴ Spieler, *Empire and Underworld*, 15, 38.

³²⁵ See Geggus, “Racial Equality, Slavery, and Colonial Secession During the Constituent Assembly.”

candidate for public office. All others, including, slaves in the colonies, were thus considered “non-individuals” without an ability to reason.³²⁶ Article One of the *Rights of Man* stated that: “Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social differences may be based only upon the general good,” whereas the last clause, Article Seventeen, announced that: “Since property is an inviolable and sacred right, no one shall be dispossessed of it except where public necessity, legally determined, shall have need for it, and then only on if the owner shall have been beforehand equitably compensated.”³²⁷ For Robin Blackburn, the fact that from the Great Revolution, slaves were non-white, a type of property, as well as in the service of public utility meant that the qualification of natural liberty—or “active” citizenship status—would not apply.³²⁸ Scholars have illustrated a fraught relationship between the development of Western democratic ideals and rights extension, but none of these studies examined the trajectory slave emancipation in a colonial possession against the backdrop of metropolitan events and movements between the 1840s and the turn-of-the-century.

As this thesis has argued, discourses surrounding rights for non-whites in the colonies and more specifically, freedom for slaves, could rarely be separated from events and movements at home, in France. On the eve of slave emancipation during

³²⁶ Le Cour Grandmaison, *Les citoyennetés en Révolution, 1789-1794*, 191-237; Hunt, *The French Revolution and Human Rights*, 10-11; and Wallach-Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer*, 10-11, 60.

³²⁷ Paul Beik, *The French Revolution*, (New York : Walker and Company, 1970), Excerpt from August 20-26, 1789 *Declaration of the Rights of Man of the Citizen*.

³²⁸ Blackburn, “Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of Democratic Revolution.”

the 1840s, when this study began, the issue of slave emancipation was therefore viewed through the lens of industrialization and increasing calls from white French workers for greater political participation. The February Revolution of 1848 may have, at least temporarily, met liberal and progressive demands. However, the fact that the Second Republic was short-lived, only to be followed by a return to an authoritarian empire in 1851, meant that discourses about liberty and equality in the colonies played out against failed attempts to extend republican ideals of citizenship and universal rights at home. In this same light, French perceptions of the colonies and slavery between the 1850s and the 1870s were influenced by important metropolitan events, which included the social and political environment surrounding the increasingly liberal empire of Napoleon III, followed by the disastrous Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, when the French suffered lost territory and injured pride to the emerging German Empire. Catastrophes only grew more dramatic during the socialist experiment of the Paris Commune in the spring of 1871, and during the early 1870s when the Third Republic could barely hang on for survival. This study has shown that these events altered the *milieu* within which the French weighed the issue of colonial slavery, as well as the ability of anti-slavery supporters to influence public discourse. With this in mind, though during the 1870s and 1880s, the French government transitioned from the conservative Orleanist-Republican Moral Order to the moderate Opportunistic Republic, this shift only revealed tensions over what it meant to be a citizen of France, thus, in its own way, reinforcing a French perception of “difference” in non-white populations in French territories overseas. Moreover,

during the same period, the French Empire expanded across Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, West Africa, Madagascar and Indochina, a process that strengthened French nationalism, and acted to further limit the definition of what it meant to be French. Then, towards the end of the century, the Radical Republic emerged amidst the polarization of public opinion when a Jewish captain, Alfred Dreyfus, was brought to trial for the crime of espionage. The Dreyfus Affair summoned yet again varied versions of citizenship in French discourse.

As chapter five stressed, nineteenth-century French *bourgeois* often used the same language to describe overseas subjects as they did for wage laborers in French cities at home.³²⁹ The writings and speeches of Guizot, Tocqueville, Le-Roy Beaulieu, and Ferry demonstrated a paternalistic discourse that advocated elite rule through the political exclusion of the poor in France *and* the indigenous in the colonies, believing that both populations required instruction on how to be civilized before they could be worthy of all the benefits of French citizenship. While the *bourgeois* believed that impoverished French workers and the colonial indigenous were not ready for the responsibility and privileges of full French citizenship and, therefore, required a period of transition and preparation, this paradigm likewise featured an element of fear. As we saw in Tocqueville's writing in particular, an

³²⁹ Interestingly, during the July Monarchy, a direct link was made between the colonial indigenous with poor white laborers in France in the Law of July 19, 1845, which opened up lines of credit for planters to introduce white wage laborers into jobs traditionally maintained by slaves. White laborers would be receiving a wage, while blacks were forced to work without pay, but the fact that the white poor could be viewed as interchangeable with black slaves underscores the fact that these two social categories were sometimes viewed through the same prism. See Leroy-Beaulieu, *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes, cinquième édition* (Paris: Gillaumin et compagnie, 1902), 225.

anxiety about extending republican rights to marginalized populations included the worry that “unstable” peoples might prove difficult to subdue. Lest we view all metropolitan French through the same lens, however, this thesis made an important distinction in this philosophical paradigm. Socialism not only distinguished workers in France from non-whites in the colonies, but with respect to conditions of forced labor specifically, it suggested that colonial slaves were inherently “unable” to discern the horrors of their fate. This was particularly evident in the case of Louis Blanc, who explained that while the conditions of colonial slavery were reprehensible, an intellectual and emotive deficiency in blacks did not permit them to fully comprehend the degree of depravity in which they existed.

Critically, as the nineteenth century moved to a close, the idea of forced labor became inextricably tied to the Third Republic’s demand for conquest, and to the French Empire’s expropriation of indigenous land. Leroy-Beaulieu’s cry to “seize unused indigenous land, exploit the natural resources, and force the indigenous to work for the French,”³³⁰ was part of a much grander scheme to boost France and her economy, while exporting “superior” French republicanism to the “inferior” African. The Third Republic’s *mission civilisatrice* may have maintained the goal of extending republican civilization and principles to the colonized, yet paradoxically, native land could be seized, individual rights could be delayed, made conditional, and under certain circumstances, could be denied indefinitely. Meanwhile, a growing criticism of the empire’s policy of *assimilation* resulted in a late nineteenth century shift to the

³³⁰ Idem., *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes*, 4^{ème} édition, 842.

colonial policy of *association*—simply reinforcing a longstanding pattern in French political culture to exclude the colonized from metropolitan rights. Under the new policy of *association*, the French were removed from any responsibility, even morally, to extend republican rights to non-whites in French overseas territories. Perhaps the words of Leroy-Beaulieu best articulated what had been the bedrock of French political philosophy towards the colonized all along when he wrote that “one wonders if it is a fool’s errand to seek for a fusion of natives and Europeans. All one can hope for is a reciprocal tolerance between the two peoples.”³³¹

Leroy-Beaulieu was expressing a long-held perspective that defined the colonized as distinctly “different” from the metropolitan French. And, as this thesis has argued, perhaps no greater victim of this political philosophy existed than slaves. In many ways, slaves were not just the colonized who were physically distant from the European homeland, but something more obscure—a forgotten people, far from the minds of the metropolitan French. In fact, scarcely does the theme of colonial slavery appear in French popular culture during the era. Between 1790 and 1815, the topic was present in French publications a total of just 67 times. And if the issue attracted a bit more attention between 1816 and 1830, when it appeared 107 times, between 1831 and 1860—the period in which the abolition law was decreed—slavery only graced the pages of French publications 186 times. Then, between 1861 and the beginning of the twentieth century, the theme experienced a precipitous decline,

³³¹ Idem., *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes*, cinquième édition, 459.

appearing just 62 times,³³² during the period when the imperial project was at full tilt with more forced labor in French territories than ever before. To be sure, the plight of slaves was of little concern for the French at home during the era. However, no more pronounced was this oblivion than with respect to slaves in West Africa. As has been shown, for most of the period studied, West Africa was a backwater that few Europeans thought about and even fewer visited. When West Africa was evoked, however, it was often portrayed as “unstable.” In this way, if we are to take seriously the combined statements of Tocqueville, Rambaud, Durdan-Labourie, Decressac-Villagrand, and Olivier, in regions where blacks were not completely subdued by the French, slave labor was not only an important component of subjugation but a way by which “backward” populations could be instructed in European standards of culture and industry.

No doubt, West Africa was a far-off and strange place where metropolitan principles of liberty and equality were inapplicable. Far away from France, in the colony of Senegal, it appears however that many slaves *did* wish to partake in republican principles of liberty and equality. This study pointed to several French reports regarding slaves who sought freedom from French administrators—only to be turned away as “dangerous vagabonds.” Likewise, immediately after promulgation of the decree, many slaves who tried to reach French soil never made it. An unknown number of captives *en route* to Saint Louis, where the greatest number of white

³³² Data extracted from the American and French Research on the Treasury of the French Language (University of Chicago, ARTFL), <https://artfl-project.uchicago.edu>.

officials resided and where the new law was most enforced, were caught by masters.³³³ Yet slaves who safely reached the colony's capital and who were liberated voiced great joy to have been freed.³³⁴ Liberated slaves encouraged others in captivity to flee and seek manumission to such an extent that Governor Baudin recorded in February of 1849, that "in Cayor alone, more than 200 slaves are on their way here" and "in all the neighboring areas many slaves are simply waiting for a good opportunity to cross the river" to get to Saint Louis.³³⁵ Then in 1857, Governor Faidherbe commented that "fleeing slaves present themselves [for emancipation] very often in Saint Louis."³³⁶ However, perhaps the most revealing report conveying slaves' desire for liberty took place on the eve of official slave emancipation in 1847 as part of a colonial survey. My research uncovered that when asked about the possibility of emancipation, slaves in Saint Louis and Gorée stated that they were "strongly in favor of liberty." In fact, slaves tried to reassure French officers "of security and good behavior and to continue working well" if only they could be freed.³³⁷ Despite assurances of good behavior, however, for at least the next fifty years, the majority of individuals on French soil in Senegal and its borderlands

³³³ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15a, 50. Letter from Governor A. Baudin to the Minister of the Navy and Colonies, February 12, 1849.

³³⁴ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15a, 43. Letter from Governor A. Baudin to the Minister of the Navy and Colonies, February 3, 1849.

³³⁵ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15a, 50. Letter from Governor A. Baudin to the Minister of the Navy and Colonies, February 12, 1849.

³³⁶ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 15a, 644. *Circulaire* from Governor Faidherbe, November 16, 1857.

³³⁷ ANOM, FM, SG, Sénégal, XIV, 14. Report dated October 4, 1847, sent to the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies.

remained enslaved—estranged from republican principles of *liberté, égalité*, and *fraternité*—revealing a colonial culture of slavery in French West Africa that was eerily distant from the rhetoric of the *Rights of Man* at home. Indeed, matters in Senegal were altogether different.

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