Abstract

Assimilation in colonial African history has often been studied as an active policy. Recent literature has argued that assimilation was instead far more limited and complicated, especially in the case of French-Senegal. This thesis therefore examines cultural assimilation as a rhetorical tool rather than as a directly implemented idea, asking: did the French colonial government in Senegal, between 1852 and 1906, consciously implement assimilation processes with the intended purpose of stimulating the general acceptance of French identity in local indigenous groups, or were there other factors involved?

A precursory analysis of how the *métis* of the Four Communes self-gallicised into French mercantile and cultural intermediaries frames the complex historical situation of French-Senegal. The centuries-long public disinterest towards imperial affairs that the *métis* experienced resulted in certain freedoms, which they used to construct themselves as French intermediaries over a long period of time. This directly contrasts the short-term adjustments to the indigenous *status quo* undergone by the Toucouleurs of Futa Toro in the late-19th century, after decades of direct and indirect conflict with the French.

This paper provides a more complete picture of how assimilation evolved, was viewed, and significantly more limited than 19th and early-20th century ideological rhetoric suggests. Limited intermediary construction emerges instead as the colonial government's main policy to ensure long-term stability in newly acquired interior regions, imperial competition with other European powers being a key catalyst. While the colonial government did attempt a few instances of direct assimilation, the budgetary and logistical difficulties of enforcing the acceptance of French civilization indicate that this was not in colonial interest. Policy was instead driven to construct effective intermediaries, which allowed the government to focus on the larger issues it had to deal with.

This is connected to the initial war against the *jihadi* Toucouleur Empire, and the continuing threat that both it and its leaders represented. The Toucouleur Empire had control over a significant swath of West Africa, and the ruling Tall dynasty that claimed those territories was a problem for French colonial ambitions. In addition, the predominantly Islamic indigenous group was highly resistant to foreign Europeans, making assimilation all the more difficult and unlikely in the long run. Due to the demands of imperial competition, the French sought to undermine the Toucouleur Empire, and the Tall dynasty that held sway over it. This was successful, in part thanks to manipulation of the geopolitical situation through treaties with local indigenous chiefs and arming Toucouleur rivals - with indigenous geopolitics playing a significant role on its own in causing the decline of the Toucouleur Empire.

The colonial government seized Futa Toro in 1890, forcing the Tall dynasty into exile. The years that followed and the policies implemented further suggest that assimilation was limited in French-Senegal, largely relegated to rhetoric that exaggerated events to fit into unrealistic ideological expectations. A form of limited intermediary construction was emphasised instead, as seen in source description of Islamic policies, which sought to restrict the movement of Muslim preachers and curtail the influence of Islam. Due to the cultural importance of the Islamic faith in Futa Toro, this policy intended to favour French civilization as a replacement – but was unsuccessful. This shows the difficulties that the colonial government encountered when it did attempt to enforce the widespread acceptance of French civilization, and by extension identity, in indigenous groups.

Information-gathering practises through 19th century military expeditions also highlight that the colonial government was in no position to extensively consolidate French identity in the region. The French had to acquire as much information about local affairs as possible, so that effective policies could be enacted within budgetary restrictions – which

they used to guide the writing of treaties. This is tied to the power wielded by the Tall dynasty, which originated from established Islamic traditions such as the *hajj*. The French, through information-gathering practises, were well aware of these traditions, and sought to limit the ability for the clerical elite to rebel effectively against them in the long-term.

The eventual restriction of the *hajj* was subsequently enacted through enforced treaty terms, ensuring that indigenous elite children would acquire a predominantly French-education. Yet even in these schools, they were able to speak their own language outside of class and attend Qur'anic schools. This was done so that the ruling elite would be gallicised enough to never question colonial rule, yet not French enough to be able to identify themselves as such in any meaningful way – potentially unable to act as effective leaders and intermediaries in their respective communities as a result. Even this process was complicated by conflicting interpretations of assimilation between colonial missionaries and officials, relating to assimilation's conceptual connection to the European civilizing mission.

This thesis therefore concludes that the French colonial government in Senegal, between 1852 and 1906, certainly talked about assimilation in a way that implied they had consciously implemented assimilation processes with the intended purpose of stimulating the general acceptance of French identity in local indigenous groups. Other factors show that this was not the historical reality, however. The colonial government was not able to apply direct assimilation to the same ideological extent as rhetoric portrayed. Rather, over the span of several decades and due to budgetary restrictions, the government focused on applying pragmatic long-term solutions to ensure public order and stability.

This conclusion was driven by theoretical and methodological considerations. To ensure that colonial perspectives remained firmly fixed in their context, this thesis was written using a social imaginary approach, permitting this paper to speak more objectively to

what occurred within colonial conversations. Importantly, this avoids the assumption that a 'superior' civilisation was dictating the terms of interaction in West Africa. In addition, this new approach provides fresh insights and perspectives, allowing this thesis to contribute something new to existing colonial African literature.

Imagining Colonial Community

The Construction of Indigenous Intermediaries and Limitations of Assimilation in Colonial French-Senegal (1852-1906)

Yorik Janssens

Thesis submitted for the degree of Master of History
Word count: 16,406

Europaeum Office
2019

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Glossary

Jihad[1] - in Islam, a meritorious struggle or effort. Exact meaning of the term *jihad* depends on context; often erroneously translated in the West as "holy war."

Hijra[2] - Muslim understanding of emigration that connotes breaking ties of kinship and association. Re-enactment of the Prophet Muhammad's evacuation of Mecca in 622 A.D., usually the result of believers migrating away from non-Muslim oppression. Marks beginning of Arabic calendar.

Mansa[3] - Mandinka word for emperor.

Signare[4] - a title given to African women of property and social standing along the Senegambian coast.

Tijani Order[5] - order of Islamic mystics (Sufis) widespread in northern and western Africa and the Sudan.

Torodbe[6] - title of West African Muslim clerics.

[1] A. Afsaruddin, 'Jihad,' *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 20 July 1998, www.britannica.com/topic/jihad.
[2] D. Robinson, 'The Umarian Emigration of the Late Nineteenth Century,' *The International Journal of African Historical* Studies 20, no. 2 (1987), p. 245.
[3] J. C. de Graft-Johnson, 'Mūsā I of Mali,' *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 20 July 1998, www.britannica.com /biography/Musa-I-of-Mali.
[4] H. Jones, *The Métis of Senegal: Urban Life and Politics in French West Africa*, (Bloomington, 2013), p. 4.
[5] Eds., 'Tijānīyah,' *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 20 July 1998, www.britannica.com/topic/ Tijaniyah.
[6] J.R. Willis, 'The Torodbe Clerisy: A Social View,' *The Journal of African History* 19, no. 2 (1978), pp. 195-212.

Preface

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Writing about colonial Africa comes with a host of ethical and theoretical connotations which must be considered. Despite having lived in various countries in Africa for a significant amount of time and identifying closely with my Zimbabwean and Kenyan upbringing - as a white man of a privileged and predominantly European ancestry, I - more than most - must state clearly the intent that has gone into the writing of this thesis. The ethics of writing such a history have certainly been thought through, as have any potential biases. The first section of the second chapter, under the heading *Theoretical Considerations* goes into greater detail on this, but to summarise – a decolonising method of historical writing (social imaginary) has been the theoretical backbone of this work since the beginning for precisely this reason. Under no circumstances do I, the author, subscribe to colonial doctrine and biases related to civilising or assimilation rhetoric, as well as ethno-racial stereotypes - historical or otherwise. This work has been written from an objective and humanist perspective, intending to go beyond biased colonial narratives and tell a more accurate truth to history.

Acknowledgements

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I would first like to thank my dear family, colleagues, and friends. Most of all, I would like to thank Drs. Augestijn, van der Steen, Sowerby, Vaicbourdt and Velmet for all their assistance and advice throughout the writing of this thesis.

Introduction

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The French officers of Fort Lamy were restless. Some had not served in the Senegalese interior before. Some had for far too long. Yet each man was well aware of the potential danger that the people passing them by represented. With keen eyes, they watched as the Umarian Toucouleur's continued on their *hijra*.[7] For the French, the timing could not have been worse. 1906 was a year of increased hostility towards the French colonial government. Only mere months had passed between the outbreak of widespread public unrest, Lieutenant Governor Perreaux's implementation of a new colonial penal code, and the arrival of this *hijra*.[8] The situation was not helped by the fact that the leader of this pilgrimage was Ma Bassirou, one of the last sons of Amadou Tall.[9] Nor that he was accompanied by his uncle Tierno Aliou[10] - brother of the famed El Hajj Umar Tall (1794? – 1864),[11] who had waged war against the French in the previous century.[12] With this in mind, the battalion chief of Fort Lamy, Henri Gaden, reported their movements to Perreaux in great detail.[13] Colonial interest in this remnant of the Tall dynasty lay in its potential to upset the political control that the French had taken decades to wrest from the Talls. They were likely to have trouble with this again, should the pilgrimage choose to turn further inland. The French had given permission for the Toucouleur *hijra* to pass, on the condition that they would not do this. Gaden reiterates in his report to

[7] Definition in glossary, p. 4.
[8] Robinson, 'The Umarian Emigration', pp. 247-262.
[9] Translation: Anglicized from أحمدو تال, Ahmad al-Madani al-Kabir at-Tijani. All translations are the authors' unless stated otherwise.
[10] Anglicized: Thierno Aliou Bhoubha Ndian.
[11] Translation: حاج عمر بن سعيد طعل & Anglicized: al-Hajj Umar ibn Sa'id al-Futi Tal.
[12] Robinson, 'The Umarian Emigration,' p. 245.
[13] *Note sure le groupe toucouleur arrive à Fort-Lamy*, « Chef de Bataillon Gaden », [10 Août 1906]. Pièce 123. Manuscrit. Fonds Gaden, APC 15, CAOM.

Perreaux that if they were to abruptly change their minds, he would follow his orders and send troops to stop them from going further – violently, if they had to.

The Toucouleurs are a specific branch of the Fulani ethnic group, predominantly of the Sunni Islamic faith, living almost exclusively within Futa Toro - a fertile and well-watered region due to its proximity to the Senegal river. Compared to the situation in 1852, when the Toucouleurs were arguably at the height of their power, the exile of their leaders at the end of the 19th century highlights their decline since then. This *hijra* is the natural conclusion to an insightful historical narrative, a setting from which to consider some aspects of imperial colonialism. For instance, how empires have wielded civilising ideology as a rhetorical tool, used education as a means of conquest, and constructed new colonial communities. The intention here is to add to the historical understanding of methods related to the construction of new societies and cultures - by delving into how vastly different categories of people were incorporated into an empire's collective schema. Through such an analysis, these practices can perhaps become more recognisable in other contemporary instances and contribute to existing literature that intends to highlight the nuance behind similar historical situations.

Indigenous responses to imperial rule are equally important. Particularly essential is the active role they often played in the construction of colonial communities, which goes against common conceptions of assimilation. Interactions between indigenous chiefs in Futa Toro and the colonial government provide ample examples of this. Yet French officials and intellectuals parroted their specific narrative of assimilation to such great effect that it has dominated colonial historical debate. However, the dialogue around assimilation was never truly representative of what was actually taking place on the ground, which recent literature on the subject has argued.[14] As such, this thesis asks: did the French colonial government in Senegal,

[14] J. P. Daughton, *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880–1914*, (New York, 2006).

between 1852 and 1906, consciously implement assimilation processes with the intended purpose of stimulating the general acceptance of French identity in local indigenous groups, or were there other factors involved?

While the French colonial government may certainly have implemented certain forms of cultural assimilation, this thesis intends to contribute to the literature which argues that the reality was far more limited than colonial sources indicate. Instead, assimilation was primarily described in public rhetoric to justify and favourably exaggerate French action in Senegal and beyond. The intention here is to support the emerging idea that the emphasis of French indigenous policy was on the construction of intermediaries, occasionally punctuated by acts of direct intervention that could be called assimilation. In Senegal, this relates to the creation of a French-educated indigenous elite that was gallicised enough to never question colonial rule, yet not French enough to be able to identify themselves as such in any meaningful way. Again, this could be called assimilation – yet as will be shown later, these interventions and reforms were never undertaken with the explicit intent of having the indigenous population wholeheartedly accept French identity. Rather, it was to establish long-term stability, and for Senegalese ethnic groups to rule themselves under a colonial administration which had neither the manpower nor the funds to do so on its own.[15] To reiterate, and as primary source evidence will show, the intentions were never singularly clear or directed towards the wholesale indoctrination of an entire peoples into accepting French civilisation and identity.

To begin with, the first chapter will comprise a discussion on the theoretical and methodological ideas that provide the structural framework for this thesis, which will be followed by an examination of what exactly is meant by assimilation – as well as how it ties to

[15] *Économie du Sénégal*, « plusieurs auteurs », [1782 – 1894]. 14mi/1540-1541, Série Q: AEGS, GS 1782-1919. AOM.

the European and French civilising missions. The second chapter will then begin by analysing the *métis* of Saint Louis, who will act as a precursory case study towards the introduction of the Toucouleur Empire and its relevance to questions of assimilation.

The third and final chapter will deal primarily with source material regarding limited assimilation efforts aimed at the regional Islamic faith, information-gathering practises to that end, as well as treaties with interior groups in Futa Toro. All aspects are prescient in the control exerted on the education of the indigenous chiefs' sons from the late 19th century onwards. Education will be the core example, with the intended outcome being to highlight that intermediary construction in Futa Toro was the historical reality, rather than the direct assimilation of the entire indigenous populace touted in colonial rhetoric.

Chapter I

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Theoretical Considerations

Studying assimilation on its own usually offers nothing new to the field of colonial African history. Indeed, as the historian Oludare Idowu argues; "when discussing the evolution of the French-speaking African States, scholars have often found it fashionable to try to explain everything in the light of the policy of assimilation".[16] Previous literature has done exactly what Idowu criticises - furthering French colonial narratives of assimilation, that have been disingenuous to the historical realities and disregarded indigenous perspectives on the matter. While this work does choose to analyse assimilation specifically, it approaches the subject in an ideological and rhetorical sense, as well as within a specific Franco-Senegalese context. What Idowu draws issue with is that assimilation has been studied as an active policy, directly implemented by colonial powers. Recent developments in the literature have instead pointed towards assimilation being far more limited and nuanced than French rhetoric has claimed.[17] In addition, religious involvement in colonial affairs further complicated traditional conceptual perspectives on assimilation. Therefore, this thesis seeks not so much to explain everything in the light of the policy of assimilation - but rather to contribute to the idea that assimilation was far more limited than previous colonial literature has suggested.

The ethics involved in writing on assimilation from a predominantly European perspective must also be considered. This is to avoid methodological imbalances. Personal aspects of this have already been covered in the preface, while more theoretical parts will be delved into now. Attitudes of Eurocentrism and orientalism have tainted indigenous discourses

[16] O. Idowu, 'Assimilation in 19th Century Senegal'. *Cahiers d'études africain*es 9 (34) (1969) : p. 194.
[17] Daughton, *An Empire Divided*, pp. xi-330

in the past, and unfortunately, continue to do so in the case of some non-indigenous scholars. This is not reflective of current academic views on colonial history. To ensure that antiquated colonial perspectives remain firmly transfixed within their respective historical contexts, this paper has chosen to deal with the topic of colonial assimilation using a social imaginary approach.

The universal framework of this method presupposes that human society and culture is formed through the interaction and adaptation of ideas between various groups of people. Humans actively imagine abstract ideas – for example, government, limited companies, or even deities. When repeated enough, these concepts are made physically manifest and real to the mind, hence increasing the human capacity to interact more effectively with one another. This is because similar socio-cultural beliefs create common ground, and reduce differences between groups – which, in turn, limit the reasons for conflict. Following initial proposals on subject matter relating to intersubjectivity theory, as well as Benedict Anderson's conception of 'imagined community',[18] social imaginary has proven to be uniquely fitting for a work that intends to add to broader colonial African discourse.

Some new literature supports this method, as Janette Habashi implies in her work on similar issues in Arab indigenous discourse[19] - suggesting that a social imaginary approach is a useful alternative to purely indigenous or colonial ones. The concept can also function as a decolonising methodology.[20] This is so that a meaningful narrative is presented, which speaks objectively to interactions between different human groups, without racial, ethnic, or cultural biases.

[18] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* (London: 1991).
[19] J. Habashi, 'Arab Indigenous Discourse: Social Imaginary Alternative to Decolonizing Methodology,' *International Review of Qualitative Research* 8, no. 4 (2015), pp. 493-508.
[20] Habashi, 'Arab Indigenous Discourse', pp. 493-508.

As such, a social imaginary approach will enable this thesis to avoid the assumption that a 'superior' civilisation was dictating the terms of interaction in West Africa. Other methods were considered, such as transnational and global history. This is not to say they are not present in this paper. However, a social imaginary approach was deemed to be the more effective choice when dealing with a colonial case-study that intends to speak to broader themes of empire, as well as respond to the thesis question. In addition, social imaginary as an emerging decolonizing methodology may contribute fresh insights and perspectives on colonial African history.

Assimilation Theory & Origins: Towards a Popular French Rhetoric

The assimilation discussed in this thesis is cultural, based on the anthropological understanding that in human interaction, dominant groups tend to incorporate non-dominant groups into their collective schema. The latter is made to (consciously or unconsciously) adopt or adapt the language and general cultural traits of a dominant group into their own society and culture. With empires being such large ruling geographical entities by definition, assimilation is a recurring theme in imperial history. Such a process is not necessarily bad, nor is it good. Rather, anthropologically and behaviourally speaking, it simply exists. Not that the methods used by colonials were any less violent from a 21st century humanist perspective, or from the perspective of some 19th century observers for that matter. However, assimilation within certain controversial contexts needs to be reframed, having functioned differently than previous literature has described.

Assimilation, in the modern European colonial sense, has also varied in its application. Sometimes it is explicit and violently implemented, as seen in Aboriginal examples in British

Australia and Canada. In 19th century French West Africa,[21] colonial forces vocalised a form of European assimilation through the ideals of the civilising mission. In most cases, this meant justifying colonial action with rhetoric, rather than acting with the conscious intent of having indigenous groups collectively accept French civilisation and identity. The specific situation of West Africa turned out more in favour of the construction of intermediaries, for instance within the indigenous elite, rather than directly enacting policies of forced assimilation on the entire population. These intermediaries were intended to act as distant cultural middlemen so that the French did not need to interfere too strongly in African affairs – unless they were needed for specific purposes such as the suppression of slavery, or construction and mining work.[22] The fact that such a recurring pattern can emerge in some form or another when dominant and non-dominant groups have interacted in the past is worth a closer look - especially when examining the motivations that have driven empires to encourage non-dominant groups to incorporate themselves into their cultural framework. This can occur despite the non-dominant group having a significantly larger population than the dominant one.

No claim can be made for a singular and conscious driver of assimilation. The term, like empire, can be understood as a fluid and constantly changing concept. It exists relatively from individual to individual. This is in line with this thesis's social imaginary approach. Colonial French officers imagined assimilation differently from one another, as did the French missionaries sent to the colonies and the indigenous people that encountered them.[23] An imagined concept like assimilation is made physically manifest through sufficiently widespread belief, which we see encouraged in official French assimilation rhetoric in the 19th

[21] Afrique Occidentale Français, or A.O.F.
[22] *Transports et transmissions*, « plusieurs auteurs », [1809 -1920]. 14mi/1311-1379, Série O :ASJEF. GS 1782-1920. AOM.
[23] E. Foster, *Faith in Empire: Religion, Politics, and Colonial Rule in French Senegal, 1880-1940*, (Stanford, 2013), p. 178.

century.[24] This can be accomplished through the establishment of public socio-cultural dialogues, norms, and taboos, for instance. In the universal interpretation of assimilation, this can come from anywhere in a civilisation; top-down, bottom-up, and *vice versa*. This adaptive interaction between social groups leads to a feedback loop of ideology. If the above follows, most, if not all civilisations have developed their own unique take on assimilation. It makes sense, therefore, to examine how the concept developed in France itself, before finding its way into the French Empire and impacting groups such as the Toucouleurs.

One of the many reasons why the French approach to assimilation was different is that arguably, unlike imperial Great Britain and Spain, the First French Colonial Empire (16th-18th century), was "amassed in the face of public apathy at best, antipathy at worse".[25] The colonies were of interest only to the upper and mercantile classes. Private interest in the pursuit of several objectives, such as resource and wealth acquisition, territorial expansion, and state competition occupied colonial spheres of interest. Evidently, imperial and personal ambitions changed course, evolving over the three centuries that encompassed the life of the First French Colonial Empire. Yet the majority of the French public, educated or otherwise, was never gravely interested in its defence. As Raymond Betts notes : "When the first colonial empire fell apart, the laments at home were not numerous".[26]

This disinterest gave enormous freedom to those who toiled within the Empire. Open trading with local indigenous groups began early on – which inevitably led to a constant exposure of French culture and society. This was especially the case for those who lived within colonial trading posts, meaning that those groups adapted over several centuries to French rule, rather than in a matter of decades and years. The liberties and limited geography of the early

[24] A. Conklin, *A mission to civilize : the republican idea of empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930*, (Stanford, 1997).
[25] R. F. Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914*, (New York & London, 1961), p. 1.
[26] Betts, *Assimilation and* Association, p. 2.

French colonies ensured this. More importantly, assimilation as a concept did not comprehensively exist until the 19th century. Hence why in earlier years, the kind of assimilation that arguably resulted from long-term exposure to French rule was unintended - the product of dominant *versus* non-dominant interactions. This is particularly evident in the case of the Senegalese *métis*.

Yet there were undoubtedly similarities between the French kind of assimilation and that of other European empires, connected as it was to the broader idea of the "civilising mission".[27] Some previous colonial literature has argued that the French civilising mission was distinct from other European ones, in that it was largely secular and non-religious. Recent literature has disputed this claim, as seen in the work of Elizabeth Foster.[28] Not only does she clarify that French assimilation was a blend of religious and secular ideas, with the interactions between missionaries and colonial officials defining the civilising mission – the institutional interpretation of assimilation was not the only one at play in the colonies. Missionaries had their own views on the concept. The definition of assimilation was therefore in a constant state of flux, continually changing the outcomes of the mission in colonies such as Senegal.

The influence of Christianity on the early evolution of the civilising mission, and by extension assimilation, cannot be understated. This is where the similarities between French assimilation and other European forms also lie. Whether English, Iberian or indeed French, in the later imperial years of the 19th century, the common perception was that it was the civilised European's burden to bring their enlightened culture to others. This is closely tied to the shared Christian traditions of the European states – whose thinkers naturalised and placed social development within a teleological framework. This defined what was truly civilised and what was not. Many early colonialists saw it as their holy duty to save indigenous heathens from

[27] Translation: *mission civilisatrice*.
[28] Foster, *Faith in Empire*.

themselves.[29] The kind of Christian assimilation linked to this early-modern version of the civilising mission was, in the majority of cases, quite direct. Yet it was also equally adapted by the different spaces it came to inhabit, and the indigenous cultures that populated them. The Iberian global empires, for instance, practised aggressive forms of assimilation in many of their early encounters with indigenous groups. However, as can be seen in Jesuit missionary actions within South America, they would often evangelise local populations using softer methods - emphasising re-education, for instance.[30] Religious interpretations of the civilising mission would carry over into the 19th century, combining with theoretical ideas such as nationalism and assimilation. In French-Senegal, this would complicate the interactions between colonial officials and missionaries. Each group viewed the civilising mission and assimilation differently from one another, and while official colonial interpretations of assimilation have dominated the popular narrative of colonialism, the missionaries enacted their own version of assimilation in West Africa - through education and religious outreach.[31]

There were therefore various forms of assimilation rhetoric and ideology at work. One, for instance, being generated by 19th century French intelligentsia and institutions. This was then adapted into colonial settings, with contemporary public rhetoric often speaking from this official, and largely institutional interpretation of assimilation. The role that assimilation has historically played, even before becoming colonial doctrine, is clearly quite nuanced. Never has the civilising mission been straightforward – a trend which continued beyond the early-modern period and the advent of even more extensive European empires in the 17th and 18th centuries. To reiterate, the French colonial assimilation that this thesis discusses was brand new, and the French did not consciously discuss or begin to apply it until the 19th century. This

[29] G. Rist, 'Le développement. Histoire d'une croyance occidentale,' *Monde et sociétés* 4 (2013), pp. 48-80.
[30] T. Herzog, *Frontiers of Possession: Spain and Portugal in Europe and the Americas*, (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 70-134.
[31] Foster, *FIE,* p. 178.

is made evident by the fact that at the same time that France sought to assimilate overseas territories, the government in Paris sought to do the same to those resistant to the newly-conceived French identity in their own borders.[32]

Fanny Colonna highlights the parallels between French assimilation efforts in Algeria and at home in Bretagne and Aix-En-Provence.[33] One of the reasons for this is the development of modern nationalism on the European continent in the 19th century. Nationalism, which Merriam-Webster defines as "a sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supranational groups",[34] became closely tied to the rhetoric of the European civilising mission. Hence why ideas of what constituted 'Frenchness' only entered the discourse of the educated and literate elite during this time. As Europe experienced this wave of nationalism, a decidedly nationalist version of assimilation became prevalent in the popular imagination, through the work of prominent French theorists and writers such as Ernest Renan.[35] This would inspire French colonial officials and missionaries, impacting the ways in which they engaged with indigenous groups - as seen in the treatment of Islam, treaties with indigenous chiefs, and the education of their sons.

[32] E. Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*, (Stanford, 1976).
[33] F. Colonna, 'Educating Conformity in French Colonial Algeria' in F. Cooper and A.L. Stoler, ed., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, (Berkeley, 1997), pp. 346-370.
[34] 'Nationalism,' *Merriam-Webster*. Retrieved ; 12/06/2019.
[35] E. Renan. [1882]. *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation? Presses Électroniques de France*, 2013 & "Renan, Ernest". A. Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, (London, 2007), pp. 195-196.

Chapter II

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Métis Self-Gallicisation

To use the word *métis* is to describe someone of mixed ancestry. In Senegal, it refers to the indigenous mulatto people who inhabited the Four Communes[36] – Saint Louis, Gorée, Dakar and Rufisque. The history of *métis*' self-assimilation is uniquely fitted to provide a contrasting and precursory example to a Toucouleur case-study analysis. Using education as well as political and justice reform, the *métis* became collectively important - even politically active as elite Franco-Senegalese intermediaries. The *métis* example highlights and contrasts the short-term methods employed by the late-19th century French colonial government towards the Toucouleurs of Futa Toro. It is through such comparison that a meaningful conclusion can be reached regarding how assimilation evolved as a concept in colonial French-Senegal, and the extent of its limitations.

Importantly, prior to the 19th century, to speak of Senegal was to describe the largely French-controlled coastline outposts.[37] The *métis* of Saint Louis have historically been the most influential native group within them. This is largely due to their role as cultural and mercantile intermediaries. Indeed, what makes the story of the *métis* a relevant comparative case study for this thesis is their gradual gallicisation. Gallicisation means the extension of French as a first language in a region. This definition also includes the adoption, forced or otherwise, of gallic cultural norms and taboos. Considering that French identity was not static, and only formally constituted under the national movements of the 19th century - when this paper refers to the adoption of French culture, what is meant is the evolving socio-cultural framework ubiquitous

[36] Translation: *Quatre Communes*.
[37] Idowu, 'Assimilation in 19th Century Senegal', p. 194.

to the French metropole in the 16th-18th centuries. This can be associated with the prevalence of primarily metropolitan Francophone mercantile and administrative classes in Senegal during this period. Arguably, *métis* culture evolved and adapted in conjunction to changes in the French metropole. *Métis* identity certainly took on specific aspects of this socio-cultural framework, yet it was a process that began long before the French formally took over the coastline outposts. Nor did the *métis* adopt the entirety of French culture in the long-term – the gradual construction of their intermediary role was a constantly evolving blend of French and indigenous Wolof culture.

The indigenous people native to the coast were already quite accustomed to Europeans, a relationship that began when the Portuguese discovered the mouth of Senegal in 1445. The Portuguese had initially sent raiding parties along the coast in search of slaves and resources – only to be completely rebuffed, or even annihilated by indigenous Malian and Wolof forces.[38] The swift military response of the indigenous peoples took the Portuguese aback, who quickly sent envoys to initiate formal relations with the formidable Mali Empire and its coastline tributaries, which included the Wolof.[39] With the blessing of the Malian *mansas*[40] and Wolof chiefs, the Portuguese were granted some islands on which to build outposts and permitted to trade along the coastline. However, they were strictly forbidden to enter too far into the interior and potentially disrupt the flow of tribute from Malian vassals by taking their people as slaves.[41] As such, from the 16th until the 18th century, European sailors used the mouth of Senegal as the primary location for ship-to-shore trade. In doing so, they directly tapped into the slave trade already prevalent among African states.[42] While the Portuguese had a monopoly on the coastline for some time, France extended its colonial empire there in 1633, establishing

[38] J.Thornton, *Warfare in Atlantic Africa, 1500–1800*, (London, 1999), pp. 41-55.
[39] Thornton, *Warfare in Atlantic Africa,* pp. 41-55.
[40] Definition in glossary, pg. 4.
[41] Thornton, *Warfare in Atlantic Africa,* pp. 41-55.
[42] Encyclopedia of African History, s.v. "Senegal"

similar trade relations with Malian and Wolof elites. By 1659, the island of *Ndar* was ceded to the French. Saint Louis, the first French colony, was established there soon after.[43]

The French Crown ordered the construction of a fortified trade post on the island. It offered European ship captains' "strategic access to human and material commodities controlled by African rulers in the interior".[44] At the request of the Malian *mansas*, local indigenous groups guided French merchants along the trade routes, as they had done for the Portuguese and Dutch before them. Importantly, mercantile company policy prohibited cohabitation with indigenous women - yet did not allow employees to bring their families with them to the colonies. As a consequence, some European men began to look to African women for domestic needs, despite company policy. This would result in some of the first Senegalese mulatto children. Subsequent generations of these children would eventually form the self-conscious *métis* group, with Saint Louis as the nexus of a new mixed society.[45]

While the *métis* quickly adopted facets of French culture, their gallicisation was far from certain. Ownership of the coast changed hands several times as the result of conflicts in Europe. For example, British forces took control of Gorée in 1800, imposing a naval blockade that prevented French forces from reaching Saint Louis. This was the first effect of the Napoleonic wars on the region.[46] In 1809 the British reoccupied Saint Louis, retaining control until 1817 when Senegal was returned to France under treaty terms dictated by the Congress of Vienna (1815). Despite geo-political changes and British rule, which the *métis* adapted to, they still retained distinct French loyalties. The tenacious motivations that drove *métis* self-assimilation in a uniquely French direction cannot be tied down to a singular conscious decision. Yet, as social imaginary theory suggests, non-dominant groups often adapt to

[43] Jones, *The Métis of Senegal*, p. 24.
[44] Jones, *TMS*, p. 23.
[45] *Ibid*., p. 1.
[46] *Ibid*., p. 28.

dominant ones in a collective attempt to thrive and survive. In this case, the dominant group for the longest period was the French Empire – hence the particular cultural loyalties of the *métis* despite British rule.

This can be attributed to the *métis* intermediary role, which needed to be flexible enough to thrive in the Senegalese colonial setting. Due to their mercantile nature, the métis were required to constantly accrue influence over colonial affairs, so as to be powerful enough to establish and maintain a monopoly over the colonial marketplace. Indigenous women were instrumental in this process, and their role as cultural agents is indicative of how exactly the *métis* were able to become such effective intermediaries. These women, called s*ignares*,[47] were increasingly influential when it came to important socio-political matters in the Four Communes. They were initially the women who tended to the domestic needs of European men during their stays in the colony, as mentioned earlier. The nature of these relationships was originally defined by sexual fulfilment. However, in time, it would also become familial – even involving a ritualistic tradition of temporary marriages,[48] called "marriage in the style of the country".[49] It was through the unique kind of social mobility that these arrangements allowed that the *signares* would establish themselves as mercantile and cultural intermediaries for their French husbands, and by extension their children.

Marriage with a *signare* even became a key method by which French or other European merchants could gain access to local trade routes and goods. The more prestigious a *signare* was, the greater the access to these resources. In addition, by having children with European men, the *signares* were almost singularly responsible for establishing the cultural traditions that enabled the *métis* to thrive in French colonial community, similarly to how the French

[47] Definition in glossary, p. 4.
[48] H. Jones, 'From Mariage à La Mode to Weddings at Town Hall: Marriage, Colonialism, and Mixed-Race Society in Nineteenth-Century Senegal,' *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 38, no. 1 (2005): p. 27.
[49] Translation: *mariage à la mode du pays*.

government would later encourage the elite class of interior indigenous groups to become cultural intermediaries through French education. The *métis* accomplished this by maintaining a network of kin and clients in the interior, being customary custodians of the towns, and upholding their place within the region's politics.[50]

In the late 19th century, education played an increasingly vital role in ensuring that the *métis* maintained their standing in Senegal's colonial community. Beginning at the turn of the 18th century, s*ignares* would often send their children to be educated in France itself, putting them through schools in Toulouse or Marseille.[51] This continued into the 19th century until it became an established *métis* tradition. This is because it provided a host of benefits for the children that returned home, who would be able to work on an educated and close basis with French officials. Not only did this expand their family's network, it also improved their role as mercantile middlemen. This is an important reason as to why the *métis* were able to establish their own political representation and to take part in the upper echelons of Senegalese society, which was dominated by French colonial officers and merchants. They were able to speak their language and behave in a way that the Europeans understood and could relate to. The historian Hilary Jones provides several instances of how this was done:

> Some within the métis population joined the Alliance Française, an organization founded to protect and support the spread of French language and culture. Others joined the Masonic lodge and founded newspapers with an anticlerical point of view. They espoused the virtues of the republic in their newspapers, celebrated Bastille Day, joined rifle clubs, and held annual regattas on the Senegal River.[52]

However:

> Although the métis attended French schools, adopted French dress, and identified closely with the ideals espoused by the Third Republic, they also transformed these cultural idioms to serve their purposes. They solidified their role as the predominant French-educated and professional elite of Senegal's colonial capital.[53]

[50] Jones, *TMS*, p. 1.
[51] *Ibid*., pp. 96-117.
[52] *Ibid*., p. 96.
[53] *Ibid.*

Again, there was no singular conscious motive behind this. Rather, it resulted from cultural and individual pursuits that eventually became the unique social circumstances of the Four Communes. Nothing highlights the distinctiveness of their adapted culture more than the fact that indigenous Wolof was spoken in *métis* homes, something actively encouraged by the *signares*.[54] They evidently understood the need for their children to maintain close ties with other local ethnic groups. This hybridisation of French and indigenous culture highlights that the *métis* were in the business of making themselves into intermediaries, not assimilating completely into French civilisation.

The *métis* were only intermediaries insofar as was required to function effectively as an elite class within the Franco-Senegalese community. Many *métis* later became mayors, city councillors, and local colonial advisors in the 19th century.[55] It was not only the longer history of Franco-Senegalese relations that permitted this, but also the specific political and historical situation of the Four Communes – which, as mentioned, the *signares* played a crucial role in establishing. Due to their efforts, and those of their children, the 19th century *métis* who inhabited the island towns had far greater rights and opportunities than their fellow Africans in the rest of the A.O.F.[56] The importance of the *métis* cannot be understated. Indeed, the political history of Senegal's colonial towns "is a history of the *métis*".[57]

Importantly, events on coastline Senegal occurred in a largely separate fashion from those taking place in the interior. It was largely unexplored and unknown to French colonial forces in the late 18th century – and indigenous events inland were devoid of any significant French, *métis*, or European influence. This is not to say that the indigenous peoples of the interior were unaware of the French. Through trade with *métis*, Muslim and occasional

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 100.
[55] *Ibid*., pp. 1-2.
[56] Afrique Occidentale Français, or A.O.F.
[57] Jones, *TMS*, p. 1.

European merchants, the various kingdoms and empires of the interior became conscious of the French. Yet this was the extent of their connection, until colonial expansion began from the mid-19th century.

As for how political and economic reform enabled the *métis* to be effective cultural intermediaries - the *métis* did much of the political and economic reforming themselves. *Métis* education in France was essential to this. An example of how the *métis* accomplished large-scale political change on the basis of their education is seen in the case of a *cahier de doléances*,[58] sent to the legislative assembly in Paris and signed by the inhabitants of Saint Louis. Presented by Dominique Lamiral, an independent French trader in Saint Louis during the late-18th century, this *cahier* outlines the overprotective attitudes that have often defined relations between colonial Senegal and France.[59] Lamiral describes the *métis* as brothers of those who live "on the banks of the Seine,"[60] and states that political rights is something the inhabitants of Senegal's towns should aspire to in the future.[61] The *cahier* was written to petition for more *métis* rights and increased representation in both legislative and colonial government, similar to those of French elites in the metropole. This further reinforces the argument that by the 19th century, due to the specific context of the Revolution and a variety of factors such as their education, the *métis* were able to intimately identify themselves as French to the point where it was not uncommon for the French to think the same of them.

The success and motivations behind their petitions and political reforms becomes obvious when examining events in the early 19th century. At this point, *métis* men had a controlling share over the export trade in gum Arabic from the Senegal River valley.[62] Yet, by

[58] *L'Afrique et le peuple Afriquain considères sous tous leurs rapports avec notre Commerce et nos Colonies*. « Lamiral, M. » [1789] Paris: Chez Dessenne, Libraire au Palais Royale et Chez les Marchands de Nouveautés.
[59] Jones, *TMS*, p. 26.
[60] *Ibid.*, p. 28
[61] *Ibid.*, p. 26,
[62] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

1850, the collapse of the price of gum for *guinées* would cause them significant financial setbacks. This was not helped by increasing competition with Afro-Muslim traders for the role of mercantile middleman within the colonial economy. On top of this, peanut culture was being introduced by Bordeaux merchants - seeking to exploit interior cash crop production. It would have effectively ended the *métis* monopoly.[63] Yet, by taking advantage of the chaos surrounding the abolition of slavery, the *métis* effectively wielded their role as the main French-educated group in Senegal to turn the situation around.

The *métis* consolidated on this in the late-19th century, when they involved themselves further in the Third French Republic's expansion of electoral institutions. The *métis* were able to manoeuvre into more favourable positions - through direct appeals and letters to the legislative government, such as the one that Dominque Lamiral presented. This was to ensure they did not lose control over trade in the region.[64] With the approval of the French government, between 1880 and 1920 the *métis* elite "transformed the local assemblies into an arena of negotiation and contestation with colonial authorities, articulating a vision of modern Senegal that differed from that espoused by metropolitan capitalists and the colonial administration".[65] Not only were they willing to adapt to French culture and society – they were important cultural intermediaries, powerful traders, and capable of playing politics all on their own.

As the above has made evident, the *métis* became an elite class of intermediaries that defined colonial culture in the Four Communes. They achieved this largely through education, which enabled them to be involved in political and economic reform. The process by which the *métis* assimilated themselves was clearly organic, in that it took place over a significant stretch of time and had no conscious or direct influence from the French colonial government. In large

[63] Idowu, H. O. 'The Establishment of Elective Institutions in Senegal, 1869-1880,' *The Journal of African History* 9, no. 2 (1968): p. 267.
[64] Idowu, "The Establishment of Elective Institutions in Senegal,' p. 275.
[65] Jones, *TMS*, p. 2.

part, because the *métis* had accomplished this themselves before the nationalised European concept of assimilation had been conceived and attached to the colonial civilising mission. Yet even then, the French colonial and metropolitan government continued to view the citizenry of the Four Communes in a distinctly different way than they did other indigenous groups.[66]

1852-1890: Rhetoric in Practice

French assimilation rhetoric was not exclusive to the years that comprised the creation and existence of the A.O.F. (1895-1960). While it did become more explicit and widespread in colonial dialogue at the turn of the 20th century, early ideas are already present in the writings, and law-making practises of colonial French officials in the 1850s.[67] At this stage, however, the colony was still mostly comprised of the Four Communes. Military expeditions and treaties started to push at the boundaries of interior indigenous states, culminating in rapid military expansion near the turn of the 20th century. In light of this, the intelligentsia and officials who wrote about French expansion portrayed it as part of the civilising mission – an intended outcome being the assimilation of newly colonised local peoples into greater French civilisation. Rhetoric did not reflect reality - as the colony was expanded, government policy often adapted to the uniquely different cultures of interior indigenous groups.

The Toucouleur's experienced the polar opposite of the *métis* colonial experience, in that they were not given a choice regarding their inclusion in colonial community. As one of the more resistant indigenous groups during aggressive French expansion in the latter half of the 19th century, examining how the Toucouleurs came to be subjugated, and subsequently 'assimilated' under later French rule offers a more insightful example than other case studies

[66] Idowu, 'Assimilation in 19th Century Senegal', pp. 194-218.
[67] *Ibid.*

towards understanding the limits of colonial assimilation, and the extent of intermediary construction as an alternative.

The Toucouleur Empire, while short-lived, was one of the greatest threats to French control in several interior regions - not just Futa Toro. This was the case even after the Toucouleur Empire's dissolution in 1890, which relates specifically to the lasting dynastic, cultural and charismatic authority wielded by its leader and founder – El Hajj Umar Tall, which was extended to his family as well. Due to the Tall family's importance in Toucouleur society, the French sought to undermine them. This is because the Tall's represented the Toucouleur Empire as its founders, unifying the core Islamic traditions and peoples of that society. They were clerical elites by birth, able to afford the *hajj* to Mecca, and hero-worshipped by their people as victorious Prophets spreading the true Islamic faith.[68] In addition, the Tall dynasty had extensive territorial claims to strategically-important parts of West Africa, making them one of the main obstacles blocking French expansion into the rest of the continent. Removing them from power, according to the French, would make expansion easier in the long-term and ensure stability once they had control in later years.[69] A central catalyst for this was the imperial competition between Great Britain and France. Betts makes the reasons for this clear, in that the

> "rush overseas is a salient characteristic of the history of Europe in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Almost every European nation of importance engaged in the activity, and all converged on the one area still open to intensive penetration, Africa. Although such expansion had occurred throughout the century, the keenness of the competition now enlarged the importance of the problem and made it vital to European and world affairs".[70]

[68] *Poème de louange pour Umar Tall*. « Mohammadou Aliou Tyam », [c.1890-1899]. Dans : *La vie d'El Hadj Omar. Qacida en Poular*. Henri Gaden, ed. et trans. Paris 1935. Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire.
[69] E.E. Beauregard, 'Toucouleur Resistance to French Imperialism,' *Présence Africaine*, Nouvelle Série, no. 131 (1984): p. 145.
[70] Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory*, p. 2.

Essentially, the French wanted to ensure that the British did not have a larger territorial presence on the African continent than them, hence why Tall dynasty-led resistance frustrated the colonial government.

It is important here to delve further into the historical background and importance of El Hajj Umar Tall and his family. Key aspects of French colonial policy were fundamentally shaped by them. For example, many treaties with indigenous chiefs in Futa Toro were written with the intention of undermining Tall dynasty rule.[71] Another is West-African Islamic culture, which is a prominent topic in colonial sources considering the challenge it presented to later assimilation efforts – seeing that it enabled Umar as a member of the clerical elite to recruit so many to his *jihad.*[72] The traditions the Talls represented also frame the impact of education policies in French-controlled Futa Toro. Through Umar's story, the importance of the *hajj* to Mecca for the ruling elite becomes evident in the Toucouleur context. Late-19th century French efforts to stop this tradition altogether - by directly controlling the education of indigenous elites - provides further insight towards understanding the limits of assimilation processes *versus* intermediary construction.

Tall Dynasty & Toucouleur Empire

El Hajj Umar Tall (1794? – 1864) was born at Halwar in Futa Toro to an elite Sunni Muslim family. He studied under scholars in his homeland, as well as in Futa Jallon and Mauretania. These doctrines would guide him throughout his life.[73] Umar was made one of the *torodbe*,[74] and as Erving Beauregard summarises, in 1826 was initiated into the *Tijani* order[75]

[71] Beauregard, 'Toucouleur Resistance to French Imperialism,' p. 144.
[72] Definition in glossary, pg. 4.
[73] *Histoire et notices concernant El Hajj Umar Tall*, « auteur inconnu », St Louis, [25 May 1876]. 14mi/654, Série G, PAG: MNM 1818-1921. AOM.
[74] Definition in glossary, p. 4.
[75] Definition in glossary, p. 4.

before he journeyed "to Mecca and received the honorific title of « Al Hajj ». Moreover, he was invested as Tijani *khalifa* for the Western Sudan and endowed with the *baraka and istikhara*, thus being divinely appointed to purify Islam in that region".[76]

Once he had returned to West Africa, Umar set about preaching his version of Islam. He settled within the Sokoto caliphate from 1831 to 1837, then moved to Futa Jallon.[77] To summarise the ensuing ten years, he preached to larger and larger audiences, acquiring great influence. In 1847 he became acquainted with Saint Louis, as well as other prominent colonial outposts and his own inherited territories in Futa Toro. Importantly, he continually clashed with the beliefs of other Fulani religious leaders and military elites, increasing tensions with them to the point where they forced him to leave in 1851. It was here that Umar became militant – turning his mission into one of widespread reform, using a violent interpretation of *jihad* to accomplish it.

Umar returned to Futa Toro that same year. Once there, he appealed to the people in much the same way as the *torodbe* of the previous century's *jihads* had – using his religious influence to challenge the military elites, based upon the grievances of their people and riling them up further using Islamic rhetoric.[78] He was successful, and in 1852, Umar declared himself a Prophet of Islam. This made him, and his family, key figures in Islamic society. As the educated elite who had undertaken the *hajj*, their actions and words were interpreted as sacrosanct by their largely illiterate followers. This was how the upper classes of Islamic West African societies retained their control on local Muslim populations,[79] and as will be explored later, something that the French specifically targeted.

[76] Beauregard, 'Toucouleur Resistance to French Imperialism', p. 145.
[77] Beauregard, 'Toucouleur Resistance to French Imperialism,' pp. 144-154.
[78] David Robinson, 'The Islamic Revolution of Futa Toro,' *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 8, no. 2 (1975): pp.185-221.
[79] Robinson, 'The Islamic Revolution of Futa Toro,' pp. 185-221.

Umar then set about conscripting and arming his recruits to enact his *jihad* – with predominantly French weapons.[80] This included muskets, ammunition, and even cannons, and is an early indicator of French colonial intentions to destabilise the region through undermining existing unity between local ethnic groups by arming certain ones. This made them easier to conquer and pacify later, a tactic repeated in several other regions. Yet French officials of the time and afterwards are loath to mention it in their own reports on the matter[81] - considering that helping to arm Umar's *jihad* would promptly backfire on them.

Umar subsequently conquered the territory of Kaarta in Upper-Senegal. In 1854, after consolidating his position and declaring a Toucouleur Empire, he began to wage war against the French.[82] Umar knew he had to mount a significant resistance against them to satisfy his zealous followers. The actual intended outcome, however, seems to have been establishing a lasting peace on equal terms with colonial forces rather than continue an extended conflict with them. This can also be read from the geopolitical and strategic situation of the time, with Toucouleur forces surrounded on all sides by existing enemies, as well as potential foes. Ending conflict with the French was beneficial – in that it would enable Umar to focus on conquering other, more culturally important places, such as Timbuktu for instance.

This theory is reinforced by the fact that the Toucouleur forces engaged mostly in raiding and skirmishing with French military expeditions in the 1850s.[83] French soldiers were often frustrated by the guerrilla tactics of Toucouleur forces, who used small armed groups deployed across floodplains, mangroves and forest to harass and limit French movement along the rivers. The only significant investment of troops by the Toucouleurs in this brief war was

[80] *Expédition de Guémou, sous le commandement du chef de bataillon Faron, contre le prophète El Hadj Omar*, « Commandant Faron », [1858]. 14mi/237, Série D : AMOM : SD, 1823-1894. AOM.
[81] *Mission Jacquemart dans le Fouta et le Toro*, « Commandant aux Podor » [1879-1880]. 14mi/651, Série G, PAG, EG : MNM 1818-1921.
[82] Beauregard, 'Toucouleur Resistance to French Imperialism,' pp. 144-154.
[83] *Expédition de Guémou, sous le commandement du chef de bataillon Faron, contre le prophète El Hadj Omar*, « Commandant Faron », [1858]. AOM.

the unsuccessful siege of Medina Fort (1857), which in its own way served as the final conflict needed to draw both parties to the negotiating table. Umar appears to have never committed his troops to large-scale warfare, undoubtedly aware of French military superiority. Peace was eventually made on the condition that the French recognised Umar's authority over Futa Toro and his conquered lands. In return, Umar would leave French interests alone.

Before his death in 1864, resulting from an explosion of his own gunpowder reserves, Umar had conquered all around the Niger and Upper-Senegal. He then placed his four sons, Eliman, Amadou, Boubabar, and Alioum in charge of different parts of the Toucouleur Empire (Timbuktu, Macina, Kaarta and Segou). Umar was not succeeded by any of his sons, however. One of his nephews, Tidiani Tall, was chosen to be the new head of the Empire instead. This was decreed by Umar himself before he died. Amadou, however, was the most powerful of all his brothers and appears to have been the true ruler in all but name, with Tidiani playing a placeholder role to ease further conflict between them.[84] It was Amadou who the French, in any case, were most concerned with, despite Amadou's maintenance of a strong diplomatic relationship with them.[85] According to colonial sources, Amadou kept the peace so that he could put out the proverbial fires his father had lit in his *jihad*.[86] His focus was to ultimately consolidate his power, and it is important to note here that while the French did indeed play a part in Toucouleur decline, a factor was Umar Tall's own unsustainable military conquests. Spanning vast swathes of Western and Central Africa, Umar had overextended the Toucouleur Empire, and could not have retained reasonable control over his new territories in the long-term. He died before that process could even begin, his successors having to deal with significant issues of consolidation as a result. Only then were the French able to begin taking

[84] B.O. Oloruntimeehin. *The Segu Tukulor Empire*. (New York: 1972).
[85] *Mission de Bafoulabé par Gallieni et Bayol*, « Gallieni » [1879]. 14mi/651, Série G, PAG, EG : MNM 1818-1921. AOM.
[86] *Mission de Bafoulabé par Gallieni et Bayol*, « Gallieni » [1879]. AOM.

advantage of the situation. They seized whatever opportunities they could to turn the weaker brothers against Amadou and encouraged chief tributaries to question his authority.[87]

This can be inferred from a historical overview on Umar and a notice regarding Amadou's political situation.[88] These sources make it clear that the French viewed Toucouleur resistance as "a situation of the first order",[89] since Amadou would not renounce his claims on extensive French territorial possessions that bordered with British colonies.[90] This ties to another reason, and arguably the simplest one – to ensure local stability as the colony expanded. Positive public order was of paramount importance to the colonial government in Senegal. Considering the unpredictable shortening and lengthening of the shoestring budget that French officials had to work with, extensive repression through military means would have been an unsustainable method of retaining control over acquired regions. Hence, why gradually eroding unity within local powers by removing key leaders and then subjugating what remained proved more efficient. This was achieved through the manipulation of the indigenous political situation, through treaties and arming rivals. These treaties also played their own role in establishing some of the indigenous elite of Futa Toro as new intermediaries of French rule, working towards dismantling Tall dynasty influence on the region as they did. In the long-run, agreed upon treaty terms relating to matters such as education and political control would undeniably ensure that the indigenous elite adapted to the demands of the colonial government. Not unlike the *métis*, the indigenous chiefs of Futa Toro played their own part in establishing themselves and their successors as intermediaries – and with time, their respective communities as well.

[87] *Mission de Bafoulabé par Gallieni et Bayol*, « Gallieni » [1879]. AOM.
[88] *Histoire et notices concernant El Hajj Umar Tall*, « auteur inconnu », St Louis, [25 May 1876]. AOM.
[89] Translation: *une situation de premier ordre.*
[90] *Histoire et notices concernant El Hajj Umar Tall*, « auteur inconnu », St Louis, [25 May 1876]. AOM.

After Umar's death in 1864, the French used *métis* trade and political networks when they could to control the geopolitical situation.[91] Eventually, colonial French military expansion in the last decades of the 19th century brought the Toucouleur Empire to an end. Remaining Talls, such as Amadou, were forced to flee - remaining in involuntary exile for many generations, with occurrences like the *hijra* near Fort Lamy being a rare exception. Following their exile, one of the principle concerns of the colonial government was to consolidate its grasp on new territories in Futa Toro. This is arguably a leading cause for why limiting the possibility of widespread public unrest and resistance to French rule was emphasised in colonial policy – hence why the government was so unnerved with two members of the Tall family so close to their homeland in 1906. Long-term stability being the true motivation makes the assimilation touted by French rhetoric highly unlikely as an outcome of colonial action, and intermediary construction far more likely, as further evidence will show.

Indeed, action on the ground reveals a very different reality from ideological dialogue - that twists or omits events to fit within the framework of a benevolent and civilising colonial narrative. As the following examples will show, the French colonial government - between 1852 and 1906 - reported at length about consciously implementing assimilation processes. Not only in Futa Toro, but the emerging A.O.F. at large. Public sources frequently state the intent to facilitate French identity in local indigenous groups such as the Toucouleurs, as per the ideas of a greater civilising mission.[92] However, the historical truth is far more nuanced, with assimilation significantly more limited than colonial sources state. Franco-Senegalese intermediaries emerged instead as the product of colonial policies towards Islam and education

[91] *Traités conclus avec les chefs indigènes*, « plusieurs auteurs », [1782-1919]. 14mi/876-878, Série G : PAG Sous-série 13 G : APAMS, GS 1782-1917. AOM.
[92] Conklin, *A mission to civilize : the republican idea of empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930*.

– all connected by the colonial government's motivation to maintain stability and public order as competition with other European empires increased.

Chapter III

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Controlling Islam: Limiting Influence

The French approach to Islam indicates the differences between rhetoric and reality regarding newly acquired territories in the Senegalese interior in the late-19th century. This also ties to other factors such as education, in that Islam was culturally vital to many of the societies in those regions – for instance, the formation of the Imamate of Futa Toro (1776-1861), which preceded the Toucouleur Empire, was only made possible through *jihad* and variations of it such as the *hijra*.

Islam had permeated the region since the 11th century. Prior to this, West Africa had been largely under the control of the Ghana Empire (700-1240 A.D.),[93] which collapsed with the destabilising introduction of Islam in western Sudan[94] by the conquering Almoravid dynasty (1040–1147 A.D.) - a Muslim Berber empire that originated in Morocco.[95] It went on to become a crucial part of regional culture and indigenous identity. Hence why Futa Toro, as well as other Fulani states, were often the leading Islamic civilisations in West Africa.[96] A large majority of Futa Toro's population subscribed to the beliefs laid out in the Qur'an, as well as the interpretations of those educated enough to read and preach it.[97]

French source material produced at the beginning of the 20th century highlights all of the above, examining in hindsight the actions taken by the colonial government throughout the 19th century to curtail its influence. One of several circulars, written for colonial administrators between 1906 and 1918, describes in great detail the lengths to which the French went to both

[93] I. M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, (Cambridge: 2002).
[94] D. Lange, 'The Almoravid expansion and the downfall of Ghana,' *Der Islam* (73) (1996): pp. 122–159.
[95] Lange, 'The Almoravid expansion and the downfall of Ghana', pp. 122–159.
[96] Robinson, 'The Islamic Revolution of Futa Toro,' pp. 185-221.
[97] *Ibid*.

understand Islamic tradition, and seek to diminish its hold over indigenous societies in the latter half of the 19th century.[98] One example of action taken by the government to this end was limiting the movement of Muslim preachers. This method is described using assimilation rhetoric – in that the author provides reasoning for his statement by reminding the reader that one of the prime directives of the colonial government in Senegal is to "civilise and elevate the indigenous people to the standard of greater French civilisation".[99] The circular's author is clearly referencing the civilising mission, and states the intent of the French to limit Islam as a whole.

While the French colonial circular does not explicitly refer to the acceptance of French identity in indigenous groups, the connection between the civilising mission and this facet of assimilation cannot be denied. Islam being such a central part of indigenous identity, to curtail it in any form would be to encourage an alternative – which in the colonial view, would be 'superior' French secularism or Euro-Christian ideals. Hence why this kind of rhetoric may be connected to assimilation. This is reinforced by one of the prevalent tones of the circular, which is derision. The author does this in the way he points out that local indigenous people "still made prophets of people who studied and could read the Qur'an",[100] in this way noting their illiteracy and, in his opinion, backwards reverence for the elite few who could interpret the written word. Yet regardless of his perspective, the author notes the failure of the French to tamper Islamic influence. He says explicitly that he wishes he was exaggerating - that despite restricting the movement of preachers and scholars, indigenous people still continued to 'fetishize' Islam, as well as its preachers and prophets. The author does not provide a compelling reason for this on the French side, putting it down to local "vagabonds of Islam".[101]

[98] *Circulaire sur le situation générale et histoire de l'Islam en A. O. F.* « auteur inconnu », [1906]. 14mi/1084, Série G : PAG, Sous-série 19 G : AM 1900-1920. AOM.
[99] Translation : *civiliser et élever les populations indigènes à la civilisation française.*
[100] Translation : *ils font encore toujours des prophètes de gens qui étudient et pouvaient lire le Coran*.
[101] Translation: *vagabonds de l'islam*.

Here, he is referring to preachers that agitated the population to the point of rebelliousness. This is connected to French colonial government emphasis on maintaining stability – anything that upset public order gave the French good reason to label it suspect to the local authority. In this way, the French continued to set limits on Muslim clerics throughout Senegal in an attempt to curtail Islam in the region.

The circular infers that French officials were encouraged to view Islam as an issue in need of rectification, which is in line with other circulars, notices, and reports on the subject directed towards officials. They frequently cite the 'inferiority' and limits of Islam, pushing for its replacement with French civilisation. This kind of dialogue seems to make an apparent case for the conscious implementation of assimilation processes. However, the limits of direct assimilation are stated even by the author of the circular – who places blame on supposed indigenous backwardness instead of analysing why French action did not result in the desired effect. This indicates, perhaps, self-awareness amongst many colonial officials at the limits of their rhetoric, spanning the decades of expansion into the 19th century. However, while this sentiment is open to interpretation, it is never concretely stated in any sources.

The rhetoric does not reflect the historical reality, and the emphasis that the colonial administration placed on constructing indigenous intermediaries. Interestingly, the author of the aforementioned circular states that Islam is highly diverse in the A.O.F. and extremely different amongst the various ethnic groups of Senegal. Often, they spoke a different dialect or had an alternative interpretation of Islam, which blended with local tribal traditions and beliefs. It was also a great source of division. As to where this information was gathered, the author is far less explicit. Yet the very method by which the French acquired this knowledge of Islam highlights a truth that assimilation-citing colonial sources fail to mention.

Knowledge as Colonial Power

The information-gathering practises of the colonial government in Senegal reflects an attitude of pragmatism,[102] as well as an awareness of its own limitations.[103] This refers to what could realistically be done in the region *versus* what would have been ideal to some – fully assimilating the population into French civilisation, for instance. Yet the situation was far more complicated than this, considering the colonial government had to make do with a budget dictated by France. No other example shows this more than Louis Faidherbe's term as Governor of Senegal in the mid-19th century.[104] He directed the colonial government against the Toucouleur Empire in the 1850s, yet supposedly understood that any forced suppression or repression of Islam would be counterproductive to establishing long-term French rule in Senegal.[105] Direct military invasion of Futa Toro at this stage in Senegalese colonial history would certainly have proved troublesome for the French. Local intelligence gathering efforts, usually in the form of colonial military expeditions, are important in that while they were being implemented to inform territorial expansion efforts in the long-term, the men sent on expeditions were also directed to amass knowledge about the nuances of indigenous Islamic societies.[106] This was to help distinguish which groups might interact more favourably with French colonial ambitions, indicating that a conscious assimilation policy was not the priority – instead, potential intermediary construction was being considered as a more realistic way to accomplish colonial goals.

[102] A. F. Clark, 'Imperialism, Independence, and Islam in Senegal and Mali,' *Africa Today* 46, no. 3/4 (1999): pp. 149-67.
[103] Foster, *FIE*, p. 179.
[104] Governor from 16 December 1852, 3 year interval 1861-1863, until end of term in 1865.
[105] *Expédition de Guémou, sous le commandement du chef de bataillon Faron, contre le prophète El Hadj Omar*, « Commandant Faron », [1858]. AOM.
[106] *Mission de Bafoulabé par Gallieni et Bayol*, « Gallieni » [1879]. AOM.

Evidently, this was not discussed in public studies and reports on Islam during this period.[107] Assimilation rhetoric was already prevalent during this time, as Idowu makes clear,[108] and while it portrayed events in the colony a certain way, in no way did it show what was actually occurring under Governor Faidherbe's direction. Jones summary of the governor's approach to the Muslim population in the coastal towns lends itself to this argument;

> In Faidherbe's view, building strong institutional support for Islam in the towns cultivated key allies among the Saint Louis Muslim population that were essential for gathering information about Islamic expansion and the ruling elites in the interior. After 1850, colonial authorities sought cooperative relationships with Muslim clerics, interpreters, and traders in Saint Louis.[109]

Faidherbe did not begin this process, yet he was arguably crucial in catalysing it. Not only this, but the directions that the governor gave to his subordinates on the subject highlight that assimilation was far from his mind. Working effectively with local indigenous groups in an intermediary fashion was preferred. This is seen in the expectation that all officials should be well read on local matters before being stationed at their posts.[110]

A summarised history of Umar Tall,[111] which was circulated amongst French officers during their war with the Toucouleur Empire is evidence of this. This source highlights that the colonials were fully aware of Umar's story and the source of his influence.[112] This history is largely objective as a primary source and can be used to understand the intentions of French information gathering practises. This is because it serves an informational purpose for a very specific group of people, about the realities of the interior kingdoms and Umar Tall, so that they can problem-solve more effectively when encountering them in the field. In addition, this

[107] *Études et rapports sur L'Islam*, « plusieurs auteurs », [1906-1918]. 14mi/1084, Série G : PAG, Sous-série 19 G: AM 1900-1920. AOM.
[108] Idowu, "Assimilation in 19th Century Senegal", pp. 194-218.
[109] Jones, *TMS*, pp. 19-39.
[110] *Expédition de Guémou, sous le commandement du chef de bataillon Faron, contre le prophète El Hadj Omar*, « Commandant Faron », [1858]. AOM.
[111] *Histoire et notices concernant El Hajj Umar Tall*, « auteur inconnu », St Louis, [25 May 1876]. AOM.
[112] *Histoire et notices concernant El Hajj Umar Tall*, « auteur inconnu », St Louis, [25 May 1876]. AOM.

knowledge was doubtless used to undermine Tall dynasty influence in Futa Toro, as well as understand the crucial role they played as educated Islamic elites and the otherwise disruptive influence they could have on French-dominated Toucouleur, even in exile.

As the result of such policies, officers reporting back to Faidherbe often stated that they could deal quite well with indigenous chiefs on their own, based on their knowledge of regional specifics - drafting numerous treaties and agreements with the assistance of Muslim or *métis* interpreters, considering that all treaties required a written Arabic translation.[113] Their knowledge of the region and Islamic traditions, combined with information gathered on expeditions, played its own role in allowing for the emphasis of colonial rule to be on intermediary construction, as opposed to directly 'civilising' the locals. The French did not reach this policy for lack of trying, however. Even Louis Faidherbe, who consistently emphasised close relationships with Muslim clerics and tolerance of the Islamic faith was swift to implement forceful measures in response to rebellion or public disorder.[114]

Setting examples was certainly a crucial part of French colonial policy. This was especially the case at the turn of the 20th century, with more aggressive governors such as Louis Brière de l'Isle[115] culling any significant threats to colonial rule that remained in Senegal. Brière de l'Isle was largely responsible for the end of the Toucouleur Empire, and his policies of military expansion are the most compelling evidence of direct assimilation being practised by the French.

This is seen in the oppressive terms written into treaties with the annexed indigenous chiefs of Futa Toro.[116] In one specific set of correspondence between a chief of Toro and de

[113] *Traités conclus avec les chefs indigènes*, « plusieurs auteurs », [1782-1919]. AOM.
[114] *Défense de la colonie du Sénégal : plans et itinéraires*, « plusieurs auteurs », [1843-1894], 14mi/402, Série D AM, Sous-série 5 D : DOM 1763-1920. AOM.
[115] Governor from 18 June 1876 until April 1880.
[116] *Traités conclus avec les chefs indigènes*, « plusieurs auteurs », [1782-1919]. AOM.

L'Isle's subordinates, it is evident that the government had been in frequent contact with the chiefs of the Fulani region. The chief notes in a response that a variety of falsehoods had been promised in an attempt to convince him to break ties with Amadou and the other Tall family members. Upon seizing control of Futa Toro, Brière de l'Isle had not followed through on those promises, which had heightened tensions between the chiefs and colonial forces. In response, the government offered to recognize their legitimacy as elected chiefs, so long as they, in turn, recognized French colonial sovereignty.[117]

This tactic seems to have worked and quelled potential rebellion. Interestingly, despite de L'Isle's apparently aggressive policies, it also allowed the chiefs of Futa Toro to rule as intermediaries of the colonial government. Other treaty terms varied - from the French right to unrestricted military access, to low tariffs being permitted for annexed or allied states, while high tariffs were to be imposed on any antagonistic indigenous groups. These terms were often enforced, and in later years chiefs would even be discreetly chosen by the French and removed from power if they stepped out of line. The terms for some local tribes even included the construction of infrastructure, like roads, railways and telegraph poles, using local labour.[118] In this sense, the concept of assimilation was made manifest, physically changing the surrounding environment from the previously existing indigenous one. Brière de l'Isle also attempted to remove Islamic influence directly. This helps explain the appearance of one key term in treaties, which was of course attached to education – the children of indigenous chiefs would not be permitted to undertake the *hajj* to Mecca. Yet de L'Isle's efforts to reduce or limit the influence of Islam in the short-term had little impact, as the circular on Islamic history confirms.[119] It would only be in several decades that the effects of his decision-making

[117] *Toro*. Correspondance avec les chefs indigènes, « plusieurs auteurs », [1852-1888]. 14mi/915, Série G: PAG, Sous-série 13 G : APAMS, La Fleuve de Saint-Louis à Matam 1817-1908. AOM.
[118] *Transports et transmissions*, « plusieurs auteurs », [1809 -1920]. AOM.
[119] *Circulaire sur le situation générale et histoire de l'Islam en A. O. F.* « auteur inconnu », [1906]. AOM.

coalesced with other factors to contribute to the intermediary construction that was already occurring.

The French efficiently wielded their extensive working knowledge of the various ethnic groups that inhabited the A.O.F. to cut costs and implement practical policies in treaty terms that would favour French outcomes. These treaties were neither ideal nor perfect. Faidherbe and de L'Isle's different approaches can be attributed to the different contexts of their terms: de L'Isle ruled during the height of New Imperialism, Faidherbe during the beginnings of French expansion. Nevertheless, both governors and their governments applied their knowledge of the indigenous setting to enable local groups to become part of Franco-Senegalese colonial community. In the long-term, all they needed was for the situation to remain in this vein – ideally, with an indigenous elite French enough not to consider rebellion, yet able to associate enough with French language and culture to understand, as well as enact various colonial interests. Additionally, this new French-educated elite could not be so French that they would seek to take an active part in colonial politics and community to the same extent as the *métis*.[120]

Education: Limited Assimilation & Intermediary Construction

Treaties with indigenous chiefs in Futa Toro,[121] following the exile of the Talls are an essential source for understanding just how limited assimilation was, and how intermediary construction was the main goal of the French in the long-term. It also ties to their treatment of Islam, and previous experience regarding the Tall dynasty. Yet the most important article of these treaties, which was often non-negotiable, was education. The sons of indigenous chiefs

[120] Idowu, 'Assimilation in 19th Century Senegal', p. 203.
[121] *Traités conclus avec les chefs indigènes*, « plusieurs auteurs », [1782-1919]. AOM.

or rulers would be sent to special missionary schools in Saint Louis, which were purpose-built for educating these children in a French manner.[122] As Idowu states;

> "In Senegal, as in many other parts of Africa, the history of education is largely a history of missionary activities. After resuming possession of the colony in 1817, the French government, in an attempt to propagate French civilization by means of education, introduced a method of education known as *enseignement mutuel,* to replace the koranic form of education operating in the colony. But when this did not prosper, the government invited the religious organizations established in France to extend their educational activities to Senegal".[123]

Importantly, these schools were not specifically founded in the late 19th century, highlighting that education was already part of indigenous treaty terms early on. This implies that the colonial government was already aware of its importance in establishing effective intermediaries, and implemented targeted acts of direct, but limited assimilation to achieve the long-term goal of stability – perhaps based on their previous and continuing relationship with the *métis* of Saint Louis.

The first of these "schools of the colony"[124] for indigenous elite children was founded in 1864,[125] as part of a larger initiative that sought to establish schools on coastline settlements and some interior regions. Indeed, the education system appears to have been largely based on previous missionary experience with the *métis*. This can be seen in a letter to Governor August Baudin from the Vice Apostolic Prefect Abbot Caysac in 1847,[126] requesting that the Governor consider sending Libermann missionaries[127] to Senegal. The Abbot asks that they be allowed to establish an elementary school at Gorée, as well as an industrial and agricultural school –

[122] *Organisation et fonctionnement de l'enseignement en A. O. F*., « plusieurs auteurs », [1896-1902]. 14mi/1143, Séries H à T : ASJEF. Série J : E 1802-1920. AOM.
[123] Idowu, 'Assimilation in 19th Century Senegal', p. 203.
[124] Translation: *Écoles de la Colonie*.
[125] *Organisation et fonctionnement de l'enseignement en A. O. F*., « plusieurs auteurs », [1896-1902].
[126] *Lettre au Gouverneur du Préfet Vice-Apostolique L'Abbé Caysac*. « Gouverneur August Baudin », [1847]. 14mi/1143, Séries H à T : ASJEF. Série J : E 1802-1920. AOM.
[127] Refers to missionaries attached to the Congregation of the Holy Spirit within the Roman Catholic Church, commonly known as Spiritans.

based on their previous successes with *métis* school systems in Saint Louis. This particular branch of missionaries emphasised the teaching of the gospel in the context of an individual's own tradition. Evidently, this was an unusually adaptive approach that contradicts the assimilation rhetoric of the colonial administration in the 19th century. From this perspective, with indigenous civilisation as 'lesser', it should be impossible for indigenous peoples to understand Christianity from the context of their own lives. However, for several decades it appears to have been common practice for these missionaries to teach French alongside their students' indigenous language, so that they could have a direct comparison between words – to make learning French easier. Yet despite the official rhetoric, the Governor, in his own response, approved the Abbot's request.[128]

This highlights the nuance in how assimilation was dealt with. However, it is certainly more complicated than this, as it was in the early days that these arrangements were made. The relationship between the administration and the religious missionaries was problematic in the implementation of future education policies. This emerged largely from the fact that the majority of Muslims did not trust the European education system, which due to its missionary nature, seemed intent on converting its students to Catholicism.[129] This was eventually a source of extensive conflict between the French colonial government and the missionaries in the late 19th century. Elizabeth Foster makes this clear when she describes a disagreement between the two regarding the Sereer indigenous group - "While the missionaries saw the animist, Islam-resistant Sereer as the ideal tabula rasa for the implantation of Catholicism and civilisation, French administrators considered the Sereer 'anarchic' and 'savage' and prone to drunkenness".[130] This is one example taken from the many that she provides, yet it summarises

[128] *Lettre au Préfet Vice-Apostolique L'Abbé Caysac du Gouverneur.* « Préfet Vice-Apostolique L'Abbé Caysac », [1847]. AOM.
[129] Idowu, 'Assimilation in 19th Century Senegal', p. 203.
[130] Foster, *FIE*, p. 49.

the division between colonial administrators and religious missionaries. They needed one another to effectively manage things on the colonial budget but had differing views on what assimilation and the civilising mission entailed in Senegal. Importantly, Foster also notes that indigenous groups would manipulate this rivalry to their own benefit – French actors did not frequently acknowledge, or perhaps even realise, that they were often mere instruments in an African quarrel.[131]

These examples reinforce the idea that while public rhetoric may have presented a very different interpretation of events related to the assimilation of indigenous peoples into French civilisation, the reality was evidently very different. Missionaries and their collective, as well as individual perspectives on assimilation certainly complicated its conception in Senegal – yet according to Foster, the missionaries were not as impactful as they could have been;

> "Local dynamics and the interplay between French and African power brokers proved much more significant in determining how policies were developed and implemented on the ground, regardless of how colonial officials were casting their actions in conversations with their superiors. As they confronted a complex religious landscape, administrators rejected Catholic overtures because they saw missionaries at various times as competitors for influence among the African populations, as meddlers who provoked disorder and antagonized Muslim and animist Africans, as allies of political interests that challenged administrative rule, or as agents who gave Africans inappropriate aspirations within the colonial framework".[132]

Despite this, and Foster's compelling evidence, missionaries still played an arguably essential role in limiting assimilation and enabling intermediary construction - in the specific context of Futa Toro. While perhaps not comparable to other indigenous regions, the restriction and control over the education of elites - which previously entailed the *hajj* that had given local leaders like Umar great influence in the past - ensured long-term stability in the Toucouleur homeland that met several goals of both the colonial government and the missionaries. As has

[131] Foster, *FIE*, p. 50.
[132] Foster, *FIE*, p. 179.

been made abundantly clear, the colonial administration was well aware of what role these kinds of leaders played in Islamic society. They did not want indigenous elites to go on pilgrimages to the Middle-East and return with the cultural capacity to undermine French colonial rule, endowed as they would be with the means to declare *jihad*. The effectiveness of this policy for the French cannot be understated, with Islamic recruiters having great difficulty in acquiring the allegiance and support of influential young elites.[133] This made it all but impossible for Afro-Muslim religious leaders to rebel effectively against the colonials in the long-term.

Arguably, these children experienced assimilation far more intimately than those working in the agricultural or trade markets of Futa Toro. Yet even in these schools, they were able to speak their own language outside of class and attend Qur'anic schools should they so choose.[134] Direct French colonial intervention in this matter against missionary interpretations of assimilation suggests that officials were eager to see the children become French enough to serve their purpose as intermediaries. At the same time, they ensured that they would not be so French that it would alienate them from their indigenous communities through a change of religion – yet equally, not be able to be involved in the colonial politics of the broader A.O.F. This further contributes to what this thesis is suggesting - that assimilation was not the goal to begin with, and significantly more limited than public rhetoric made it out to be. Intermediary construction was the realistic outcome. The continuing presence of long-standing Qur'anic schools in the coastal towns, as well as the tutoring some students received there,[135] also highlight this. In the same way that the *métis signares* encouraged Wolof to be spoken at home, it was essential that the children of the indigenous chiefs could return to Futa Toro and function

[133] *Situation Générale de l'Islam en A. O. F. Circulaires, programmes d'enquête, études et rapports*, « plusieurs auteurs », [1906-1918]. 14mi/1084, Série G : PAG, AM 1900-1920. AOM.
[134] *Organisation et fonctionnement de l'enseignement en A. O. F.*, « plusieurs auteurs », [1896-1902]. AOM.
[135] *Organisation et fonctionnement de l'enseignement en A. O. F.*, « plusieurs auteurs », [1896-1902]. AOM.

as expected. To estrange them completely from their own cultures, as would have occurred if they had changed faiths under missionary influence, would have been counter-productive to establishing them as effective colonial intermediaries.

Fanny Colonna reaches a similar conclusion in her work on the French-Algerian education system. Those who had no experience or contact with the French language had to be assimilated, "first by disseminating the French language with French teachers".[136] This idea was mirrored in French-Senegal - in that the schools in Saint Louis and Gorée dealt with indigenous children unfamiliar with French civilisation.[137] Education was a tool of conquest, according to the French republican and statesmen Jules Ferry. Ferry was at the vanguard of Third Republic colonial partisans in the 1890s, when these kinds of education systems were being put in place.[138] His rhetoric emphasised economic reasons for colonialism which included the re-education the indigenous people as part of the duty of the civilising colonial forces.

This was, again, significantly more limited than officials like Ferry said it was – ideological rhetoric did not reflect the nuances of the colonial context. In French-Senegal the situation required for the construction of an intermediary class, so as to effectively stabilise the region and meet the broader goals of the colonial government. Colonna, once again, supports this idea when she states that it was "propitious for the selection of the thin layer of indigenous elite required by the colonial administration, whose primary emphasis was on the moral programming of needs and aspirations" and that "education responded to a more fundamental, but always implicit demand to create a situation in which French domination was never questioned".[139] Had French colonial policy been exactly as assimilating rhetoric made it out to

[136] Colonna, 'Educating Conformity in French Colonial Algeria,' p. 348.
[137] Organisation et fonctionnement de l'enseignement en A. O. F., « plusieurs auteurs », [1896-1902]. AOM.
[138] Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial* Theory, p. 3.
[139] Colonna, 'Educating Conformity in French Colonial Algeria,' pp. 352- 353.

be, the French would have forced their hand. By imposing their civilising mission on local groups directly, they would have had issues of public order and widespread rebellion. Through treaty terms of re-education, the colonial powers understood that they would make the elite sons of Senegal and Futa Toro their intermediaries, ensuring that the French could keep African indigenous groups at a trustworthy distance, yet not result in public order issues – or another Umar Tall.

Conclusion

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The French colonial government in Senegal, between 1852 and 1906, certainly talked about assimilation in a way that implied they had consciously implemented assimilation processes with the intended purpose of stimulating the general acceptance of French identity in local indigenous groups. Yet other factors and evidence show that this was not the historical reality. The colonial government was not able to apply direct assimilation to the same ideological extent as rhetoric portrayed. Rather, over the span of several decades and due to budgetary restrictions, the government focused on applying pragmatic long-term solutions to ensure public order and stability. This was so that it could pursue broader geopolitical pursuits, such as imperial competition with Great Britain. This involved a limited form of intermediary construction, which was combined with targeted acts of direct yet similarly restricted assimilation.

In Futa Toro specifically, information-gathering practices prior, during, and after conflict with the Toucouleur Empire indicate colonial emphasis on acquiring knowledge related to local power structures and Islamic culture. This was done to guide indigenous policies designed to undermine antagonistic Tall dynasty rule. Through treaties, and further manipulation of regional political power struggles, the colonial government applied this knowledge to gradually erode at existing unity amongst the Toucouleurs, making Futa Toro and other regions easier to conquer and control in ensuing decades. Direct assimilation becomes evident in attempts to curtail the influence of Islam, particularly under Brière de L'Isle's term as governor. It was an ultimately fruitless endeavour – yet through education policies imposed on indigenous chiefs through treaty terms, the colonial government was able to encourage the construction of a new intermediary class instead.

Sons of indigenous chiefs, the leaders of the next generation of Toucouleurs, were forced to attend special French schools in the Four Communes. Through their education, we arguably see the most direct form of assimilation practised by the colonial government. The target was not the general population, but rather a specific group of power-holding clerical elites. Yet even in their case, this assimilation was limited. They were not taken to these schools to completely accept and incorporate French identity into their own. Missionary-led schooling also complicated this process and clashed with government views on what should and should not be taught to these children. Regardless, education was evidently one of the main tools used to begin the imagining of a new colonial community. This was achieved through the partial gallicization of these children, as well as restricting their access to regionally empowering Islamic traditions such as the *hajj* to Mecca, which we see exemplified in the story of El Hajj Umar Tall. They would be French enough to rarely question colonial rule, yet not French enough to be able to identify themselves as such in any meaningful way and cripple their influence in their indigenous communities.

The *métis* example contrasted this more direct process of intermediary construction, yet also highlights the importance of education in doing so. The *signare*'s initiative to send their children to French schools on the European continent is arguably what gave them an edge in the colonial community. While still maintaining a unique hybridization of their indigenous culture with evolving French traditions, the *métis* were able to be viewed as distinctly separate from indigenous groups in the 19th century and onwards, existing on a more equal basis with French colonials – as French citizens, not subjects. At the same time, they maintained their indigenous connections to further their collective mercantile goals, yet were able to take an active part in the local politics of the Four Communes and later A.O.F. For the Toucouleurs, it was less a natural choice and more an organised initiative by the colonial government. Both

examples reflect the importance of education in effective intermediary construction and highlight the limitations of assimilation in French-Senegal.

The situation at Fort Lamy in 1906 epitomises the vast changes that had occurred in the span of half a century. On the one hand, one uncle and the son of an exiled dynasty on their *hijra*, only able to look to the horizon past a French fort towards a lost homeland they could never return to – symbolising perhaps a last remnant of pre-colonial indigenous culture in the face of French expansion. On the other hand, the people of that homeland – a clerical elite restricted from enacting their Islamic traditions, and the next generation of Toucouleur leaders sent away to become intermediaries for their new French rulers. This case study provides further insight into the realities of assimilation, contributing to existing literature on the subject and broader themes, such as how vastly different categories of people can be incorporated into an empire's collective schema. Through such an analysis, these practices can perhaps become more recognisable in other contemporary instances.

1906 was indeed a year of increased public unrest - hence the nervousness of Henri Gaden, his soldiers, and Governor Perreaux. Peace was not suddenly achieved through the implementation of colonial policies, and public order continued to trouble the government in Senegal in the following decades. Yet it was certainly not as violent as it could have been, and not destabilising enough to become an issue in imperial-state competition. This was helped by the emphasis that had been placed on colonial intermediaries. As the colonials and indigenous people continued to interact, the imagining of colonial community that resulted evolved with them – a unique blend of intermingling societies and individuals that interpreted it in their own particular way.

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