# CONTENTS

| ILLUSTRATIONS                            | xi |
| MAPS                                     | xiii |
| TABLES AND FIGURES                       | xv |
| PREFACE                                  | xix |
| ABBREVIATIONS                            | xxix |

1 **SENEGAMBIA: THE REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

The Region and Its Political Framework: Sixteenth-Century Realignments 6
Senegambian Agriculture: The Economic Base 13
Senegambian Society 29
Government 37
Religion and Political Change 46

2 **TRADE DIASPORAS AND THE SENEGAMBIAN JUULA**

Islam and Commerce 66
Juula Communities in Senegambia: The Soninke of Gajaaga 68
Jahaanne and Others 75
The Politics of Trade: Juula Communities and the Competition between the Rivers 83

3 **TRADE DIASPORAS FROM OVERSEAS**

The Afro-Portuguese 95
The Great Trading Companies 100
The Trade Diasporas of the Europeans 105
An Era of Transition, 1750–1816 109
The Afro-French Community of the Eighteenth Century 112
Overseas Traders and the Politics of the Neighborhood 121
“Legitimate Trade” and the French Reoccupation of Saint Louis 127
CONTENTS

The English Return to the Gambia; Revived Competition between the Rivers 136

4 THE TRADE IN SLAVES 153
   The Internal Trade and the Export Trade 154
   Enslavement and the Supply Function 156
   The Economics of Delivery to the Coast 168
   The European Factor 173
   Sources and Regional Variants: East of the Rivers 177
   Sources and Regional Variants: Senegambia Proper 182
   The Nineteenth-Century Twilight of the Export Trade 187

5 PRODUCTION FOR THE MARKET 197
   Gold 198
   Iron 207
   Cotton Textiles 211
   Gum 215
   Cattle and Cowhides 218
   Horses and Transport Animals 221
   Beeswax 223
   Ivory 224
   Salt 224
   Kola Nuts 228
   Minor Products 229

6 CURRENCY AND EXCHANGE 233
   Cloth Currencies and Systematic Equivalents 237
   Iron Bars and Bar Prices 240
   Assortment Bargaining 247
   Export Prices and Their Fluctuations 253
   Subdivisions of the Senegambian Market 257
   New Currencies of the Nineteenth Century 264

7 THE WAYS OF COMMERCE 271
   Caravans and Caravaners 271
   The Economics of Transportation and the Pattern of Routes 278
   Political Authorities and the Control of Trade 286
   Markets and Brokers 295
   Market Imperfections and Administered Prices 299
   Credit and Commercial Paper 302
This book is an experiment in a kind of history sometimes called interdisciplinary, sometimes analytical history, or even historical sociology. More specifically, it might be called historical economic anthropology, to identify the disciplinary bounds to be crossed. Or a purist might insist that any study of change in human societies is a study of history, implying that this particular kind of history is still history, neither more nor less. Fundamentally, the label should make no difference, though it does create expectations. This book has to do with historical change, and it brings in some of the theory and concepts of anthropology, economics, and geography; but it is not written to any particular disciplinary model.

Analytical history calls first of all for the study of regularities, uniformities, and similarities in the way human societies operate. This means that the specific and unique aspects of the past, while recognized to exist, are not the center of attention. Nor is it possible at present to discover historical laws equivalent to the regularities in the physical universe. It is possible, however, to look for more limited uniformities of pattern in the way societies work, in the ways they change through time. Perhaps these could be called styles of history or styles of change, to avoid the suspicion of ironclad determinism.

The kind of history aimed at here will depart from two fundamental attitudes of most previous history. It will try to avoid both ethnocentricity and elitism. It seeks the perspective of world history, relating events to their meaning as part of the process of change in human society generally, not to the particular national or cultural setting of the author and his probable audience. It seeks to avoid the elitist bias that has made so much of history an account of men in power, great ideas, important inventions, top nations, or the winners on the field of battle. Economic history, for example, has been concerned almost entirely with the economic growth of the industrial world.
This book is concerned with the process of economic change in a society that still lay outside the industrial world, had not yet become a European colony, yet was linked to the Western economy through trade. My underlying assumption is that generalizations based on the Western economy or on other industrialized economies cannot be an accurate picture of economic change in human society, but only in a particular segment of human society. One object, in short, is to help extend our understanding of economic change beyond the Western and industrial societies that have so far been too narrow a basis for generalization about human behavior.

The subject is an African economic region, not a nation state but a sufficiently homogeneous set of societies for convenient study. Senegambia was a comparatively small and unimportant economic region between the late seventeenth century and the middle of the nineteenth. This book is not principally concerned to explain how Senegambia became as it was at the end of this period. It is concerned with Senegambia as an example of the way an economic system operated on the fringes of the world economy during the centuries before it fell under the economic domination of the West. Its contribution should be first of all an examination of uniformities and styles of historical change within Senegambia itself, though it may then aid comparison between this economic region and others.

Needless to say, the book did not begin with those objectives; few books ever end as they were first planned. It grew instead out of a long-standing concern about race relations in the United States, which had already been translated into historical writing about Africa and the West Indies. It was apparent to Africanists generally during the past quarter-century that the treatment of the slave trade in American historical literature was peculiarly biased. If the trade is conceived as having, broadly speaking, four stages—enslavement, shipment within Africa from the point of enslavement to the coast, shipment across the Atlantic, and sale to the ultimate owner—only the last two appeared in detail. The African aspect was left hidden behind the myth of a "savage" Africa, with the unstated assumption that "primitive" people were probably easy to enslave—or behind the nineteenth-century abolitionists' active mission to show that the trade was evil and should be ended. It was evil, and they succeeded. But historians for a century thereafter turned away from the slave trade, especially from the slave trade within Africa.

In the process, they left unanswered a flock of questions that are now crucial. What, for example, was the impact of the slave trade on Africa? If Africa was supposed to be savage and primitive, how is it that the African commercial system of the 1760's was able to deliver more than 100,000 men, women, and children to the coast for sale to the European slavers in a peak
year? Both sellers and buyers might be called savage, but the commercial system within Africa was far too complex to be called primitive. Other unanswered questions remain. Why were slave prices on the African coast so low that slaves from Africa replaced European workers throughout the American tropics? Were Africans captured for sale to the Americas, or were those already enslaved sold off because their labor in Africa was less profitable to the owners than the price paid by the European slavers?

My direct concern with some of these questions began in the early 1960’s, when I began to put together a collection of historical sources about the slave trade within Africa, drawing on accounts mainly by those who were themselves victims of the slave trade. That research made it obvious that source material existed for the slave trade within Africa and that a study in depth would have to have a regional focus. Since I had edited and commented (in *Africa Remembered*) on the account of a certain Yuuba Jaalo (Ayuba Diallo or Job ben Solomon) from the Senegambian kingdom of Bundu, a man who had been a slave in Maryland and then returned to Africa, Senegambia seemed a convenient point of departure. Because Senegambia was a complex region with many linguistic and cultural variants, it seemed wise to begin with Yuuba Jaalo’s home country of Bundu as a place for orientation to Senegambian culture, for the collection of oral traditions, and for what field work was possible in the retrospective ethnography of commercial culture. Yuuba Jaalo had, in fact, been a merchant, and Bundu lay across the main trade route from the east to the navigable Senegal or Gambia. It was also close to Gajaaga, where the French had maintained a fortified trading post most of the time from the late seventeenth century onward. This meant that European records would be available for early periods and from a spot well in the interior.

The project advanced in 1966 to field research in Senegal and the Gambia. At that stage, however, the objective was still quite different from the present outcome. I hoped to write two short books. One would deal with the trade route running from the Niger valley through Bundu to the coast, its working concept “the biography of a trade route,” while the other was to be a study of Bundu’s policies toward the slave trade that crossed its territory. In the optimism of those days, I hoped to finish one of these books by 1967 or so and the other by 1968 or 1969. In fact, neither book appeared; and it may be that neither will ever appear, though work continues with the Bundu material.

In the summer of 1967, I took time off the Senegambian research to write an essay I had promised J. F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder for their *History of West Africa* (1971), an essay that was to be a synthetic treatment of the slave trade in general from a West African perspective. When I came to the paragraph that had to tell how many slaves were shipped from West
Africa at what times, I began following the numbers from footnote to authority, through his footnotes to his authorities, till it was finally clear that historians had only been copying from one another back to the middle of the nineteenth century. Only Noel Deerr's *History of Sugar* had even tried to make new estimates, and no one at all had systematically gone through the monographic literature to add subtotals and pull together a total number for the slave trade and its parts. The task seemed worth doing immediately, so I put off the Senegambian material once more to write an article. The projected article then took on a life of its own and grew into an unplanned book called *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (1969).

Long before the book appeared, the Senegambia material began to dictate its own priorities. In the beginning, the slave trade had been the main focus. The core of the investigation was the way slaves were acquired, shipped to the coast, and transferred to the Europeans. It seemed at that time to be sufficiently Africa-centered, since it carried the slave trade from origin to point of sale to the Europeans. In fact, it also carried its own weight of ethnocentric distortion. By focusing on the slave trade alone, it abstracted from Senegambian reality the one economic feature that tied it closely to the West at the height of the slave trade.

Abstraction from the total reality is legitimate and necessary for any social science, as it is for most writing. The decision is not whether to abstract a part from the whole reality, but which abstraction will add most to our understanding at the present state of knowledge. As the research continued through still another academic year of leave in Paris and London in 1968–69, it seemed increasingly clear that highest priority did not belong to a mere pursuit of the slave trade into the heart of Africa. Just as the slave trade was a sub-system of the Atlantic economy (even within Africa), it was also a sub-system of a broader pattern of West African society, attitudes, religion, professional standards, self-identity, and much else. First priority was to recapture as much as possible of the broader patterns of Senegambian life in precolonial times, then the economic life in particular, and finally commerce, of which the slave trade formed a part. Only then could the slave trade emerge in a perspective that was not dictated from America. It was only then that the project crossed the imaginary line from economic history to historical economic anthropology.

In the writing, it changed again, but not so crucially. One decision was to write from the inside out, beginning in chapter 1 with a synthetic view of what might be called Senegambian history, with no special emphasis on external factors. In the chapters that follow, the influence of the broader Atlantic world is uncovered layer by layer down to a final quantitative summary of external trade. Each new chapter pulls out some particular aspect for examination. Each should be readable in itself, but the book was written
to be read straight through from the beginning, and it should still read best
that way. The companion to this volume, subtitled Supplementary Evidence,
contains added information for those who would like to pursue the subject
further.

It would be pleasant to believe that the result is like peeling an onion layer
by layer, until finally nothing remains to be explored. Such, unfortunately, is
not the case—not merely because history never produces the whole truth, but
even more because the quality and quantity of evidence available for more
recent history within Western culture is not and will never be available for
distant times in less literate societies. At best, it must be a more partial truth
than produced by social scientists studying the recent past, but its contribu­
tion could be equal or greater because the starting point is so far behind.

The crux of the problem is exactly the same for any social scientific
investigation of long-run phenomena. In the short run of the present and
recent past, it is possible to define the problem and then generate data for
solving it. You can ask questions. Further back in time, you can still ask
questions, but the answers have to be discovered in the evidence the past left,
either by chance or with intent. This explains why historical economic
anthropology cannot make the most desirable kind of contribution to exist­
ing theory in either anthropology or economics. The trade-off is that only
historical studies can say anything at all about change over the long run.

Precolonial history of sub-Saharan Africa also has some special handicaps of
its own. Even though Senegambia was a literate society using Arabic as the
language of religion, comparatively little of the surviving documentation in
Arabic is useful for a study like this one, and the rest of the written record
was left by foreigners. They were mainly temporary residents of the trade
enclaves Europeans maintained along the coast and rivers. Everything they
wrote has kept the biases of their time, place, and social status in Western
society. Few indeed even tried to understand the African societies around
them. For any historian, even present-day Senegalese or Gambian historians,
these sources pose a constant threat of "brainwashing" or unconsciously
imposing their point of view. The "Senegambian point of view" of two or
three centuries ago is probably unrecoverable beyond its vague outlines. The
best that can be done is to avoid the culture-bound attitudes of the Western
present, to try for a perspective on Senegambia in the broader framework of
human society in general.

Other special problems of Senegambian historiography are more annoying
than serious. Colonial education left its impact on the customary orthography
for Senegambian languages, in spite of the recent Senegalese effort to reform
and phoneticize, and the orthographic heritage was double—one in French
and one in English. As a result, members of the same family, pronouncing
their surnames identically, are likely to spell them Diop in Senegal and Jobe
in the Gambia, Diallo in Senegal and Jallow in the Gambia, Cissé in Senegal and Seesay in the Gambia. European map makers dotted their maps with even more various approximations of the proper names they actually heard. In many cases the erroneous name stuck so firmly that no possible extent of intellectual decolonization is likely to unstick it.

One solution I followed in the past was to accept the map name as it is, no matter how far from actual pronunciation, and to accept modern spellings for the names of historical figures. Now, however, the government of Senegal has provided a way out in its new phonetic alphabet, which has already been widely used by Senegalese historians and promises to be standard in the near future, however unfamiliar it may look at first. The Senegalese orthography published in 1971 has the advantage of allowing the same letter to stand for the same sound in the major Senegalese languages—Wolof, Sereer, Pulaar, Joola, Malinke, and Soninke—using a total of forty symbols that can be written with a standard international typewriter. These are described phonetically in tables P1 and P2.

The obvious answer of simply adopting the Senegalese alphabet for all Senegalese names is not as simple, however, as it might appear at first. Official transliterations of place names have not yet been made, and all place names are not pronounced quite the same way by all people—even by those who live

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table P1</th>
<th>Consonants in the Official Phonetic Alphabet for Senegalese Languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implosive or glottalized</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constricted</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lateral</td>
<td>l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trilled</td>
<td>r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-vowels</td>
<td>w</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Letters not found on an ordinary international typewriter may by typed as follows:

\[
\begin{array}{llllll}
\& b & i & ï & ï & p & \acute{p} \\
\& c & ê & ñ & ŋ & f & i \\
\& d' & ð & ñ & ŋ & u & u \\
\& g' & ã & ò & ò & y' & ÿ
\end{array}
\]

Table P2
Vowels in the Official Phonetic Alphabet for Senegalese Languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forward</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Rear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely closed</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>ú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-closed</td>
<td>é</td>
<td>ê</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium or half-open</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open</td>
<td>a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely open</td>
<td>à</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The long form of these same vowel sounds is produced by doubling the letter.


close by. (Think of the problem of a “correct” phonetic spelling for New Orleans.) In time, usage will straighten out most of the existing problems, but foreigners who hear some Senegalese say Bambuhu, while others say Bambugu, must wait until an accepted phonological spelling emerges.

We are, in short, in a transitional stage of some uncertainty, and complete consistency is difficult. The Senegalese orthography is therefore used for all historical personal names, but not for the names of living people, which are spelled as they are by the people themselves. It is used for most place names, but not for those of French or English origin. This is true not only of Bathurst and Saint Louis (still widely called Banjuul and Ndar respectively, and Banjuul has reemerged on the official maps) but also of place names like Kayes, in Mali. Phonetically, it should be Xai, as pronounced locally, but most people in Senegal and Mali know it is Kayes and pronounce it kai. For that matter, Kayes was a colonial town of no great consequence before the railroad was built. It would only be confusing and pedantic to change to Xai at this point.

And a further shift from strict adhesion to the Senegalese alphabet is made here in regard to the symbols, ß and â respectively, which stand for the implosive that sometimes occurs in Pulaar. For typographical convenience, these symbols will appear only the first time a Pulaar term is used, and they will be indicated in the index reference to proper names. It seems unnecessarily pedantic to preserve the full distinction in a book written for an English-speaking audience, few of whom could either make the distinction in pronouncing the words or readily distinguish the difference in hearing spoken Pulaar.
Weights, measures, and currencies present another problem of translation. Weights and measures reported in old French or English measures are easily enough translated into metric equivalents, accepting the authority of H. Doursther, *Dictionnaire universel des poids et mesures anciens et modernes*, unless otherwise noted.

The problem is more severe with currencies. Money is supposed to be a standard of value, but it has never been a very reliable, stable, or convertible standard. The sources for Senegambia refer either to French livres tournois (later francs) or to English pounds sterling. But the structure of prices in Europe was not identical with that in the Senegambian trade enclaves, so that a pound sterling in England was not really equal to a pound in the Gambia, and the same with metropolitan and Senegalese livres tournois. In Europe, even when the silver value of the two currencies was constant, the market price fluctuated within a reasonably wide range. In addition, the silver content of the livre tournois fluctuated considerably, which meant that the par value shifted as well, especially in the early eighteenth century. The pound sterling, however, remained constant at 111.60 grams of pure silver from 1611 onward until after 1850, though it was officially bimetallic through most of the eighteenth century and subsequently shifted to a gold standard. The changing ratio of gold to silver values, however, made no practical difference until the 1840's, so that the value of the pound sterling was nearly the value of a constant quantity of silver throughout the period.

Recognizing that any monetary translation is bound to involve incommensurates, it nevertheless seemed preferable to translate all Senegambian values into a single standard. Because of its constant quantity of silver, the pound sterling was chosen as the standard of reference, and livre or franc values are translated at the uniform annual rate shown in appendix 9 of *Supplementary Evidence*.

Any historical study of this size has a large accumulated load of obligation to those who helped along the way. Financial support has come from the Carnegie Corporation of New York through its grant to the Program in Comparative World History at the University of Wisconsin, from the Guggenheim Foundation for a fellowship in 1966, from the National Endowment for the Humanities for a Senior Fellowship in 1968–69, from the Graduate Research Committee of the University of Wisconsin for a variety of financial aid from funds voted by the State Legislature, and in recent years especially from the Ford Foundation through its grant to the Wisconsin Research Program in African Economic History. I can only hope that the results will be seen in retrospect to justify the confidence they showed, though nothing written here should be taken to represent the views of any of the sponsoring bodies.
The obligation to research institutions is equally great, and especially to the courteous and efficient service offered by the Memorial Library at the University of Wisconsin, by the Archives nationales du Sénégal and the library of the Institut fondamental de l'Afrique noire (IFAN) in Dakar, by the National Archives of Gambia in Banjul, by the Bibliothèque nationale, the Archives nationales, the Archives de la Marine, the Centre d'études et de documentation sur l'Afrique et l'Outre-Mer, the Centre universitaire international, and especially by the Section Outre-Mer of the Archives nationales in Paris, by the Public Record Office, the British Museum, and the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in London.

The greatest obligation of all is to my Senegalese friends and fellow workers in the field, who guided my steps from the beginning of my research. In this respect, I am especially grateful to Amadou Maktar M'Bow for his early interest in this project. In Bundu, Koli Sy performed the invaluable role of introducing me to those who could best help, while in Dakar, Abdoulaye Bathily, Makhan Bathily, and Mamba Guirassy helped with the translation of oral traditions in Soninke, Jahaanke, and Malinke. Most important of all was the unfailing courtesy, friendship, and good advice of Hammady Amadou Sy, who not only translated the Pulaar traditions for me but also acted as my principal informant and guide into the intricacies of Senegalese society, culture, and history.

At a later stage in the work, I received most valuable assistance from my colleagues and friends George Brooks, Lucie Colvin, Anne Curtin, Stanley Engerman, Steven Feierman, Allen Howard, Martin Klein, David Robinson, and Jan Vansina, who were kind enough to read the manuscript and to give me the benefit of their advice.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AM</td>
<td>Archive de la Marine, Paris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANF</td>
<td>Archives nationales de France, Paris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANF-OM</td>
<td>Archives nationales de France, section Outre-Mer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANS</td>
<td>Archives nationales du Sénégal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIFAN</td>
<td>Bulletin de l’Institut fondamental de l’Afrique noire; formerly Institut français de l’Afrique noire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BN</td>
<td>Bibliothèque nationale, Paris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6</td>
<td>In reference to ANF, carries the unstated implication that the indication is the colonial series of documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Curtin Collection of oral traditions of Bundu and Gajaaga, on deposit at IFAN, Dakar, and the African Studies Association, Center for African Oral Data, Archive of Traditional Music, Maxwell Hall, Indiana University, Bloomington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEA</td>
<td>Cahiers d’études africaines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEHSAOF</td>
<td>Bulletin du Comité des études historiques et scientifiques de l’Afrique occidentale française</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CI</td>
<td>Compagnie des Indes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>Colonial Office series, Public Record Office, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FF, NA</td>
<td>Fonds français, nouvelles acquisitions, Bibliothèque nationale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFAN</td>
<td>Institut fondamental de l’Afrique noire, Dakar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAH</td>
<td>Journal of African History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JHSN</td>
<td>Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRGBS</td>
<td>Journal of the Royal Geographical Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC</td>
<td>French Ministry of Colonies or Ministry of the Navy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>British Parliamentary Sessional Papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRO</td>
<td>Public Record Office, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAC</td>
<td>Royal African Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHCF</td>
<td>Revue d’histoire des colonies françaises, Revue francaise d’histoire d’outre-mer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMM</td>
<td>Revue du monde musulman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplement</td>
<td>Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Supplementary Evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Treasury series, Public Record Office, London</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

xxix
ECONOMIC CHANGE IN PRECOLONIAL AFRICA

Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade
The lower valleys of the Senegal and Gambia rivers mark off a region of special significance for African history. Senegambia shares two distinct styles of history—one in common with other maritime regions along the western coast, and a second in common with other regions along the sahal, the southern shore of the Sahara. During the stretch of more than four centuries from about 1450 to the European invasions in the 1880's, European traders appeared along these coasts of the Atlantic and the Gulf of Guinea, once the part of Africa furthest removed from contact with the outside world to the north and east. Maritime contact with the Europeans posed common problems for the west-coast states and peoples, and their solutions to these problems helped to produce a common style of history. This is not to say that contact with Europeans was the dominant force in shaping African history of this period; it was certainly not so in the earlier centuries, though it left a detectable pattern even then in such matters as the response to the Atlantic slave trade, or political controls over trade and trade routes. It became more important from the last two decades of the seventeenth century as the slave trade became the dominant trade for many African regions. Finally, the European presence and pressure became crucial all along the coast during the century from about 1780 to 1880, the "pre-colonial century"; as the slave trade began to end, other trade became more important, and western Africa began to be pulled into closer interaction with the outside world, a process that has been continuous ever since.

Senegambia was a key region in this maritime pattern. It was the closest sub-Saharan region to Europe. In the early centuries of the slave trade, it was the largest single contributor to the repopulation of the New World. The twin water route to the interior gave Senegambia a deep commercial hinterland, reaching to the upper valley of the Niger, which was one reason why Sene-
gambia was never quite so dependent as other regions on the slave trade alone—gum, gold, hides, ivory, and beeswax were also important. In the early nineteenth century, when the Europeans stopped buying slaves for export, Senegambia was the first West African region to shift successfully to other products. Finally, it was a key region for cultural interchange between Africa and the West through a series of Afro-European communities in the coastal towns. These towns in turn were to be among the first in Africa to have modern, representative government. Senegambia, in short, was not so much typical of the maritime style of history over these centuries as it was a paradigm of what was to happen elsewhere, often to a lesser degree.

But Senegambia was simultaneously a desert-edge region, practicing rainfall agriculture, but with steppe and desert to the north. Here too was a region of culture contact, since the desert functioned in many respects like the sea. With camels, people could easily cross it, but a sedentary life was not possible outside the oases which functioned as islands. Senegambia was thus a point of desert-caravan contact with the Islamic civilization of North Africa—and beyond to the whole Middle East. This sahal contact with Islam was older than the maritime contact with the West, and it was more intense. Taking simply the index of religious change, being offered both Islam and Christianity from the outside, most Senegambians today have chosen one or the other in preference to the older local religions, and the great majority have chosen Islam.

From 1450 onward Senegambia was thus in contact with two civilizations of the intercommunicating zone—the civilizations stretching from Morocco through India to China, which had been in nearly continuous contact since before the birth of Christ. The rest of Guinea knew very little of Islamic civilization before the nineteenth century, and the rest of the sahal knew even less of the West.

The Senegambians were conscious of their position at this point of three-way contact, and their ordinary view of the world often saw the contrast in ecological terms. Senegambian social traditions place a low value on occupational specialization and a high value on cultivating the land. They therefore tended to think of themselves as people with the correct values, who grew crops and maintained a proper relationship with the earth and its Creator. People related to the land in other ways were inferior and possibly dangerous. This was true of the Moors who pastured their animals on the steppe and desert, and were forced to trade animal products for the very clothes they wore and the grain they ate. Just as the Moors were desert people, the Europeans were water people whose realm was the sea and the rivers. Some of the more unsophisticated Senegambians believed that Europeans lived constantly on their ships. And the traders and mariners were also a specialized,
unbalanced community, forced to trade in order to exist, skillful enough at what they did well but lacking a proper relationship to the forces of creation.

These underlying attitudes of Senegambian folk culture were so pervasive and durable, it would be hard to overrate their importance for the course of history and equally hard to trace that importance in detail with solid evidence at every point. The Senegambian perceptions, for example, help to underline the fact that this meeting point of three civilizations was not a meeting point of three complete civilizations. Senegambian culture was representative enough of the African civilizations stretching away to the east and southeast, but the desert nomads of the Sahara were fringe people in their relationship to Muslim civilization as a whole. Nor did the motley and invalid crowd of merchants and sailors at the European trading posts fairly represent the West. In this sense, the Senegambians were right in seeing both sets of alien culture-bearers as representative of specialized, incomplete subcultures. That fact in itself has an important bearing on culture contact and the course of historical change.

Another aspect of sahel history drew still more directly from differences between the sedentary and nomadic ecologies. Anywhere along the worldwide frontier between the steppe and the farmland, relations between farmers and herdsmen tended to be both competitive and cooperative. The basis for cooperation lay in specialized production. The herdsmen had milk and meat, and animals to sell for the farmers’ cloth and grain. But the two groups were in competition for the use of land that was marginal to both, and the terms of exchange could often depend on the threat of force. In their power relations, nomadic and sedentary peoples had quite different advantages and disadvantages. The fact that nomads had to keep moving to feed their flocks gave them an enforced mobility that could be turned to military ends. Though they were comparatively few, they could concentrate for raids into the sedentary territory. The sedentary peoples were comparatively rich, numerous, and immobile—attached to their farms, stores of grain, and sources of irrigation water. They could use these advantages in different ways. One possibility was to buy off the nomads with tribute. Another was to build elaborate frontier defenses, a heavily capitalized military effort. Still another was to organize full-time troops, and hence attain the countervening mobility of frontier guards or even extend sedentary control over the steppe itself.

The result of these factors was a style of history along the desert fringe marked by alternation of strength between farmers and nomads. Some nomadic attacks were not merely raid-and-withdraw, but went from an initial victory to the foundation of nomadic dynasties ruling over sedentary empires. When sedentary empires were strong and well organized, however, they were able to control the marginal lands and police the steppe itself, so that
nomadic raids were hard to mount. This style of frontier relations is traceable as far back as written records extend for the western Sudan, nor is it limited to West Africa. It is found along both fringes of the great Afro-Asian dry belt stretching from Mauritania to the Sea of Okotsk. While the first detailed theoretical attention paid to these phenomena had to do with relations between the Sahara and North Africa, the most recent detailed studies have had to do with the great-wall frontier of China.¹

For Senegambia, therefore, the desert was partly a route of contact with Islamic civilization—and this part was shared with the rest of the Sudan as far as the Red Sea—but it was also associated with a style of sedentary-nomadic relations that was shared far more broadly. During the four centuries preceding 1880, however, the pattern of Senegambian relations to the nomads of the north was most closely parallel to that of the other sub-Saharan peoples between the Atlantic coast and Lake Chad. Broadly speaking, the sixteenth century was one of sedentary successes, while the seventeenth and especially the eighteenth witnessed nomadic incursions all along the line. Senegambia's special place in West African history came from the fact that there and there alone the pattern of desert-edge history was overlaid on the maritime style of commercial contacts by sea.

The Region and Its Political Framework: Sixteenth-Century Realignments

The historical region of Senegambia was so called long before the European colonies of Senegal or the Gambia came into existence. The name came from the rivers, but Senegambia was not simply a physical region demarcated by the rivers, and nothing more. It was also a region of homogeneous culture and a common style of history. Three of the principal languages, Sereer, Wolof, and Pulaar, are closely related members of the West Atlantic language family. The fourth, Malinke, is part of the Mande language group centered further east, and the Malinke came into the Gambia valley only six to eight hundred years ago. Malinke culture, on the other hand, is not far different from that of the Wolof-, Sereer-, or Pulaar-speakers. Living as neighbors over several centuries also led to interchange among the peoples, so that Sereer and Wolof today have more in common with the Malinke on the Gambia than they do with the West-Atlantic-speaking region of stateless societies and micro-states that lay to the south of the Casamance River.

The discontinuity of culture patterns to the north of the Senegal is far more

¹. The historical analysis of ecological frontiers as a factor in historical change goes back at least to Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406). It was especially developed in this century by Owen Lattimore, Inner Asian Frontiers of China, 2nd ed. (New York, 1951).
obvious. The people there speak Arabic or sometimes Berber, Afro-Asiatic languages far different from the West Atlantic and Mande language groups, which are usually classified as part of the even broader Niger-Congo language family spoken in most of the rest of West Africa. The ecological difference between cultivating the land and practicing nomadic pastoralism is still more striking, and a difference in physical appearance is usually recognizable. Both the desert people and those to the south are a mixed race, but the mixture is more Negroid south of the desert and more Caucasoid in the steppe. These obvious differences are so obvious, indeed, that they threaten to obscure many similarities—in social structure, for example, in pre-Islamic religious belief and kinship forms, or in music—similarities built up over millenia of contact between the different peoples in the western Sahara and its fringes.1

Toward the interior, the regional boundary is harder to draw. With culture and interstate relations alike, the break is not sharp. Fuuta Tooro, in the middle valley of the Senegal River, has interacted over centuries with the Wolof states on the coast, as it has with its upstream neighbor, Gajaaga (Gadiaga), which speaks Soninke or Sarakoole. Gajaaga, in turn, had close historic relations with its neighbors to the east, who share the Soninke language and other aspects of culture. It is therefore hard to draw a sharp line, and unnecessary as well. In rough terms, Senegambia probably ends as a historical entity at about the present eastern frontier of the Republic of Senegal. Of the precolonial African states, that line would include Bundu (Bondu), which had occasional influence on the state system as far west as the Atlantic, but it would exclude Xaaso (Khasso) and Kaarta, both of which were historically and culturally more nearly within the orbit of the MANDING region.

Cultural homogeneity had ancient roots, but the tug of political consolidation sometimes came from outside the region. Ancient Ghana incorporated part of Senegambia. So did Mali, moving in from the southeast, and even Soiri (Songhai) may have had a distant and indirect form of control over part of the region, at least for a time. But still another focus of early state formation was in Senegambia itself, on the middle and lower course of the Senegal. This northwest focus was a natural center of dense population in the lands watered by the Senegal; it was a point of cultural interchange with desert people, and through them with North Africa. Takrur, predecessor of the later Fuuta Tooro, was an early center of Islam south of the desert. Its first Muslim ruler, War Jaabi, died as early as 1040. Later, in the second half of the twelfth century, a Wolof leader, Njjan Njaj, founded a new state

centered just south of the river. In time, this empire of greater Jolof came to exercise some form of hegemony over virtually all of the western Senegambia, including Dimar, the westernmost province of Takrur.  

The power of Mali began to be felt on the opposite corner of the region in the thirteenth century, as Mali pulled in the eastern part of Senegambia, leaving Jolof in control of the west. Oral traditions date the Malinke push down the Gambia valley to the reign of Sunjaata, in about the middle of that century, but the establishment of a Malinke-speaking population on the lower Gambia was more likely a long process extending over several centuries. The Gambia was a natural objective for Malians. Salt was rare and valuable throughout the Manding region, and the Gambia was a highway leading to the salt flats on the tidal reaches of the Gambia and the Saalum rivers. When Mali was strong, its political control reached down the trade route to the Atlantic, and its hegemony extended briefly over all of Jolof as well.

In the second half of the fifteenth century, when Portuguese accounts first become available, the power of Mali no longer stretched unbroken to the sea. Many of the north-bank states were already independent under Malinke rulers, and many that were to play a continuing role in Gambian history over the coming centuries were already present—Nomi (Niumi or Barra) at the mouth of the river, Rip or Badibu next upstream, Naani (Niani) and Wuuli (Wuli or Oul) dominating the north bank to the head of navigation at Barokunda Falls.

The political situation in the south was more complex. Portuguese accounts mention several of the later Gambian states, like Kantora, opposite Wuli: these states were still under Malian hegemony in the late fifteenth century, but Malian rule was exercised indirectly through Kaabu, the province that occupied the pre-forest region from the Gambia southward to the Corubal—roughly the present-day upper Casamance and the eastern end of Guinea-Bissau. This province appears to have kept a degree of centralized power under the descendents of Tiramakan Traore, who had been commander of the original Malian conquest of the region. At various times, its authority was recognized along the whole south bank of the Gambia, except Kombo, the


Joola region at the far west. Even after the central power of Mali itself weakened, that of Kaabu was to continue.⁴

To the north, Jolof was still a united empire in the late fifteenth century, but much of the real power had slipped to the level of the provinces—the metropolitan province of Jolof proper, Kajor (Cayor), Waalo, Bawol, and Siin—each of which had once been an independent state and would be so again. Of the prominent Wolof and Sereer states, only Saalum was missing; it was founded about 1500. On the middle Senegal, a Takruri state still existed, independent of Jolof but possibly under the overlordship of Jara (Diara) in the sahal further east.

During the century and a half after 1450, the political map of Senegambia was redrawn, and the main changes were the disintegration of Jolof and Mali. That left a series of medium-sized successor states, normally independent, though closely linked to the others through family ties between ruling houses and diplomatic relations between courts, and occasionally falling briefly under the broad hegemony of one of the strongest. This new situation then stabilized through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was only after 1850 that religious revolutions swept Senegambia, changing political geography once more on the very eve of the European conquest.

Direct European influence during the sixteenth century was small. After an initial piratical phase, the Europeans learned that trade was more profitable than raiding. One exceptional episode broke the pattern of European non-intervention, though lessons learned on that occasion may well have helped to freeze the pattern for the future. In 1489, a certain Jelen, the Bumi of Jolof (the second in command to the Burba or king), was ruling over the empire in the name of his half-brother, Burba Biraam, but he fell from power in a palace coup. Biraam was assassinated by his other brothers, and Jelen took refuge first with Portuguese traders on the coast and then in Portugal itself. It was part of the regular pattern of Senegambian politics to take refuge at a friendly court after a fall from power and to ask the host for military help to regain power. Jelen did this, and the Portuguese acceded, on condition that he become a Christian and a vassal of the Portuguese crown. João II came through handsomely with a major expedition of some twenty caravels—a fleet as large as the one that established Portuguese dominance of the Indian Ocean off East Africa a dozen years later. But this fleet was less successful; it sailed into the mouth of the Senegal; the commander quarreled with Jelen and

1.1 Senegambian States about 1700
killed him, and the fleet withdrew. The Portuguese never again tried to place a major trading fort on the Senegambian coast.\textsuperscript{5}

The more serious threat to Jolof domination came from the interior. In about the 1490's, a Puulo (pl. Fuulбе) adventurer named Kooli Teengela Baa had recruited a force of pastoral Fuulbe and others and begun a career of conquest in the western Malian region of weakening central control. He made one entry into Senegambia following down the Gambia river through Wuuli, then crossing to the south bank and on through the south-bank kingdoms until he was finally stopped by the Biafada. Defeat forced him to retreat as he had come, to a fortified camp in Fuuta Jaalō (though it was not yet called that). After rebuilding his force he set out once more for Senegambia in about 1510, moving first to the north and then down the Senegal valley. This time he was successful in establishing his hegemony over the ancient state of Takrur, which he refounded under a new dynasty, the Deñanakoobe (sing. Deñanaanke), who were to rule until the 1770's. Details of Deñanaanke relations with Jolof are not known, but it is clear that Kooli Teengela recaptured Dimar and pushed the metropolitan province of Jolof back from the river.

The coming of the Deñanakoobe not only meant that Jolof now had a strong and troublesome neighbor; it also affected the strategic situation within the kingdom. Cavalry was the dominant military arm, but horses were hard to breed in Senegambia proper. Remounts were mainly imported from the Moors, or even from North Africa. The Moors apparently tried to keep their position in this trade by refusing to sell mares under any circumstances. The interposition of the new Deñanaanke state between the heart of Jolof and the Moors weakened Jolof access to remounts at the very time when the coastal provinces of Waalo, Kajor, and Bawol had a new source of remounts from their trade with the Europeans. The result was further decay of Jolof's central authority over the provinces.\textsuperscript{6}

At an uncertain date, probably in the late 1540's, Kajor led a move toward full independence for the provinces. Not only was it successful, but metropolitan Jolof even fell for a time under the suzerainty of the Deñanakoobe. Kajor moved ahead in the late sixteenth century to be the strongest state in the region in a period remembered still as one of prosperity. But Kajor did not try to refound the Jolof empire under her own control. It was enough to keep Waalo within reduced frontiers and to join Kajor and Bawol in a dual monarchy, where the same man held the titles Teen of Bawol and Damel of Kajor.

Meanwhile, the southwestern part of Senegambia suffered its own conquest


\textsuperscript{6} J. Boulègue, "La Sénégalie," pp. 177–203.
from the interior and its own shift of power toward the Atlantic coast; and this movement was also associated with the weakening of Mali. Somewhere near the middle of the sixteenth century, Kaabu made itself independent of Mali and began a course of expansion on its own, pushing westward and southward into the earlier kingdom of Kasa and against the stateless peoples in the hinterland of the southern rivers. An offshoot of Kaabu expansion even skipped over the Malinke states on the north bank of the Gambia and attacked the stateless Sereer along the Atlantic coast north of the Saalum River. Malinke adventurers from Kaabu first attacked near the coast under leaders associated with the ruling lineages in Kaabu itself, gradually winning Siin for the Gelwar dynasty. With Siin as their base, they then conquered still more territory, this time returning toward the east to create a second Gelwar-dominated state—Saalum, with its capital at Kawon near the present-day city of Kaolak on the Saalum River, ruling over territory stretching still further east and south to reach the northward bend of the Gambia near Kaur.

This whole process remains obscure, and it certainly took several decades. By the end of the sixteenth century, however, Saalum had emerged as one of the most powerful states in Senegambia, with its authority extending over Nomi, at the mouth of the Gambia, and over Badibu and Kular. By this time, the Gelwar dynasty had become Sereerized, but the two Sereer states were separate. Siin remained relatively small and homogeneously Sereer, while Saalum had a Sereer majority, a Malinke dynasty, and important ethnic minorities.

Both the expansion of Kaabu and the Gelwar kingdoms in Sereer country can be associated with the new opening for trade on the coast and up the rivers. Kaabu was beautifully placed to catch the trade moving from the interior to the south bank of the Gambia, and on to the southern rivers. The movement may also be associated with the demand for slaves. Sample data about the ethnic origins of African slaves in both Mexico and Peru in the middle years of the sixteenth century indicate the importance of these Senegambian military and political changes for the source of slaves bound toward the New World. A combination of the Mexican and Peruvian samples can give a reasonably accurate picture of the probable makeup of slave exports from Africa toward the Caribbean and beyond. (See table 1.1.) These data are important, because they confirm the probable course of political events in Senegambia. The Wolof 20 per cent for that particular quarter-century suggests that the wars associated with the breakup of Jolof had already begun. The low proportion of Fuulbe would be expected from the

Table 1.1
Projected Contributions of African Regions to the Northern and Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1526–50

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region and ethnic group</th>
<th>Regional percentage of total exports</th>
<th>Ethnic percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senegambia</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolof</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuulbe</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sereer</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malinke</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea-Bissau</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kasanke</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bañuun</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biafada</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bram</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Mount to Cameroon</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo-Angola</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeastern Africa</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: P. D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, p. 100. The total here is not the whole of Atlantic exports from Africa, since São Thomé was a major importer, but only of the slave exports into the transatlantic trade.

Stability of a newly founded dynasty that was no longer expansionist. The Sereer figures are relatively higher, as would be expected at a time when the conquest of Saalum was still in progress. Finally, the very high percentages from the south suggest that the expansion of Kaabu was an important military operation. If the Sereer and Malinke figures are taken along with the others from present-day Guinea-Bissau and both are taken as a symptom of this last major phase of Malinke expansion to the west, that expansion accounted directly and indirectly for more than half the slaves exported from Africa in this quarter-century. But that expansion ran its course before the end of the sixteenth century, and Senegambia settled down to two and a half centuries of relative stability.

**Senegambian Agriculture: The Economic Base**

Like other pre-industrial societies, most people in Senegambia were concerned most of the time about crops, not states, and the period between the mid-seventeenth century and the mid-nineteenth was one of comparative stability in agricultural technology. The American crops like
1.2 Senegambian Annual Rainfall
maize, peanuts, and tobacco had been assimilated and fitted into the set of available cultigens in the previous two centuries. The next major change was to be the enormous expansion of cash-crop peanut growing in the second half of the nineteenth century, followed by the spread of agricultural colonization in the twentieth. The period between these dates was stable, but not changeless. Senegambian villages were not isolated from the larger world. They were rarely self-sufficient, producing all they consumed; hence they were connected to markets and trade. Although no mass migrations took place, people were constantly moving back and forth, lured by opportunity or pushed by the usual pressures of war, pestilence, and draught.

Senegambians had long since adjusted to the particular problems and advantages of their environment, though some adjustments could not be completely successful. One of the worst problems was erratic rainfall. Located at the extreme northern limits of possible rainfall agriculture, Senegambia might be expected to be dry; but the climate was (and is) dry in its own peculiar ways. The basic seasonal pattern of rainfall is produced by the northward sweep of the intertropical convergence zone, which follows the apparent northward movement of the sun during the northern summer. The zone is a convergence of two different air masses. Monsoon-like winds in these months blow tropical maritime air over the land areas of West Africa. At the same time, a tropical continental air mass moves south from the Sahara, overriding the moister air from the sea. When the wedge of moist air under the dry reaches a depth of 1,500 meters or more, a band of rainfall occurs. This band of rain is comparatively narrow and comparatively intense, and a dry belt follows it, giving a double rainy season to some parts of West Africa further south than Senegambia—one as the intertropical convergence zone moves north and a second one later in the summer when it returns.

The result for Senegambia is a brief seasonal peak of rainfall just at the edge of the desert, the most northerly reach of the convergence zone. A place in the north, like Podor on the Senegal River, has had an annual average of 316 mm of rain in recent decades, but 45 per cent of it fell in the single month of August, and the growing season for rainfall agriculture is barely two months long. More important still, the intertropical convergence front may not arrive at all, or it may not stay as long as expected. In the period 1887–1927, Podor's mean rainfall was 300 mm, but the annual variation ran from 513 mm in the highest year to 128 mm in the lowest. Meanwhile, at the other extreme of the Senegambian region, at Ziguinchor south of the Gambia, the recent annual average rainfall has been about 1,500 mm, distributed over a

growing season from mid-June to early November—five times the rainfall at Podor, twice the growing season, yet the distance from Podor is less than 500 kms or less than Boston to Baltimore, London to Edinburgh, or Calais to Lyons. And Ziguinchor also lacks the insecurity of northern Senegambia. Between 1887 and 1927, the variation from the mean of 1,500 mm was from 2,146 mm in the highest year and 705 in the lowest. Ziguinchor's worst year, in short, was better than Podor's best. The Ziguinchor's variance is not much less than Podor's, but the maximum and minimum are within an acceptable range for agriculture.2

Historical climatology has not yet succeeded in explaining the variations in weather along the northern fringe of the African savanna. The sequence of wet and dry years appears to be cyclic to some degree, since four or five relatively wet years have been followed in recent decades by a slightly longer sequence of dry years. Some scientists once associated this sequence with sun spot activity, but the connection has never been proven; nor has the "cycle" been conclusively proven not to be simply random change.

Another, longer-term variation can be documented back to the sixteenth century. Some dry and wet periods affected the western Sudan as a whole and are attested by simultaneous observations at the Niger's northern bend and at the mouth of the Senegal. (See Supplement, appendix 1.) Around 1500, the intertropical convergence zone apparently moved further north each summer than it does today, carrying the whole pattern of rainfall further north as well. At that time, rainfall agriculture appears to have been generally possible in southern Mauritania, and the Senegal valley was within the belt of safe dependence on the rains.3 These relatively favorable conditions seem to have lasted until the end of the sixteenth century. Then dry years became progressively more frequent until a maximum aridity was reached about the middle of the eighteenth century. This long-term arid phase corresponds to a European cold phase with similar timing; the steepness of the arctic-to-tropics temperature gradient is one factor that determines the northward reach of the intertropical convergence front. A cooling of the northern latitudes tends to push the deserts of the arid belt further south, causing what has been called the "Sahelian effect" (responsible for the period of comparative aridity that began to be felt along the southern fringe of the Sahara in the late 1960's). It goes without saying that these shifts from inadequate to adequate rainfall and back again had enormous importance for human history in the sahel.4

Northern Senegambia has one natural protection against irregular rainfall. The Senegal River flows from further south and from higher elevations. The combination of high altitude and low latitude guarantees a good supply of water each year, and the Fuuta Jaalô highlands where the river begins have an annual average rainfall of more than 2,500 mm. Each year, as the rains begin in June or July on the middle and lower Senegal, the river begins to rise, and it stays high even after the local rains have finished, sustained by the longer rains to the south. Finally, about early November, the waters begin to recede, and people sow crops on the wet fields. The residual moisture in the soil is enough to carry the crops until they can be harvested between March and May. In addition to guaranteeing against total starvation if the rains fail altogether locally, the use of the Senegal water has a second virtue. It makes agricultural work possible at a time of year when work on rainfall agriculture is finished, enormously increasing the productivity per capita. The Futaanke have a saying, “Fuuta is a double-barrelled gun.”

The flood waters, however, had their own form of inconstancy; flood levels varied from year to year, and a few meters difference in the vertical height of the water could mean thousands of hectares difference in the amount of land covered. In the decade 1941–50, for example, the highest flood covered some 280,000 hectares, while the lowest covered only 80,000. But even with this variation, the flood waters improved the statistical chance for a reasonable harvest, since the rainfall crops depended on local rain, while the flood depended mainly on rain that fell far up the watershed. A low-rainfall year in one place could be a high-rainfall year in the other.

Long before the seventeenth century, the people of the middle Senegal valley had developed an intricate response to the peculiarities of their environment. They classified all land as either jeeri, land for pasture or shifting cultivation using rainfall alone, or waalo, floodland usable in the following dry season. Waalo land was further subclassified according to the likelihood of its being flooded, over a range from the low-lying land certain to be flooded every year, up to the highest land that was flooded only by an exceptionally high crest. Jeeri land was also subclassified according to the type of soil and the possibility of getting a crop in a low-rainfall year.

In effect, the Senegal valley downstream from Bakel to the mouth had many characteristics of an oasis river flowing through desert. In this case, though, it was not real desert but an erratic semi-desert, and farmers responded, when they could, by planting different kinds of crops for the

different conditions. A plot planted was partly an act of faith and partly a wager in a complicated game played against the environment. For the waalo lands, the Futankoo Be had a choice of four or five different species of sorghum (called *gros mil* in Senegalese French), selected according to the particular conditions of a specific plot, though the most common was *Sorghum cernum*. For the jeeri the staple was millet (*petit mil* in Senegalese French, botanically *Pennisetum*). Again, two varieties were available in Senegambia, but the choice in the semi-arid north was almost always the one known in Wolof and Pulaar as *suna*, which had the shortest growing season. In recent years, the jeeri has produced about 42 per cent of all cereals grown along the middle Senegal, while the waalo produced 58 per cent. The annual floods are therefore enough to mitigate famine, but not enough to prevent it altogether if the rains fail.

The Senegal valley was also the center of an important pastoral industry. Even though the jeeri well away from the river received as much rainfall as any other land in the region, it was not dotted with permanent villages. The dry-season water table was often too low to be reached by wells before modern drilling equipment came into use, though some dug wells went as deep as 30 meters. Land beyond the reach of permanent villages was therefore left to transhumant pastoralists, who stayed near the river and the sources of water in the dry season and then went out to the north or south of the river when good pasture and surface water returned with the rains. The fact that cattle-keepers had to be away from settled lands exactly when the jeeri cultivation was at its peak meant that pastoralists and cultivators were sharply divided (though pastoral people could and did often raise a millet crop near their temporary cattle camps), and this occupational division has left a deep imprint on the culture and history of the Senegal valley.

It has also left a heritage of enormous confusion in the ethnographic and historical literature. The people of the middle valley call themselves Halpulaar (meaning speakers of Pulaar), regardless of occupation as cattleman or farmer. The fact that they live apart during a good part of the year, however, tends to accentuate the marks of a pastoral subculture. French ethnographers in the nineteenth century began to make a new distinction, dividing the Halpulaar into two different “tribes.” The agricultural they called Toucouleur or Tukulor, and the pastoral they called Peuhl or Peul, borrowing a Wolof term. This distinction persisted down to the present, but only in Francophone scholarship. When English visitors to Africa ran into Halpulaar in northern Nigeria they called them Fulani, regardless of occupation, borrowing the Hausa word. When other English met Halpulaar in the Gambia and Sierra Leone they called them Fula, borrowing from Malinke. The confusion only increased when Anglophone scholars read the work of their French colleagues and added “Peul” and “Tukulor” to their ethnographic data. As a result,
people with an essentially similar language and culture are found in the literature under at least four different names—many more, in fact, since many communities of Halpulaar origin scattered through West Africa have achieved a separate identity by partly assimilating the culture of their neighbors.

This confusion in terminology was influenced by the most serious error of nineteenth-century science. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Senegambians and Europeans alike seem to have thought in terms of three broad categories of people—sub-Saharan Africans, Moors, and Europeans—categories that were essentially cultural, but were also marked by recognizable racial differences that made the individual recognizable on sight. In the nineteenth century, however, pseudoscientific racism was virtually unchallenged in Europe. Early anthropologists assumed that race determines culture, and they became sensitive to smaller racial differences, as between so-called Nordic and Mediterranean in Europe itself. They noticed that the pastoral Halpulaar tended to be more “Caucasian” in appearance than their sedentary neighbors in Fuuta, though everyone on both sides of the line between savanna and desert is actually racially mixed in varying degrees. The slight racial difference among the Fulbe, however, was enough to make nineteenth-century ethnographers distinguish the Peuls from the Tukulor, thus elevating occupational subcultures to ethnic entities.

The two terms come from different linguistic roots. Tukulor goes back to a root that means sedentary. The other root, pul or ful, is associated with the people’s name for themselves regardless of occupation, as in the names of the language they all speak (Pulaar in Senegambia, often Fulfuulde elsewhere) and of their country (Fuuta), or as a general collective for all Halpulaar (Fulbe). In the Senegalese Fuuta, however, the term Fulbe can also have a narrower meaning of pastoral Fulbe, which some informants say originated as a short way of indicating the Fulbe Woodabe, or red Fulbe, so called for their Europeanoid skin color. This usage has tended to make many people say Halpulaar in the Senegalese Fuuta when they refer to all the people, without regard to occupation. Elsewhere in West Africa, however, the most common single term for all people who speak the common language is Fulbe, and this wider meaning is the one I will use here, though much of the time it is necessary to distinguish between Fulbe political units and talk of the Futankooobe as the people of Fuuta Tooro on the middle Senegal, the Bundunkooobe (sing. Bunduunke) for those of Bundu to the southeast, and so on.

Many different hypotheses have sought to explain why people who have the same language, very similar culture, but different occupations should also tend to have somewhat different racial mixture according to occupation. The

---

Since ethnic groups are mixed in all regions, the map shows only those that are numerically dominant.

- Sedentary Fuulbe
- Soninke
- Malinke
- Tanda (Kollegi, Bassai, Bajar, etc.)
- Wolof
- Serer
- Joola
- Fuulbe pastoralists scattered among other populations

1.3 Ethnographic Map of Senegambia
most reasonable explanation begins with Fuulbe oral traditions saying that they came from the north, supported by the fact that they once controlled a great deal more territory to the north of the Senegal than they now do. These early Fuulbe were sedentary, and they were negroid in appearance. They settled along the middle Senegal, while the Sereer who speak a closely similar language moved on to settle in the region between Cape Verde and the mouth of the Saalum River. Meanwhile, the Wolof had been neighbors of the Fuulbe and Sereer in their original home to the north. Wolof, for example, is a related language, but not as closely related to either Sereer or Pulaar as Sereer and Pulaar are related to each other. The Wolof moved south in their turn and settled near the mouth of the Senegal, southward to Cape Verde, and eastward into the later core area of Jolof. In this way, they put a wedge of Wolof speakers between the Sereer and Fuulbe.

As a next step, probably after the Wolof occupation of the lower Senegal, Zenata or Sanhaja Berber pastoralists followed the sedentary migrations. The evidence now at hand suggests that the pastoral Fuulbe were an offshoot of these Berber migrations. Not only do the caucasoid Fuulbe pastoralists look a little like Berbers; serological evidence also suggests a Berber connection. The probable course of events is that some Berber pastoralists attached themselves to the denser communities of sedentary Fuulbe. In time, they assimilated Fuulbe culture and intermarried with the negroid Fuulbe to produce the present racial mixture, and the geographical conditions of the Senegal valley suggest why this process of cultural and racial change may well have been relatively rapid. Pastoral peoples who crossed to the south of the Senegal valley could practice wet-season movement into the Ferlo wilderness to the south, but they would return each dry season to the dense Fuulbe populations along the waalo lands of the Senegal. Interchange and intermarriage with the sedentary people could produce major changes in culture within a few generations. Meanwhile, Berbers who practiced the same kind of transhumance north of the Senegal, as many Moors still do, would retain continuous contact with people of their own culture. This hypothesis certainly oversimplifies; but it helps to explain changes that had already taken place by about 1000 A.D., when the pastoral Fuulbe of recent history were already on the scene with a physical appearance and culture not unlike that of the present day.

8. This hypothesis has been adopted by a number of different authorities. See Pélissier, *Paysans du Sénégal*, passim.

9. Racial mixture has been continuous for centuries along the southern Sahara fringe where negroid and caucasoid peoples meet, producing a variety of different mixtures. Serological studies among the pastoral Fuulbe in northern Nigeria indicate that the mixture there tends to be stabilized with a larger number of negroid than of caucasoid genes. (R. G. Armstrong, *The Study of West African Languages* [Ibadan, 1964], p. 28.)

But the Fuulbe puzzle is not ended there. Fuulbe are not found merely in Senegambia, near others who speak related languages. They are scattered across the West African savanna belt as far east as Cameroon and Chad. By the 1950's, Fuulbe were estimated to be 6,000,000 in all, but barely 200,000 (or around 3 per cent) still occupied the original homeland in the middle valley of the Senegal. Part of the explanation seems to be that Fuulbe filled an unoccupied ecological niche in the western Sudan. Some farmers there kept cattle, but they were not able to take full advantage of transhumance as long as they were tied down to their fixed villages and crops. Pastoral Fuulbe on the move found they could prosper through a division of labor with sedentary farmers. Their numbers could therefore increase, while those who stayed at home were limited by the carrying capacity of the middle Senegal.

Transhumant pastoralism was itself an encouragement to migration. As long as the group moved north each summer with the rains, it was easy to seek a new dry season base if the need arose; and the need could arise from conflict with other pastoralists, from conflict with their sedentary hosts, from weather conditions, and from much else. Nor was the pattern of transhumant drift followed by the Fuulbe alone. The Shuwa Arabs began a similar drift on the Sudanese shore of the Red Sea and gradually moved westward as the Fuulbe were moving east. By the late nineteenth century they had actually overlapped, with some Shuwa west of Lake Chad and some Fuulbe to the east. The timing of the Fuulbe drift outward from Fuuta is uncertain, but it had apparently begun before the year 1000.

One other encouragement for the Fuulbe diaspora lay in the physical environment of Fuuta itself. A cycle of good years with high rainfall, good crops, and good grazing on the jeeri would encourage the herds and even the human population to increase. When the dry years came, it was a natural reaction of the mobile pastoral Fuulbe to move out. Unlike their sedentary neighbors, they rarely had waalo land to fall back on. The Senegal valley conditions were therefore like a demographic pump; a few decades of mostly good years filled the cylinder with people and their cattle, while a series of bad years like the early 1970's pushed them out to begin a process of transhumant drift.

The basic economic and work unit among the sedentary farmers in Fuuta Tooro was the narrow family made up of a man, his wives, and his children, with the possible addition of a few close relatives or slaves. With the agricultural technology that prevailed into the recent past, this unit could work only a small plot of land, perhaps 1.5 hectares of jeeri and 2.25 hectares of waalo.

Control over the use and produce of these plots was set in a complex and
historically determined system of land tenure. The basic right over land
belonged to the man who first cleared it (and his descendents), or in the jeeri
to the one who dug the first well. The holder of this kind of claim was called
jom jengol (master by right of fire) or jom levre (master by right of the ax).
He could farm the land himself or rent it out on a variety of tenures. A
second kind of claim was created by the state, superimposed on that of the
jom jengol. This second title was jom leeidi (master of the land), and it was
usually held by court favorites, important officials, or others who had earned
the gratitude of the ruler. Their estates were often substantial, usually
managed by a slave official called a jagraf. The jom leeidi simply collected
annual dues and special inheritance payments from the peasant who worked
them in the status of jom jengol, or from the jom jengol’s tenants.

As of the late 1950’s, about a fifth of the cultivated land in Fuuta was
under a jom leeidi. Another 37 per cent was worked by tenants who paid the
jom jengol for the right to cultivate, usually a substantial payment of 10 to
50 per cent of the harvest. Another third of the land was worked by the jom
jengol, without a separate jom leeidi over him. The remainder, about a tenth
of the whole, was joint-family property whose co-proprietors formed a
segment of a lineage. Nearly 60 per cent of the land, in short, was worked by
men who owed part of the income to other private claimants. When the rights
of the jom leeidi are traced back in time, however, many of them are found
to have originated in the period of religious warfare at the end of the
eighteenth century. In the seventeenth or early eighteenth century, a far
higher proportion of the land was owned by the peasants who worked it.13

As one moves up the Senegal valley through upper Fuuta and into Gajaaga
the environment changes in important ways. The floodplain of the river is
narrower, which means less waalo land; but the rainfall is greater, which
means that the jeeri is progressively more valuable. At present, the average
rainfall doubles between Podor and the frontier between Fuuta and Gajaaga.
It reaches 800 mm a year in central Gajaaga and northern Bundu, 900 in
central Bundu, and 1,000 mm in southern Bundu. Over the same distance the
natural vegetation also changes from open grass with only a few trees, to dry
savanna and sparse woodland, and then into a dry forest so thick it is rarely
possible to see more than a few hundred meters, even in the dry season.14

13. The chief authorities for more detailed studies of Futaanke land tenure are H.
Gaden, “Du régime des terres de la vallée du Sénégal au Fouta antérieurement à
tenure des terres indigènes au Fouta,” CEHSAOF, 18:415–18 (1935). The simplified
version given here is largely that of Boutillier and others, Vallée du Sénégal, pp. 112–15.
See also D. Robinson, “Abdul Bokar Kan and the History of Futa Toro, 1853 to 1891,”
(Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1971), for nineteenth-century relationships of polit­
ical change to changing land tenures.

14. For Senegambian zones of natural vegetation see J. Trochain, Contribution à
l’étude de la végétation du Sénégal (Paris, 1940).
Millet and sorghum give way to a greater variety of crops in these latitudes with their longer growing season—rice along the streams, maize, cotton, indigo, and peanuts on the higher land, along with millet. In Bundu, the land used for rainfall agriculture is called niaruwaal or seeno, rather than jeeri as in Fuuta, and it is far more important to the economy. The lowest of the waalo land along the Faleme, the part certain to be flooded every year, is nowadays planted with eggplant, tobacco, onions, and an African bean called néebe (Vigna sinensis), while sorghum is moved to higher land that might or might not flood in a particular year. The waalo, in short, is hardly more than a kitchen garden, while the major crops are grown with rainfall alone. The other major change from the Futaanke pattern is the presence of American crops like maize, peanuts, and tobacco. Their first appearance is not documented, though they were present and important by the 1720's. This suggests an indefinite date of introduction sometime before the end of the seventeenth century. Millet, however, remained the principal export crop from Bundu until the middle of the nineteenth century, while peanuts were kept for home consumption and soap-making. Today, of course, the situation is reversed; peanuts are sold overseas, while millet is kept or sold locally.

Bundu and Gajaaga kept the general principles of Senegambian land tenure—that ownership belonged to the lineage that first cleared and made the land productive, though the state reserved some rights to itself (like that held by a jom leedi in Fuuta). Most land, however, was distributed at the village level, where it was owned and worked by an extended family. Some fields were assigned to the family as a whole, and the produce of those fields was redistributed by the lineage head. Other fields were assigned to the nuclear family, and the produce of those fields was redistributed to the smaller group. Even slave families were assigned a small parcel of land. The state-held land in Gajaaga was mainly rented to those who worked it. The Tunka or ruler appointed a slave official called the jagarafu to manage these lands, in much the way the jagraf did in Fuuta, but no land-holding nobility stood between the Tunka and the peasant.

Bundu was again different. The usual work unit was the small or nuclear family, as in Fuuta; but virtually all land was held by the village, even more

than in Gajaaga. In fact, land in Bundu has no scarcity value except along the Faleme and other streams,\textsuperscript{18} and no evidence suggests that it did in the past, though population densities before the middle of the nineteenth century are thought to have been higher than they are today. A recent study showed the region of Bundu as a total of 1,795,000 hectares, of which 88.9 per cent were unsuitable for cultivation (largely because laterization had turned the surface to rock); 5.6 per cent were judged suitable, but only 1.6 per cent had ever been cultivated in the past and only 0.9 per cent were being cultivated at the time of the survey.\textsuperscript{19} In these circumstances, uncleared land acquired value only through the labor of those who cleared it. They kept their control over it until its fertility was gone and it returned to fallow. After a few years in fallow, it was again ready for use, but it had to be cleared all over again by the new occupier assigned to it.

Wolof agriculture on the Atlantic coast faced different problems and met them in different ways. Aside from the waalo land along the Senegal in the country called Waalo, the Wolof had to depend on rainfall agriculture—but with only about half the rainfall normal to Bundu or Gajaaga. On the other hand, the soils were comparatively light and easy to work, which meant that low yields per hectare could be balanced by cultivating more hectares per man. If the rains came in the right quantity and with the right timing, yields per worker could be as high as anywhere in Senegambia. The Wolof therefore grew a combination of crops that balanced many possible kinds of diversity against one another. They grew the suna variety of millet near the village, the sonio variety further out, and sorghum on scattered patches of clay soil. Near the house, cotton, peanuts, and manioc were common, supplemented by goats and sheep. The Wolof also kept cattle; but they often consigned them to the care of the Sereer or to Fuulbe herdsmen for the cycle of transhumance. This meant that manure was not available as fertilizer to permit continuous cropping without a period of bush fallow.\textsuperscript{20}

Wolof land tenures bore a family resemblance to others in Senegambia, but with their individual peculiarities. The primary claim came through descent from the man who had first settled and cleared it. This claim, however, was held by the lineage, not the individual, and it usually included much more land than a single family could work. The head of that lineage held a claim called\textit{ borom dai} (the right of fire), and his office of\textit{ lamane} (often translated as “master of the land”) also included obligations to the earth deities—

\textsuperscript{18} Land in and near towns and villages obviously had a site value, but this was apparently slight.
\textsuperscript{19} The remaining 3 per cent were forest reserves. See M. Baro, B. Fall, D. Diarra, D. N'Diaye, and B. Dieye, \textit{Le Sénégal oriental, étude régionale} (mimeographed study for CINAM and SERESA, c. 1957), ANS, B. I. 4° 174), p. 104.
\textsuperscript{20} Péllissier, \textit{Paysans du Sénégal}, pp. 149 ff.
obligations that have often disappeared in recent centuries with the progressive introduction of Islam. The laman who held borom dai collected customary payments from each of the families that actually worked the land, though these payments were usually more nearly a ritual token of recognition than an economic rent. Those who worked the land held another kind of right, borom ngajo (right by ax), more sharply distinguished here than in Fuuta from the “right by fire.” This claim normally covered the amount of land a family actually worked; it was equally heritable with borom dai, and it was a secure tenure as long as the symbolic payments to the borom dai were made regularly.

It is usually assumed that the lamanate preceded the establishment of states. When higher authorities like the Burba of Jolof, the Damel of Kajor, and the Teen of Bawol came on the scene, they simply superimposed their power, leaving the laman in office with their old functions. But the state needed to reward loyalty, and it began granting tracts to those it favored. This movement paralleled the similar grant to a jom leeidi in Fuuta, but it differed in its consequences. The level of dues collectable under these government grants of lamanate remained at the low, symbolic levels of the past. If the territories controlled were large enough, they might produce a significant income; but they were not the source of inequality that similar grants were to be in Fuuta. Many of the grants covered areas that had no pre-existing laman; in this case the government appointee simply began to collect the dues a laman might have collected. Later grants were in the core areas of the various kingdoms, but they tended more often to extinguish the rights of the existing laman than to impose a second layer over him.

Here, as in Bundu, land had little scarcity value. Where the only real value of land was the capital cost of clearing it, command over land was not an important source of social differentiation; but command over people was. By the nineteenth century, a military aristocracy of slave origin, the ceđdo (thiedo), became more and more important in all the Wolof states, but their power came from their influence over the court and from their ability to harass and plunder the peasantry, not from enforced collection of regular dues or rents.21

Sereer agriculture and Sereer life in general were different from the Wolof in ways that transcend the southward step toward more dependable rainfall. Where the Wolof peasants tended to be mobile and impermanently fixed, Sereer villages and people had a quality of closedness, stability, and cohesiveness—all of which are aspects of their tendency to fend off foreign

influence. Where Islam had long been a crucial force, if not the only religious force, in the Wolof states, the Sereer kept to their religion based on the worship of ancestors and of the tree and the earth spirits, through many centuries of contact with Islam, though many have only converted to Christianity or Islam in the past century. This meant that the Sereer laman had quite a different position from the Wolof equivalent. He held the land by right of fire (yal o niat), but his position was mainly religious, a link between the land and those who worked it. The payments he received therefore kept the significance of religious contributions longer than they did among the Wolof.

The continued ritual functions of the Sereer lamanate may be one reason it and the peasantry together were more successful than the Wolof were in defending their position against royal encroachment. The very foreignness of the Gelwar rulers may also have made them sensitive to the danger of seeming to interfere with the local religion. In addition, the individual economic units among the Sereer peasantry tended to be larger and more stable than they were among the Wolof, possibly providing a stronger organization for resistance. Here, the basic economic unit was the extended family, living in a single compound (mbind). The lineage held the land by right of the ax (yal bakh in Sereer). Its total work force might vary between ten and forty people associated with a single matrilineage and represented by a lineage head who was normally the eldest male.22

Sereer agricultural technology was also strikingly different from other Senegambian systems, though the crops were the same. Millet was the basic cereal, especially the suna variety, though in recent years Sereer have grown more neebe and cotton than the Wolof, and less manioc. The real difference was the Sereer use of penned cattle, held in the fields soon to be cultivated, rather than sent out for transhumance with the Fuulbe shepherds. The manure made it possible to use some fields year after year, and the cattle pens were integrated with the use of the Acacia albida. The peculiar feature of this tree is a deep tap root which enables it to act as though the seasons were reversed. It sheds its leaves just before the rains begin—thus providing humus for the soil about to be worked and opening the fields to sunlight. At the beginning of the dry season it grows new green leaves, and the leaves on the lower branches serve as fodder for the cattle toward the end of the dry season when other food is scarce. Although this tree is grown intensively in Sereer country and elsewhere in West Africa, it is not native to the region, and it requires horticultural care from farmers who want to benefit from it.23

22. This discussion of Sereer agriculture is based on Pélissier, Paysans du Sénégal, pp. 183–299.
23. The Acacia albida is not used in quite the same way elsewhere in Africa, but it has become a common tree in scattered regions from Senegal to Lake Chad. How or when it came to West Africa is not known, nor is its place of origin, though North Africa is suspected.
As a result of this combination of cattle, millet, and Acacia albida, the Sereer were able to use the land more intensively than their neighbors and therefore to have denser patterns of settlement. Present-day population densities cannot be read back into the past, but they help to measure the relative productivity of agricultural systems that have not changed drastically. Where Wolof densities in recent decades have been on the order of ten to thirty people per square kilometer, the heart of the Sereer region carried at least sixty and sometimes seventy-five people in an equivalent area.

This density of population dropped off sharply between the mouth of the Saalum River and the mouth of the Gambia. For reasons that are still not clear, the Malinke occupation of the Gambia valley stretched only a short distance north of the river, leaving the region further north sparsely settled, with only scattered fortified villages of varying ethnic identity. This underpopulated region was one of those available for planned agricultural colonization in the twentieth century.

Ethnic heterogeneity marked the middle valley of the Gambia as well, where the Gelwar monarchy of Saalum ruled a population that was not merely Sereer but Wolof, Malinke, and pastoral Fuulbe as well. The wedge of Malinke population stretching west from the greater Manding culture area in present-day Mali was not merely a wedge in the sense of splitting apart the West Atlantic languages; it also had the shape of a wedge, with a point in Nomi on the north bank at the mouth of the Gambia. Moving inland, it became appreciably wider, with Naani and Wuuli on the north bank matched by Malinke dominance over Kaabu on the south.

The Gambia River had little of the agricultural importance of the Senegal in Fuuta, partly because its water was not easily used for irrigation and partly because better rainfall made irrigation less necessary. The floodplain is much narrower than the floodplain of the Senegal. Though the Gambia's annual rise is nearly 10 meters, it floods a much smaller area. More serious still, the Gambia is tidal during low water as far as the head of navigation at Baro-kunda Falls. Even in the time of the annual flood, the tides still reach as far as MacCarthy's Island, 195 kms in direct line from the mouth of the river or 283 kms following the river. With the end of the rains, the tides begin to push inland again, bringing salt water as far as 350 kms up river at the end of the dry season. The salt destroys the possibility of easy dry-season cultivation on the floodplain of the lower river. Techniques that have been used recently to remedy some of these problems were available only in this century.

It is hardly worthwhile trying to determine at this distance in time why or whether the Malinke system of agriculture was less efficient than it might have been. It was certainly not as efficient as the Joola rice cultivation of lower Casamance, which today supports a population as dense as sixty people per square kilometer, through careful control of fresh and salt water by a
system of dykes. The Malinke on the Gambia on the other hand put the main emphasis on upland millet and other grains, leaving rice to women, as a secondary crop, when women were already largely occupied with other chores. Either as a result, or because they had small alternative, Malinke rice cultivation was comparatively inefficient, with seeds sown broadcast in swampy areas and with small attention to transplanting or hydraulic controls until recent decades. And one result was to leave the Gambia valley so sparsely populated that immigrants from other regions had to be attracted as “strange farmers” when peanuts began to be grown for export in the middle of the nineteenth century.

This is not to say that the Joola system of rice cultivation would have worked along the Gambia. What appears today as inefficient may actually reflect an optimum use for that environment, given the technology available. The valley of the Kuluntu, a southern tributary to the Gambia, is completely unpopulated, even today, though it has a broad floodplain and annual flooding that could easily be adjusted to intensive rice cultivation. Yet the people of the region stay in the surrounding uplands and grow millet under conditions clearly inferior to those in the valley floor, because the price of using those resources is simply too high; the gallery forest along the river provides protection for tsetse fly and hence the danger of sleeping sickness, while the river itself is home to the variety of snail that acts as intermediate host for “river blindness” (*Onchocerca volvulus*).

**Senegambian Society**

Just as the new state structure of the late sixteenth century was comparatively stable, the social patterns were also comparatively stable. As a result, recent field studies are in broad agreement with historical records, and this congruence makes it possible to use both sources in reconstructing the patterns of past society. Some of the detail is inevitably lost in this process, and much of the change through time that might be apparent from better historical evidence is simply not visible, but the main outlines are clear enough.

Almost everywhere, the fundamental social division was tripartite. First, the free men, *jambuur* in Wolof, *riimbé* (sing. *diimo*) in Pulaar, *horó* in Malinke.

---


Then came the so-called caste people belonging to endogamous occupational
groups such as blacksmiths, leather workers, or minstrels, called collectively
nehō in Wolof, neeëibe in Pulaar, or namahala in Malinke. Finally came the
class of servile bondsmen, sometimes called slaves (jam in Wolof, maacube in
Pulaar, jōo in Malinke). In a broad sense, the three major divisions were a
hierarchy of rank, but wealth, status, and power did not line up neatly in the
ranked order. Many finer lines and divisions could exist within any of the
three divisions, so that in fact they overlapped. Those who were best off in
either of the lower groups, in terms of wealth, status, and power, were better
off than the lowest ranks of free men.

Several distinctions were drawn among the free men. The mere fact of being
free might mean no more than belonging to the mass of the Wolof peasantry,
the baadolo. It was thus a neutral status, a zero point, to be added to or
subtracted from. Some men had less, by virtue of membership in the occupa­
tional “castes” or being bondsmen. Others had more, by virtue of office or
personal reputation, and above all by membership in a privileged lineage. The
root of the free man’s self-identity and the framework for his day-to-day
relations with others was kinship. In pre-Islamic times this meant a matri-
lineage for the Wolof, Sereer, and Fuulbe—inheritance passed from male to
male, but following the female line. For the Malinke, the normal form of
reckoning descent was in the male line, though either system could change to
the other. The Fuulbe who converted to Islam changed to the Muslim
patrilineage, though traces of matrilineage remain in Fuuta and among the
pastoral Fuulbe down to the present. Patrilineal descent also gained a great
deal of ground in Wolof territory, though it never replaced the important
matrilineages. At the same time, the patrilineal Malinke who became the
rulers of the Sereer states and of Kaabu changed over to a system that
emphasized matrilineage, though keeping some patrilineal elements.¹

Whether patrilineal or matrilineal, the largest kind of lineage group in
Senegambia, sometimes called a clan, was one made up of all people who
traced their descent back to a common ancestor (usually a male ancestor,
even when traced through the female line). The members of this clan had
(and still have) a common surname, called jaamu in Malinke, yetooë in
Pulaar, sant in Wolof, but there are more lineages than surnames, so that quite
separate lineages may have the same surname. In any event, the whole clan

¹. For the upper class or free people generally see C. A. Quinn, “Traditionalism, Islam,
and European Expansion: The Gambia 1850–90” (Ph.D. diss., University of California,
Los Angeles, 1967), pp. 71–73, recently published as Mandingo Kingdoms of the
Senegambia: Traditionalism, Islam, and European Expansion (London, 1972); Wane, Les
toucouleur, pp. 29–34; Diagne, Pouvoir politique, pp. 56 ff.; Barry, “Royaume du
was not an effective social unit. It was usually scattered in villages hundreds of miles apart, and its distribution cut across linguistic, ethnic, and state boundaries, though most prominent surnames have a known original ethnic identity. All the people of a clan were linked by the belief that they were kin, and by common totemic animals. One, called *tana* in Malinke, was the totemic animal proper, associated with the ancestors and never to be harmed in any way. The other animal symbol was called *bemba* in Malinke, *ele* in Pulaar, and it was repugnant rather than attractive or protective. This system of dual animal symbols extended far beyond the Senegambia. In spite of the coming of Islam, it was found in recent years from Wolof country on the Atlantic coast, through Fuuta, and on east into the whole of the greater Manding region.

But the clan was too broad to be an effective political or social unit. The effective lineage was the segment living together in a single town or village, often having contiguous compounds of a ward belonging to that clan alone. This local unit (*lu* or *kabilo* in Malinke, *gale* in Pulaar) had an active head, normally the oldest member, who represented its interests to higher officials, settled internal quarrels, and sometimes acted as a central agent for receiving and redistributing income from the group’s economic efforts. This local unit usually included the bondsmen subordinate to members of the lineage of free men, and might include some clients and especially some of the associated “caste” people. In this way, the position of the free lineage often determined the status of subordinate ranks as well.

But the “caste” people were not set in a social hierarchy so much as set aside from the rest of society. This is one reason why the Portuguese-Indian term *caste* tends to be confusing in the West African setting. Like Indian castes, the West African *neefibe* were endogamous and they were associated with particular occupations, but there the similarity ends. The West African caste groups were not separated by religious prohibitions, either Muslim or pre-Muslim. They were defiling to others through sexual contact but not necessarily through social contact, such as common dining. Caste rules in this respect differed from place to place. While the free people everywhere thought of them as separate, they were not necessarily inferior. Whether they were or not depended on the particular caste. Blacksmiths, for example, were feared, but also respected for their technical expertise—not for skill or virtuosity alone, but because they had to deal with the tree spirits to make charcoal and with the earth itself to extract ore for making iron. These dealings required special ritual and spiritual contacts that ordinary people were well advised to stay clear of.

Minstrels were a group with variable status. People looked down on some of them as mere entertainers, just as Europeans of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries placed “players” at the bottom of the social hierarchy along
with domestic servants. But the Senegambian minstrels were not merely at the bottom of a social hierarchy; they were outside it, and their potential for defilement was so strong that they were formerly buried in trees to avoid polluting the soil. At the same time, many were close to the nobility and the centers of power. Not only could they have informal influence through their advice, they often had a formal political role as well, especially in diplomacy and above all in diplomacy between factions within the same lineage. Leather-workers and woodworkers, on the other hand, were craftsmen whose work itself was defiling. Woodworkers dealt with trees, which were the home of the spirits in the pre-Islamic religion. It was therefore necessary for them to deal with the supernatural in ways that could be dangerous in the same way that it was for blacksmiths, while leather-workers were defiled by the necessity of breaking certain blood taboos.  

The institution of the neno or namahala is at its most complex, strongest, and probably oldest along the Senegal valley, especially with the Wolof and the Fuulbe. The Wolof in the seventeenth century distinguished five separate occupations as the basis for endogamous social groups—fishermen (cubalo), weavers (rabb-ser), woodworkers (lawbe), smiths (tegg), and minstrels (gewel). This would be a maximal list of occupations, even though some societies counted two or even three different kinds of minstrels. Approximately the same complexity of caste division still survives in the middle and lower Senegal valley.  

The number of divisions and the strength of the institution then tends to diminish with distance from the mouth of the Senegal, but the diminution is not directly proportional to distance. It weakens rapidly to the north and the south, for example, but it stretches far to the east. In Fuuta, the fishermen shift into the group of free men, but a small group of potters is added to the Wolof list. In Bundu and in some parts of Fuuta the weavers tended to be grouped with minstrels, and weavers drop from the list altogether among the Malinke both in the Gambia valley and the Manding heartland. Otherwise, the core of the institution, distinguishing smiths, leatherworkers, woodworkers, and minstrels of two kinds, persists into the whole of the Manding culture area. It begins to weaken sharply only with movement still further east—for example in Mossi country of the present-day Upper Volta, where only blacksmiths persist as a separate “caste.”


4. Person, Samori, 1:54-58.
With movement north or south of the Senegal, on the other hand, the number and importance of the ṇeeîibe also decreases sharply. To the north, the Moors of the Mauritania distinguish only two endogamous groups, minstrels and praisers on one hand (‘iggawan, sing. ‘iggiw), and a group of all the craftsmen on the other, including smiths, soapmakers, leatherworkers, and so on (called m’allmin, sing. m’allam). To the south, even the Sereer borrowed the institution from their Wolof and Fuulbe neighbors within recent centuries, and in many instances the “casted” people themselves were immigrants from the north. The institution is strong with the Gambia Malinke, but here it is intrusive and reflects its strength in the Manding region to the east. South of the Gambia, caste distinctions drop off altogether. The Bajaraanke, Koñagi, and Basari of southeast Senegal, who once lived much further north, believe that blacksmiths have a special relationship with the supernatural, but the smiths are not endogamous.

Whatever its origin and cause of diffusion, the institution of “casted” occupations is not coterminous with other aspects of culture. It exists among sedentary people speaking West Atlantic languages, as it does among nomads speaking Afro-Asiatic languages like Arabic and Berber. It appears strongest among West Atlantic speakers like the Wolof and Halpulaar, but it stops short of other West Atlantic speakers like the Bajaraanke, and it has only recently reached the Sereer, who are close linguistic relatives of the Fuulbe. It corresponds somewhat better to the region that has a long historical experience of elaborate political institutions of the state type, but even there the correspondence is far from perfect.

The presence of the ṇeeîibe as an institution affected society at large. Where ṇeeîibe were important, a strong sense of occupational solidarity was often found among free men, and members of particular lineages tended to follow the same occupation generation after generation. Interest groups or professional groups that came into existence in particular historical circumstances could be frozen by inheritance and then separated somewhat from the rest of society by the tendency toward endogamy. A recent example is the Toorodê of Fuuta, who began as a religious party which strongly supported Islamic purity in the eighteenth century; many were Muslim clerics by profession. They then won power in the religious revolution during the last quarter of that century, tended to become a hereditary aristocracy, not truly endogamous, but enough so to make some authorities identify them as a “caste.”

a somewhat different way, some Moorish tribes tended to be identified as clerical or zwâya, while others were military. In fact, both kinds had some Muslim clerics, both had to fight, and both contained “casted” occupational groups of minstrels and smiths.\textsuperscript{7}

The boundaries between nêeîbe and riimbe were not always absolute. Smiths and minstrels were clearly and permanently nêeîbe, but others have changed status within historical memory. The jawaanîbe (sing. jawaanîdo), for example, were something like minstrels in Fuuta; they too were courtiers and advisors to the rulers, though they were sometimes merchants. In Bundu and Fuuta alike, they were usually considered to be nêeîbe in the nineteenth century, but in recent decades they have begun to take wives from the class of free men. In much the same way, the subaalîbe (pl. of cubaalô) were fishermen in Fuuta and among the Wolof, but in Fuuta they were considered riimbe, though the seventeenth century Wolof called them nêeîbe.\textsuperscript{8} Subtle shifts with time and place make the historical role of Senegambian castes especially liable to misunderstanding.

The third major group, slaves or captifs, is also liable to misunderstanding for other reasons, especially so because the West itself recently had a social category called slave, marked by the legal right of one person to sell another person at will, like any other chattel. The key was the property right, the salability that distinguished the owned from the owner. Purchase was the mechanism for transferring African slaves to the Americas, but it was really a shift of institutions more than a simple change of geography. Senegambian slaves were not property in the Western sense, and most of them could not be sold at all without judicial condemnation. The distinguishing mark of slaves as a social group was the fact that they were foreigners or descendents of foreigners who had entered the society in which they found themselves by capture in war or by purchase.

But these African “slaves” fell into three quite distinct categories. First, there were trade slaves who had themselves been captured or purchased. They were called jam sayor in Wolof, pad okob in Sereer, jiaado in Pulaar, and a variety of different names in different regional dialects of Malinke. Trade slaves had no legal rights at all. Second came the category of slaves born in captivity or accepted as members of the household of the master, called jam juundu in Wolof, pad bin in Sereer, maccuuûdo (sing. of maacûbe) in Pulaar.


From the moment of purchase, a trade slave began gradually to change status as he was assimilated to the new society. For those born in the new society, the status was that of a subordinate membership, including a fictitious quasi-kinship relationship to the master's lineage which carried with it a complex web of rights and obligations. The slave's general well-being depended a great deal on the kind of work he did. Some were settled in slave villages, where they did the work of ordinary peasants and had much the same kind of life, except that they owed a portion of the harvest to the owner. Others served the master more directly in his own fields. Still others were allowed to follow crafts like weaving. Some females were taken as concubines by their masters, or even as wives, since the slaves were not set apart from the rest of society by sexual prohibitions like those against the ñeënebe. In several Senegambian societies, marriage to a free man that ended after a child was born automatically shifted the mother into the ranks of the free, since it would not be proper for the mother of a free child to marry a slave.

In a separate category came royal slaves used for military or administrative purposes. These were called cëddo in Wolof, Sereer, and the Pulaar singular (sebe in the plural and often spelled thiedo in French). The potential power and wealth of a royal slave was enormous, and the chief among them sometimes were second only to the king himself. In most Senegambian kingdoms they were the only people available to serve as bureaucrats, because all others had obligations to their own lineages standing in the way of efficiency and loyalty to the king. In the same way, the royal slaves were usually the only standing army, in much the same tradition as the Janissary corps in Turkey, the Mamluks in Egypt, or the corps of black slave-soldiers in eighteenth-century Morocco. This position gave them access to power that could be used to influence the choice of the ruler, or to lord it over the peasantry or even over civilian officials. By the early nineteenth century, the slave-soldiers in the Wolof states and some Malinke Gambian kingdoms had become a branch of the ruling class who happened to be military specialists, and they fell more and more outside of royal control. Their habit of pillaging the countryside, with or without the king's agreement, made them increas-

9. The importance of this group differed greatly from place to place in Senegambia, and the terminology also differed. In the Malinke kingdoms, a term cognate with cëddo included slave administrators as well as slave soldiers. (Quinn, “The Gambia,” p. 88.) The Pulaar cëddo had a variety of different meanings. In Fuuta, even today, it refers to free men descended from the Deñanke dynasty and its followers. In Bundu, however, the original meaning slipped still further, and the word became the generic term for foreigners, especially for Wolof or the Soninke of Gajaaga. (Wane, Les Toucouleur, pp. 29–34.) In much the same way, the current meaning in Wolof and Sereer is also extensible in certain usages to mean non-Muslims generally, or simply a member of the precolonial ruling class. (Klein, Islam and Imperialism, p. 9.)
ingly unpopular with the peasantry. In the second half of the nineteenth century, this unpopularity combined with reformist Islam in a series of insurrections that overturned the political order from the lower Gambia northward to Kajor and Jolof.  

The numerical balance of class and caste differed greatly from one place to another, and from one time to another, influenced by the rise and fall of states, the incidence of warfare, or the political success of particular lineages. In recent Fuuta Tooro, a sample of sedentary Fuulbe showed 20 per cent descended from "slaves" (maccube), 6 per cent in the occupational "castes" (夜里ibe), and 74 per cent riimbe. This may be close to the general pattern in the Wolof and Sereer states as well, but the upper Senegal had a different pattern. Administrative estimates in 1904 put two-thirds of the population of Bundu and lower Gajaaga in slave status at that time. Travelers on the Gambia toward the end of the eighteenth century also guessed that three-quarters of the population of the Malinke states were slaves. Other Malinke in Bambuhu, on the other hand, kept no slaves at all in some regions, and very few in others. On balance, the administrative estimate for all of French West Africa in 1906 was about 25 per cent slave.  

One final institution cut across the lines of status, descent, and kinship. This was an age-grade organization, grouping all men or women who were initiated to adulthood at about the same time. In many African societies, the age grades were a crucial cement joining those who were otherwise split into jealous and competing kinship groups. In Senegambia, their importance was uneven. It was greatest in the Manding culture area to the east of Senegambia proper. There, the age grades helped to work across the grain of separate lineages that competed within the framework of the small Malinke state or kafu. A new age grade was created each seven years, and the previous grade promoted for a total of six promotions, yielding a cycle of forty-nine years in all. The Gambia Malinke, however, did not preserve the full force of this system; rather than having a cycle of seven named grades repeated over and over they kept only four. Even so, this was a more important age-grade system than was found in most of Senegambia. Age grades had some importance among the Sereer, but they dropped to insignificance with the Wolof.  

11. In this case the jawaambe, often counted as riimbe, were counted as 陋eeibe, but they were only 1.8 per cent of the total, so that the change is not significant. (Cantarelle, "Endogamie," p. 671.)  
The Wolof, however, had a related institution, the *mbar* or circumcision group; and it could have importance later in life, as it did when those men who had passed through circumcision with a potential Damel would later become the core of his military support. The sedentary Fuulbe kept only an unimportant age association, while the Soninke of Gajaaga had age associations for adolescents but not for adults.\(^{13}\)

**Government**

As elsewhere in West Africa, the essential element of political life in Senegambia was kinship; lineages were the building blocks out of which a constitutional order had to be made. Lineage determined eligibility for office, and some states had a single royal lineage from which the ruler was chosen—the Deñankoobe in Fuuta, the Baacili (Bathily) in Gajaaga, the Sisibe (Sy) in Bundu, the Gelwar in the Sereer states, and the Naanco (Nantio or Nyancho) in Kaabu. Others had a number of different lineages that were eligible for office in a multidynastic system of rotation, as in Kajor, Waalo, and most of the Gambia Malinke states. Whether one dynasty or several, all Senegambian political constitutions were in the nature of a compromise between the most powerful lineages. The terms of the compromise were privileges or favors promised to other powerful lineages in return for their acquiescence in a one-lineage monopoly of the monarchy.

Below the level of the ruling lineage or lineages (called *garmi* in Wolof and *sumakunda* in Malinke), still other lineages had an inherited right to provide candidates for lesser offices at the provincial level or in the central government. This class of nobility was known as *kangam* in Wolof, sometimes as *riiibe ardiibe* in Pulaar. It was sometimes made up of the descendants of local rulers, like the laman, who had been subordinated in the aggregation of small states to make a larger one. In other places, subordinate offices were reserved for junior members of the dominant lineage. The Naanco of Kaabu had a regular hierarchy for non-royal Naanco, formed by an interesting imposition of patrilineal descent on the dominant matrilineal pattern borrowed from the Sereer. The form of succession was such that only a female Naanco, in effect a royal princess, could give birth to a true Naanco, eligible for the kingship. A male Naanco’s sons and daughters were therefore non-Naanco unless their mother was also a Naanco. But these non-Naanco grandchildren of a Naanco princess were nevertheless eligible for certain subordinate offices and their children in turn were eligible for lower offices, and so

on until the fourth generation down the male line from the Naanco princess were nothing but ordinary free men.¹

The constitution of Waalo is one illustration of the way the powers of royal lineages were balanced against those of the non-royals. To be a candidate for the office of Brak, a man had to be qualified by descent through both the male and the female line. He had to belong to the patrilineage (or sant) of Mboj, and he had to belong to one of three royal matrilineages (or men)—Logar, Joos, or Teejek. The choice between potential candidates, however, was in the hands of a three-man council (called Seb ak Baor). The councillors were themselves men of kangam status, eligible for high office in the central government, for provincial command, but not for the kingship. Their origins in most cases would have gone back to the lamanate, and their rights to choose and remove the Brak was thus a form of compromise between the old rulers and a central government. Even in the central government, the rules of eligibility divided power among three powerful matrilineages. The council was not bound to appoint a Brak from each in turn; but some kind of informal order must have been maintained, since all three continued to be appointed with reasonable frequency down to the French conquest.²

Such neat balance of authority by constitutional compromise may not, however, work out well in practice. During the last centuries of Waalo’s independence, the Brak’s powers came to be too limited in practice as well as in theory. His control over the provinces was very weak indeed, and even in the central government, the Bökkneeg Jurbel or chief of the royal slaves succeeded in making his office into a form of prime ministership equal in power to the ruler himself. Several Bökkneeg Jurbel made the office hereditary for a time. The constitutional balance in this case was an adequate guard against autocracy, but not against anarchy.

None of the Senegambian constitutional arrangements was fixed permanently. Kajor, Waalo’s neighbor to the south, began with a similar constitution, which developed in a different direction. At the emergence of Kajor from the greater Jolof empire, the Damel had to bear the sant of Fal and belong to a particular branch of that patrilineage. He also had to belong to one of a prominent group of matrilineages, though in fact the approved list kept getting longer and longer through the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as each Damel who had not been legitimate on his mother’s side


added his own matrilineages to the approved list. As in Waalo, the choice of Damel lay with a council of non-royals.

Then a powerful figure came to office and the situation changed. Lat Sukaabe (ruled c. 1697–1720) not only added his matrilineage to the list, the seventh matrilineage to be so added, but also changed the constitutional practice. From then on to the French conquest, all seven matrilineages were counted as eligible, but each Damel was in fact chosen from the Geej matrilineage to which Lat Sukaabe had belonged. In theory anyone from the sant of Fal could be ruler, but in fact the senior branch, which had ruled up to this time, never supplied another Damel. Instead, all later rulers came by turn from two junior branches. Just as the constitutional balance was effectively a compromise between lineages, the terms of the compromise could be changed as the power and influence of the lineages themselves changed.3

While the lineages at play in the political game were usually only free lineages, this was not necessarily the case. In Jolof, the Burba was chosen from a single patrilineage (with no privileged matrilineage at all), but the electoral council was made up of the lineage heads of five important, named patrilineages, plus the village heads of two particular slave villages belonging to the royal family.4

The Sereer states exemplify a constitutional order that sought to balance the rights of a conquering dynasty, the Gelwar, against those of the local people. The Gelwar first of all transformed themselves into a matrilineage, out of deference to their subjects’ way of doing things. They also allowed the conciliar principle to enter on a continuous basis, not simply when a ruler had to be chosen. This was done through an assembly of village heads (jaraf) and village-level administrators (sak-sak), which was entitled to elect the Great Jaraf, a cross between an elected prime minister and a tribune of the people representing the Sereer peasantry at the court of the Malinke rulers. The Great Farba, chief of the crown slaves and head of the military forces, was a third important figure balancing the power of the Bur and that of the Great Jaraf. Perhaps because so many lineages were represented on a continuing basis, the Sereer monarchies were able to keep order in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when the Malinke to the south and the Wolof to the north were seriously disturbed by their anarchic military aristocracies of slave soldiers.5

1.4 The Lower Gambia Valley, Showing the Riverside Provinces of Kaabu
While the Malinke states of the Gambia bear a family resemblance to other political forms in Senegambia, they also belong to the Manding political tradition stretching out to the east. The fundamental political unit was the local segment of a patrilineage—called *lu* in the east, but often *kabilo* on the Gambia. The word *kabilo* means a ward or section of a village, but with overtones suggesting that only people with the same jaamu would live together. Hence the head of the kabilo (*kabilo-tigi* or *kabilo-tio*) was simultaneously the head of the ward and the head of the extended family, and the office passed in succession through a line of brothers before dropping one generation to pick up again with the eldest son of the eldest brother. In practice this meant that the kabilo-tigi was usually also the eldest male in that kabilo.

In the greater Manding world, several different political forms have linked the local lineage to the state. Common forms along the Gambia were like the Sereer and Wolof systems, having a council to represent important lineages and multidynastic succession. Unlike the Wolof system, however, which tended to let the electoral council choose a ruler from any eligible lineage, the Malinke system passed the office from one to another in a fixed order. Nomi or Barra, for example, had three royal lineages (Jame, Mane, and Sonko), but the office of *Mansa* actually circulated in a set order to the kabilo-tigi of each of seven different towns dominated by one or another of the royal lineages. The council (*beng*) therefore had nothing to say about the choice of a Mansa, though it had to be consulted on all major decisions and it (or the Mansa’s own lineage) could depose him if either strongly disliked his rule. This was true even in states like Wuuli where a single dynasty ruled.

The political system in the south-bank Malinke states was somewhat different because they were theoretically part of the much larger state of Kaabu, formerly a province of Mali. Each of the smaller kingdoms that made up the empire of Kaabu had its own Mansa and its own particular dynasty or dynasties eligible for rotation to the kingship. In all, some twenty to thirty mini-states of this kind made up Kaabu at its height, including a row of states along the south bank of the Gambia. From west to east these were Kiañ, Jaara, Wuopena, Jimara, Tumaana, and Kantora—all of the south-bank states ex-

---


cept Ñamina, tucked into the northern bend of the river opposite Saalum, and the two dominantly Joola states in the far west, Fooni and Kombo. The imperial office could only be held by a member of the patrilineage Sane or Mane who was also a Naanco in the maternal line, and these same qualifications applied to the office of Mansa of the imperial kingdoms of Jimara, Sama, or Pachana. In practice, the emperor was chosen because he was the eldest ruler of any of these three kingdoms, though his authority seems to have been merely nominal in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Fuuta Tooro resembled Kaabu and the Gelwar states in being ruled by a foreign dynasty, established by right of conquest near the beginning of the sixteenth century. But the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century constitutional pattern in Fuuta is obscure. The political narrative preserved by oral tradition reflects the play of conflicting interests within the state, but without explaining their formal relations. As rulers, the Deñankoobe could not simply override local interests. They had to balance diverse ethnic differences. They had to balance those of their own followers, some of whom acquired large territories as jom leeidi at the time of their conquest, against those who held land as jom jengol. They had to balance the interests of the transhumant pastoralists against those of sedentary farmers—and during a period when the Moorish nomads from the north were especially aggressive. They had to balance a demand for religious reform against the ideas and practices of others who were not completely Muslim. Some of the Deñankoobe were themselves pious Muslims; others were less so, but they were all swept from power by the religious revolution at the end of the eighteenth century. It was this revolution that obscured the formal constitution of the earlier period by superimposing its own forms.

Meanwhile Bundu, a second sedentary Fuulbe state, was founded at the end of the seventeenth century by Futaanke emigrants who followed a Muslim cleric named Maalik Sii (Sy) into a sparsely settled region populated by a mixture of Malinke, Soninke, Tanda, and emigrant Futaanke. Since his leadership was based on religious prestige, Maalik Sii took the religious title of Eliman (later changed to the more Pulaarized version Almaami), derived from the Arabic al-Imâm, leader of prayer. This was the first of a series of almamates founded by religious insurrection or conquest. When Maalik Sii died about 1700, other lineages claimed their turn to rule. For a time in the 1720's, one of them, the GiiroBe, became dominant, but the Sisibe returned in the 1730's under Maalik's grandson and made the almamate hereditary in their lineage alone. An electoral council had a voice in choosing which Sii was to rule, but the succession was supposed to pass through a line of brothers before returning to the eldest son of the eldest brother—and the council included only other Sisibe, though other lineages would be consulted if there

8. Sidibe, "The Story of Kaabu."
were sharp disagreement within the family. Bundu was thus a model for a potentially more autocratic state than most, as though the prestige of religious leadership strengthened the hand of the Sisibe in their dealings with other lineages.\(^9\)

The Bundu model was thus available when the Toorodbe emerged as successful leaders of a similar religious revolution in Fuuta. The first Almaami of Fuuta was Abdul Kaader Kaan, a serious Islamic scholar, a sincere Muslim, and a man who wanted to enforce Islamic law in a purified Muslim state. As the revolution moved toward its final victory, however, many joined who were not quite so religiously motivated. In 1806, a group of these men conspired with the Almaami of Bundu to divide the forces of the religious party and kill Abdul Kaader. With that coup, five of the conspirators (and their descendents after them) emerged as the real power in the country. They inherited membership in an electoral council, but the electoral lineages were barred from the office of Almaami. Instead, the office tended to rotate among another group of lineages, more famous for their religious prestige than for their political acumen.\(^10\) The Bunduunke model was thus partly followed by Abdul Kaader Kaan but abandoned by his successors—not by choice but by force of circumstance.

Gajaaga, the Soninke state next upstream from Fuuta, passed through a similar and more complex series of constitutional changes. The oral traditions suggest that the kingship originally belonged to the segment of the ruling Baacili (Bathily) family that came from the town of Tiyaabu (Tuabo), even though Tiyaabu was only one of several towns in which the Baacili were important. This primacy for Tiyaabu disappeared at an unknown date, to be replaced up to the 1830’s by a multidynastic succession involving different branches of the Baacili. The office of Tunka for Gajaaga as a whole went in order to the eldest male Baacili from each of six towns, in a fixed order—Tiyaabu, Kotere, Lani, Maxaana, Musala, and Tambukaane.\(^11\) In the period from the 1830’s through the 1850’s, the system broke down in intertown rivalries and efforts to monopolize the possible profits from the newly intensive trade on the Senegal, with the result that the original Gajaaga was

---


split (under French pressure) into two kingdoms—upper Gajaaga or Kamera, along the south bank of the Senegal from the Faleme nearly to Kayes, and lower Gajaaga or Goi, from the Faleme downstream to the frontier with Fuuta. The capital of upper Gajaaga was usually Maxaana, while Tiyaabu became the usual capital of the smaller Goi.

All of these Senegambian states were territorially defined, but autonomous enclaves might also exist within the territory—a tendency that may have been more widespread than records indicate. It apparently originated from the fact that some conflicts could be resolved by giving contestants a share of power or a turn in office, but others were better avoided by creating independent or autonomous jurisdictions, where possible dissidents could peacefully go their own way. Throughout the western Sudan, Muslim clerics were often found with their own ward in a town, sometimes with a separate town alongside the secular town, or simply with the right to apply Muslim law to Muslims while the non-Muslims followed their own customs. In Gajaaga, a dozen or so of the towns along the Senegal River were dominated by clerical lineages, especially by the Draame. They enjoyed autonomy from the secular government of Gajaaga by long tradition, and they kept that autonomy through all the constitutional changes of the Baacili regime. A similar autonomy was granted to at least one other group of alien immigrants. Sometime during the eighteenth century, a segment of the Njaibe, the ruling lineage of Jolof, came to Gajaaga as refugees who had lost a struggle for office. They were granted permission to settle at Bakel, which then became an autonomous center of Njai power. It was partly this autonomy that made the French establish their fortified post there in 1818 and led to the later rise of Bakel to commercial predominance in northeast Senegal.12

The broad similarity of Senegambian political constitutions helped to give it a relatively homogeneous political style. Even the Gambian regimes of Manding origin were influenced by their centuries of political interaction with non-Manding neighbors. This influence is most apparent in changes from patrilineal to matrilineal reckoning of descent, but it also appears in the way the Gambia Malinke developed kingdoms of approximately the size and stability of others in Senegambia. In the Manding area to the east, the removal of Malian imperial rule tended to leave the somewhat smaller unit generically called a kafu. Thus the greatest discontinuity in political constitution lay between Wuuli, the easternmost of the medium-sized Malinke kingdoms on the Gambia, and the congeries of Malinke and Tanda mini-states to the east and southeast. A little to the north, a similar discontinuity fell

between Bundu and the neighboring Malinke region of Bambuhu, to the east of the Falme. There, the political units were smaller than those of the Gambian states, and the rulers made no claim to the title of Mansa, used by the emperors of Mali. The fundamental unit for many purposes was the village, ruled by a Farin, who was usually the lineage head of the principal lineage. Larger states grouping several villages were also present, but they might have no more than two to five villages, and the ruler carried the title of Saatigi. In fact, he was usually the Farin of one village in the group, and his authority was greater there than it was in the others.13

But the similarity of constitutions should not obscure the variety of actual regimes that could masquerade behind the forms. These constitutions included a web of checks and balances, which meant that some regimes could function reasonably well as governments with the consent of the governed. But the checks and balances could easily become mere rules for dividing power among members of an oppressive oligarchy.

One source of this contrast between outward forms and their actual content was the fact that Senegambian bureaucracies were too rudimentary to deal directly with individuals. They dealt instead with corporate groups, normally lineages; these corporations were then responsible for their internal self-government. This meant that the monarch’s writ might run very unevenly through the territory of his state. A strong provincial governor could carry his province into a temporary de facto independence, or a strong king could upset the theoretical balance of the constitution and become genuinely autocratic. The main outlines of political geography could therefore remain stable one century after another, while the political realities of power and its application changed rapidly.

The tendency to deal with corporate groups also helped the European trading concerns when they appeared off the coast. If the Europeans asked permission to build a factory or set up a town of their own, Senegambian practice had plenty of precedents with dealing with aliens through their own chiefs. From the African point of view, a European trading post was not ceded territory, merely another religious minority, more easily dealt with by letting it live under its own laws. In other respects, the Senegambian monarchies were acutely interested in trade, and especially in the tolls that could be collected from traders. Each state had an official in each port in charge of

13. Boucard, "Relation de Bambouc," June 1729, AM, Mss. 50/2, ff. 23–28; Person, Samori, 1:64–88. The title Saatigi was also used by the Deñankoobe of Fuuta Tooro, and it has a broader sense of meaning a leader of a caravan, or of a moving body like a body of migrants. The distinction between Saatigi and Mansa in Malinke is therefore not simply one distinguishing the size of the state; it has overtones, rather, of the distinction between Laamiâo and Aarâo in Pulaar—that between the ruler of a sedentary state and the leader of a band of transhumant pastoralists.
European relations, normally under the title *Alkaati*, and a Grand Alkaati might also exist at the central level. In Waalo, for example, this post, held by a royal slave first appointed to deal with Atlantic commerce, gradually rose in importance over the course of the seventeenth century to make its occupant a kind of minister of foreign affairs.\(^{14}\) Fuuta, Kajor, Siin, and the Gambian kingdoms all had a similar official, often known along the Gambia as the *Tubabmansa*, literally “king of the Europeans.”

**Religion and Political Change**

Over two centuries and a half, from the early seventeenth to the middle of the nineteenth, the maritime trade on the Senegambian coast was a new element of some importance, but it was rarely of first importance. The Europeans were no physical threat; external dangers from the Moroccans in the first half of the eighteenth century, and from the Bambara in the second, were far greater. The European cultural impact was minimal before the end of the eighteenth century, and it was insignificant compared to the influence of Islamic civilization until well into the colonial period. The most important general theme in the political history of Senegambia was, indeed, Islamic. It was the problem of adjusting the political forms of pre-Islamic society to the religious and legal claims of Islam.

Islam was hardly a new religion at this period, though Senegambia lay on the far outskirts of the Muslim world, a borderland inhabited by converts, incomplete converts, and non-converts; but this had been so for centuries. Islam was first taught as early as the tenth century. By 1700, it was already more than six centuries since the Almoravids rode north from the Sahara (Senegambians among them) to conquer Morocco and Spain. In all that time, the advance of the religious frontier was not very obvious—either in the percentage of converts south of the Sahara, or in the smaller percentage who fully followed the teaching of Islam. The question was not whether the Islam of Senegambian believers was “pure” by Middle Eastern standards, which is beside the point. The question, rather, was whether Senegambian Muslims took the local version of Islam seriously as a standard of conduct in personal and public life. This was the point of intersection between religious belief and political change.

This question was important all along the religious frontier, but the religious frontier was a zone, not a line, and the frontier zone in the seventeenth century stretched to the south of the Gambia and northward far into the desert. In the western Sahara, the Sanhaja or Žnāga Berbers had been the core of the Almoravid movement, but they were no longer the dominant desert

nomads. Beginning about the fourteenth century, they were joined by an Arab migration, branching southward and extending the major movement of Arabs from Arabia toward the Maghrib, which had begun in the eleventh century. As these Arabs moved into the western Sahara, the tribal units divided, forming new tribes, which subdivided in their turn. This process is one cause of the genealogical complexity and shifting terminology that besets Mauritanian history. The Arab nomads who finally came to live north of the Senegal by the end of the sixteenth century and established their dominance over the Berbers already there are sometimes called the Banū Ma‘qil, after the oldest remembered male ancestor—or else Hassānī after the leader of a later fission, or Maghfar after a leader later still.

Whatever name is used, the coming of the Arabs introduced a division in Mauritanian society that has lasted to the present. They were Muslim, but they did not pay very great attention to Islamic learning or to commerce. Their specialty, other than pastoralism, was fighting, and they were able to supplement their pastoral income by levying tribute and "protection money" from others in the region, both nomadic and sedentary. In time they came to be known by their occupation, so that Ma‘qil, Hassānī, or Maghfar was synonymous with the grouping of "warrior tribes." The Berbers meanwhile passed through a long-term process of cultural assimilation, adopting Arabic rather than Berber for everyday use—as they had done long since for learned discourse—but they kept their special tradition of Muslim learning, linked to a commercial tradition as well. In time, they came to be known as the zwāya, clerical, or "marabout" tribes.

The same pattern of serious and less serious Muslims extended south of the Sahara as well. European visitors of the sixteenth century reported that Senegambians were Muslim, which indicates that the surface forms of Islam were practiced at the courts and in commercial circles. Later evidence suggests that courtiers and merchants were more likely than the rest of the population to be Muslim, and that otherwise, Islam was often a superficial layer on a non-Muslim base. Muslims were a probable majority of the peasantry only in Fuuta Tooro. Elsewhere the religion appears from scattered evidence to have been similar to that of the present-day survivals among the Sereer or the non-Muslim Malinke. They recognized a high god who created the world and may in some variants have withdrawn into neutrality, though Rog Sēn, the high god of the Sereer, is an immanent deity, still active in the world’s affairs, though he acts in the world through supernatural beings, some purely spiritual and others that can take human form.1 Some spirits in these pre-Muslim religions were associated with particular trees, termite hills, or water courses. Others were the spirits of ancestors, or in some cases non-ancestral spirits that could nevertheless act as intermediaries between the


RELIGION AND POLITICAL CHANGE
living and the dead. Lineage heads and rulers, with their powers derived from kinship, therefore had a crucial role as representatives of the living to the dead of the same lineage, just as they represented their people to other lineages among the living. Hence political leadership at all levels was partly a religious office, sanctioned by religion and requiring ritual acts by the office holder. The conversion of a ruler to another religion was therefore an act with potentially profound political implications, not simply a personal choice of belief.

Islam itself raised political issues. Alongside the emphasis on the hereafter and ultimate justice in heaven, Islam was more insistent than Christianity has been on the proper organization of the here and now. Rather than distinguishing a realm for Caesar and one for God, Islam obliged a ruler who was a true Muslim to see that Muslim law was enforced within his territory. And Islam came equipped with attitudes and techniques that carried further political implications. It was a religion of the book, which meant that good Muslims were also literate at a time and place where literacy was a rare and valuable skill. This skill was most useful, or most remunerative, at the courts of Senegambian rulers. Through Muslim scribes, the rulers were introduced, at least in a small way, to the norms, values, and practices of Muslim civilization in North Africa and the Middle East. Finally, Islam south of the Sahara was an occupational religion. Merchants from North Africa carried it across the desert. Their most common converts on the sahal were their merchant counterparts from black Africa, who in turn became the carriers of Islam further south through the savanna and into the forest; and this fact too had political implications.

Taken together, these factors conditioned the form and speed of Islamic penetration. Merchants on the move tended to form little clusters of foreigners, travelers, or Muslims—in fact, these three categories were one and the same in the eyes of a mainly peasant population. Some of these clusters appeared in capital towns as well, with the result that Islam first appeared not as a moving frontier of mass conversion but as a series of urban enclaves at the centers of trade and political power, while the mass of the peasantry remained little affected for centuries. For the Gambia, a Portuguese visitor writing in about 1570 mentioned three specifically clerical towns, Sutuko in Wuuli, Malor in Naani, and a third unnamed town near the mouth of the river. There were to be many more a century and a half later. In this respect, at least, the progress of Islam was continuous.

This pattern of propagation heightened the political problem. After the

2. These religious functions should not be taken to indicate that Senegambian rulers were in some sense “divine kings”; they were not. For a review of divine kingship see M. W. Young, “Divine Kingship of the Jukun: A Re-evaluation of Some Theories,” *Africa*, 36:135–54 (1966).
merchants themselves, rulers and courtiers tended to be among the first converts. This fact would have posed no problem if the whole country had also been Muslim, or if the ruler had had an autocratic bureaucracy capable of imposing Islam; but none of the Senegambian rulers had the political power or the bureaucratic machine to enforce Muslim law. Rulers who converted therefore did what they could; they became nominal Muslims and enforced the law insofar as they could without compromising the loyalty of the non-Muslim majority. In most cases, however, they also continued to carry out their pre-Muslim duties of office.

The result was a crucial tension within the Muslim community—always implicit, sometimes rising to a crisis. All Muslims were not themselves so well instructed in the full Islamic doctrine as to be troubled, but those who were found themselves caught between the obligation to insist on full enforcement of law and belief, and the recognition that politics was the art of the possible. The result, over time, was a chronic demand for religious purity and religious dominance within the state. The reform movement was capable of turning to revolution on occasion, especially when the religious issue could join other issues in a common cause. At first, from the second half of the seventeenth century through the first half of the nineteenth, the religious revolutions were sporadic, rarely affecting more than two or three adjacent states at the same time, rarely recurring more frequently than once a generation. From the middle of the nineteenth century to the European conquest, the series of separate crises spread into a pandemic and continuous crisis marked by warfare, mass migration, anarchy, and a steadily greater weight of European power to intervene.

The first recorded of the early crises occurred on both sides of the ecological frontier between steppe and savanna. It began with Nasr al-Din, a zwâ’ya cleric of southern Mauritania, who preached the need for reform, first among his own people but then throughout the Muslim world. He claimed to be caliph, with a right to rule as successor of the Prophet, and he sent out missionaries to preach in his name and proclaim the new order. He was successful at first among his own people, even among some of the militaristic Hasantya, and he gained support among the common people of the sedentary zone as well. The movement was peaceful until 1673, when Nasîr al-Dîn called for jihad, in this case not against pagans but against Muslim rulers who were incompletely Muslim. This too was successful at first; he conquered and set up viceroys over Fuuta, Waalo, and Kajor, but he failed to keep the full support of the desert nomads. When he asked them for the zakât traditionally paid to a Muslim sovereign, most of the Hasantya revolted under the leadership of a certain Häddî b. Ahmad b. Dâmân. The war that followed is known in Mauritanian history as the war of Shur-bubba. The Hasantya won in the desert by 1677; the former rulers won and returned to power in the three
For the time being, the reformers had lost quickly and completely.

A generation later, in the 1690’s, Maalik Sii emerged as a new Fuutanke religious leader with a military following, and he succeeded in founding Bundu as a new Muslim state. This was not a religious revolution within a Muslim state so much as a Muslim war of conquest setting up a new state in non-Muslim or weakly Muslim territory. Maalik Sii’s use of the title of Eliman (later Almaami), however, recalled Nasir al-Din’s use of an Arabic equivalent Imānīna, and Almaami was adopted by most of the later religious revolutionaries down to Samori Ture in the late nineteenth century.

The third revolt followed a generation later, in 1725, in Fuuta Jaalö. Here, as in Bundu, Fulbe had been moving gradually into previously Manding territory, and their insurrection had aspects of a Fulbe ethnic revolt as well as of a jihad against rulers who were incompletely Muslim. The result was a new almamate that was to last, like Bundu, until the French conquest at the end of the nineteenth century.

Another kind of outcome from Nasir al-Din’s jihad appeared on the desert edge. Hāddi b. Ahmad b. Dāmān capitalized on his leadership of the anti-clerical forces among the Hasanlya to form the first of a group of Mauritanian emirates with a territorial jurisdiction, replacing looser tribal groupings. Hāddi’s foundation was called the Trarza emirate, after an eponymous ancestor who led a subdivision of the Banû Maghfar, and it dominated the region north of the lower Senegal until the French conquest. By the end of the seventeenth century, a second Maghfar division was reorganized as the Brakna emirate dominating the region north of Fuuta Tooro.

About the same time, still another subdivision of the original Banû Ma‘qîl, the Mbârek or Mubarek, established a similar state in the steppe much further east, in the region known as Hodh, north of Nóro (Nioro) in the present-day Malian sahal. This was the state the eighteenth-century Europeans called the kingdom of Ludamar. Finally, about 1775–1800, the last of the Moorish states that were to be important for Senegambian commerce took form midway between the Brakna to the west and the Mbârek to the east. This time, the dominant tribe was not of the Banû Ma‘qîl but was one of the


zwäya. These people, called the Idaw ‘Aish (or Dowich by the Europeans), had first been submerged in the common zwäya defeat in the 1670’s, but they gradually recovered and rebuilt a substantial power.

This new cast of characters beyond the northern boundaries of Senegambia was important enough in itself, but its emergence was simultaneous with the intervention of Morocco in Mauritanian and Senegambian affairs. Morocco had been interested in the trans-Sahara since the late sixteenth century. The successful Moroccan expedition against Sōñrai in 1591 led to the collapse of the Sōñrai empire, but the Moroccan expeditional force was small, only about 4,000 men. Even with later reinforcements, the Moroccans were unable to conquer what Sōñrai had once held. Instead, they settled down in an uneasy occupation of the Niger bend. In time the garrison and their descendants, called the arma, made themselves an independent power and slipped from Moroccan control.

In the 1670’s, simultaneous with the war of Shur-bubba, Mulai Isma’il (ruled 1672–1727) became Sultan and began extending his authority over parts of the Sahara. He soon took over a slave army recruited in the Sudan and began to build an even larger slave army of his own. This effort called for a series of expeditions into the Sahara and then to the Sudan itself. In 1689, Mulai Isma’il led an especially important expedition in person. It moved south through Chingetti, the principal Moroccan base in the Sahara, with a force said to have been nearly 40,000 troops mounted on horses or camels, and fell on a stone-built town called Tarra in the European reports, probably a little north of present-day Noro in Mali. Neither this nor the later expeditions to the south tried to establish permanent Moroccan control over any part of Sudan, but Mulai Isma’il was able to secure recognition of his hegemony from most of the Ma’qil leadership in the western Sahara. One of his wives came from the Banû Maghfar and became mother of the later Sultan, Mulai ‘Abdullah b. Isma’il, and Mulai Isma’il drew important military resources from the Sudan throughout his reign.

5. Some of the soldiers who went inland with Cornelius Hodges participated in the attack, but Hodges himself was in Bambuhu at the time. He reported it at 457 kms distance ENE from the gold working at Neteko (Netico). By dead reckoning from modern maps, that would put it between Nioro and Jaara (Diara) in Mali. It is possible that Hodges’ “Tarra” was actually the present-day Jaara, or else Nara, somewhat further east. (C. Hodges to RAC, 16 September 1690, printed in T. G. Stone, “The Journey of Cornelius Hodges in Senegambia,” English Historical Review, 39:89–95 [1924].) But Mungo Park’s Travels (1:156–57) opens still another possibility. When he was in Jara in 1796, he inquired after Major Houghton, an earlier British traveler who had disappeared in that region. He was told that Houghton left Jaara in the direction of Tichit (which is due north). After two days’ travel, he had to turn back, and he backtracked to a watering point called Tarra, where he died.

1.5 Western Sudan and Western Sahara in the Late Eighteenth Century
At first, the primary Moroccan targets were further east, but Senegambia began to attract expeditions almost annually after the 1690's, and especially in the 1720's and 1730's. The expeditionary forces varied in size, but they were considerably larger than the small force that caused the collapse of Sönrai. Reports mention 12,000 Moroccan troops operating on the upper Senegal in the closing years of the seventeenth century, and another force of 30,000 men and 60,000 camels in the 1730's. The full intentions and extent of these expeditions can only be known when they have been studied from the Moroccan sources. Reports from the Senegambian side, however, make it clear that the Moroccans devastated much of the northern savanna from Kaarta west as far as the Atlantic coast and south at least into Bundu, Jolof, and the Sereer country. The commanders of the Ormankoobe (as these troops were called in Fuuta) also played a major role in the Senegambian politics of the period. They operated in alliance with a variety of Senegambian and neighboring states—among others, with Trarza, Brakna, Fuuta Tooro, Gajaaga, and Bundu—and they were able to act at times as the arbiters of local political quarrels, making and unmaking the Saatigi of Fuuta Tooro at their whim. But the Ormankoobe were no easier to control from Morocco than their predecessors the Arma had been. On at least one occasion, in 1737, two separate Moroccan expeditions in the Senegal valley were fighting each other. In spite of many puzzles that still surround these Ormaanke expeditions, it is clear that European intervention in Senegambia never approached this scale before General Faidherbe's expeditions on the Senegal in the 1850's.

7. The Pulaar version, which is a plural form, may disguise the fact that the name orma or arma is the same by which similar Moroccan forces were called in the region of the Niger bend.

8. Labat, 


It is not yet possible, and it may never be possible, to trace in detail the activities of the Ormankoobe. The records of the Compagnie des Indes preserved in the French archives are full of detail because they regularly contain the despatches from Fort Saint Joseph in Gajaaga—but only up to the middle of 1738, when this series breaks off abruptly.
One remaining puzzle is the relationship of the Moroccan expedition to the climatic patterns of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and of both to a general weakness of sedentary society in the face of nomadic advance from the Senegal eastward past the Niger bend to Air. The climatic record is sufficiently clear. (See Supplement, appendix 1.) The number of dry years was greater in the seventeenth century than it was in the sixteenth, and the first half of the eighteenth was worse still, down to the great famines of the 1750's. It is possible that the Moors in the west and the Tuareg in the east were forced from their usual grazing areas into the country of the sedentary farmers, while the farmers in turn were driven south by their inability to cultivate. What is not known is why the Moroccans came at the time of worst climatic crisis, and why they withdrew when the worst of the crisis had passed—though it could have been no more than coincidence.

Whether coincidence or not, the Moroccans played a role in the pattern of sedentary decay during the first half of the eighteenth century, but a reform movement began to be more and more vocal from the middle of the century, just as the Moroccan danger receded. This movement drew on diverse sentiment—opposition to the Ormankoobe, to the raids by the Moors into sedentary kingdoms, to enslavement of Muslims and their sale into the Atlantic slave trade. The issues involved were not logically tied to the demand for Islamic reform, but they were pulled into the reform movement, just as that movement drew new strength from the currents of reform in the Islamic world at large. The intellectual center of the movement was at Piir in Kajor, which had been a center of Muslim intellectual activity, partly Moorish and partly Senegambian, and it was probably through Piir that the zwäya resentment of the Hasanlya worked its way into the movement.

The currents from Piir were found in most Senegambian states, but the movement turned to active revolution first in Fuuta Tooro. The Toorodbe became a military force in the early 1770's under Suuleiman Baal. About 1776, leadership passed to Abdul Kaader Kaan, who gradually established his authority over Fuuta and took the title of Almaami. Since Abdul Kaader Kaan had been a student at Piir, they were close to similar reformers in Kajor and Bundu. At first the reform influence was comparatively peaceful. Abdul Kaader asked the Damel, Birama Faatim Penda (ruled c. 1777-90) to accept the Kaadiri order (Qädiriyya in Arabic),\(^9\) which he did, but his successor Amari Ngoone Ndella Kumba (1790–1809) was less pious. Early in the reign, he became involved in a quarrel with Malamin Sar, an important cleric, and

\(^9\) The Qädiriyya was one of the largest and most widespread of the siïfi orders in Islam. It was not necessarily a reformist order in all times and places, but it functioned as such in the western Sudan of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, where it was associated with the whole group of religious revolutions before the 1850's, from Cameroon to Fuuta Tooro.
the quarrel grew into a general clerical revolt against the secular state. The Damel of Kajor defeated the rebels decisively near Piir, but some of them managed to escape and take refuge on the Cape Verde peninsula in the far southwest of the kingdom. There they built fortified lines across the base of the peninsula and defended themselves as an independent state under clerical rule, attracting a steady trickle of like-minded refugees from Kajor and Bawol.10

Meanwhile, Abdul Kaader Kaan had established himself in full power in Fuuta, the decisive step being his defeat of the Trarza in 1786, which assured Fuuta’s security from the desert and brought in large numbers of new followers who were not necessarily as religious in their motivation as the original nucleus had been. With this, Abdul Kaader was able to follow a more adventurous foreign policy. He forced Waalo and Bundu to accept his hegemony, which they did peacefully. Then, in 1796, he invaded Kajor, but the Damel defeated his army and captured the Almaami himself, though allowing him to return to Fuuta after humiliation and a few months in captivity. The next year, Abdul Kaader moved against Bundu, where he seized the Sisibe Almaami, Seega Gai, and put him to death for acts unfriendly to Muslim clerics. This move led on into a civil war in Bundu, partly a war between two candidates for the almamate, partly a contest between a clerical and an anticlerical faction, and partly a war of independence from Futaanke control. The winner was Amadi Aisaata Sii, of the anticlerical side. By the first years of the nineteenth century, Abdul Kaader was successful in Fuuta, but he had failed to spread the reform movement into other states.

In the end, this effort to export the revolution backfired and ended its forward movement in Fuuta itself. After his victory in the Bundunke civil war, Amadi Aisaata made an alliance with the aggressive Bambara state of Kaarta for a war of revenge against Abdul Kaader. He also made secret arrangements with a number of powerful figures in Fuuta, nominal followers of Abdul Kaader but in fact not serious Muslims or serious reformers. The invasion of Fuuta came in 1806–7. Abdul Kaader’s support melted away, and Almaami Amadi Aisaata had no trouble finding and killing him. The Sisibe of Bundu thus had their revenge, and the conspirators came to power in Fuuta as the electors who were to dominate the almamate and reduce the office of Almaami to a nearly meaningless honor. Fuuta Tooro after 1807 represented an effective victory for the counter-revolution.

Senegambia drifted into the first half of the nineteenth century under a

double shadow. On one hand, the unfulfilled movement for Islamic reform was pushed underground; but it had active followers, and the suppression of reform again built up revolutionary tensions. By the 1850’s these tensions were present throughout Senegambia, with the possible exception of Sin. The second threat came from the industrial revolution in Europe. Before the 1820’s, the European presence was confined to a few rented islands in the rivers or off the coast. These were fortified, but mainly only for defense against other Europeans. They had diplomatic and military exchanges with African neighbors, but they were usually militarily weak, though they were sometimes useful as auxiliaries supporting African allies.  

When they returned in force after the Napoleonic wars, the new European presence was different from the communities of merchants who had run the slave trade in the past. They no longer bought slaves in quantity, and European economic growth meant that Europe was a growing market for other African products. By the 1830’s, the value of Senegambian maritime exports was already more than three times the level reached at the height of the slave trade (see below, table 8.7), and the Europeans came back with a new kind of military advantage based on their new industrial technology.

The Europeans still followed a policy of entrepôt, with no intention of ruling over African territory; but their attitude toward Africans was different, and their sphere of informal influence beyond their trading towns was greater. Both changes can be traced in part to the industrial revolution. The Europeans had a new self-confidence in their own abilities, in their own standing among world civilizations. They became more arrogant in their dealings with non-Europeans, and this attitude fitted their biological thought about race difference. As a result they adopted a cluster of ideas and attitudes, with pseudoscientific racism at the core, surrounded by multi-variant layers of cultural arrogance and ethnocentricity.  

It was partly this attitude, and partly the new technology of power, that made France in the Senegal and Britain on the Gambia shift from a policy of merely trading on the river to one of trying to dominate the trade. They rebuilt or built a new series of fortified posts along the rivers, and they forced the African states along the banks to grant them a variety of political and commercial privileges. They sometimes tried to create an economic monopoly over one or more branches of trade, but this policy never succeeded for long. The intention, however, was to control the rivers’ trade, not their banks. In spite of incidents

11. As, for example, when the French in Saint Louis took the antireligious side in their efforts to suppress the jihad of Nasîr al-Dîn. See Chambonneau, “L’histoire du Toubenan.”
like the French annexation of Waalo in 1855, the actual conquest of major Senegambian territory came only in the 1880's and afterwards.

Before the shadow of colonial rule began to be a reality, the shadow of religious revolution completely destroyed the old political and social order. Insurrectionary episodes occurred in Jolof and Waalo in 1820 and in Fuuta in 1828–29, but they were suppressed. The almamate in Fuuta was strong enough to keep order. Elsewhere in the Wolof states and those of the Gambia Malinke, the ceddo were a source of anarchy, but they were also able to suppress opposition to governments too weak to keep them under control. One solution sometimes available to clerical reformers was enclavement. Muslims who wanted reform, or simply security from ceddo raids on their villages, joined together in separate Muslim villages under a clerical leader. They could protect themselves, and they could enjoy autonomy from the secular state, and in time they came to constitute scores of nuclei for a more aggressive role against the state.\(^\text{13}\)

The active phase of the new Senegambian religious revolutions began when Umar Taal, a cleric from Fuuta, returned from pilgrimage in Mecca with long stops at the centers of religious reform elsewhere in the western Sudan—the Caliphate of Sokoto and the Caliphate of Hamdullahi in Maasina.\(^\text{14}\) He finally settled at Dingirai on the outskirts of the Almamate of Fuuta Jaalô. Rather than follow the Kaadiri order of the earlier reformers, Shaykh Umar accepted the Tijaani way, and his call for reform was not so much aimed at the purification of Islam in his own homeland as it was at jihad against pagans to build a new Muslim empire. He criticized the three previous almamates in the two Fuuta and Bundu, but he apparently had no original intention of attacking them—rather of using them as a recruiting ground for the military strength he needed for the jihad. He and his agents therefore began organizing a following in all of the almamates during the second half of the 1840's, and the call for jihad came in 1852. The result for Senegambia was a series of military campaigns on the upper Senegal in the mid-1850's, an enormous emigration of Fuulbe to join Shaykh Umar in the conquered territories to the east, but not yet a renewal of the older revolutionary tradition in Senegambia itself.

A new and more inward-looking phase of revolution opened about 1860 in Badibu (Rip), a north-bank kingdom on the lower Gambia. There, the enclaved Muslim communities joined together under a religious and military

\(^{13}\) Barry, “Royaume du Walo,” *BIFAN*, 31:387 ff. For the background to revolution in Siin and Saalum see Klein, *Islam and Imperialism*.

\(^{14}\) He signed himself in Arabic 'Umar al-Fûtî, more formally he was called al-Hâjj Shaykh 'Umar al-Fûtî, but he is remembered in the oral traditions as Laaji Umar Taal, or sometimes simply as Shaykh Umar. The Pulaar forms will be used here and below.
leader known as Maa Baa. He was first successful in overturning the local secular state. By 1862, he began to spread the revolt to the neighboring countries. It then broke out almost everywhere, not so much by transmission from Badibu as from local causes. To the south of the lower Gambia, Foode Kaba, a cleric originally from Bundu, established a new Muslim state. Upstream on the south bank, the succession of Alfa Molo and Muusa Molo led a revolt that overturned Kaabu, though in this case the rising was not so much reformers against unreformed as Fuulbe from Fuuta Jaalö against the Kaabunke. In the Wolof north, the new religious thrust had dampened political consequences because of the French presence, but the 1860’s and 1870’s saw a new beginning toward the complete conversion of Senegambia to Islam.

The final act in Senegambia was the rising of Mamadu Lamiin Draame in Gajaaga in the mid-1880’s, after the colonial conquests had already begun further east. This movement, which combined Muslim reform with anti-French and anti-Fuulbe elements, followed a checkered course from Bakel through Bundu to the middle Gambia, where the leader was finally tracked down and killed by a French column in December 1887.

The most general phase of the religious revolutions, like the colonial conquest itself, lies beyond the chronological limits of this book, in a very different era on Senegambian history. The three decades before 1850 were in fact a period of transition, when time was running out for the political and social and economic forms that had prevailed since the seventeenth century. It might have been wise to stop the account short at the end of the eighteenth century, before the transition began, but I will nevertheless carry on to the middle of the nineteenth, though conscious that many of the social, political, or economic forces that were to become important in the future will be slighted in favor of those rooted in the more distant past.

15. Quinn, Mandingo Kingdoms, is the best recent treatment of these wars on the Gambia, where they were called the Marabout-Soninki Wars in the nineteenth century. But the name is confusing, since the clerical party were not all marabouts, or clerics, and the anticlerical party were not Soninke in the ethnic sense but non-Muslim Malinke, the word Soninke in this sense being derived from a Malinke term meaning to make a sacrifice. (Person, “Les ancêtres de Samori,” CEA, 4:125–56 (1963), pp. 130–31, n.)
Trade between people of differing culture has been an important source of culture contact and culture change through the whole of human history, and it always poses special problems. Exchange between people with a common way of life can take place in an atmosphere of confidence, while aliens are always a little mysterious and probably dangerous. The ubiquitous, if mythical, stories of silent trade represent one form of solution. They imagine trade on a frontier between two cultures, where nothing changes hands except the trade commodities themselves. Alien traders appear, leave some goods, and then go away. If they return and find an equivalent that satisfies them, they take the equivalent and go away. If they are unsatisfied, they retire again and wait for an increase in the return. This model of trade without communication is ingenious, but it actually involves a high level of tacit understanding between the parties, and most trade we know about has taken place away from the cultural frontiers.

An analytical model closer to historical reality would depict an individual who crossed the cultural frontier, settled in the alien territory, learned about its culture so as to be able to act as a cross-cultural broker. That single individual would function as an embryonic trade diaspora, one of those networks of trade communities scattered along the routes of commerce, living as a series of alien enclaves in the host societies to facilitate the passage of trade. The term trade diaspora originated with Abner Cohen, who called it "a nation of socially interdependent, but spatially dispersed, communities." His own studies were first made in West Africa; but the phenomenon itself runs through human history on a worldwide basis.

The utility of a trade diaspora clearly grew from the fact that trust and communication are far easier between people who share values, language, legal system, kinship ties, and other sources of social solidarity than they are across cultural barriers. The functions of the trade diaspora, stripped to the essentials, were two—agency and mediation. The trader of the diaspora mediated by gaining a specialized knowledge of other cultures along the trade route. He had to deal with political authorities so as to make way for trade to pass through several different jurisdictions, and he had to deal with the aliens at the point of exchange. The obvious archetype of the cross-cultural middleman in West Africa is the landlord-broker. The second function necessary to long-distance trade was an organized form of agency. The model of the peddler carrying his wares from place to place as a one-man operation is possible, but not common. Efficient long-distance trade needed sources of market information, and it needed people who could be trusted to act for the principal at a distant point.

Trade diasporas dominated trade in all parts of the world until at least the end of the eighteenth century, and cross-cultural trade today is possible without them only because the commercial culture everywhere has become that of the West. However different existing cultures are in other respects, long-distance trade is no longer cross-cultural.

At earlier stages in history, chains of trading posts, commercial networks, and diasporas are found in great diversity. The chains of Phoenician trading posts and some aspects of Greek colonization are familiar examples from the classical Mediterranean. Within the broadly homogeneous world of medieval Europe, trade diasporas were linked with the local and semiseparate economic regions. International banking spread out of Italy with Italian bankers until Lombard became an alternate term for banker. The Hanseatic League in the Baltic was based on an earlier trade diaspora outward from Cologne during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The prior existence of merchant communities with commercial and family relations scattered among the Baltic and north European trading towns made it possible to organize a formal league of towns. Even short-distance trade between different countries was easier if traders of the same nationality were resident at either end of the route. The Hanseatic League, for example, kept a privileged enclave in London (called the Steelyard) into the early sixteenth century. Meanwhile, English wool trade to the Continent went through an English enclave at Calais, under English sovereign control, while the Company of Merchant Adventurers which regulated the export of English cloth kept its headquarters in Antwerp—not in England.

Nor was the phenomenon mainly Western. The East African trading towns of the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries became cosmopolitan centers because

they received trade diasporas from Persia and Arabia. By the fifteenth century, a set of coastal enclaves stretching from southern Somalia to southern Tanzania had evolved a common culture and adopted a common religion. Further east, Gujarati traders formed a network of commercial settlements from northwest India to Malacca, where it intersected with similar Chinese networks coming from the north, and both existed alongside settlements of Indians from the Malabar coast and Indonesians from Java.

Some of these trade networks were established by force, with political authority exercised over the trading posts from a central point—a variation on the trade diaspora sometimes called a “trading post empire.” It was a short step, in any case, from a series of homogeneous communities stretched out along a trade route to making each community dominant over a trade enclave, thus opening the possibility of controlling trade. Attempted trade control came into the Atlantic and Indian Ocean trade networks simultaneously with the outburst of the Portuguese in the second half of the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth, armed with better ships and cannon than their Asian or African rivals. The Portuguese operation in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea became the classic overseas-European model of a trading post empire, with controlled enclaves at Macao in China, Malacca in Malaya, Goa in southwest India, and Mozambique in southeast Africa. In retrospect, the attempted monopoly of the spice trade in the Indian Ocean was not as successful as many thought at the time, but it was nevertheless copied by others.

Europeans in West Africa quickly shifted from “ship trade,” where the ships’ personnel did their best to mediate between differing cultures, to shore-based trade. But the Portuguese, as the leading alien power on the African coast, were not interested in controlling local competition so much as they were in keeping other Europeans out of their private commercial preserve. They therefore seized and fortified offshore islands, not coastal enclaves. Their three strongpoints of the late fifteenth century were Arguin Island, some 500 kms north of the Senegal, the Cape Verde Islands, 800 kms due west, and Elmina far away on the Gold Coast. Portuguese went ashore to trade, but they did so under the peaceful conditions of a nonmilitarized trade diaspora. With the exception of the brief attempt to seize a post at the mouth of the Senegal about 1490, the Europeans remained a set of enslaved merchant communities on the African mainland. The first attempts to switch to trading post empire came only with the mid-seventeenth century.

By that time, Europeans had some experience with overland trading post

empires, as well as the overseas variety. One of the best known, and certainly
the best known to the Portuguese, grew with the spread of the **bandeirantes**
into the Brazilian backlands during the course of the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{6} Similar trade networks pushed westward with similar timing in North Amer­
ica, from the Saint Lawrence valley into the Great Lakes country and beyond—and a little later from Hudson Bay to the south and southwest, while the Russians extended their fur trade along the Siberian watercourses until they reached the Pacific by the end of the seventeenth century. In the North American and Siberian cases, the operation was an overland trading post empire, with central control over the trading posts and attempted control over the trade that passed between them.\textsuperscript{7} The bandeirantes served an economic demand for gold and slaves that ultimately reached back to Europe, but they were seldom under close control from S\ão Paulo, much less from Lisbon. They were more nearly a self-governing community of traders, a trade diaspora less militarized and less controlled than a real trading post empire; and they were less European in culture. Their ordinary language was Tupi, not Portuguese, and their culture was further from European norms than that of the coureurs de bois in North America or the forest cossacks of the Russian forests and Siberia.

In West Africa, on the other hand, the Europeans had no need to send out overland trade diasporas, much less develop trading post empires. The African merchants had already established trade networks in long distance trade, some of them extending back in time to the thirteenth century if not before. These trade networks had long since been linked to the Mediterranean networks through the trans-Sahara diaspora of North African merchants who had established themselves in the desert-edge towns south of the Sahara. Eleventh-century reports from Gao on the Niger bend and others from the capital of ancient Ghana tell of double cities, one for the ruler and his court and the other for the foreign merchants. These and similar towns on the sahal were the points of exchange between the North African diaspora and the West African merchants who operated the trade routes further south into the savanna and ultimately into the forest. Since the Soninke were the dominant people of the northern savanna between the Niger bend and the Senegal, it was only natural that their diaspora to the south carried the first known long-distance trade into West Africa.

The trade diasporas of recent African history are thus part of a much larger and more various family of similar socioeconomic institutions, and they need

\textsuperscript{6} The best English introduction to the bandeirante literature is R. M. Morse, *The Bandeirantes* (New York, 1965).

\textsuperscript{7} The most useful introduction to the Russian-fur-trade literature is found in G. V. Lantzeff, *Siberia in the Seventeenth Century* (Berkeley, 1943), and R. Fisher, *The Russian Fur Trade, 1550–1700* (Berkeley, 1943).
to be understood in this broader perspective. One form of analysis is to distinguish the types of trade diaspora by a variety of political, cultural, economic, and social variables. The obvious and key political variables were in the relations, first, between a minority merchant community and its host population, and second, among the individual merchant enclaves in the same network, though these two do not exhaust the possible variables.

The relations of the traders to the host community can be seen as a broad spectrum of possibilities. One would be for the host state to dominate the people of the diaspora completely, keeping them in a dependent position in order to milk their commercial income. This was close to the actual situation of West European Jewry during the Middle Ages, and of East European Jewry into the early twentieth century (though the Jewish diaspora was more diverse and complex than a mere trade diaspora). Through the middle ranges of the spectrum would be various relations of autonomy or dependence, but at the far end the merchant enclave would be found not merely independent of the host society but dominant over part of it. This was the actual situation of the Portuguese trade enclaves in Malacca and Macao, or Dutch rule over Cape Town in the eighteenth century.

The second political variable concerns relations among trade enclaves. Some enclaves had no formal political ties with any other enclave, or at most only such weak ties as might be carried by a sense of solidarity based on common religion, nationality, or profession. This was, in fact, close to the African pattern in Senegambia and much of West Africa; and it contrasts sharply with the overseas-European extreme of a centralized trading post empire where autocratic control extended from a central point to each individual trading post, and the whole trade of the network was centrally directed as a single economic enterprise. At certain periods of its history the Dutch East India Company approached this ideal, and it was pursued by the Compagnie des Indes and the Royal African Company in their Senegambian operations of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Some implications of the geographers' "central place" theory are relevant to the West African tendency toward acephalous trade diasporas and the overseas European tendency toward strong political ties. With a relatively simple commercial technology, individual West African traders or small firms could carry out all necessary commercial functions on their own, independent of specialized facilities for banking, marketing, communication, and the like.

Each commercial enclave could then stand alone, without having to depend for essential functions on a multifunctional urban center. In theory, greater specialization of function would lead to greater efficiency in commerce. But historical experience and central place theory alike suggest that specialized functions will not be distributed in space at random but will concentrate in a central place where other specialized functions are also located. The result has usually been an urban hierarchy, the apex occupied by the central place with the largest concentration of different functions, descending through levels of decreasing functions to the most specialized settlement on the periphery of the system. The multifunctional central place gains an automatic advantage over the less-diverse places in the region. It performs functions which all require but it alone can perform. It is essential to the rest, but no single center lower in the hierarchy is functionally essential to the central place. In this rudimentary form, the model is extremely simple, but it has useful implications as a tool for the analysis of historical relations between cities, and it will be used in discussing the changing Senegambian trade networks. For the present, it merely points out the theoretical expectation that functional dependency within a commercial system is likely to be the basis for political dependency; the more specialized and divisible the commercial functions, the stronger and more centralized the possible political control.

The political variables are also influenced by cultural variables. One important distinction is the degree of cultural difference between the trading community and the host society. A Hanseatic German resident at the London Steelyard was not far removed from the cultural pattern of the English. An employee of the Dutch East India Company on their island off Nagasaki would be far less at home. In the Senegambian setting, the traveling merchants of Manding culture who passed along the Gambia toward the coast were culturally on home ground, while those in the European trade enclaves were not. These differences were modified in turn by another variable—the degree of contact between the enclave and the host society. Some enclaves tried to seal themselves off by their own choice, like the overseas Europeans in the Chinese treaty ports before 1939; others were sealed off on the initiative of the host, like the Dutch post at Nagasaki during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Others, however, had easier relations that led to intermarriage and finally to so much assimilation of the host’s culture that a new blend came into existence, containing elements from both parent cultures. Sometimes the blend became a separate people with its own identity. The bandeirantes of Brazil or the mixed bois brûlés of Manitoba come to mind as examples. 9 Similar cultural blending was to have an important role in the shifting fortunes of Senegambian trade enclaves—not merely the blending of African and European cultures at coastal points but also the interaction of African and European cultures at coastal points but also the interaction of African and European cultures at coastal points but also the interaction of

the African traders' culture (and especially their Muslim religion) with the cultures of less-mobile farming peoples.\(^\text{10}\)

A trade diaspora served economic ends; it is therefore only natural that the range of discriminating economic variables should be very wide. They are too many, in fact, to be listed here, though several will recur in connection with specific trade networks of Senegambia. Some idea of the range of variation can be had by comparing the possible size and makeup of the individual firm or basic, self-directing economic unit. For some of the European trade diasporas, the whole trading post empire was a single firm, controlling the fleets and forts and goods in transit, while at the other end of the scale was the single small-time African trader or juula with his entire capital tied up in a single load of kola nuts carried on his own back.

The size of the firm was largely independent of the size of the system, and it was again independent of functional specialization. The commercial system of a trade diaspora can be broken down for analysis into a number of discrete functions—whether performed by one man or several. Some men, acting as a small independent firm, might do nothing but serve as broker between buyers and sellers, never or rarely trading on their own account and never moving from a fixed point. Others would buy goods in one place and sell them in another. Others acted as transporters, taking charge of other peoples' goods in transit. Still other firms performed all or many of these functions. The whole trade process, in short, can be subdivided for analysis into many different functions, various combinations of which could fall to a particular individual or firm. As the Senegambian trade diasporas changed through time, one of the crucial aspects of that change was to be the shift of particular functions from one type of firm to another.

The range of social variation in trade diasporas was still wider than the range of economic difference, though many social types available in the worldwide spectrum of trade diasporas were not present in Senegambia. The Senegambian examples, however, were sharply divided between one social type for the African commercial enclaves and another for the overseas Europeans. African enclaves normally reproduced the full range of class, caste, and occupation found elsewhere in the vicinity, though with more people in commercial occupations than was normal. The European communities, however, were almost entirely made up of adult males, resident for short periods only. Most of these men died after a short period in Senegambia, because they lacked immunity to the endemic diseases of the region.\(^\text{11}\) Those who lived tended to return to Europe after a residence of three

---


to ten years, rarely longer. Without their own women, overseas Europeans
could not recreate a model of the home society. Most took local concubines
or mistresses, which meant that the second generation was racially and
culturally mixed. This mixed community was constantly renewed with new
immigrants from Europe, and it was just as constantly dissipated as third- and
fourth-generation part-Europeans lost touch with the overseas-European cul-
ture of the posts and merged with the general African population.

The death rates of new arrivals to West Africa were higher than equivalent
rates for overseas Europeans anywhere else, which suggests that the West
African pattern may well mark one extreme in a range of overseas-European
social patterns; but the comparative study of these communities, and of trade
diasporas in general, is only now beginning.

Islam and Commerce

The vast majority of merchants in long-distance trade were
Muslim, often clerics, while the vast majority of people in other occupations
were incompletely Muslim, or at least not clerics. This fact helped to build a
feeling of solidarity among merchants and give them an identity separate
from the rest of the population. A separate identity for a professional group
fitted the Senegambian social setting, where craft specialists were set aside in
endogamous “castes.” In practice, merchants also tended to marry their
daughters to Muslim clerics or to other merchants, though their usual social
ranking was that of free men, generally one step lower in prestige than the
military and political élite.

Islam and commerce were first associated in West Africa because Islam
came across the Sahara carried by merchants, and contacts on the sahel were
between merchants. It was natural enough for the savanna merchants to
adopt the new religion and carry it further south. But mere contact may not
be explanation enough; the Wolof were in contact with Islam for nearly a
thousand years before they finally converted in the full sense of the term.
Merchants, on the other hand, found particular advantages in the new faith.
Islam was friendly to commerce from the beginning in Arabia, and it was also
a universal religion where belief carried a valuable sense of solidarity with
other believers. The local pre-Islamic religions were often particular to spe-
cific places and specific ancestor spirits. A local community that propitiated
the spirits of the fields and streams and trees had a spiritual investment
reinforcing other ties to the land it worked. Islam lacked this intimate tie to
nature, but its universality meant that the believer’s spiritual investment was
good anywhere. A Muslim trader could look down on pagans, whose nature
spirits were simply genies in the Muslim context, and he had the temporal
advantage of dealing with fellow traders who were also fellow Muslims.
Islam also carried the prestige of literacy and association with court life, a prestige that held good even with non-Muslims. Their own religions were not exclusive, and they were happy to seek Muslim clerical aid to help them manipulate the world of the supernatural. Islamic clerics and merchants therefore had a lucrative sideline in the manufacture and sale of charms. These were the "gri-gris" of the European travelers, the most common being verses from the Koran or other symbolic words written on a piece of paper, then sewed into a flat leather container 3 to 5 cm square (called talki, sing. talkuru, in Pulaar). Others were made from various powders, kept in hollowed cow's horns (galuujie, sing. alaadu). All these forms of charm had close parallels in pre-Muslim practice. One common charm, for example, was the aye, made by writing verses from the Koran on a wooden plaque, then washing the plaque with water, which absorbed the spiritual power of the written words. The pre-Islamic counterpart in Bundu was a similar liquid made by mixing water with the ritually prepared bark or roots of certain trees. The aye thus drew its power from wood of the plaque as well as the words of the Koran.

Non-Muslim respect for Muslim spiritual powers also helped to protect Muslims moving through a variety of different political jurisdictions. It was worth a trader's while to encourage a reputation for magical powers, and some clerics were less than zealous about spreading Islam to the unconverted, preferring to claim esoteric powers for their own group. This use of religion as a passport was noted by Richard Jobson, writing about clerics on the Gambia in 1620: "... they have free recourse through all places, so that howsoever the King and Countries are at warres and up in armes, the one against the other, yet still the Marybucke [marabout or cleric] is a privileged person, and many follow his trade or course of travelling, without any let or interruption of either side."

Some of the merchant-clerics claimed a special protective power for their religious knowledge, even beyond the powers of other clerics. The Jahaanke (French Diakhanké, English Jahanka) were one such clerical community whose villagers were scattered widely in the hinterland of the Senegambia, and their claims rested on non-Muslim as well as Muslim sources of religious prestige. They trace their origins back to Ja (Dia) on Niger above Timbuktu, a town famous for its outstanding place in the supernatural order of things on Muslim and pagan grounds alike. Today, the Jahaanke lay greatest emphasis

1. Annotation by Hammadi Amadu Si to narrations by Demba Sembalu Sok, CC, T 5 (1) and Idi Ja, Ts (2).
2. Person, Samori, 1:133.
on their special techniques for reciting the *alfatiya*, the first verse of the Koran, so as to produce good or evil consequences for particular individuals, and some claim that all Jahaanke are endowed from birth with the powers of a *waliu* or Muslim saint.\(^5\) This use of religious prestige to protect long-distance traders was not peculiar to Islam in West Africa. In southern Nigeria, for example, both the Awka and Aro, commercial specialists and subgroups of the Ibo, used the powers of their associated local deities to assure their safety throughout Iboland.\(^6\)

The merchant as Muslim also fitted the ancient West African division between the religious, commercial, and clerical calling on one hand and the military and political on the other. The distinction appears at many points in the thought and practice of the western Sudan and western Sahara. The division between so-called warrior and marabout tribes in the desert extends from the distinction between Hasaniya and the zwâya in Mauritania eastward to the Tuareg northwest of Lake Chad. One aspect of dichotomy was the belief that the political-military group had a right to rule, but the clerical-mercantile group had a right to autonomous jurisdiction over their own affairs. This distinction appears early in West African history with the double cities at Gao and ancient Ghana, where the segregation of foreign merchants was in effect a segregation of Muslims as well.

The practice of segregation and autonomy for Muslims continued, and certain clerical towns—most famous of which was Jahaba (Diakaba) on the Bafing—had the right to autonomous government and to give sanctuary to fugitives, even in the great days of Malian power.\(^7\) Elsewhere Muslims were grouped together in a quasi-independent village under clerical leadership, in a special ward of a mixed village, or sometimes in a double town. This separation was important to the isolation of the communities of a trade diaspora, as it was later on for the enclavement of Muslims on the eve of the great religious revolutions.

**Juula Communities in Senegambia: The Soninke of Gajaaga**

The clerical-commercial communities scattered through Senegambia and its hinterland were an offshoot of a much wider net of associated trade diasporas spread across the whole of West Africa. In the sector west of the Niger bend, these diasporas had begun with a southward movement of

\(^5\) Baku Kaba, Tambura, CC, T 13 (1); Mamba Girasi, translator’s notes, CC, T 13 (2).


people from the desert edge, setting up trade communities to serve the trans-Sahara trade. Some were Soninke from ancient Ghana, who traded overland to the Bambuhu gold fields. Others used the upper Niger river transportation which extended from the edge of the desert nearly to the edge of the forest. The boatmen on the river itself were mainly Sōirai (Songhai), but merchants, often of Soninke origin, moved south to carry the overland trade that branched off from the river itself. One important branch, in operation well before 1500, dropped due south from the Niger at Jene through Bobo-Julaaso (Bobo-Dioulasso), Kong, and Bunduku to the Asante goldfields. In the process of developing this route, the merchants dropped the Soninke language and picked up a dialect of Malinke, modifying their culture in the process. In time, they adopted a self-identity as Juula (Dioula or Dyoula in French), juula being the Malinke word for merchant—now adopted to mean a particular people and their way of life.

Other Soninke followed trade in other directions and went through a similar transformation. Those who moved from Ja on the Niger to a new center at Jahaba on the Bafing came to be known as Jahaanke, and they too Malinkized. Other Soninke moved inside the Niger bend and were called Marka, while those who became associated with the Voltaic states became Yarse. Still other Soninke merchant colonies are found out in the desert oasis towns like Tichit and Walata, while others branched south from the Niger to work the north-south kola trade through Kankan in upper Guinea, and the trade colonies spread further until they reached the sea through Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Senegambia.¹

Just as many of the originally Soninke trade diasporas changed to Malinke patterns of language and culture, some Malinke joined them by choice or through intermarriage. Other Malinke became Muslim and took to long-distance commerce on their own, founding new trade networks of Malinke Mori or Muslim Malinke. These were especially important in the westward salt route from Mali to the Gambia and in the southern kola routes from the Manding culture area to the forest edge. By the seventeenth century, the Senegambian hinterland had at least three distinct but interrelated trade diasporas—Soninke who remained Soninke in speech and culture, principally based in Gajaaga; Jahaanke, or Malinkized Soninke, principally based at Jahaba on the Bafing but gradually pushing their sphere to the west and south; and the Malinke Mori, mainly important along an east-west axis stretching from the Gambia mouth to Bamako on the Niger. In spite of the danger of confusion with the Juula of the Jene-to-Asante axis, the most

2.1 Schematic Outlines of Early West African Trade
2.2 The Clerical Towns of Gajaaga

accurate collective name for all three groups is still *juula*, the ordinary Malinke word for a trader.²

The Soninke juula of Gajaaga were centralized more than the others, as a clerical enclave in a Soninke state otherwise dominated by the secular-minded Baacili lineage. They had a base, therefore, in a culturally homogeneous region, and their role as mediators of cross-cultural trade began only as they traveled away from that base. Oral traditions trace these people back to the dispersal of all Soninke from Wagadu, and they hold that the Baacili arrived in Gajaaga together with the clerical lineage of the Tanjigora, who were in fact collateral descendants from a common ancestor. Other clerical lineages of Soninke later joined from other directions. The Draame were most important, coming either from Tichit in the desert (according to one tradition) or from Mali (according to another). Other clerical lineages, Saaxo (Sakho), Dukure, Ba, and Jombera (Diombera) were also present by the early twentieth century, each dominant over part of a town or an autonomous town scattered among other Gajaaga towns governed by Baacili.³

Clerical autonomy for some at least of these towns was already old by the seventeenth century. The *Tarikh al-Fattâsh* bracketed Gunjuru, the principal clerical town in Gajaaga, with Timbuktu and Jahaba as towns with a special judicial status stretching back to the period of Malian dominance. “... it was the town of the cadi of that region and of the ulama. No soldier may enter it nor any official reside there so as to oppress his charges. Nevertheless, the king of Gajaaga would visit the ulama and the cadi of that town each year in the month of Ramadan according to the custom of the country, bearing presents which he would divide among them. When the ‘night of destiny’ came round, the king would order food cooked, and then he would have it placed on a large plate or rather in a large calabash which he would place on his head. He would then call those who studied the Koran and the young people who were learning to read, who came to eat the food from the calabash on the king’s head, he being seated while the others stood in order to eat. The king acted thus in order to honor them, and the custom lasted down to our own time according to what I have been told by al-Hâjj Mamadu Sire, a native of Gajaaga.”⁴

2. Although the word passed into Ghanian English as a proper name for a particular ethnic group, it passed into Gambian English in the broader sense, often as “julaman,” a trader or peddler.


4. Translated from the French translation by O. Oudas and M. Delafosse published as M. Kâti, *Tariih El-Fattach*. The “night of destiny” is one of the last nights of Ramadan, in which it is believed that God sets the events that are to occur during the coming year. The translation places Gunjuru in Kaniaga rather than Gajaaga, though the error is corrected in identifying Mamadu Sire’s birth place as Gajaaga.
The number and fortunes of the various clerical towns varied somewhat over time, but they were all under at least the moral authority of the Draame—first the Draame of Gunjuru, but later those of Dramane (after Gunjuru itself was annexed to Xaaso in the early eighteenth century). Even then, the Draame of Gunjuru became the principal religious advisors of the rulers of Xaaso, as their relatives in Dramane were in Gajaaga.\(^5\) It seems doubtful, however, that the Gajaaga clerics ever had a “marabout republic” or league of clerical towns, as described by some of the European visitors of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.\(^6\) They had the mutual solidarity that bound merchants to act together in favor of commercial privilege, and they had the usual solidarity of serious Muslims, but their relationships stretching beyond Gajaaga were sometimes as close as those within the country.

Each major lineage was merely the local segment of a broader lineage distributed far beyond that region. A Draame, for example, was a kinsman of other Draame scattered very widely by the Soninke dispersal, and the connection had obvious value for traveling merchants. Another kind of tie could result from a tight and permanent alliance between lineages. Such alliances (jönu in Soninke) were traced back to an inviolable oath, sworn after a memorable event had demonstrated the friendship of the two families or earned the gratitude of one to the other.\(^7\) The Saaxo and Ba in the lower-Gajaaga towns of Jawara and Yelingara have a tradition of a first dispersal from Wagadu to Fuuta Tooro. There they became jönu, and they remained so after their final move to Gajaaga; the tie still continues, and it is binding on others of these two lineages wherever they may be.\(^8\)

Though the clerical towns might sometimes act together in war, they were often on their own in defense against the nomads from the desert, or their neighbors, the Baacili. Like other Gajaaga towns each was defended by a


7. This kind of relationship is found very generally in western West Africa, not merely in Gajaaga. See Bathily, “Notices sur Gadiaga,” p. 68.

8. Al-Häjj Bukari Saaxo (Sakho) of Jawara (Diawara), CC, T 4 (2).
substantial adobe wall (called a *tata* in most Senegambian languages), and the interior was subdivided into smaller defensible areas, each with its own tata. Some clerical towns were single, while others were paired with a secular community to make a double town, religious and mercantile in one half, military and secular in the other. Lani, for example, was traditionally a double town of this kind, Lani-Modi and Lani-Tunka. In 1849, when they were both sacked by a French force, the two towns were about 1.2 km apart, each within its separate wall. The clerical town was the larger of the two, with a main tata measuring about 400 meters by 90 and subdivided into four separately walled interior tatas. The usual population of Gajaaga clerical towns was from four or five thousand for a large one down to perhaps two thousand for the general run. This was unusually large for a purely agricultural village of the time, and roughly half the population of Gajaaga was associated with the clerical towns. But most of their people were slaves and members of the occupational castes of minstrels, leatherworkers, woodworkers, blacksmiths, and the like. Only a minority were able to follow the call of religious learning as a full-time occupation, though many more participated in commerce.

The trade network of the Gajaaga merchants led mainly eastward from their home base on the upper Senegal, one branch running through the sahal to Jaara (Diara) just south of the Sahara, and occasionally on to the Niger bend. A second branch veered off to the south to catch the trade further up the Niger, usually at Segu, and an intersecting north-south route exchanged the products of the steppe for those of the savanna. The Gajaaga-based trade network was thus an extension outward in three directions from a junction point between networks. It was the normal terminus for the pack oxen from the east, donkeys from the south, and camels from the north, and it was the transfer point to Senegal River trade.

But the normal was not invariable. If the Senegal route was blocked by political disturbances in Fuuta Tooro, as it often was in the eighteenth century, Gajaaga merchants were willing and able to go overland to the upper Gambia, or even through to the coast itself if necessary. The fact that they could do this without having their own Soninke network stretching in that direction on a permanent basis is one indication that facilities for brokerage and the like were available to any Muslim juula, regardless of nationality. In this sense, the Soninke trade rested on the whole network of trade enclaves.

---


10. For the nature and range of Gajaaga trade see Charpentier, Memoir of 1 April 1725; Park, *Travels*, 1:95; Paul Marty, *Etudes sénégalaises* (Paris, n.d. [c. 1926]), p. 179; Governor Senegal to Minister of Colonies, no. 60, 20 February 1832, ANS, Dakar, 2 B 14; Al-Hājj Bukari Saaxo, Jawara, CC, T 4 (2).
and trade communities that stretched across the Manding cultural region and west to the ocean.

Some additional Soninke settlements, however, were founded by dispersal from Gajaaga, some by political refugees, others for commercial reasons. One small cluster emerged along the western frontier of Bundu in the direction of Wuuli. Since Bundu was a Fuulbe state and Wuuli was Malinke, this was a cultural frontier and one marked by chronic warfare—so much so that the frontier between the two states was not a line but a zone of man-made wilderness. The Soninke villages of Julingel and Juumi were convenient take-off points for crossing the wilderness bound for the Gambia, or for entering Bundu on the way back. Sabi in the valley of the Ńeriko (Nieriko) was another Soninke center between the Gambia and the interior. Isaaco, Mungo Park's former guide, stopped there in 1810 to enjoy the hospitality of the family of one of his wives, though he himself was from the neighboring kingdom of Wuuli. A decade later Major William Grey employed Isaaco's cousin Yusufu to carry a message from Gajaaga to Segu—one of the occasional glimpses of family patterns strung out along the trade routes which sometimes come through the otherwise impersonal reporting by European travelers. Other Gajaaga settlements were still more distant, on the northern fringes of Fuuta Jaaló, where in the early nineteenth century they helped to forward Soninke traders with gold from Bure or slaves from the upper Niger on their way to the Portuguese posts on the Geba-Corubal river system.11

Jahaanke and Others

The Jahaanke resemble the Soninke of Gajaaga so much that the two trade diasporas have often been confused.1 Both were originally Soninke in speech and culture, Muslim in religion, commercial and clerical by occupation. Both lived in commercial enclaves, with as much freedom as possible from the interference of the secular state. The Jahaanke, however, trace their origins back to Ja, in Maasina on the Niger, just as the Juula of the Asante hinterland do. They, like the Juula, passed through a process of Malinkization, and they regard the eastern Juula as a related people. The


clerics of Gajaaga, on the other hand, trace a different course from Wagadu to their present location, they belong to a different set of lineages, and their home base remained in Soninke-speaking territory.

In effect, both the Juula of the Asante hinterland and the Jahaanke were peoples formed by a trade diaspora—formed, indeed, by the same trade diaspora—but the two went in different directions and both lost regular contact with their common source (which is no longer Soninke, in any case). While insisting on their ultimate origin in Ja, the present-day Jahaanke make much more of a formative period of residence at Jahaba on the Bafing in the border area between Bambuhu and Gâgarâ. They trace their identity as a people to the experience of living there together, and to the religious teaching of al-Hâjj Salimu Sware (Arabic Salim Suwari, also called Mbemba Lai [Laye]). The chronology is uncertain, but data assembled by Ivor Wilks suggest that Salimu Sware must have flourished after 1485 and before 1650. At either of these dates, the Jahaanke were comparative latecomers to the western trade, but they became so important in the last decades of the seventeenth century and the early decades of the eighteenth that their name became virtually synonymous with merchants among the Europeans on the Gambia or the upper Senegal, though with many variant spellings such as Guiaca in French, Junko or Jagga in English.

The date of the outward movement from Jahaba is uncertain, though Jahaanke traders no doubt moved up and down the trade routes for some time before they actually began to establish new towns at a distance. One of their principal moves was into Bundu, where Maalik Sii's new clerical state, founded in the 1690's, provided a welcome for Muslims, along with easy access to the Bambuhu gold fields from the coastward side. The first two Jahaanke towns in Bundu, Diide (Dide) and Gunjuru (Goundiourou, not to be confused with the Gajaaga town of the same name), were founded in the reign of Maalik Sii himself. The thirteen or so that followed all trace their origin to one or the other of the pioneer settlements.

2. The earlier date is suggested by the fact that Salimu Sware's teaching laid great emphasis on a religious work that was not available until 1485. Other evidence from silsila or intellectual genealogies suggests a date in the sixteenth rather than the seventeenth century, but the first mention to my knowledge of the Jahaanke in European sources is that of Francisco de Lemos Coelho in 1669, in Duas descrições seisentistas da Guiné de Francisco de Lemos Coelho, ed. Damiao Peres (Lisbon, 1953), p. 23, saying that the "Jagancazes" were the most important merchants on the routes eastward from the upper Gambia. I have revised my earlier belief that the Jahaanke founded Sutuko (P. D. Curtin, "Pre-Colonial Trading Networks and Traders: The Diakhanké," in Meillas-soux, Indigenous Trade and Markets, pp. 229–30); they may have done so, but the only evidence is that they lived there in the late eighteenth century, much too late to be conclusive.

3. Hammadi Madi Si, Madina Kojalani, CC T 7 (1 and 2); Arfâ Alkasana Gasama, T 13 (2); Kadiali Diakite, C1P(1); Anon., "The History of the Gassama," Fonds Curtin, IFAN, Dakar, unpublished collation and translation by Lucy Quimby from mss. nos. 1, 27, and 29.
A second Jahaanke town was founded about the same time to the south of Jahaba, in Dentilia. This time the commercial significance was not the gold trade but the general east-west route between the upper Niger and the upper Gambia. Other new towns followed further west on the same route. Silakunda, Lamiinia, and Samekuta (Sillacounda, Laminia, and Samécouta) are on or near the Gambia where it changes its general course from north to west, near the present Senegalese town of Kedugu (Kédougou). Though the date of foundation is uncertain, these towns were already flourishing by the early eighteenth century, maintaining close relations with their kinsmen in Bundu, Dentilia, and Jahaba. By the late eighteenth century some Jahaanke were found at Sutuko (Sutuco) on the navigable Gambia to the west, though Sutuko may not have been purely Jahaanke. By that time, the Jahaanke trade diaspora had spread along the main east-west route from the Niger to the Gambia.

Nineteenth-century expansion took a north-south direction as well. Jahaanke had been moving into Fuuta Jaalo for the kola trade over many decades, but their first town in that region was founded in 1804 by al-Hājj Salimu Gassama, called Karamoho Ba (literally, "the great teacher"). He was not so much a man of commerce as a man of letters who was born in Diide in Bundu, studied in Naani on the Gambia, in Gunjuru in Xaaso, and had taught in Kâkâ and Timbo before he asked the Almaami of Fuuta Jaalo for permission to found his own town on the northern frontier of that country. The town had to be moved in 1815, but both settlements were called Tuba, and the second (often called Tubaba) became a major center of Islamic learning through the remainder of the century. Tuba was also a center for the Jahaanke dispersion further south, into the kola-producing regions and on to the coast. This further dispersion, however, was mainly one of small groups settling in their own sections of existing towns, rather than founding new, all-Jahaanke settlements. Though diffuse, it may have been more influential on surrounding peoples than the older pattern of settlement had been, and the Jahaanke were among the most important of a number of northern elements moving through Fuuta and onto the coastal plain during the course of the nineteenth century.4

At this same time, the network further north also began to change. The rise of Kaarta in the final decades of the eighteenth century was a menace to all of northeastern Senegambia, and disaster to Jahaba. As the trade routes were cut again and again for long periods, inhabitants drifted away to the Jahaanke towns in Bundu or downstream to the Gajaaga clerical settlements. Finally, Tiginkoro of Kaarta (ruled c. 1808–11) destroyed Jahaba and drove the

2.3 Jahaanke Towns and Villages about 1900 (Sources: Rançon, *La Haute Gambie*, pp. 67, 467–68, 487–88, 540–41; Marty, *L'Islam en Guinée*, pp. 133ff.; Henry Oliver, Permanent Secretary for Local Government, the Gambia, personal communication, May 1966; Kadiali Diakité, CC, CIP (1)
survivors off to the west. According to tradition, 500 years passed from the founding of Jahaba to its destruction.5

The final shifts in the spacial disposition of Jahaanke towns came with the religious revolutions. As serious Muslims, the Jahaanke could hardly ignore the call of Shaykh Umar Taal for a fergo or emigration into Kaarta to found a new Muslim empire. Some from Bundu followed him, and their descendents still live near Ñoro (Nioro) in Mali. Most Jahaanke, however, were in the Kaadiri brotherhood, while Shaykh Umar was a leader of the rival Tijaani order. Jahaanke traditions also centered on a self-protecting isolation from the quasi-pagan world, not military action to transform it. They were to be more ripe for action, though, some three decades later, when Mamadu Lamiin Draame appealed for their support at a time when the kind of society they had known seemed to be in full collapse. Many Jahaanke from Bundu followed Mamadu Lamiin on his final flight toward the Gambia in 1886, and they settled there when the leader was killed and the revolt collapsed.6

Although they have had no common political ties since their departure from Jahaba, the present-day Jahaanke think of themselves as a separate nation or people, unified by the special religious tradition incorporated in the teaching of Salimu Sware. But the Jahaanke people in the broad sense are defined linguistically as those who speak their special dialect of Malinke. In a slightly narrower sense, they are counted as Jahaanke if they live in a dominantly Jahaanke village, whether free people, members of the endogamous craft groups, or former slaves (joo).7 In fact, the “slave” group were more important to the Jahaanke than to most Senegambian peoples; it was their work in the fields that freed the upper class for koranic learning and commerce abroad. Tuba in Fuuta Jaaló was reported as 60 per cent slave at

7. In a still narrower sense, a true Jahaanke would be a person descended from those who lived in Jahaba in the time of Salimu Sware, though in fact many leading Jahaanke today are descended from lineages of Halpulaar or Malinke origin which have since become assimilated to the Jahaanke way of life. Some traditions claim that the key Jahaanke patrilineages from Jahaba were originally a single matrilineage, since each of the founding ancestors of the patrilineages was born to one of a set of full sisters with the jaamu Suduro. On the other hand, Jahaanke villages differ as to which patrilineages belong in the inner circle. Sware (alternate forms, Sanbaheesi or Sise), Draame, Giraasi (alt, Fofana) are most commonly listed. Kaba (alt. Jaakite), Dibasi, and Jabi (alt. Gasama) occur on some lists but not on all. See Hammadi Madi Si, Madina Kojalaani, CC, T 7 (2); Monteil, Les Khassonké, p. 357; Smith, “Les Diakhanké,” passim; Arfa Ibrahima Gasama, Tombura, CC, T 13 (2); Mamba Guirassy, “Etude sommaire sur la race Diakha” (unpublished mss. seen through the kindness of the author, Ministère d’Education Nationale, Dakar).
the beginning of the colonial period, and this is close to the figure given for other Jahaanke towns as well.\textsuperscript{8}

Like other juula, the Jahaanke valued autonomy from the secular authorities, Islam as a religion, and commerce as their chosen occupation, but they went further still and held that the use of force and the exercise of political authority were incompatible with the religious calling. These ideas are attributed to Salimu Sware and are found among the Juula of the Asante hinterland as well,\textsuperscript{9} but the Jahaanke gave them a special twist. The theological formulation of Swarian pacifism was to reject physical jihad and to assert that the only correct form of jihad was the spiritual struggle for righteousness. Later Jahaanke thought drew out the fullest possible implications, holding that all warfare is morally wrong and the use of violence even in self defense may not be legitimate. They explain many of their shifts from one place to another as a decision to move rather than fight. The Jahaanke of Bundu have a tradition that, when they first arrived, their ancestors made an agreement with Maalik Sii, who promised they would never be asked to fight in Bunduunke wars but could do alternate service building fortifications and giving prayer for victory. Many traditionalists still claim that Jahaanke caravans moved through the country armed only with the power of prayer, though others concede that prayer was most effective when supplemented by firearms.

The avoidance of political power emerges most forcefully as a theme running through Jahaanke historical traditions, which tell again and again of a noble cleric, so respected by the people that they offered him the kingship. Yet he declined, proving by his renunciation that he was indeed a great waliu. The Jahaanke reaction to the Umarian jihad of the 1850's is neatly illustrated by the Jahaanke account of Shaykh Umar's visit to Tuba. There he met the famous Jahaanke scholar and waliu Karâ Tasilimu, and the tradition tells how each performed a series of miracles to demonstrate his supernatural powers. After they had reached a mutual recognition of spiritual equality at a high level, Umar asked Karâ Tasilimu to join his jihad, but the Jahaanke saint proved his ultimate superiority by answering that he was a Jahaanke, and Jahaanke fight only against the temptation to dominate others.\textsuperscript{10}

The general range of Jahaanke trade ran from the navigable Gambia on the west to the Niger on the east, rarely extending further than Segu or Sikasso, where it linked up with other trade networks in the Niger valley. On occasion in the eighteenth century, they might go through to the sea at the petite côte north of the Gambia mouth, but the southern route to the sea in what was to become Guinea-Conakry appears to have developed only in the nineteenth

\textsuperscript{10} (Arfan Diame Diakhabi, CC, T9 (2). See also Kadiale Diakhite, T2 (1); Ibrahima Diasigui, Sututa, T 10 (2); Baku Kaba, Tambura, T 13 (2).
century. Even then, most Jahaanke originating as far north as Bundu would trade only as far as Tuba or Kankan, leaving the trade from there to the coast to a few traders with large capitals or to those whose base was further south. Jahaanke merchants took their caravans to Gajaaga, just as the Soninke did, but they seem to have left the east-west route along the sahal to the Soninke, rarely going further to the northeast than Xaaso.\textsuperscript{11}

In spite of the web of relationships giving separate identity to the Jahaanke or the Soninke of Gajaaga, those networks were only subdivisions of a broader net that encompassed all the juula of Senegambia, with linkage to other juula networks beyond. Several different groups of Malinke Mori or Muslim Malinke were involved in long-distance trade. Virtually any Muslim Malinke town could contribute some merchants, though most Malinke juula appear to have come from the core area of Manding culture, especially from its southern fringes, less often from the Muslim villages on the Gambia itself. The Gambian Afro-Portuguese, for example, translated juula as mercador, and the English called them mercadores at first before settling on merchant as a term for a specific group of people, not just those with commercial occupations; and the usual designation for the Malinke region east of the Gambia was simply “the merchants’ country.”

Juula involvement in Gambia trade, however, led early to the development of juula settlements on the Gambia which were not specifically identifiable as Jahaanke, or Soninke, or Malinke Mori. In 1507, for example, Sutuko on the Gambia was a commercial enclave on the fringes of the Jolof empire but independent of it. It then had about 4,000 people and was a site of major exchange between Malinke juula from the interior and Portuguese river traffic. Even at this early date, gold exports through Sutuko were 23 to 28 kgs in a good year. A century later, in 1620, Sutuko was still the most important up-river town, with a walled area more than 1.5 kms in diameter, though the enclosed area was greater than the built-up area, to allow grazing for the large number of transport donkeys. After another century, in about 1730, however, the main trade center had moved downstream to Kaur, which took the form of a triple town having one Wolof section and two separate sections for Muslim traders.\textsuperscript{12}

Nor was Kaur alone. Francis Moore’s map of the Gambia in about 1735 showed eighteen different villages identified as “morecunda” or “junco-cunda” (Muslim town or Jahaanke town). (See below, map 3.2.) By the 1790’s, even more of the principal merchants in long-distance trade had

\textsuperscript{11} Kajaali Jahite, CC, T 2 (1).

\textsuperscript{12} The old Sutuko is the village shown on present-day Gambian maps as Sutukoba (literally “great Sutuko”), not the one marked Sutuko a little to the north of Basse. See D. Pacheco Pereira, \textit{Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis}, ed. and trans. Raymond Mauny (Bissau, 1956), pp. 63, 65; Jobson, \textit{Golden Trade}, p. 89; Francis Moore, \textit{Travels into the Inland Parts of Africa . . .} (London, 1738), pp. 101–2.
moved to the Gambia. Mungo Park visited a certain Jemafu Mamadu, the "richest trader on the Gambia," who lived in one of the clerical villages, but other prominent juula in the Gambia trade still kept their main residence hundreds of kilometers to the east, usually in enclaved Muslim towns, but scattered very widely in places as diverse as Xaaso or the Muslim part of a double town he called Kamalia in the heart of Manding a little west of Bamako—in either case near the eastern terminus of the normal caravan route to the Gambia. Still others lived halfway along the route. One juula Park visited in 1797 had his headquarters at Madina (Médine), a village which was his sole property, near Satadugu on the Faleme. But the Gambian influence was apparent in the Gambian English architectural style of his house and in the fact that his meals were served on imported pewter dishes.  

Other ethnic groups also contributed a few traders to the general juula community. The Sereer and coastal Wolof were notable for their relative scarcity, but many of the Futankooobe of the middle Senegal were juula. North of the Senegal, many zwäya Moors were active in the gum trade and in the more general exchange between desert and savanna. The usual point of exchange for gum was the north bank of the river, but zwäya caravans came as far south as Cape Verde and occasionally to the Gambia as well, so often that all of Kajor and Waalo fell within a Moorish trading zone. The Moors also operated east-west camel caravans that sometimes covered the whole distance between the coast of Mauritania and the Niger bend. One group especially active in this trade was known to the Europeans of the 1730's simply as the Arabs of Haire, Haire being the desert region due north of Gajaaga.

In one sense, all of these different long-distance traders were in competition with one another, but their competition was moderated by other aspects of Senegambian social organization. A useful distinction can be made between two different kinds of solidarity, a corporate solidarity and a feeling of solidarity based on common status. In the first case, an individual may feel that his interests are bound up with those who bring differing contributions to a common effort. The present-day example would be the solidarity of all who belong to the same university or work for the same firm; in Senegambia, it would be the solidarity of a village regardless of rank or caste. But the individual may have an equal or stronger feeling of status solidarity with those whose position is equivalent to his own, but in other firms, other universities, or other villages.

The normal pattern in Senegambia was very strong corporate solidarity exemplified by strong persisting ties between former masters and their former slaves, or between the "caste" people and the ruling class. Juula on the other

14. The distinction recalls Durkheim's discussion of "corporate" and "mechanical" solidarity; but it is not identical, nor are Durkheim's full set of theoretical overtones implied.
hand lived in peculiar circumstances, where their religion normally bound them to fellow Muslims and separated them from the rest of society. Their special function as cross-cultural mediators in commerce also separated them somewhat from others of their own language or ethnic group. The juula tradition laid a very strong emphasis on status solidarity with other merchants. Jahaanke today still insist that they have a bond not merely to other Jahaanke but to other juula, and especially to other juula in the same line of trade. A multinational caravan representing several ethnic groups—Jahaanke, Soninke, or Futaanke—would tend to subdivide according to the branch of trade, not the ethnic identity. The road through status solidarity to nationhood based on that solidarity—the road followed by the Juula of the Asante hinterland—had already been followed some way by the Senegambian juula as well.

When Richard Jobson visited the Gambia in 1620, he met a juula named Bokar Sano who appealed to Jobson's own sense of juula solidarity. In Jobson's words, "In our time of trading together, if it were his owne goods he bartered for, he would tell us, this is for my selfe, and you must deale better with me, than either with the Kings of the Country or any others, because I am as you are, a Julietto, which signifies a Merchant, that goes from place to place, neither do I, as the Kings of our Country do which is to eate, and drinke, and lye still at home amongst their women, but I seeke abroad as you doe; . . ." The road through status solidarity to nationhood based on that solidarity—the road followed by the Juula of the Asante hinterland—had already been followed some way by the Senegambian juula as well.

Over the long run, however, juula solidarity in Senegambia reached neither the nationhood it achieved in the Asante hinterland nor yet the revolutionary role that allowed Yves Person to identify the rise of Samori Ture as a "juula revolution." A detailed explanation will have to await further research in specific Senegambian societies; but in general the juula solidarity of earlier centuries disappeared into the broader movement for religious reform and Muslim supremacy. This was possible in nineteenth-century Senegambia because Islam and the status of juula were no longer coterminous in Fuuta Tooro, the Wolof states, or even the lower Gambia; Muslims outnumbered merchants many times over, while in Samori's country or the Asante hinterland they continued to be nearly one and the same.

The Politics of Trade: Juula Communities and the Competition between the Rivers

It is difficult in most periods to disentangle the role of the juula in the maze of political maneuver, negotiation, violence, and threats of violence that marked the shifting relations between coastal or riverain polit-
ical authorities, the European juula from overseas in their trading forts or factories, the African juula from the hinterland, and occasional extraneous forces, such as the Moroccan raiders who were present along the Senegal so much of the early eighteenth century. The somewhat abstract model of juula society, religion, attitudes, and spatial distribution is nevertheless only a part of reality. Another part of that same reality is the day by day, year by year play of power and profit surrounding the movement of commerce. The data needed for a continuous account are not available. Even if they were, a full chronicle of these political relations would be redundant, where the essential is the style of history, the recurrent pattern that emerges from the more detailed narrative. Some of this style can be seen in a sequence of crises in the 1720's and 1730's, centering on the strategic rivalry of the Senegal and Gambia rivers as carriers of east-west trade.

The two rivers were nearly equal as potential routes to the interior, but their advantages and disadvantages were different. The Senegal was navigable as far as Felu Falls, just above Kayes in present-day Mali, 560 kms in a direct line from the mouth, 925 kms by river. The Gambia on the other hand was only navigable to Barokunda Falls, 265 kms in direct line from the mouth, 470 kms by river—roughly half the distance. But the Senegal had contravening disadvantages. Oceangoing ships found it difficult to cross the bar at the mouth of the river, and even harder to navigate further inland than Podor (180 kms direct, 269 by river from Saint Louis). In practice, goods were transshipped at Saint Louis for a river voyage in specialized vessels. The Gambia had none of these transshipment problems. Oceangoing sailing vessels could go all the way to Barokunda Falls, though they found the upper reaches so difficult they often stopped further down. Even today, oceangoing steamers sail regularly as far as Kuntaur, 153 kms in direct line from Bathurst, 240 kms by river.¹

The hydrography of the two rivers was also different. Where the Senegal was tidal only to Podor, the Gambia was tidal all the way to Barokunda. This meant that, even with unfavorable winds, a sailing vessel could go upstream by drifting with the favorable tides and riding at anchor during the unfavorable. But on the Senegal, navigation above Podor was only possible during the “high season” when the river was in flood, rarely before July or after December, and usually only in August through November. During the rest of the year, any sailors from the coast who happened to be in Gajaaga were cut off till the next high season. Though the Gambia was not seasonal in this definitive sense, the best trade season there was the dry season, when the tides were comparatively strong and the current comparatively weak, say late January through April. It was also the best season for European sailors to avoid malaria and for juula to avoid muddy tracks and streams in flood. This

meant that the two rivers offered complementary seasonal advantages, and the average transit time from the coast to upper Gajaaga and back was not very different. (See map 2.4.) The combination of Gambia River plus caravan came to about thirty days each way, while the Senegal route took about fifty days upstream and fifteen days down.

The game of competition between the two rivers included as players the French traders from overseas on the Senegal and the English on the Gambia. Each had a route to the interior which it sought to monopolize against other Europeans. The two positions were roughly competitive but not symmetrically so. The Senegal, being harder but longer, had two strategic advantages balancing its navigational problems. The need to transship for the upriver voyage meant that control of Saint Louis carried full control of the river trade, whereas easier entry into the broad estuary of the Gambia meant that interlopers or well-armed enemy ships could sometimes sail past the forts at the river mouth. The longer reach into the interior also put the French in a position to use force or diplomacy to set up a prohibitive screen from their base in Gajaaga to block trade from passing through to the Gambia. The French strategists suggested again and again that the Company either sign treaties with Bundu, paying Bundu to prevent the passage of caravans, or else that the French themselves set up a series of armed posts along the line of the Faleme in Bundu or Bambuhu. Both lines of suggestion (and combinations of the two) led to recurrent if unsuccessful action from the 1710's until after the 1850's. The countering English strategy was to use the navigational superiority of the Gambia to pay higher prices for African produce, prices high enough to compensate for the extra days of travel by caravan from Gajaaga. This policy also called for forward diplomacy to keep the roads open and the tolls low.

The various groups of juula were also in the game, not only as the carriers on the overland extension into the interior from either river route, but also as potential competitors between the head of navigation and the coast. In this respect, the European trade diasporas had the advantage of relatively cheap and efficient water transportation, but this advantage carried concomitant disadvantages. The rivers were fixed in place, and the river mouth was easily blockaded from the sea. Nor was it possible to detour around an unfriendly state that might try to stop shipping along the river. The contrasting juula advantage was mobility. They could switch their trade from one route to the other, bypassing both rivers if necessary and selling directly on the coast.

The degree of functional differentiation between nodes in the trade net-

2.4 The Strategy of Competition between the Two Rivers
work played a role here. The waterborne trade network was more complex, with greater division of labor and greater spatial distribution of functions. Central direction was in London or Paris, with either James Fort or Saint Louis dependent socially and economically and politically on its respective central place, just as sloop captains, heads of out-factories, and other personnel in Africa were dependent on James Fort or Saint Louis. When either fell to enemy forces in wartime, the whole trade operation came to an end or was diverted to the service of a new master. But this was not so of the juula, where each node in the network performed much the same functional roles as any other. The Soninke of Gajaaga had central places on the upper Senegal, and they performed some basic functions for the diaspora as a whole—like clerical education, or basic socialization of each new generation of traders. But the Gajaaga clerics could shift their trade in an emergency to keep it clear of Gajaaga. In much the same way, the Jahaanke network was able to continue alive and healthy even after the fall of Jahaba, the center of its seventeenth- and eighteenth-century dispersion. Specialization and functional differentiation were potentially more efficient, but the trade off of efficiency for mobility may well have been the appropriate strategy for the juula to follow.

The secular African states were also in the game, with still another hand of cards. They had power—more power locally available than the Europeans could usually muster, and far more than the African juula. But the African states were comparatively small; none had enough extension in space to stop the flow of trade by individual action. They were therefore at the mercy of juula mobility. If they tried to raise tolls, at some point the juula would find it easier to take another route than to pay. Even the European juula had a long-term kind of mobility that could be played against the greater power of the African states. If it appeared that high tolls would make their operations unprofitable for the foreseeable future, the European headquarters would simply withdraw its Senegambian outposts, removing the source of revenue altogether. In this sense, the secular rulers, the European juula, and the African juula were set in a hierarchy of increasing mobility, running counter to another hierarchy of decreasing power.

The sequence of crises chosen to illustrate this pattern began in 1719, when the Ormankoobe were operating in the region of Gajaaga. Name, the Tunka or ruler of Gajaaga, became friendly with the Moroccan commander and decided that the Moroccan presence strengthened his position. He therefore asked the French representative of the Compagnie des Indes to increase the tribute or "customs" he paid each year. At first, the French agreed; they could do little else, but they waited for a chance to reassert their position. That chance came in 1722, when Charpentier, the French commandant, escalated the latent conflict into open war by attacking the Tunka's capital at
living mainly in Bundu. In 1737 and 1738, Saint-Adon formed a tripartite alliance between the Compagnie des Indes, Samba Gelaajo, and the local commander of the Ormankooobe, for a joint attack on Saatigi Konko Bubu Muusa of Fuuta. If it succeeded, the Moroccans would get booty (and perhaps some control over Samba Gelaajo once he was in power), Samba would again become Saatigi, and the French would have the right to build a fort in Fuuta for the greater security of their trade. They also hoped, of course, for the friendship and cooperation of a grateful Saatigi put in power by their efforts. The campaign began early in 1738 with the sack of Dramane, the leading clerical town in Gajaaga—perhaps a way of punishing the juula for their earlier actions—and in March it moved on to an attack on Fuuta itself.11

The historical record is anything but clear on points of detail, but the coalition apparently won. Samba returned to power, though only for a short time. Trade revived on the Senegal route, as the Gajaaga juula came back to their natural outlet on the upper river. The Royal African Company lost its initiative in the Gambia trade. Though trade on that river continued to be important, it moved from the hands of the Company into those of separate English traders. But these developments were part of the changing way the Europeans sought to organize their trade sphere on the two rivers. Before going forward, it is best to go back to the earlier history and background of these juula from overseas.

11. Saint-Adon to CI, 20 April 1737, Devaulx to CI, 20 March 1737 and 15 February 1738, and Conseil du Sénégal to CI, 14 May 1738, ANF, C6 11.
Although the European trade diasporas in Senegambia belonged to the same family of socioeconomic institutions as their juula counterparts, their political, social and economic norms were alien to the Senegambian way of doing things. Most obvious was their dependence on the European metropolis, and European control over the trade enclaves on the coast. The pattern of dependence and control affected even the most independent-looking separate trader who sailed the coast trading from shipboard, free of all relationship to his fellow Europeans in the trade enclaves; even this apparently free agent was tied to outfitters, port facilities, shipbuilders, armorers, pools of skilled seamen, a national identity that made it possible to fly a flag and hence enjoy the protection of international law—to say nothing of banking, insurance, and the maze of capitalist commercial institutions. And the functional dependence of the private trader on shipboard or on shore meant an ultimate political subordination that was very hard to escape, even though the metropolis found it hard to exercise continuous control over its subjects in Africa beyond the official trade enclaves.

The trade castles were kept under metropolitan control, either directly through the Crown bureaucracy or indirectly through a chartered company with explicit authority to act for the Crown. The European political presence was one aspect of a striking contrast between the African juula communities and those from overseas. Where the African juula made a sharp distinction between the clerical-mercantile and the political-military callings, and sought political independence or at least autonomy for themselves, the juula from overseas combined political and commercial roles, or else brought along political and military specialists in the form of royal governors and garrisons.

But the Europeans made their own kind of social distinction between commercial and politico-military occupations. Military officers and royal
officials tended to be drawn from the nobility or gentry and to have higher status in Europe than merchants had, and the European traders lacked the access to high status and prestige that came to the African juula from his association with Islam and all it implied in religious knowledge, literacy as a rare technique, and possible control over the supernatural world.

In this sense, war was thought of as more honorable in Europe than in Senegambia, and trade less honorable, but European culture had a special category for trade beyond the seas as opposed to trade in and around Europe itself. From the Portuguese outburst of the fifteenth century and the Spanish invasions of the Americas in the sixteenth, war and commerce were often alternate occupations for a single group of men; and the close overseas association of war and commerce continued in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries when the French, Dutch, and English tried to fight their way into the Hispanic zones of commerce and control in the Indian Ocean and the tropical Americas. This union of war and commerce, rather than religion and commerce, was a far cry from the juula tradition of neutrality in war and politics, further still from the outright pacifism of the Jahaanke. War and trade beyond the seas remained joined in European thought into the eighteenth century, so that overseas trade or the service of a trading company remained a respectable occupation for a nobleman in a way that trade at home would not have been. The line between distant trade, warfare, and piracy remained narrow, and many switched easily from one to the other, their action justified most often by appeal to the higher cause of national triumph in the competition of European states. It was, after all, a mercantilist age where wealth was national power, and national power was wealth.

This peculiar European sense of ethnic solidarity was, of course, quite alien to the Senegambian way of looking at things. The Senegambian juula had his first links of solidarity with his kinship group, followed by more distant solidarity with clusters of associated lineages (like the Jahaanke or the Gajaaga clerics), next by professional loyalties to other juula. Loyalties to people of the same language and culture were far down the list, well below loyalties to co-religionists in Islam, and the secular state was treated with aversion. The Europeans, on the other hand, had only weak kinship ties, and their families stayed in Europe. They had a strong sense of solidarity with people of the same language and culture who served the same king, but this was sharply limited by social class. The “gentlemen” who ran the trade forts showed very little concern for the well-being of the working-class soldiers or artisans, while the trade rivalry between the French and English “gentlemen” in command was always close to warfare in the eighteenth century. As an ethical ideal, loyalty to the Crown came first, then loyalty to the Company or other economic associates, third, loyalty to fellow-subjects.