URBAN MIGRATION, CASH CROPPING, AND CALAMITY: THE SPREAD OF ISLAM AMONG THE DIOLA OF BOULOUF (SENEGAL), 1900-1940

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Between 1900 and 1940 the establishment of French colonial administration and the introduction of cash crop agriculture led to far-reaching social and economic changes among the Diola of Boulouf, in southwestern Senegal. Also during this period, the Muslim religion began to attract converts in Boulouf. The growth of urban migration and trade, together with the sale of peanuts as a cash crop, brought a degree of financial autonomy to the young men who participated in these activities. Many of these individuals converted to Islam to achieve status not accessible to them in the traditional social structure.

During the 1930s a series of natural calamities afflicted Diola society. The cumulative effect of these disasters and of continuing social and economic change, was to promote a sense of loss of power over their world among the Diola. This led, in turn, to a great acceleration in the rate of religious conversion. By the beginning of World War II, a majority of the Diola of Boulouf had become Muslim.

The 220 thousand Diola are the largest ethnic group in the Lower Casamance region of southwestern Senegal. Sedentary rice farmers, they have a social organization comprising shallow patrilineages three or four generations deep. The 40 thousand people of Boulouf, the region north of the Casamance River, west of the administrative center of Bignona, and south of the Diouloulou marigot, are a subgroup with distinctive dialect and cultural traits. They inhabit twenty-one villages numbering from six hundred to six thousand persons; each community in turn contains two or more semi-autonomous wards. In southern Boulouf there is a sizeable Catholic population; northern Boulouf is, however, 95 percent Muslim. The Islamic area constitutes the subject of this study.

During the nineteenth century the Diola of Boulouf had little commercial contact with the outside world, and they entered the cash economy later than many neighboring peoples. Peanuts, for example, had been exported from the Gambia as early as 1830 and by the 1860s had become a major export of the Middle Casamance (Brooks, 1975). The mid-nineteenth century was, however, a time of endemic warfare between the Manding and the Diola. Not until the strife ended in 1893, did commerce develop between the two peoples, and not until the turn of the century was peanut cultivation introduced in Boulouf.
Boulouf and the Lower Casamance

1 Tiobon
2 Mlomp
3 Tionk-Essil
4 Tendouk
5 Kartiak
6 Dianki
7 Mandegane

Scale 10 km.

adapted by the author from Mark (forthcoming)
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Archival records of European visits to the region do not mention peanuts before the early 1900s, a date which is corroborated by oral testimony.

According to village elders, peanut cultivation was learned from Manding traders. Before 1905 the people of Tiobon were raising small quantities of nuts and selling them to a Juula who had settled in the community. Before 1907 the new crop spread from Tiobon to the neighboring communities of Kartiak and Dianki. The earliest written references to peanuts in Boulouf date from 1911. In that year the administrator of the Casamance wrote:

Peanuts are not cultivated in the Lower Casamance except in a few villages in the region of Djougoues [Boulouf] (Diagoun, Kaniobon, Dianki, Kartiak, Tiobon, Bode, Affiniam and Diatock).

Peanut sales provided the Diola with small amounts of cash to purchase clothes, guns, and other items from itinerant traders. In Boulouf, the French made their first serious effort to collect the head tax during the dry season of 1905-06. The early development of peanut farming may have been, in part, an effort by the Diola to find an additional source of cash income to pay the tax. Prior to this, rubber and palm produce had constituted the Diolas' principal means of earning money. By 1913, however, the wild rubber boom had ended, leaving only palm produce, which was far less remunerative per unit weight, as a commercial resource. The loss of the rubber market and the need to pay the head tax must have made Diola farmers receptive to the new and potentially profitable crop.

Oral sources agree that peanut cultivation spread to Tionk-Essil, the largest community in Boulouf, about 1910. By the end of the First World War small quantities of the nuts were grown throughout Boulouf and then sold to Manding traders and to Wolof representatives of French trading houses. Local colonial administrators, however, seemed unaware of the incipient commercial agriculture. Not until 1921 did the administrator of the Casamance turn his attention to the agricultural development of the Lower Casamance.

Beginning in 1921 the colonial administration made a major effort to encourage the expansion of peanut cultivation in the Lower Casamance and much of their attention was focused on Boulouf. This policy served several purposes. First, peanut oil was needed in metropolitan France for industrial uses. Second, revenue generated by the export of peanuts and by the higher taxes that could then be paid by the local populations would make the Casamance more nearly self-supporting financially. Third, the infusion of currency into the Casamance would create a local market for goods produced elsewhere in the colony or in the metropole. Ultimately, the awakened desire for consumer goods might stimulate the Diola to undertake even more intensive cultivation of cash crops. As the governor of Senegal (ANS, 2G, 28: 8) observed in 1928, French economic policy was to:

give rise in the remote areas to needs, even essential ones, which would inspire intensive work and would constitute such an important factor in the prosperity of the colony.

To encourage cash cropping, the French used a strategy common throughout the West African colonies: increased taxation, combined with active propaganda for the new crop. Between 1918 and 1920 the head tax was doubled from five to ten francs and collection was enforced with increased vigor. In 1922 the commandant at Bignona complained that the Diola were still resisting the tax. Therefore, during the following year an entire company of soldiers accompanied him on a tour of Boulouf, and the Diola were forced to pay. In addition to collecting all but 300,000 francs of a total assessment of 2.8 million for 1923, the administration gathered
back taxes for 1921 and 1922 (ANS, 2G, 22: 33; 2G, 23: 70). This campaign stimulated the rapid expansion of peanut farming to provide income for payment of the head tax.

After 1921, to increase production further, the administration provided seed peanuts to the Diola. For this purpose, Sociétés Indigènes de Prévoyance (SIP) were established throughout the Casamance. The SIP distributed seed to farmers with the stipulation that the loans be paid back in kind and with a fixed interest of 20 percent after the harvest. This procedure ensured a steady annual growth in the SIPs’ store of seed. The societies also provided storage facilities for the peanuts. By 1923, 280 thousand kilos of seed were provided to Casamance farmers.12

The campaign to increase peanut cultivation in northern Boulouf was an immediate success. In 1921 the commandant complained that without official permission the Diola had burned several hundred hectares of forest to plant peanuts. A year later the acreage devoted to the new crop in the Kartiak region had increased by one-third (ANS, 2G, 22: 33).

The Boulouf plateau provided vast expenses of uninhabited land which, once denuded of forest cover, were perfectly suited to growing peanuts. With the demise of the rubber trade those forests had lost their commercial value to the Diola, who rapidly cut them down to convert them to peanut fields. The farmers were already familiar with the new crop and thus required no instruction. As they could use the traditional rice-cultivating implement, the kajando, to prepare the soil and plant the seeds, and as unused land was available at no cost, capital was needed only to purchase seeds, and even that was provided by SIP loans.

Unlike rice, peanuts are not labor-intensive, and the two crops are planted at different times. In addition, peanuts do not grow in the low-lying inundated areas reserved for rice cultivation. The Diola could, therefore, add the new crop without sacrificing their staple food production.13 Consequently, peanuts complemented rather than competed with rice production, and the people of Boulouf were able to develop a dual agriculture. While rice, cultivated by traditional techniques, remained their basic food crop, peanuts became the primary source of monetary income and the means to pay the tax.

The development of peanut farming throughout the Casamance is reflected in production statistics. In 1916 only 11 thousand tons were grown in the entire region and of this quantity, practically the entire amount came from the districts (cercles) of Kolda and Sedhiou, east of Bignona (ANS, 2G, 18: 44). By 1922 the growth of cash cropping had already attracted a large number of merchants to the Bignona region (ANS, 2G, 22: 33). Two years later the Casamance produced 20 thousand tons of peanuts (ANS, 2G, 24: 4). In 1925 prices rose and production soared to 45 thousand tons (ANS, 2G, 26: 30). Poor rainfall caused the following year’s output to drop to 27 thousand tons (ANS, 2G, 27: 34) and in 1927 exports totaled 32 thousand tons (ANS, 2G, 27: 34). In 1928, the last year of pre-Depression prosperity, production climbed to 50,545 tons, of which 40 thousand were exported, 10,930 tons from the cercle of Bignona.14 In Boulouf the growth of peanut farming led to the construction of two granaries.

In the cercle of Bignona peanut production continued to climb through the early 1930s. In 1935 the administrator of the Casamance estimated that in the Lower Casamance, the reasonable limit of cultivation had been reached.15 Any further increase, he felt, would cut into the rice crop. In Boulouf this meant that most of the forest had been cleared and converted to peanut fields.

In 1921, as the French began their efforts to commercialize agriculture in the Lower Casamance, they also undertook the construction of roads through the
region. By linking their administrative posts to the more remote areas they hoped both to facilitate communication and to strengthen their effective control. Coordinated with the growth of cash cropping, the new transportation network permitted the rapid conveyance to market of the crops. In 1924 and 1925 most of Senegal’s credits for transportation development went to the Casamance (ANS, 2G, 25: 43).

Completed in 1921, the first road in the Lower Casamance connected Bignona to Tobor (then the southern limit of ground transport on the route to the trading center of Ziguinchor). Early road maintenance was carried out by prisoners. As the transportation system expanded, however, the administration came to rely on forced labor for both construction and upkeep.

In 1922 the road system was extended into Boulouf. The first path for automobiles ran from Bignona to Tiobon. It was subsequently lengthened into a 70 kilometer route which traversed most of Boulouf. By the rainy season of 1923 the administrator of the Casamance reported that this road was nearly completed.\(^{16}\) By 1924 the essential lines of the present road system joining Boulouf to Bignona had been completed. Thereafter, by lowering transportation costs, the use of trucks to carry peanuts to market helped to stimulate the continued expansion of cash crop production. In addition, the roads made it easier for the Diola to travel.

The completion of a transportation network facilitated communication between local communities and the outside world. It also encouraged urban migration. During the late 1920s and early 1930s, migration of young people was further stimulated by the introduction of primary education in Boulouf. The first school was constructed in 1926 and, during the following decade, elementary education became available throughout the region. By 1936 five schools were in existence, with a total enrollment of over eight hundred students (ANS, 2G, 36: 75). By introducing primary education, the French hoped to create a group of young Diola with the training necessary to act as local auxiliaries of the administration.\(^{17}\) The effects of widespread education, however, went beyond the formation of low level functionaries. Inadvertently, French educational policy fostered the continued growth of urban migration.

The generation which grew to maturity during the 1930s was the first to receive primary schooling in Boulouf. Young men who could speak and write French and Wolof—each a lingua franca in the major cities of Senegal—were better prepared to seek jobs in northern Senegal. The movement to Dakar was accordingly related to the spread of primary education in the Casamance.

Before World War I, Diola men and women had already begun to travel to Ziguinchor to work loading ships. By 1911 this activity was primarily the province of women, who received 1.5 francs for a day’s labor (ANS, 1G, 343: 172). The participation of many people from Boulouf is recalled by elders. Before 1914 a considerable seasonal migration had also developed to the Gambia. From November to May, young men went north to gather and sell palm produce, while others hired themselves out to work on the docks at Bathurst. During the war, this exodus was further stimulated by the efforts of young men to escape military recruitment. Between 1915 and 1918 the population of South Combo District, immediately north of Boulouf, soared from 1,012 to 2,575 (ANS, 1F, 13: 6). Undoubtedly, many of the new inhabitants were Diola from French Combo and Boulouf.

By 1920 most youths from two communities, Mlomp and Tionk-Essil, spent the dry season collecting and selling palm produce in the Gambia. With the completion of the road system through Boulouf, seasonal migration became a regular aspect of life in most of the villages. In 1928 an administrator characterized population
movements between the Casamance and the Gambia as "a perpetual coming and going."

The more distant region of Cap Verde did not attract many Diola until a later date. Oral testimony does recall one early migrant from Tionk-Essil who, about 1910, traveled to Dakar. Only during the 1930s, however, did this migration assume significant proportions. By about 1940 a considerable number of young men who had received primary education in Boulouf and could speak French, were going to Dakar to seek employment.

**THE DEPRESSION YEARS**

The Depression, which struck the western economies in 1929, had immediate repercussions in those areas of West Africa linked to a cash economy. In Senegal the trading price of peanuts plummeted, depriving the colony of a large portion of its revenue. The ensuing years brought continued low peanut prices as well as decreased financing for colonial administration and development programs. The economic situation for 1929 was summarized by the governor in his annual report:

The commercial crisis resulting from the 1929 trade . . . the depreciation of peanuts on the export market . . . another drop in the price of the principal export commodity. At the present moment these economic and financial problems assume an aspect of particular gravity (ANS, 2G, 29: 15).

In 1930 the situation worsened. Although Senegal exported a record 503,681 tons of peanuts, the falling prices caused "a year of exceptional crisis" (ANS, 2G, 30: 4). In Bignona cercle the crop was large, at least 12 thousand tons. Trading, however, commenced at 25 to 30 francs per one hundred kilos, less than half the prevailing level for previous years.

In August 1930 the financial crisis led to a sudden suspension of credit in the Gambia. As a result, the palm oil and palm wine trades were curtailed (ANS, 2G, 30: 60). This deprived the Diola of their accustomed alternate source of cash income. In addition, in 1930 grasshoppers invaded the Casamance (ANS, 2G, 31: 48; 2G, 31, 73).

During the following year, there was no relief from the economic woes. In his annual report the governor bemoaned the fact that "the value of the peanut . . . has fallen to a lower level than [that allowed for by] the most pessimistic forecasts" (ANS, 2G, 31: 14). Total exports from the colony dropped by 10 percent to 456,732 tons (ANS, 2G, 31: 48). In Bignona cercle 13 thousand tons were exported, but at a price so low that the commandant expected future cultivation to decline.

Although the precipitous drop in peanut prices imposed hardship on farmers, until 1930 the effects of the Depression were mitigated by the fact that the Diola continued to raise enough rice for their own sustenance. In the summer of 1931, however, the Lower Casamance was seriously affected when the rains failed (ANS, 2G, 32: 111). The rice crop was further damaged by grasshoppers in July (ANS, 2G, 31: 73, p. 51). Difficulties arising from the resulting poor harvest were intensified by the lack of sufficient money from peanut sales to buy rice. This terrible coincidence of agricultural and economic calamities was exacerbated by an outbreak of cattle plague in Bignona cercle. An estimated 15 hundred head perished and Boulouf was hit with particular severity (ANS, 2G, 31: 73, 63). Informants recall that only two animals were left alive in the village of Tionk-Essil. Cattle, along with stored surpluses of rice, were the most important measure of wealth to the Diola. The simultaneous occurrence of drought and cattle plague must therefore have constituted a crisis of unprecedented proportions.
In 1932 and 1933 local society continued to face extraordinary hardship. Again, the rice crop was damaged by insufficient rainfall (ANS, 2G, 33: 64). The French, however, continued to impose economic demands on the people of Boulouf. The road from Bagaya to Diotok was widened, with the use of forced labor, and military conscription was carried out annually. This stimulated a new tide of emigration into the Gambia. Other Diola, not affected by conscription, crossed the border to avoid paying the head tax and, for the first time, the administration noted that women, too, were traveling to Bathurst to seek employment (ANS, 2G, 30: 84).

The 1932 peanut harvest in Bignona was large and 16 thousand tons were exported. Due to a late and short rainy season, however, the rice crop was once again somewhat insufficient (ANS, 2G, 34: 67, 145). Not until 1935 did the agricultural situation finally improve. Then, abundant rainfall led to a magnificent rice harvest, thereby ending several years of deprivation. Also in 1935, the long depression in the peanut market began to ease.

It is interesting to note that even during the worst years of the Depression peanut cultivation continued to increase. Apparently, farmers attempted to maintain their income in the face of falling market prices, by increasing production. Also, after the mid-1930s the curtailment of the palm produce trade to the Gambia deprived the Diola of their chief alternate source of income and forced them to expand peanut cultivation.

Economic recovery in Senegal accelerated during 1936. The peanut market opened at 70 francs per one hundred kilos and rose to 85 francs by December. In Bignona the rice harvest was large, and 16 thousand tons of peanuts were exported. At year’s end the administrator observed that “the years 1935 and especially 1936 mark a considerable recovery in the economic situation” (ANS, 2G, 56: 75).

The pharaonic plagues of the early 1930s seem to have induced a general sense of loss of control over their lives and environment among the people of Boulouf. Already during the preceding two decades, rapid economic change together with urban migration and consequent challenges to the authority of the elders, had placed strains on the local social structure. The catastrophes of the 1930s added to this dislocation. Together, these social and economic developments stimulated the rapid spread of Islam among the Diola.

**ISLAM**

In Boulouf, a Muslim is one who has made the profession of faith and who carries out the five daily prayers. To the Diola, marabouts are far less than they are to the Wolof; indeed, many Boulouf Muslims have no marabout. Each village boasts several mosques. Aside from the *imam*, however, few Diola can read Arabic. All Muslims do follow dietary restrictions, avoiding pork and, above all, forswearing alcohol. Abstinence is the defining characteristic of a Diola Muslim; the local word for traditionalist, *araana*, means “one who drinks.” In Boulouf, Muslims are generally expected to abandon their traditional shrines (*sinaati*). In fact, however, some pre-Islamic shrines survive. These now serve a primarily medicinal function so that, in time of illness, many Muslims seek relief from their ailments through visits to the appropriate shrine.

The first Diola Muslims were converted in about 1893 and Islam did not achieve a wide following among the Diola until the inter-war period. Before World War I, a few young men accepted the new religion while they were in the Gambia. During the 1920s other individuals, again usually younger men, accepted Islam while in their home communities. By 1930 the villages of northern Boulouf
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contained small but growing Muslim communities, but only Tiobon was predominantly Muslim. This community, closely tied commercially to the Gambia, had hosted itinerant marabouts since the late nineteenth century. Its inhabitants became Muslim well before the rest of the Diola.

Elsewhere in Boulouf rapid conversion, which occurred during the 1930s, was directly related to the economic innovations of the colonial period. The development of cash cropping, together with the expansion of urban migration, brought new wealth to local communities. Much of this wealth accrued to young men, who were among the first to raise peanuts for sale and to participate in the palm produce trade. These men achieved financial independence and were in a position to marry before the age when they would traditionally have been accorded adult status. They, not surprisingly, were anxious to free themselves from the constraints of patriarchal authority. That authority was intimately associated with traditional Diola religious institutions. During the 1920s and especially after 1930, the challenge to the position of the elders took the form of widespread conversion of young men to Islam.

Conversion was also spurred by the calamities which afflicted Diola agriculture during the 1930s. For over a generation Islam had been presented to the Diola by traveling marabouts as an alternate belief system with its own ritual experts. Even before the Diola had begun to convert, marabouts were called upon in Boulouf to exercise their spiritual powers.27 These powers were viewed by the Diola as compatible with the local belief system. During the period of hardships, therefore, a growing sense of the impotence of traditional religious ritual led the Diola to accept the alternative source of ritual power and control offered by the Muslim religion.

In time of drought, non-Muslims had recourse to several forms of ritual assistance. In pre-colonial Tionk-Essil, for example, they could sacrifice to the village shrine; they could hold a rain ceremony under the auspices of the village priest, the oeyi; or if these measures proved ineffectual, they could send a delegation to the village of Enampor, south of the Casamance River, to pray for rain.28 By 1930 the oeyi of Tionk-Essil no longer existed, but the village shrine remained, and the community continued to send delegations to Enampor. Yet, visits to these shrines brought no respite from the drought, nor from the other problems that beset local agriculture. This inability of indigenous ritual to safeguard their well-being led some communities to seek the assistance of Muslim holy men. In 1933 the people of Mandegane asked Cherif Chamsedine, younger brother of the khalif of Boulouf and southern Combo, to visit their village and bless the rice fields which were not producing. Chamsedine came and offered a prayer. The subsequent end to the drought certainly did not hurt his prestige and undoubtedly encouraged conversion.

Until this period of extreme agriculture hardship Islam had spread gradually among the Diola, but in 1931 the commandant at Bignona noted:

The number of followers is growing quite a bit, most notably in the west and the northwest of the cercle (Djougoutes, Fogny Combo) (ANS, 2G, 51: 79).

Two years later the administrator of the Casamance remarked on the increasing rate of religious conversion in Bignona:

The Diola have allowed themselves to be Islamized in rather large numbers in the cercle and especially in the northwest (ANS, 2G, 33: 60, 40).

Oral testimony corroborates this evidence of accelerating conversion, and indicates that the years 1932-1935 were a time of particularly rapid Islamization throughout Boulouf. In Tionk-Essil many informants identified this brief timespan
as the period of religious change. The chief of one ward says, "It was in 1933 that the Muslim faith achieved considerable strength" (interview, Mamadou Diatta, Tionk-Essil: 1974). Likewise, the first Muslim in the village calls 1934 "the era of important conversion" (interview, Suleyman Sane, Tionk-Essil, 1974), and the village chief states that most of the community converted about 1933, when the first school was constructed (interview, Nyanku Sagna, Tionk-Essil, 1974).

Elsewhere in Boulouf the spread of Islam followed a similar course. In Mlomp, when the present imam converted about 40 years ago, most of the village was already becoming Muslim. Similarly in Kartiak, where a small Muslim community had grown up in one ward during the 1920's, the bulk of the population accepted Islam between 1927 and 1940.29

In Mandegane, where Chamsedine had blessed the rice fields, most of the village had converted by 1939, when Arfan Kemo Sagna assumed the post of imam. Only in Tendouk did a significant part of the community continue in their traditional faith through the 1940s.30

Tionk-Essil typifies the speed with which the Islam won converts in Boulouf. When, about 1928, the current imam left the village to pursue his advanced studies, conversion was still in its early stages. In 1941, when he returned, most of the population was Muslim (interview, Ansoumana Sambou, Tionk-Essil, 1974). In the relatively brief span of a decade the Muslim community had grown from a small minority centered among younger men to a majority faith encompassing most of the village except for the elders.31

Religious conversion was also stimulated by the urban migration and peanut farming which brought financial independence to young men.32 Customarily, the members of the extended family group had turned to the elders as a source of ultimate counsel and authority. As increasing numbers of men in their twenties left their villages for extended periods to seek employment, however, they were temporarily freed from the constraints of patriarchal control. Upon returning home, many expressed their newfound independence by rejecting the ancestral religion.

Much of the prestige of the elders derived from their status as leaders of local religious rituals. Most shrines were entrusted to older men, and a few powerful elders served as priests of the sacred forest. During village initiation ceremonies, these men used their ritual authority, backed by strict discipline of the initiates, to teach tradition and to secure respect for customary authority.33

Islam, which valued religious learning and knowledge of the Koran above age alone, offered an alternative value system for younger men bent upon establishing their independence from the elders. The sense of the importance of piety and Islamic learning that converts received from their new faith would have lessened their dependence on traditional authority, particularly where the elders continued to follow the old religion. Where formerly the elders adjudicated quarrels, Islam introduced a new source of authority in the imam.

With the selection of an imam, the Muslim community was expected to govern itself in accordance with the shari'a. During the 1930s, customary village-wide authority, which consisted of the consensus of the elders backed by tradition, was thus modified by the introduction of Islamic law.34

Just as it modified traditional sources of community authority, so too, Islam provided new parameters of individual status and prestige. Having made the profession of faith, a Muslim achieved respect among his peers on the basis of his knowledge of the Koran and his literacy in Arabic. At the same time, of course, primary
education was fostering literacy in French. The ability to read and write in either language gave the younger generation a valuable and prestigious skill their parents did not possess. Together, then, these new values partially replaced the old parameters of respect for age and experience.35

The enthusiasm with which the Diola approached their new faith was reflected in the proliferation of koranic schools. By 1934 there were 85 in the cercle of Bignona. The 1,149 pupils enrolled in them was the fifth highest number among the 16 cercles in Senegal (ANS, 2G, 34: 5).

Islam held its greatest attraction for uninitiated young men. In the traditional Diola social hierarchy, a man was not considered to be an adult, nor could he marry, until he had been initiated. Since the bukut (the village-wide initiation) occurred only once in 20 years, and as a man had to wait until the second bukut after his father’s before himself being eligible for initiation, many Diola reached their mid-thirties without achieving adult status.36 Before the twentieth century, a 30-year old would not have possessed the financial means to support a family. With the growth of urban migration and cash cropping, however, younger men were economically in a position where they could marry. To them, the new religion with its new parameters of status offered a more rapid means of attaining adulthood.

Tionk-Essel, for example, had last celebrated a bukut in 1919. By the mid-1950s there was a substantial group of young men who had lived in the Gambia, free of patriarchal authority. Others had earned money at home, through the sale of peanuts. These individuals would naturally have been impatient to end their protracted adolescent status, and many of them did become Muslims in part to achieve recognition of their adulthood. Islam did not require bukut initiation. Although still not adults by customary standards, the young converts earned respect and acknowledgment from fellow Muslims and traditionalists alike, to the degree that they mastered their koranic studies. In the words of one village leader, “Quand il est Musulman, de son étude il sera considéré d’être homme, à cause de son intelligence.”

For younger men, and particularly for the not yet initiated, Islam provided an alternative path to higher status within the community. Older men, of course, were not similarly attracted and were rarely among the early converts. Likewise women, who often lost status with the spread of Islam, were usually not among the first Muslims.37

During the 1930s, as the number of converts increased, Islamization gained a momentum of its own. Peer group pressure, which had at first served to discourage the acceptance of Islam, now began to have quite the opposite effect. By the second half of the decade people were converting to follow everyone else. This snowball effect was described by Suleyman Sane, himself the first Muslim in Tionk-Essel. Asked why everyone seemed to become a Muslim about 1934, he replied, “Whoever you were, you saw your friends converting.” Indeed, in 1938 peer group pressure helped to induce the Catholic catechist in one ward to become a Muslim.38

The pressure to conform by accepting the new faith was felt most strongly during important Muslim holidays. In order to participate in such celebrations as Tabaski and Mouloud, one had to be a Muslim. Ever since the arrival of Cherif Mahfouz at Tiobon prior to 1900, these religious festivals had impressed the Diola and had attracted individuals to Islam. During the 1930s, too, many people were drawn to Islam through its festivals. Once a majority of the village had converted, these celebrations assumed the character of community-wide rituals. A non-Muslim
would have felt very much the outsider. Thus, the desire to be a member of the religious community of the village and to participate in its rituals led many Diola to join the swelling ranks of the faithful.

The spread of Islam among the Diola of Boulouf was in large measure a response to the establishment of colonial rule and the introduction of a cash economy. Islamization was, furthermore, prompted by a conjunction of individual motivation and collective response to a changing environment. The early stages of conversion were characterized by individual initiative. From the turn of the century to about 1920 there were few converts and most of them accepted the Muslim faith while they were working in the Gambia. During the 1920s and particularly during the 1930s, conversion was a means for young men who had entered the cash economy through urban migration or the sale of peanuts, to attain higher social status.

The more rapid Islamization of Boulouf after about 1933 represents a collective response to the apparent powerlessness of indigenous religion to alleviate the crises of the period. The economic and agricultural disasters of 1929-1935 fostered an accelerated rate of conversion. This led, finally, to a late stage when pressure to conform stimulated conversion and made Islam into the dominant religion of Boulouf.

During the period of collective response, Islam offered a new source of ritual expertise to confront challenges from the natural environment. At the same time, it facilitated the social adjustments that gave younger adults the status commensurate with the higher economic position they enjoyed as a result of the growth of the cash economy. Islam thus permitted the Diola to face the dual challenge posed by the threatening natural environment and a changing socio-economic environment.

NOTES
1. The correlation between economic and political change and a growing sense among the Diola that new religious powers were needed is discussed by Baum (1976).
2. For a comparative study of Islam and Christianity in Boulouf see Mark (1976).
3. The origins of this trade are discussed by Mark (forthcoming).
4. Pelissier (1966: 779) suggests that peanuts were introduced in Boulouf about 1900 from the French post at Carabane.
5. Informants dated the introduction of peanuts in Tiobon to before Tionk-Essil's initiation ceremony of 1905. Since initiations are held at 15 to 20 year intervals, they provide a helpful yardstick for dating events recounted in interviews.
6. Informants in Tionk-Essil and Kartiak concurred that peanuts reached Kartiak before a 1907 revolt against the French.
7. (ANS, 1G, 343: 158). Djougoutes was the French canton which corresponded to Boulouf.
8. Further research may shed light on the intriguing possibility that the first peanut cultivation was financed by earnings from the rubber and palm produce trades. Such a situation, where traders reinvest their profits in cash farming, would closely parallel the movement of Akwapim palm produce traders into cocoa farming at the end of the nineteenth century. See Hill (1963: 164).
9. As late as 1920 the administration of the Casamance complained that the paucity of currency made transactions such as the sale of rice difficult (ANS, 2G, 20: 36).
10. For a general discussion of the use of taxation to stimulate commercialization of agriculture, see Hogendorn (1975).
11. (ANS, 2G, 18: 44; 2G, 20: 36). In announcing the tax increase the administrator of the Casamance predicted that Africans would earn the additional sum through the sale of crops.
12. (ANS, 2G, 23: 70). Archival sources exaggerate the role of the SIPS in introducing cash crops. After 1921 the societies may have facilitated the rapid expansion of peanut cultivation; the continued increase in exports after 1930 indicates, however, that the Diola were quite capable of increasing production on their own.
13. This corresponds to the situation described by Berry (1975: 170) among Yoruba cocoa farmers, who extended cocoa plantations without sacrificing staple food crops.
14. Boulouf formed the western part of the cercle of Bignona. In 1927 and 1928 Bignona's peanut exports remained constant (ANS, 2G, 27: 94; 2G, 28:37). Production statistics are, unfortunately, not available for most years, for the canton.


16. (ANS, 2G, 25: 70). The Diola did not undertake road or bridge construction of their own initiative. But then, they were kept busy enough by forced labor, which was used through 1942.

17. As the governor wrote in 1927, education was aimed at producing "a level of young students capable of receiving the preparation [to become] the true agents of our decisions and of our politics" (AN-OM, Affaires Politiques, 598, 5: 45).

18. This compared with 408, 709 tons in 1928 and 393, 745 tons in 1929 (ANS, 2G, 31:48).

19. (ANS, 2G, 30: 78). Earlier, the commandant had predicted that the Diola would refuse to sell their crop at even 50 francs per one hundred kilos.


21. The use of forced labor for public works projects enabled the administration to keep expenditures to a minimum. Thus, even at the height of the Depression in 1932 the administrator of the Casamance boasted that Bignona cercle had brought a 750 thousand franc surplus to the colonial treasury (ANS, 2G, 34: 67).

22. In 1931 Bignona, with an estimated population of 72 thousand, furnished 32 conscripts; in 1932 70 men were drafted and in 1933 55 were called (ANS, 2G, 33: 60, p. 24). In 1934 87 were called (ANS, 2G, 34: 5), in 1935 54 men went (ANS, 2G, 35: 67) and in 1936 44 were called up (ANS, 2G, 36: 5). In 1938 the Diola were reported to be in hiding rather than face the draft.

23. Annual exports from Bignona were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1928</th>
<th>1930</th>
<th>1931</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 thousand tons</td>
<td>12 thousand tons</td>
<td>13 thousand tons</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

24. This corroborates Hopkins (1973: 254) who observes that farmers in many parts of West Africa reacted to falling market prices by increasing their production. On this point, see also Berry (1975: 83).

25. The trading firms which purchased the nuts at 85 francs, resold them at 144 francs per one hundred kilos (ANS, 2G, 36: 5, p. 3).


27. Before the 1907 revolt in Kartiak, marabouts had been consulted to provide gris-gris (ANS, 13G, 375: 19). Cherif Mahfouz, the Mauritanian marabout who, before 1900, first spread Islam in Tiobon, is said to have dispensed charms among the Diola to protect them against the danger of attack by the French.

28. The prayers of the oyi at Enampor were a last resort in the time of drought. According to oral tradition, the people of Tionk-Essil originally migrated from near Enampor. This was the reason for the spiritual ties between the villages.

29. Informants in Kartiak indicate that Islam spread rapidly after the arrival of Catholic missionaries (1927) and before the start of World War II.

30. In Tendouk followers of the indigenous religion still include individuals who are in their early forties.

31. Surviving traditionalists in Tionk-Essil are in their eighties. They would have been nearly 50 at the time of mass conversion. Their age would have entitled them to respect, and this quite probably dissuaded them from converting.

32. Diola Muslims, unlike the Wolof Mourides of Cayor, were not responsible for the expansion of peanut farming into new areas. Whereas Mouride cheikh and talibé moved into new regions, cleared the land, and began cultivation (see Tidiane Sy, 1969), the Diola had no comparable cheikh—talibé relationship. Furthermore, Moulouf farmers frequently converted only after they had begun to grow peanuts.

33. For a discussion of Diola initiation, see Thomas (1958: 697; 1965).

34. The Diola, like all West African Muslims, follow the Maliki school of jurisprudence. Community-wide decisions are still arrived at by consensus of the adult males, to whom the imam now serves as unofficial advisor. As one imam stated, the elders follow village custom insofar as it does not blatantly contravene the shari'a.

35. Anyone who has seen the illiterate head of a household forced to ask a son to read him a
35. Anyone who has seen the illiterate head of a household forced to ask a son to read him a letter, cannot deny that the illiteracy of the older generation has decreased their general aura of unquestioned authority.

36. At the 1962 bukut the elders of Tionk-Essil agreed to drop the rule of skipping a bukut between father and son.

37. Women often but not always converted to follow the faith of their husbands.

38. There were only five Catholics in his ward and the catechist, who is partially crippled, found himself unable to walk 40 kilometers to the nearest church. This too undoubtedly influenced his conversion to Islam (interview, ex-catechist Boubacar Niassi, Tionk-Essil, 1974).

39. In limiting my analysis primarily to the social and economic factors in changing religious affiliation, I do not mean to imply the insignificance of the religious aspect of religion.

REFERENCES

Abbreviations

Archives Nationales, Section Outre-Mer; Paris. [AN—OM]

Archives Nationales du Sénégal; Dakar. [ANS]


