1

Mademba and the Foundations of the Bargains of Collaboration, 1852–1888

Mademba Sèye was born on March 3, 1852, in Saint Louis du Sénégal near the mouth of the Senegal River bordering on the Atlantic Ocean. The Wolof-speaking residents of the town referred to it as Ndar, which was a fishing village before the Portuguese and other Europeans first came to the mouth of the river in 1444. When the Europeans first reached the Senegal River, they did not linger long in Ndar on their voyages, preferring settlements further south and deeper into the Atlantic, especially the uninhabited Cabo Verde archipelago discovered by the Portuguese in 1456, who founded the first European settlement in the Atlantic tropics in 1462. The Portuguese built a chapel on the island of Gorée, but did not establish a permanent settlement there. In 1588, the Dutch began using Gorée as a base. The deepening of the Atlantic economy and the transatlantic slave trade brought the inhabitants of the Senegal River valley more fully within the reach of these new encounters and ushered in political, economic, and cultural pressures that accelerated changes already underway in Senegambian societies.[1]

European settlements in Senegambia were few and fragile, subject to intra-European rivalries as well pressures from African polities. In 1659, the French established their presence on the island near the mouth of the Senegal River that would become Saint Louis. The British established themselves on James Island in the mouth of the Gambia River. In 1677, a French fleet seized Gorée. Increasing European presence contributed to the expansion of commerce and the exchange of culture. Commerce and the cultural exchange moved in many directions as Europeans adapted to African commercial and political practices and as Africans adapted to European ones.[2] In the course of the eighteenth

[1] Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa, 1300–1589* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[2] Philip Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975); Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, translated by Ayi Kwei Armah (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Peter Mark and José da Silva Horta, *The Forgotten Diaspora: Jewish Communities in West Africa and the Making of the Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

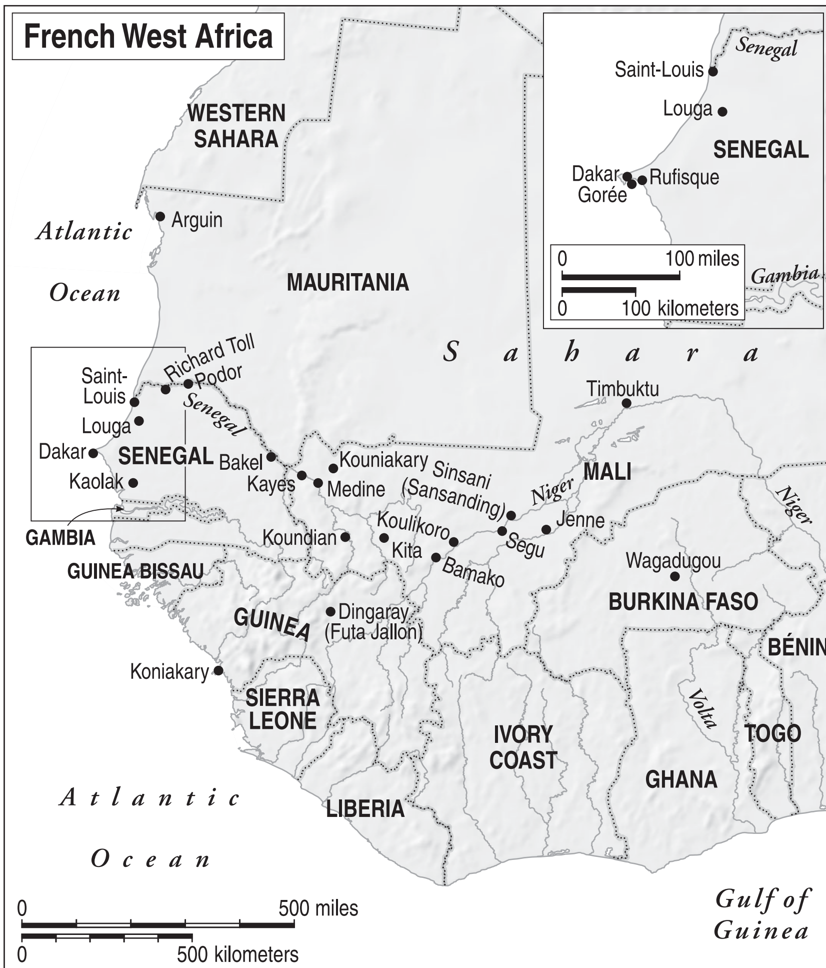
century, European rivalries led to the periodic changes in European overrule along the Senegambian coast: the Dutch displaced the Portuguese only to be displaced by the French and British, who then displaced each other periodically. None, however, could exert significant control over Africans and African polities. All the while, trade in African commodities including slaves, gold, gum arabic, and foodstuff flowed to sustain the tiny European presence as Africans imported European guns, textiles, hardware, metals, and other consumables. African polities linked to the coast and to the expanding commerce of the Sahara strengthened. Islam spread and periodically erupted into militant reform movements. During the French Revolution, free and property-owning residents of Saint Louis sent a letter of grievances to the National Assembly protesting the role of the chartered companies in dominating trade and demanding that the monopoly over the gum trade be abrogated in favor of freer trade. In 1789, the value in the gum trade, widely used in the metropolitan textile industries, exceeded the value of slave exports. Britain again seized Saint Louis and Gorée in 1809. France regained possession of Saint Louis and Gorée from the British following the end of the Napoléonic wars in 1817 (see Map 1.1).

At least four changes swirled through Saint Louis during the mid century when Mademba Sèye was born in 1852. The first was the gradual ending of the transatlantic slave trade and the change in the economic and political foundations of the wider regional economy of the Senegal River valley, which involved increased demand for gum arabic and groundnuts – each commodity was associated with different economic and political practices. The second was the resurgence of militant Islam associated with Al Hajj Umar Tal. Umar's preaching put into stark relief the meaning of Dar al-Islam and forced Muslims to articulate their practices and their politics in relationship to these debates. The third was the revolution of 1848 that toppled the monarchy of Louis-Philippe in favor of new democratic ideologies, free trade, and the abolition of slavery. The year 1848 left a profound legacy in Saint Louis that persisted beyond the collapse of that revolution. And the fourth was the arrival of Louis Léon César Faidherbe as the new governor, ushering in a newly aggressive French presence that led to French colonial expansion. Faidherbe is credited with establishing three colonial institutions that contributed to the foundations of French colonial authority.[3]

Even though Senegambia had become significantly less important to the overall transatlantic slave trade in the course of the eighteenth century, the slave trade still exerted an enormous influence on the region and on the interactions between Africans and Europeans. After the British abolished the slave trade in 1807, they pursued an aggressive diplomatic strategy of

[3] For background, see Yves-Jean Saint-Martin, *Le Sénégal sous le Second Empire: Naissance d'un empire colonial (1850–1871)* (Paris: Kathala, 1989) and Régine Bonnardel, *Saint-Louis du Sénégal: Mort ou naissance?* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992).

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press



Map 1.1 French West Africa

pressuring other European and non-European carriers in both the Atlantic and Indian Oceans to also suppress it. The British managed to pressure France to abolish the slave trade in 1815 as part of the treaty to end the Napoléonic wars.[4] Britain, which had seized Gorée and Saint Louis, agreed to return these

[4] Suzanne Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade* (New York: Africana Publishing Co., 1975); Trevor Getz, *Slavery and Reform in West Africa: Toward Emancipation in Nineteenth Century Senegal and the Gold Coast* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004).

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

outposts to the French. The French returned to Saint Louis with a commitment to nurture both commerce and agriculture, including bold plans to establish plantations using the local labor that was no longer exported into the Atlantic world.[5] By 1826, these ambitious agricultural plans were abandoned and commercial interests of Saint Louisian merchants predominated. Since the abrogation of the commercial monopoly of the French chartered companies in the late eighteenth century, metropolitan wholesale merchants competed with métis and African traders, particularly in the gum trade. Given the complex commercial practices surrounding the gum trade along the Senegal River, the expansion of commerce favored locally based Saint Louisian African and métis traders who invested in long-term relationships with the Trarza and the Brakna. These traders invested in boats and crews to move commodities up and down the river. By the 1830s, a quarter of the 12,000 inhabitants of Saint Louis earned their livelihoods from the gum trade.[6]

The boom in the gum trade was fragile. During the 1830s and 1840s, price fluctuations of gum and *guinée* cloth led to oversupply, and increasing debt of Saint Louisian merchants left few local merchants able to continue in the gum trade. Moreover, by the 1850s, the prominence of the gum trade in the economy of Saint Louis declined as better financed metropolitan merchants invested heavily to promote the trade in groundnuts, which expanded rapidly in the coastal plains south of the Senegal River and into the Siin and Saalum regions and along the Gambia River. Groundnuts, according to Martin Klein, "transformed Senegal from a stagnant relic of the slave trade into a bustling colony."[7] By 1850, the population of Saint Louis had swelled to 15,000 and the city had become a "place of opportunity" for African traders, freed slaves, and African refugees fleeing from political and religious ferment in neighboring African polities.[8]

Islamic revival, reform, and revolution periodically convulsed what David Robinson refers to as the Senegalo-Mauritanian zone since at least the

[5] Richard Roberts, *Two Worlds of Cotton: Colonial and the Regional Economy in the French Soudan, 1800–1949* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), chapter 3.

[6] James L. A. Webb, Jr., *Desert Frontier: Ecological and Economic Change along the Western Sahel, 1600–1850* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995); Hilary Jones, *The Métis of Senegal: Urban Life and Politics in French West Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 40–44.

[7] Martin A. Klein, *Islam and Imperialism in Senegal: Sin-Saloum, 1847–1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1968), 38; Bernard Moitt, "Slavery and Emancipation in Senegal's Peanut Basin: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 22 (1) 1989, 27–50.

[8] See Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa*; Barry, *Senegambia*; David Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation: Muslim Societies and French Colonial Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880–1920* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 31–33.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

seventeenth century. Another wave of Islamic militancy in the eighteenth century led to the establishment of the Islamic polities of Futa Toro, Bundu, and Futa Jallon.[9] The militant preaching by Al Hajj Umar Tal in the 1840s further roiled African polities and Muslim communities in this region, many of which were already suffering from changes in the regional and Atlantic economies.[10] During his pilgrimage, Umar deepened his affiliation with the Tijaniyya sufi brotherhood and returned to West Africa as *khalifya* (deputy) of the order. Umar preached a more "exclusivist interpretation" of this order's teachings, which contributed to Umar's eventual call for *hijra* (withdrawal) and jihad. Umar's more militant message urged believers to maintain religious and political distance from European authority. Not all Muslims followed Umar, but his preaching encouraged a wider debate among the Muslim community about the meaning of Dar al-Islam. In 1846, Umar established a settlement in Dinguiray, near Futa Jallon, where he recruited followers and launched his first jihad against the kingdom of Tamba. In the 1850s, Umar recruited heavily in the Futa Toro region and renewed his call for Muslims to withdraw from French authority. In 1855, his army defeated the Bambara kingdom of Kaarta and he clashed militarily with the French at their fort at Médine. Umar's militant message caused deep rivalries within Futa Toro communities. Blocked by an increasingly expansionist French colonization, Umar turned eastward to wage jihad against the Bambara of Segu. Umar also waged jihad against the Muslim theocratic state of Masina, where his actions resulted in claims that he caused *fitna* or civil strife. Widespread rebellions against Umarian overrule shook the region.[11]

The third variable in the rapidly changing environment of Saint Louis was the French Revolution of 1848.[12] The provisional government in Paris decreed on April 27, 1848, that slavery in all French territories was abolished and reasserted the long-standing French legal concept that French soil liberates (*sol libérateur*) all slaves who touch it. In the plantation colonies of the

[9] See David Robinson, *Chiefs and Clerics: Abdul Bokar Kan and Futa Toro, 1853–1891* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); Michael A. Gomez, *Pragmatism in the Age of Jihad: The Precolonial State of Bundu* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Rudolph T. Ware III, *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge, and History in West Africa* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

[10] Martin A. Klein, "Social and Economic Factors in the Muslin Revolution in Senegambia," *JAH* 13 (4) 1972: 419–441; David Robinson, *The Holy War of Umar Tall: The Western Sudan in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, 16–25.

[11] Robinson, *The Holy War of Umar Tall;* Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation,* 21–22.

[12] For background on the 1848 revolution, see John M. Merriman, *The Agony of the Republic: The Repression of the Left in Revolutionary France, 1848–1851* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978) and Christopher Guyver, *The Second French Republic, 1848–1852: A Political Reinterpretation* (London: Palgrave Macmillon, 2016).

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Caribbean and the Indian Ocean, freed slaves become citizens and together with other free citizens had the right to elect representatives to the French National Assembly. Slaves were also freed in Saint Louis and Gorée, but ambiguity surrounded their status as citizens persisted. The 1848 decree nonetheless had significant impact on France's two Senegalese outposts. In 1845, slaves constituted fully 50 percent of the population of Saint Louis and nearly 65 percent of that of Gorée.[13] Slaves were freed, but because of a severe housing shortage on Gorée and Saint Louis, many of those newly freed continued to work for their former masters for wages. New forms of unfreedom emerged; unfree people continued to reside in these two towns, and streams of unfree children continued to arrive. Many were recognized as "wards" and placed as apprentices with urban notables.[14] French administrators and magistrates sought to limit the definition of "French soil" in order not to destabilize Saint Louis and its neighboring African communities.[15] Runaway slaves from African communities deemed friendly to the French were returned to their masters, while runaway slaves from enemies were freed. Coinciding with Umar's call for Muslims to leave the areas of French authority, thousands of Fulbe and their slaves migrated away from the region around Saint Louis.[16]

By 1852, the Second Republic gave way to the Second Empire under Louis Napoléon, who was eager to reassert power through empire. The architect of a more expansionist French colonialism in Senegal was Louis Léon César Faidherbe, who served in Algeria during the crucial phase of conquest and expansion. Faidherbe first arrived in Senegal as military director of engineering from 1852 to 1854; he was promoted to governor in 1854. Faidherbe served as governor from 1854 to 1861 and then again from 1863 to 1865. Faidherbe's success as governor benefitted from the profound changes in the colony's economy as it transitioned from the gum trade toward the trade in groundnuts. This period witnessed the expansion of Bordeaux-based merchant houses into Senegal together with a business-friendly metropolitan government under the Second Empire.[17] Faidherbe also benefitted from the

[13] Martin A. Klein, *Slavery and French Colonial Rule in French West Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 23; Kopytoff, "French Citizens and Muslim Law," 325.

[14] Kelly Duke Bryant, "Changing Childhood: 'Liberated Minors', Guardianship, and the Colonial State in Senegal, 1895–1911," *JAH* 60 (2) 2019: 209–228.

[15] On the meanings of free soil, see Robert Harms, *The Diligent: A Voyage through the Worlds of the Slave Trade* (New York: Basic Books, 2002) and Sue Peabody and Keila Grinberg, eds., *Free Soil in the Atlantic World* (London: Routledge, 2015).

[16] Klein, *Islam and Imperialism in Senegal*, 165–166; Jones, *The Métis of Senegal*, 59–60. See Klein, *Slavery and French Colonial Rule,* 19–36 for the fullest discussion of this period.

[17] Saint-Martin, *Le Sénégal sous le Second Empire*, chapters 20–21; Dominque Barjot, Éric Anceau, Isabelle Lescent-Giles, and Bruno Marnot, eds., *Les Entrepreneurs du Second Empire* (Paris: Presse Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2003).

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

fact that he survived much longer than most previous governors of Senegal.[18] Faidherbe was also an ambitious military officer eager to secure the commerce so crucial to the colony by conquest and annexation.

During this relatively long administrative reign, Faidherbe created or transformed several key institutions that helped transform the French colony of Senegal into a major force in West Africa. In 1857, Faidherbe created the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais*, modeled loosely on the Algerian *Tirailleurs indigènes*, which was a volunteer force of indigenous soldiers who received relatively good pay, good rations, and a uniform. The *tirailleurs* were also promised a share of the booty captured in wars. Founded close on the heels of the abolition of slavery, it is not surprising that many new recruits were former slaves. As Faidherbe launched aggressive territorial expansion, he increased the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* from two companies in 1857 to six in 1860.[19]

Recognizing the need to augment the administrative side of the colony, Faidherbe founded the *école des otages* in 1856. Faidherbe's decision was part of a wider strategy to promote accommodations with the Muslim majority in Saint Louis, especially after his order to expel Tijaniyya clerics from Saint Louis.[20] He created the *école des otages* as a way to provide secular French education to Muslim boys. Since 1817, Saint Louis had a series of lay and clerical French schools. The first was an elementary school, which experimented with various metropolitan and mixed Wolof–French curricula. In the early 1840s, the Brothers of Ploërmel, a Catholic teaching order, established a series of elementary schools. While the schools were designed to promote French civilization, they also provided practical subjects – such as bookkeeping. But they also encouraged conversion. Promoting conversion, however, threatened to alienate the Muslim population of Saint Louis. Most Muslim children in Saint Louis attended Qur'anic schools. In 1857, Faidherbe ordered that marabouts operating Qur'anic schools be licenced. All boys twelve and older were also required to attend evening classes in French at the Ploërmel schools.[21] Faidherbe also consolidated power in the Directorate of Political Affairs, which managed both internal and external relations of the colony. In order for the French officers of the directorate to engage with the affairs of

[18] Leland Barrows, "Louis Léon César Faidherbe (1818–1889)," in *African Proconsuls,* 58. For analysis of the Second Empire's imperial interests, see David Todd, "A French Imperial Meridian, 1814–1870," *Past and Present* 210 Feb. 2011, 155–186.

[19] Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*; Barrows, "Faidherbe," 61–62.

[20] Barrows, "Faidherbe," 64.

[21] Joseph Gaucher, *Les débuts de l'enseignement en Afrique francophone: Jean Dard et l'École Mutuelle de Saint-Louis du Sénégal* (Paris: Le Livre Africain, 1968); Denise Bouche, "L'école française et les musulmans au Sénégal de 1850 à 1920," *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer* 61 (223) 1974, 218–235; Kelly M. Duke Bryant, *Education as Politics: Colonial Schooling and Political Debate in Senegal, 1850s–1914* (Madison: University Wisconsin Press, 2015), 14–15, 56.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Africans, they needed reliable interpreters. Faidherbe's decision to create the *école des otages* was designed in part to help expand the pool of Africans willing and capable of serving as intermediaries in the expanding colonial state without pressure to convert.[22]

The third significant innovation designed to help transform France into what David Robinson terms a "Muslim power," was the establishment in 1857 of a Muslim tribunal recognized by the colonial state as a central part of the colonial judicial apparatus. The Muslim tribunal was the result of nearly a quarter century of political pressure by the Muslim population of Saint Louis to have the colonial state recognize shariʿa law as a means of adjudicating civil disputes among Muslims. The authorization of the Muslim tribunal coincided with increased tension and conflicts with more militant Muslims along the Senegal River valley and the interior, and helped solidify support of Muslims for the French colonial project in Senegal.[23] The recognition of Saint Louis's Muslim inhabitants' right to adjudicate their civil disputes in a religious court bumped up against French tradition of the separation of church and state, especially in the legal sphere, and raised questions about the content of rights granted to residents of French territories in 1848.[24]

The Beginning of Mademba's Narrative

I know virtually nothing about Mademba's childhood. According to Abd-el-Kader Mademba's biography of his father, and the only written source for this period of Mademba's life, Mademba's father fled the unrest initiated by Al Hajj Umar's preaching and recruitment in Futa Toro and settled in Saint Louis. "M'Baye-Sy, father of Mademba, of the Torodo tribe, did not want to admit that there was any other prophet other than Mohammad. After entering into conflict with El Hadj Omar, he preferred to seek refuge in Saint Louis next to Faidherbe, who had proclaimed in the name of France the respect for all religions."[25] By these two sentences, Abd-el-Kader Mademba signaled that Mademba was from a clerical family and a member of the Sy lineage.

22 Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, 81–85; Mbayo, *Muslim Interpreters in Colonial Senegal*.

23 Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, 79–85; Ghislaine Lydon, "Obtaining Freedom at the Muslims' Tribunal: Colonial Kadijustiz and Women's Divorce Litigation in Ndar (Senegal)," in *Muslim Family Law in Sub-Saharan Africa: Colonial Legacies and Post-colonial Challenges*, eds. Shamil Jeppie, Ebrahim Moosa, and Richard Roberts (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 136–139.

24 Sarr and Roberts, 'The Jurisdiction of Muslim Tribunals in Colonial Senegal"; Mamadou Diouf, "The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation and the Civility of the Originaires of the Four Communes (Senegal): A Nineteenth Century Globalization Project," *Development and Change* 29 (1998): 671–696.

25 Abd-el Kader Mademba, *Au Sénégal et au Soudan Français* (Paris: Larose, 1931), 9.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

According to Mademba's personnel dossier, Mademba's patronym was not Sy but Sèye.[26] Even at his funeral in 1918, Lieutenant-governor Brunet's eulogy referred to Mademba as Sèye.[27] The shift in patronym from Sèye to Sy was highly significant in laying claim to a prestigious clerical lineage that was linked to the Fulbe cleric Malik Sy, the founder of the theocratic Muslim state of Bundu in the early eighteenth century.[28] Another Malik Sy rose to prominence in the late nineteenth century as the grand marabout of Tivaouane in Senegal and one of the key figures who chartered paths of accommodation with the French colonial state.[29]

Oral histories recorded in and around Sinsani, where Mademba would rule as *faama*, present a very different version of Mademba's origins. Mademba was not well-loved by the inhabitants of Sinsani and this legacy no doubt influenced my informants' recollections. According to Binke Baba Kuma, a wonderful informant who was a descendant of Sinsani's chief when Mademba arrived in 1891. "The faama of Sansanding arrived here [in Sinsani] thanks to the French. He was born in Senegal and went to school together with the son of his master, [Mamadou] Racine [Sy], who when he entered the army, requested that the French take care of Mademba."[30] In all of his responses, Binke Baba Kuma was usually careful in how he used words in order not to tarnish an elder's reputation. Thus, his reference to Mademba's "master" remains undefined. Several other informants were not as differential. Alamake Togora of Sinsani stated that Mademba "was a slave of the Peuls and it was due to his master that he was able to accomplish what he did. In compensation, he gave his first born son the first name of his master."[31] Mademba's first-born son was Racine. Togora's statement thus supports Kuma's assertation that Mamadou Racine Sy was either the son of his master or his master directly. I want to quote one final informant, Al Hajj Soumaila Fane of Tesserela. Fane notes in his recitation of oral history that "[Mademba] was born in Fouta [Toro], but he grew up together with Captain Racine." When I asked Soumaila Fane how Mademba came to be *faama* of Sinsani when he was not from a family of chiefs or kings, Fane replied that "Mademba was a bastard. In the Fouta, one throws bastards into the bush. It was Racine who discovered him in the bush. He was a bastard. Racine placed him in the

[26] ANOM Dossiers personnels (Mademba) 2862.
[27] "Les obsèques du Fama Mademba, Discours du Lieutentant-Gouverneur," *JOHSN*, Sept. 1, 1918, 414.
[28] Gomez, *Pragmatism*, 25–51. I owe this interpretation of the shift of patronym from Sèye to Sy to Babacar Fall.
[29] Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, chapter 10.
[30] Interview with Binke Baba Kuma, Sinsani, July 7, 1992. For more information on Mamadou Racine Sy, see Seydou Madani Sy, *Le capitaine Mamadou Racine Sy (1838–1902): Une figure sénégalaise au temps des Tirailleurs* (Paris: Karthala, 2014).
[31] Interview, Alamake Togora, Sinsani, July 12, 1992.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

school . . . [Mademba] never spoke the names of his father or his mother."[32] There is much I do not know about Mademba's origins and the various and conflicting interpretations of his origins have much to do with the ways in which the narrative of Mademba's life was periodically remade. Such ambiguities are empowering to the historian because divergent interpretations suggest that there were several sides to Mademba's life and that different groups of actors experienced him differently.

According to his colonial employment personnel file, Mademba was indeed born in Saint Louis in March 1852, the year Faidherbe first arrived as director of military engineering and before he became governor.[33] Similar to most Muslim children, Mademba attended Qur'anic school in Saint Louis. Beginning when they were around seven years old, children attended schools run by Muslim teachers. Many students remained with their teachers for five or six years. Learning in these West African Qur'anic schools involved significant bodily discipline, labor to support the teacher and his community, and recitation during which pupils learned not only to the recite the Qur'an but also how to be good Muslims.[34] Under Governor Faidherbe, the colonial state sought to surveil and control Qur'anic schools in French territory, fearing that they might be sites for anti-French propaganda. In Saint Louis alone in the mid 1850s, there were at least twenty Qur'anic schools, but probably many more.[35] Beyond the foundations of learning the Qur'an, Arabic, and the embodiment of Islam, students often went on to learn religious sciences, geography, mathematics, and law, especially from scholars with regional reputations. It is not clear how far Mademba pursued his Islamic education. All I know is that Abd-el-Kader Mademba noted in passing that "After solid Qur'anic studies, [Mademba] was admitted in to the school of hostages that Faidherbe created in Saint Louis in 1855."[36] The idea of a school for hostages was not new to Faidherbe, who institutionalized the practice and provided ministerial funds for the operation of the school. Under Faidherbe, the school promoted a secular education in French, mathematics, geography, and Arabic, and it became a boarding school, where students were taught, fed, and housed. Almost all of the students received scholarships. Between its founding and its temporary closing in 1871, the *école des otages* had some 103 students over

[32] Interview, Al Hajj Soumaila Fane, Tesserela, July 15, 1992.
[33] ANOM Dossiers personnels (Mademba) 2862.
[34] Ware, *The Walking Qur'an,* introduction and chapter 1.
[35] Denise Bouche, "L'enseigement dans les Territoires français de l'Afrique Occidentale de 1817 à 1920: Mission civilisatrice ou formation d'une élite?," Unpublished PhD dissertation, Université Paris I, June 8, 1974 (Lille: Atelier Reproductiion des Theses, 1975), 286–294; Duke Bryant, *Education as Politics*, chapter 2; Octave Homberg, *L'École des colonies* (Paris: Plon, 1929), 192.
[36] Mademba, *Au Sénégal*, 9. Abd-el-Kader Mademba may have used Homberg as his source, since Homberg also cites the 1855 date, Homberg, *L'École des colonies*, 192.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

fifteen years.[37] Among them were "sons of chiefs who subsequently became the best auxiliaries of our African penetration."[38] Abd-el-Kader Mademba elaborated on this theme. "From this school of hostages exited those who became provincial chiefs, interpreters, military officers, teachers, bookkeepers, employees. Many returned to their places of origin to become farmers. During the first expeditions to the Soudan, the former pupils of the school of hostages rendered large services to the chiefs of the columns." Given that Mademba's father was not a chief and that the family was already living in Saint Louis, the conditions of Mademba's entry into the *école des otages* remain unclear. Abd-el-Kader went on to state that "Mademba's scholarly success brought the attention of the Governor."[39] In an interview with *Le Petit Parisien* in 1906, Mademba reflected on his experience at the *école des otages* and with Faidherbe.

> Raised by General Faidherbe in Saint Louis du Sénégal, I was among the first negroes sent to the French School founded by that officer. That institution had the name "School of the Sons of Chiefs and Hostages" and only enrolled the children of those who had made their submission and who were given as a guarantee of their loyalty to the metropole in order for their children to be educated *à la française*. General Faidherbe personally occupied himself with me. He enhanced not only my instruction, but also my education.[40]

The last two sentences here are important: "General Faidherbe personally occupied himself with me. He enhanced not only my instruction, but also my education." In her study of letters from students at the reopened and renamed *école des otages*, Kelly Duke Bryant argues insightfully that in the course of providing students with basic necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter the school became a surrogate family. "In approaching the school and its associated officials and personnel as 'family,' students both situated themselves as dependents within a colonial hierarchy and also sought colonial patronage." Duke Bryant further argues that in invoking French officials as "fictive fathers and patrons," African graduates of these boarding schools "used the school and the knowledge, status, and connections it provided for their own ends."[41] Fathers provided for their children and "accordingly, such fictive fathers also faced social obligations." Faidherbe in particular took a "keen interest" in the pupils at his new school, which was located near the

[37] I want to thank Kelly Duke Bryant for sharing with me digital images of the existing pages of the school's roster. I was not, however, able to determine definitively which student was Mademba.
[38] Homberg, *L'École des colonies*, 192.
[39] Mademba, *Au Sénégal*, 9.
[40] *Le Petit Parisien*, Oct. 27, 1906.
[41] Duke Bryant, *Education as Politics*, 94–100.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

colonial government offices in Saint Louis. Faidherbe not only visited the school twice a week but every Sunday morning, Faidherbe had the students visit him so that he could encourage and reward them. Invoking such fictive kinship expressed dependence and submission, but also an expectation of patronage.[42] I do not know when Mademba entered the *école des otages*, but I do know that just before he turned seventeen, he entered the colonial Post and Telegraph Department as an auxiliary clerk.

Working for the Colonial Telegraph Service

By 1869, when Mademba joined the telegraph service, the Senegalese colonial state was emerging from its chrysalis into an aggressive conquest machine. Conquest depended on military superiority, which in turn depended upon a host of provisioning services. Just as essential as bullets and food, reliable intelligence was crucial to military victories. Intelligence was often gathered by scouts, but few European military men had adequate knowledge of African languages. They depended on African interpreters, who controlled the flow of information and interceded between French military and African chiefs, whether allied or belligerent. African interpreters parsed complex African realities into European conceptual and strategic categories.[43] No matter how dependent the French were on African sources of information, they could not rely unquestioningly on self-interested interpreters. Instead, they sought to create a "moral community" of indigenous intermediaries, whose interests lay in supporting the colonial endeavor and in their bargains of collaboration.[44] Many of these intermediaries were of originally of low social status and participation in the colonial endeavor provided significant social mobility.

French military leaders in French West Africa stood at the head of fairly compact armies composed of a handful of European officers, a small number of noncommissioned European soldiers, a sizeable number of locally recruited *Tirailleurs Sénégalais*, and often a larger number of more or less irregular African auxiliaries. This army had to be provisioned, which generated another army of porters, many of whom were recruited from *villages de liberté*, where slaves liberated from enemy lands were settled, often with the intention of providing a pool of coercible labor for the myriad tasks of conquest: building

[42] Ibid., 106–107.

[43] Worger, "Parsing God"; Benjamin Lawrance, Emily Osborn, and Richard Roberts, "Introduction: African Intermediaries and the 'Bargain' of Collaboration," in *Intermediaries*; Mbayo, *Muslim Interpreters in Colonial Senegal*.

[44] The concept of creating "moral communities" of intermediaries essential to the colonial project was originally framed by Christopher Alan Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6–7, 61–66.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

forts, roads, railways, telegraph lines, and eventually railways. And this army of porters and builders also had to be fed. Provisioning, thus, was a central mission of both the military and the colonial state.[45]

European military leaders also needed means of quick communication between units, and between men in the field and those at central command. European military expansion in West Africa coincided with new military and communication technologies, especially the telegraph.[46] The use of telegraphy increased rapidly in Europe and the United States following converging discoveries regarding transmission of electromagnetic impulses along wires and the development of the Morse code between 1831 and 1836. By the late 1840s, telegraph wires crisscrossed both Europe and the United States.[47] The challenge was linking different regions, especially those separated by water. The development of insulated submarine cables in 1850 permitted faster communication across channels and oceans, linking England to mainland Europe, but also France to Algeria, which in the 1850s saw the massive use of French troops to suppress Algerian resistance to French colonialism. The first submarine cable linking Europe with West Africa was completed in 1874 and one linking Saint Louis to Europe was completed in 1885.[48] Mademba's career in the telegraph service of colonial Senegal coincided with the dramatic increase in telegraphy and conquest in French West Africa.

Telegraph in Senegal began with Faidherbe's territorial expansion in 1855. The first telegraph line linking Saint Louis with recently conquered Kajoor was built in 1859. A marine cable linking Gorée and Dakar was originally established in 1861, but it failed almost immediately. By 1862, Saint Louis and Dakar were in constant communication. The conquest and pacification of Waalo in 1868 led to the linking of Saint Louis and the French posts at Richard Toll and Dagana and southward to Gandiole and Louga. The outbreak of hostilities with the Umarians in 1869 fed the pressure to push the telegraph toward Podor. African adversaries of French expansion understood the power of the telegraph and strategically cut the wires whenever they could, as the

[45] Denise Bouche, *Les Villages de liberté en Afrique noire française, 1887–1910* (Paris: Mouton, 1968); Richard Roberts, "The Emergence of a Grain Market in Bamako, 1883–1908," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 14 (1) 1980: 37–54; Klein, *Slavery and French Colonial Rule*.

[46] Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); Daniel R. Headrick, *The Invisible Weapon: Telecommunications and International Politics, 1851–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[47] George Shiers, ed., *The Electric Telegraph: An Historical Anthology* (New York: Arno Press, 1977).

[48] Headrick, *The Tools of Empire*, chapter 11; Headrick, *The Invisible Weapon*; Jean-Claude Allain, "L'Indépendance câblière de la France au début du XXè siècle," *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 166 (April) 1992: 115–131.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Damel of Waalo and Lat Dior did during their resistance. With the intensification of expansion under Colonel Brière d'Isle in 1877, increased pressure was put on expanding telegraphy along the Senegal River to Bakel and from Dakar to Kaolak and on to Siné near the Gambia River. Depending on terrain and supply of materials, the fifty men crews building the telegraph averaged four kilometers per day.[49]

By the time the telegraph entered the Soudan in 1878, the work of laying the telegraph had become routinized.[50] Several crews often worked simultaneously on different lines or on different stretches of the same line. A European agent usually directed each crew. By 1893, however, given the paucity of trained Europeans in Senegal and the Soudan, only one European agent supervised several crews. The European supervisor oversaw the distribution of the equipment, the clearing of the trees for the telegraph lines, the proper height and alignment of the lines, and the provisioning of his crew. He was assisted by four or five African supervisors. The crew was divided into five units. The first team was charged with identifying which trees to cut and which to select for use as poles. Some trees served as better telegraph poles than others because they resisted termites and water damage. The second team, consisting of twenty workers, cut the trees and dug the holes to support the poles. The third team prepared the trees selected as poles by cutting the branches and moving them close to the holes. This team also hardened the poles by burning the surface. A fourth team installed the poles and the isolators on each pole. The fifth team, consisting of three workers, installed the telegraph wire. This was a critical part of the work of the telegraph crews and had to be done with care. And finally, two or three workers were assigned the task of providing water to the rest of the crew, "who drank copiously." The work of building the telegraph did not stop during the "bad season," but continued throughout the year. Flooding during the rainy season necessitated constant repair work on the line. Every October, crews checked the existing lines, replaced poles that had deteriorated, replaced broken isolators, tested the tension of the wires, and cleared the bush under the telegraph lines. Even the best hardwood trees selected as poles had to be replaced every four to six years.[51]

A central part of the work of the European supervisor was to manage the material necessary for construction. The telegraph service experimented with using metal pylons, particularly along the flood-prone banks of the Senegal

[49] Gouvernement Général de l'AOF, *Les Postes et Télégraphes en Afrique Occidentale* (Corbeil: Éditions Crété, 1907), 198.

[50] Our ability to reconstruct the detail of the telegraph service in the French Soudan is limited by a fire in 1896 that destroyed the archives of telegraph post in Kayes, which was the headquarters of the colony until 1908. Ibid., 177.

[51] Ibid., 190–201; Jacques Méniaud, ed., *Les Pionniers du Soudan: Avant, avec, et après Archinard, 1879–1894* (Paris: Société des Publications Modernes, 1931), vol. 1, 38–39.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

River from Bakel to Kayes, but these pylons had to be imported from France and were cumbersome to transport. Indeed, each pylon had to be divided into three parts in order to be head-loaded by African porters. Telegraph wire and isolators rounded out the requirements. In French West Africa, the telegraph service chose the three millimeter galvanized iron wire rather than the heavier four millimeter gauge used in France. The telegraph wire arrived in Senegal in 500 meter rolls, each weighing twenty-eight kilograms and capable of being head-loaded by an African porter. The isolators arrived by ship in cases of 100, which had to be repacked into smaller bundles. Along some routes, animals were used to carry the equipment, but most of it was head-loaded. The telegraph crews also constructed telegraph depots every 100 kilometers.[52]

In 1887–1888, the telegraph service in the Upper River was reorganized into two linked but separate divisions with headquarters in Kayes: the provision of services of telegraph crews and posts and the technical division charged with construction and repair of lines and posts, and provision of the construction materials. With the expansion of conquest and the militarization of the colony, the telegraph became an indispensable tool of governance. A central part of Mademba's work was repairing the telegraph lines damaged by France's African enemies, the distrustful local population, the rainy season, and occasionally by giraffes. Archinard, who took over the military command in 1888, and who wanted more resources for the telegraph service, wrote to the governor of Senegal, that it was impossible "to govern the land if the [military] posts cannot communicate with each other through the means of the telegraph."[53] By 1885, telegraph linked Bamako on the Niger with Paris; in 1889, a cable sent from mainland France arrived in Bamako eight hours later, closely tying together the empire.[54]

Workers in the telegraph service of colonial French West Africa were divided into three cadres with different responsibilities and commensurate salaries. In the French Soudan at the beginning of the twentieth century these were the metropolitan cadre, which was reserved for Europeans and consisted of a single inspector or subinspector, senior clerks (of which there were none appointed), ordinary clerks (of which there were twenty-two), and supervisors (none appointed). The second cadre consisted of local employees divided into receivers (zero), senior clerks (four), ordinary clerks (twenty-two), auxiliary clerks (eight), mechanics (one), head agents (four), local agents (nine), head

[52] Gouvernement Général l'AOF, *Les Postes et Télégraphes*, 188–195.

[53] Martine Cuttier, *Portrait du colonialisme triumphant: Louis Archinard (1850–1932)* (Panazol: Lavauzelle, 2006), 277–284, fn 164, 283 citing Archinard, Situation des Postes et Télégraphes, Jan. 23, 1890, ANS K series.

[54] Paul Butel, ed., *Un officier et la conquête colonial: Emmanuel Ruault (1878–1896)* (Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2007), 190; see also Méniaud, *Pionniers*, I, 37.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

supervisors (one), and in a world dominated by males, one female employee, whose tasks were not specified. The third cadre was the military telegraphers, of which there were twenty-five. The workers of the telegraph service were thus divided into military and civilian branches, even if at the beginning of the telegraph service it served almost exclusively the needs of the military. Of the 906 employees in the French West African telegraph service in 1906, 9 percent were Europeans, 3 percent held military appointments, and 88 percent were Africans.[55] In addition, daily construction workers were recruited locally, whether by choice or force. Free porters, for example, could receive as much as one meter of *guinée* cloth and one liter of rice per day; others, especially those recruited from the official *villages de liberté*, received only subsistence.[56] The racial boundaries separating these cadres were relatively inflexible, even in the fluid world of the nascent colonial state. Nonetheless, Mademba was formally placed in charge of the technical division.

Mademba Sèye: Building Colonialism and the Bargains of Collaboration

With Faidherbe's departure from Senegal in 1865, his aggressive agenda of conquest faded. Paris instructed subsequent governors to cease new military adventures and to consolidate their control over territory already conquered.[57] Groundnuts were expanding rapidly in the plains of Kajoor and into Siin and Saalum further south. Pressure was building in Saint Louis to link better this region to the export markets, to build the railway connecting Saint Louis and Dakar, and to connect these regions through telegraph lines. By the mid 1860s, however, the groundnut regions of western Senegal were caught up in civil wars that pitted the monarchies against insurgent Muslims, rivalries that were intensified by militant Islamic preaching, by increased French territorial conquest, and by challenges borne of new economies.[58] On February 1, 1869, Mademba joined the colonial telegraph service as an entry-level local employee. The curriculum at the *école des otages* did not prepare Mademba for the technical duties of building and maintaining a telegraph system.

[55] Gouvernement Général, *Les Postes et Télégraphes*, 19–20.

[56] On daily wage and provisions, see Bouche, *Villages de liberté,* 58–64, 87–88, 146–153; Roberts, *Warriors*, 143–146; and Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, 87–88; on *guinée* cloth, see Richard Roberts, "*Guinée* Cloth: Linked Transformations within France's Empire in the Nineteenth Century," *Cahiers d'études africaines* 32 (128) 1992: 597–627.

[57] Kanya-Forstner, *The Conquest of the Western Sudan*, 43.

[58] See Yves-Jean Saint-Martin, *Le Sénégal sous le Second Empire* for the most comprehensive discussion. See also Mamadou Diouf, *Le Kajoor au XIXè siècle: Pouvoir ceddo et conquête colonial* (Paris: Kathala, 1990) and James F. Searing, *"God Alone Is King": Islam and Emancipation in Senegal: Two Wolof Kingdoms of Kajoor and Bawol, 1859–1914* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002).

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Presumably, Mademba spent the first few months on the job learning about the telegraphy and the construction of the lines.

As part of a global pandemic, cholera struck Saint Louis in November 1868 and again in June 1869.[59] Among the casualties was Governor Pinet-Laprade; Colonel Valière assumed command of the colony. Valière ordered the September 1869 march to Louga in the center of the raging civil Kajoor civil war in which Lat Joor was mobilizing one faction. Mademba was part of the contingent of civilian employees of the telegraph service seconded to the military to assist in the construction of the telegraph lines. The telegraph group went about its business when Lat Joor's forces attacked and besieged the smaller telegraph group. Mademba faced his first military confrontation. According to his son, Mademba wanted to take up arms and join his military comrades in an effort to push back against Lat Joor and reunite the French forces. The commander of his contingent, Lieutenant Frey, rejected Mademba's request and ordered him to race to the main column and alert them to the critical situation Frey's forces faced. Mademba succeeded and reinforcements arrived.[60]

In 1870, the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871) led to the fall of the Second Empire and the emergence of the Third Republic; Mademba was posted to the telegraph bureau in Betet, Senegal.[61] I know virtually nothing about Mademba during the 1870s. Mademba was still at the telegraph post at Betet in early April 1878 when the French explorer Paul Soleillet stopped there. Betet, which is no longer identifiable on maps, was not far from Rufisque, where Soleillet had disembarked a few days before.

> From three o'clock the land becomes sandy and uninhabited. At four-thirty Soleillet arrives at Bettet's post where he is received by Masemba (sic), a black Muslim from St. Louis, [an] employee of the telegraph and already a respected marabout. [Soleillet] leaves [the post] the next day Sunday, April 7, at five o'clock in the morning, crosses a cool oasis and follows the edge of the sea all day long.[62]

Soleillet's brief description suggests that Mademba's long tour of duty in Betet was rather dreary, being merely a backwater of the colony. Soleillet indirectly suggests that Mademba may have spent some of his leisure time running a Qur'anic school or at least deepening his knowledge of Islam. The 1870s was a

[59] Myron Echenberg, *Africa in the Time of Cholera: A History of Pandemics from 1817 to the Present* (New York: Cambridge University, 2012), 46–47.

[60] Mademba, *Au Sénégal*, 11–12; Diouf, *Le Kajoor au XIXè siècle*, 239–240.

[61] Archinard noted that Mademba was the district officer of Betet, not merely the telegraphist, between 1870 and 1871. Archinard, letter to Étienne, under sec. of state for colonies, Nioro, Jan. 9, 1891, ANOM Soudan I-1a.

[62] Paul Soleillet, *Voyage à Ségou, 1878–1879, rédigé d'aprés les notes et journaux de Soleillet par Gabriel Gravier* (Paris: Challamel, 1887), 18.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

fraught time for West African Muslims caught between Islamic reform and revolution and a range of accommodations with expanding French colonialism. If Mademba was actually deepening his knowledge of Islam while in Betet, it was part of an emerging quest for his identity and place in a rapidly changing world. It may also have been part of Mademba's ongoing efforts to periodically remake himself.

Abd-el-Kader Mademba suggests that the one evening Mademba spent with Soleillet in Betet was a crucial turning point in Mademba's life. "His Soudanese career, [Mademba] recounted by himself forty years later, was born of a conversation with the explorer Soleillet, who during his visit to Betté in 1879 (sic), spoke of all the hopes [the French] pin on the still unknown land along the Niger."[63] Except for notations regarding his regular promotions up the employment ladder in the telegraph service – from fifth class clerk to fourth class to third class – the archival record regarding Mademba is relatively silent from 1870 to 1879.[64] His regular promotions indicate that he was a diligent employee fully capable of the tasks he was assigned. But nothing in the record indicated that he was prepared to renegotiate his original bargain of collaboration, which was regular pay for government service. On that fateful evening of April 6, 1878, Soleillet may well have planted in Mademba the seeds of imagining adventure, wealth, and prestige along the Niger River. Not long thereafter, Mademba was given the opportunity to take part in the French military expansion into the Soudan. Mademba's career suddenly took off.

The appointment of Colonel Louis-Alexandre Brière d'Isle as governor of Senegal in 1876 signaled a return to a more expansionist policy in West Africa. In 1879, the appointment of former governor of Senegal Jean Jauréguiberry as minister of the Navy gave a further boost to plans for territorial expansion. In anticipation of further military conquest, preparations needed to be made. Additional explorations of the Upper River region, which was seen as the launching pad for conquest of the interior, were needed. With the approval of the minister, Brière sent Captain Joseph Simon Gallieni on a mission in 1879 to map and generate treaties with the chiefs and polities of the Bafoulabe region. The Bafoulabe region was just to the south of the Umarian state of Kaarta and Segu, which had fallen to Al Hajj Umar in the 1860s. Gallieni's mission was so successful that Brière next sent him on a mission to Segu to assess the context of future French expansion. Gallieni's mission to Segu was not as productive of treaties as his Bafoulabe mission, but it did redouble French resolve to conquer the Soudan.[65]

[63] Mademba, *Au Sénégal*, 12–13.

[64] ANOM Dossiers personnels (Mademba) 2862; Mademba at Betet, see *Moniteur du Sénégal*, Mar. 1, 1870.

[65] Joseph Simon Gallieni, *Voyage au Soudan Français (Haut-Sénégal et pays de Ségou), 1879–1881* (Paris: Hachette, 1885); Kanya-Forstner, *The Conquest of the Western Sudan*, 55–112.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The second prerequisite for military expansion was to extend telegraph communication from Saint Louis to the Upper River region. Since 1877, the telegraph was making its way eastward along the Senegal River. But as it did, telegraph construction bumped up against the civil war raging in Futa Toro. By 1880, the telegraph was mostly completed except for a portion between Saldé and Bakel. This gap coincided with the region controlled by Abdul Bokar Kane, who refused the French permission to construct the telegraph line through his territory. The Saldé–Bakel line was finally completed in 1885.[66] In 1879, Mademba was reassigned to the Upper River division of the telegraph service. And the third piece of the foundation for French expansion into the Soudan was the creation of the new position of the commandant supérieur du haut-fleuve, the supreme military commander with full powers of all operations in the Upper River area, including command of a new battalion of *Tirailleurs Sénégalais*. The supreme military commander was to report to the governor of Senegal, who also maintained the budget over his activities.[67]

In his new position, Mademba was actively engaged in constructing the telegraph from Bakel to Médine. Mademba was still at this task in 1880 as Lieutenant-colonel Gustave Borgnis-Desbordes, newly appointed as the supreme military commander, prepared to move boldly into the French Soudan. Desbordes's plans were disrupted, however, by the outbreak of two yellow fever epidemics in Saint Louis in 1880 and 1881 that led to the deaths of considerable numbers of Europeans, including the newly arrived Governor Lanneau. Yellow fever epidemics sowed not only death but also massive supply disruptions since public health efforts to contain the disease involved quarantine. The 1881 epidemic was particularly deadly to the newly arrived contingent of European soldiers and civilian employees, including the European cadre for the telegraph service.[68] Even with the shortage of material, Mademba pushed on with his limited equipment. A frustrated Desbordes complained about the general disarray in the telegraph service, with few agents capable of any tasks with the exception of Mademba. "Arriving at Médine," Desbordes wrote, "I found a native telegraph employee, named Mademba, who was well instructed in his work, intelligent, active, and ready to assist me. He also has significant experience constructing telegraph lines." Desbordes recognized that he was overstepping the racial hierarchy in the telegraph service, but stated simply that he had two choices: either to abandon

[66] Robinson, *Chiefs and Clerics*, 124–138; Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, 131–132.

[67] Kanya-Forstner, *The Conquest of the Western Sudan*, 72, 87–94.

[68] Gouv. Sén, p.i., letter to Min. Marine, Saint-Louis, Aug. 8, 1881, ANOM Sénégal et dépendances XII-117: travaux de PTT. See also Capitaine Pietri, *Les Français au Niger: Voyages et combats* (Paris: Hachette, 1885), 260; Kalala Ngalamulume, *Colonial Pathologies, Environment, and Western Medicine in Saint-Louis-du- Sénégal, 1867–1920* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 50–81.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

construction altogether until new European supervisors arrived or push ahead under Mademba's leadership. Desbordes appointed Mademba head of the construction crew, hired two or three additional native supervisors, and instructed that all the necessary material and means of transport be put at Mademba's disposal. Mademba was quickly promoted to second class clerk and then to first class clerk because of his "exceptional services." Mademba's crew laid the 121 kilometer line linking Bafoulabe with Toukoto, which was "superior" in all respects despite the paucity of material. Mademba, Desbordes noted, acquitted this task with "intelligence and devotion."[69]

Desbordes's experience with Mademba and several African interpreters convinced him that trusted and devoted African intermediaries were absolutely essential to the success of the French military mission of conquest. Desbordes also reflected on Europeans' dependence on these intermediaries and the ease to which Europeans could be misled.

> We rely on the interpreters to describe the wealth of the country, the number of herds, the supplies of grain, the numbers of guns, etc. They can easily deceive us if they are not honest and have some other interests. It is therefore essential that we choose interpreters with great care since they can do us great harm and bring about general disaffection [with our mission of conquest].[70]

Captain Ruault, who served as administrator of Bamako during the conquest, noted the power of the interpreter.

> The selection of a good interpreter is of utmost importance for a commander of a post, which has both military and administrative functions ... Most are conscientious. Some interpreters, however, alter the meaning of the speech that they translate by favoring whoever will offer them a pot of wine. Others exploit our influence for their own gain ... We must identify those interpreters who have tendencies to flatter local chiefs and who give to them information that they find agreeable even if it is not the truth.[71]

To help with conquest, Desbordes established a military intelligence division for the Upper River campaign, which had military as well as political tasks.

[69] Desbordes, cmdt. sup., letter to gouv. Sén., Médine, Dec. 23, 1880, ANS-AOF 1 D 56; cmdt. sup., Rapport sur la Campagne 1880–1881 dans le Soudan, np, nd [1881] ANS-AOF 1 D 59.

[70] Lt. Col. Borgnis-Desbordes, Campagne de 1880–1881 dans le Soudan, Saint-Louis, July 6, 1881, ANOM Sénégal et dépendances IV-73 bis. On the dependence of European soldiers and administrators on African intermediaries, see Osborn, "Circle of Iron" and Emily Osborn, *Our New Husbands Are Here: Households, Gender, and Politics in a West African State from the Slave Trade to Colonial Rule* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011), 127–128.

[71] Paul Butel, ed. *Un Officer et la conquête colonial*, 165–166, 201.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

This service eventually was absorbed into the Political Bureau of the central command.[72]

Mademba did not disappoint Desbordes. He pushed the construction of the telegraph forward into the interior of the Soudan despite irregular supplies of construction material.[73] Mademba also used every opportunity to provide additional intelligence to the French. In January 1882, for example, he noted in a letter to the military commander that he discovered traces of horses in the area of Griogolla, where his crew was working. Given how the tracks were made, Mademba assumed that these horses were evidence of African enemies spying on the French military column.[74] France's enemies had begun to realize the importance of the telegraph and took every opportunity to cut the lines and to steal the telegraph wire, the isolators, and the other material.[75] On April 3, 1883, a band of Samory's troops raided Mademba's encampment at Dialocoro on the route between Kita and Bamako and made off with three reels of telegraph wire and a herd of cattle destined to support the French column.[76] Mademba retreated with his crew to Bamako, where he persuaded Desbordes to permit his crew of fourteen men to accompany a retaliatory raid against Samory. According to his son, Mademba had his first serious military encounter that tested his ability to command during fighting. "A few days later, during a very heated encounter with the Malinke warriors, Mademba and his men penetrated the enemy camp, retrieved the telegraph wire, and continued to construct the line that reached Bamako shortly thereafter."[77]

The year 1883 marked a significant turning point in Mademba's bargains of collaboration. He had proven himself an able manager of his telegraph crew, and with his first taste of military adventure, he successfully tested his capacity to command. The French military leadership was keenly attentive to these successes. Even before the April 1883 military raid, Desbordes had written to the governor of Senegal requesting that he send Mademba to Mont Valérien, just outside of Paris, for advanced training in telegraphy. "Mademba," Desbordes wrote, "is a dedicated native employee of the telegraph service of the Upper River, who is performing all the difficult tasks with great zeal,

[72] Cuttier, *Portrait du colonialisme triumphant*, 270–271.

[73] Mademba, letter to cmdt. sup., Guinina, Mar. 2, 1883, ANM J 43.

[74] Mademba letter to cmdt. sup., Toukato, Jan. 4, 1882, ANM J 1.

[75] Chef de service télégraphe, letter to cmdt. sup., Kayes, Oct. 23, 1882, ANM J 1.

[76] Archinard avec la collaboration du Lt. L. Levasseur, Historique succinct des nos rélations avec Samory et Tieba, np, July–Aug. 1889, ANOM Sénégal et dépendances IV-93.

[77] Mademba, *Au Sénégal*, 23–24. For supporting evidence. see Col. Desbordes, Rapport sur les affaires avec l'armée de Samory, commandé par Fabou, du 19 à 27 Avril 1883, np, nd, ANOM Sénégal et dépendances IV-77. The attack on the Dialocoro telegraph camp is noted in États de Service de M. Mademba Sèye, Bafoulabe, May 3, 1888, ANOM Dossiers personnels (Mademba) 2862. See also Lieutenant de Vaisseau Hourst, *Sur le Niger et au Pays des Touaregs: La Mission Hourst* (Paris: Plon, 1898), 63–65.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

intelligence, and dedication despite significant impediments. I know that this employee would benefit from a trip to France to see the progress being made in telegraphy." Desbordes underscored the importance of nurturing the dedication of natives like Mademba to the French mission in Africa.

> Colonization of Senegal will only be accomplished by the means of natives who we attract to our goals, which are primarily the work of civilization, not conquest and exploitation. In this regard, nothing can replace a voyage to France, which then becomes like an open book that the Blacks can read and comprehend ... Over the past years, I have often raised the issue about how useful it is for the most intelligent and dedicated natives to improve their skills through a tour of our arsenals for two or three months. I urge you, M. Governor, to approve this request that M. Mademba be sent to France for advanced telegraphy training.[78]

The governor agreed and Mademba sailed to Bordeaux at the end of July 1883. Mademba spent nearly three months at Mont Valérien on the outskirts of Paris. His annual salary was raised to 3300 francs, he received an extra stipend of 10 francs per day while in France, and he was promoted to "native" clerk first class in colonial telegraph service with the title of "chief of construction of the telegraph line in the Upper River." On Desbordes's recommendation, the governor of Senegal wrote to the Minister of the Navy recommending that Mademba be awarded the honorary rank of the cross of the Legion of Honor. In forwarding his approval to this recommendation, the Director of Colonies argued that not only had Mademba rendered "exceptional services" to France, but that "bestowing this honor has the power to produce the best results" for those who receive it.[79]

Created in 1802 by Napoléon Bonaparte, the Legion of Honor recognized outstanding service to France in peacetime as well as in wartime, regardless of the social status. By 1805, Napoléon extended these awards to foreigners who had demonstrated their service to France. The numbers of legionnaires for each rank was fixed by law and the nomination of individuals had to pass several administrative layers.[80] These awards were manifested in ceremonies

[78] Borgnis Desbordes, letter to gouv. Sén., Bamako, Mar. 2, 1883, ANOM Dossiers personnels (Mademba) 2862.

[79] Direction des colonies, Min. Marine, Note pour le Min., Paris, Aug. 16, 1883 and Note pour le cabinet du Ministre, Paris, Aug. 22, 1883, ANOM Dossiers personnels (Mademba) 2862.

[80] On the Legion of Honor, see Jean Daniel, *La Légion d'Honneur: Histoire et organisation de L'Ordre National* (Paris: Éditions André Bonne, 1948); Jean Tulard, François Monnier, and Olivier Echappé, eds., *La Légion d'honneur: Deux siècles d'histoire* (Paris: Perrin, 2004); Michel Wattel and Béatrice Wattel, *Les Grand-Croix de la Légion d'Honneur de 1805 à nos jours: Titulaires français et étrangers* (Paris: Archives et culture, 2009).

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and medals, which Mademba proudly wore. As Lieutenant-colonel Gallieni explained in 1887, for France's mission in the Soudan to succeed, "France has to rely increasingly on natives to promote our civilization and commerce, and we must do all we can to encourage the natives in this task ... This nomination of Mademba will have a positive influence on the natives we employ all around us, in our construction, our schools, our telegraph system, etc."[81]

We do not know much about Mademba's experiences in France in 1883. We do know, however, that Desbordes was absolutely right about how significant such visits were to nurturing African loyalty to France's mission. Paris in the early 1880s must have astonished the young African telegraphist. With more than two million inhabitants, Paris dwarfed anything that Mademba had experienced. Baron Hausmann, credited with the major urban renovations of the Second Empire, continued his efforts to remake Paris into a bourgeois capital of Europe. He used the collapse of the Paris Commune to exile the working classes to the suburbs and to transform the inner city into a cosmopolitan center of the arts, business, and government. We can imagine Mademba during his free time promenading along the new boulevards of the central districts in awe of the scale of building and the ongoing electrification. During these early years of the Third Republic, France was becoming more prosperous, more bourgeois, and more imperial.[82] Walking those streets in Paris in 1883, Mademba would likely have attracted stares of Parisians unaccustomed to seeing African men. Mademba was certainly in awe of the progress and excitement that France exuded during the Belle Époque.

In his study of Freemasons and French imperialism, Owen White discovered that Mademba most likely became a Mason during or shortly after this visit to France in 1883. Freemasonry in France in the nineteenth century involved a relatively decentralized and plastic ideology that articulated local interests within generally agreed commitments to progress, anticlericism, liberty of consciousness, the brotherhood of all mankind, and mutual support of its members. Central to the organizational structure of Freemasonry were the lodges, which were in many ways "republics in miniature" and committed to the promotion of science, individual progress, free thought, and fraternity.[83]

[81] Extract of a letter from Lt.-col. Gallieni to gouv. Sén., Kayes, May 12, 1887, ANOM Dossiers personnels (Mademba) 2862.

[82] Raymond Rudorff, *Belle Époque: Paris in the Nineties* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1972), 27–30; Johannes Willms, *Paris: Capital of Europe: From the Revolution to the Belle Époque* (New York: Homes and Meier, 1997), 334–339. See also Mary McAuliffe, *Dawn of the Belle Époque: The Paris of Monet, Zola, Bernhardt, Eiffel, Debussy, Clemenceau, and Their Friends* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2011), especially chapter 12 on 1883.

[83] Sudhir Hazareesingh and Vincent Wright, *Francs-Maçons sous le Second Empire: Les loges provincials du Grand-Orient à la veille de la Troisième République* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2001), 26–27, 156.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Freemason lodges became crucibles for the development of a new form of sociability and strove to create "an enlightened universalism" in which there was a "pure brotherhood of men."[84] In France, Masonic lodges were simultaneously social clubs, incubators for republican political thought, and generators of professional networks. To achieve these goals required a practical commitment: Masons were encouraged to acquire positions of power in government and other sectors of society.[85]

Different lodges in France and in the empire had different commitments to these principles. White points out that despite the relatively small number of Masons in French West Africa, the portability of their ideas "served to connect them to a highly organized network that spanned the divide between metropole and overseas France."[86] Saint Louis already had a Masonic lodge in 1781 that included Frenchmen and members of the influential métis community. Few black Africans were admitted, in part because the Masons worried about their lack of formal French education and commitment to Masonic ideals. As a graduate of the *école des otages* and as a member of the Legion of Honor, Mademba certainly qualified and had proven his loyalty, and he was initiated into the relatively new Union Sénégalaise lodge, which was established in 1874.[87] In the 1880s, when Mademba was a member, the Union Sénégalaise lodge promoted a new school for "apprentices, *hommes de couleur*, and former slaves."[88] As a Mason, Mademba joined what Bayly has called a "moral community" of intermediaries so essential to colonialism. All colonial lodges were deeply committed to the "emancipatory action" of the French civilizing mission.[89]

Membership in the Masons thus brought with it brotherhood and a community of like-minded gentlemen. Membership also had an instrumental quality in linking members to powerful patrons. White describes several cases where Masons in West Africa appealed to more powerful members for

[84] Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, *The Politics of Sociability: Freemasonry and German Civil Society, 1840–1918* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 5–13.

[85] André Combes, *Histoire de la Franc-Maçonnerie au XIXè siècle* (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 1999), vol. 2, 158–163; Hazareesingh and Wright, *Francs-Maçons*, 32, 187–219; Maurice Larkin, "Fraternité, solidarité et sociabilité: Les racines herbeuses du Grand Orient de France (1900–1920)," in *L'héritage jacobin dans la France d'aujourd'hui: Essais en l'honneur de Vincent Wright*, ed. Sudhir Hazareesingh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 93.

[86] Owen White, "Networking: Freemasons and the Colonial State in French West Africa, 1895–1914," *French History* 19 (1) 2005: 94–95.

[87] Ibid., 98–99, fn 32. By the late 1890s, a new racialism eroded this sense of equality and fewer black Africans were initiated or sought initiation. Ibid., 99. See also Georges Odo, *La Franc-Maçonnerie dans les colonies, 1738–1960* (Paris: Éditions Maçonniques de France, 2001), 60.

[88] Jones, *The Métis of Senegal*, 110–112. See also Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, 103.

[89] Combes, *Histoire de la Franc-Maçonnerie*, II, 399.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

assistance with employment requests. We have no records of Mademba appealing to more powerful fellow Masons, but the sense of fellowship no doubt contributed to Mademba's abilities to renegotiate the bargains of collaboration after his return from France and later in his career.[90] This was especially true since William Ponty, as a fellow Mason, would emerge as Mademba's patron during the challenging period when he was under investigation for crimes and abuses of power. One of the leaders of the Colonial Lobby in the Third Republic and the under-secretary for state for colonial affairs when Colonel Archinard proposed that Mademba be made king of Sinsani was Eugène Etienne, who was also a Mason.[91]

Mademba and the Work of the Military's Political Bureau

Upon his return from France in late 1883, Mademba rapidly took over the telegraph construction and pushed aggressively to link Kayes with Bamako and to repair the damaged line. Colonel Boilève, the new supreme military commander, placed Mademba directly under the authority of the central command, and thus no longer subject to the civilian telegraph service. Exactly why this occurred is not clear from the archival record, although we can assume that it was because Mademba had broken the racial ceiling in the telegraph service by being named chief of telegraph construction for the Upper River and thus encountered the hostility of M. Dabadie, the European director of the telegraph service of the Upper River based in Kayes. Boilève complained about how difficult it was to recruit and retain competent Africans for the many tasks of supporting the military campaign. He urged the governor of Senegal to double the salary of the best native employees, including Mademba, whose work has made the telegraph perfectly operable.[92] Being directly under the central command placed Mademba close to the center of political power in the nascent colonial conquest state. In 1883–1884, the nascent conquest state was besieged by rebellions in Beledugu and was increasinglu threatened by Samory's forces, which had even marched to the gates of Bamako, before retreating.[93]

Paris was not pleased with the military's rapid territorial advance during the aggressive campaigns of 1883–1884. The ministry of the Navy instructed the

[90] White, "Networking," 100–101. See also Combes, *Histoire de la Franc-Maçonnerie*, II, 397–398, fn 13. Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, 103 notes that William Ponty was a member of the Union Sénégalaise lodge. According to Combes, Mademba rejoined the Cosmos lodge in 1907, likely following his 1906 visit to France, *Histoire de la Franc-Maçonnerie*, II, 404. See also Larkin, "Fraternité, solidarité et sociabilité."

[91] Combes, *Histoire de la Franc-Maçonnerie,* II, 397–398.

[92] Col. Boilève, cmdt. sup., Campagne 1883–1884 dans le Soudan, Saint Louis, Aug. 8, 1884, ANOM Sénégal et dépendances IV-79 bis.

[93] Méniaud, *Pionniers,* I, 198.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

governor of Senegal to reign in the military leadership and instructed the military to consolidate their conquests before engaging the two major African states in the region: the Umarian state at Segu and Samory Ture's state on the Milo River. Between 1884 and 1886, Mademba was posted in Senegal, where he led the construction of the telegraph linking Rufisque and Joal and Saldé and Bakel, and thus away from the center of military and political power in the Soudan.[94] During this period, Mademba developed good relations with M. Hübler, the head of the Post and Telegraph Department in Senegal. Hübler was affiliated with the Alliance Française and committed to promoting instruction in French. The Freemasons were also deeply committed to promoting secular instruction in French. Exactly when Mademba and Hübler cooperated in expanding French instruction is not clear, but according to General Faidherbe's memoire,

> Colonel Gallieni was also concerned with developing instruction in French among the Blacks. To that end, he ordered the creation of school in each post. Under the authority of the commandant of the post, the under officers and soldiers of the garrison offered preliminary instruction in the French language as a means to divert the youth from the teachings of the marabouts. The costs of the instruction books were covered by the Alliance Française, whose task is conducted through the entire world.
>
> It was not only in the posts of the Upper River where these schools were established. M. Hübler ... aided by M. Mademba-Sèye, one of the most intelligent natives who is also the most devoted to the national cause, pursue with indefatigable ardor the same goal in the posts along the coast, in Saloum, Casamance, etc.[95]

The shift from leading a Qur'anic school in Betet in the 1870s to promoting instruction in French at military posts marked yet another phase in Mademba's periodic efforts to remake himself.

Mademba's fortunes changed dramatically with the appointment of Lieutenant-colonel Gallieni as supreme military commander for the 1886–1887 military campaign and with a change in Paris that supported increased military activity.[96] The political and military situation in the Upper River and in the Soudan had changed from 1884 when the French National Assembly pushed back against increased military expenditures: the

[94] États de Service de M. Mademba Sèye, commis principal colonial des PT faisant fonction de contrôleur du Service technique, May 3, 1888, Bafoulabe, ANOM Dossiers personnels (Mademba) 2862.

[95] Général Faidherbe, *Le Sénégal; La France dans l'Afrique occidentale* (Paris: Hachette, 1889), 474–475. This was the only reference to Mademba in Faidherbe's entire memoire.

[96] For background, see Marc Michel, *Gallieni* (Paris: Fayard, 1989); on the military conquest, see Méniaud, *Pionniers*, I, 275–307 and Kanya-Forstner, *The Conquest of the Western Sudan*.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

French had established a loose agreement with Samory regarding spheres of influence and Amadu had reasserted his authority over his brother in Nioro. In the meantime, however, Al Hajj Mamadu Lamine Drame, a Soninke Tijaniyya scholar, had resettled near Médine and began preaching and recruiting followers. His arrival in Médine in 1885 further enflamed the multiple and conflicting regional movements invoking Islam, reform, and resistance to the French. In January 1886, Mamadu Lamine led his forces into the Muslim state of Bundu, where he sacked villages and forced the Sy dynasty to flee. Mamadu Lamine then laid siege to the French fort of Bakel in April 1886. Forming a temporary alliance with forces in Futa opposed to Mamadu Lamine, Commandant Supérieur Frey pushed Mamadu Lamine's forces out of Bakel and into the Upper Gambia. Mamadu Lamine regrouped in the Upper Gambia and returned to the Bundu area the next year, where he again threatened French forts along the Upper River. When Gallieni was appointed supreme military commander in November 1886, he was instructed to subdue Mamadu Lamine, which he accomplished in the Spring 1887.[97] Mademba participated in the 1887 campaign against Mamadu Lamine. Battlefield victories regularly led to the division of the booty captured from the enemy, especially prominent was the division of Mamadu Lamine's wives, concubines, and slaves.[98] Gallieni seemed little bothered by this division of human booty.

> I did not know what to do with the seventeen women brought to me. I asked them, through Alassane [Gallieni's interpreter], if they would not marry my *tirailleurs*. We know how easy it is for native women in Senegambia to change their masters. These [women] came from all the points of the Soudan; they had been given to the marabout as soon as he arrived in the country. What does it matter to them to change their slavery? . . . Our blacks from Senegal admire success. Women do not escape this rule, and, in the end, our prisoners are perhaps very satisfied to pass in the hands of [our] brave soldiers. I ordered the women to stand in a line. I also ordered the seventeen *tirailleurs* who had most distinguished themselves in the campaign to come to attention. I then called number 1, who made his choice, then number 2, and so on, until the last tirailleur. There was then only one woman left, and naturally only the oldest and the ugliest was left. So it is in the midst of the laughter and the joy of the whole camp, gathered to enjoy this spectacle, that the last tirailleur was called, a beautiful and robust Bambara, and he took possession of his [new] wife.[99]

[97] Lieutenant-colonel Gallieni, *Deux campagnes au Soudan Français, 1886–88* (Paris: Hachette, 1891), 8–17; Méniaud, *Pionniers*, I, 288–293; Abdoulaye Bathily, "Mamadou Lamine Dramé et la Résistance antiimperialiste dans le Haut-Sénégal (1885–1887)," *Notes Africaines* 125 1970: 20–32; Robinson, *Chiefs and Clerics*, 145–149; Gomez, *Pragmatism*, 152–169.

[98] Gallieni, *Deux campagnes*, 79.

[99] Gallieni, *Deux campagnes*, 121–122; Bathily, "Mamadou Lamine," 27.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

During a similar event later in the campaign, Mademba likely chose Mariam Aidara, one of Mamadu Lamine's elite wives, and her two daughters for himself.[100] This was how Mademba began building both his prestige and his household.

As Gallieni pacified the Upper Senegal and turned eastward into the Soudan, he confronted a still rebellious Beledugu, the Umarian state at Segu, Samory along the Milo River, and Tieba in Sikasso. Gallieni described the French presence in the Soudan as a "thin line from Kayes to Bamako," supported by a few military posts and villagers fearful of their powerful neighboring African states.[101] Because of Mademba's effectiveness as head of the telegraph crew, in leading his men into a battle in 1883, and for his provision of intelligence whenever he could, Gallieni requested in 1886 that Mademba be seconded to the military command, even as he still pursued construction and repairs on the telegraph. The same year, Mademba was awarded the rank of "chevalier" in the Legion of Honor. Gallieni also pursued an aggressive policy of securing treaties with African chiefs willing to side with the French. Mademba certainly participated in several of these treaty missions through his role in Gallieni's Political Bureau, where Mademba served as interpreter.[102]

In moving ever closer into the center of the military command, Mademba sought more recognition for his dual work as director of telegraph construction and as a member of the Political Bureau. He requested a new uniform reflecting his rank, which in the civilian administrative service was parallel to that of a lieutenant. Mademba understood well how important uniforms were for commanding respect (see Figure 1.1).[103] As a career soldier, Gallieni also recognized the power of uniforms and supported Mademba's request for one.

> I strongly support Mr. Sèye Mademba's request to be named deputy chief of military telegraphy in the French Soudan. This rank will not change his salary, but it will give him the right to wear the uniform. As you well know, the uniform is necessary in our colony and in the Soudan in particular, for the prestige it offers our staff in the midst of the native population . . . I would add that this native, because of his deep knowledge

[100] Abdoul Drame, letter to Gouv.-gen., Saint Louis, Aug. 17, 1899, ANS-AOF 15 G 176.

[101] Gallieni, Rapport du Lt.-col. Gallieni, cmdt. sup. du Soudan Français sur la situation politique du Soudan Français à la fin de la campagne 1887–1888, May 10, 1888, Bafoulabe, ANS-AOF 1 D 92.

[102] Chef de Bataillon, Rapport sur le Colonne du Niger, [Nango], May 28, 1887, ANS-AOF 1 D 90. Mademba is also listed as an employee in the Post and Telegraph Department. This report includes Mademba under the heading of "European," which may reflect the ambiguities surrounding the status of the *originaires* of the Four Communes of Senegal holding rights of French citizenship.

[103] Osborn, "Circle of Iron."

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Figure 1.1 Mademba and his telegraph construction crew, ca. 1880s.
(Source: Borgnis-Desbordes Collection, Bibliothèque nationale de France: Société de Géographie, with permission)

> of the countries [and people] of the Soudan has often been employed by me in several very important political missions, especially since the death of my loyal interpreter, Alassane Dia. Without M. Mademba's assistance, I would have faced significant difficulties from a political point of view.[104]

Mademba's rise to the inner circle of the military command was facilitated by the death of Gallieni's trusted interpreter Alassane Dia in February 1887. Alassane had been Gallieni's guide and interpreter since his mission to Segu in 1880.[105] In his eulogy, Gallieni stated that "the life of this valiant servant can be captured in a few words: absolute devotion to the French cause, courage beyond proof, and pushed often towards heroism. For this native, his adapted

[104] Gallieni, letter to gouv. Sén., Kayes, May 12, 1887, ANOM Sénégal et dépendances XII-117. See also Mademba's letter requesting this uniform, Mademba, letter to Gallieni, Kayes, May 10, 1887, ANOM Sénégal et dépendances XII-117.

[105] Aristide Auguste François Pérignon, *Haut-Sénégal et Moyen-Niger: Kita et Ségou* (Paris: J. Andre, 1901), 122.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

country was a veritable cult . . . Alassane gave blind devotion to all the French officers who used his services."[106] Gallieni promoted Mademba as chargé des affaires in his Political Bureau and nominated him for the Legion's "Cross of Cambodia."[107]

It is not clear what the title chargé des affaires meant in the context of the tenuous French presence in the Soudan. Normally used to refer to an official in a diplomatic role, Mademba's portfolio was much larger. Gallieni sent Mademba on missions to outlying villages and regions that were simultaneously diplomatic and practical. Villages that accepted French protection were in turn obliged to provide millet and rice to feed the French column and to supply labor to build the newest forts. When persuasion did not work, Gallieni dispatched a section of *tirailleurs* under the command of Under-lieutenant Saba Maram to help Mademba with these requisitions. Requisitions were a central part of the meaning of French protection.[108]

Indeed, Gallieni described Mademba as "charged with the political affairs of the column" and instructed Mademba to assist a troop of *tirailleurs* to scout the region and secure supplies of rice and millet for the colonial army. Gallieni eventually appointed Mademba director of his Political Bureau, which was charged with coordinating the information received from various informants and military sources and negotiating with African chiefs and notables.[109] In his memoire of his appointment as supreme military conmmander, Gallieni recalled that at a reception for him in Kayes in November 1887, chiefs of surrounding villages, African officers of the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais*, "outfitted in their splendid oriental uniforms," and the interpreters attached to the column attended. "They were presented to me by Mademba Sèye, the head of the political bureau."[110] Mademba's request for a military uniform was ultimately denied because he was not a formal member of the military telegraph service. After significant back and forth, the Ministry of Navy eventually recognized the power of uniforms and authorized Mademba to wear a newly designed uniform of the civilian telegraph service.[111]

[106] Gallieni, Paroles pronouncées sur la tombe de l'interprète Alassane Dia, Kayes, Feb. 14, 1887, ANS-AOF 15 G 29.

[107] Le chef du 4ème Bureau, letter to gouv. Sén., Paris, Oct. 4, 1886; gouv. Sén., letter to min. Marine, Saint Louis, Oct. 7, 1887; Gallieni, letter to sous-sec d'État, au bord du "Sénégal," Oct. 21, 1887, ANOM Dossiers personnels (Mademba) 2862.

[108] Order #58, Gallieni to Mademba, Kita, Jan. 10, 1888, ANS-AOF 1 D 93.

[109] Cuttier, *Portrait du colonialisme triumphant*, 272–273.

[110] Gallieni, *Deux campagnes*, 326–327.

[111] Arrêt no. 258, 5ème bureau, Paris, Sept. 9, 1887, ANOM Sénégal et dépendances XII-117. See also le chef de la 2ème division, rapport au sous sec d'État, Paris, Sept. 9, 1887, ANOM Sénégal et dépendances XII-117.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

During this period, Mademba increasingly came into conflict with the director of the civilian telegraph service in which Mademba was still employed. Gallieni weighed into this conflict with strong support for Mademba and accused M. Cartier, the new director of the telegraph service, of "bad will" toward Mademba, whom he accused of a poor work ethic and lack of attention to his tasks. Gallieni's support for Mademba represented the flip side of the bargains of collaboration, in that French patrons protected their loyal African servants.[112] Gallieni also requested that Mademba receive a salary supplement of 500 francs for his devotion and service.[113]

At the end of the 1887–1888 military campaign, Gallieni stated in self-satisfied terms that the "political situation in the French Soudan is actually very good. There is no obvious danger on the horizon." But he warned that the interior of French West Africa remained a "land of surprises" and only the foresight and perseverance of the military chief can keep small problems from developing into major challenges. Gallieni was pleased that his Gambia column had routed Mamadou Lamine and his followers. Mamadou Lamine and his son were executed. The villages of the Upper Senegal that Mamadou Lamine had burned have been rebuilt and commerce has returned to the region. Nonetheless, Gallieni urged continued vigilance against the "false prophets" (Amadu, Samory, and Aguibu), whose propaganda may still sway chiefs and populations who have not fully supported the French presence.[114] In 1888, Gallieni returned to France and passed on both the military command and Mademba to Lieutenant-colonel Archinard.

In 1888, after nearly two decades in the French colonial telegraph service, Mademba Sèye had demonstrated his deep commitment to France and to France's mission in West Africa. He had also demonstrated through his technical skills and his political acumen that France's promotion of his education, his employment, and his training had amply returned their investment. Mademba had clearly become a core member of the "moral community" of intermediaries that had become so essential to the working of late nineteenth–century empire. Mademba had proven that he was able to manage people as well as technology. As Mademba moved closer to the inner circle of

112 Letter, Gallieni to cmdt., Kayes, Boungourou, Jan. 22, 1887, ANM J 1. See also Gallieni's eulogy for the interpreter Alassane Dia, Gallieni, Paroles prononcées sur la tombe de l'interprète Alassane Dia, Kayes, Feb. 14, 1887, ANS-AOF 15 G 29 and Gallieni's remarks on Alassane Dia in his *Deux campagnes*, 28, 147–148.

113 Administration des colonies, 3ème bureau, rapport au sous sec d'Ètat, Paris, July 26, 1888, ANOM Dossiers personnels (Mademba) 2862.

114 Gallieni, Rapport du cmdt. sup. du Soudan Français sur la situation politique du Soudan Français à la fin de la campagne 1887–1888, Bafoulabe, May 10, 1888, ANS-AOF 1 D 92.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

political and military decision-making, he proved yet again that he understood how to command authority when needed and how to defer to authority as well. These two sides – commanding authority and deferring to authority – were to become even more pronounced as Mademba entered the more aggressive phase of conquest with the appointment of Lieutenant-colonel Louis Archinard as supreme military commander in 1888.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106849.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press