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SLAVE EMANCIPATION, TRANS-LOCAL SOCIAL PROCESSES AND THE SPREAD OF ISLAM IN FRENCH COLONIAL BUGUNI (SOUTHERN MALI), 1893–1914*

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ABSTRACT: This article explores the relationship between slave emancipation and the spread of Islam in early colonial French Buguni (southern Mali). It examines the reconstitution of village communities in the wake of violence and enslavement during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and documents the ways in which widespread mobility and trans-local social processes fostered the emergence of new forms of religious identification and practice. It demonstrates that many of the region's first Muslims were returning slaves whose conversion was a cultural consequence of slavery. Oral accounts of village histories of Islam are used in reconstructing a history that has left few traces in the archival record.

KEY WORDS: Mali, slavery abolition, Islam, religion.

ON the edge of the village of Tenemakana, there is a sacred site where Muslim villagers perform prayers, leave gifts and make sacrifices.[1] It is the tomb of Tumani Danyoko, the man credited with first introducing Islamic prayer into the village.[2] Long before, Tumani had been a slave in a Muslim household in Bouaké (northern Ivory Coast), where he came of age in a world punctuated by the daily rhythms of Islamic culture. In time, he learned the basic Muslim prayers and became imbued with new values and beliefs. Later, in the dramatic years of emancipation and exodus, Tumani left his master and walked home to his village located in the French colonial district of

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[1] Tenemakana is located in the commune of Kolondieba. During the colonial period it was in the canton of Fulala, district (*cercle*) of Buguni, *Haut-Sénégal Niger* – later French Sudan (*Soudan Français*).

[2] This opening narrative is based on the oral testimonies of Tumani Danyoko's grandson, Yacouba Danyoko, Tenemakana 21–3 June, 15–20 July and 10 Oct. 2002, and the current *imam* of Tenemakana, Youssouf Coulibaly 15–17 May 2002. The grandfather and father of Youssouf Coulibaly also came back from slavery converted to Islam. Youssouf was born around 1920 and became the second *imam* of Tenemakana in 1959 after the death of Mamadou Danyoko (the son of Tumani, who was the first in the village to attend Quranic school).

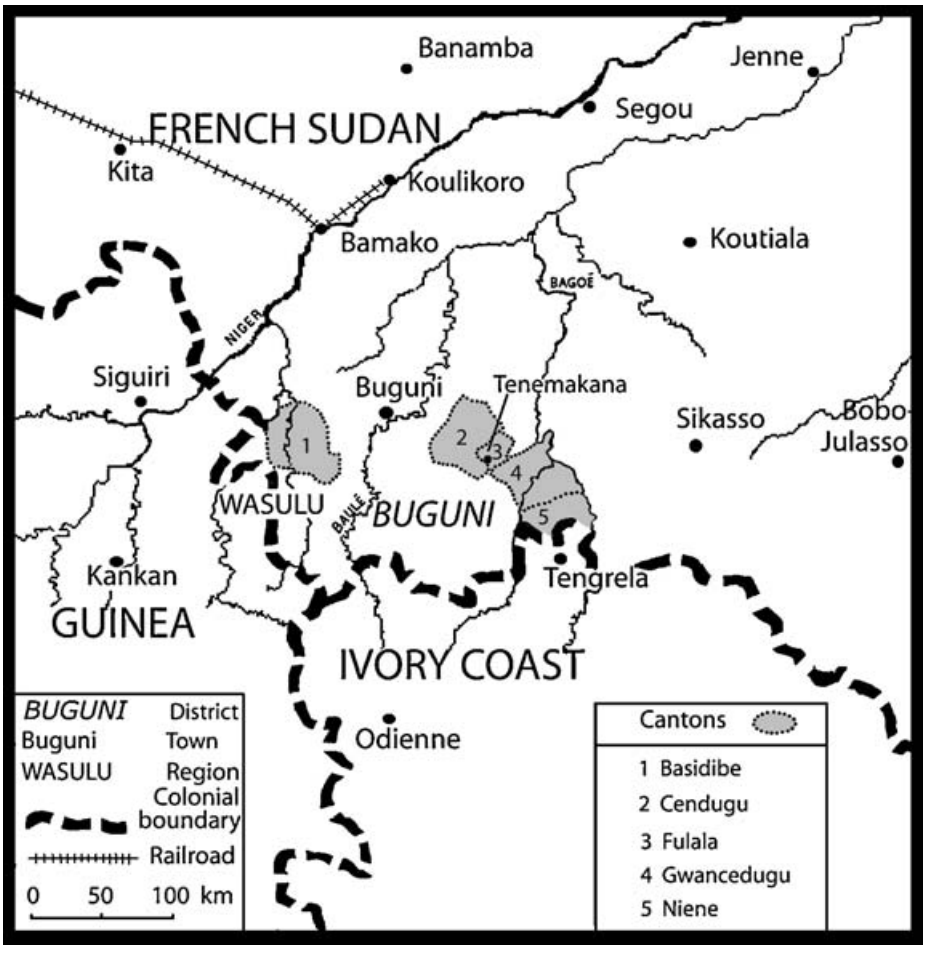

Fig. 1. Southern French Sudan.

Buguni, carrying with him his new Muslim faith. The *imam* of Tenemakana explained: 'Tumani had been a slave in Bouaké, and he came back converted to Islam. It was from down there that he brought back Islam to here'.[3]

The story of Tumani, and the village history that it represents, resonates deeply with many other village and family histories of Islam throughout southern Mali.[4] Building on the works of historians of the end of slavery in Africa, this article explores the relationship between slave emancipation and religious change.[5] The case of Buguni is instructive because of the large

[3] Interview, Youssouf Coulibaly, Tenemakana, 16 May 2002.

[4] Although Tumani was credited with introducing Islamic prayer into Tenemakana, there were actually three others who came back from slavery after him who had converted to Islam.

[5] M. Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa* (Cambridge, 1998); R. Roberts, 'The end of slavery in the French Soudan, 1905–1914', in S. Miers and R. Roberts (eds.), *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Madison, 1988); R. Roberts, *The State and the Economy in the Middle Niger Valley, 1700–1914* (Stanford, 1986); and R. Roberts

number of slaves who returned to this region over the course of a decade.[6] Owing to the size of this social group, freed slaves were important agents in the transfer of Islamic practices to decentralized societies in the district of Buguni.[7] This movement of people, which occurred as village localities were reconstituting themselves in the wake of widespread violence, terror and population displacement, created new openings in religious practices and structures. It fostered emerging trans-local forms of religious identification, resulting in multiple and overlapping networks.

Islam has a long and intertwined history with slavery in West Africa.[8] However, few scholars have examined the linkage between slave emancipation and the dissemination of Islamic practices.[9] Recently, James Searing has explored this relationship, but from a different angle. Emphasizing what might be termed the 'religion of social liberation' thesis of Islamization, Searing demonstrates how Murid Islam brought with it a liberating ideology of equality, which spurred slaves to flee slave-owning Wolof aristocrats for new Muslim communities.[10] In contrast, this article highlights slave converts who migrated away from Muslim communities in large numbers, contributing to a geographic expansion of Islam. In exploring this connection between emancipation and Islam, this article addresses two bodies of literature. First, it contributes a case study to the debate on the end of slavery by examining religious change tied to slave mobility. Research on slave emancipation in Africa has focused on the transition from slave labor to free wage labor, examining the complex interplay between metropolitan interests and ideologies and the initiatives of local elites and slaves.[11] More recently, scholars

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and M. Klein, 'The Banamba slave exodus of 1905 and the decline of slavery in the Western Sudan', *Journal of African History*, 21 (1980), 375–94.

[6] Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, 172; Roberts, 'The end of slavery'.

[7] On decentralized societies, see R. Baum, *Shrines of the Slave Trade: Diola Religion and Society in Precolonial Senegal* (Oxford, 1999); J. Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforest* (Madison, 1990); R. Harms, *Games against Nature: An Eco-Cultural History of the Nunu of Equatorial Africa* (Cambridge, 1987); W. Hawthorne, *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves: Transformations along the Guinea-Bissua Coast, 1400–1900* (Portsmouth, 2002); J. Searing, '"No kings, no lords, no slaves": ethnicity and religion among the Sereer-Safen of Western Bawol, 1700–1914', *Journal of African History*, 43 (2002), 407–30; and the articles on 'Decentralized societies and the slave trade', in *Journal of African History*, 42 (2001), 1–65.

[8] See, for example, J. R. Willis (ed.), *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa: Islam and the Ideology of Enslavement* (London, 1985); and H. Fisher, *Slavery in the History of Muslim Black Africa* (London, 2001).

[9] J. Searing, '*God Alone is King*': *Islam and Emancipation in Senegal: The Wolof Kingdoms of Kajoor and Bawol, 1859–1914* (Portsmouth, 2002). Martin Klein alludes to conversion at the end of slavery in *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, 229. Similarly, Humphrey Fisher has suggested that freed slaves 'may have carried the seeds of Islam with them, home to fields hitherto unsown'. Fisher, *Slavery*, 91.

[10] Searing, *God Alone*. Richard Eaton has discussed this 'social liberation' thesis in explaining Islamization processes in India. See *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204–1760* (Berkeley, 1993), 113–34.

[11] See for example F. Cooper, *From Slaves to Squatters: Plantation Labor and Agriculture in Zanzibar and Coastal Kenya, 1890–1925* (New Haven, 1980); M. Klein (ed.), *Breaking the Chains: Slavery, Bondage, and Emancipation in Modern Africa and Asia* (Madison, 1993); Miers and Roberts, *The End of Slavery*; and P. E. Lovejoy and

have sought to reframe the analysis of emancipation processes, expanding the temporal boundaries and incorporating questions of race and citizenship.[12] This article similarly strives to widen the scope of historical change in post-emancipation societies by exploring the cultural and religious effects of emancipation in the district of Buguni.[13] The second body of literature is recent research on Islam in French West Africa. Most of this work has focused on the colonial state's relationship with Muslim leaders and institutions, implicitly linking conversion processes to Muslim traders, *marabouts* (Muslim holy men) notables and Muslim states.[14] Though this work has contributed important insights into the nature of France's policies towards Islam, it has left popular dimensions of religious change largely unexplored, while isolating Islam from 'non-Muslim' religions.[15] This article strives to provide an account of popular religious change among ordinary people, examining village histories of Islam, and the links between Islam and local ('non-Muslim') religious practices and structures.[16] It is based on fieldwork in the former colonial canton of Fulala, which serves as the main case study, and draws on comparative case study material from surrounding cantons – Céndugu, Gwancédugu and Niéné – and the region of Wasulu.

J. S. Hogendorn, *Slow Death for Slavery: The Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria, 1897–1936* (Cambridge, 1993).

[12] See F. Cooper, T. C. Holt and R. J. Scott, *Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Post-Emancipation Societies* (Chapel Hill, 2000).

[13] Recently, Kristin Mann incited historians to push beyond the accomplishments in the field over the past twenty-five years: 'Ideas, information, and movements circulated not only among members of the ruling classes, but also among the ruled. This phenomenon too cries out for more research'. See 'Ending slavery/reforging freedom: the problem of emancipation in western culture: a review essay', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 45 (2003), 29–40.

[14] See D. Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation: Muslim Societies and French Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880–1920* (Ohio, 2000); C. Harrison, *France and Islam in West Africa, 1860–1960* (Cambridge, 1988); D. Robinson and J. L. Triaud (eds.), *Le temps des Marabouts: itinéraires et stratégies islamiques en Afrique occidentale française* (Paris, 1997); and L. Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge: Religion, Power, and Schooling in a West African Muslim Society* (Bloomington, 2001). There are not many studies of conversion to Islam in West Africa, and most attribute Islamization to elites and states. See, for example, N. Levtzion (ed.), *Conversion to Islam* (New York, 1979), and in particular the introduction by N. Levtzion, 'Toward a comparative study of Islamization', 1–23, and his chapter, 'Patterns of Islamization in West Africa', 207–17.

[15] Recent works, however, have begun to address these particular lacunae: J. Searing, 'Conversion to Islam: military recruitment and generational conflict in a Sereer-Safèn village (Bandia), 1920–38', *Journal of African History*, 44 (2003), 73–94; G. Mann, 'Fetishizing religion: Allah Koura and French "Islamic policy" in late colonial French Soudan (Mali)', *Journal of African History*, 44 (2003), 263–82; R. Launay and B. F. Soares, 'The formation of an "Islamic sphere" in French colonial West Africa', *Economy and Society*, 28 (1999), 497–519; and D. Jonckers, 'Le temps de prier est venu: Islamisation et pluralité religieuse dans le sud du Mali', *Journal des Africanistes*, 68 (1998), 21–45.

[16] *Bamanaya* is the term used by people in southern Mali for religious practices that are non-Muslim. Colonial officials generally referred to these religious practices as 'fetishism'. However, I will retain *bamanaya* as a covering term for a wide range of indigenous religious practices and beliefs.

Since most of the villages discussed in this article were not nominally 'Muslim' until after the Second World War, the earlier religious changes were often 'invisible'.[17] For most of my informants, 'the coming of Islam' was read retrospectively: they thought about 'Islam' today and then tried to remember when things started looking like they do now. For example, an informant would cite the moment when, suddenly, it was socially acceptable to pray publicly, or when the village mosque was built. Therefore, the beginnings of Islamic prayer in a village were sometimes obscured by normative declarations. Nevertheless, in families of Muslim religious specialists (*imam*s or *marabouts*), or those whose ancestors were among the first Muslims in their village, testimonies contained important evidence of early histories of Islam. Therefore, the moment when the breach occurred – the mosque was constructed – is not the focus of this article. Rather, I strive to present the history of Islam in a context in which Muslims could rarely pray openly, and were hence 'invisible' to the rest of the village, and to the colonial state. This is partly a story, then, about the clandestine build-ups behind the lines.

BACKGROUND: POPULATION MOBILITY IN THE DISTRICT OF BUGUNI, 1893–1914

The late nineteenth century was a dark era for the people of southern Mali as paroxysms of violence and terror swept across the land. The region was left in ruins, depopulated and devastated.[18] Warfare and enslavement had been extensive throughout southern Mali for much of the second half of the nineteenth century, such that by the 1880s, the region had become the 'main supplier for the slave markets' of the Western Sudan.[19] According to oral traditions and the accounts of French explorers, large village confederations and 'states' (*kafow*) in Wasulu waged internecine warfare, resulting in enslavement and pillaging. In more decentralized societies, there were inter-village skirmishes and widespread kidnapping.[20] Thus, by the time the warrior state of Samori Touré invaded southern Mali in 1882, the region had been fragmented politically.[21] Equipped with modern European rifles and

[17] On 'invisible histories', see S. Feierman, 'Colonizers, scholars, and the creation of invisible histories', in V. Bonnell and L. Hunt (eds.), *Beyond the Cultural Turn* (Berkeley, 1999), 182–216.

[18] On this history, see Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, 108–25; L. G. Binger, *Du Niger au Golfe de Guinée par le pays du Kong et de Mossi, 1887–1889* (Paris, 1892), 60–130; and Y. Person, *Samori: une révolution Dyula* (3 vols.) (Paris, 1968–75), 489–520 and 1050–86.

[19] J. Gallieni, *Voyage au Soudan Français, Haut-Niger et Pays de Ségou, 1879–1881* (Paris, 1885), 598; and also M. Park, *Travels into the Interior Districts of Africa* (London, 1816).

[20] Gallieni, *Voyage au Soudan Français*, 597–99; Binger, *Du Niger*; Interviews, Doulaye Kone, Kolondieba, 19 Nov. 2002; Drissa Diallo, N'Golobala, 18–20 May 2002; Bangali Kone, Bunjoba, 19 June 2002; Nama Dembele, Kolondieba, 20 July 2002; Nouhou Diakite, Kologo, 5 Oct. 2002; Moussa Sumoaro, Kolondieba, 20 Nov. 2002; Youssouf Sidibe, Koniba-Barila, 27 Mar. 2002; Jan-Jan Sidibé, Balanfina, 2 Apr. 2002; Imam Sidibé, Balanfina, 3 Apr. 2002; and J. L. Amselle, *Mestizo Logics: Anthropology of Identity in Africa and Elsewhere* (Stanford, 1998), 138–9. Bamanankan note: an added '*w*' denotes plural, i.e. *kafo* ('canton' or 'state') becomes *kafow*.

[21] Person, *Samori*, 1, 489.

a large cavalry force, the Samorian army was the most potent engine of destruction and death that the region had ever seen. Killing and enslavement were carried out on an unprecedented scale. By the 1890s, thousands of refugees had fled in every direction, and many more people had been captured and sold into slavery, or massacred.[22]

In 1893, French colonialism arrived in Buguni as a 'liberating' force; the colonial military defeated hated oppressors, established security and slowly facilitated the return of refugees. The era of refugee return occurred over the course of a decade, from roughly 1893 to 1905, staggered through time, fluctuating seasonally and contingent on the circumstances in the multiple locations of refugee exile and homeland.[23] By 1894, as the sphere of French occupation expanded outward from the post at Buguni town, refugees streamed back into the district.[24] However, the region was still rife with enslavement and kidnapping during the first five years of colonial rule; between 1893 and 1898, Samori and Babemba Traoré of Kénédugu contended for hegemony in the southeastern quadrant of the district while pillaging for slaves.[25] Because the French had effectively blocked Samori's access to markets to the north, slaves captured in battle were sent south. During this period Samori was supplying Baoulé slave traders in Ivory Coast with slaves on 'a massive scale'.[26] In 1898, the entire district of Buguni was finally absorbed by French rule: Babemba Traoré was defeated, Samori was captured and more refugees flowed into the district from the south and east.[27]

Years earlier, in 1894, the new governor of the French Sudan, Albert Grodet, issued decrees prohibiting the slave trade. As the decrees were posted throughout the colony, slaves began fleeing their masters.[28] Most of the slaves returning to the district of Buguni at this time actually were coming from the Ivory Coast. According to Timothy Weiskel, as early as 1898, thousands of slaves were leaving their masters throughout northern Ivory Coast.[29] Further to the north, on a smaller scale, runaway slaves fled localities in the Sahel and along the Niger River to the district of Buguni between 1895 and 1905.[30] Then, in March of 1905, a mass slave exodus began

[22] Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, 108–25; Binger, *Du Niger*, 60–130; and Person, *Samori*, 1050–86.

[23] Bulletin Politique, May 1896, Rapport Politique du cercle de Bougouni, *Archives Nationales du Mali* (ANM), *Fonds anciens* (FA) I E 27.

[24] Rapport Politique, May 2nd trim 1894, ANM (FA) I E 27.

[25] Rapport Politique, June 1895, ANM (FA) I E 27.

[26] T. Weiskel, *French Colonial Rule and the Baoulé Peoples: Resistance and Collaboration, 1889–1911* (Oxford, 1980), 87.

[27] Rapport Politique, May 1898, ANM (FA) I E 27.

[28] Le Capitaine Barbécot, Commandant du Cercle de Bougouni à le Gov. du Soudan, Kayes, Mars, 1894, Rapport Politique, ANM (FA) I E 27; Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, 111–13; Roberts, 'The end of slavery', 285–6.

[29] See T. Weiskel, 'Labor in the emergent periphery: from slavery to migrant labor among the Baoulé peoples, 1880–1925', in W. Goldfrank (ed.), *The World-System of Capitalism: Past and Present* (Beverly Hills, 1979); and Weiskel, *French Colonial Rule*, 99–141.

[30] Rapport Politique, Bamako, Jan. 1904, and Rapport Politique, Haut-Sénégal-Niger (HSN), August 1904, *Archives Nationales du Sénégal* (ANS), and *Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer*, Aix-en-Province (CAOM) 2 G 4 – 16.

from the region of Banamba, followed by the abolition decree of 1905. During 1906–8, the exodus spread throughout the colony, touching the important slave-holding districts of the Sahel.[31] The exodus lasted a decade, between 1905 and 1914, with as many as 500,000 slaves leaving their masters.[32]

Census numbers from the district of Buguni, though often inaccurate (i.e. undercounted), convey at least a sense of the scale of things. In 1896, the overall population of Buguni was measured at 13,814.[33] By 1900, the population had skyrocketed to 90,096.[34] During the period of the slave exodus, the population increased from 95,592 in 1905 to 162,343 in 1913.[35] Overall, therefore, during the twenty-year period, 1893–1913, the population grew from 13,814 to 162,343. Within this larger context, the canton of Fulala grew from 980 people in 1900 to 2,655 in 1912.[36] This increase was attributed to 'slaves, taken during the wars of Samori, returning to their country of origin'.[37]

Return migration also occurred on a more local level beginning in 1907. As freed slaves returned to their villages from distant localities, they carried with them the news that slavery had been abolished. This set off a chain reaction of local liberation movements in the district of Buguni

[31] Rapport Politique, HSN, 1st trim, 2nd trim and 3rd trim, 1908, ANS (CAOM) 2 G 8 – 1; Rapport Politique, Rapport d'ensemble, ANS (CAOM) HSN 2 G 9 – 11; Roberts, 'The end of slavery', 288–303; and, on the Banamba exodus, Roberts and Klein, 'The Banamba slave exodus'.

[32] Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, 170–3.

[33] Bulletin Politique du cercle de Bougouni, May 1896, Rapport Politique, ANM (FA) I E 27. This number, however, was based on incomplete coverage of the district – many cantons had not yet been absorbed into the 'zone of occupation', as colonial officials called it. Generally, given the incompleteness of the census tours, numbers on return migrations are probably much greater than those recorded. In addition to the flaws in counting people in transit between districts, errors stemmed from African resistance to the census in the forms of hiding and dissimulating in the villages after they had resettled. For a brief statement on the colonial census and religious identities, see my 'Quantifying conversion: a note on the colonial census and religious change in postwar Southern Mali', *History in Africa*, 29 (2002), 381–92; Roberts, 'The end of slavery', 289–94.

[34] Rapport Politique Annuel, 1900, ANM (FA) I E 27.

[35] Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, 171; L'administrateur en chef des colonies, J. B. Foussagrives, inspecteur des affaires administratives à Monsieur Lt. Gouverneur de Haut-Sénégal et Niger à Bamako, Avril 1910, ANM (FA) I E 27.

[36] Although the population of Fulala grew rapidly during the years of emancipation, according to the oral record, many of the first slaves to return to Fulala actually came back from Ivory Coast before the abolition decree. They were later followed by slaves returning from regions to the north, in places like Banamba and Segou. Interviews discussing slavery and emancipation (all in 2002, unless otherwise noted): Broulaye Doumbia, Tenemakana, 13–21 May and 6 Oct.; Doulaye Kone, Kolondieba, 19 Nov.; Drissa Diallo, N'Golobala, 18–20 May and 14–17 July; Hawa Diallo, Tenemakana, 13 May; Youssouf Coulibaly, Tenemakana, 15 May; Bourama Dembele, Tenemakana, 13–14 June; Zoumana Kone, Tienaga, 15 June; Bourama Coulibaly, Tenemakana, 18 June; Bangali Kone, Bunjoba, 19 June; Nama Dembele, Kolondieba, 20 July; Lamine Diakité, Yanfolila (Nénéjana), 14 Apr.; Nouhou Diakite, Kologo, 5 Oct.; Adama Diallo, Niamala, 7 Oct.; Souleyman Sidibe and Amadou Sidibe, Solona, 10 Apr.; Moussa Sumoaro, Kolondieba, 20 Nov.; Youssouf Sidibe, Koniba-Barila, 27 Mar.; Jan-Jan Sidibé, Balla Kouyate, Sekou Diakite, Imam Sidibé, Balanfina, 2–3 Apr.

[37] Rapport de tournée de cantons de Zana, Molodiana, Foulala (Avril, 1912), Rapport Politique, ANM (FA) I E 28.

itself.[38] A further local dimension of population movement entailed the migration of freed slaves away from population centers to settle on new land. In the aftermath of slavery, there was an expansion of village agrarian frontiers as returning slaves founded new satellite villages (Bamanankan: *sokuraw*) and farming hamlets.[39] Formerly, villages had maintained their fields very close to the village, with all of the inhabitants residing within the village's protective mud walls to defend against the attacks of slave-raiders.[40] However, owing to the security established by French rule, people were able to venture out in smaller groups. A colonial observer noted:

> A large number of returned refugees or freed slaves, having returned to their villages of origin, have shown a marked tendency to abandon the large centers and to settle themselves, permanently, at noticeable distance from the villages, in the middle of the fields in which they farm.[41]

This pattern of resettlement allowed returning slaves to reintegrate on their own terms, and, in some cases, to practice their new Muslim faith away from the constraints of the village community.[42] According to oral accounts, most people were lured to the new villages by the prospects of fertile and open land, greater independence, or to evade malevolent spirits.[43] For example, in Tumani's village, Tenemakana, some villagers decided to relocate to their new village (*sokura*) after several years of bad harvests and untimely deaths, resulting in a constant need to make sacrifices. In recounting this resettlement, one informant explained: 'because of the wickedness of this site of settlement, in the old ruins, there was bad luck. This all meant sacrifices, sacrifices to the spirits'.[44]

Colonial administrators tended to view this widespread change as a sign of disintegration, anarchy and resistance to authority.[45] Indeed, as more people returned to their villages during 1905–14, the balance of power shifted rather quickly. In 1910, one colonial official observed: 'now the rivalries of the families begin, each aspires to impose one of its family members on the others as the choice to fill the functions of chief'.[46] In the village of Tenemakana, conflicts centered on the rivalry between the Danyoko and Dembele families. Certain members of the Danyoko family were among the earliest Muslim converts, while a member of the Dembele family was traditionally the *kòmòtigi* (head of the *kòmò* power association).[47] Thus, local struggles along lineage lines (*fadenkélé*) over the position of chief may have been partly

[38] Rapport Politique du cercle de Bougouni, Jan. 1907, ANM (FA) I E 28.
[39] Interview, Lamine Diakité, Yanfolila (Nénéjana), 14 Apr. 2002.
[40] Interview, Drissa Diallo, N'Golobala, 18–20 May 2002; M. Klein, 'The slave trade and decentralized societies', *Journal of African History*, 42 (2001), 49–65.
[41] Rapport sur l'état social des indigènes du cercle de Bougouni (au sujet de la création des sociétes indigènes de prévoyance), 20 Oct. 1910, Rapport Politique, ANM (FA) I E 28.
[42] Interviews, Drissa Diallo, N'Golobala, 14–17 July 2002; Broulaye Doumbia, Tenemakana, 13–14 May and 6 Oct. 2002.
[43] Interview, Lamine Diakité, Yanfolila (Nénéjana), 14 Apr. 2002.
[44] Interview, Broulaye Doumbia, Tenemakana, 6 Oct. 2002.
[45] Rapport Politique, 1911, ANM (FA) I E 28.
[46] Rapport Politique, fin d'année 1910, ANM (FA) I E 28.
[47] Interviews, Bourama Dembele, Tenemakana, 13–14 June 2002; Broulaye Doumbia, Tenemakana, 6 Oct. 2002.

based in religious difference. Evidence suggests that the few Muslims who were chiefs during the early colonial period sometimes drew on the power of the colonial state to suppress *bamana* religious authorities and activities.[48] Further research, however, remains to be done on the linkages between religious change and chieftaincy disputes.

BAMANAYA, TRANS-LOCALITY AND THE RECONSTITUTION OF RELIGIOUS LIFE, 1893–1905

The villages into which returning slaves introduced Islamic prayer were organized around practices common to *bamanaya*, i.e. 'non-Muslim' local religions, which included: initiation groups (Bamanankan: *jow*), power associations (*kɔ̀mɔ̀w*), family and village-level ancestor sites (*subaw*), village protective spirit sites (*dassiriw*) and diverse power objects (*jow*). Through participation in these groups, engaging in the ritual practices associated with the different sacred sites and power objects, and going through the normal rites of passage, villagers became local citizens.[49] Naming ceremonies, circumcision, scarification and ritual acquisition of esoteric forms of knowledge were all ways in which the village locality was inscribed into the minds and on to the bodies of villagers. Conversely, through the demarcation of fields, the clearing of village and inter-village paths, the building of huts, the burying of the dead, the designation of sacred sites and the ritual domestication of the land, villagers inscribed themselves into the locality spatially.[50]

During the early colonial period, reconstitution of the religious locality was a cultural process that proceeded with profound adjustments and accretions following years of violence, exile and reshuffling of power relations. The mass dispersal and return of refugees and freed slaves had resulted in widespread social mixing that had profound effects on religious practices, and ethnic and territorial boundaries. Formerly, as one informant explained, 'each region or each ethnicity (*siya*) had its tribal scars (*fɔ̀nw*), and the people were recognized by their scars'.[51] However, as a result of the wars of Samori, and the years of exile, scarification as an identity marker lost its meaning. Furthermore, 'people from different regions were forced to mix with those of other regions'.[52] The result was a breakdown of local particularities; older distinctions, signified by language, family clan names (*jamuw*), clan taboos (*tanaw*), inter-lineage pacts (*sénankuyaw*) and other symbols of difference, often representing ecological and geographical boundaries, were eroded

[48] Interview, Drissa Diallo, N'Golobala, 17 July 2002; Rapport Politique, Jan. 1905, ANM (FA) I E 27.

[49] Interview, Yacouba Danyoko, Tenemakana, 21–3 June 2002. Much of this was clarified during my discussions with Sekou Camara, who translated many of my interview tapes. See also, however, P. R. McNaughton, *The Mande Blacksmiths: Knowledge, Power, and Art in West Africa* (Bloomington, 1988).

[50] Interview, Broulaye Doumbia, Tenemakana, 6 Oct. 2002.

[51] Interview, Doulaye Kone, Kolondieba, 19 Nov. 2002. On ethnicity, see Amselle, *Mestizo Logics*, 43–57; and M. Klein, 'Ethnic pluralism and homogeneity in the Western Sudan: Saalum, Segou and Wasulu', *Mande Studies*, 1 (1999), 109–24.

[52] Interview, Drissa Diallo, N'Golobala, 18 May 2002.

away.[53] Furthermore, terror and displacement produced more general, but abrupt, discontinuities in consciousness.

In most villages, the first people to return were refugees who survived during the early years by hunting, fishing and gathering wild fruits, roots and plants. After years of absence, ruined villages and their fields were overgrown with bush and populated by wild animals, requiring men to clear land and wrest control from the bush through hunting.[54] One man explained: 'the people were forced to be hunters because there were too many wild animals that destroyed the fields and killed people here in the village'.[55] Thus, with the region awash in rifles following the wars of Samori, and the need for security and food, more people hunted and participated in local hunters' associations (*donso tonzv*), which were open to all men, and from which status was achieved through skill and merit.[56] Returning refugees also engaged in strenuous ritual work as they sought to preserve 'traditional' *bamana* practices. As one elder in Wasulu explained:

> These people were not big innovators. They wanted to simply preserve their traditional values that they had been forced to leave behind them … When the people came back, they came back to reclaim their customary practices, they did not want to modify them. They maintained the ancient practices passed down by their fathers. They did not abandon them.[57]

Often, former sacred sites had been destroyed and power objects lost. As a result, returning refugees introduced new power objects that they carried with them from the localities where they had found refuge. For example, refugees returning from Maàlé (Ivory Coast) in 1894 reintroduced *kɔ̀mɔ̀* power objects into the village of Tenemakana.[58] Broadly, while the region had been fragmented socially and culturally, people were free to practice their *bamanaya*. Following years of violent suppression of 'non-Muslim' religious practices under Samorian rule, there was a resurgence of *bamanaya*.[59] *Imam* Drissa Diallo summed up:

> At the end of conquest, the people regrouped themselves and as a result *bamanaya* was practiced freely among the populations according to each person's convictions. Those who had been forced by Samori to convert and abandon their power objects (*jow*) readopted them and venerated their *jow* as they had before.[60]

Furthermore, villagers were now free to travel without exposing themselves to danger, gaining access to power objects, renowned sorcerers and healers,

[53] Interview, Bakary Diarra, Kolondieba, 27 July 2002. For more on '*jamu*' switching, see Amselle, *Mestizo Logics*, 52–4; G. Mann, 'What's in an alias? Family names, individual histories, and historical method in the Western Sudan', *History in Africa*, 29 (2002), 309–20.

[54] Interviews, Youssouf Sidibe, Koniba-Barila, 27 Mar. 2002, Broulaye Doumbia, Tenemakana, 6 Oct. 2002; Doulaye Kone, Kolondieba, 19 Nov. 2002; Youssouf Coulibaly, Tenemakana, 15 May 2002.

[55] Interview, Jan-Jan Sidibe, Balafina, 2–3 Apr. 2002. [56] *Ibid*. [57] *Ibid*.

[58] Interview, Broulaye Doumbia, Tenemakana, 6 Oct. 2002.

[59] Maurice Delafosse, similarly, observed that 'French protection' had enabled people to remain faithful to their 'ancestral religions', *Haut-Sénégal-Niger* (Paris, 1912), 186.

[60] Interview, Drissa Diallo, N'Golobala, 18 May 2002.

and many diverse sacred sites, tombs and magic in more distant localities. There were even tombs of renowned saints, which drew people from distant villages to make sacrifices.[61] An informant recounted:

In Numu Foro, there where we have the banana trees, the stream there was called Numurilako, in the hamlet, the people would go there to entrust themselves to the power object (*jo*). The person whose tomb they would go to do the sacrifices to the site, he lived between our garden and the village. It is not far. He lived right here. They took a stone from here to put on his tomb to immortalize him with this stone. He was a saint. He was one of those people who never lied, never cheated, never did bad things in his life. Sabu Satigi was a real saint.[62]

Another reason for shifts in local configurations of religious practice was the 'relative deprivation', in many localities, of ritual specialists. According to the oral record, many village blacksmiths – the main ritual specialists – had been conscripted by Samori to work in his munitions industries.[63] Many of the blacksmiths never returned. In Tenemakana, for example, the traditional blacksmith quarter (*numuso*) was abandoned and never again resettled.[64] As a result, villagers in Tenemakana became dependent on a powerful blacksmith from a neighboring village.[65] Out of necessity, therefore, villages forged new trans-local religious ties.

OBSERVING ISLAM: EARLY COLONIALISM AND THE REGIONAL MUSLIM FRONTIER, 1900–14

The Muslim frontier was the zone that separated the wider world of Islam from regions hitherto nominally 'non-Muslim' in French West Africa. On one level, in the colonial imagination, it was the boundary between two cultural tectonic plates comprised by Muslims and 'fetishists'.[66] In this optic, in which the expansion of Islam was viewed as a religious tidal wave sweeping inexorably across the land, it was the active frontier of conversion to Islam. Certainly, in some ways this frontier was real, but it was also a trope. From the first years of conquest, the spread of Islam, and the potential political role that it might play, was a central focus of the colonial administration. But while colonial administrators in Senegal and Mauritania pursued a more pro-Islamic policy, systematically collaborating with Muslim leaders, military officers in the French Sudan were much more hostile towards Islam.[67]

[61] Interview, Doulaye Kone, Kolondieba, 19 Nov. 2002.

[62] Interview, Souleyman Sidibé, Solona, 10 Apr. 2002. There were actually two types of 'saints': *bamana* saints (*waliyu bamana*) and Muslim saints (*waliyu silame*), and Sabu Satigi was considered a *waliyu bamana*.

[63] Interviews, Bourama Dembele, Tenemakana, 14 June 2002; Youssouf Sidibe, Koniba-Barila, 27 Mar. 2002. On blacksmiths, see McNaughton, *The Mande Blacksmiths*, 35–6; J. L. Amselle, *Les négociants de la savane: histoire et organization sociale des Kooroko, Mali* (Paris, 1977).

[64] Interview, Bourama Dembele, Tenemakana, 13–16 June 2002.

[65] Interview, Broulaye Doumbia, Tenemakana, 6 Oct. 2002.

[66] Robinson and Triaud, *Le temps des Marabouts*; Triaud, 'Islam in Africa under French colonial rule', in N. Levtzion and R. L. Pouwels (eds.), *The History of Islam in Africa* (Ohio, 2000), 169–87.

[67] Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*; Harrison, *France and Islam*.

Nevertheless, despite the fears of an anti-colonial Islamic *jihad* and the spread of Islam, during the early years of colonial rule in Buguni, it was reported that there were not any of the normal 'signs' of Islamization in the region.[68] In 1899, colonial officials proposed that Islam was actually in regression in the region. It was asserted that Africans were somehow instinctively resistant to Islam. Conversion was viewed as a byproduct of violence: the 'Religion of the Sword' thesis, which had been around since at least the time of the Crusades and had been reinvigorated during the nineteenth century as modern European imperialism in Muslim lands began, was the most widespread explanation for the spread of Islam.[69] It seemed to fit with the image of Samori as a bloodthirsty conquering Muslim warrior. As it was argued, however, forced conversion during the Samorian period had left no legacy, only a 'bad memory'.[70] As early as 1900, colonial reports on the spread, or decline, of Islam based their assertions on two specific indices: the number and size of Quranic schools and the presence of influential *marabouts* and Muslim traders.[71] The number of Quranic schools in the district of Buguni was minimal throughout the early colonial period, and the French were dismissive about the few that existed.[72] In addition to keeping statistics on Quranic schools, the colonial administration set a high priority on monitoring *marabouts* and traders, particularly between 1905 and 1914.[73] Indeed, the figure of the itinerant *marabout* was a rather shadowy one, filling reports with imagined Pan-Islamist plots.[74] In principle, colonial officials tolerated *marabouts*, so long as they remained sedentary, did not travel, nor interact with one another, or host foreign *marabouts*. To this end, palavers were held with canton chiefs, who, after 1909, were employed more directly in the struggle to prevent the spread of Islam and avoid the perils of Islamism. In some cases, local chiefs intervened directly, preventing Muslims from settling in their villages by simply chasing them away. In accord with the ethnic particularism of Governor-General William Ponty's *politique des races*, the colonial administration bolstered support for 'fetishist' chiefs in their moves against Islam from 1909 to 1914. As one official reported, 'the prestige of the fetishist local chiefs must be enhanced if we wish these chiefs to be of some help to the Commandant in the surveillance of Islamism'[75]. In the canton of Fulala, it was the 'fetishist' Fabala Suntura Diallo who was the canton chief

[68] On Pan-Islam in French North Africa, see E. Burke, III, 'Pan-Islam and Moroccan resistance to French colonial penetration, 1900–1912', *Journal of African History*, 13 (1972), 97–118; J. Clancy-Smith, *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters, Algeria and Tunisia, 1800–1914* (Berkeley, 1994).

[69] Rapports sur l'Islam et les confreries musulmanes, cercle de Bougouni, 1899; Rapport du Capt Vuillemot, Commandant de Cercle, sur le mouvement religieuses musulmanes, 1899, Politique Musulmane, ANM (FA) 4 E 42; and Rapport Politique du cercle de Bougouni, Sept 1903, ANM (FA) I E 27. On this broader thesis, see Eaton, *The Rise of Islam*, 113–34.

[70] Rapports sur l'Islam (1899), ANM (FA) 4 E 42.

[71] Rapport Politique du cercle de Bougouni, Aug. 1900, ANM (FA) I E 27.

[72] Rapport Politique, Mar. 1903, ANM (FA) I E 27; Harrison, *France and Islam*, 57–67.

[73] Rapport Politique, Aug. 1909, ANM (FA) I E 27.

[74] There is a detailed description of one such 'itinerant *marabout*' in the May 1914 Rapport Politique, ANM (FA) I E 28.

[75] Rapport Politique, Aug. 1912, ANM (FA) I E 28; Harrison, *France and Islam*, 29–56; P. Marty, *La politique indigène du Gouverneur général Ponty en Afrique occidentale française* (Paris, 1915).

for most of the early colonial period.[76] Furthermore, political agents traveled throughout the district visiting towns aimed at curtailing the influence of *marabouts*.[77] These agents reported when *marabouts* entered the district from other regions, usually from Guinea, the Ivory Coast or northern Mali, and the administration was particularly quick to intervene when they tried to set up Quranic schools or were traveling about and engaging in 'charlatanism'. When attempts were made to build Quranic schools or mosques, the French would respond by dispatching soldiers to demolish religious edifices.[78]

Islam was often conflated with slavery.[79] Hence, colonial officials and ethnographers agreed that the end of slavery would result in a regression of Islam. In a widely distributed report, the reasons behind this regression were largely theoretical.[80] The first reason had to do with ideas about race and religion. Following the racially and environmentally determinist theories of Ernest Renan, an idea in circulation among colonial officials was that herders, nomads and other mobile groups, such as traders, were 'naturally' inclined to thinking about existence, hence the preponderance of monotheism among them. In contrast, sedentary cultivators were purportedly 'fetishists' by nature, due to their close connections to the land:

> Perpetually bent over towards the nourishing land whose inexhaustible fertility and expanse without limit has assured the black cultivator, for infinite generations back, the happiness to live without struggle, without fatigue or constraint of any sort. He naturally envisions his future in a positive light, lacking any metaphysical speculation and not having any connection with his moral responsibility. His present divinity and faith are above all in this world that nourishes him and provides him with all his needs.[81]

The second reason cited was that the end of slavery had divested Muslims of the economic base that had financed their religious pursuits. Thus, providing an example that would be picked up by Maurice Delafosse, it was noted that at the end of slavery even slave-owners had been forced to return to their pre-Islamic ancestral religions.[82] Maraka slave-owners, bereft of their slaves and forced to work the fields themselves, 'progressively abandoned the Muslim faith in order to adopt the fetishist ideas and practices of the Bambaras who surround them'.[83] Robert Launay and Benjamin Soares, with their foci on Korhogo and Nioro, both Muslim merchant centers, agree that the abolition of slavery delivered an economic 'crushing blow' to traditional Muslim elites during the early colonial period. However, they argue that processes of Islamization generally accelerated during the colonial period as shifts in the political economy fostered 'the freer circulation of persons and commodities'.[84] Thus, while there may have been a decline of Islam in

[76] Notes et fiches de renseignements sur les chefs et notables de cercle de Bougouni, Politique indigène, ANM (FA) 2 E 47; interview, Drissa Diallo, 18 May and 26 June 2002.
[77] Rapport Politique, May 1912, ANM (FA) I E 28.
[78] Rapport Politique, June 1912, and Rapport Politique, Feb. 1913, ANM (FA) I E 28; Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge*.
[79] Harrison, *France and Islam*, 29–56.
[80] Rapport sur la situation de l'Islam dans le Haut-Sénégal-Niger, 1909, ANM (FA) 4 E 32.
[81] Rapport sur la situation de l'Islam, ANM (FA) 4 E 32.
[82] Delafosse, *Haut-Sénégal-Niger*, I, 86.
[83] Rapport sur la situation de l'Islam, ANM (FA) 4 E 32.
[84] Launay and Soares, 'The formation of an Islamic sphere', 504–5.

what Martin Klein has called 'high-density' slave systems, located in and around the market-oriented towns of merchants and traditional Muslim elites, the case of southern Mali suggests that there was a countervailing undercurrent of Islamization in regions of 'low-density' slave systems. Indeed, Klein has doubted whether the end of slavery necessarily meant a decline of Islam.[85] In the following sections, I will discuss the ground-level processes of slave return migration in driving cultural changes and disseminating elements of Islamic culture.

THE THINGS THEY CARRIED: KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION TRANSFERS AT EMANCIPATION

There is a proverb: 'the slave belongs to you, but his knowledge and his spirit belong only to himself'.[86] Although slaves were valued primarily as workers, and, in the case of women, as agents of biological reproduction, slaves represented more than just labor power; slaves had their own knowledge, beliefs and practices that they carried with them. Slaves, returning to their home villages, introduced a diverse set of ideas and innovations into their villages, which became part of a larger toolkit, or repertoire of skills, forms of knowledge, cultural practices, tools, crops and information.[87] The kinds of innovations that they transplanted to their homes depended on the location and context of their slavery. As Bourama Dembele explained,

> The people had all been dispersed; they were not in the same place. They were all in different places, which decided their fate … So, when they were taken away, those who ended up among followers of Islam, they came back with religion. Those who were in other places, they came with some other sort of work. Those who found some way to earn money, they came back with the knowledge of that.[88]

The first, most important, bit of information utilized upon their return, however, pertained to the location of family members. Many slave return narratives contain stories of news received about a loved one's whereabouts and the subsequent journey to retrieve them. Bourama Dembele described this phenomenon: 'Those who came back, when they settled, they opened their ears, to try to hear news about a certain person in such or such place, and then he would go look for them. He would go search for this person, until they all began to gather in this manner'.[89] In traveling across vast spaces, freed slaves learned much; their horizons were broadened; they acquired 'new ideas' about the world, and gained a sense of their village's place in the wider world. They were introduced to different landscapes, and trees, kinds of wildlife; they crossed ecological boundaries that had once seemed dangerous and were immersed in different languages and customs.[90] Some

[85] Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, 4–5, and 229.

[86] '*I ta ye jonkenin ye, ko nka jonkenin ta y'a kono feere ye*', interview, Doulaye Kone, Kolondieba, 19 Nov. 2002.

[87] On the sociological use of the term 'toolkit', see A. Swidler, 'Culture in action: symbols and strategies', *American Sociological Review*, 51 (1984), 273–86.

[88] Interview, Bourama Dembele, Tenemakana, 13–14 June 2002.

[89] *Ibid*.

[90] Interview, Jan Jan Sidibe, Balafina, 2 Apr. 2002.

people even came back having forgotten their old language and speaking new ones. As one informant told his family's story:

> My grandfather was sold all the way to Segou as a slave. His little brother was sold in slavery in the country of the *Koyaga* [central Ivory Coast]. Another brother of my grandfather, Ba Nankuma, had come back to Kolondieba with the people from Maàle [northern Ivory Coast] … My father's father, he died. But all his children came back to the village at the end of slavery. Ba Nankuma received them, and slowly our family was resurrected from the ashes. Ba Nankuma became the head of the family. His little brother, Ba Jeefe, came back from slavery in *Koyaga* country. He could never rid himself of the *Koyaga* language, and he could never really speak the language of here correctly. He even came with his *Koyaga* wife and two girls.[91]

Slaves were sometimes responsible for bringing back various new agricultural ideas and crops. Seeds for different kinds of millet, rice or maize were introduced and some people even tried growing kola trees. Many returning slaves also brought back fruit trees, in the form of seeds, pits and cuttings.[92] Furthermore, slaves who had worked as weavers, blacksmiths or in other trades returned with new skills and techniques that could be used in the marketplace. One informant's father had been in slavery in Wasulu, working as a weaver of cotton textiles. Upon his liberation, he was able to continue weaving and managed to pay his taxes from the craft.[93] Those who were enslaved in regions that were more directly tied into the world economy gained knowledge about the kinds of products that had a high exchange value and how and where to collect or produce such products, such as rubber, ivory and gold. Many slaves returned with knowledge that gold and diamond mines in Guinea were lucrative, that tree felling and hunting were sources of money in Ivory Coast or that farming peanuts in Senegal was remunerative.[94] These innovations enabled freed slaves to take advantage of new openings in the emerging colonial economy. Furthermore, some slaves were able to use social networks and ties between distant villages forged during their years in slavery to tap into long-distance trade.[95] Thus, Tumani Danyoko drew on his experience, connections and knowledge acquired from working as a slave porter to work in the kola trade during the colonial period.[96] One of the most frequently cited innovations, however, was Muslim prayer.

[91] Interview, Doulaye Kone, Kolondieba, 19 Nov. 2002.

[92] Interviews, Adama Diallo, Niamala, 7 Oct. 2002; Yacouba Danyoko, Tenemakana, 21–3 June 2002; and Drissa Diallo, N'Golobala, 10 July 2002. The phenomenon of freed slaves bringing back fruit trees has also been noted by colonial observers. See, for example, Rapport de la tournée dans la partie sud-ouest du cercle du 8 Nov. au 20 Dec. 1910, Rapport Politique, ANM (FA) I E 28.

[93] Interview, Bangali Kone, Bunjoba, 24 June 2002. On this aspect of emancipation, see also R. Roberts, *Two Worlds of Cotton: Colonialism and the Regional Economy in the French Soudan, 1800–1946* (Stanford, 1996), 94–6.

[94] Interviews, Mariame Kone, Tenemakana, 15 May 2002; Salimata Diallo, Tenemakana, 26 June 2002; Namakoro Bamba, Kolondieba, 7 July 2002; Bakari Kone, Kolondieba, 28 June 2002; Bangali Kone, Bunjoba, 24 June 2002; and Tenaiko Bamba, Kolondieba, 12 Oct. 2002.

[95] Interviews, Siaka Diarra, Woblé, 5 May 2002; Nama Dembele, Kolondieba, 19 July 2002; and Bakari Diarra, Kolondieba, 28 July 2002.

[96] Interviews, Youssouf Coulibaly and Yakouba Danyoko, Tenemakana, 16 May 2002.

The first generation of Muslim converts who had been in slavery are now all long deceased. Therefore, the 'moments of conversion', and motivations behind conversion, during the early colonial period remain obscure. Suggestive evidence, however, can be drawn from the colonial ethnographic record.[97] While most colonial administrators were blind to the role of slaves in introducing Islamic practices into their home villages, a few astute observers commented on this linkage. Paul Marty, head of the Service of Muslim Affairs in French West Africa, noted that slaves sometimes converted to Islam through close contact with their Muslim masters; that despite being subalterns within the host environment, slaves participated in the household culture.[98] Casting his observations in a form familiar to colonial discourses on *Islam noir*, Marty reported that young slaves would 'imitate, several times each day, what they saw around them in performing their prayer'.[99] Even when masters discouraged slaves from converting to Islam – to maintain boundaries of authority and to avoid manumission – slaves appropriated Muslim ideas and practices on their own. Furthermore, recently converted slaves were bringing back Muslim prayer to their home villages at the end of slavery. Marty summarized:

> In most of the fetishist villages, there were at least one or two natives returning from slavery and performing Muslim prayer. These Muslims certainly are not very fervent, nor very convinced. But nevertheless, wittingly or unwittingly, they are preparing the ground, more favorable for Islam.[100]

This process was far from universal, however, as conversion depended on the nature of the relationship between slave and master within the household; assimilation into the hegemonic household culture was proportionate to the degree and frequency of communications between masters and slaves.[101]

The first Muslims converted as individuals in disparate localities unified by the common experience of slavery, and not as a part of larger processes of 'communal conversion', nor as a result of institutions of Islamic

[97] On the 'moment of conversion', see Searing, 'Conversion to Islam'.

[98] P. Marty, *Études sur l'Islam en Côte d'Ivoire* (Paris, 1922), 89–101. [99] *Ibid*. 93.

[100] *Ibid*. Marty made similar observations with respect to localities in the Sahel regions of the French Sudan. See *L'Islam et les Tribus du Soudan*, II (Paris, 1920), 180. I highlight the case from northern Ivory Coast due to its greater proximity to southern Mali, and the direct linkages between villages, such as Tenemakana, and northern Ivory Coast.

[101] In households in which slaves shared the master's way of life, usually in contexts where there were fewer slaves, conversion was more likely. Conversely, on large plantations, such as those found in Banamba or Kankan, where slaves were settled in their own villages, and kept at a distance from the master's culture, limited interaction meant less likelihood of conversion. Levtzion, 'Slavery'; Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, 4–5 and 197. Similar social and demographic patterning is detected in conversion among slaves in the United States. A. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South* (Oxford, 1980); I. Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Belknap, 2003); E. D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York, 1972); and David Brion Davis, personal communication (2003). Interesting comparisons, thus, might be done on the social logics of conversion to world religions among slaves in Africa and the Americas.

education.[102] In the aftermath of the slave exodus, Maurice Delafosse reported that there were 13,710 Muslims in Buguni, of the total population of 157,435.[103] In the canton of Fulala, there were around fifty Muslims.[104] In juxtaposition to the number of Quranic schools in Buguni (five schools with 78 students), it becomes evident that conversions to Islam during the early colonial period were probably not a result of Quranic education. Indeed, by 1912, the canton of Fulala had neither a Quranic school, nor a *marabout*, though the people belonged to the Qadiriyya Sufi brotherhood.[105] In short, there was an expansion of scale of Islam following emancipation, but not because of Quranic education or the proselytizing activities of *marabouts*.

Because many of the first Muslims had been enslaved during childhood, or adolescence, and spent their formative years in captivity, cut off from the religious practices and structures of their home villages, they discovered alternate forms of ritual and identification in Islam. Tumani Danyoko, for example, passed these years in exile, and missed important initiation rites, which normally lasted seven years. Furthermore, as *Imam* Coulibaly explained, 'he had stayed such a long time in Bouaké that Tumani never belonged to the *kòmò* society [power association]'.[106] Of course, there were many returning slaves who abandoned Islam once they had reintegrated into their home villages. But in plenty of cases, their new Muslim practices could not simply be removed through ritual ablation, as the first Muslims had spent 'part of their lives living among Muslims as slaves'.[107]

Although returning slaves are the most salient social group attributed with introducing Islamic prayer, oral accounts reveal the many paths to Islam: colonial soldiers, Juula traders, migrant workers and porters, former soldiers of Samori Touré, refugees and *marabouts* have all been credited with playing this role.[108] As one informant explained, 'each village has its story of how it came to prayer'.[109] However, these social categories often overlapped: a former slave may have become a colonial soldier, migrant peanut farmer or porter, and even a trader or *marabout*. Thus, the multiple itineraries, and permutations, of individual lives within larger contexts of mobility defy strict correlations between social categories and processes. However, in order to avoid vague notions of general mobility driving cultural change, focus on returning slaves serves to link a specific form of mobility to cultural processes within a shifting political economy. Oral accounts from the canton of Fulala emphasize the role of returning slaves. *Imam* Drissa Diallo explained:

Here in Fulala, it was the return of slaves, above all, that gave Islam the force necessary to expand here as it did, because after liberation of the slaves, people

[102] On 'individual' versus 'communal' conversions, see Levtzion, 'Toward a comparative study of Islamization', 19–20. More recently, Launay and Soares have noted the importance of 'individual conversion' in the disintegration of 'ethnic' markers of Muslim identity. 'The formation of an Islamic sphere', 506.

[103] Delafosse, *Haut-Sénégal-Niger*, I, 165.

[104] Out of 2,655 total (in 24 villages). Rapport de tournée de cantons de Zana, Molodiana, Foulala, Avril 1912, Rapport Politique, ANM (FA) I E 28.

[105] *Ibid*.

[106] Interview, Youssouf Coulibaly, Tenemakana, 16 May 2002.

[107] Interview, Drissa Diallo, N'Golobala, 9 July 2002.

[108] Interviews, Sirakoro Traoré, Moro, 6 May 2002; Doulaye Diarra and Siaka Diarra, Woblé, 5 May 2002; Imam Sidibé, Balanfina, 2–3 Apr. 2002; and Martin Klein, personal communication (2004).

[109] Interview, Zoumana Kone, Tienaga, 15 June 2002.

reintegrated with their families bringing this new Muslim religion with them … There were five men related by maternal bloodline, they were our ancestors, our fathers, who introduced the Muslim religion here in N'Golobala at the end of their slavery. In our family, it was our father, Kojugu, who first introduced Islam here in our village.[110]

Testimonies of elders in neighboring villages of Fulala reveal similar histories.[111] But how exceptional was the case of Fulala? Comparative cases, collected during fieldwork in five cantons and twenty different villages, reveal that across the district of Buguni slaves returned as converts to Islam. In the canton of Céndugu, an informant reported that the first Muslims were often returning slaves.[112] Although this pattern was not as common in Wasulu as in regions east of the Baoulé River, informants in the canton of Ba-Sidibé told of the end of slavery playing a decisive role in the spread of Islam.[113] Colonial documents substantiate this link; as one observer reported during a census tour, 'the Muslims that one encounters are for the most part former slaves of Jula traders'.[114] In the canton of Gwancédugu, south of the Banifing River, an informant in the village Tienaga reported that the first Muslims in his village were returning slaves:

The person who had brought religion here was our uncle. But there were actually two people, two people who prayed in our village here, otherwise nobody else prayed here. But these two people, they came back from slavery, bringing prayer with them. One of them had been in slavery in the region of Segou. The other had done his slavery among the Maraka. So these two people were the first people to pray here. But when the people started to migrate, everyone began to pray, one after another.[115]

Slave return and reintegration lasted over a decade. Therefore, it took time for the first Muslims to realize that they were not alone in their new faith. However, as more Muslims accrued to local communities, from 1905 to 1910, they slowly got into contact with other Muslims in surrounding villages and began praying together. *Imam* Diallo spoke of this process:

Kojugu brought religion here after slavery, and he began to pray alone until some others came to enter the religion with him. They went to congregate among the people of Tenemakana, down there, with Tumani and Bassori, those who had brought prayer there. That was how they all came together, adding their numbers

[110] Interview, Drissa Diallo, N'Golobala, 18 May 2002.

[111] Interviews, Adama Diallo, Niamala, 7 Oct. 2002; Nouhou Diakite, Kologo, 5 Oct. 2002, Youssouf Coulibaly, Tenemakana, 16 May 2002.

[112] Interview, Bakari Diarra, Kolondieba, 28 July 2002.

[113] There were, in fact, small Muslim enclaves which had existed before the colonial period. Furthermore, because Samorian occupation was more enduring in Wasulu than elsewhere, forced conversion to Islam left a more profound imprint. Interviews, Youssouf Sidibe, Koniba-Barila, 27 Mar. 2002; Jan-Jan Sidibé, Balla Kouyate and Imam Sidibé, Balanfina, 2–3 Apr. 2002. Amselle sees the whole region as a zone of religious hybridity, *Mestizo Logics*, 117–35. While there is no question that *bamanaya* had been influenced by Islam through many centuries of contact, Muslims were largely restricted to trade towns and a few disparate enclaves. If we take the words of elders living in the region at face value, most people did not pray, hence they were not 'Muslim', until the colonial period.

[114] Rapport Politique du cercle de Bougouni, Feb. 1913, ANM (FA) I E 28.

[115] Interview, Zoumana Kone, Tienaga, 15 June 2002.

to the others. After that, N'Jignana Baji and Ba Cékoro came back, and then, after that Zenjuwara, Balakaw, Siribébala, who were the inhabitants of Bala, they came back and added themselves to the group. Then, the father of Sidi Ba Lamine came back. And after that Gnama and Bakoroblén also came back with prayer from slavery and added to the others. So at this time, Islam came little by little.[116]

Prayer in these early years focused on repetitive chanting of what informants called the '*kalima*'.[117] Adama Diallo, an elder from the village of Niamala, said, 'people would chant the *kalima*. At this time, the people did not have a big desire to study'.[118] From the standpoint of contemporary Muslims, the prayer that these pioneers practiced was 'incorrect': they did not know the protocols of ablutions or the correct way to pronounce Arabic words. The first Muslims are referred to as 'pretenders' (*an yé ka do ké*), or those who manifest only external signs of Islam, and whose prayer was not 'clear' (*jélen*). However, as it was said, 'they knew there was some sort of God, and so they prayed in their own manner'.[119] The fact that they prayed symbolized that they were Muslims. Thus, the role such figures played in opening a door to a deeper understanding of the relationship between their village and Allah placed them beyond scrutiny. Tumani's grandson explained: 'Tumani knew that something had put everything in the world into existence. There was no Quran at this moment. There were no *marabouts*. But Tumani would pray, very simply, he would pray to Allah'.[120]

HIDDEN PRACTICES, SOCIAL NETWORKS AND PUBLIC MANIFESTATIONS

Centrifugal forces arose from within villages, besetting religious life with internal contradictions and contestation. In contrast to notions of hybridity, or syncretism, village religious life was not exactly a fusion, or superimposition, of two 'distinct' systems. Rather, evidence suggests that early colonial religious cultures were loosely integrated polyvalent systems of conflicting, but also overlapping, networks and practices.[121] Furthermore, religious dialectics were a function of power relations in which religious practice and identification were negotiated relationally. In many contexts, religious differences reflected a generational gap. On one side, elders who remembered the forced conversions, suppression of *bamanaya* and terror of the Samorian period were more hostile towards Islam. As one official noted: 'the elders and some men of a mature age have conserved an enduring memory of the exactions committed by the armies of Samori'.[122] On the other side, for many of the first Muslims, their embrace of Islam had occurred on more peaceful

[116] Interview, Drissa Diallo, N'Golobala, 9 July 2002.

[117] Interview, Drissa Diallo, N'Golobala, 9 July 2002; Imam Sidibé, Balanfina, 3 Apr. 2002. According to Drissa Diallo, the *kalima*, or *al-kalimat at-tayyiba*, 'the blessed phrase', comprised the first words of the *shahadah* and was a profession of faith: *La-ilaha il-allah muhammadur rasul-allah* ('There is no god but Allah, Muhammad is the messenger of Allah').

[118] Interview, Adama Diallo, Niamala, 7 Oct. 2002.

[119] Interview, Youssouf Coulibaly, Tenemakana, 16 May 2002.

[120] Interview, Yacouba Danyoko, Tenemakana, 15 July 2002.

[121] See Jean-Loup Amselle, *Mestizo Logics*, on what he calls 'originary syncretism,' ix–xvii and 25–42.

[122] Rapport Annuel, 1911, Rapport Politique, ANM (FA) I E 28.

terms. Having been sold into slavery as children, they had not been fully conscious of the atrocities committed by Samori in the name of Islam, nor witnessed their 'traditional' religion being desecrated by Samori's troops. Nevertheless, there was a power differential; elders represented the dominant religious group, led by the village chief and the head of the *kòmò* power association, and effectively policed village public culture, forcing the first Muslims underground. The new faith represented a sort of dissident subculture; its ideological underpinnings ran counter to many 'traditionalist' practices, such as the consumption of alcohol and sacrifices to power objects. In some ways, the cultural survival skills employed by Muslims represented a 'hidden transcript'; their secret lives were largely conducted offstage, 'beyond the direct observation of powerholders'. However, in contrast to the model developed by James Scott, in this case, cultural practices should not be narrowly construed as forms of resistance, in the sense of opposing the claims or actions of a dominant group.[123] The first Muslims were religious minorities and had to 'get long' with *bamana* traditionalists.[124] Thus, when they returned, their numbers were small, forcing them to hide their prayers. It was explained:

> Muslims were not very numerous at this time. Muslims were rare because the problem of the *kòmò* [power association] was widespread in the village. At this time, nobody dared to discuss building a mosque in the village. The followers of Islam were forced to hide themselves when they said their prayers.[125]

Moving outward from Tumani's village, Tenemakana, there was a wider, but local, Muslim community to which people belonged. Early Muslims sought to break out of isolated village-level niches, and the clandestine religious lives that they lived, by investing in trans-local Muslim social networks. Such Muslim social networks became central to religious dynamics during the early colonial period. However, they were not only conduits for the transmission of information, they were active networks through which ideas, beliefs and practices were reproduced and transformed. Trans-local links were facilitated and strengthened through inter-village prayer associations and forms of social obligation and affiliation. In many instances, Muslims drew on connections with the villages from which their mothers had come, forging ties through their maternal bloodline. Furthermore, Muslims used the practice of bride exchange (*falen-ni-falen*) to form alliances with other Muslims in remote villages.[126] Such connections enabled Muslims to gain strength in numbers that was not possible within the confines of the village itself.[127]

Muslim subcultures reproduced themselves in specific sites. Communal prayer was performed with groups of Muslims drawn from neighboring villages, often in someone's home, and preferably in a settlement removed

[123] See J. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, 1990). [124] Interview, Drissa Diallo, N'Golobala, 9 July 2002.

[125] Interview, Youssouf Coulibaly, Tenemakana, 16 May 2002.

[126] Interview, Adama Diallo, Niamala, 7 Oct. 2002. For more on social networks, see M. Emirbayer and J. Goodwin, 'Network analysis, culture, and the problem of agency', *American Journal of Sociology*, 99 (1994), 1411–54.

[127] Interview, Drissa Diallo, N'Golobala, 9 July 2002; Imam Sidibé, Balanfina, 2–3 Apr. 2002.

from the centers of traditional power. Thus, even before a mosque had been built, or the position of *imam* designated, local Muslim leaders – like Sangaré Cémogo or Tumani Danyoko in Tenemakana, and Kojugu Sountura Diallo in N'Golobala – stepped forward and brought people together in their homes. *Imam* Diallo explained:

> Before Kojugu became *Imam*, he led the people in prayer and that lasted quite a long time. The inhabitants of the village came and added to him and they prayed together at the prayer site, everyone going to his house.[128]

Secrecy shrouded the lives of the first Muslims, but occasionally Muslims were allowed to bring their faith into public view, such as during the celebration of Muslim holidays: the month of fasting, or Ramadan (*sun kalo*), commemoration of Ibrahim's sacrifice of the ram (*tabaski* or *seliba*) and the celebration of the Prophet Mohammed's birth (*donba*). Evidence suggests that there was a tacit understanding between Muslims and *bamana* traditionalists through which the new faith was tolerated on occasional public manifestations, so long as they did not encroach on certain domains of indigenous religious and political life, or challenge the authority of the heads of the power associations (*kɔ̀mɔ̀tigiw*). There were clearly demarcated limits to these manifestations:

> When they were allowed to pray, it was Sangaraje Cémogo who led the prayers. He led the prayers the whole year, including Ramadan. But when it was time for public prayer, Sangaraje Cemogo said to his followers, 'I can lead prayers during the month of fasting, but I cannot organize the public prayer because I do not want to be killed'.[129]

Bamana traditionalists more than just tolerated the celebrations, however, as it seems that everyone partook in the festivities, enjoying the feasts, dances and 'mixed sacrifices'. Practitioners of local religions would use the opportunity to make sacrifices to power objects, or to their ancestors, while Muslims would perform sacrifices 'to Allah' (*saraka bɔ̀ Ala ye*).[130] Colonial officials commented on the celebrations surrounding Ramadan, reporting, with an air of amusement, when non-Muslims joined in the festivities. One official described Ramadan in 1907: 'the end of Ramadan gave place to certain rejoicing in which the fetishists took part, in as large a part as the Muslims. Some hastened to seize the occasion to permit them to make noise and give free reign to their voracious appetites'.[131] The year before, it was observed that Ramadan was 'being celebrated in grand style by the natives who indulge in their ordinary gatherings. Numbers of guns being fired at the appearance of the moon and abundant libations during the three days that follow'.[132]

In addition to such isolated public manifestations, there is evidence that on a more everyday level a space of mutual borrowing emerged. Informants frequently spoke of pragmatic appropriations and complementary practices.

[128] Interview, Drissa Diallo, N'Golobala, 9 July 2002.
[129] Interview, Youssouf Coulibaly, Tenemakana, 16 May 2002.
[130] Interview, Broulaye Kone, 19 Nov. 2002.
[131] Rapport Politique, Nov. 1907, ANM (FA) I E 28.
[132] Rapport Politique, Nov. 1906, ANM (FA) I E 28.

Even colonial officials, who posited a 'pure fetishism', acknowledged this process of cross-fertilization. As it was reported:

> Though fetishist, they seek help from the *marabouts* when they are sick, they buy amulets from them that protect them from new afflictions … In short, the religion of the populations of the district is but an ensemble of crude superstitions.[133]

This 'cluttered arsenal', or toolkit of practices, was an emergent religious formation, characterized by interdependence and interplay between adherents of local religions and Muslims.[134] It was facilitated by certain commonalities such as the belief in local spirits (*jine'w*) and a single transcendent God-force, the performance of sacrifices and the use of plants in healing.[135] Muslims adapted indigenous forms of knowledge to their larger repertoires, and, conversely, traditional *bamana* healers would often use Muslim benedictions in their rituals.[136] One of the most important spiritual roles that any religious leader played in the village was that of 'rain-maker', a role normally filled by the heads of traditional power associations. Rainmaking ceremonies were some of the most vital and collaborative rituals of the community. In Wasulu it was recounted:

> Before the spread of Islam, we had a stream here. When there was a problem of rain, there was a sort of music here, a music that unfortunately no longer exists. We called it '*Buru*'. So this '*buru*' was played with the *yabara* [sort of calabash drum]. When one started to play it, all of the men and women would put themselves in white earth. Nobody would wear black. They did this music while walking down to the sacred stream. That was done when it did not rain at the beginning of the rainy season, when the stream was at the point of drying up. When they started the libation ceremony, the same night of the ceremony it would rain abundantly until the sacred stream started to overflow! One could say that it had nothing to do with Islam, but it was a form of *Aladeli* [invocation of Allah].[137]

Similar forms of rainmaking existed throughout the region.[138] But Islam introduced changes in the rainmaking rituals. While traditionalists were performing their libations and music on the banks of the sacred streams, Muslim rituals focused on group prayer, chanting of the *kalima*. Muslims also sought to fill this role of 'rain-maker' using forms of divination and geomancy. It was explained in Fulala:

> For the *marabouts* (*moriw*), it was prayer. If the problem of rain became very difficult, they would prepare their things there, put the toad there and do their things, and if the toad jumped across it, then this day there it would rain. There were others who would do it near the termite mounds. Even during the dry season, when you put it near the termite mound and raised it above, you would hear the rumblings of thunder.[139]

[133] Rapport Politique, Sept. 1903, ANM (FA) I E 27.

[134] C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973), 172.

[135] Delafosse saw this tendency of sharing magical practices as 'adapting and superimposing on themselves beliefs and rites, often more ancient than the religion itself.' *Haut-Sénégal-Niger*, 178.

[136] Interview, Drissa Diallo, N'Golobala, 10 July 2002.

[137] Interview, Imam Sidibe, Balanfina, 2 Apr. 2002.

[138] Interviews, Hawa Diallo, Tenemakana, 17 May 2002; Dramane Doumbia, Tenemakana, 17 May 2002; Delafosse, *Haut-Sénégal-Niger*, 175.

[139] Interview, Drissa Diallo, N'Golobala, 10 July 2002.

Evidence suggests, however, that the most powerful, last resort, ritual was performed by the women's power association (*muso-kɔ̀mɔ̀*). According to *Imam* Sidibé, when the prayers of Muslims failed to bring rain, 'women would come and do their special ceremonies, and thanks to the combining of the different prayers together Allah would make it rain'. When asked if the women's ceremony was tied to Islam, he responded with an abrupt 'No'. But then he added, 'though it had nothing to do with Islam, the two complemented one another, so if both of them helped the people to have what they want, we could say that the two religions are complementary'.[140]

CONCLUSION

Behind the village of Tenemakana, there is a small stream known as *Kɔ̀mɔ̀-ko*. It is an important site in the history of Tenemakana: the place where the village's first *imam*, Mamadujan Danyoko, and the head of the *kɔ̀mɔ̀* society (*kɔ̀mɔ̀tigi*), Fah Dembele, agreed to bury the *kɔ̀mɔ̀* in a collaborative ceremony. As it was recounted, 'they went together, and took all the *kɔ̀mɔ̀* power objects and buried them there. From that day on, we started calling this part of the stream in Tenemakana *Kɔ̀mɔ̀-ko*, because that is where the *kɔ̀mɔ̀* is buried'.[141] Soon after, the Muslim community of Tenemakana built a mosque and public prayer and Quranic education began.[142] By the post-Second World War period, throughout the district of Buguni, small village mosques had sprung up, spotting the religious landscape. 'Islam' had arrived. However, while this era is much better documented, in both the oral and archival record, it represents, in many ways, the completion of a process that had begun years earlier when slaves returned to their villages converted to Islam.

Two of the most profound social transformations in the district of Buguni, and the entire French Sudan, during the colonial period were the end of slavery and the spread of Islam. This article has sought to link these two processes during the tumultuous first twenty years of colonial rule. Using oral accounts from villages throughout the district of Buguni, it has argued that returning slaves played an important role in the spread of Islam. As a mass of 'individual converts', this large social group formed the nuclei of future Muslim communities that would in time help soften the ground for later more profound and enduring religious transformations. As a case study, it contrasts with the recent work of James Searing.[143] While both works similarly highlight the agency of ordinary people, and shifts in the larger political economy in driving processes of Islamization, the social, geographic and demographic logics behind the processes differ. For one, the end of slavery in the French Sudan was a much more dramatic event, characterized by mass exodus and larger numbers of people. Secondly, in contrast to the Wolof kingdoms, Islamization in southern Mali was more of a territorial or geographic expansion; the religion was spread spatially through the diffusion of

[140] Interview, Imam Sidibe, Balanfina 2 Apr. 2002.
[141] Interviews, Yacouba Danyoko, 21–3 June, 15 July 2002 and 10 Oct. 2002.
[142] The census tour report of 1951 mentions the mosque and Quranic school of Tenemakana. Rapport, Tournée de recensement du canton de Foulala, 1951, Rapports Politiques, Bougouni, 1921–59, ANM (*Fond recent*) I E 10.
[143] Searing, *God Alone*.

people migrating away from Muslim centers. On a social level, slaves who returned as Muslims to their villages in southern Mali were forced to contend with a 'non-Muslim' religious majority, whereas runaway slaves in Senegal joined Muslim communities. Furthermore, it could be argued that the violence, terror and displacement which preceded conversions during the late nineteenth century were greater in southern Mali and contributed to wider social dislocation. These different logics determined the ways in which village localities in both regions worked out the details of religious change over the course of the colonial period. Broadly, this article has tried to show how 'Islamization' must be unpacked, and rethought, as a process of individual life histories, face-to-face social interactions and encounters and shifting relations of force at the village level. It cannot be assumed that 'Islam', itself, made inroads; rather, people made inroads, introducing subtle changes as agents in the transfer of knowledge, and new ideas and practices.