

**CONSTRUCTING DAKAR:
CULTURAL THEORY AND COLONIAL POWER
RELATIONS IN FRENCH AFRICAN URBAN
DEVELOPMENT**

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines urban development and colonial power relations in the French West African capital of Dakar between 1902 and 1914. Founded in Senegal in 1857, Dakar was constructed to physically implement and visibly project France's assimilationist conception of colonial power. Dakar's transformation as a "French" city was central to the integration of its African inhabitants into French culture. However, at the same time that assimilation impacted Dakar's development and population, the policies enacted by local French authorities gradually shifted to reflect the theory of cultural association, including the spatial segregation of African city-dwellers. In addition to addressing the complexities of colonial rule in Dakar, this thesis examines the ways the city's indigenous residents negotiated their own lived experience, considering their agency and responses to colonial ruling strategies.

Keywords: Assimilation; Association; Dakar; Exclusion; French West Africa; Integration; Lebou; Médina; *Originaires*; Segregation

For my family and teachers

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1. INTRODUCTION: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN COLONIAL DAKAR, 1902-1914

The construction of cities was a significant element of French colonialism in Africa.¹ Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, cities were not only centres for the economic, administrative and military activities of France's African colonies, but also the principal sites of interaction between French colonial authorities, European settlers and indigenous Africans. As the nodal spaces of colonial power and society, colonial cities also became laboratories for the physical, spatial and visual implementation of French colonial ideology. In other words, the cultural theories of assimilation and association that influenced French conceptions and practices of colonial power were inscribed in Africa's urban landscape.² This process affected both the growth of French African cities and the lives of their European and African residents.

The development of the French West African capital, Dakar, between the years 1902 and 1914 provides an important opportunity to examine the relationship between the cultural theories of assimilation and association, urban development and colonial power relations. Founded in Senegal in 1857, Dakar was constructed to inscribe

¹ While cities did not become important physical markers and population centres in Africa until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, some scholars demonstrate that urban traditions existed on the continent prior to European conquest. See Aidan Southall, "The Impact of Imperialism Upon Urban Development in Africa," in *Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960*, vol. 3 of *Profiles of Change: African Society and Colonial Rule*, ed. Victor Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 216-255; Richard Hull, *African Cities and Towns before the European Conquest* (New York: W. W. Norton Company, 1976); David Anderson and Richard Rathbone, eds., *Africa's Urban Past* (Oxford: James Currey, 2000).

² The term cultural theory is used in this thesis to describe the ideologies of assimilation and association that influenced French colonial policy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Before becoming official colonial doctrines, assimilation and association began as theories that expressed differing French attitudes about the relationship between non-European cultures and French civilization.

assimilationist ideals in West Africa's urban landscape. Stressing that the civilization of non-Europeans could only be achieved through their acceptance of French culture, assimilation—France's official colonial doctrine since the late eighteenth century—was exemplified by policies that sought to transform France's colonies into integral parts of the metropole.³ In Dakar, this meant that assimilationist planning and architectural initiatives transformed the city into a European metropolis of “French population and influence.”⁴ Colonial officials lauded the city as an expression of French cultural superiority and colonial power. However, into the twentieth century, the assimilationist vision of power Dakar embodied no longer reflected the social and urban policies enacted by local colonial authorities. Instead, French attitudes and ruling practices shifted over time to reflect the theory of association, which formally replaced assimilation as France's colonial doctrine in 1907. The results of this transition in French colonial power in Dakar are addressed in this study.

This thesis focuses on the impact changing conceptions and practices of colonial power had on Dakar's development and population. A number of ideas are central to its analysis: that, as a result of its establishment as a federal colonial capital in 1902, Dakar's assimilationist development reflected the principles of planning and architecture in vogue in contemporary French cities; that Dakar's urban environment was not a passive expression of the assimilationist vision of colonial power, but an active site for the transition from assimilationist to associationist ruling strategies; that the city itself was used as a tool in this transition; and that its European and African residents played active

³ Jean Martin, *Lexique de la Colonisation Française* (Paris: Dalloz, 1988), 25.

⁴ “Le Ministre de la Marine et des Colonies, Hamelin, au Commandant de la Station des C.O.A., Commandant Supérieur de Gorée de dépendances (Paris, le 21 juillet 1857),” in *La Fondation de Dakar (1845-1857-1869): Documents recueillis et publiés par Jacques Charpy*, ed. Jacques Charpy (Paris: Larose, 1958), 133. All citations in French have been translated by the author.

roles in shaping how French authorities viewed and built it. In examining these issues, this thesis expands our knowledge of Dakar's urban morphogenesis and society under French rule, and also broadens our understanding of French African cities and their connection to colonial power relations.

While there is a growing scholarship on colonial Dakar, the city's development in the early twentieth century has received relatively little attention. Most scholars tend to focus on the city's foundation and early development, analyzing its importance to French commercial activities in West Africa.⁵ Others examine Dakar's urban and demographic growth after the First World War, paying particular attention to the city's administrative and strategic importance to French imperialism.⁶ What these scholars fail to address is the significant role colonial ideology played in transforming the city into a centre of colonial power and economics. A recent article on French and African toponyms in early colonial Dakar by Liora Bigon does highlight the "Europeanization" of the city's street names as an example of assimilationist urban planning in French Africa. However, Bigon mischaracterizes French colonial policy when she argues that assimilation fostered efforts to segregate Africans from Dakar. Instead, these efforts can be attributed to associationist

⁵ Alain Sinou, "La Fondation d'une Ville Nouvelle," in Sinou, *Comptoirs et Villes Coloniales du Sénégal: Saint-Louis, Gorée, Dakar* (Paris: Editions Karthala et Orstom, 1993), 225-242; Derwent Whittlesey, "Dakar and the Other Cape Verde Settlements," *Geographical Review* 31, no. 4 (1941): 609-638; Jean Delcourt, *Naissance et Croissance de Dakar* (Dakar: Editions Clairafrique, 1983); Richard J. Peterec, "The Historical Basis for the Growth and Development of the Port," in Peterec, *Dakar and West African Economic Development* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1967), 25-43.

⁶ Raymond F. Betts, "Dakar: Ville Impériale (1857-1960)," in *Colonial Cities: Essays on Urbanism in a Colonial Context*, ed. Robert Ross and Gerard J. Telkamp (Dordrecht and Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985), 193-206; see also Marème Dione, "Dakar au Fil des Plans," in *Architectures françaises outre-mer*, ed. Maurice Culot and Jean-Marie Thiveaud (Liège: Éditions Mardaga, 1992), 221-236.

policies implemented in the city by French authorities in the early twentieth century.⁷ In another study, Thomas Shaw examines the “Africanization” of Dakar’s public buildings as part of association’s impact on the city during the interwar years.⁸ Noticeably missing from his analysis, though, is a critical inquiry into the effects planning and ruling initiatives enacted before 1914 had on the city’s future urban landscape. In this regard, to understand Dakar’s prominence within the French colonial framework in Africa, especially in the years following its designation as the French West African capital, it is necessary to provide a detailed outline of its development and connection to colonial power relations.

“A Natural Capital of all our African Possessions”

Situated on Senegal’s Cape Verde peninsula, Dakar was the principal site of France’s program of West African expansion that began in earnest under the direction of Louis Faidherbe, the Governor of Senegal from 1854 to 1865.⁹ According to one official, the future city’s significance to French colonialism was so great that it would “one day become [...] the large commercial city and the seat of the general government of all our

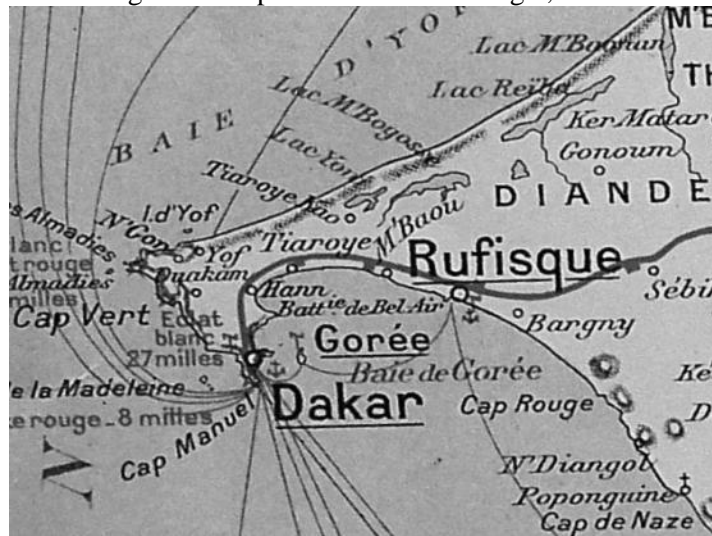
⁷ Liora Bigon, “Names, Norms and Forms: French and Indigenous Toponyms in Early Colonial Dakar,” *Planning Perspectives* 23, no. 4 (2008): 479-501; see also Liora Bigon, “Urban Planning, Colonial Doctrines and Street Naming in French Dakar and British Lagos, c. 1850-1930,” *Urban History* 36, no. 3 (2009): 426-448. In another study, Bigon takes her assessment of French colonial policy in Dakar further by examining the impact of residential segregation on the city’s development and society. In her effort to trace the presence of residential segregation in Dakar to the beginning of the French development of the city, she links assimilation to segregationist tendencies, ignoring evidence that French authorities in the city promoted the inclusion and assimilation of indigenous urban dwellers. Bigon, *A History of Urban Planning in Two West African Colonial Capitals: Residential Segregation in British Lagos and French Dakar (1850-1930)* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2009).

⁸ Thomas M. Shaw, *Irony and Illusion in the Architecture of Imperial Dakar* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006).

⁹ Robert Aldrich, *Greater France: A History of French Overseas Expansion*, 96-97; see also Sheldon Gellar, *Senegal: An African Nation Between Islam and the West* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995), 6-7.

establishments on the Western Coast of Africa.”¹⁰ One of the main factors that contributed to this belief was Dakar’s location (Fig. 1). The future city’s position on Cape Verde—the westernmost point of Africa—placed it “in easy communication with France, the coast of Africa and the entire world.”¹¹ Additionally, it was protected from the possible maritime attacks of other European colonial powers by Gorée, France’s nearby island settlement and main Atlantic naval station.¹² Together with the easy accessibility of Dakar’s harbour, it was clear to the French that these advantages would “naturally make [Dakar] our principal establishment, our centre of military and maritime operations, in a word, the capital of all our African possessions.”¹³

Figure 1: Map of the coast of Senegal, 1902.



Courtesy of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Prior to France’s official colonial expansion into West Africa, the Cape Verde peninsula was populated by the Lebou, an Islamicized indigenous group that engaged in

¹⁰ “Le Chef de Division, Commandant Supérieur de Gorée et Dépendances, Mauléon au Ministre (1856),” Charpy, *La Fondation de Dakar*, 92.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² “Rapport annexé au projet d’un fortin à établir à Dakar, sur l’emplacement de l’habitation Jaubert (20 janvier 1857),” *Ibid.*, 125.

¹³ “Le Chef de Division, Commandant Supérieur de Gorée et Dépendances, Mauléon au Ministre (1856),” *Ibid.*, 92.

seasonal fishing and the cultivation of millet, rice and groundnuts. Considered native to the region, the Lebou consisted of a mixture of people from the Wolof states of Kayor and Waalo, as well as migrants from the Futa Toro region of the Senegal River. However, they only became a separate entity after waging a successful struggle for independence from the *Damel* (ruler) of Kayor between 1790 and 1812. Of the estimated 10,000 Lebou that inhabited Cape Verde in the mid-nineteenth century, the majority occupied eleven villages at the southern end of the peninsula (the future site of Dakar) that together formed the independent Muslim polity of Ndakarou. Each village, which numbered around 150 to 200 residents, contained several clusters of thatched huts organized in a circular pattern around a central space that was free of built objects. Reflecting Islam's influence on local spatial organization, a mosque, with a burial ground situated directly behind it, was placed at the edge of the central space.¹⁴

Though the French expressed significant interest in occupying Cape Verde, their interaction with its indigenous inhabitants in the first half of the nineteenth century was relatively limited. Apart from the activities of a few French merchants, who purchased goods such as peanuts and pistachios from the Lebou, the development of a Catholic missionary settlement in 1846 was the only indication of France's permanent presence in the area.¹⁵ On 25 May 1857, this situation changed drastically when the Chief of the French Naval Division at Gorée, acting on orders from France's Minister of Colonies to establish a commercial city on Cape Verde, authorized a force of marines to take formal

¹⁴ David P. Gamble, *The Wolof of Senegambia: Together with Notes on the Lebu and the Serer* (London: International African Institute, 1967), 41, 93-95; see also Jean Gallais, *Dans la Grande Banlieue de Dakar: Les Villages Lébous de la Préqu'île du Cap Vert* (Dakar: Institut des Hautes Études, 1954), 5-6.

¹⁵ "Le Ministre de la Marine et des Colonies, de Mackau, au Gouverneur (Paris, le 26 février 1847)," Charpy, *La Fondation de Dakar*, 37-39. For more information on the commercial ties established between the French and the Lebou before the 1850s, see the documents in Charpy, *La Fondation de Dakar*, 65-83.

possession of Dakar's intended site. Landing during the Lebou population's celebration of Ramadan, the French troops attempted to associate their occupation with the atmosphere of rejoicing by giving each local headman a French tricolour to fly over his hut. Léopold Prôtet, the High Commander of Gorée, then negotiated a treaty with these leaders to establish French commercial and land rights on the peninsula.¹⁶ In keeping with France's official colonial doctrine at the time, the soon-to-be-city of Dakar quickly became a central site of assimilationist urban planning initiatives.

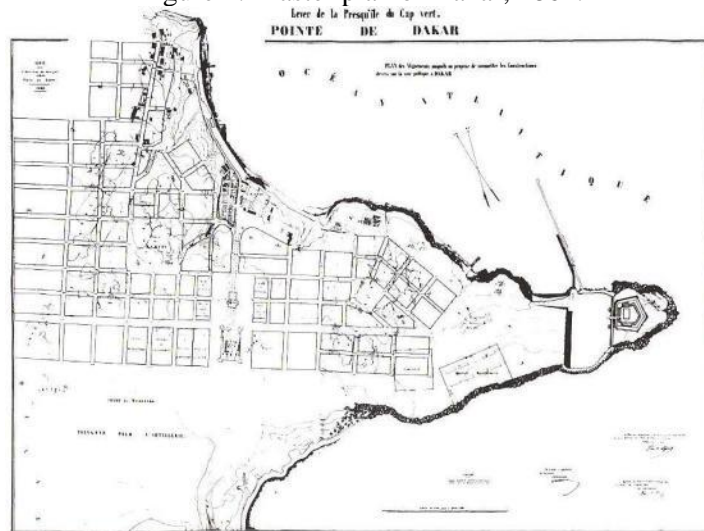
Even before the French officially established Dakar, assimilation's influence was articulated in the first master plan for the city drawn in 1856 by the chief military engineer on Gorée, Jean Marie Emile Pinet-Laprade; the final draft of this plan was released in 1862 (Fig. 2). Following assimilationist ideals, Pinet-Laprade envisioned a French imperial city developing on Dakar's site according to an orthogonal, gridiron pattern of plots and straight and diagonal streets between eight to ten meters wide. The plan's main feature was a central boulevard punctuated midway by a plaza (*Place Prôtet*) within which colonial officials intended housing a church, a presbytery with a school, a city hall with a courthouse, and a police guard station.¹⁷ Reflecting the military-led development of the city, this boulevard was designed perpendicular to a military fort

¹⁶ The account of the French occupation of Dakar has been reprinted in several French colonial archival documents and newspapers. See the documents in Charpy, *La Fondation de Dakar*, 130-132.

¹⁷ "Observations du Directeur du Dépôt des fortifications, le Colonel Roux, sur le projet de deux batteries à élever aux pointes Dacar et Belair de la presqu'île du Cap-Vert (18 mars 1857)," *Ibid.*, 119-120; see also Claude Faure, *Histoire de la Presqu'île du Cap Vert et des Origines de Dakar* (Paris: Émile Larose, 1914), 139. The implementation of an orthogonal plan in Dakar was not a new practice, but a typical urban planning approach in other French colonial settlements in Africa and elsewhere in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See Pierre Pinon, "Raisons et Formes de Villes: Approche Comparée des Fondations Coloniales Française au Début du XVIII Siècle," in *La Ville Européenne Outre-Mers*, ed. Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch and Odile Goerg (Paris: l'Harmattan, 1996), 45-47; Whittlesey, "Dakar and the Other Cape Verde Settlements," 619-625. The importance of Pinet-Laprade's plan for Dakar was not necessarily the grid form it took, but the role it played in the realization of assimilationist ideals and the implementation of assimilationist policies.

located on Dakar Point to provide colonial troops access throughout Dakar. In addition, space was reserved for several other public buildings, including a police station and a post office, in a square (*Place du Marché*) to the west of the city “to ensure order and justice in the streets.”¹⁸ As a result, Pinet-Laprade’s plan signified the French effort to transform Dakar into an assimilationist centre that, according to one official, would facilitate the “transformation of [indigenous] ideas” through the introduction of French religion, culture and politics.¹⁹

Figure 2: Master plan of Dakar, 1862.



In Dione, “Dakar au Fil des Plans,” 221. © 1992, Éditions Mardaga, by permission.

While local colonial authorities took a number of measures to implement Pinet-Laprade’s original plan, the first half-century of Dakar’s existence was characterized by a lack of significant urban development. As one onlooker remarked in 1873, the city appeared to be stuck in an “embryonic state.”²⁰ Nearly two decades later, French naval captain J. Bouteiller adopted a more negative tone with his comment that “Dakar only

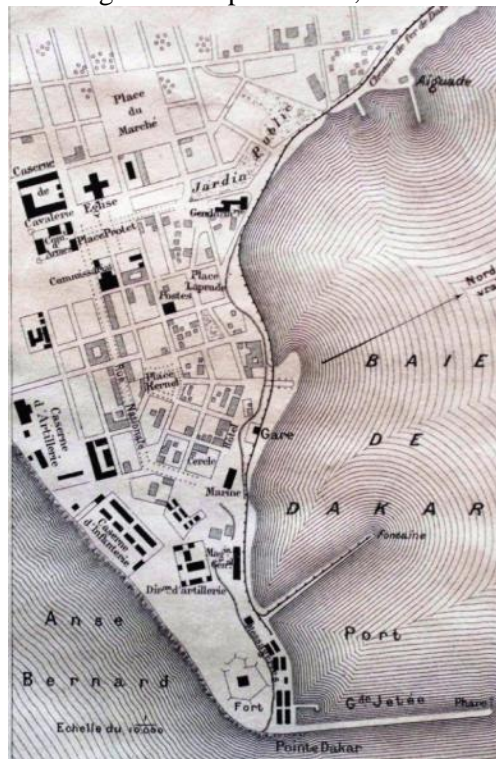
¹⁸ Faure, *Histoire de la Presqu’île du Cap Vert*, 146.

¹⁹ “Le Commandant de Gorée, d’Alteyrac, au Prince chargé du Ministère (Gorée, le 21 septembre 1858),” Charpy, *La Fondation de Dakar*, 191.

²⁰ Quoted in Faure, *Histoire de la Presqu’île du Cap Vert*, 154.

offers some poorly constructed quarters and leaves a lot to be desired with regard to cleanliness. There are no important monuments.”²¹ Visiting the city in 1894, Adrien Domergue, a member of the Society of Geography of Paris, was similarly disappointed when he lamented, “Dakar offers nothing of interest for tourists.”²² A map drawn in 1888 illustrates what visitors saw upon their arrival at Dakar. Apart from a few commercial and military structures, the marked plots of the city’s urban landscape were virtually empty three decades after the French occupation of the Cape Verde peninsula (Fig. 3). In addition, city’s population remained a relatively small segment of Senegal’s total population, increasing gradually from 1,556 in 1878 to 8,737 by 1891.²³

Figure 3: Map of Dakar, 1888.



Courtesy of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

²¹ J. Bouteiller, *De Saint-Louis à Sierra-Leone: Huit ans de navigation dans les rivières de Sud* (Paris: Augustin Challamel, 1891), 39.

²² Adrien Domergue, *Sénégal et Soudan* (Paris: Imprimerie Paul Dupont, 1895), 11.

²³ Whittlesey, “Dakar and the Other Cape Verde Settlements,” 632. Indeed, the population of the capital of French Senegal, Saint-Louis, had already reached 20,000 in 1889. See Rita Cruise O’Brien, *White Society in Black Africa: The French of Senegal* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1972), 43.

During this period, scholars attribute Dakar's slower than envisioned growth to the fact that it remained in the shadow of other colonial cities in French Senegal. To the north, Saint-Louis remained the capital of the colony and a centre for economic activity along the Senegal River, while to the south, Rufisque was the colony's major port and commercial centre due to its role in the cultivation and exportation of peanuts. Even the nearby island of Gorée numbered more than 3,000 inhabitants in the 1870s, and housed the headquarters of several commercial companies.²⁴

Consequently, it was not until after Dakar was named the capital of France's West African Federation in 1902 that the city reached the height of its assimilationist morphogenesis. The Federation of French West Africa, established in 1895, united eight of France's colonial territories in Africa: Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), Dahomey (present-day Benin), French Guinea (present-day Guinea), French Sudan (present-day Mali), Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Upper Volta (present-day Burkina Faso). As the seat of the Government General of this supercolony, Dakar was thus home to a centralized bureaucracy that supervised a geographical area nine times the size of mainland France.²⁵ In this context, colonial authorities considered the introduction of so-called modern principles of European urban development in the city an essential means of exemplifying its administrative and economic importance to the French colonial empire. Before 1914, Dakar's streets were modelled in a manner similar to Haussmann's Paris, with functionality and sanitation acting as guiding concepts. Considerable investment was also made in the construction of a modern port system that could handle the commercial traffic of the European colonial powers that operated along the West African coast, in

²⁴ Betts, "Dakar," 195; see also Whittlesey, "Dakar and the Other Cape Verde Settlements," 623-625.

²⁵ Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 23.

South Africa and South America. Within the city, buildings were constructed in the Beaux-Arts style that dominated metropolitan architectural designs before the First World War. A number of administrative monuments built in this style, including the Governor General's Palace and the Palace of Justice, became emblems of France's imperial might and grandeur. Altogether, these efforts and others underlined Dakar's transformation as a French city.

In addition to planning and architectural initiatives, assimilation's influence was evident in efforts to integrate African city-dwellers into French culture. As early as the first decade of Dakar's existence, French colonial authorities proclaimed that "all the old rights and customs"²⁶ of its indigenous residents would be abolished and that they would be treated "all and forever like Frenchmen."²⁷ To this extent, the French established a municipal administration in the city that followed metropolitan precepts. Moreover, they promoted the residential co-existence of Europeans and Africans, and expected the latter to conform to Dakar's gridiron pattern and a European style of urban life. As Pinet-Laprade's 1856 plan for the city exemplifies, the discouragement of the survival of indigenous settlements, monuments and architecture in favour of European urban forms was an important component of this integrationist scheme (Fig. 4). Drawn over the thatched huts, graves and mosques of the Lebou villages that existed on the Cape Verde peninsula before 1857, the plan's grid erased them from Dakar's future site, enforcing a European spatial arrangement on the African landscape.

²⁶ "Le Commandant de Gorée au lieutenant Commandant Dakar (le 9 janvier 1858)," Charpy, *La Fondation de Dakar*, 141.

²⁷ "Avis du chef de Division, Commandant Supérieur de Gorée et dépendances, L. Protet, a MM. les habitants et les commerçants de l'île de Gorée ainsi qu'a MM. les Capitaines de commerce sur rade (Jeanne d'Arc, rade de Gorée, 25 mai 1857)," *Ibid.*, 131.

During the period in question, the main factor that contributed to this shift in colonial ruling practice was the growing influence of the doctrine of association in French West Africa. Under Governor Generals Ernest Roume and William Ponty, for instance, associationist policies were implemented that perceivably demonstrated respect for indigenous customs, and French officials encouraged “the peoples of the federation to evolve within their own African cultures.”²⁹ This belief was apparent in Roume’s approach towards colonial education. He asserted that the metropolitan curriculum, which was being used in the federation, needed to “adapt” to the special needs of indigenous Africans. To accomplish this objective, he created a federal school system in 1903.³⁰ In the cities of French West Africa, the associationist belief in respecting cultural difference also served as a rationale for the introduction of repressive initiatives that promoted the spatial separation of Africans and Europeans. In Dakar specifically, association influenced residential and building policies that increasingly made it difficult for Africans to live in the city’s European quarters. By 1914, under the pretext of local sanitary concerns, the French West African government enacted other policies that sanctioned not only the residential segregation of Dakar’s indigenous inhabitants, but also their removal to a new African town named Médina.

My analysis of the transition from assimilation to association in Dakar between 1902 and 1914 shows how French colonial authorities employed shifting ruling strategies to facilitate the attainment of the different, and often disparate, goals of the French colonial enterprise. This thesis’s principal aim, then, is to call into question the uniformity of assimilation’s impact on colonial rule in the French West African capital.

²⁹ Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 74.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 74-80.

While recognizing the influence of assimilationist ideals in the city's development and colonial society, it seeks to explore the various ways local colonial initiatives changed to reflect the doctrine of association. It also details how the negotiation of colonial power at the local level affected Dakar's population, questioning how African city-dwellers responded to the shifting methods of French colonial rule, and examining what this revealed about their lived experience and agency. In order to address these issues, it becomes important to outline the origins and ideals of assimilation and association, and to briefly explore the impact both theories had on French rule in Senegal.

Assimilation, Association and French Colonial Policy

In the history of France's Second Colonial Empire, the cultural theories of assimilation and association dominated the discourse on French power in Africa. As the tenets of France's official colonial doctrine, they influenced the policies enacted by French administrations overseas. Far from representing a uniform approach to imperial rule, however, these theories characterized the different views and attitudes of non-European societies and cultures held by French colonial theorists and officials. While assimilation sought to improve indigenous Africans through French civilization, the goal of association was to allow colonized groups to evolve in accordance with their own customs and beliefs. Consequently, these theories had a significant impact on the power relations that existed between the French and the Africans they colonized.

The formulation of French assimilationist thought can be traced to Enlightenment philosophy that emphasized a belief in the power of reason and the concept of universal human equality. These ideas were noticeably important during the revolutionary period in

France at the end of the eighteenth century.³¹ They were extolled in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, which states succinctly that “men are born and remain free and equal in rights.”³² With regard to French colonialism, the events of 1789 convinced the French that they had an obligation to spread their revolutionary ideals beyond the metropole. Given the opportunity, they believed that non-Europeans would, like Europeans, become civilized, rational and free.³³ To this extent, Article VI of the French Constitution of 1795 asserted that “the colonies are an integral part of the Republic and are subject to the same constitutional law.”³⁴ This statement underlined the French concept of assimilation, and implied that the civilization of non-Europeans could only be achieved through their acceptance of French culture and institutions.

As France’s official colonial doctrine in the nineteenth century, assimilation represented the implementation of centralized imperial rule without regard for pre-colonial indigenous societies. In short, the goal of assimilation was to remove all differences between France’s colonies and the metropole, and to give colonized populations the same rights and privileges as French citizens.³⁵ To achieve this goal, the French substituted their social, political and economic institutions for indigenous ones in an effort to degrade and eliminate non-European customs and culture. Stressing the necessity of a unified France, assimilation also encouraged the French to control the

³¹ Raymond F. Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1961), 14-15.

³² “The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, August 1789,” in *The French Revolution and Napoleon: A Sourcebook*, ed. Philip G. Dwyer and Peter McPhee (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 27.

³³ G. Wesley Johnson, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal: The Struggle for Power in the Four Communes, 1900-1920* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971), 75.

³⁴ Quoted in Betts, *Assimilation and Association*, 13.

³⁵ Betts, *Assimilation and Association*, 8; see also Robert O. Collins, “Assimilation and Association and French Colonial Rule in Africa,” in *Problems in the History of Colonial Africa 1860-1960*, ed. Robert O. Collins (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1970), 162.

administration of their colonies from Paris. At the same time, it required each of these colonies to receive direct governance from French administrative and military personnel. While military force was used to establish direct rule, the French hoped that by providing schooling to assimilate colonized populations into French ways of thinking, they would create a non-European community of Frenchmen that would naturally support France.³⁶ Not only was it believed that this policy would reduce the chances of resistance to French rule, but practically, French colonial officials envisioned it producing assimilated indigenous clerks for colonial commerce and administration.³⁷

As an area of French interest since the seventeenth century, Senegal was France's first West African possession to experience assimilationist social and political policies. Before the foundation and development of Dakar, assimilation's influence was evident in the establishment of schools to educate the indigenous populations of the colony. As early as 1816, a Roman Catholic priest created the first French school for Africans in Saint-Louis. Shortly afterward, another opened in Gorée, while ninety miles north of Dakar, a mission school was started by the Sisters of Saint-Joseph de Cluny, a Roman Catholic congregation. By 1843, around 600 students were enrolled in schools in Saint-Louis and Gorée. In the 1850s, a significant expansion of French educational efforts in the colony occurred under Governor Faidherbe who, to provide education for a large number of Senegalese Muslims, created a secularized school system that consisted of thirteen schools for Africans staffed with teachers from France. In all of these schools, instruction was conducted in French and tailored after the metropolitan curriculum.

³⁶ Harold D. Nelson et al., *Area Handbook for Senegal* (Washington: For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974), 17; see also John Chipman, *French Power in Africa* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 56.

³⁷ William B. Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans: White Response to Blacks, 1530-1880* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1980), 122.

Additionally, the French colonial government founded a School for the Sons of Chiefs in Saint-Louis where potential indigenous leaders were educated in Western ideals and trained to serve as French auxiliaries.³⁸ Together with the creation of scholarships that offered advanced study in France, these measures provided the beginnings for a class of educated African elites to develop in Senegal.³⁹

In Senegal, a number of other assimilationist measures were taken after France's Second Republic re-affirmed in its constitution of 1848 that the country's overseas possessions were integral parts of French territory.⁴⁰ Notably, between 1872 and 1887, the colony's four main administrative and economic centres—Gorée, Saint-Louis, Rufisque and Dakar—were named French Communes (*communes de plein exercice*) and placed under the same municipal laws that governed contemporary French cities. In addition, residents of the Four Communes were granted the same privileges as French citizens, though Africans were allowed to retain their private law matters of land inheritance, marriage and divorce; this was called the *statut personnel*. Known as *originaires*, these indigenous inhabitants could vote in elections for municipal councils and the General Council of Senegal, and elect a deputy that would serve in the French National Assembly. As a result, by the end of the nineteenth century, four assimilated enclaves were created on the coast of Senegal where French law not only extended to a

³⁸ While some Senegalese Muslims did attend French schools, granting them access to a European education was not a guaranteed method of assimilation. Because Catholic missionaries ran these schools, most Muslims rejected the colony's European education system. See Johnson, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal*, 28-29; Nelson et al., *Area Handbook for Senegal*, 21; H. Oludare Idowu, "Assimilation in 19th Century Senegal," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 9, no. 34 (1969): 203.

³⁹ Nelson et al., *Area Handbook for Senegal*, 21

⁴⁰ Betts, *Assimilation and Association*, 18.

minority population of French colonists and mulattoes, but also to a large indigenous African population.⁴¹

However, by the late nineteenth century, despite assimilation's importance to French colonial ideology and rule, critics in France questioned the practicality and validity of the ideals it represented. For instance, in the academic field of physical anthropology, scholars emphasized the racial inferiority of non-Europeans, and insisted that they were incapable of following the same evolutionary trajectory as Europeans. In addition, the newer discipline of sociology stressed that cultural differences existed between human societies.⁴² Opposed to the belief that diverse societies could integrate equally into French civilization, a number of French colonial theorists used these arguments to claim that important inequalities existed between races and peoples. According to some theorists, non-European peoples and cultures were inherently and permanently inferior, which underlined their inability to assimilate into French culture.⁴³ Other theorists, influenced by changes being made to ruling practices in a number of France's colonies, were truly concerned about the disruption non-European cultures and traditions experienced under assimilationist rule. Thus, they argued that resentment and revolution could result if assimilation remained France's colonial doctrine.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 76-77; see also Michael Crowder, *Senegal: A Study in French Assimilation Policy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 4-15; Johnson, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal*, 47-57.

⁴² Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 78.

⁴³ Philip Curtin, "The Impact of Europe," in Philip Curtin et al., *African History: From Earliest Times to Independence* (London and New York: Longman, 1995), 424; see also Betts, *Assimilation and Association*, 78; James J. Cooke, *New French Imperialism 1880-1910: The Third Republic and Colonial Expansion* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1973), 22

⁴⁴ Moshe Gershovich, *French Military Rule in Morocco: Colonialism and its Consequences* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 21-22; John Chipman, *French Power in Africa*, 57. These ideas were also influenced by the practices of other colonial powers, namely the British and the Dutch. See Betts, *Assimilation and Association*, 33-58.

Though their viewpoints differed, opponents of assimilation agreed that a new approach to colonial governance was needed in France's colonies.⁴⁵ In this regard, several theorists, notably Joseph Chailley-Bert and Jules Harmand, proposed an alternative colonial doctrine based on the cultural theory of association.⁴⁶ Association underlined the belief that France should respect and preserve non-European cultures and institutions to allow colonized populations to develop "in their own way."⁴⁷ Accordingly, French colonial rule would be predicated not on equality, but on a strong type of cooperation or fraternity, where colonizer and colonized would be "associated," each working within the general framework of native institutions while doing what best suited their differing abilities and stages of development.⁴⁸ The latter would maintain control of their own institutions as long as they submitted to French rule, while the former focused on colonial economic growth and the wellbeing of its European community.⁴⁹

Implying a more scientific approach to colonialism, association was lauded by its proponents as a realistic and flexible method of imperial rule. One of its main tenets was that colonial policy should not be determined by officials in France, but by

⁴⁵ Apart from the activities of colonial theorists, efforts to establish a new approach to colonial rule were made during the Second Empire of Napoleon III (1852-1870). For example, Napoleon III expressed interest in establishing an "Arab Kingdom" in Algeria that would associate the French and Muslim Algerians. To this extent, he pushed for the implementation of an approach to colonial governance which encouraged French officials to rule different Muslim groups directly through their indigenous leaders. However, despite Napoleon III's efforts, this approach actually resulted in a decrease in local indigenous powers. Moreover, after the fall of the Second Empire in 1870, French government officials re-instituted assimilationist policies with the goal of continuing earlier efforts to integrate Algeria into France. See Betts, *Assimilation and Association*, 19; see also Herbert Ingram Priestley, *France Overseas: A Study of Modern Imperialism* (New York: Octagon Books, 1966), 76-88.

⁴⁶ Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 52-53; see also Betts, *Assimilation and Association*, 120-126, 147-153.

⁴⁷ Curtin, "The Impact of Europe," 424; see also Gwendolyn Wright, "Tradition in the Service of Modernity: Architecture and Urbanism in French Colonial Policy, 1900-1930," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 327.

⁴⁸ Betts, *Assimilation and Association*, 107; see also Chipman, *French Power in Africa*, 57.

⁴⁹ Gershovich, *French Military Rule in Morocco*, 22.

administrators-on-the-spot who had the ability to assess local populations and affairs. In this context, colonial policy would vary depending on the geographic and ethnic characteristics, as well as the stage of development of a particular region under French control.⁵⁰ This emphasis on flexibility in colonial rule generated considerable support for association in early twentieth-century France. Indeed, speaking to members of the French colonial press in 1905, France's Minister of Colonies, Étienne Clémentel, claimed that it was a necessary colonial policy.⁵¹ At the same time, members of the *Parti Colonial*, a pressure group for colonial expansion in the French National Assembly, pushed for its adoption as France's new colonial doctrine. By 1907, this effort succeeded when, at the opening of the annual Colonial Congress held by the French Colonial Ministry, it was declared with certainty that, "the entire colonial group is in agreement on the necessity of following [the] policy of association."⁵²

Even before the new colonial doctrine's rise to prominence in France, associationist policies were evident in French Senegal. Due to a lack of military and administrative officials necessary to govern the vast areas of the colony that came under French possession, a protectorate system of colonial rule was established there in the second half of the nineteenth century. This system divided the interior of Senegal into districts (*cercles*) that were each governed by a local commander (*commandant de cercle*) who "ruled through a hierarchy of chiefs who were chosen and appointed by him and could be dismissed at will."⁵³ In 1890, the use of the colony's indigenous leaders in this way was solidified by a decree that "limited direct administration to the Four Communes

⁵⁰ Betts, *Assimilation and Association*, 106-107; see also Gershovich, *French Military Rule in Morocco*, 22.

⁵¹ Betts, *Assimilation and Association*, 124.

⁵² Quoted in *Ibid.*, 125.

⁵³ Nelson et al., *Area Handbook for Senegal*, 17-23.

and their suburbs, together with the areas served by the new Saint-Louis-Dakar railway.”⁵⁴ In this regard, a strict dichotomy of ruling principles was established where the rights of citizenship and the franchise were limited to Africans born in the Four Communes, while all other Africans in the colony were treated as colonial subjects.⁵⁵ However, as mentioned above, this transition in French colonial policy would continue after the establishment of France’s West African Federation, so that by the early twentieth century, associationist ideals also influenced the ruling strategies practiced by French authorities in Dakar. Before the effects of this transition on the city’s development and population are examined, though, it is necessary to evaluate the analytical and theoretical approaches that dominate the existing scholarship on the impact of cultural theory on French African urban development.

Rethinking French African Urban Development and Constructing Dakar

Within the field of French colonial history in Africa, a number of scholars acknowledge the influence of assimilation and association on colonial urban planning and architecture. In *Making Algeria French*, David Prochaska analyzes the development and society of the French Algerian city of Bône from 1870 to 1920. Prochaska outlines the impact assimilationist ideals had on the city during this period, particularly in relation to the efforts that were made to instil a French image in its urban landscape.⁵⁶ In their respective studies, Paul Rabinow and Gwendolyn Wright examine association’s influence on colonial planning and architectural initiatives, notably in the French Protectorate of Morocco. It was in Morocco, they argue, that resident general Hubert Lyautey

⁵⁴ Johnson, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal*, 31.

⁵⁵ Nelson et al, *Area Handbook for Senegal*, 24.

⁵⁶ David Prochaska, *Making Algeria French: Colonialism in Bône, 1870-1920* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

implemented a “dual city” approach to urban development that preserved existing indigenous Moroccan cities (medinas) and constructed around them *villes nouvelles* (new cities) that promoted modern European urban planning principles.⁵⁷

These studies emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s as part of a new approach to colonial history that explored how colonial administrations—through censuses, mapping, medical discourse and policy, and urban development—ordered colonized populations according to differing ideologies of colonial society and strategies of colonial rule.⁵⁸ Theoretically, their analyses can be understood in the context of the Foucauldian conception of modern power, succinctly described as “a power bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them.”⁵⁹ Indeed, Foucault saw modern power as a normalizing force diffused throughout society that, through surveillance and other regulatory mechanisms, achieves the “subjugation of bodies and the control of populations.”⁶⁰ One of the main aspects of Foucault’s understanding of modern power that particularly resonates in the works of Prochaska, Rabinow and Wright is the power-knowledge nexus.⁶¹ This idea is apparent in the treatment of colonial cities as the sites

⁵⁷ Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norm and Forms of the Social Environment* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press, 1989); Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991).

⁵⁸ See Bernard S. Cohn, “The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia,” in Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 224-254; Timothy Mitchell, “Enframing,” in Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 34-62; Benedict Anderson, “Census, Map, Museum,” in Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 163-185; Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991); David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

⁵⁹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume One: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 136.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 139-140.

⁶¹ Foucault *The History of Sexuality*, 92-102, argues that power and knowledge enjoy a reciprocal relationship in which power is not only based on and makes use of knowledge, but also reproduces it. See also Mark Philp, “Michel Foucault,” in *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences*, ed. Quentin Skinner (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 74-75.

where the knowledge of metropolitan planners and architects was used to shape and order the African urban environment to reflect France's assimilationist or associationist models of colonial power.⁶² It is also evident in the argument that the efforts of these experts became important functions of the production and maintenance of French colonial dominance on the continent.⁶³

While Prochaska, Rabinow and Wright succeed in showing how the different ideals of French colonial power physically and visually shaped cities in French Africa, my study seeks to move beyond their specific focus on colonial urban development. Indeed, one aspect of this scholarship that needs to be addressed is its failure to question if assimilation and association succeeded in influencing other mechanisms of French colonial rule beyond planning and architectural initiatives. In other words, was the image of colonial power embedded in the built environments of cities like Bône and Casablanca in accordance with the policies employed by local French authorities?

Since the emergence of the studies in question, a number of scholars have pointed out the existence of inconsistencies in the assimilationist and associationist models of colonial governance. For example, in *The Invention of Decolonization*, Todd Shepard argues that while colonial officials in Algeria claimed their goal was to assimilate the colony socially, culturally and politically, a divergent policy, coexistence, actually influenced the majority of their administrative decisions.⁶⁴ Similarly, in his study of Hubert Lyautey's associationist method of rule in Morocco, William Hoisington asserts

⁶² See Rabinow, *French Modern*, 277-319; Prochaska, *Making Algeria French*, 206-229; Wright, *The Politics of Design*, 85-160.

⁶³ See Rabinow, *French Modern*, 285-287; Prochaska, *Making Algeria French*, 6-25, 207-209; Wright, *The Politics of Design*, 79-85.

⁶⁴ Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2006), 19-39.

that far from allowing indigenous Moroccans to develop in their own way, the resident general initiated efforts to reshape many native institutions.⁶⁵ Overall, these studies suggest that while we must recognize the different power dynamics created by assimilation and association in practice, we must also understand that French ruling strategies did not always match the avowed goals of the colonial enterprise. Indeed, as was the case in Senegal, colonial policies evolved in accordance with changing colonial situations and metropolitan conditions. Consequently, to properly address urban development and power relations in French Africa, colonial power cannot be viewed as static and beholden to a specific colonial doctrine, but a contested and fluid process that varied in its implications for colonial rule.

In addition to not fully engaging with the complexities of colonial power, this scholarship is silent on the lived experience and agency of indigenous African city-dwellers. For example, while Prochaska argues that the projection of Bône's image as a French city was a part of the effort made by colonial authorities to downgrade Algerian culture, he does not question if or how Algerians responded to this effort during the colonial era.⁶⁶ In their studies, Rabinow and Wright both outline that colonial officials ignored the needs of Moroccan city-dwellers. However, they do not cite any instances of indigenous resistance to French urban planning initiatives.⁶⁷ As a result, these scholars present French power in the development of colonial cities as absolute and all-encompassing, and indigenous urban populations as passive recipients of colonial

⁶⁵ William A. Hoisington, *Lyautey and the French Conquest of Morocco* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 109-134.

⁶⁶ In his study, Prochaska does cite instances where Algerians responded to messages of European dominance after Algeria's independence from France (i.e. the renaming of streets in Bône to reflect the city's Muslim past and to celebrate Algeria's independence). Prochaska, *Making Algeria French*, 214-215.

⁶⁷ Wright, *The Politics of Design*, 142, even argues that an authoritarian process of urban development was initiated in Morocco that prevented acts of resistance from both European and indigenous inhabitants.

mechanisms of rule. For while African city-dwellers are frequently referred to, at no time is the possibility of their agency, particularly in relation to the dissemination of French ruling strategies in the colonial urban environment, actually scrutinized. Yet, as scholars of British colonial cities in Africa demonstrate, colonial urban planning initiatives were continually met with and transformed by the tactics and spatial lifeworlds of indigenous Africans.⁶⁸ Though the French and British approaches to colonial power and urban development in Africa differed, we cannot assume that African populations were idle watchers and receivers of French planning and ruling strategies. Instead, scholars need to adopt an analytical framework that incorporates indigenous experience and agency within their examinations of the development of French African cities.

With these criticisms in mind, it becomes important to delineate the conceptual framework—particularly with regard to the concepts of power and agency in French Africa—that guides my analysis of colonial Dakar. First, while the French held the dominant position in the colonial encounter, their power was not all-determining, but diverse in its effectiveness, as well as in how it was constituted and instituted. Indeed, in his historiographical essay on the scholarship that addresses European colonialism in Africa, Frederick Cooper aptly notes that colonial power was “arterial,” or “concentrated spatially and socially, not very nourishing beyond such domains, and in need of a pump

⁶⁸ See Frederick Cooper, “Urban Space, Industrial Time and Wage Labor in Africa,” William Worger, “Workers as Criminals: The Rule of Law in Early Kimberley, 1870-1885,” Luise White, “A Colonial State and an African Petty Bourgeoisie: Prostitution, Property, and Class Struggle in Nairobi, 1936-1940,” in *Struggle for the City: Migrant Labor, Capital, and the State in Urban Africa*, ed. Frederick Cooper (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1983), 7-50, 51-90, 167-194; Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990); Karen Hansen, *Keeping House in Lusaka* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Garth A. Myers, “Colonial and Postcolonial Modernities in Two African Cities,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 37, no. 2/3 (2003): 328-357.

to push it from moment to moment and place to place.”⁶⁹ In Dakar specifically, the unstable nature of French colonial dominance meant that European and African city-dwellers had room to not only negotiate their relationship with the colonial administration, but also the shape of their urban experience.

Second, at the same time French colonial power cannot be treated as absolute and unchanging, indigenous agency cannot be wholly equated with the concept of resistance. As Cooper warns, the scholarly focus on African resistance to European colonialism “can be expanded so broadly that it denies any other kind of life to the people doing the resisting.”⁷⁰ This is not to say that expanding our examination of the lived experience of Dakar’s indigenous inhabitants negates the significance of their impact on colonial power relations. Instead, this is to say that the complexities of African engagement with French methods of rule need to be analyzed so that we can identify the instances when colonial power was accepted, appropriated, subverted and resisted. Finally, the terms “colonizer” and “colonized” were not self-autonomous and cannot be conceived monolithically. As recent scholarship asserts, and this study illuminates, groups on both sides of the colonial encounter held varying levels of power and agency, and significant divisions existed between and within these groups.⁷¹ In the case of Dakar, tensions between colonial

⁶⁹ Frederick Cooper, “Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History,” *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 5 (1994): 1533.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 1532.

⁷¹ Cooper, “Conflict and Connection,” 1517, raises serious questions about the misuse of binaries like “colonizer/colonized,” “Western/non-Western,” and “domination/resistance.” Indeed, he argues that while these binaries “begin as useful devices for opening up questions of power,” they “end up constraining the search for the precise ways in which power is deployed and the ways in which power is engaged, contested, deflected, and appropriated.” I agree with his assertion that while it is difficult to ignore these binaries, it is important to make sure that they are not treated as self-contained concepts. A recent collection of articles on the topic of European colonialism and African agency also builds off this theoretical argument. See Femi J. Kolapo and Kwabena O. Akurang-Parry, eds. *African Agency and European Colonialism: Latitudes of Negotiation and Containment* (New York: University Press of America, 2007).

authorities, European expatriates and African city-dwellers even affected how the French West African government approached the city's development.

Dakar is an important site to critically re-examine the existing perspectives on colonial power in French African urban development. After being named the capital of French West Africa in 1902, the city assumed a greater role within the French colonial framework. In attracting the majority of urban development projects in the federation, it became a model space to project France's permanency and power overseas. With relative freedom to direct Dakar's development, federal and municipal colonial authorities encouraged the city's transformation in the French image. The implementation of metropolitan urban forms was central to these efforts, and represented the continuing influence of the doctrine of assimilation in the city.

By the early twentieth century, however, Dakar was far from a laboratory for assimilationist planning and architectural initiatives. Indeed, the growing influence of the alternative doctrine of association in the French West African capital led to the introduction of policies that changed how colonial power was disseminated and negotiated at the local level. However, this transition did not occur overnight. Dakar's status as one of Senegal's Four Communes—a symbol of assimilation's success—prevented the use of policies that made explicit this new adherence to association. While this would change with the introduction of segregationist efforts in response to an outbreak of bubonic plague epidemic in Dakar in 1914, my thesis shows that the interplay between these two divergent conceptions and practices of colonial rule broadened the spectrum of colonial power that existed in the city.

In addition to examining the complexities of colonial power in Dakar, my thesis seeks to analyze the lived experience and agency of the city's indigenous residents. Because this is a lofty goal, there are limitations to this part of my analysis. In particular, there is almost a complete absence of African-produced documentary material from the period in question. Instead, the majority of the primary sources I examine are those of the French West African colonial government housed in the Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer (ANOM) in Aix-en-Provence, France. Despite being invaluable resources for any analysis of French colonial rule in West Africa, these documents only represent the official—and thus partial—record of the colonial past left by French colonial authorities. One cannot easily learn from them the experiences and views of the colonized.

To get over this challenge, this thesis draws inspiration from two scholars who posit interventionist strategies to deconstruct dominant accounts of history. In his study of subaltern resistance, James Scott argues that a “hidden transcript” develops and exists among subordinate groups that, in moments of confrontation with their oppressors, can take on a public dimension (the “public transcript”).⁷² Of special importance to this study is Scott's assertion that even without primary documentation, a given subordinate group's hidden transcript can be inferred from “practices that aim at an unobtrusive renegotiation of power relations.”⁷³ Also influential is Gayatri Spivak's argument that because subaltern subjects cannot be understood independent of the documentary evidence created by dominant groups, scholars must engage in a subversive reading strategy from *within* dominant accounts of history to locate subaltern agency. Asserting that “history” is at once a textual practice and a textual product, Spivak proposes that we read for

⁷² James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 189-190.

difference within the textual operations of colonial documents to find the silences and absences and even the local subversion of colonial discourse.⁷⁴ While this thesis does not claim to provide a comprehensive analysis of Dakar's African inhabitants, engagement with these approaches below does help foster an examination of their lived experience, including some of the strategies they employed in response to local modes of colonial urban development and rule.

The following analysis is divided into three chapters. Chapter 2 examines the influence of assimilation on Dakar's urban development between 1902 and 1914. Of central importance to this chapter is an analysis of French efforts to transform Dakar into a French city, and the connection these efforts had to metropolitan planning and architectural initiatives. In Chapter 3, the transition from assimilation to association that occurred at the same time Dakar transformed into a French city is analyzed in relation to local social and cultural relations. Specific attention in this chapter is given to the "African zone" that grew in response to assimilationist planning initiatives, as well as the introduction of exclusionist policies that reflected the influence of associationist ideals. Finally, in Chapter 4, efforts to segregate Africans from Dakar and the development of the village of Médina in 1914 are outlined as explicit examples of the acceptance of the doctrine of association in the French ruling structure in West Africa. The implications of French segregationist initiatives are examined, including the responses they elicited from African city-dwellers.

⁷⁴ Gayatri Spivak, "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography," in Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 197-221; see also Ranajit Guha, "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India," and "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency," in *Selected Subaltern Studies*, ed. Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Spivak (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), 37-44, 45-84.

2. A FRENCH CITY IN WEST AFRICA: ASSIMILATIONIST IDEALS AND THE URBAN MORPHOGENESIS OF COLONIAL DAKAR

Visiting Dakar in 1908, French writer Léon d'Anfreville de la Salle commented on the panoramic view offered by the recently constructed palace of French West Africa's Governor General. "From all of the palace's windows," he wrote, "one indeed takes in the whole horizon, the city spread out on the irregular peninsula, its houses and its scattered palm trees, its lively port."¹ For over half a century, the city de la Salle looked out upon had been a focal point of urban planning and architectural initiatives that evoked France's assimilationist conception of colonial power. It was only after Dakar was named the capital of France's West African federation, however, that it became the central target of an extensive program of urban development and expansion. From 1905 to 1909, public expenditures on construction projects in the new capital totalled 8,300,000 francs, by itself the most money spent on the city's development during its entire colonial history.² Writing in the midst of these efforts, de la Salle's impression of Dakar exemplified its transformation in the early years of the twentieth century: "indigenous Dakar is dead, our European Dakar is just barely being born."³

Before the First World War, the development of Dakar's urban landscape was directly connected to the city's position in the French colonial enterprise. As a federal colonial capital and major commercial port, it was identified by colonial officials as more

¹ Léon d'Anfreville de la Salle, *Sur la Côte d'Afrique: Villes, brousses, fleuves et problèmes de l'Ouest Africain* (Paris: Émile Larose, 1912), 11.

² Shaw, *Irony and Illusion*, 26.

³ de la Salle, *Sur la Côte d'Afrique*, 22.

than just a site that maintained political and economic relations between France and its West African colonies. According to Ernest Roume, Governor General of French West Africa between the years 1902 and 1907, early twentieth-century Dakar was a “world port.”⁴ Situated along two major Atlantic shipping routes, the city was the principal transit centre and fuelling station for ships traveling between Europe, South Africa and South America, and thus an important site of interaction between France and Europe’s other colonial powers.⁵ In this regard, Dakar fulfilled a significant international role for the French, who proclaimed the city the “face,” or microcosm, of their Atlantic colonial empire.⁶ Against this background of Dakar’s function as a *ville impériale* (a nodal point of French colonial authority, commerce and communication), French colonial authorities promoted the amelioration of its urban infrastructure. In particular, they considered the assimilationist design of local urban elements, such as street layouts and building façades, instrumental in showcasing France’s imperial superiority and permanence to the indigenous populations of French West Africa.⁷

While my thesis aims to challenge Dakar’s image as a purely assimilationist centre, it is still important to recognize that the doctrine of assimilation had a significant role in shaping the city’s urban development. In this regard, this chapter seeks to examine the nature, extent and implications of assimilation’s impact on Dakar’s development as a French city between 1902 and 1914. Indeed, over a decade after Dakar was designated a

⁴ Ernest Roume, “Dakar Ville Impériale,” *l’Afrique Française* 46 (1936): 378.

⁵ Ibid; see also René le Hérisse, *Voyage au Dahomey et à la Côte d’Ivoire* (Paris and Limoges: Henri Charles-Lavauzelle, 1903), 20; Laurent, *De Dakar a Zinder: Voyage en Afrique Occidentale* (Lorient, 1911), 5.

⁶ Georges Ribot and Robert Lafon, *Dakar: Ses Origines, Son Avenir* (Bordeaux: Imprimerie de G. Delmas, 1908), 19; see also Léon d’Anfreuille de la Salle, *Notre vieux Sénégal: son histoire, son état actuel, ce qu’il peut devenir* (Paris: Augustin Challamel, 1909), 65.

⁷ Sinou, *Comptoirs et Villes Coloniales du Sénégal*, 300.

distant suburb of Paris at the French Colonial Congress of 1889-1890, the French West African government continued to treat the city as a physical extension of the metropole and a centre of French culture.⁸ To this extent, it initiated the introduction of urban forms and amenities in Dakar that imitated metropolitan approaches to urban design, including the spatial planning elements of Haussmann's Paris.⁹ This shaping of Dakar as a French city was also evident in the architectural designs that adorned the city's major administrative buildings (*les Grands Travaux Publics*). Reflecting French pretensions at the time, these designs emulated the Beaux-Arts tradition in Parisian architecture, and created monumental urban perspectives that befit Dakar's status as a federal colonial capital. Early twentieth-century literary accounts that referred to Dakar as "little Paris" demonstrate the extent to which contemporaries recognized the city's transformation in this regard.¹⁰ In typical assimilationist spirit, French colonial authorities added to these descriptions by not only labelling Dakar a French city, but also a "modern city."¹¹

⁸ Betts, *Assimilation and Association*, 31-32.

⁹ During the Second Empire of Napoleon III, Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann, the Prefect of the Seine from 1853 to 1870, carried out in Paris what scholars proclaim to be the "biggest urban renewal project the world has ever seen." Responding to Napoleon III's desire to modernize the French capital, Haussmann initiated an urban development program that affected all aspects of planning in the city. In particular, Haussmann's program included the construction of a new arrangement of monumental thoroughfares that broke through the congested areas of the city to establish an organized and healthy urban environment. The program also included the development of massive public buildings and monuments—often at the terminus of major avenues and boulevards—that were designed to showcase the legitimacy and permanency of the Second Empire. See Anthony Sutcliffe, "Paris as the Hub of French Industrialization: Building a European Capital under the Second Empire, 1852-70," in Sutcliffe, *Paris: An Architectural History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 83-104. For a thorough examination of Paris's modernization under Haussmann, see David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006). For the purposes of this thesis, it is important to note that the use of Paris as a template for French colonial planning and architectural initiatives was not restricted to Dakar. Indeed, Paris's influence on the development of other major French colonial capitals like Algiers and Saigon is noted in Betts, *Tricouleur*, 97-115.

¹⁰ See Betts, "Dakar," 193. Even as late as the 1940s, observers referred to the city as "Paris in the tropics." See Emil Lengyel, *Dakar: Outpost of Two Hemispheres* (New York: Garden City Publishing, 1943), 30.

¹¹ Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 18.

Consequently, both perceptually and materially, Dakar's establishment as a French city symbolized the success of assimilation's influence in the local built environment.

Planning French West Africa's Capital

From the beginning of Dakar's colonial development, the streets that made up Pinet-Laprade's 1856 plan were central to the physical realization of assimilationist ideals. Their construction, one of the first signs of the city's presence on the Cape Verde peninsula, actualized Pinet-Laprade's vision of the local landscape as a *terre vacante et sans maître* (unoccupied and ownerless land) transformed by the clearly marked lines of colonial urban planning. Indeed, where avenues and boulevards met the thatched huts of existing Lebou villages, these indigenous structures were destroyed to make room for French urban forms. In this context, the initial orthogonal arrangement of Dakar's roadways represented the French effort to order the city's growth according to a distinctly European and rationalistic conception of space. In using street plans to establish the boundaries within which a colonial urban population would reside, French authorities also sought to discipline the experiences of Dakar's African inhabitants. The clearest expression of this goal was made in 1858, when, after destroying ninety-five huts of the Lebou village of Kaye to make room for a boulevard, colonial officials promoted the incorporation of the rest of the village into the city's urban layout.¹² For the French, incorporating indigenous populations through planning was not only essential to introducing them to a European style of urban life, but a necessary means of monitoring their activities in and movements throughout the city.

¹² "Le Commandant de Gorée, d'Alteyrac, au Prince chargé du Ministère (Gorée, le 21 septembre 1858)," Charpy, *La Fondation de Dakar*, 190.

Before construction commenced on many of Dakar's streets, their importance to assimilationist planning efforts was solidified on 23 May 1863 when the French Administrative Council in Senegal decided to name them. In his overview of French planning efforts in Dakar before the First World War, archivist Claude Faure lists the thirty-eight names that adorned the city's streets between the 1860s and the 1880s.¹³ Similar to street naming practices in other French African cities, Faure's list reveals that street names functioned as "collective representations" that reflected a biased interpretation of Dakar's colonial society and urban environment.¹⁴ In this regard, main thoroughfares in the city were given names that referenced the metropole—the central boulevard in Pinet-Laprade's original plan was named *Boulevard National*—or individuals who had played important roles in the colonization of Senegal and its surrounding regions. Twenty-four names comprised the latter category, including *Boulevard Pinet-Laprade*, the long northern artery that served as the entry point for passengers that arrived by boat at Dakar's port. Apart from these streets, others were granted names that praised certain French-built sites (*Rue de la Gendarmerie*), or referred to Senegalese villages that France had colonized (*Niomoré, Thiong, Caronne* and *Sandiniéry*). As a result, the street names selected by the colonial administration imprinted a historical narrative in Dakar's infrastructure that was rooted in French colonialism. This underlined their role as symbols that, in glorifying the French establishment of Dakar, expressed the city's definite and permanent French identity.

¹³ Faure, *Histoire de la Presqu'île du Cap Vert*, 148-154.

¹⁴ The use of street names as representations of French conceptions of colonial society has been analyzed by Prochaska, *Making Algeria French*, 209-215; see also Bigon, "Names, Norms and Forms," 482-486.

By the turn of the century, however, the significance accorded to urban planning and street names in Dakar did little to prevent contemporaries from making derisive comments about the state of the city's development. Claude Faure claimed, for example, that in Dakar, "there remains a number of non-cemented sidewalks [...and] indistinct plots surrounded by hideous fences."¹⁵ Even a year after being named the capital of French West Africa, colonial officials themselves lamented that Dakar "was not organized. No methodical plan was studied, [and] other than the roads surrounding the market and Place Protet, most were not planned; they were poorly kept and, for the most part, not paved."¹⁶ These problems were largely noticeable on the city's periphery, where streets were haphazardly laid in response to rapid urban growth in the early years of the twentieth century. Taken in 1904, a photograph of *rue Vincens*, a street located on Dakar's western border, illustrates the unfinished state of many of these roadways (Fig. 5). Built between poorly constructed sidewalks, this road was uneven, crooked, and made entirely of dirt. Despite the presence of a few European buildings on the *rue Vincens*, the African dwellings depicted in the photograph indicate that non-European settlement practices remained a feature of the local landscape. To this extent, Dakar appeared less like an ideal colonial capital, and more like novelist Pierre Loti's description of the city as a "sketched" town "laid upon the sand and the red rocks," that, for colonial officials, required a more extensive program of urban development.¹⁷

¹⁵ Faure, *Histoire de la Presqu'île du Cap Vert*, 164.

¹⁶ Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 82.

¹⁷ Pierre Loti, *Le Roman d'un Spahi* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1896 [1881]), 196.

Figure 5: *Rue Vincens*, 1904.



In Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 66. Public domain material obtained from Bibliolife, LLC.

Indeed, in the same year as the above photograph, the need to reform Dakar's urban landscape was recognized in an *arrêté* (decree) that declared it was a public necessity to straighten and widen the city's existing streets, and to construct new roadways to order its future growth. The *arrêté*, issued by Governor General Roume on 22 August 1904, accordingly outlined and approved a new alignment plan for the city that followed the modernist movement in European urban planning.¹⁸ In this regard, instead of conceptualizing Dakar as a collection of diverse sectors, local colonial authorities and planners began to treat the city as a totality "in which different quarters [...] and different functions were brought into relation to each other to form a working whole."¹⁹ In many ways, the 1904 plan responded to the assimilationist goal to shape Dakar into a French city and a significant colonial capital. Building off the existing urban arrangement, it outlined a grandiose vision of the city spread out across the Cape Verde peninsula with new layouts to the south and west that, by 1908, contained over twenty-five kilometres of new roads (Fig. 6).²⁰ At the same time, the plan exhibited the federal colonial

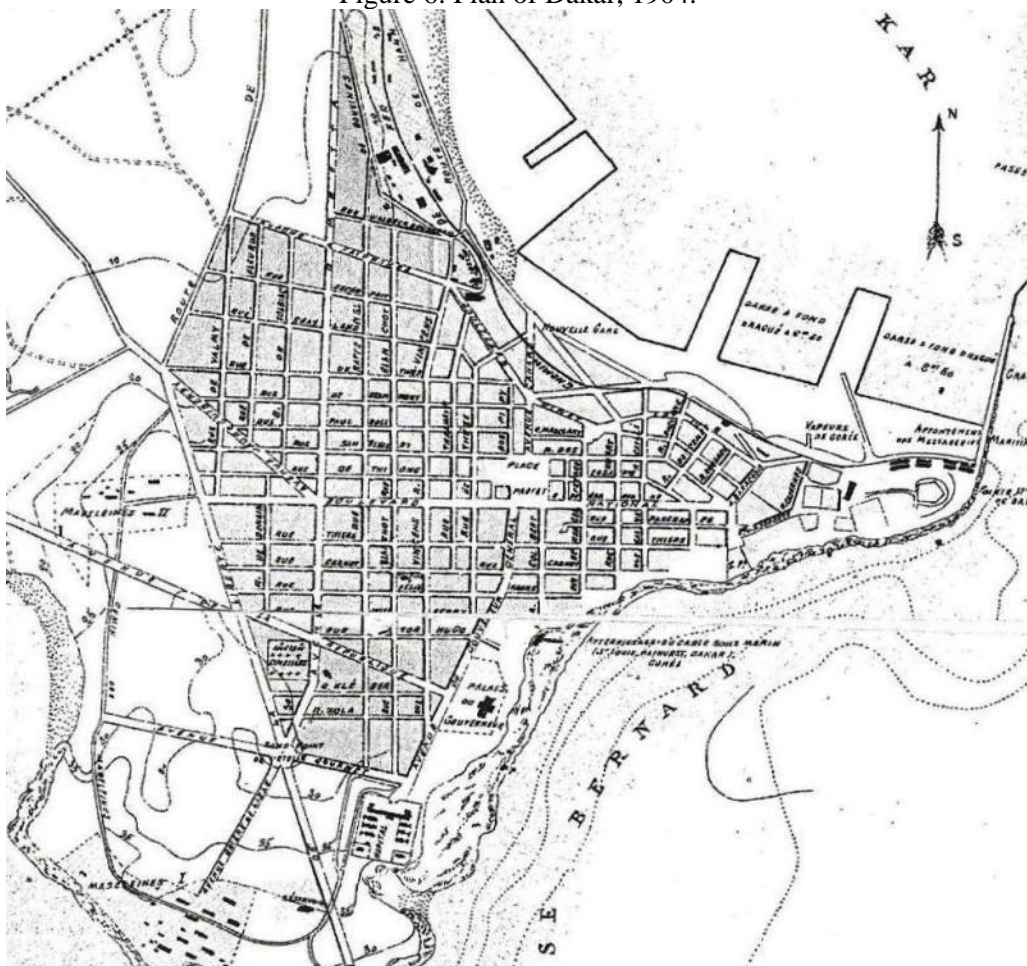
¹⁸ Faure, *Histoire de la Presqu'île du Cap Vert*, 163; see also Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 67-68.

¹⁹ David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity*, 111.

²⁰ de la Salle, *Sur la Côte d'Afrique*, 7.

government's interest in rational urban development, incorporating metropolitan modes of planning to organize the city spatially. Similar to Paris's development under Haussmann, for example, Dakar's grid was abandoned in a number of areas for a freer pattern of diagonal avenues and boulevards that were used to both divide land use activities into several zones and improve circulation throughout the city.²¹

Figure 6: Plan of Dakar, 1904.



In Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*. Public domain material obtained from Bibliolife, LLC.

²¹ The importance of zoning and circulation to modern European urban planning was clearly expressed in Haussmann's planning efforts in Paris, namely in relation to the development of the *Grande Croisée* arrangement of boulevards which connected the center of the French capital to its periphery. See David P. Jordan, *Transforming Paris: The Life and Labour of Baron Haussmann* (New York and London: The Free Press, 1995), 185-210; Thomas Hall, *Planning Europe's Capital Cities: Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Urban Development* (London: E and FN Spon, 1997), 55-83. For a general discussion on the importance of zoning in French African cities in the twentieth century, see Ambe J. Njoh, *Planning Power: Town Planning and Social Control in Colonial Africa* (London and New York: University College London Press, 2007), 14-35.

Shown in Figure 6, the 1904 plan organized the city's layout around two points of articulation that expressed its role as a major administrative and commercial centre: the *Place Prôtet* and the port. The original plaza of Pinet-Laprade's 1856 plan, the *Place Prôtet* was enlarged after 1902 to house the principal administrative buildings of the French West African government, including the palaces of Justice and the General Secretariat.²² The importance of this zone to Dakar's overall plan was underscored by its placement at the intersection of two main arteries, the *Boulevard National*—the central east-west axis that was lengthened by 304 meters and widened by 20 meters—and the *Avenue du Gouverneur Général* (renamed *Avenue Roume* in 1907)—an expanded north-south axis along which the Governor General's Palace was planned.²³ Forming a cross that reached Dakar's four cardinal points (the later continued north by the *Avenue Canard*), these axes brought the *Place Prôtet* into direct communication with the entire city. Around it, Dakar's commercial, military and residential zones were all situated, making the administrative quarter the central node from which the French West African capital would grow.

The second point of articulation, the port, was the principal site of efforts to ensure Dakar's growth as France's chief maritime establishment on Africa's Atlantic coast, to the extent that the French West African government spent 33,120,000 francs on

²² de la Salle, *Notre vieux Sénégal*, 74.

²³ A report on the work done to extend Dakar's main thoroughfares indicates that the expansion of the *Boulevard National* was completed in 1912. Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer (hereafter ANOM), FM TP 1096/4, "Rapport du Chef du Service des Travaux Publics au Sujet de l'Achèvement de l'Avenue Gambetta a Dakar," April 4, 1916. The renaming of *Avenue du Gouverneur Général* to *Avenue Roume* was done to honour Governor General Roume for his years of work in the French West African federation. ANOM, FM SG AOF/II/5, "Affaires Coloniales: L'avenue Roume a Dakar," *Le Temps*, December 3, 1907. For a discussion of the projected lengths and widths of Dakar's main thoroughfares as outlined in the 1904 plan, see Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 77-79.

its development between 1898 and 1914.²⁴ During this period, space on the north half of Dakar Harbour was used for a naval arsenal, which consisted of barracks, a 250-meter-long dry dock, as well as a base for submarines and destroyers.²⁵ The south half featured a commercial port equipped with three wet docking areas in the form of two 300-meter-long piers, and a third attached to a nearby jetty that measured 150 meters in length. These piers, together with the intervening quays alongshore, created 2,200 meters of wharfside.²⁶ Similar to planning initiatives within Dakar, these developments were influenced by assimilationist principles. In particular, the expansion of the port's commercial capabilities was essential to the integration of empire and metropole. As products acquired through trade and agricultural initiatives flowed through the port to France, European building materials and products arrived there to facilitate the construction of a French city and to ensure the well-being of its population.²⁷ Moreover, with a direct maritime connection to Europe, Dakar was meant to not only function like a European port city, but also serve the distant continent. As figures from the city's commercial port service indicate, Dakar became the main fuelling station for European

²⁴ The money spent on the port came from three sources. The French Navy contributed 21,200,000 francs, while 11,300,000 francs came from the 65,000,000 and 100,000,000-franc loans raised for infrastructure projects. The remaining 650,000 francs came directly from the general budget of the French West African Federation. ANOM, FM TP 1076/3, Inspection Général des Travaux Publics des Colonies, "Rapport de l'Ingénieur-Inspecteur: Emprunt de 167 millions de l'Afrique Occidentale Française," Paris, June 15, 1914.

²⁵ Bibliothèque Nationale de France (hereafter BNF), Gouvernement Générale de l'Afrique Occidentale Française, *Le Port de Dakar en 1910* (Paris: Bibliothèque du Journal Les Annales Coloniales, 1910), 33; see also Whittlesey, "Dakar and the Other Cape Verde Settlements," 628-629.

²⁶ A report on the construction of the two longer piers is given in ANOM, FM TP 1096/1, Ingénieur Principal des Travaux Publics, Port de Commerce de Dakar: Travaux d'Extension, Dragages et Decrochements, "Plan de la Rade de Dakar," August 4, 1917; see also BNF, *Le Port de Dakar en 1910*, 33-36; Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 114-115. A description of the shorter pier is given in BNF, Gouvernement Générale de l'Afrique Occidentale Française, *Le Port de Dakar: Ses Origines, État Actuel, Extensions Futures* (1929), 9-12.

²⁷ Betts, "Dakar," 202.

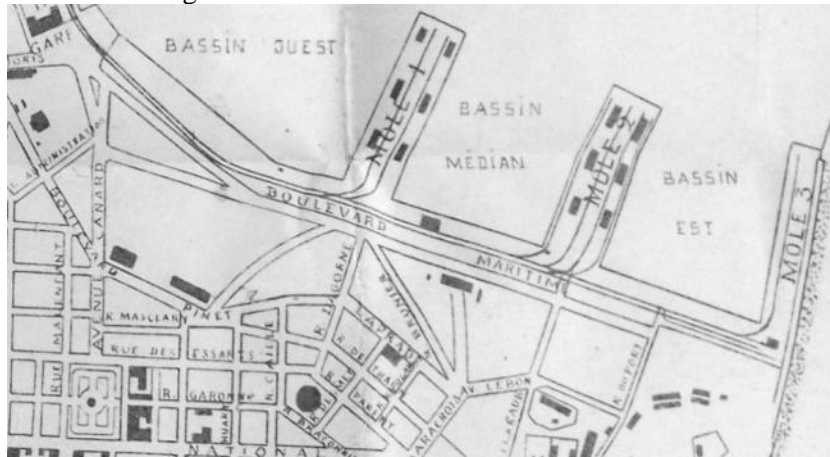
vessels heading to South Africa and South America, so that by 1913 it was handling five times for tonnage than Rufisque, its nearest French West African competitor.²⁸

Within Dakar, zoning was based mainly on topographical considerations. In the north, the land surrounding the port was designated the commercial zone (Fig. 6). Within this zone, modernist planning ideals were evident in the construction of a new east-west axis (*Boulevard Maritime*) which facilitated the movement of goods and people throughout the city by connecting local port facilities to a system of radial thoroughfares that entered the existing arrangement of streets at different points. Among these streets, the *Rue Dagorne* provided direct access to the *Place Kermel* (the central market), while the *Avenue Canard* linked the port to the *Place Prôtet*. The development of the *Boulevard Maritime* also improved the commercial link between France and its West African colonies because it connected Dakar's port to a train station that was built to receive products shipped along the Dakar-Saint-Louis railroad. In the east, the French maintained the military sector located at the end of the *Boulevard National*, but separated it from the rest of the city with the construction of the peripheral *Boulevard de la Défense*. Finally, in the south, the existence of a higher-elevated site (the Plateau) determined the location of the main residential zone, which grew after 1904 to accommodate a number of foreign consuls, as well as some business firms and health services.²⁹

²⁸ ANOM, FM TP 1096/1, Ingénieur Principal des Travaux Publics, Port de Commerce de Dakar: Travaux d'Extension, Dragages et Decrochements, "Plan de la Rade de Dakar," August 4, 1917; see also Betts, "Dakar," 196.

²⁹ Whittlesey, "Dakar and the Other Cape Verde Settlements," 631.

Figure 7: Plan of Dakar's Commercial Zone.



Courtesy of the Archives Nationale d'Outre-Mer.

At the same time planning methods like zoning and circulation brought order to Dakar's development, other configurations were introduced in the 1904 plan that, in emulating more elaborate metropolitan precedents, contributed to the aesthetic embellishment of the city. Symbolic interests were particularly apparent in Dakar's new layouts, where networks of avenues and boulevards were planned that resembled the star-shaped *ronds-points* established in Paris by Haussmann. Indeed, Haussmann oversaw the planning and construction of the French capital's most famous *rond-point*, the *Place de l'Étoile* (now the *Place Charles de Gaulle*), which links twelve streets to a roundabout surrounding the Arc de Triomphe.³⁰ In reflection of assimilationist planning efforts in Dakar, the city's largest *rond-point* was similarly named the *Rond Point de l'Étoile*. Located on the Plateau, this *rond-point* was the place of convergence of four twenty-meter-wide avenues (*de la Liberté, Gambetta, Courbet, Brière de l'Isle*) arranged in the formation of a six-armed star. Once built, this network became the main point of articulation within the city's southern residential quarter. It provided the Plateau's residents access to not only the Central Hospital located at the end of the *Avenue du*

³⁰ For a discussion of the star-shaped *places* created in Paris under Haussmann, see Jordan, *Transforming Paris*, 185-210; Hall, *Planning Europe's Capital Cities*, 55-83.

Gouverneur Général, but also to other major thoroughfares like the *Boulevard de la République*—a new twenty-meter-wide artery placed on a right angle from the Governor General’s Palace.³¹ Growing by the addition of two streets before 1914, the *Rond Point de l’Étoile*, together with the city’s other peripheral *ronds-points*, also organized Dakar’s future development across the Cape Verde peninsula (Fig. 8). As a result, the reproduction of monumental archetypes of Parisian planning helped reinforce the new capital’s expansion as a French city.

Figure 8: *Rond Point de l’Étoile* with two added streets, 1913.



Courtesy of the Archives Nationale d’Outre-Mer.

Overall, the work outlined in the 1904 plan was a major undertaking. It was not completed until 1913, after the federal colonial government hired a private contractor, named Sellenave, to construct several un-finished streets. However, Sellenave’s project, which began on 18 March 1909 and cost over 1,500,000 francs, involved more than the development of avenues and boulevards. The installation of gutters along roadways, as well as the laying of pipes for water and sewer systems carried out by his company was part of a larger effort to create a colonial urban environment that was as healthy as

³¹ Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 68-69; see also Bigon, *A History of Urban Planning*, 232-235.

possible by European standards.³² Writing in 1908, Georges Ribot, the chief medical officer in charge of health and sanitation in the city, acknowledged, “before 1904, sanitary conditions in Dakar were deplorable.”³³ Indeed, in the period between Dakar’s founding and its designation as the capital of French West Africa, each decade seemed to bring a new epidemic to the Cape Verde peninsula that, in almost every case, caused contemporaries to question the viability of the colonial project there.³⁴ As the head of the public works company (Hersent & Fils) that was hired to construct the city’s military port complained after an outbreak of yellow fever epidemic in 1900, “the sanitary conditions of Dakar and its surrounding area, in their current state, will never allow the growth of an important settlement for Europeans.”³⁵

Even after Dakar became a colonial capital, the continuing presence of yellow fever cases there underlined the sanitary challenges that French authorities faced, and made necessary the authorization of public works projects that addressed colonial health concerns.³⁶ However, these projects responded to more than just local health needs. Instead, for the officials who crafted them, they were a “colonial necessity” that “concerned all of French Africa.”³⁷ Calls for the improvement of sanitation in the city were thus infused with imperial meaning. According to Ribot, “Dakar, a great Atlantic

³² ANOM, FM TP 1096/4, “Rapport du Chef du Service des Travaux Publics au Sujet de l’Achèvement de l’Avenue Gambetta a Dakar,” April 4, 1916.

³³ Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 63.

³⁴ In Dakar, five yellow fever epidemics were declared between 1866 and 1901, while a number of cases of the viral disease were also confirmed in 1905 and 1906. In addition, outbreaks of small pox and cholera were confirmed in 1893 and 1894. Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 54-62; see also Bigon, *A History of Urban Planning*, 188-189.

³⁵ ANOM, FM SG Sénégal/XII/110, “Création d’un point d’appui de la flotte à Dakar.” L. Hersent, letter to M. Binger, the Minister of Colonies, October 12, 1900. According to an engineer working in Dakar, the presence of a yellow fever in the city caused significant delays in the construction of the military port. Signé Ficatier, “Les Transformations de la ville de Dakar,” *A Travers le Monde* 44 (1908): 345.

³⁶ Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 57-62.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

port, should no longer be a home of spontaneous infection, but should, through superior hygienic conditions, stop at Senegal's doorstep outside epidemics from entering the colony."³⁸ In other words, as the "face" of France's West African federation, Dakar was meant to be the grand example of a healthy colonial empire.

Sanitation and Public Health Schemes in Colonial Dakar

That French colonial authorities considered public health an important aspect of Dakar's development is not surprising. Almost immediately after his arrival in French West Africa in 1902, Governor General Roume made the improvement of health conditions for Europeans and Africans, what he referred to as the *assainissement* of the federation, one of his major commitments. For Africans especially, Roume was convinced that modern health services would bring both material and moral progress—a lofty goal that dovetailed nicely with assimilationist ideals and policies. As he explained in numerous speeches and government circulars, the amelioration of sanitary conditions was both a debt "owed by all civilized nations to its citizens," and an essential means of "opening a vast part of the African continent to civilization."³⁹

To achieve this goal, Roume allocated 8,450,000 francs from the two loans he raised for infrastructure projects in 1903 and 1906—totalling 65,000,000 and 100,000,000 francs respectively—to the federation's Inspectorate of Sanitary Services, which was responsible for public health initiatives and medical care for Africans.⁴⁰

Reflecting the centralist tendency apparent in the assimilationist approach to colonial

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ernest Roume, *Discours Prononcé à l'ouverture de la Session du Conseil du Gouvernement: Session Extraordinaire de Mai 1906* (Gorée: Imprimerie du Gouvernement Général, 1906), 5, 18; see also Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 47-54.

⁴⁰ ANOM FM TP 20/1, M. Armand Fallières, "Projet de Loi autorisant une répartition nouvelle des fonds des deux emprunts de 65 million et de 100 millions de l'Afrique occidentale Française," 2-3.

governance, he also introduced legislation that drew from medical and public health policies enacted in France in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁴¹ In particular, on 14 April 1904, he established a public health code for the entire federation that emulated the main provisions of the law on public health passed in the metropole two years earlier (15 February 1902).⁴² Similar to its metropolitan precedent, this code required local colonial authorities, such as mayors and *commandants de cercle*, to implement sanitary regulations that were considered necessary to combat the spread of epidemic diseases.⁴³ Considerable emphasis in this regard was placed on urban areas, where, according to Roume, high population densities made the implementation of modern sanitary practices essential.⁴⁴

In this context, Dakar's assimilationist development included a number of European sanitary planning methods. For instance, while their association with good health had fallen out of vogue in Europe by the early twentieth century, the unique health challenges faced by local French officials made hard pavements an essential hygienic need.⁴⁵ During Senegal's rainy season in particular, uneven and unpaved streets were sources of stagnant water, and hence breeding grounds for mosquitoes potentially carrying malaria and yellow fever.⁴⁶ To eliminate this problem, Dakar's municipal government employed three steamrollers to macadamize and level the city's streets as

⁴¹ The metropolitan precedents Roume drew from were largely influenced by Louis Pasteur's development of the germ theory of disease, as well as the emergence of a reinvigorated public health movement that was led by doctors, engineers and architects. See Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 59-64.

⁴² This was acknowledged by Roume shortly after he enacted the public health code. See Ernest Roume, *Discours Prononcé à la Séance d'ouverture de la Session du Conseil du Gouvernement: Session de 1904* (Saint-Louis: Imprimerie du Gouvernement, 1904), 19.

⁴³ *Ibid*; see also Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 48-49.

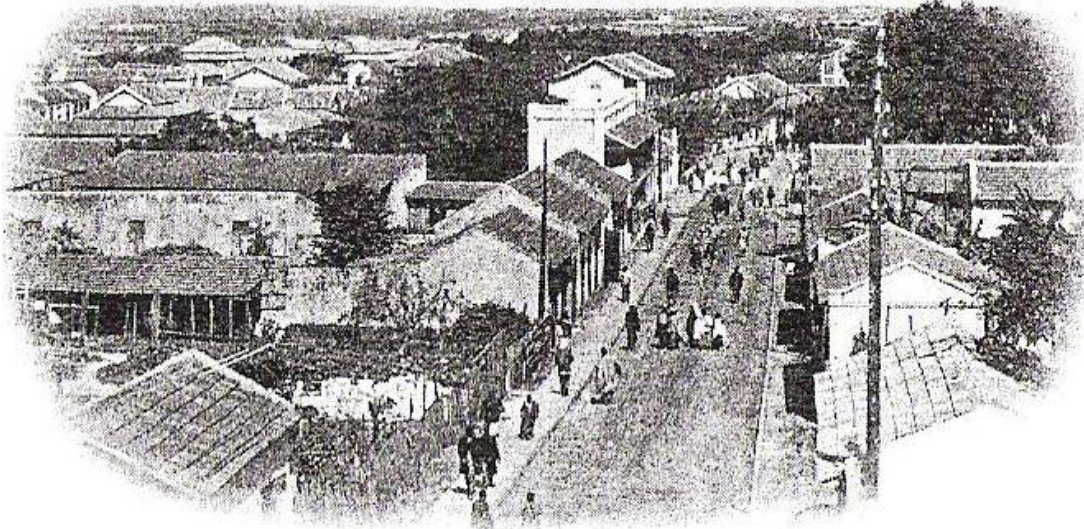
⁴⁴ Roume, *Discours Prononcé à l'ouverture de la Session du Conseil du Gouvernement: Session Extraordinaire de Mai 1906* (Gorée: Imprimerie du Gouvernement Général, 1906), 18.

⁴⁵ Njoh, *Planning Power*, 203-204.

⁴⁶ BNF, *Le Port de Dakar en 1910*, 49.

they were re-built and extended after 1904.⁴⁷ A photograph taken of the *rue Vincens* in 1908 depicts the result of this effort (Fig. 9). Where a once-crooked dirt road sat, well-maintained sidewalks now bordered a smoothly paved street surface accommodating the foot traffic of both city-dwellers and horses.

Figure 9: *Rue Vincens*, 1908.



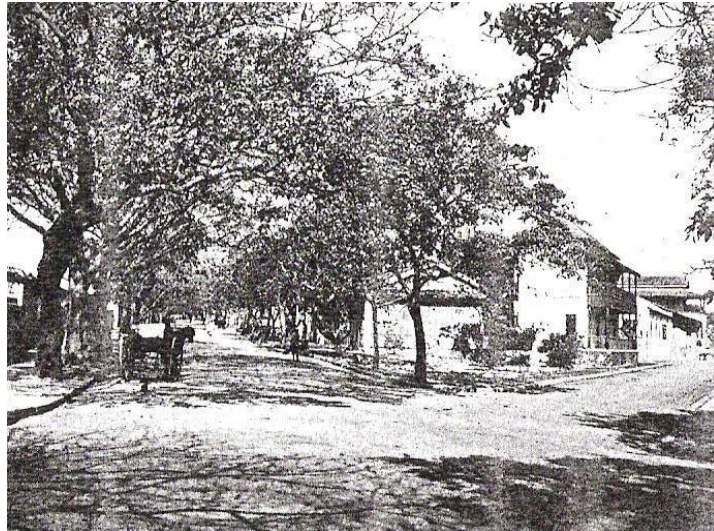
In Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 67. Public domain material obtained from Bibliolife, LLC.

Throughout Dakar, street surfaces also changed in response to the practice of introducing vegetation in urban agglomerations more commonly referred to as the “garden city” ideal. Together with the creation of private gardens and a public park (named the *Jardin Public*), trees were planted along broader thoroughfares like the *Boulevard National* to produce salubrious urban spaces that circulated a fresh supply of

⁴⁷ In addition to street surfaces, a number of ravines situated throughout the city, including one located in the *Jardin Public*, were filled to eliminate stagnant water. Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 69-72; see also BNF, *Le Port de Dakar en 1910*, 49.

clean air and provided shade from sun radiation (Fig. 10).⁴⁸ Furthermore, tree-lined avenues and boulevards responded to the assimilationist goal to establish a French aesthetic in Dakar; a fact not lost on French observers. As de la Salle remarked of the new capital's layout, for example, major roadways passed "between sidewalks shaded, following the requirements of *our aesthetic*, by trees planted at a regular distance."⁴⁹

Figure 10: *Boulevard National*, 1908.



In Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 78. Public domain material obtained from Bibliolife, LLC.

However, the introduction of modern sanitary amenities in Dakar was not restricted to street surfaces. Shortly after the city was founded, the development of an underground water delivery system was recognized as an essential public need for its residents and their private gardens, as well as for wetting down unpaved streets during Senegal's dry season. Early efforts to meet this need involved the installation of a system

⁴⁸ Christopher Winters, "Urban Morphogenesis in Francophone Black Africa," *Geographical Review* 72, no. 2 (1982): 143. It is important to note that the inclusion of vegetation in Dakar in no way emulated the social ideals associated with the garden city model originally envisioned by Ebenezer Howard in *Garden Cities of To-morrow* (1898). Instead, the model adopted in the city drew from metropolitan precedents that utilized green spaces in response to sanitary and aesthetic concerns. See Bigon, *A History of Urban Planning*, 243-263. For a general analysis of the influence of the "garden city" ideal in colonial urban development, see Raymond Betts, *Uncertain Dimensions: Western Overseas Empires in the Twentieth Century* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 140-144.

⁴⁹ de la Salle, *Sur la Côte d'Afrique*, 7-8. Emphasis mine.

of pumps in sand dunes six kilometres north of Dakar in an area known as Hann that collected water in a reservoir and distributed it to hydrants located throughout the city. By 1902, this system was capable of supplying 300 cubic meters of water daily, which according to officials in Senegal and France, was insufficient to meet the needs of the city's growing population and port.⁵⁰ For example, in its 1906 report on public works projects financed by loans borrowed by the French West African government, the French Senate argued that daily water distribution in Dakar—which had risen to between 700 and 800 cubic meters—needed to be increased to 4,000 cubic meters.⁵¹

Before the First World War, a number of measures were taken by the French West African government to increase Dakar's water supply. At Hann, two reservoirs and a number of wells were added to the already-existing pump system which, depending on the time of year, increased the daily provision of potable water to between 1,500 and 12,000 cubic meters.⁵² To ensure the cleanliness of this water, Hann's reservoirs were equipped with filtering galleries, and Dakar's Sanitary Service was charged with testing well water.⁵³ Water delivery was facilitated by two cast iron conduits that linked the reservoirs at Hann to three reservoirs situated in the city—the largest, located on the *Boulevard National*, was capable of holding 2,000 cubic meters of water.⁵⁴ From these reservoirs, water was distributed to hydrants and buildings by a network of underground

⁵⁰ Raymond F. Betts, *Tricouleur: The French Overseas Empire* (London and New York: Gordon and Cremonesi, 1978), 102-103; see also Whittlesey, "Dakar and the Other Cape Verde Settlements," 629.

⁵¹ ANOM, FM TP 20/1, Sénat: Session Extraordinaire, 29 Déc. 1906. M. Saint-Germain, "Rapport fait au nom de la Commission des finances, charge d'examiner le projet de loi, adopté par la Chambre des Députés, autorisant le Gouvernement general de l'Afrique occidentale française à contracter un emprunt de 100 millions pour exécuter divers travaux d'utilité publique et d'intérêt général" (Paris: Imprimerie du Sénat, 1906).

⁵² BNF, *Le Port de Dakar en 1910*, 51; see also Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 121-122.

⁵³ Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 121-130.

⁵⁴ BNF, *Le Port de Dakar en 1910*, 52.

pipes that grew with the construction of new streets. On the Plateau, for instance, construction of the avenues *de la République*, *de la Liberté*, *Gambetta* and *Courbet* was accompanied by the laying of water mains.⁵⁵ By 1912, 2,000,000 francs had been spent on the expansion of this network, while another 1,000,000 francs was allocated to build a second reservoir on the *Boulevard National* and a complementary series of pipes.⁵⁶ Included in this work was the construction of a new reservoir and several wells at M'Bao, a vast sandy plain on the outskirts of the Cape Verde peninsula, which colonial officials claimed would triple the city's water supply.⁵⁷

Sewage removal was another problem that French authorities sought to solve through the development of Dakar's underground. While cesspools emptied by "honey-pot" wagons remained the primary method of solid waste removal in the early twentieth century, significant progress was made in the construction of a system of street sewers to handle the city's liquid waste.⁵⁸ Underneath the city's main thoroughfares, a network of pipes was laid that received wastewater from individually connected buildings; smaller siphons were eventually built to serve secondary roads. Sewage was removed from this network by a system of collectors that carried wastewater away from Dakar to the Atlantic Ocean. Two principal collectors formed the main pieces of this system. The first,

⁵⁵ ANOM, FM TP 1096/4, "Rapport du Chef du Service des Travaux Publics au Sujet de l'Achèvement de l'Avenue Gambetta a Dakar," April 4, 1916.

⁵⁶ Financing for the expansion of this network was provided by funds from the two loans borrowed by the French West African government in 1903 and 1906. ANOM, FM 2LEG 120/Vol. 2, Inspection Générale des Travaux Publics des Colonies, "Rapport au Président de la République Française," June 28, 1914; ANOM, FM TP 1076/4, Gouvernement Général de l'Afrique Occidentale Française, *Budget des Fonds des Emprunts de 65 et 100 Millions* (Gorée: Imprimerie du Gouvernement Général, 1913), 6-7.

⁵⁷ ANOM, FM TP 1076/4, Gouvernement Général de l'Afrique Occidentale Française, *Budget des Fonds des Emprunts de 65 et 100 Millions*, 6-7; see also BNF, *Le Port de Dakar en 1910*, 51.

⁵⁸ In Senegal's Four Communes, inhabitants also relied on *marseillaises* (vases containing solid waste) as a method of waste removal. Myron Echenberg, *Black Death, White Medicine: Bubonic Plague and the Politics of Public Health in Colonial Senegal, 1914-1945* (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 2002), 31; see also Ficatier, "Les Transformations de la ville de Dakar," 347.

named the *branche est*, was an 890-meter-long pipe built under the *Boulevard Pinet-Laprade* and the *Avenue André-Lebon*. It emptied waste collected from street sewers east of the *Place Prôtet*—as well as a secondary collector located under the *Boulevard National* and the *Avenue Barachois*—into the ocean at Dakar Point. At 2,650 meters long, the second collector, named the *branche ouest*, followed the extension of the *Boulevard Pinet-Laprade* to the end of the newly built *Avenue Faidherbe*, where it took a westerly direction to empty waste into the ocean below the city. This collector, which served most of Dakar, was aided by three secondary collectors. One drained the southern quarter below the *Boulevard National*, the second the central quarter between the avenues *Gambetta* and *Roume* above the *Boulevard National*, and the third the western quarter past the *Avenue Gambetta*. Construction of this sewage collection system was completed between 1905 and 1906. During this period, a separate network of collectors was also built that emptied rainwater drained by street-level gutters into Dakar Harbour.⁵⁹

Commenting on the sanitary initiatives just outlined, Georges Ribot proclaimed that Dakar’s sanitization was a “complete and remarkable work [...] and an important occurrence in the sanitary history of France’s colonial cities.”⁶⁰ Ribot’s praise, while lofty when we consider his position as the city’s chief medical officer, should not be dismissed as pure over-exaggeration. According to officials and non-officials alike, the assimilationist changes made to Dakar’s urban landscape by 1914 were extensive, and not

⁵⁹ Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 72-79; ANOM, FM TP 36/1, Service des Travaux Publics, Programme de l’emprunt de 1903, Rapport du Directeur des Travaux Publics, “Programme de travaux d’intérêt général à exécuter au Sénégal sur fonds d’emprunt,” December 1903. A report on the sanitary work done in Dakar outlines that to keep street water and sewer pipes separate from one another, colonial officials had them constructed underneath opposing sidewalks. Rainwater collectors were located directly underneath roadways. ANOM, FM TP 1096/4, Inspecteur Général des Travaux Publics de l’Afrique Occidentale Française, “Travaux d’assainissement de la ville de Dakar, projet d’achèvement de l’avenue Gambetta,” April 29, 1916.

⁶⁰ Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 66-67.

only made the city healthier, but more organized and French. For example, in 1908, after outlining the accomplishments of French sanitary measures in the city, engineer Signé Ficatier argued that Dakar was “one of the healthiest cities in all of our colonies.”⁶¹ Visiting the city only a year later, Louis-Marie Vasseur, a colonial army lieutenant, claimed that it “sufficiently represents the kind of colonial city that is very improved [...] with the most modern comforts.”⁶² This claim was echoed in 1912 by travel writer Louis Sonolet, who labelled Dakar a “modern European colonial city.”⁶³ In all of their accounts, these commentators highlighted Dakar’s wide, tree-lined thoroughfares as symbols of its development as a French city. However, planning and sanitation projects were not the only aspects of local development impacted by the doctrine of assimilation. During the period in question, French authorities also initiated the construction of major public edifices that were designed to reflect metropolitan architectural plans and forms. This interest in architectural expression, as well as its importance to French colonial rule in West Africa, is addressed in the final section.

Les Grands Travaux Publics

If a lack of significant public works projects characterized the first forty-five years of Dakar’s colonial development, the years immediately following its designation as a federal colonial capital can be understood as the beginning of an era of monumental building in the city. Indeed, Dakar’s new imperial role brought with it the construction of several massive public buildings, including a post office and a new railroad station that, according to French authorities, contributed to its *embellissement* (embellishment), a term

⁶¹ Ficatier, “Les Transformations de la ville de Dakar,” 347.

⁶² Louis-Marie Vasseur, *Vers Bir-Taouil: Souvenirs et Journal de Marche* (Paris: Imprimerie E. Capiomont, 1912), 58.

⁶³ Louis Sonolet, *L’Afrique Occidentale Française* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1912), 99.

that carried both formative and aesthetic connotations.⁶⁴ The guidelines established for the design of the city's post office in 1914 emphasized the architectural vision intended for the local urban landscape:

The planned building will be one of the most important monuments in Dakar. It will be visible from all points in the harbor and the lower city [...] it is therefore desirable from an architectural point of view that the building provide an imposing and original exterior aspect.⁶⁵

For colonial officials, architecture thus became a political tool that could represent the permanency and power of French imperialism. Similar to local planning initiatives, assimilationist ideals were central to the perspectives created by the façades of Dakar's major public buildings, as French authorities not only promoted the application of architectural styles that conformed with metropolitan precedents, but also the use of "modern" building materials imported from France (i.e. iron, brick and glass).⁶⁶ In the city, attention was especially given to the design of the administrative edifices erected by the French West African government. Labelled *les Grands Travaux Publics*, these structures assumed the special role of symbolizing the monumentality of Dakar's development, and were accordingly seen as one means of enhancing the image of French colonial institutions and ideals.

Despite the significance of *les Grands Travaux Publics* to the shaping of Dakar's physical space, the architectural designs that adorned these administrative buildings were not immune to criticism. De la Salle, who praised other aspects of the city's colonial development, declared that "Dakar does not offer anything of interest from an

⁶⁴ Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 85.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Betts, *Tricouleur*, 101.

⁶⁶ Njoh, *Planning Power*, 21; see also Alain Sinou, "Le Sénégal," in *Rives Coloniales: Architectures de Saint-Louis à Douala*, ed. Jacques Soullou and Françoise Doutreuve Salvaing (Paris: Editions de l'Orstom, 1993), 58.

architectural point of view.”⁶⁷ Visiting the city in 1911, a French naval captain echoed this claim when he wrote, “there is nothing of interest to see here,” adding that “the palace of the Governor General, pretentious and ugly, seems to be an imitation built from the leftovers of our European Expositions.”⁶⁸ Written after the completion of several *Grands Travaux* projects, these comments suggest that French colonial authorities failed to pull Dakar from a history of monotony. However, criticisms of colonial architecture often had less to do with what was seen, than what was not seen. As travel writer Louis Sonolet exclaimed in 1912, Dakar “has nothing in its development that evokes Africa.”⁶⁹ Indeed, when visiting France’s African colonies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many tourists and travel writers anticipated finding colonial cities that embodied exotic expressions of “authentic” African architecture. Instead, they predominantly found “what appeared to be [replicas] of some quarter of Paris or of a French provincial village” implemented in the colonial urban fabric.⁷⁰

The disappointment expressed by some contemporaries upon their arrival at Dakar can largely be explained by how African urban forms were represented in the metropole. From 1878 on, sections of several French expositions were devoted to the country’s African colonies, with exhibits of African buildings and settlements forming common showpieces. In the Exposition Universelle of 1900, for instance, the design of a pavilion dedicated to France’s colonies in Senegal and Soudan (present-day Mali) attempted to create “something African to the extent that the exterior of the pavilion had

⁶⁷ de la Salle, *Sur la Côte d’Afrique*, 5.

⁶⁸ Laurent, *De Dakar a Zinder*, 6.

⁶⁹ Sonolet, *L’Afrique Occidentale Française*, 93-94.

⁷⁰ Raymond F. Betts, “The Architecture of French African Empire: A Neglected History,” in *Études Africaines: Offerts à Henri Brunschwig*, ed. Jan Vansina et al. (Paris: Éditions de l’École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1982), 308.

very simple decoration and used a system of buttresses used in the Sudan.”⁷¹ Despite the fact that the African styles presented at these expositions were French-created, exhibits like the Senegal-Soudan pavilion perceivably brought Africa home and appealed to the popular imagination of what could be seen in the cities of French Africa.⁷²

In many ways, these expositions did have a significant impact on colonial urban development in Dakar, especially in the context of the changes that were made to French ruling strategies in West Africa in the twentieth century after association replaced assimilation as France’s official colonial doctrine. Colonial officials, who came to view African built forms as tools of association and persuasion, drew from West African architectural designs conceived in the metropole to develop a romanticized *style AOF* (also called the neo-Sudanic style) that was meant to establish a symbolic unity and harmony between the various territories of the federation. However, while this new architectural style adorned the frontages of a number of Dakar’s public buildings, it did not make its debut in the city until after the First World War.⁷³ Instead, during the period in question, consideration of Dakar as an extension of France continued to influence the architectural plans that structured the development of the city’s major public buildings.

For *les Grands Travaux Publics* in particular, colonial officials adopted a standardized architectural treatment that evoked the Beaux-Arts tradition which

⁷¹ Shaw, *Irony and Illusion*, 36.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 35-36.

⁷³ Raymond F. Betts, “Imperial Designs: French Colonial Architecture and Urban Planning in Sub-Saharan Africa,” in *Double Impact: France and Africa in the Age of Imperialism*, ed. G. Wesley Johnson (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985), 198; see also Michael Ralph, “Oppressive Impressions, Architectural Expressions: The Poetics of French Colonial (Ad)vantage, regarding Africa,” in *African Urban Spaces in Historical Perspectives*, ed. Steven J. Salm and Toyin Falola (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press, 2005), 35-36. One of the main influences behind the development of the *style AOF* was the West African pavilion constructed for the 1906 Exposition Coloniale in Marseilles, which recalled the architectural forms and decoration of an actual African building, the mosque of the small French Sudanese town of Djenne. See Shaw, *Irony and Illusion*, 5-6, 36-40.

dominated Parisian architecture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. More commonly referred to as neo-classical, this style of architecture was an eclectic blend that borrowed from the aesthetic principles of national monuments built in France during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and presented them in the service of modern building materials like iron and glass.⁷⁴ Representing a rationalistic approach to architectural design, the main feature of the neo-classical style was symmetry in the layout of exterior façades established by the regular spacing of columns, pilasters or arched windows.⁷⁵ Extolled as “modern” by contemporaries, this style also featured minimal façade detailing which, together with the exaggerated scale of major public buildings like *les Grands Travaux Publics*, helped accent the visual order emphasized by the stylistic homogeneity of Dakar’s existing built forms.

In Paris, the neo-classical aesthetic approach was famously used by Haussmann to create a “national character” in built space that, in stressing historical continuity with the great imperial regimes of Louis XIV and Napoleon, signified the legitimacy and grandiosity of the Second Empire of Napoleon III.⁷⁶ Consequently, in making Dakar a visual counterpart of the French capital, colonial authorities implemented an aesthetic identity in the city that accentuated its connection to France’s imperial past. More importantly, because this aesthetic identity was distinctly French, the administrative buildings of the French West African capital became three-dimensional maps of empire

⁷⁴ Donald Drew Egbert, *The Beaux-Arts Tradition in French Architecture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 59-61.

⁷⁵ Roy Johnston, *Parisian Architecture of the Belle Époque* (Chichester, Great Britain: John Wiley and Sons, 2007), 65-89.

⁷⁶ The monumental results of Haussmann’s architectural efforts in Paris were particularly evident in the uniform apartment blocks built along the city’s major thoroughfares, which established a “city-wide visual unity” on a scale never before achieved in European urban development. Sutcliffe, *Paris: An Architectural History*, 83, 99-100; see also Egbert, *The Beaux-Arts Tradition*, 59-61.

that suggested the successful implementation of assimilationist ideals and policies overseas. However, as the subsequent chapters of this thesis reveal, assimilation's influence during the period in question was largely restricted to the built environment.

Of all *les Grands Travaux Publics* constructed in Dakar, two buildings stand out for their monumental designs: the palaces of Justice and the Governor General. The Palace of Justice was constructed in 1906 on the eastern end of the *Place Prôtet* (Fig. 11). Made of brick and white stone, its main feature was a principal façade surrounded by symmetrically placed windows, columns and pilasters. Surmounted by a triangular pediment, the building's forefront, which faced the center of the *Place Prôtet*, served as an entranceway for two audience rooms and a spacious waiting area. On its eastern and western wings—which bordered the *rue Garonne* and the *Boulevard National*—were deliberation rooms, while on the first floor were offices for magistrates.⁷⁷ Criticized for being too large for the city by de la Salle, the palace was recognized as a success by French authorities.⁷⁸ According to Ribot and Lafon, for instance, it was a “pleasing” building in harmony with its function.⁷⁹ Reflecting the desire in metropolitan architectural circles to design buildings in relation to their function, the grandiosity of the Palace of Justice was justified in terms of its role as the mediating institution between the European and African populations of the federation.⁸⁰

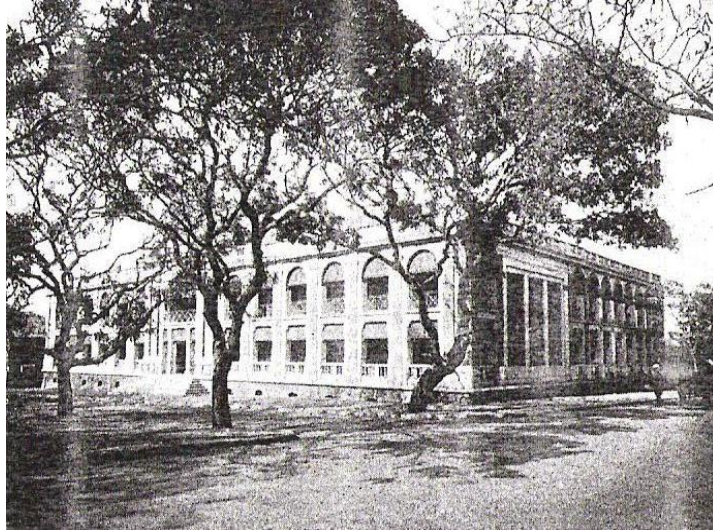
⁷⁷ Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 87.

⁷⁸ de la Salle, *Sur la Côte d'Afrique*, 12.

⁷⁹ Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 87.

⁸⁰ For a discussion of the trend among French architects to design buildings based on their function, see Egbert, *The Beaux-Arts Tradition*, 59.

Figure 11: Palace of Justice, Dakar.



In Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 88. Public domain material obtained from Bibliolife, LLC.

Yet, for all of the symbolism associated with building a large monument to French laws and governance at the centre of a colonial capital, the Palace of Justice was not the most prominent administrative building in Dakar. This distinction was reserved for the Governor General's Palace designed by Beaux-Arts trained architect Henri Deglane.⁸¹ Built on the highest bluff on the Plateau between 1905 and 1907, this 3,000,000-franc gubernatorial structure dominated Dakar's urban landscape (Fig. 12).⁸² In a rare moment of praise for French architecture in the city, de la Salle declared, for example, "if the first sight that catches the eye of the traveller to the first French city on the [West African] coast [...is] the Palace of the Governor General [...] it must be welcome, because its view gives an impression of real beauty."⁸³ Made entirely of white stone, the palace's façade was encircled by pilasters and arched windows. Set below a large cupola bearing the French tricolour, the building's portico opened into well-lit and

⁸¹ ANOM, FM TP 1077/7, M. Ligmann, "Rapport concernant la vérification du service des Bâtiments Civils à Dakar," November 18, 1907.

⁸² Betts, *Tricouleur*, 101; see also Johnson, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal*, 70.

⁸³ de la Salle, *Sur la Côte d'Afrique*, 12.

spacious waiting areas, as well as the official and private offices of the Governor General. Designed to advertise France's cultural might and grandeur, it was intended that the palace would impress upon the indigenous populations of French West Africa in general, and the city in particular, the permanency of French colonialism. Indeed, for contemporary observers, the building was a visual landmark that, through its "mass of immaculate whiteness," projected an imposing image of the French empire.⁸⁴

Figure 12: Governor General's Palace, Dakar.



In Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 86. Public domain material obtained from Bibliolife, LLC.

By 1914, Dakar exemplified the assimilationist goal to establish a French city in West Africa. Considered the "face" of France's Atlantic colonial empire, the French West African capital was designed to express its own importance, as well as the superiority of French colonialism. While the city's development in this regard was extensive, certain sites became important points of focus for federal and municipal colonial authorities. With the implementation of a new alignment plan after 1904, Dakar's streets not only symbolized the French ideal for broad, tree-lined thoroughfares that improved circulation

⁸⁴ de la Salle, *Notre Vieux Sénégal*, 75; see also Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 85-86; Ficatier, "Les Transformations de la ville de Dakar," 347.

and defined urban zoning initiatives, but also emulated the urban design practices apparent in Haussmann's Paris. Below these streets, the introduction of modern sanitary amenities like water and sewer systems contributed to the city's sanitization. Moreover, Dakar's built space was transformed by the construction of monumental public buildings whose neo-classical architectural designs grandly displayed the city's Frenchness, and suggested the success of the doctrine of assimilation. However, as the following chapters demonstrate, at the same time assimilationist ideals were embedded in Dakar's urban landscape, the ruling strategies practiced by French authorities in the city changed to reflect the alternative colonial doctrine of association. The impact this transition in colonial ruling ideology and practice had on the city's inhabitants is examined in Chapters 3 and 4.

3. WALKING IN THE COLONIAL CITY: SHIFTING NORMS IN FRENCH WEST AFRICA'S *VILLE IMPÉRIALE*

While an examination of Dakar's development in the early twentieth century can tell us a lot about how French colonial authorities inscribed assimilation in built space, it is only one lens through which the impact of colonial power on the city can be viewed. To fully understand how the ideals and practices of colonial rule operated in Dakar, we need to look beneath the French image created by planning and architectural initiatives, and study how the city's inhabitants were affected by and responded to the policies enacted by the French West African government. In doing this, we can begin to unpack the complexities of not only the transition from assimilation to association in Dakar, but also the lived experience and agency of African city-dwellers.

Dakar is an important site to analyze the socio-cultural implications of shifting colonial ruling strategies because, in the early twentieth century, it became the center of colonial society in French West Africa. Numbering only 8,737 in 1902, the city's population more than doubled to 19,775 in 1904. Between 1905 and 1914, it even rose to and remained near 25,000, though some contemporaries estimated a large group of "transients" brought the total closer to 30,000.¹ The reasons for the city's rapid urbanization are linked to its position in the French colonial enterprise. As the capital of France's West African federation, as well as a major military and commercial center, Dakar housed a diverse European population that ranged from civilian employees of the

¹ Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 37; see also Faure, *Histoire de la Presqu'île du Cap Vert*, 163; Charles Jojot, *Dakar: Essai de Géographie Médicale et d'Ethnographie* (Montdidier, France: Grau-Radenez, 1907), 30.

federal colonial government, to military and naval personnel, merchants, shopkeepers and labourers.² Despite growing from 1,500 in 1905 to 4,014 in 1914, however, this European community remained a minority in comparison to the city's African population.³ Some Africans, namely the Lebou, were incorporated into Dakar's urban landscape as it expanded in the decades following France's formal possession of the Cape Verde peninsula. Others, including Wolofs, Fulani, Tokolors and Moors, migrated to Dakar in search of economic opportunity and advancement. Together, these indigenous groups not only served as the main labour force that constructed the city's public buildings and infrastructure, but also worked as porters and commercial employees.⁴ Apart from these European and African residential elements, Dakar also housed a small mulatto population that was active in colonial economics and politics.⁵

From the outset of Dakar's colonial development, local social and political relations were shaped by the doctrine of assimilation. As a French Commune, Dakar was subjected to the same municipal laws that governed contemporary French cities. Moreover, a large number of its mulatto and African inhabitants were granted the same rights and privileges as French citizens. At the same time, however, Africans granted these rights were allowed to retain their *statut personnel* in matters of land inheritance, marriage and divorce. Throughout the late nineteenth century, colonial authorities also made a number of efforts to facilitate the residential integration of the city's European

² Jojot, *Dakar*, 30; see also O'Brien, *White Society in Black Africa*, 54.

³ Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 37; see also Faure, *Histoire de la Presqu'île du Cap Vert*, 163.

⁴ Njoh, *Planning Power*, 22; see also Betts, *Tricouleur*, 113; Winters, "Urban Morphogenesis," 144.

⁵ The only population figures for mulattos from this period come from colonial medical official Charles Jojot. In his 1907 ethnography of Dakar, Jojot estimates that the mulatto population living in Senegal's Four Communes numbered between 5,000 and 6,000. Jojot, *Dakar*, 31. While a comprehensive examination of Dakar's mulatto population is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to note that scholarly attention has been given to miscegenation in French West Africa. See Owen White, *Children of the French Empire: Miscegenation and Colonial Society in French West Africa 1895-1960* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).

and African communities, which they believed was a crucial means to the desired end of indigenous cultural assimilation. However, between 1902 and 1914, even as contemporaries described assimilation's continued influence on Dakar's colonial society, it was undermined in a variety of ways. First, opposition to French integrationist efforts was evident in the everyday cultural expressions and practices of the city's assimilated and non-assimilated African inhabitants. In particular, overt subversion of assimilationist planning and architectural initiatives was apparent in the development of a peripheral African residential zone that sustained elements of pre-colonial indigenous culture. In the context of Dakar's rapid urbanization, the growth of this "African zone" became a site of concern for French authorities, prompting significant changes to their conceptualization of the city and its African population.

Second, the French West African government's support for the alternative doctrine of association influenced changes to colonial policy in Dakar, despite the city's status as a French Commune. In 1910, colonial theorist Jules Harmand offered a concise explanation of association in his book *Domination et colonisation*. Representing what he called the "systematic repudiation of assimilation,"⁶ Harmand argued that association "envisages the coexistence and cooperation of two profoundly different societies placed in contact in a manner as brusque as it is artificial."⁷ Accordingly, association was a "contract" between colonizer and colonized in which the former was responsible for the establishment of order and the economic betterment of colonial society, while the latter maintained control of their institutions and remained subordinate to French rule. For Harmand, the most salient features of the new doctrine included respect for indigenous

⁶ Jules Harmand, *Domination et colonisation* (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, 1910), 163.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 161.

customs and beliefs, as well as the preservation of indigenous institutions. However, while he explained that association “does not at all attempt to prepare and achieve an equality forever impossible,” Harmand also asserted that it was still meant to have a transformative impact on indigenous populations morally and intellectually.⁸

In practice, the features of association outlined by Harmand were present in the native, educational and judicial policies of the two men who served as the Governor General of French West Africa between 1902 and 1914, Ernest Roume and William Ponty. Applied uniformly throughout the federation, these policies rejected the assimilationist effort to transform Africans into Frenchmen in favour of measures that encouraged indigenous peoples to live and evolve within their own cultures. In Dakar specifically, this new adherence to association influenced efforts to deny *originaires* living in the city many of the rights and privileges they were granted under assimilation. More importantly, it brought significant changes to local residential and building material legislation that, together with the French response to the “African zone,” symbolized the transition in colonial ruling ideology and practice that occurred in the city. Far from encouraging the integration of European and African city-dwellers, this transition restructured colonial social and power relations in Dakar, fostering a new attitude towards indigenous Africans that favoured their exclusion from the French city.

French and African Spaces in Dakar-Ville

To examine the extent of assimilation’s impact on Dakar’s colonial society, it is necessary to not only outline what colonial authorities sought to accomplish through its application, but also to examine how it operated in practice. In short, the intended

⁸ Ibid., 159-160.

outcome of assimilationist efforts at the local level was the creation of a French public that included French expatriates, mulattoes and indigenous Africans who were politically and culturally integrated with France. Although no formal definition of a fully assimilated person was given by French authorities in West Africa before the turn of the century, a number of characteristics of what they believed constituted an *évolué* (or *assimilé*) can be inferred from assimilationist ideals and policies. Most importantly, to be assimilated, one had to be governed by French laws like a typical French citizen. Educated in French schools, the *évolué* was expected to be literate in French, to think French and to adopt French cultural mores, including monogamy. By adhering as much as possible to the French way of life, it was also anticipated that the *évolué* would both support France and contribute to assimilation's successful implementation by voting in elections, running for political office, or serving in the colonial administration or military.⁹ For colonial authorities, mulattoes and Africans constituted the assimilable groups in Dakar. However, because the former readily adopted French beliefs and customs, assimilationist policies were primarily directed towards the latter.¹⁰

The genesis of Dakar's role as a chief center for the assimilation of indigenous Africans can be traced back to the period of its founding. After the French occupied the Cape Verde peninsula on 25 May 1857, Léopold Prôtet, the High Commander of Gorée and its dependencies, announced that the African residents of Dakar would be treated "all

⁹ It should be noted that while efforts were made to convert indigenous Africans to Christianity, accepted *évolués* were not necessarily converts. Indeed, before the First World War, a number of *évolués* remained practicing Muslims. See Idowu, "Assimilation," 205.

¹⁰ Typically the products of racial unions between French merchants or functionaries and African women, mulattoes preferred to integrate into the customs and practices of their French parent. Consequently, mulatto children constituted a large portion of the school-going population in Senegal, and the majority converted to Christianity. See G. Wesley Johnson, "The Senegalese Urban Elite, 1900-1945," in *Africa and the West: Intellectual Responses to European Culture*, ed. Philip D. Curtin (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1972), 144; see also Idowu, "Assimilation," 205-207.

and forever like Frenchmen.”¹¹ In this regard, the French administration in Senegal placed the city under the jurisdiction of the French Civil Code—initially rendered applicable in Saint-Louis and Gorée in 1830—and granted all individuals living there the same rights accorded by the Code to citizens in France.¹² By 1887, this concession was carried further when Dakar was named one of Senegal’s Four Communes, a designation which facilitated the creation of a municipal council responsible for the application of laws that mirrored those governing metropolitan cities.¹³ Moreover, the privileges of French citizenship were extended to African city-dwellers (*originaires*), including the right to elect a deputy to the French National Assembly, to run for the position of deputy, or to serve as councillors in the municipal government or Senegal’s General Council.¹⁴ Together, these measures underlined the work of political assimilation in the city. Yet, while the *originaires* cherished their citizenship status, actively participated in colonial politics, and defended their political rights, assimilation encompassed more than colonial political matters.¹⁵

Before the turn of the century, a number of measures taken by the colonial administration in Senegal also exemplified the French effort to culturally integrate Dakar’s African inhabitants. First, following Pinet-Laprade’s 1856 plan, two institutions considered essential to teaching non-Europeans to become French, a school and a church,

¹¹ “Avis du chef de Division, Commandant Supérieur de Gorée et dépendances, L. Protet, a MM. les habitants et les commerçants de l’île de Gorée ainsi qu’a MM. les Capitaines de commerce sur rade (Jeanne d’Arc, rade de Gorée, 25 mai 1857),” Charpy, *La Fondation de Dakar*, 131.

¹² Njoh, *Planning Power*, 27; see also Idowu, “Assimilation,” 195.

¹³ Crowder, *Senegal*, 15

¹⁴ Johnson, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal*, 47-57.

¹⁵ For an examination of *originnaire* acceptance of political assimilation, as well as their engagement in colonial politics, see *Ibid.*, 79-89; see also Michael C. Lambert, “From Citizenship to *Négritude*: ‘Making a Difference’ in Elite Ideologies of Colonized Francophone West Africa,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35, no. 2 (1993): 243; Idowu, “Assimilation,” 208-209.

were constructed near the soon-to-be-named *Place Prôtet*.¹⁶ Writing in 1858, the Special Commander of Gorée, Paul d'Alteyrac, underlined the “great value” of these institutions when he argued that the introduction of French education and religion in Dakar would facilitate the transformation of African thoughts and beliefs.¹⁷ With regard to education at least, d'Alteyrac's claim echoed the Enlightenment-based undertones of assimilationist ideology that theorized schooling could eliminate differences between divergent peoples.¹⁸ Moreover, his claim highlighted the important role urban development played in the implementation of metropolitan institutions overseas. Indeed, the destruction of Lebou settlements and the efforts made by colonial authorities to incorporate indigenous populations through urban planning initiatives are also examples of how the city was used to further the assimilationist goals of the French colonial enterprise.

Perhaps the most important effort made to culturally assimilate African city-dwellers, however, can be found in French settlement practices. In particular, during the first two decades of Dakar's development, French inhabitants built their homes among the huts of the city's African community. As a result, by the 1870s, Dakar-ville (the name given to the original gridiron arrangement of Dakar) became the site of a residentially integrated populace of French colonists, mulattoes and indigenous Africans.¹⁹ Apart from their desire to receive economic benefits from this arrangement, colonial officials believed that close contact between French expatriates and Africans would contribute to

¹⁶ Faure, *Histoire de la Presqu'île du Cap Vert*, 139.

¹⁷ “Le Commandant de Gorée, d'Alteyrac, au Prince chargé du Ministère (Gorée, le 21 septembre 1858),” Charpy, *La Fondation de Dakar*, 191.

¹⁸ One of the greatest proponents of the equalizing value of education, particularly in relation to environmental differences, was French philosopher Claude Adrien Helvétius, whose ideas are imbedded in both French revolutionary ideology and the doctrine of assimilation. See Betts, *Assimilation and Association*, 14-15; David Wotton, “Helvétius: From Radical Enlightenment to Revolution,” *Political Theory* 28, no. 3 (2000): 307-336.

¹⁹ Whittlesey, “Dakar and the Other Cape Verde Settlements,” 623-624.

the dissemination of French culture and “progressively encourage the indigenous populations of Dakar to practice our customs, our mores and our laws.”²⁰

Into the early twentieth century, contemporary descriptions of local interaction with several French cultural emblems suggested that Dakar’s transformation into a centre of French culture was a success. Principal among these cultural emblems were the numerous cafés constructed throughout Dakar-ville, including Café Sergent located in the *Place Prôtet* which, according to French writer Léon d’Anfreville de la Salle, was “one of the most patronized and successful cafés in the city.”²¹ Visiting Dakar in 1912, travel writer Louis Sonolet described the scene that greeted visitors upon their arrival at this establishment: “the largest part of the public is situated at the café’s immense terrace that opens onto the *Place* [...with] its tables under large trees. Government officials, merchants, officers dressed in white cloth, women in elegant outfits peacefully enjoy their cold drinks. They talk, gossip and flirt.”²² Situated amongst the administrative monuments that surrounded the *Place Prôtet*, Café Sergent catered to an elite clientele that represented French colonial governance and commerce. Accordingly, it added a social element to the administrative quarter, making the *Place*—already the center of colonial power in the French West African capital—a public space that visibly displayed the city’s French character. Consequently, while sources are silent about Dakar’s other cafés, Sonolet’s account suggests their presence contributed to the formation of an urban environment that was distinctly European. As patrons sat at Café Sergent, for instance, they listened to the music of a colonial infantry band that played “popular medleys from

²⁰ Commander of the district of Gorée, Canard, quoted in Faure, *Histoire de la Presqu’île du Cap Vert*, 158; see also Idowu, “Assimilation,” 211.

²¹ de la Salle, *Sur la Côte d’Afrique*, 13. The name of the café is given in Delcourt, *Naissance et Croissance de Dakar*, 82.

²² Sonolet, *L’Afrique Occidentale Française*, 95.

Wagner's repertoire."²³ There, they also watched other city-dwellers promenade across the open space at the center of the so-called "prettiest area of the town."²⁴

If the presence of cafés is any indication, the consolidation of French culture in Dakar was closely connected to nineteenth-century Western bourgeois notions of pleasure, aesthetics and leisure time.²⁵ Spread within the residential area of Dakar-ville, popular forms of metropolitan entertainment, in particular, drew Europeans and Africans into the public sphere and helped display an integrated population that embraced French spaces of sociality and leisure. The arrival of a theatre was especially important in this regard. Louis Sonolet, for example, remarked that its construction satisfied "one of the most marked French tastes" of Dakar's inhabitants.²⁶ In describing his experience at the theatre, Sonolet wrote:

I saw play there [...] Madame Suzanne Després and her company. So much by the impeccable material installation than by the sight of the artists and the public, one would believe to be suddenly transported well away from there [...] and one would swear that one would find outside, after the curtain came down, Paris so eventful and so brilliant.²⁷

The theatre, in short, performed a significant social and cultural role in the lives of the city's European and African residents. At no time was this better expressed than during Senegal's dry season, when contemporaries argued the performances of metropolitan theatre companies gave Dakar "a liveliness [...] that many French cities are lacking."²⁸

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Faure, *Histoire de la Presqu'île du Cap Vert*, 146; see also Sonolet, *L'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 95.

²⁵ For a discussion of these bourgeois notions in relation to Paris, see Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity*, 209-224; see also Nicholas Green, *The Spectacle of Nature: Landscape and Bourgeois Culture in Nineteenth-Century France* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1990).

²⁶ Sonolet, *L'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 98.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Faure, *Histoire de la Presqu'île du Cap Vert*, 164; see also Delcourt, *Naissance et Croissance de Dakar*, 82.

As a result, the theatre contributed to the establishment of a shared social setting that was not only urban, but arguably more French than some cities in the metropole.

Green spaces likewise became the sites of a local urban experience that was particularly metropolitan. As established above, contemporaries acknowledged that the planting of trees along avenues and boulevards introduced a French aesthetic to Dakar's urban landscape. For European and African city-dwellers, parks like the *Jardin Public*, which was located south of the naval port and new railway station, were also said to be public spaces of social interaction and solidarity. Attending an outdoor concert at the *Jardin Public* in 1908, travel writer Louis Songy wrote:

I acknowledge very frankly that I was somewhat sceptical of the value of the company and of the installation of the establishment; so I felt a real pleasure to notice that Dakar's "Garden of Paris" is not much below its contemporaries at the Champs-Élysées [...] Installed in the open air, under the cover of bulky trees, the stage, with its background draped in red fabric, is well in the local tone, and the troupe is no better or no worse than the many concerts of provincial France. It is necessary to appreciate what one experiences here: by this tepid evening, the singers accompanied by the chords of the piano [...] raise the applause of a European and indigenous audience, who ask for nothing more but to have fun.²⁹

Songy's account highlights the recreational value that was ascribed to green spaces by both Europeans and Africans. Together with the descriptions of Dakar's cafés and theatre, it also illustrates that metropolitan public establishments and amenities assumed a symbolic meaning when they were imported in the colonial spatial environment. For French colonial authorities, their presence was meant to bear certain assimilationist fruit, the most significant being the cultural integration of indigenous Africans.³⁰

The above public spaces were designed to encourage African city-dwellers to adopt a European way of life. However, we cannot assume that interaction with these

²⁹ Louis Songy, *La France d'Afrique: Au Sénégal* (Paris: Librairie d'Éducation Nationale, 1908), 80-81.

³⁰ Bigon, *A History of Urban Planning*, 250-258.

sites completely defined the lived experience of Dakar's indigenous population. Indeed, engagement with Gayatri Spivak's method of reading for difference when examining French accounts of the city's colonial society helps reveal that Africans mapped their own experiences of Dakar outside of French-produced spaces.³¹ Contemporary travel literature, for example, indicates that the experiences of the local African community varied as a result of religious differences. In the city, a small Christianized-assimilated indigenous population, along with a larger number of Europeans and mulattoes, took promenades along the *Boulevard National* to attend Catholic religious services at the church located within the *Place Prôtet*. In contrast, the local Senegalese Muslim population, particularly the Lebou, had its own place of worship: a mosque located near the indigenous residential areas on the periphery of Dakar-ville.³² Among other aspects of life in colonial Dakar described in the available colonial documentation, African peoples' experiences were also conditioned by different places of residence and employment.³³ With regard to the latter, some *originaires* made a living by working in Dakar's administrative and economic sectors as functionaries for the federal colonial government or as employees for private commercial firms. Others, however, remained economically independent through their continued engagement in pre-colonial practices like fishing and farming. Apart from the occasional trip to the market, this group of *originaires* rarely entered the spaces frequented by Europeans, implying their interaction with colonial institutions was fairly minimal.³⁴

³¹ Spivak, *In Other Worlds*, 197-221.

³² de la Salle, *Sur la Côte d'Afrique*, 13.

³³ Scholars of British colonial cities in Africa have made similar assertions. See Myers, "Colonial and Postcolonial Modernities," 340-341; Hansen, *Keeping House in Lusaka*, 31-36.

³⁴ Joe Lunn, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom: A Senegalese Oral History of the First World War* (Cape Town, David Philip Publishers, 1999), 19; see also Bigon, *A History of Urban Development*, 229.

These examples of the diversity of lived experience in Dakar show that Africans had room to negotiate their encounter with local colonial institutions and urban development. For the purposes of this study, recognition of African autonomy in the colonial urban sphere invites further inquiry into the ways indigenous city-dwellers responded to French cultural imperialism. In addressing this issue, it is important to keep in mind Frederick Cooper's thoughts on African agency. In contrast to scholars who focus solely on the concept of resistance in their examinations of the African experience of European colonialism, Cooper contends that the agency of colonized peoples can be found in the divergent ways they engaged with, appropriated, deflected and contested colonial strategies of rule.³⁵ In the case of Dakar's African inhabitants, interaction with assimilationist policies and initiatives produced a myriad of responses that illustrated they were agents in making their own choices and constructing their own ideas about local ruling strategies and initiatives.

Indeed, contemporary accounts of life in the French West African capital indicate that it was not uncommon to find *gourmets*, a group of Africans described as "Catholics who live like Europeans [...and] well-off young people who copy European styles," dressed *à l'euro péenne* walking along Dakar's major thoroughfares.³⁶ French military official Louis-Marie Vasseur explained, for example, that some African men adopted a European style of dress that included frock coats, vests and felt hats.³⁷ In the commercial port as well, African porters displayed their own unique sense of European fashion by, according to one observer, "refusing to tuck their shirts into their pants," allowing "them

³⁵ Cooper, "Conflict and Connection," 1532-1537.

³⁶ Jojot, *Dakar*, 31-32.

³⁷ Vasseur, *Vers Bir-Taouil*, 59.

to float back and forth in the wind.”³⁸ In addition, several private African landowners demonstrated their approval of French building practices by constructing 285 brick homes in Dakar-ville from 1903 to 1908.³⁹ Since the early nineteenth century, the development of brick homes in colonial Senegal symbolized the builder’s wealth and attachment to places of European power and influence.⁴⁰ Accordingly, while many of these homes were constructed by Africans as part of their assimilation into French culture, it can also be assumed that savvy indigenous entrepreneurs appropriated French building practices to charge higher rents and attract European renters.⁴¹

At the same time some African city-dwellers adopted certain French habits, it is also conclusive that they kept much of their pre-colonial civilization, while many others resisted assimilation completely. In 1908, colonial officials Ribot and Lafon commented on the influence of assimilation in the French West African capital. “Even the most civilized blacks,” they argued, “cannot submit themselves to certain European habits, no more than Europeans can adopt certain indigenous customs.”⁴² As Figure 13 illustrates, a number of Africans who participated in colonial economic activity at the *Place Kermel* market continued to dress in pre-colonial clothing styles, which mainly consisted of long flowing garments, baggy pants and skullcaps (Fig. 13).⁴³

³⁸ Laurent, *De Dakar a Zinder*, 5.

³⁹ Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 82.

⁴⁰ Sinou, *Comptoirs et Villes Coloniales du Sénégal*, 158-159.

⁴¹ Indeed, contemporaries observed that some Europeans did rent from African landowners. See Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 82.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 160.

⁴³ The continued use of pre-colonial clothing styles by African city-dwellers is outlined by Jojot, *Dakar*, 31.

Figure 13: African city-dwellers at the *Place Kermel* market.



In de la Salle, *Notre vieux Sénégal*, 80-81. Courtesy of Gallica, the digital library of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Other salient features of *originnaire* existence in Dakar go farther in elucidating why even for Africans with French citizenship rights the cultural impact of colonial integrationist efforts was limited. That *originnaires* retained their *statut personnel* as part of their political privileges explains, for example, why the majority of this group saw little contradiction between their status as citizens and maintaining their customary values and practices.⁴⁴ In the organization of local African society especially, this situation was aided by the stable urban setting created by the dominance of the social systems of the Lebou and Wolof peoples—the largest ethnic groups that made up Dakar’s *originnaire* population. Similar to rural Wolof social relations, allegiance among most *originnaires* was determined by familial bonds and extended kinship networks, and residential collectives continued to invest authority in making group decisions in customary ways.⁴⁵ Because nearly all *originnaires* were Muslims, Islam was another factor that undermined assimilation’s influence. Indeed, the number of Muslims who entered the local school

⁴⁴ Some colonial authorities even complained that *originnaires* used their rights as “citizens and electors” to resist following certain French policies. See Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 109-110.

⁴⁵ Johnson, “The Senegalese Urban Elite,” 143, 184-185; see also Lunn, *Memoirs*, 18-19.

system, an important avenue for French assimilationist initiatives, was negligible. For their part, Senegalese Muslims were distrustful of the impact European education would have on their religious beliefs, and therefore prohibited their children from attending French primary schools.⁴⁶ As a result, the spread of the French language that colonial officials believed was essential to indigenous cultural integration, and to French social and economic relations with Africans, was impeded. As colonial medical official Charles Jojot outlined in his 1907 ethnography of Dakar, while indigenous city-dwellers spoke some French, their principal language was Wolof.⁴⁷

Against the background of the indigenous response to French cultural imperialism, contemporary evidence also indicates that African views of the colonial spatial environment were not profoundly transformed by assimilationist planning efforts. Indeed, despite the fact the Lebou villages of the Cape Verde peninsula were destroyed to make room for French urban forms, the local African community continued to reference these sites using informal place names. In particular, indigenous city-dwellers living at or near the former sites of displaced villages like M'bot and N'Graff referred to them by their pre-colonial names, even though they were now comprised within residential plots or replaced by city streets and renamed according to the French street naming system. Even when these former sites no longer housed indigenous residents, such as Gouye on the Plateau, their pre-colonial names persisted in the African vernacular. Additionally, non-official terminology was often used by the city's African residents in reference to French urban forms. When the *rue Vincens* was constructed on Dakar's western border after 1902, for instance, Lebous living near the street labelled it "la grand'rue." In this

⁴⁶ Idowu, "Assimilation," 203; see also Lunn, *Memoirs*, 19.

⁴⁷ Jojot, *Dakar*, 31.

context, the indigenous use of informal toponyms signifies that Africans had their own systems of reference for particular spaces within Dakar-ville. Far from being regulated or eliminated by the official, French, organization and conception of the city's urban landscape, these systems of reference existed outside—or at least alongside—it. As a result, African place names represented a way of thinking about Dakar that differed from the disciplinary apparatuses imbedded and reinforced in the city's development since the middle of the nineteenth century.⁴⁸

Compared to African naming practices, more overt opposition to Dakar's assimilationist development was apparent in indigenous urban residential practices and spatial production. While some Africans willingly conformed to Dakar-ville's gridiron pattern, and even constructed brick homes, others refused to be absorbed into the colonial urban landscape.⁴⁹ Indeed, travel writers who visited Dakar in the early twentieth century observed that only a small number of Africans lived in the city. Instead, they claimed a large indigenous population resided in an informal, yet distinct, quarter outside of Dakar-ville's unofficial borders.⁵⁰ The origin of this residential quarter dates back to the early years of Dakar's development when the Lebou, in response to the destruction of their villages, maintained their cultural sovereignty by moving to the northwest of the Cape Verde peninsula and settling where the French were not active.⁵¹ Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, this process contributed to the formation of an "African

⁴⁸ The information for this paragraph comes from Liora Bigon's examination of indigenous perspectives on street and place names in Dakar. Bigon, "Names, Norms and Forms," 491-496. Contemporary evidence of African naming practices in relation to other French innovations reinforces the argument that indigenous city-dwellers had their own systems of reference for specific sites in Dakar. See Jojot, *Dakar*, 33.

⁴⁹ Johnson, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal*, 12-13.

⁵⁰ de la Salle, *Sur la Côte d'Afrique*, 19-20; see also Sonolet, *L'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 95.

⁵¹ Faure, *Histoire de la Presqu'île du Cap Vert*, 142; see also "Le Commandant de Gorée au procureur imperial (30 avril 1858)," Charpy, *La Fondation de Dakar*, 145.

zone” on the western edge of Dakar-ville that not only preserved pre-colonial forms of spatial organization, but a style of life that was distinctly African.

In contrast to the in-filling of the grid that represented Dakar’s colonial urban development, the “African zone” was characterized by a form of spatial production that closely resembled the layout of the original villages on Cape Verde, as well as nearby Wolof settlements. In this regard, the quarter developed in a spontaneous and asymmetrical fashion, most likely starting with a single, isolated structure before growing outward in a circular formation with the accretion of additional buildings. At the centre of this arrangement, an open space was reserved for communal activities. The principal structures that surrounded this space were round huts walled and roofed with thatch, though other pre-colonial building materials like straw and wattle were also present. Within the “African zone,” other pre-colonial practices, including the production of food on the land around houses, were continued by indigenous settlers, and consequently engendered a lived experience that was at least partly defined by traditional habits and customs.⁵² To this extent, the “African zone” represented the emergence of an indigenous urban order that not only opposed assimilationist planning efforts and policies, but also visibly displayed their limits.

By 1905, the “African zone” sat to the west of the recently constructed *rue Vincens*, and its continued growth became a major source of concern for French colonial authorities.⁵³ However, while planning and architecture in the *ville impériale* continued to be predicated on assimilationist principles, the French response to this indigenous residential quarter underlined a change in the way colonial officials conceptualized the

⁵² Gamble, *The Wolof of Senegambia*, 41, 93-95; see also Winters, “Urban Morphogenesis,” 145; Bigon, *A History of Urban Planning*, 100-101.

⁵³ Bigon, *A History of Urban Planning*, 190.

city and its African inhabitants. As the following pages reveal, this change was part of a larger transition in colonial ideology and rule that took place throughout the whole federation between 1902 and 1914. In particular, the social and political policies enacted by the Governor Generals of French West Africa during this period demonstrated their adherence to the new colonial doctrine of association. Consequently, to understand the effects of this transition on Dakar's colonial development and population, it becomes important to examine association's influence on the ideals and practices of French rule in West Africa.

The Decline of Assimilation in French West Africa

While the precedent for assimilation existed in the Four Communes of Senegal, a clear shift in the rhetoric and practice of colonial rule in French West Africa occurred in the early twentieth century under the direction of Governor General Ernest Roume. A graduate of the *École Polytechnique* who had worked for the French Colonial Ministry from 1895 to 1902, Roume was a prominent member of the colonial lobby, an interest group that emerged in the 1890s and attempted to influence French colonial policy.⁵⁴ During his tenure in the federation (1902-1907), Roume, a supporter of the lobby's push for French economic expansion overseas, initiated a program of *mise en valeur*—namely through the expansion of railway networks and port systems—to facilitate the

⁵⁴ A group of geographers, colonialists, economic theorists, merchants and industrialists, the colonial lobby promoted French colonial expansion, namely for the economic benefits colonialism offered. For a full description and examination of the colonial lobby, see Aldrich, *Greater France*, 100-106; see also Stuart Michael Persell, *The French Colonial Lobby 1889-1938* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1983).

exploitation of resources like palm oil, peanut oil and rubber.⁵⁵ More importantly, his attitude towards colonial rule reflected the group's condemnation of assimilation as rigid, unscientific and harmful, as well as its promotion of association as France's official colonial doctrine.⁵⁶

In a government circular released in 1903, Roume made apparent his rejection of the assimilationist ideal to transform Africans into Frenchmen with his claim that France was duty-bound to respect the "traditional" customs and mores of the federation's indigenous subjects.⁵⁷ Indeed, the policies he enacted mirrored the associationist belief that fundamental differences existed between Europeans and non-Europeans, and that indigenous populations should be permitted to live and evolve within their own cultures. However, they also revealed that if a custom was deemed to conflict with French principles of civilization, the Governor General had an obligation to excise it and replace it with superior French habits and institutions. Roume's effort to completely eliminate slavery and aristocratic "feudalism," for instance, represented his use of this provision to improve Africans morally. In this regard, while associationist rule in the federation was patterned on local institutions and habits, it still promoted the gradual evolutionism of indigenous peoples towards European civilization.⁵⁸

Of all the issues Roume addressed as Governor General, his adherence to association was most evident in his approach towards colonial education. On 24

⁵⁵ In a circular released to his subordinates in French West Africa, Roume outlined the importance of French economic expansion in the federation. Ernest Roume, *Discours Prononcé à la Séance d'ouverture de la Session du Conseil du Gouvernement: Session de 1903* (Saint-Louis: Imprimerie du Gouvernement, 1903), 13-23.

⁵⁶ The colonial lobby's expression of its support for association can be found in the actions of its parliamentary group, the *Parti Colonial*, which was influential in the promotion and eventual acceptance of the new colonial doctrine. See Betts, *Assimilation and Association*, 5-9; Persell, *The French Colonial Lobby*, 37-38; Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 52.

⁵⁷ Roume, *Discours Prononcé: Session de 1903*, 6-7.

⁵⁸ Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 74-75.

November 1903, barely a year into his posting at Dakar, Roume created a federal school system to provide free, but not compulsory, education for the indigenous populations of French West Africa. In the decree establishing this new system, Roume reiterated his assertion that African customs and beliefs needed to be respected, arguing that the metropolitan curriculum had to “adapt” to local conditions and the special needs of indigenous Africans. The different schools established in the federation after 1903 underlined this change, but also demonstrated the continuing efforts made by the French to move Africans along the path of civilization. At the primary education level, for instance, village and regional schools were envisaged in rural areas that covered different areas of study ranging from speaking, reading and writing French, to hygiene, agriculture and local industry. At the higher primary and professional levels, practical training was emphasized to foster the creation of literate auxiliaries in the manual trades, commerce and administration. In all of the federation’s schools, to ensure Africans evolved within their own cultures, instruction was secular and also focused on local history, indigenous traditions and, in Islamicized areas, Arabic.⁵⁹ For Roume, the creation of a secular school system represented a triumph for the new approach to colonial governance he spearheaded. Speaking in 1904, he explained that the strict enforcement of religious neutrality in colonial policy underlined France’s “benevolent protection” of indigenous beliefs and practices, which was meant to win Africans—especially Muslim Africans—over to French colonial rule.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Apart from the decree of 24 November 1903, Roume outlined the major aspects of his education policy in government circulars and speeches. See Roume, *Discours Prononcé: Session de 1903*, 19-20; Ernest Roume, *Discours Prononcé à la Séance d’ouverture de la Session du Conseil du Gouvernement: Session de 1904*, 18-19. For more information on the different schools established under this system, see Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 75-86.

⁶⁰ Roume, *Discours Prononcé: Session de 1904*, 18-19.

While Roume initiated the transition to association in French West Africa, the ruling principles he lauded were even more apparent in the statements and actions of his successor, William Ponty. A career soldier-administrator, Ponty participated in the conquest of Western Sudan (renamed Upper Senegal-Niger) in the late nineteenth century, served as the colony's lieutenant governor, and also briefly worked under Joseph Gallieni—considered the father of association—in Madagascar before his tenure as Governor General (1908-1915). Though his career differed greatly from Roume's, like his predecessor, Ponty devoted most of his time as Governor General to crafting an approach to colonial governance that respected the different traditions and beliefs of indigenous Africans. Speaking in 1909, he articulated the main tenets of his ruling strategy: “respect for indigenous life, freedom, and family, [...] habits and traditions, without allowing him to give into his native barbarism [...]; attentive study of his mentality, aspirations and needs; benevolence in our interactions with him, impartial justice appropriate to his spirit.”⁶¹ According to Ponty, these tenets underlined that the French relationship with Africans was akin to that of a “tutor to his ward.”⁶² In this regard, his attitude towards the everyday rule of the federation's indigenous populations echoed his predecessor's; respect for African traditions and beliefs would be shown to “prepare, without abruptness, without irregularity, and without weakness, their evolution toward a social ideal conforming to our civilization.”⁶³ In practice, the associationist

⁶¹ BNF, William Ponty, *Discours Prononcé à la Séance d'ouverture de la Session du Conseil du Gouvernement: Session Ordinaire de Juin 1909* (Gorée: Imprimerie du Gouvernement, 1909), 12.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ ANOM, FP APOM 75/4, Papiers Randau, William Ponty, “Situation Politique Générale de 1909 à Juin 1910,” *Gouvernement Générale de l'Afrique Occidentale Française, Service des Affaires Politiques, Administratives et Économiques*, 1910.

ideals espoused by Ponty were best expressed in the reforms he made to the federation's native and judicial policies.

At the time of the creation of the French West African federation, a system of protectorates existed outside of Senegal's Four Communes that followed a native policy of territorial commands which administered specific districts through indigenous intermediaries. Though this protectorate system represented association's initial rise to prominence in France's West African colonies, immediately upon his arrival at Dakar, Ponty introduced a new native policy that he claimed would ensure the federation's indigenous populations would progress within their own traditions. In the 22 September 1909 circular establishing this new policy, labelled the *politique des races*, Ponty argued that for French colonialism to achieve positive and lasting results, direct contact needed to be re-established between local French *commandants* and the indigenous populations they administered. Far from eliminating the position of indigenous intermediaries, however, he asserted that "it can only be advantageous to choose a native chief from a family of the ethnic group that he will represent; indeed, we do not have the right to sacrifice the future of one race to the future of another."⁶⁴ In granting Africans the right to be governed by chiefs from their own ethnicities, Ponty sought to diminish the power, as well as the overall number of chiefs who ruled over Africans of differing origins and traditions. According to Paul Marty, who collaborated with Ponty on Muslim affairs, this was done to not only conserve the differences between neighbouring indigenous groups, but to also win these groups over by protecting them from religious and social

⁶⁴ ANOM, FP APOM 75/4, Papiers Randau, William Ponty, "Sur la Politique Indigène," Gouvernement Générale de l'Afrique Occidentale Française, Service des Affaires Politiques, Administratives et Économiques, 22 September 1909.

oppression.⁶⁵ To this extent, the *politique des races* emphasized the associationist ideal to respect indigenous customs, which also provided the framework for his approach to the administration of the indigenous legal system.

Continuing the trend he established with the implementation of the *politique des races*, Ponty's reform of the federation's judicial policy expressed his effort to ensure Africans lived and evolved within their own societies and traditions. Introduced on 16 August 1912, this reform declared that "our judicial organization guarantees the natives the maintenance of their customs. The courts that apply custom, in case of disputes or punishable offenses, will be composed of judges practicing the same law as the parties who come before them, or who are referred to them."⁶⁶ In granting Africans the right to courts and judges that followed their particular customs and beliefs, Ponty's judicial policy considerably altered the court system established by Ernest Roume in 1903, which arbitrarily placed individual ethnic or religious groups under courts that did not practice their customary laws. Indeed, Article 6 of the decree that introduced the 1912 reform even envisioned the establishment of multiple indigenous courts in specific districts.⁶⁷ At the same time, though, the 1912 reform, more than any other policy implemented before it, reflected Ponty's overall goal to uplift Africans. As Paul Marty explained in 1915, decisions made in indigenous courts could not contradict "the fundamental rules of natural law *and* [...] the principles of French civilization."⁶⁸ In the realm of criminal law

⁶⁵ Paul Marty, "La Politique Indigène du Gouverneur Général Ponty en Afrique Occidentale Française," *Revue du Monde Musulman* 31 (1915): 7-9. Of course, his argument did not take into account the negative impact of French rule on Africans in the federation, specifically in relation to this new native policy. See Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 118-119.

⁶⁶ William Ponty, *Justice Indigène: Instructions aux Administrateurs sur l'application du Décret du 16 août 1912 portant réorganisation de la justice indigène en Afrique Occidentale Française* (Dakar: Imprimerie Ternaux, 1913), 42.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Marty, "La Politique Indigène," 18. Emphasis mine.

especially, greater French participation and intervention in indigenous judicial affairs was promoted to ensure Africans adhered to the colonizer's understanding of morality and criminal justice. For example, while local African custom decided what constituted a crime, Articles 36 and 37 of the 1912 reform outlined that French law was given the power to determine the criminality of a given offence.⁶⁹

The educational, native and judicial policies enacted by Governor Generals Roume and Ponty exemplified the new, associationist, direction in colonial governance forged in French West Africa between 1902 and 1914. However, while association brought considerable changes to the federation's administrative system, the assimilationist ideals and policies that had governed the Four Communes of Senegal since the early nineteenth century remained largely unaltered well into the twentieth century. In contrast to the "adapted" system of education established by Roume in 1903, for example, primary schools in these localities continued to follow the metropolitan curriculum.⁷⁰ The French court system operating in the Four Communes was another exception to these administrative changes. Apart from customary law matters (unless they preferred French civil law), *originaires*, in accordance with their rights as citizens, were given access to courts and French magistrates that presided over French commercial and criminal law matters.⁷¹ In ways other than the approach taken to urban development in Dakar, then, French colonial authorities attempted to maintain the image of the Four Communes as successful assimilationist enclaves.

⁶⁹ Ponty, *Justice Indigène*, 82-87.

⁷⁰ Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 77, 80.

⁷¹ This right was not only upheld by Ernest Roume, but also by William Ponty in his 1912 reform of the federation's judicial policy. See Pierre Meunier, *Organisation et Fonctionnement de la Justice Indigène en Afrique Occidentale Française* (Paris: Augustin Challamel, 1914), 85-89; Ponty, *Justice Indigène*, 32.

Though the above examples demonstrate the continuing impact of assimilationist ideals in the federation, even before the turn of the century, a number of criticisms were levelled against the doctrine of assimilation in Senegal. The majority of these criticisms mirrored the claim made by proponents of association in the late nineteenth century that colonized populations could not become equal members of French civilization. With regard to *originaires* in particular, many French expatriates (both official and non-official) in West Africa questioned the decision to grant Africans citizenship rights while at the same time allowing them to retain their *statut personnel*. According to critics, the retention of private law matters, including practices like polygamy, openly contrasted with the definition of a French citizen because it exempted Africans from their obligations under metropolitan law. Therefore, even if *originaires* adopted some French customs, it was argued they were not orthodox *évolués*.⁷²

Critics also openly questioned the voting rights held by *originaires* living in the Four Communes. In his 1901 article, “The ‘Black-Vote in Senegal,” for instance, Pierre Mille argued that “France had made a mistake in granting suffrage to the Natives.”⁷³ Labelling Senegal a “rotten-borough,” Mille not only claimed that most African voters were illiterate, but also alleged their votes were bought by competing French commercial firms who used the elections of the colony’s Municipal and General Councils to gain control of its administrative and customs policies. Furthermore, he contended that after realizing their competition to win over electors resulted in the loss of a large portion of the colony’s finances, these firms decided to join together to save their expenses and

⁷² Crowder, *Senegal*, 17; see also Idowu, “Assimilation,” 212-213.

⁷³ Pierre Mille, “The ‘Black-Vote’ in Senegal,” *Journal of the Royal African Society* 1, no. 1 (1901): 78.

control a large number of votes.⁷⁴ Therefore, even though Mille acknowledged that assimilation carried some advantages, such as the moral and social improvement of *originaires*, he concluded that from a political point of view, “it does not seem as though this experiment has been entirely successful.”⁷⁵

In the context of these criticisms against assimilation, as well as the emergence of the associationist approach to colonial governance in French West Africa, a number of official efforts were made to undermine the status granted to the *originaires* of the Four Communes. In 1908, the Lieutenant Governor of Senegal, Camille Guy, asked for 1,563 African names to be removed from the electoral role of Dakar. In Guy’s view, this request was justified because, as he argued, the city’s African residents were French subjects, and only French citizens could vote. While his request was granted by Dakar’s municipal court, it was rejected by the Court of Appeals in Paris; though, despite upholding their historic right to vote, the Court did rule that *originaires* were not French citizens.⁷⁶ Subsequent to this decision, a series of measures were introduced to deprive *originaires* of their citizenship rights. For instance, *originaires* living or travelling outside of the Four Communes were denied access to French courts and prohibited from voting in elections. Additionally, in 1911, all *originaires* serving in metropolitan army units in West Africa were discharged from their positions and placed within the units of the Tirailleurs Sénégalais, an army division composed of the federation’s non-*originaire* indigenous population. Finally, in 1913, arguably the most repressive effort to clarify the status and rights of *originaires* was made by Governor General Ponty, who launched a

⁷⁴ Ibid., 65-67, 75-77.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 77-78.

⁷⁶ Crowder, *Senegal*, 19. Other efforts were made before 1908 to reduce the number of voters in the Communes, but none were justified in the terms used by Camille Guy. See Johnson, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal*, 80-83.

legal challenge in French courts to restrict citizenship to the small number of “naturalized” Africans who had given up their *statut personnel*. Other conditions for acquiring citizenship were introduced in a naturalization decree promulgated on 25 May 1912. These included proof of devotion to France through military service or work in a French office (public or private) for at least ten years, the ability to read and write French, as well as evidence of good financial standing and a good character.⁷⁷

Redefining “French” Dakar

Overall, the efforts made to restrict the rights of *originaires* and to redefine French citizenship in the federation exemplify the permeation of associationist ideals within the administrative apparatus of Senegal’s Four Communes. In Dakar specifically, association’s influence also led to changes in how colonial authorities defined the city and responded to African residency within it. These changes can be understood in relation to the French reaction to the growth of the peripheral “African zone” in the years immediately following Dakar’s designation as the capital of French West Africa. Namely, the rapid urbanization that occurred in the city after 1902, together with *laissez-faire* regulations on indigenous urban living, contributed to a situation on the western margins of Dakar-ville where the thatched huts of the “African zone” began to overlap with the brick homes of European city-dwellers.⁷⁸ While some indigenous dwellings were moulded into new residential plots as they were constructed, the area where the city and the indigenous residential quarter met became a site of concern for commentators and

⁷⁷ Because of this new decree, only ninety-four Africans in the federation were naturalized between 1914 and 1922. See Crowder, *Senegal*, 19-20; see also Echenberg, *Black Death*, 33.

⁷⁸ Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 82; see also de la Salle, *Notre vieux Sénégal*, 74.

colonial authorities alike.⁷⁹ As late as 1908, Léon d'Anfreville de la Salle lamented that the "African zone" broke the "picturesque image" of the city with its "sandy and bumpy streets."⁸⁰ Apart from the physical appearance of this residential quarter, contemporaries also decried the presence of indigenous inhabitants of "doubtful value" within it.⁸¹ According to colonial officials Ribot and Lafon, for example, a large number of the residents in the "African zone" were nomads and migrant labourers who "sleep anywhere, eat anything, cram inside tiny houses, contribute daily labour that is often poorly done, and end their evenings by singing and dancing to their tam-tams."⁸²

During the period in question, the French attitude towards the "Africa zone," and consequently its indigenous inhabitants, was revealed in the vocabulary used by travel writers and colonial officials to describe it.⁸³ In purely spatial terms, the zone was labelled a *faubourg* (suburb) of Dakar, which indicated that it was not an integral part of the city's urban landscape. To accent this designation, contemporaries explained that apart from a few curious tourists and soldiers in pursuit of economic opportunities, Europeans rarely visited this zone.⁸⁴ Other descriptions of the indigenous residential quarter went further by establishing a clear contrast between it and the French city. In particular, while Dakar was the *cité moderne* or the *ville européenne*, the "African zone" was the *village indigène*, a term implying that it had a rural character and was not urban.⁸⁵ Finally, the zone was also known as the *quartier noir*, a more discriminatory

⁷⁹ Bigon, *A History of Urban Planning*, 115.

⁸⁰ de la Salle, *Sur la Côte d'Afrique*, 20.

⁸¹ Jojot, *Dakar*, 35-36.

⁸² Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 43-44.

⁸³ For a general discussion of how vocabulary was used to define colonial cities, see Winters, "Urban Morphogenesis," 141.

⁸⁴ de la Salle, *Sur la Côte d'Afrique*, 21.

⁸⁵ Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 18, 82-83.

term that suggested it was not even a residential sector.⁸⁶ This line of thinking was also expressed by the French West African government in an official map of Dakar it released in 1906 (Fig. 14). Shown in Figure 14, this map placed the “African zone,” labelled the *quartier indigène*, in a blank space outside of the city, despite the fact that it overlapped with certain sections of Dakar-ville.⁸⁷ Taken together, these various labels confirm that the spatial existence of this peripheral residential zone undermined the efforts that were made in the early twentieth century to transform Dakar into a French city. More importantly, they reveal that the continued presence of indigenous forms of residence forced the French to clearly define their vision of the city, which ultimately excluded indigenous African culture *and* residency.

Figure 14: Map of Dakar, 1906.



In Jojot, *Dakar*, 4-5. Courtesy of Gallica, the digital library of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

⁸⁶ de la Salle, *Sur la Côte d’Afrique*, 20.

⁸⁷ Colonial authorities also labelled the “African zone” the *quartier indigène*. See Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 100.

The French attitude towards the “African zone” at the beginning of the twentieth century directly contrasted with previous assimilationist efforts to promote the cohabitation of European and African city-dwellers. Indeed, it revealed the growing influence of association in the French West African capital, particularly in relation to the desire to draw a clear separation between both communities because of their socio-cultural differences. When discussing African residency in Dakar, some officials even suggested their segregation from the *ville impériale*.⁸⁸ However, as de la Salle observed, “our particular and very ridiculous state of mind [...] prevents us from frankly decreeing and applying with clarity, like the English, the principle [...] of racial segregation.”⁸⁹ Despite the French West African government’s rejection of assimilationist ideals and policies outside of the Four Communes of Senegal, the maintenance of Dakar’s status as a *commune de pleine exercice* prevented the colonial administration from implementing residential segregation as an official policy. Indeed, colonial authorities recognized that segregation, and the accompanying destruction of indigenous modes of habitation it implied, could become a potentially embarrassing issue and source of discontent, especially in a federal colonial capital where the rights granted to Africans under assimilation continued to be upheld.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the vocabulary and maps used to distinguish “French” Dakar from the “African zone” represented the adoption of a more subtle effort to informally exclude non-assimilated Africans from the city. Before 1914, when residential segregation became an official policy of the federal colonial

⁸⁸ Ibid., 160. Ribot and Lafon did not advocate segregation in Dakar, but did mention that the idea was discussed by the colonial administration in the early twentieth century.

⁸⁹ de la Salle, *Sur la Côte d’Afrique*, 20.

⁹⁰ Bigon, *A History of Urban Planning*, 194.

government, this de facto process of exclusion was also initiated through the regulation of building materials and the explicit promotion of European modes of living.

As established above, assimilation had a major impact on Dakar's development as a French city, influencing public works projects that were meant to project the grandeur of French culture and imperialism. This process was not altered by the transition in colonial ruling practice initiated in French West Africa after 1902. However, the acceptance of associationist socio-cultural ideals did result in legislative decisions that used the city as tool to exclude unwanted indigenous residents and infrastructure associated with the local African community from European city-dwellers. This was the case for the new indigenous hospital built between 1909 and 1911.⁹¹ A growing indigenous population provided an excuse for the federal colonial government to receive funds to construct this new building far from the European sections of the city at the southern end of the Cape Verde peninsula.⁹² Within Dakar, other measures were taken to preserve and promote French culture. In particular, as a growing number of Europeans began to occupy the Plateau, the most desirable residential section of the city was designated a strictly "European zone." On the Plateau, colonial authorities restricted residency to those who demonstrated the common capacity to follow a European way of life. As a result, the Plateau's population mainly consisted of Europeans, mulattos and assimilated Africans who worked as civil servants in the federal or municipal colonial governments, or as employees for local French commercial firms.⁹³

⁹¹ ANOM FM TP 1096/5, Inspection Générale des Travaux Publics, "Projet de construction de nouveaux bâtiments à l'Hôpital Indigène de Dakar," 24 June 1914.

⁹² ANOM, FM TP 1096/5, William Ponty, "Emprunt de 167 Millions: Projet de l'Hôpital indigène de Dakar," 28 August 1914; see also Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 91-100.

⁹³ Sinou, "Le Sénégal," 56; see also Njoh, *Planning Power*, 102.

With regard to the Plateau's private development, colonial authorities maintained the approach they established in the design of Dakar's public buildings by requiring residents and companies who built there to utilize French building materials and follow French building practices. To ensure adherence to this rule, the Lieutenant Governor of Senegal, following the implementation of a new building code for each city in the colony, issued a decree on 21 June 1905 forbidding the use of non-permanent building materials in the European residential quarters of Dakar. Non-permanent materials, or anything that was considered by colonial authorities to contribute to an unhealthy urban environment, included cloth, straw, thatch, wattle, mud and tarred carton.⁹⁴ Because these building materials were used by indigenous city-dwellers (*originnaire* and *non-originnaire*) in the "African zone," where regulations were less strict, the June decree was an important expression of the exclusionist attitude adopted by the colonial administration.⁹⁵ For colonial officials, while Africans who kept aspects of their customary laws and practices could continue to work and socialize in Dakar, their refusal to fully integrate into French ways of living justified their residential separation from the city's European, mulatto and assimilated African inhabitants.

Nevertheless, colonial policy cannot fully account for the process of exclusion that took place in Dakar between 1902 and 1914. The city's domestic economy was another factor that prevented the residential integration of Europeans and Africans. According to contemporaries, for example, increased local construction (public and

⁹⁴ Assane Seck, *Dakar: Métropole Ouest-Africaine* (Dakar: IFAN, 1970), 133; see also Bigon, *A History of Urban Planning*, 190. It is important to note that the Lieutenant Governor's June decree was sanctioned by the French West African government in a decree released on 21 May 1905. This decree authorized the Lieutenant-Governor of Senegal to prohibit the use of the above building materials in places he deemed necessary. "Arrêté du lieutenant-gouverneur concernant la construction et la salubrité des maisons (Saint-Louis, le 21 Juin 1905)," in Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 185-189.

⁹⁵ Bigon, *A History of Urban Planning*, 190.

private) after 1902 did little to reduce land and rental prices in the French West African capital.⁹⁶ Instead, these prices continued to increase, resulting in a situation where the money spent on land, rent or the construction of a home “weighed the heaviest on the budgets of the city’s inhabitants.”⁹⁷ On the Plateau in particular, monthly rental fees reached as high as 300 francs, which, together with the high cost of permanent building materials, prevented many Africans from living there.⁹⁸ Even for European city-dwellers, high land values and construction costs on the Plateau became a source of discontent. In November 1905, for example, a ministerial report revealed that a large number of Dakar’s private land owners refused to build in the “European zone” in response to the colonial government’s decision to construct residences for its functionaries free of charge, while requiring non-governmental employees to pay additional construction fees. To quell this criticism, and to promote private development on the Plateau, the federal colonial government resorted to offering individuals and groups who built there a “guaranteed interest” of ten percent—including land and construction costs—of the capital they committed to constructing their settlements.⁹⁹ By 30 December 1905, an official decree was issued raising this offer to twenty percent.¹⁰⁰

While the guaranteed interest offered by the French West African government was enough incentive to encourage private construction on the Plateau, in the context of

⁹⁶ From 1903 to 1908, colonial authorities explained that 440 buildings were built through private initiative, both European and African. As mentioned above, Africans built 285 brick houses in Dakar which contained around 1,400 rooms. During the same period, Europeans built 150 houses which contained around 800 rooms. See Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 81-82.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁹⁸ According to contemporaries, even some European labourers and low-level government employees could not afford the high rental prices in the city. Laurent, *De Dakar a Zinder*, 6; see also Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 25-26, 82.

⁹⁹ ANOM FM SG Sénégal/XII/110, Malan, Le Secrétaire Général des Colonies H.C, Chef du Service des Finances et du Contrôle, “Rapport en Commission Permanente du Conseil de Gouvernement, Séance du 20 Novembre 1905.”

¹⁰⁰ Seck, *Dakar: Métropole Ouest-Africaine*, 111.

the residential sector's designation as a "European zone," colonial authorities managed to turn a purely economic situation into a cultural one.¹⁰¹ For example, to gain authority over Dakar's private interests, the federal colonial government restricted the capital it promised in the December 1905 decree to individuals and companies whose construction projects conformed to the approved plans of the federation's Public Works Department.¹⁰² Figure 15 illustrates the results of this decision on the types of homes built in the European residential quarter (Fig. 15). Labelled "modern" by contemporaries, these homes represented a considerable innovation from the metropolitan-styled habitations located in Dakar-ville, being more suitably adapted to the local climate with wide windows that opened onto verandas or terraces that were shaded by overhanging roofs.¹⁰³ Through legislative means, then, the colonial administration transformed the Plateau into a visual symbol of not only the cultural differences, but also the unequal distribution of wealth and socio-political power that existed between "French" Dakar and the "African zone." In this regard, the "European zone," which was also called the *ville bourgeoise* by local French authorities, became a privileged urban space before 1914.¹⁰⁴ As one onlooker commented in 1908, "on the Plateau [...] numerous and elegant villas arise, freshwater flows in abundance, and electricity has made its appearance."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ The conflict over land values and construction costs on the Plateau reveals that tensions between local colonial officials and European expatriates had an impact on Dakar's urban development. An examination of these tensions and their complexities, however, is beyond the scope of my thesis. For a thorough examination of these issues in relation to French colonial architectural initiatives in Morocco, see Jean-Louis Cohen and Monique Eleb, *Casablanca: Colonial Myths and Architectural Ventures* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2002).

¹⁰² Seck, *Dakar: Métropole Ouest-Africaine*, 111.

¹⁰³ Sonolet, *L'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 94; see also Whittlesey, "Dakar and the Other Cape Verde Settlements," 631.

¹⁰⁴ Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 83.

¹⁰⁵ ANOM FM SG AOF/II/5, M. le Hérissé, Député membre du Conseil Supérieur des Colonies, "Comment-il faut la Gouverneur Demain," *Le Matin*, 21 Mars 1908.

Figure 15: Two types of European homes on the Plateau.



In Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 50. Public domain material obtained from Bibliolife, LLC.

The preceding examination of the effects shifting conceptions and practices of colonial power had on Dakar’s colonial society exemplifies the complex urban setting that existed on the ground in the city between 1902 and 1914. During this period, because of earlier French efforts to politically and culturally integrate the indigenous populations of Senegal’s Four Communes, assimilationist institutions and policies continued to shape the lived experience of Dakar’s African inhabitants. In the context of French cultural imperialism, some Africans interacted with French spaces of sociality and leisure, adopted European clothing styles, and even constructed brick homes. However, the adoption of certain French customs and practices did not necessarily indicate indigenous city-dwellers fully accepted French culture. As the example of the *originaires* demonstrates, even Africans who held French citizenship rights and actively participated in colonial politics maintained their customary values, the most significant of which was Islam. In the colonial spatial environment, a more explicit example of indigenous opposition to assimilation was evident in the formation of the peripheral “African zone.” Indeed, the persistence of pre-colonial forms of settlement and land use within this

residential sector represented the limits, even the failure, of assimilationist initiatives that sought to erase indigenous built forms from the local urban sphere.

As this situation developed, it overlapped with the general change in colonial policy reflected in the French West African government's acceptance of the doctrine of association. Despite Dakar's status as a French Commune, the associationist belief that fundamental differences existed between Europeans and non-Europeans led to criticisms of the rights granted to the *originaires*, as well as to efforts to eliminate them. More importantly, the colonial administration abandoned its policy of residential integration in favour of legislation that sought to exclude the indigenous populations of the "African zone" from "French" Dakar. Through the regulation of building materials and the explicit promotion of European modes of living in particular, local colonial officials transformed the Plateau into the symbol of this process of exclusion. The fact that thatched huts remained near or within the residential plots of Dakar-ville after this process began does not negate its significance. The implementation of spatial divisions in Dakar represented a gradual, yet fundamental, transition in colonial ideology and ruling practice that had the potential for intensification. Indeed, in the context of an outbreak of bubonic plague in the city in the spring of 1914, colonial medical officials called for "the complete separation of the natives from the Europeans and their isolation in a special village."¹⁰⁶ The systematization of residential segregation in Dakar, as well as its broader implications for spatial and social relations in the urban areas of French Africa, is addressed in the final chapter.

¹⁰⁶ André Marcandier, "La Peste à Dakar (1914-1915)," *Archives de Medecine Navale* 106 (1918): 218.

4. THE MÉDINA OF DAKAR: A NEW EXPRESSION OF COLONIAL POWER IN FRENCH WEST AFRICA

From an examination of the interplay between assimilation and association in Dakar and its impact on local inhabitants and urban development, this chapter addresses the segregationist initiatives of colonial officials in the French West African capital in 1914. Despite the growing influence of associationist ideals in Dakar, the informal process of exclusion initiated in the city between 1902 and 1914 did not produce a fully segregated residential pattern. Instead, the urban landscape of colonial Dakar continued to be defined as much by the thatched huts and dirt roads of its peripheral indigenous residential sector as it was by the assimilationist-influenced planning and architectural endeavours of the federal colonial government. While the persistence of residential mixing in Dakar-ville in particular can be explained by Dakar's status as a French Commune, in 1914, colonial authorities were given an opportunity to solidify the removal of unwanted African residents from the city.

In the spring of 1914, the third great bubonic plague pandemic in recorded history worked its way up the West African coast from South Africa, reaching Dakar in April. By January 1915, the official death toll from plague in the city numbered 1,425 out of a total population that ranged from 25,000 to 30,000. While the initial outbreak of bubonic plague went undetected by local French medical officials, once an epidemic was declared on 11 May, the federal colonial government quickly enacted a series of plague-combating

measures.¹ However, despite evidence that demonstrated the plague had spread throughout the entire city and killed several inhabitants on the Plateau, French authorities focused their sanitation efforts on the indigenous inhabitants of the “African zone.” The most repressive of these efforts included the burning of indigenous dwellings, the removal of potentially infected Africans to quarantine camps, and eventually, the residential segregation of Africans from Dakar and their placement in Médina, a new village located outside of the city. In this regard, the medical crisis provided the perfect pretext for colonial authorities to institutionalize the exclusionist goals inherent in the associationist approach to colonial governance initiated in Dakar, making the creation of Médina an important ideological issue both locally and federally.

Due to the unique status of the French West African capital, the French response to the bubonic plague outbreak in the city also became a major political issue. Only one day before the declaration of the epidemic, African voters in Senegal’s Four Communes were successful in electing the colony’s first black African deputy, Blaise Diagne, to the French National Assembly. Diagne’s electoral victory marked the beginning of a period of African political power in Senegal that, throughout the 1914 campaign, several prominent colonial authorities fought hard to prevent. Consequently, in Dakar, the burning of huts and other plague-combating efforts initiated in the days and weeks following the election represented for many of Diagne’s supporters, namely the Lebou,

¹ It is important to note that while Dakar’s municipal government kept a registry of epidemic deaths, this number only represented the plague cases brought to the attention of French medical officials. As an official report on the 1914 bubonic plague outbreak cautioned, “it has not been possible, either in Dakar or in other contaminated centres, to gain a precise idea of the number of plague cases.” In particular, the slow initial detection of the epidemic, combined with the fact that many African plague victims “were buried clandestinely during the night,” made it impossible to know the actual death toll. Collomb, Huot and Lecomte, “Note sur l’épidémie de peste au Sénégal en 1914,” *Annales de Médecine et de Pharmacie Coloniales* 19 (1921): 38-41, 58-59.

acts of political revenge on the part of the French.² This belief significantly affected the local African response to French methods of disease control, which, from peaceful protests to potentially violent clashes with colonial officials, had a significant impact on the residential arrangement established in Dakar in 1914.

The systematization of residential segregation in Dakar and the creation of Médina in 1914 represented the final phase in the trend towards association in French West Africa. This chapter examines the effects of this process on spatial and power relations in Dakar, and addresses what it revealed about the relationship between urban residential policies and colonial conceptions of power in French Africa before the First World War. It is divided into three sections. First, a comparison between the urban development of several French African cities and Dakar is made to highlight the French West African capital's significance to the realization of associationist ideals and policies on the continent. Special interest in this section is paid to colonial medical policy, which, in the early twentieth century, was a major factor in the push to establish new social and spatial arrangements in the urban areas of French Africa. Second, the development of Médina, as well as the introduction of other segregationist initiatives in Dakar, is analyzed to outline how colonial authorities used the bubonic plague epidemic to sharpen existing patterns of exclusion in the city. However, while French administrative and medical officials envisioned the segregation of Africans from Dakar as an all-encompassing scheme, the lack of African support for the project prevented its completion. Consequently, the indigenous response to the plague ordeal is the focus of the third section of the chapter. In particular, this section seeks to further elucidate the

² Raymond F. Betts, "The Establishment of the Medina in Dakar, Senegal, 1914," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 41, no. 2 (1971): 145-146.

complexities of local African agency, including the role indigenous city-dwellers played in limiting repressive mechanisms of colonial control.

Association and French Medical Policy in West Africa

The implementation of exclusionist measures in Dakar between 1902 and 1914 marked a dramatic shift from previous policies that promoted the co-habitation of European and African city-dwellers. However, when the residential patterns established during this period in other European colonial cities in Africa are examined, Dakar's situation was not unique. Instead, it reflected a broader trend in colonial urban spatial organization according to which a small, predominantly European, population occupied privileged districts near sites of colonial administration and commerce, while a much larger indigenous population inhabited quarters often portrayed by colonists as unhealthy and potentially dangerous. Before the First World War, examples of this pattern in French Africa were visible in the urban layouts of Brazzaville and Abidjan where, like Dakar, European residential sectors grew separate from African neighbourhoods on higher elevated sites known in both cities as the Plateau.³ Similar residential arrangements also emerged in British urban centres in West and East Africa, where, for example, the European sections of Freetown (Hill Station), Accra (The Ridge) and Nairobi (The Highlands) developed on hills above low-lying indigenous quarters.⁴ Consequently, despite the fact the French and British adopted different policies (social and cultural exclusion versus racial segregation) to create separate residential areas, urban topography became an important symbol of the contrast in social, economic and political power that

³ Winters, "Urban Morphogenesis in Francophone Black Africa," 141.

⁴ Philip D. Curtin, "Medical Knowledge and Urban Planning in Tropical Africa," *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 3 (1985): 595-596; see also Njoh, *Planning Power*, 64-65, 170-175.

existed between European expatriates and indigenous Africans.⁵ More importantly, it signified how colonial administrations used spatial separation to monitor the activities of African urban dwellers, which was considered a significant means of preserving colonial institutions and rule.⁶

One of the major factors that contributed to the establishment of separate European and African residential sectors was the close relationship between colonial medical policy and urban planning. Following the efforts made by public authorities in Europe in the late nineteenth century to promote sanitation through town planning projects, colonial officials turned to the management of urban space as a principal public health measure. This approach to public health was especially important in tropical Africa—labelled “the Whiteman’s grave” by Europeans due to its association with high mortality rates and frequent outbreaks of epidemic disease.⁷ For example, in response to evidence confirming that mosquitoes were the vector of both yellow fever and malaria, colonial authorities pushed for the nocturnal separation of Europeans from Africans and the creation of privileged residential districts on hilltops as disease-combating methods. That Europeans associated higher altitudes with good health and believed mosquitoes were more active at lower elevations and bit mainly during the night explains why these methods were readily implemented.⁸

Often, discriminatory, even racist, reasons were given as justification for spatial separation, including claims that indigenous populations created the unsanitary conditions

⁵ For a detailed examination of the different residential policies employed by the British and French in colonial Africa, see Odile Goerg, “From Hill Station (Freetown) to Downtown Conakry (First Ward): Comparing French and British Approaches to Segregation in Colonial Cities at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 32, no. 1 (1998): 1-31.

⁶ Njoh, *Planning Power*, 100.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 202-207; see also Goerg, “From Hill Station to Downtown Conakry,” 2-7.

that not only harboured epidemics, but also allowed them to spread. In his book, *Hygiene Coloniale*, French colonial doctor Alexandre Kermorgant expressed this belief when he wrote, “the native villages constitute a permanent danger for Europeans because of the numerous transmissible illnesses which their inhabitants frequently suffer from, so that we can only counsel building European dwellings at a certain distance from native groupings.”⁹ This perception of sanitary issues in the context of colour differences, otherwise known as the “sanitation syndrome,” influenced the approval of medical reforms that, according to colonial officials, protected European city-dwellers from unhealthy Africans.¹⁰ Of these reforms, the development of non-residential areas, or sanitary cordons, between the European and indigenous districts of almost every French and British city in tropical Africa particularly reflected the racially segregationist undertones of colonial sanitary planning schemes.¹¹

Regardless of the justifications given, the separation encouraged by colonial medical policy gained added influence in French West Africa in the context of the acceptance of associationist ideals and policies. Indeed, while proponents of association typically rationalized residential segregation as part of the new doctrine’s goal to respect indigenous customs, their claim that Africans maintained unhygienic practices—such as the co-habitation of people and domestic animals—while ignoring colonial sanitary laws also served as a basis for these efforts.¹² In a government circular released on 24 April

⁹ Alexandre Kermorgant, *Hygiene Coloniale* (Paris: Masson, 1911), 30.

¹⁰ The term “sanitation syndrome” was first used by Maynard Swanson to describe the British attitude toward public health in South Africa. See Swanson, “The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-1909,” *The Journal of African History* 18, no. 3 (1977): 387-410.

¹¹ Bigon, *A History of Urban Planning*, 201-203.

¹² See Ribot and Lafon, *Dakar*, 109-110; Betts, “The Establishment of the Medina in Dakar,” 143. In the Four Communes of Senegal, French medical and administrative authorities were also concerned with the indigenous use of Muslim healers (*marabouts*), who, they argued, ignored the simplest rules of hygiene. See Echenberg, *Black Death*, 9, 25.

1909, Governor General Ponty even articulated this argument when he recommended, “we must continue to repeat the same advice until it finally penetrates the consciousness of all of the necessity for Europeans to live apart from natives, and to protect their sleep with good quality mosquito netting.”¹³

In Dakar, it is important to note that the use of sanitary concerns as a precedent to initiate less subtle, and arguably more discriminatory, efforts to exclude unwanted indigenous residents began as early as 1902. In that year, following an outbreak of yellow fever epidemic and repeated calls to establish a “hygienic village” within which non-permanent materials would be forbidden, Dakar’s Sanitary Commission issued a decree (15 February 1902) that authorized the burning or removal of 1,061 indigenous dwellings on the city’s western periphery. Again, in 1905, French authorities took similar action when, in response to the threat of several recorded cases of yellow fever illness, they ejected Africans living in sub-standard housing from areas where the “African zone” and Dakar-ville overlapped. However, even in the aftermath of these more forceful exclusionist efforts, indigenous dwellings of brick, wood and thatch could still be found within the city’s borders.¹⁴

Though the associationist process of exclusion initiated in Dakar before 1914 was never fully realized, this pattern was repeated in other French West African cities, namely on the grounds of protecting public health. In Conakry (Guinea), for example, the system of residential co-habitation followed by the local population in the 1880s and 1890s changed drastically in the early twentieth century. By 1905, in response to rapid urban development and growing sanitary concerns, legislation was introduced that not only

¹³ Quoted in Echenberg, *Black Death*, 28.

¹⁴ Seck, *Dakar: Métropole Ouest-Africaine*, 128-132; see also Betts, “The Establishment of the Medina in Dakar,” 143.

divided Conakry into three zones, but also placed constraints on residency within these zones to separate European city-dwellers from the majority of their African counterparts. Indeed, strict building regulations and sanitary requirements combined with the high value of land to prevent many Africans from settling in the city's European sector (the central or first zone), despite the presence of laws permitting them to do so. The standards established in what local French authorities referred to as the "native" or third zone also exemplified the exclusionist goal of this legislation. There, more lenient regulations on building materials and sanitary practices helped sharpen the contrast between Conakry's European and African residents which, as a result of the associationist attitude adopted in the city, was explained by different living standards and cultural characteristics. Finally, more overtly exclusionist efforts were made in 1912 when legislation was introduced creating "reserved" town lots for Africans. While this law was rarely used, it gave the municipal colonial administration ultimate control over access to land in the city, allowing officials to both refuse African settlement in the first zone, and re-acquire plots owned by indigenous inhabitants.¹⁵

In Abidjan (Ivory Coast), similar aspects of exclusion were also evident. Founded in response to the outbreak of three yellow fever epidemics in the seaport of Grand Bassam between 1899 and 1903, Abidjan's urban landscape reflected the efforts made by French authorities in the region to create a "preventative topography" that responded to colonial sanitary objectives. In this regard, zoning initiatives separated the city into three distinct districts: a European administrative and residential quarter (the Plateau), a commercial sector, and an African neighbourhood (*village indigène*). Aiding the

¹⁵ Goerg, "From Hill Station to Downtown Conakry," 11-21; see also Odile Goerg, "Conakry: un modèle de ville coloniale française? Règlements fonciers et urbanisme, de 1885 aux années 1920," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 25, no. 99 (1985): 309-335.

separation of European and indigenous inhabitants was the French decision to locate the residential areas of the two groups on either side of a local lagoon (*Lagune Ebrié*). Though no official laws restricted Africans from living on the Plateau, sanitary measures taken between 1903 and 1912 forbade the use of non-permanent building materials in the so-called *ville européenne*. For colonial officials in Abidjan, these measures functioned to distinguish the city's residents on the basis of their dissimilar modes of living.¹⁶

By 1914, cities in French West Africa were not the only urban centres in France's African empire affected by associationist planning policies. In the protectorate of Morocco, resident general Hubert Lyautey established a system of "dual cities" in 1912 as a principal aspect of his effort to formulate a successful associationist approach to colonial governance. Reflecting Lyautey's desire to separate urban populations based on their cultural differences, this system involved the development of new European-planned districts (*villes nouvelles*) alongside older indigenous cities (medinas), as well as the establishment of a *non edificandi* zone, or green belt, between these quarters where construction was forbidden. In the cities of Fez, Marrakesh and Meknes, where belts ranging from two to three kilometres surrounded the walls of the African sector, natural barriers like ravines and hills reinforced spatial separation. In other cities, like Casablanca and Rabat, the construction of 250-metre-wide thoroughfares served as man-made incarnations of this barrier. While health concerns similar to those raised in French West Africa contributed to the formation of these dual cities, separation was principally influenced by the desire to protect and preserve indigenous customs and built forms. Despite this show of respect, however, the effort made by colonial officials to maintain

¹⁶ Marc Le Pape, "De l'espace et des races à Abidjan, entre 1903 et 1934," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 25, no. 99 (1985): 295-298.

Morocco's medinas as picturesque sites of a "traditional" way of life was used to justify their decision to not provide modern amenities for the inhabitants of these sectors. This decision, together with the requirement that Moroccans living in the French-produced *villes nouvelles* needed to conform to European cultural norms, exemplified the associationist methods French authorities used to impose and maintain formal and social divisions in the colonial urban environment.¹⁷

In all of the French African cities examined above, associationist principles influenced efforts to establish an urban dualism through the spatial separation of European and African city-dwellers. However, in each case, separation was mainly initiated through informal methods, and while legislation passed before 1914 created clear socio-cultural divisions between the two communities, no laws existed that officially sanctioned and enforced the creation of a racially segregated residential environment. In French West Africa in particular, colonial administrators were reluctant to impose overtly segregationist policies, not only because they openly contradicted earlier legislation that promoted mixed urban populations, but also because they did not sit well with the republican ideology of universalism.¹⁸ Consequently, the formal imposition of residential segregation in Dakar in response to the 1914 bubonic plague epidemic represented a significant moment in the history of both the city and, more generally, French Africa. Indeed, the establishment of Médina, officially under the guise of protecting public health, demonstrated that municipal and federal colonial authorities were finally willing to ignore Dakar's status as a French Commune in order to realize the associationist ideal for non-assimilated Africans to live separately from Europeans. How

¹⁷ Wright, *The Politics of Design*, 85-160.

¹⁸ Goerg, "From Hill Station to Downtown Conakry," 2-12.

the French used the plague to solidify this transition, as well as the social and political consequences of segregationist efforts in the city, is the focus of the remaining sections.

Segregating Dakar: The Creation of Médina

The development of Médina in response to the outbreak of bubonic plague in Dakar in 1914 constituted the farthest-reaching effort made by colonial authorities in the French West African capital to formalize the residential segregation of African city-dwellers. When bubonic plague struck the city, however, it was not immediately apparent that French medical concerns would lead to such an outcome. In fact, while official statistics indicate the number of deaths from plague reached fifty in April, the local French medical community missed the beginning of the epidemic. Senegal's Health Service was not alerted to a potential problem until early May, mainly because the civilian doctor responsible for monitoring Dakar's monthly mortality rates considered it insignificant that deaths in April doubled those of the previous year, and thus only reported these numbers at the end of the month.¹⁹ Even then, actual confirmation of the plague's presence in the city occurred accidentally. According to Dr. André Lafont, director of the Bacteriological Laboratory of French West Africa (BLFWA), bacilli resembling *Yersinia pestis*, the microbial agent responsible for bubonic plague, was only discovered in the blood samples of two African women after they were mistakenly transported by ambulance to the BLFWA instead of Dakar's Central Hospital. Consequently, by 11 May, when French colonial doctors identified plague as the cause of

¹⁹ Elikia M'Bokolo, "Peste et société urbaine à Dakar: l'épidémie de 1914," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 22, no. 85/86 (1982): 18-19; see also Betts, "The Establishment of the Medina in Dakar," 144.

death of these patients and a third indigenous victim, the epidemic had been given enough time to spread throughout the entire city.²⁰

After receiving confirmation of the bubonic plague outbreak, colonial officials in Dakar acted quickly to introduce a number of emergency sanitary initiatives considered essential to controlling the spread of the epidemic.²¹ On 13 May, the Governor of Senegal, Raphaël Antonetti, declared the “African zone” of Dakar contaminated by plague, and condemned and ordered the burning of all thatch and straw dwellings where African plague victims had resided.²² At this time, a quarantine system was also implemented that included the formation of lazarettos (isolation camps) to house for five to ten days all family and friends (“suspects”) who had come into contact with plague patients.²³ In the initial stages of the outbreak, French authorities established just one lazaretto in Dakar, which, from 13 May to 1 June, was responsible for treating around 405 individuals.²⁴ Another immediate quarantine measure taken was the establishment of a sanitary cordon on the outskirts of the city between the villages of Hann and Cambérène to isolate the Cape Verde peninsula from the rest of Senegal. To enforce this cordon, a company of Tirailleurs Sénégalais monitored the region by horseback, and colonial officials prohibited Dakar’s African residents from leaving the city by train.²⁵

²⁰ André Lafont, “Une épidémie de peste humaine à Dakar (avril 1914-février 1915),” *Bulletin de la Société de Pathologie Exotique* 8 (1915): 660-661.

²¹ Echenberg, *Black Death*, 92, rightly points out that measures such as quarantine and sanitary cordons were ineffective responses to the bubonic plague. However, it would take another generation of medical research for these practices to be abandoned.

²² Emile Vallette, “La Peste à Dakar,” *Dépêche Coloniale*, 30 May 1914.

²³ Collomb, Huot and Lecomte, “Note,” 67; see also Marcandier, “La peste,” 192.

²⁴ Marcandier, “La peste,” 192-193.

²⁵ Alexandre Kermorgant, “L’épidémie de peste qui a sévi à Dakar et au Sénégal d’avril 1914 à février 1915,” *Bulletin de l’Académie de Médecine* 76 (1916): 128; see also Collomb, Huot and Lecomte, “Note,” 66.

If the early actions taken in response to the plague outbreak in Dakar are any indication, the indigenous residents of the “African zone” became a key focus of French health concerns and sanitation efforts. This focus was once again evident on 18 May, when Dakar’s Health Committee established a second sanitary cordon in the interior of the city that not only surrounded the residential area in which the first plague victims resided, but also the urban sector where the “African zone” and Dakar-ville overlapped. Covering a region of around five city blocks on the western edge of Dakar between the *rue Thiers* and the *rue de Grammont*, this cordon, according to local medical officials, isolated Africans living in the unhygienic *quartier indigène* from the European community on the Plateau.²⁶ However, due to the economic requirements of life in the city, this cordon proved to be ineffective at arresting the spread of the epidemic and was eventually abandoned. Indeed, as Dr. L. Huot, chief of Senegal’s Health Service, explained: “Europeans were authorized to travel everywhere freely; the natives regarded as indispensable to the material life of Dakar (employees of the commercial houses, of the administration), the day labourers responsible for cleaning buildings and roads, were supplied with a travel permit.”²⁷ According to another observer, the effort made by French medical and administrative officials to satisfy the large local commercial houses—who pushed for the allocation of thousands of daily passes—was the principal reason the epidemic expanded beyond the barriers of the second sanitary cordon.²⁸ Other factors, including the decision to only direct control measures towards African city-dwellers, also contributed to this outcome.²⁹

²⁶ Collomb, Huot and Lecomte, “Note,” 66; see also Echenberg, *Black Death*, 92.

²⁷ Collomb, Huot and Lecomte, “Note,” 66.

²⁸ Paul Rousseau, “Au sujet de la Peste du Sénégal,” *Journal des Praticiens* 31 (1917): 743.

²⁹ Echenberg, *Black Death*, 93.

Despite the failure of the second sanitary cordon, it is important to question why the French focused their initial sanitation efforts on the “African zone.” For some colonial medical officials, it is clear the plague epidemic re-affirmed their negative views of the hygienic practices of African urban dwellers. Dr. Alexandre Kermorgant, for example, blamed the “deplorable customs of the natives, particularly those of the Muslim religion” for the reason why “the first cases [of plague] went unnoticed.”³⁰ In general, French authorities also believed the plague would be exclusively found among the poor inhabitants of the peripheral indigenous sector.³¹ However, research conducted by the BLFWA in the aftermath of the epidemic reveals that the first sixteen to eighteen recorded African plague victims actually lived in a “relatively affluent” quarter of Dakar.³² Moreover, some contemporaries explained that a number of plague victims were discovered in local European residential areas even before the establishment of the inner-city cordon.³³ One such victim was Alioun N’D, an African public works employee who lived in a European-styled home at the intersection of the *rue Thiers* and the *rue Blanchot* at the base of the Plateau.³⁴ Consequently, while residential segregation had yet to be implemented in the city, the sanitary measures taken by colonial authorities in early May were, similar to previous exclusionist efforts, informed by ideological concerns. Indeed, for the French, the plague epidemic represented an opportunity to accelerate the associationist objective to separate the “African zone” from “French” Dakar.³⁵

³⁰ Kermorgant, “Épidémie,” 126-127.

³¹ Echenberg, *Black Death*, 56.

³² Lafont, “Une épidémie,” 662.

³³ Vallette, “La Peste à Dakar.”

³⁴ Marcandier, “La peste,” 129. Echenberg, *Black Death*, 51-53, provides another example of an unconfirmed plague victim, Iba Ndiaye, who not only lived on the Plateau, but also worked as a senior clerk in the Native Affairs Bureau of the French West African government.

³⁵ Echenberg, *Black Death*, 128.

Against this background, while the Health Committee of Dakar eventually declared the entire city contaminated by plague on 20 May, the more extensive sanitation program it implemented on the same day continued to place harsh control measures on indigenous city-dwellers. The program, for instance, made anti-plague vaccinations compulsory for all Africans living in and around Dakar, and also approved the formation of new quarantine camps for vaccinated Africans who wanted to leave the city.³⁶ Like the second sanitary cordon, though, these new measures were short lived. In response to opposition from the local indigenous population and a declining death rate, Governor General Ponty convinced the Dakar Health Committee to repeal its emergency sanitary initiatives on 12 June. Only two days later, the French Navy, which had confined its personnel to barracks near the naval port since the beginning of the epidemic, lifted its own quarantine orders. At the time, some observers believed these decisions signalled the success of the French response to the plague outbreak. Indeed, near the end of June, members of the city's business community even claimed the epidemic was over.³⁷ For others, including several French medical officials, the halting of these control measures amounted to a "disaster," especially since the number of local plague cases grew in their absence.³⁸ By 16 July 1914, the Dakar Health Committee would once again implement its emergency sanitary program, but this was not enough to reduce the rate of monthly plague deaths, which increased from 156 in June to 348 in July.³⁹ Consequently, it was in response to Dakar's climbing mortality rate that French authorities finally took the definitive step of legalizing the residential segregation of Africans.

³⁶ Betts, "The Establishment of the Medina in Dakar," 144.

³⁷ Echenberg, *Black Death*, 68.

³⁸ Two French colonial doctors were particularly open in their criticisms of a number of the decisions made by the authorities in Dakar. See Marcandier, "La peste," 217; Rousseau, "La peste," 743.

³⁹ Collomb, Huot and Lecomte, "Note," 59.

In Dakar, it should be noted that almost immediately after the official declaration of the bubonic plague epidemic, some French officials promoted segregation as a solution to the medical crisis. As early as 13 May 1914, the Dakar Health Committee discussed relocating the indigenous residents of the “African zone” to a new village on the outskirts of the city.⁴⁰ On 7 July, as the plague outbreak worsened, the committee revisited this issue, claiming the “segregation of the native population to a point far removed from the European city and the destruction of all shacks and huts not susceptible to disinfection is the sole measure able to check the extension of the present epidemic.”⁴¹ Inspired by this recommendation, Governor General Ponty organized a conference of municipal and federal colonial authorities, which, on 24 July, issued a decree legalizing residential segregation and authorizing the continued destruction of all residences of thatch and straw. In addition, the decree created a commission to inspect housing in Dakar and to select a site for a new African village, initially labelled the *village de ségrégation*—a term illustrating colonial officials did not consider this quarter a part of the French West African capital.⁴² By August 1914, when the monthly mortality rate from plague reached a high point of 367, the commission identified the location of the new village, later named Médina, on a site approximately three to four kilometres northwest of Dakar.⁴³ Between September and October, around 2,900 indigenous residents of Santiaba, a neighbourhood within the “African zone,” were moved to Médina.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Echenberg, *Black Death*, 71.

⁴¹ “Rapport sur le fonctionnement du camp de ségrégation,” cited in Betts, “The Establishment of the Medina in Dakar,” 144.

⁴² ANOM FM TP 95/1, Joseph Clozel, “Expropriation des terrains du village indigène de Médina destiné à mettre Dakar et ses environs à l’abri des épidémies,” Dakar, 26 April 1916; see also Betts, “The Establishment of the Medina in Dakar,” 144-145.

⁴³ Betts, “The Establishment of the Medina in Dakar,” 144-145; see also Echenberg, *Black Death*, 71.

⁴⁴ Collomb, Huot and Lecomte, “Note,” 69.

While colonial officials justified residential segregation as a necessary response to the worsening plague epidemic, it is clear that associationist ideals informed both the removal of Africans from Dakar and the creation of Médina. In particular, when the destruction of indigenous dwellings recommenced in late July, the municipal colonial government made efforts to eliminate the cultural dichotomy that existed on the periphery of Dakar-ville by only permitting African land owners to reconstruct their demolished properties *à l'euro péenne*. If they did not want, or could not afford, to comply with this stipulation, then they, along with African renters of sub-standard buildings, were provided a plot of land in Médina.⁴⁵ Because the majority of African residents would be forced to choose the latter option as a consequence of the high price of permanent building materials, this stipulation underlined the effort made by the French to solidify the process of exclusion they initiated in Dakar before 1914.⁴⁶ Indeed, for colonial authorities, residency in Dakar-ville and the Plateau was to be limited to Europeans and to assimilated Africans and mulattoes who adopted a European way of life.

Within the new African village, to prevent the emergence of a pattern of development that resembled the spatial arrangement of the “African zone,” the French imposed a gridiron layout with plots smaller and streets wider than those of the original plan of Dakar-ville (Fig. 16).⁴⁷ Although no restrictions were placed on the types of building materials or styles that could be used in Médina, colonial officials utilized the town’s European-styled geographical order to monitor and control its African population. According to Dr. L. Huot, for example, “police were placed in charge of providing close

⁴⁵ Betts, “The Establishment of the Medina in Dakar,” 144-145; see also Bigon, *A History of Urban Planning*, 197-198.

⁴⁶ Echenberg, *Black Death*, 61, argues that local French merchants exploited this situation by increasing the price of permanent building materials by as much as fifty percent.

⁴⁷ Whittlesey, “Dakar and the Other Cape Verde Settlements,” 631.

surveillance to prevent natives from escaping to the old contaminated quarters of Dakar, as well as the introduction of non-disinfected objects.”⁴⁸ Other control measures included requiring residents of Médina to produce valid vaccination papers in order to gain entrance into Dakar. Even then, access to the city was limited to regular working hours (6 A.M. to 6 P.M.).⁴⁹ Finally, to accent the spatial separation between Dakar and Médina, a *non edificandi* zone was implemented outside of the French West African capital where, apart from the presence of a racecourse and a stadium, construction was forbidden. At 900 metres wide, this barrier visibly displayed the oppressive side of residential segregation, as the indigenous inhabitants of Médina were forced to contend with long distances and colonial mechanisms of control in order to interact with the urban spaces they were once free to inhabit.⁵⁰

Figure 16: The urban layouts of Médina and Dakar.



In Whittlesey, “Dakar Revisited,” *Geographical Review* 38, no. 4 (1948): 628. © 1948, American Geographical Society, by permission.

⁴⁸ Collomb, Huot and Lecomte, “Note,” 69.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Raymond F. Betts, “The Problem of the Medina in the Urban Planning of Dakar,” *African Urban Notes* 4, no. 3 (1969): 6; see also Njoh, *Planning Power*, 221.

Despite the determination they demonstrated when hastily establishing Médina in July-August 1914, colonial authorities in Dakar largely ignored the needs of the new village's early residents, and left it to degenerate into a planned ghetto. Located on very low and sandy land, Médina experienced considerable flooding during the rainy season of *hivernage*. While a report released in 1918 suggested relocating the village to a higher site, no actions were taken in this regard. In fact, in its initial years, Médina was without a proper sewer system, electricity and potable water.⁵¹ Similar to the associationist approach taken to colonial urban development in Morocco, then, French West African officials used the separation of Africans in their "own quarter" as an excuse to not provide them modern amenities. Some observers, like Emil Lengyel, expressed the racist side of this approach with claims that segregation allowed non-assimilated Africans to "live in the filth to which they are devoted."⁵² For these reasons and others, African city-dwellers viewed the French sanitation response as a tool to remove them from the European residential sections of Dakar.⁵³ An examination of how a number of the city's African inhabitants opposed this effort goes far in understanding the complexities of the indigenous interaction with French methods of colonial rule.

The Indigenous Response

Before analyzing the local indigenous response to the plague ordeal, it is important to note that not all of Dakar's African residents resisted the sanitary control measures taken between May-December 1914. Indeed, some Africans were relocated to Médina in the summer and fall of 1914 without incident. This was the case with the

⁵¹ Betts, "The Establishment of the Medina in Dakar," 148.

⁵² Lengyel, *Dakar*, 33.

⁵³ Echenberg, *Black Death*, 73.

Bambara and Tokolor migrants in the “African zone,” who, according to Governor General Ponty, complied “with the greatest docility to all measures taken.”⁵⁴ Such a claim, however, could not be made about the Lebou, who openly opposed the emergency initiatives adopted during the plague epidemic. In particular, the original inhabitants of the Cape Verde peninsula viewed the sanitary justification for segregation as a ploy to expropriate their properties in Dakar-ville and the “African zone,” a belief that was not without precedent. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, the assimilationist-influenced imposition of French conceptions of property and land ownership was a major factor behind the Lebou population’s decision to move outside of Dakar.⁵⁵ More forceful efforts to acquire Lebou property occurred as late as August 1914, when the French West African government confiscated land owned by members of the Lebou community in order to create Médina.⁵⁶ While the federal colonial government obliged the owners of these properties to accept monetary compensation, the Lebou regarded this as a bribe, and subsequently filed appeals against the expropriation of their lands in local French courts.⁵⁷

Apart from the land issue, Lebou opposition to the sanitary controls initiated in response to the plague was also influenced by the political climate in which the medical emergency was declared. On 10 May 1914, one day before the announcement of the epidemic, voters in the Four Communes of Senegal elected Blaise Diagne as the first

⁵⁴ Betts, “The Establishment of the Medina in Dakar,” 145-148. While the “docility” of this group is documented, the exact reasons why these African peoples accepted their move to Médina remain unknown.

⁵⁵ Johnson, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal*, 12-13.

⁵⁶ ANOM FM TP 95/1, Joseph Clozel, “Expropriation des terrains du village indigène de Médina destiné à mettre Dakar et ses environs à l’abri des épidémies,” Dakar, 26 April 1916.

⁵⁷ Bigon, *A History of Urban Planning*, 199-200.

black African deputy to the French National Assembly.⁵⁸ Diagne, a Gorée-born employee of the French colonial customs service, had throughout his career fought hard to promote the welfare and equality of indigenous Africans.⁵⁹ Therefore, he did not hesitate to carry this attitude into his campaign for deputy, running on a platform that argued Africans were equal to Frenchmen. In particular, Diagne recognized the discriminatory nature of the anti-*originnaire* policies adopted by colonial authorities in French West Africa between 1902 and 1914, and consequently made the preservation of *originnaire* voting privileges, as well as the recognition of their status as citizens, the central issue in his campaign.⁶⁰ Speaking at a rally in Saint-Louis on 8 May, Diagne proclaimed, “they say that you aren’t French and that I’m not French! I tell you that we are, that we have the same rights!”⁶¹ Faced with the very real possibility of losing their citizenship rights, most *originnaires* joined together to support the African candidate. In Dakar specifically, Diagne established his greatest stronghold due to the backing of several Lebou leaders, and it was the Lebou vote that ultimately secured his electoral victory.⁶²

During the campaign leading up to the election, many French observers, including the former Governor of Senegal Henri Cor, dismissed Diagne’s candidacy. However, in Dakar, some contemporaries considered the support given to Diagne by the Lebou electorate a threat to local French political interests, namely those of the Bordeaux commercial houses that had dominated the city’s municipal government since its

⁵⁸ For a detailed outline and analysis of Blaise Diagne’s political victory, see G. Wesley Johnson, “The Ascendancy of Blaise Diagne and the Beginning of African Politics in Senegal,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 36, no. 3 (1966): 235-253.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 237-238.

⁶⁰ Johnson, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal*, 161-168.

⁶¹ Quoted in Johnson, “The Ascendancy,” 247-248.

⁶² Johnson, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal*, 172-174; see also Echenberg, *Black Death*, 35-36.

inception.⁶³ Consequently, a number of prominent local colonial officials made efforts to discourage African electors from voting for Diagne. For example, Dakar's mayor Émile Masson threatened to cut off the water and electricity available to indigenous city-dwellers unless they stopped campaigning for the African candidate. Rumours also spread that if Diagne won, the municipal colonial government would dismiss all appointed African chiefs and civil servants. Even metropolitan interests became involved when Bordeaux merchants refused to give credit to their African customers who did not agree to support the French candidate for deputy, Henri Heimburger.⁶⁴

Against this background, it is easy to understand that the Lebou viewed the emergency sanitary measures taken after the election as examples of French political retaliation. Indeed, as early as 23 May, Jean D'Oxoby, French director of the pro-Diagne newspaper *La Démocratie du Sénégal*, claimed that the burning of African dwellings and the establishment of the inner-city sanitary cordon were acts orchestrated by anti-Diagnists, a group which included members of the Dakar Health Committee. Accusations made by other Diagnists were equally scathing. They included claims that the municipal colonial government's requirement that Africans rebuild their demolished properties à l'euro péenne represented an act of collusion between local French authorities and Bordeaux merchants, who stood to profit from the sale of European building materials. Some went even further, arguing the French decision to make anti-plague vaccinations compulsory for African city-dwellers was part of a conspiracy to assassinate Diagne with a fatal dose of the plague bacilli.⁶⁵

⁶³ Betts, "The Establishment of the Medina in Dakar," 145; see also Echenberg, *Black Death*, 35-36.

⁶⁴ Johnson, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal*, 170-171.

⁶⁵ Echenberg, *Black Death*, 63-67; see also Betts, "The Establishment of the Medina in Dakar," 146.

Passions thus ran high in the post-election period, and the Lebou community resorted to forms of socio-political protest to voice their displeasure with the French response to the plague outbreak. As one French official remarked in May 1914:

It has been difficult to make the indigenous population accept the measures that we have implemented. The natives of the Lebou race [sic] immediately protested [...] They did not want to go to the lazaretto; they did not want us to burn their homes. They especially protested against our removal of their dead, which prevented them from performing the funeral rites prescribed by their customs [...] For all these reasons, the excitement of the natives has been very great since the first days of the epidemic.⁶⁶

Indeed, public displays of indigenous opposition occurred as early as 20 May, when around 1,500 Lebou citizens marched on Dakar's City Hall to protest the burning of several African dwellings. After reportedly roughing up mayor Masson and clashing with the Tirailleurs Sénégalais, this group dispersed when Governor General Ponty agreed to meet with a delegation of Lebou chiefs. In two separate meetings on the 20th and 21st, Ponty assured the Lebou that the French did not intend to expropriate their property.⁶⁷ To further quell Lebou discontent, he ordered the Dakar Health Committee to suspend house burnings, and promised the delegation that the federal colonial government would help indigenous property owners reconstruct their destroyed homes.⁶⁸

While Ponty's intervention managed to arrest the aggressive elements of the initial Lebou backlash, it failed to prevent the emergence of other nonviolent expressions of African discontent. For example, from 21 May to 25 May, Lebou merchants in the *Place Kermel* market orchestrated the first effective strike in the history of the French West African federation. During this period, Lebou fishermen, truck farmers, poultry

⁶⁶ Vallette, "La Peste à Dakar."

⁶⁷ Betts, "The Establishment of the Medina in Dakar," 146-147; see also M'bokolo, "Peste," 40.

⁶⁸ Marcandier, "La peste," 192; see also Betts, "The Establishment of the Medina in Dakar," 147.

sellers and market women all refused to sell produce to Europeans or their servants.⁶⁹ That Blaise Diagne had threatened to organize a similar strike during his campaign for deputy makes the actions of these merchants a telling example of the political terms in which the Lebou perceived, and responded to, the plague ordeal.⁷⁰ More importantly, the role this strike and subsequent civil disturbances played in forcing the Dakar Health Committee to repeal its emergency sanitary measures in early June 1914 underlines a key feature of local indigenous agency. Indeed, it is clear that while French authorities occupied the dominant position in the colonial urban encounter, the sanitary policies they implemented, especially the ones that affected the everyday lives of African city-dwellers, were not all-determining or permanent. The success of these initiatives instead depended on whether or not they were accepted by Dakar's African population.⁷¹

This was further exemplified in the fall of 1914, after the French West African government restored several sanitary measures to combat the worsening plague outbreak and introduced residential segregation as an official colonial policy. On 28 October, when the Dakar Health Committee sent a group of European agents to carry out a number of burnings and removals in the Parc à Fourrages neighbourhood of Dakar-ville, the Lebou residents whose homes were threatened forcefully resisted the destruction of their properties. Forced to intervene, Governor General Ponty postponed further actions until 9 November. On the morning of the ninth, as medical and administrative officials returned to renew their efforts, this time with a company of Tirailleurs Sénégalais, they were immediately surrounded by a group of 200 to 300 Lebou. After setting fire to one hut, the French withdrew when the group of protesters, which had grown as a result of the

⁶⁹ Echenberg, *Black Death*, 61.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁷¹ Bigon, *A History of Urban Planning*, 188.

involvement of hundreds of sympathetic observers, reacted in a threatening way. As the French retreated to the *Avenue Gambetta*, they were confronted by approximately 3,000 Lebou armed with a variety of weapons. Fearing the potential violence that could result from an armed revolt, Ponty quickly ordered the French force to abandon its efforts. Subsequently, on 16 November, the Governor General offered a final compromise that ultimately brought an end to the French effort to establish a fully segregated residential arrangement in Dakar: all African city-dwellers who received at least three doses of anti-plague vaccine would be exempt from moving to Médina.⁷²

From mid-November 1914 to 25 January 1915, when Dakar was officially declared plague-free, Lebou opposition disappeared as the French West African government stopped house burnings and abandoned its effort to relocate the indigenous inhabitants of Dakar-ville and the “African zone.” By the late 1920s, the population of Médina thus numbered only 8,000, while some 20,000 Africans continued to live in Dakar.⁷³ In commenting on the French handling of the plague outbreak, many observers acknowledged that residential segregation failed because of the discontent shown by the local Lebou community, which at times threatened to break out in armed revolt.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the new African village represented the most important expression of the transition in colonial ruling ideology and practice that took place in the urban areas of French Africa between 1902 and 1914. Its politically sanctioned establishment, influenced by the doctrine of association, made formal the French effort to spatially

⁷² Echenberg, *Black Death*, 77-82, argues that Ponty’s effort to reduce Lebou opposition gained added importance as a result the First World War, which had begun in July 1914. For example, he resisted declaring a state of siege in Dakar out of concern that Germany and Turkey would take advantage of Muslim Lebou discontent. See also Betts, “The Establishment of the Medina in Dakar,” 147.

⁷³ Curtin, “Medical Knowledge,” 609; see also Seck, *Dakar: Métropole Ouest-Africaine*, 132-133.

⁷⁴ Marcandier, “La peste,” 192; see also Echenberg, *Black Death*, 131.

separate Dakar's European and African residents on the basis of their socio-cultural differences. Consequently, by the end of 1914, while Dakar continued to exist as a French city, the dualism inscribed in its urban environment replaced the assimilationist vision of power it was originally designed to implement and project. After the First World War, this new expression of colonial power would have a significant impact on the approach taken to the development of other French African cities. In particular, while French officials in Dakar relied on sanitary concerns to foster segregationist initiatives, administrative authorities in cities like Bamako (Upper Senegal-Niger) and Pointe-Noire (French Congo) regarded residential segregation as an unquestioned policy, and even attempted to replicate the layout of the French West African capital.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Jean Dresch, "Villes d'Afrique Occidentale," *Les Cahiers d'Outre-Mer* 3, no. 11 (1950): 206-211; see also Winters, "Urban Morphogenesis," 140-147.

5. CONCLUSION: UNDERSTANDING FRENCH POWER AND AFRICAN AGENCY IN COLONIAL DAKAR

In examining the relationship between cultural theory, urban development and colonial power relations in Dakar between 1902 and 1914, this thesis has moved beyond the static conceptualization of colonial power contained in the current scholarship on French African urban development. Exploring how and why specific ideologies and strategies of colonial rule were inscribed in the African urban landscape is an important means of studying the development of colonial cities in French Africa. However, it is too narrow a strategy for understanding the complexities of colonial power, mainly because it fails to take into account the fluidity in which French methods of rule operated. Indeed, this thesis argued that from the late nineteenth century to the First World War, colonial authorities and theorists in France and Africa debated which cultural theory, assimilation or association, was the proper doctrine to follow when ruling non-European societies. This context shaped the colonial project in Dakar, which became an active site for the transition from assimilationist to associationist practices of colonial power.

The nineteenth-century cultural theory of assimilation was derived from the Enlightenment-based ideal of human equality and the revolutionary belief in French cultural superiority. Proponents of assimilation asserted that non-Europeans would benefit if their cultures were destroyed and replaced by superior French customs and institutions. In French Africa, assimilationist thought thus defined a colonial doctrine that sought to transform indigenous societies and cultures into contiguous parts of the

metropole. In the Four Communes of Senegal in particular, this involved the implementation of direct rule by French colonial authorities, as well as the establishment of French educational and political systems.

As part of assimilation's influence, French colonial authorities sought to transform Dakar into a French city that visually displayed France's cultural superiority and imperial power. By 1914, this included the imposition of an urban development program that not only organized the city spatially in accordance with metropolitan modes of planning, but also improved its sanitary conditions through the introduction of European public health initiatives and amenities. Symbolic interests particularly affected the architectural approach taken in the city, as the neo-classical designs of monumental public buildings like the Governor General's Palace displayed an imposing image of empire that suggested the success of assimilationist ideals overseas. During the period in question, assimilation also impacted social and political relations in Dakar. Indeed, the city was subjected to the same municipal laws that governed contemporary French cities, and was also home to a population of *originaires* that held the same rights and privileges as French citizens. Moreover, as contemporary accounts of a number of French urban spaces (i.e. cafés, theatres and public parks) reveal, Dakar's colonial society was shaped by French efforts to residentially and culturally integrate African city-dwellers into a European style of life.

At the same time assimilation continued to impact Dakar's development and population, however, the social and political policies enacted by colonial authorities in French West Africa gradually changed to reflect their adherence to the alternative doctrine of association. This approach to colonial governance emerged in France in the

early twentieth century largely in response to the growing acceptance of racial theories of evolution, which emphasized the inferiority of non-European peoples and societies. Believing that significant inequalities existed between Europeans and non-Europeans, proponents of association argued that indigenous customs and beliefs needed to be respected and preserved. In contrast to assimilation, association thus influenced an approach to colonial rule that was based on cooperation and fraternity between French colonial administrations and the indigenous peoples they ruled, and varied depending on the decisions made by administrators-on-the-spot.

In French West Africa, association's impact was most evident in the native, educational and judicial policies of Governor Generals Ernest Roume and William Ponty. These policies, in rhetoric and practice, represented an approach to colonial rule that encouraged the indigenous peoples of the federation to live and evolve within their own societies and cultures. In Dakar specifically, the associationist belief that fundamental differences existed between Europeans and non-Europeans influenced efforts to eliminate the rights and privileges granted to the *originaires* under assimilation. This change in policy was also apparent in the informal efforts made to exclude the indigenous residents of Dakar-ville's peripheral "African zone" from what the federal and municipal colonial government's labelled "French" Dakar. While French officials in Dakar feared the formal spatial separation of European and African city-dwellers could become an embarrassing issue, the bubonic plague outbreak that struck the city in 1914 gave them the opportunity to institutionalize the exclusionist goals of the doctrine of association. Indeed, the legalization of residential segregation in Dakar, including the creation of the new African village of Médina, represented the first time in the history of France's African empire that

colonial urban dwellers were officially separated on the basis of their divergent customs and practices.

In addition to studying the transition from assimilation to association in Dakar, this thesis explored the impact shifting mechanisms of French colonial rule had on the city's African inhabitants, considering what this revealed about their lived experience and agency. In particular, I argued that far from being passive recipients of colonial ruling strategies, indigenous city-dwellers actively responded to the policies enacted by the federal and municipal colonial governments, and thus had room to negotiate their urban experience. While some African residents demonstrated their acceptance of assimilation by dressing European and adopting a European style of life, others contested French cultural imperialism by maintaining their customary values and beliefs. An even larger number of Africans, including the *originaires*, occupied an in-between position in this regard through their simultaneous engagement with European and indigenous customs. Examples of local indigenous agency were also evident in the residential practices of Dakar's Lebou community. The formation of the "African zone," for instance, represented this group's effort to maintain its cultural sovereignty in the face of assimilationist planning initiatives. By the time plague struck Dakar in 1914, the "African zone" would also become a site of Lebou opposition to discriminatory associationist policies, as the original inhabitants of the Cape Verde peninsula resorted to public displays of discontent to force the French West African government to abandon its segregationist plans.

This thesis's goal was to understand the complexities of colonial power and indigenous agency in the French West African capital of Dakar. In achieving this goal

through an examination of the city's urban development and population, my work has cleared new pathways for future research. Indeed, new ways of thinking are needed that continue to challenge our perception of colonial cities and their relationship to the shifting ideals and practices of French colonial rule in Africa. Recognition of African agency in colonial Dakar also opens the way to the adoption of more innovative strategies of analysis that will explore the various aspects of indigenous engagement with French colonialism. Moreover, it raises the possibility of delving further into the everyday experiences of groups like the *originaires* and questioning what it meant to be an indigenous urban dweller in French Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In other words, the study of the development of French African cities, as well as their European and African populations, remains an open terrain.

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