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- ¹ The Senegal Liberations Project seeks to analyze a register of slave liberations in Senegal between 1857 and May 1903 held at the National Archives of Senegal.¹ This source consists of twenty record books which contain evidence of 28,930 liberations. While the format of entry changed over time, the colonial government used the following general system: the date, identification number assigned to that specific liberation, name of enslaved person, place of birth, age, place of liberation within the colony of Senegal, and name and position of the colonial administrator who authorized the liberation. While we have not yet determined how the register was compiled in its current form, our research confirms that it is the official governmental record of

liberations conducted across different districts. The register is thus a compilation of liberations. We can therefore assume that officials in different regions of the colony transmitted their records of liberations to a central office, most likely in either Native Affairs or Judicial Affairs. This may account for the disproportionate representation of colonial officials in Dakar who are listed as authorizing liberations, at least between 1894 and 1903.²

Fig. 1. One Page of the Register, March and April 1899, *Répertoire des Libérations*.

NOM, PRÉNOM ET ORIGINE DU LIBÉRÉ	NOM ET QUALITÉ DE SON MAÎTRE	NOM, PRÉNOM ET QUALITÉ DU LIBÉRATEUR	LIEU DE LA LIBÉRATION
160 Mars 17 Procureur Général	Diado	Sala Salla	
161 " " " "	à Kourou	Paly Kaita	
162 " " " "	Kirata Loulou	Kaba	
163 Mars 30 Président du Tribunal de Dakar	à Kourou	Naranga	
164 Mars 30 Procureur Général	à Kourou	Lavara	
165 Mars 30 Procureur Général	à Kourou	Diara	
166 Mars 30 Procureur Général	à Kourou	Sambo Diabo	
167 Mars 30 Procureur Général	à Kourou	Fouta Fall	
168 Mars 30 Procureur Général	à Kourou	Stygn Des	
169 Mars 30 Procureur Général	à Kourou	Coumba Diou	
170 Mars 30 Procureur Général	à Kourou	di Diara	
171 Mars 30 Procureur Général	à Kourou	di Diara	
172 Mars 30 Procureur Général	à Kourou	di Diara	
173 Mars 30 Procureur Général	à Kourou	di Diara	
174 Mars 30 Procureur Général	à Kourou	di Diara	
175 Mars 30 Procureur Général	à Kourou	di Diara	
176 Mars 30 Procureur Général	à Kourou	di Diara	
177 Mars 30 Procureur Général	à Kourou	di Diara	
178 Mars 30 Procureur Général	à Kourou	di Diara	
179 Mars 30 Procureur Général	à Kourou	di Diara	
180 Mars 30 Procureur Général	à Kourou	di Diara	

Source: Senegal National Archives.

- 2 Slaves who received their liberation from colonial officials also received a *patente de liberté*, or certificate of liberation. None of these *patentes*, however, are included in the register. Some of those liberated by colonial officials had been seized from slave caravans moving slaves from the interior of West Africa towards Senegal. Others likely escaped from owners and made their way to colonial officials. We need to stress that enslaved people had many different routes to escape their masters and that the register of slave liberations only captures the pool who actively sought officially sanctioned liberation. A handful of enslaved Africans sought their freedom in official *villages de liberté* (liberty villages) or with missionary stations (Bouche 1968; Jones 2017). We thus have no way of knowing how many simply fled without seeking official liberation. Nonetheless, the register of liberations provides a significant and unique window onto the gradual end of slavery in Senegal during the second half of the 19th and first few years of the 20th centuries.
- 3 In many ways the Senegal Liberation Registers are comparable to the Registers of Liberated Africans from the Vice-Admiralty and Mixed Commission Courts. Each court of the Vice-Admiralty and the Mixed Commissions involved in the suppression of the maritime slave trade kept such a registrar. British efforts to suppress the transoceanic slave trade initiated these Vice-Admiralty courts and the courts of Mixed Commissions

(Martinez 2012; Bethell 1966; Pearson 2016).³ By far the largest and best analyzed of these registers was kept at Freetown, Sierra Leone. The Freetown register of liberated Africans contains selected details of 81,745 Africans landed in Freetown from 1808 to 1863. Clerks from the Liberated Africans Department recorded ‘with varying degrees of detail’ the freed peoples’ names, ages, language, and distinguishing marks such as scarification. Using the names recorded in the Freetown registers, the African Names Database seeks to identify the regions and often towns from where liberated Africans originated (Anderson 2020; Mieseovich 2019).⁴

- 4 The important difference between the two sets of registers—liberated Africans and those seeking liberation certificates—is that the former deals with those enslaved Africans who were liberated because of efforts to suppress the slave trade; the latter, with the exception of those liberated from seized slave caravans, concerns enslaved people actively seeking formal certificates of liberation in colonial African spaces where slavery itself had been abolished, but remained widely practiced. In most of colonial Africa, the ‘slow death to slavery’ followed the abolition of the legal category of slavery and the prohibition on new enslavement without formally freeing slaves (P. Lovejoy & Hogendorn 1993; Klein 1998; Barry 1998; Getz 2004).
- 5 In most of colonial Africa, officials made little or no effort to record those individuals seeking to formally register as free people. At the time of writing, we are aware of four samples of slave liberation records in Africa: Martin Klein’s (Klein 1998: 71-4) analysis of the slave liberation evidence for Senegal, Paul Lovejoy and Jan Hogendorn’s (P. Lovejoy & Hogendorn 1993: 297-304) analysis of the slave liberations evidence for Northern Nigeria, as yet unpublished research by Edward Alpers and Daniel B. Domingues da Silva⁵ on Mozambican *Registo dos Libertos* consisting of some 53,500 liberated slaves registered between 1856 and 1875, and the on-going research of the Senegal Liberation Project affiliated with Stanford University and Hamilton College. This article introduces the process and implications the ongoing Senegal Liberation Project.

Wider Context

- 6 During the heady days of the 1848 Revolution in France, the French National Assembly abolished slavery throughout the French empire. Slaves were freed in the plantation islands of the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean as well as in the tiny French outposts in Senegal. In Saint-Louis du Sénégal and on the island of Gorée, officials freed some 200 slaves (Guèye 1966; Klein 1998: 25; Getz 2004: 80).⁶ Article 7 of the 1848 abolition decree reasserted the French metropolitan principle that living on French soil entitled slaves to be liberated. Nonetheless, slave owners in Saint-Louis and Gorée mounted strong opposition to abolition, arguing that Senegal was a colony of commerce resting on enslaved labor. Although the Revolution of 1848 gave rights of citizenship to all the inhabitants of French territory, in practice legal distinctions remained between citizenship and nationality.⁷ French nationals owned very few people; most were owned by Africans, including women who were among the largest slave owning populations in the colony.⁸ Senegalese owners in these French outposts argued that their enslaved people were mostly ‘domestics’ charged with household activities, whereas the others were largely autonomous workers who hired themselves out as skilled laborers or

sailors plying the Senegal River commerce on behalf of Saint-Louisian or French metropolitan commercial houses (Pasquier 1967).

- 7 The implications of Article 7 continued to worry the colonial authorities and commercial stakeholders. Both groups supported commerce, since it sustained the fledgling colony; neither group wanted barriers to commerce; and both feared that African merchants living outside of outposts would avoid bringing their goods to market to prevent their enslaved people from seeking liberation on French soil. French colonial abolition policy remained unstable and uncertain in part because most of the Frenchmen appointed as governors in the subsequent years rarely survived Senegal's tropical disease environment for more than a year. Things changed with the appointment of Louis Faidherbe in 1854: he was a professional soldier who had served in Algeria from 1843 to 1852 with a brief posting to Guadeloupe in 1848, at precisely the moment of the abolition of plantation slaves. In 1852, Faidherbe was posted to Senegal as part of the company of military engineers and, in 1854 he was doubly promoted as *chef de bataillon* and governor of the colony. Faidherbe's posting to Senegal in 1852 coincided with the rise of Louis Napoleon (Napoleon III), the collapse of the Second French Republic, and the emergence of France's Second Empire. Among Napoleon's goals were the reassertion of French political and commercial interests in Europe and the revival of empire as a source of prestige, power, and wealth. French commercial houses, including the Bordeaux-based Maurel et Prom, had significant interests in promoting Senegalese commerce, particularly that of gum Arabic (acacia gum), widely used in the rapidly industrializing French textile industry and harvested mostly along the northern banks of the Senegal River (Mbodj 1993). Senegalese peasants, especially in the Kajoor region south of the Senegal River, were turning to peanuts as a commercial crop at the same time as industrialized France increasingly demanded vegetable oils. These Bordeaux commercial houses promoted Napoleon's imperial inclinations and encouraged the military expansion of the Senegal colony under Faidherbe (Barrows 1978).
- 8 The convergence of commercial and imperial interests with Faidherbe's governorship led to the aggressive expansion of colonial conquest, which in turn exacerbated the issue of slavery, the slave trade, and French abolition policy. In 1855, Faidherbe sought legal guidance from the head of the colony's judicial division, Frédéric Carrère, regarding the 'legality' of distinguishing French citizens from those not considered citizens, with regard to slave ownership. We do not have details of Carrère's judicial thinking, but the broader distinctions between citizens and subjects rested on the practice of the protectorate, which recognized the validity of indigenous laws and customs. In this case, Carrère's response to Faidherbe reiterated that slave ownership was impermissible for French citizens; however, as slavery was a long-established institution among African societies, slave ownership was permitted to those not considered French citizens. French citizens could hire enslaved peoples belonging to non-citizens, thus threading the needle of upholding French law while limiting scope of emancipation (Klein 1998: 28). In 1857, Faidherbe issued a series of decrees that further qualified the principles he and Carrère has established, and that underpinned both French colonial policy and French abolition policy for the next three decades. There are at least five significant aspects to these decrees: (i) French soil (so crucial to Article 7 of 1848) was limited to that which existed on the date of abolition in Senegal and was henceforth to be limited to the interior of whatever new French posts or forts were

established; (ii) fugitive slaves from friendly African allies would be expelled from French soil as vagabonds and returned to their masters; (iii) other fugitive slaves were to be held in custody for a three-month waiting period during which masters could seek to reclaim their fugitive slaves—after this time, fugitive slaves would be issued a formal emancipation document (*patente de liberté*); (iv) Faidherbe introduced a redemption and indenture procedure that not only fed increased demand for indentured labor in French plantation colonies but also fed the ranks of Faidherbe's *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* (or the companies of African Rifles), which became the arm of French colonial expansion; and (v) for our purposes, the redemption and indenture decree mandated the maintenance of a register of liberations that expanded over time to deal with the increasing number of liberations across the colonial districts (Renault 1972, 1976; Echenberg 1991; Klein 1998: 28-9; Getz 2004).⁹

- 9 At this stage in our research, we have a broad sense of the annual flow of liberations from 1857 to 1903, which is represented in the following graph.¹⁰

Fig. 2. Liberations over Time, 1857-1903 *Répertoire des Libérations*.

Source: Senegal National Archives.

- 10 There is a clear increase in the rate of emancipation from 1857 to 1903, with specific peaks in the liberation rate in the mid-1880s and the turn of the 20th century. According to this chart, enslaved Africans were reluctant to apply for official liberation during the first two decades after this process was instituted. By 1880, the pace of liberations increased – doubling and tripling over the next two decades. The rate of liberation is notably uneven, with numerous outliers (both peaks and troughs appearing at specific years) suggesting an equally non-uniform process subject to local political and economic factors and the more or less aggressive implementation of antislavery policies.

- 11 The Senegal Liberation Registers capture liberations which did not happen in isolation but rather were part of geopolitical and economic changes taking place in the wider Senegambian region. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870 led to the collapse of the Second French Empire and the establishment of the Third Republic. Until political stability returned to metropolitan France, French authorities in Senegal retreated, allowing for the deepening of the civil wars within Wolof and Sereer polities. With the appointment of Louis Brière de l'Isle as governor in 1876 and the reauthorization of military expenditures, colonial conquest resumed. Brière launched the expansion of French conquest into the interior of West Africa in 1879 and established the military command of the Upper Senegal River. Brière also negotiated with Kajoor and Bawol, which were emerging as a major peanut zone, promising not to accept fugitive slaves from these kingdoms (Klein 1998: 64-6). In 1885-1886, the French fought against the holy war launched by Mamadou Lamine Drame, and by 1890 the French had completed the pacification of Senegal with the defeat of Kajoor, Jolof, Futa Toro, and Siin (Barry 1998: 190ff).
- 12 In 1879, a report by a French pastor in Senegal about the continuation of the slave trade caused public outcry in France. The next year, Victor Schoelcher, an ardent French abolitionist and parliamentarian, launched a public campaign against the inconsistent and lax policy of abolition in Senegal with the complaint that slaves were openly bought and sold in the French colony (Schoelcher 1880; Klein 1998: 61-4). In response to metropolitan pressure, Governor Servatius extended antislavery policy to the protected territories of Waalo and Dimar in 1882. This decision in turn stimulated a massive exodus eastward of Peul/Fula and their enslaved people, in part to evade French antislavery policies and also in response to the call from Umar's son and successor, Amadu Shehu, to support the new Futanke states in the east. By 1889, as many as 40,000 people had migrated eastward (Hanson 1996; Klein 1998; Getz 2004). Enslaved Africans may have used this moment to escape, which would help to account for the increase in liberations after 1882.
- 13 By 1890, abolitionist pressure in Europe led to the international meeting in Brussels which reaffirmed European 'commitment' to ending the slave trade and regulating domestic slavery. Metropolitan pressure also pushed the government to stop the slave trade along the Senegal River in particular. In 1892, Governor Clément-Thomas met with African rulers of the surrounding protectorates, when they agreed to abolish the slave trade. They also agreed to recognize existing enslaved people in African territories as 'servants', thus tolerating domestic slavery even as the French initiated more aggressive abolition efforts. Colonial authorities increasingly stopped slave caravans and ships on the Senegal River and liberated the slaves. French antislavery efforts along the river shifted the slave trade overland and further south (Searing 2002: 152-5). At least one author argues that by 1895, the slave trade in Senegal was more or less over, although trafficking in women and children persisted for decades (Searing 2002; Lawrance & Roberts 2012).
- 14 The French authorities continued to issue freedom papers to enslaved Africans who fled to Saint-Louis and the towns and posts under direct French administration in the interior. These liberations mostly occurred along the Senegal River, in Saint-Louis and Dakar. But even at this point, French policy was deeply ambivalent. Martial Merlin, the director of Native Affairs in the newly created French West African Federation (*Afrique occidentale française*), refused to allow the commandant of the *cercle* of Thiès to send

slaves to Saint-Louis or Dakar to receive certificates of liberation, fearing that they would become vagabonds (Searing 2002: 155). Nonetheless, Africans seeking official liberation continued to present themselves to colonial officials.

- 15 Peanuts also played a significant role in the contradictory pressures of increasing slave labor and providing former slaves with opportunities to work, often as tenants or sharecroppers of landowners in the expanding Senegambian groundnut zone (Swindell 1978; Moitt 1989). Peanut cultivation for export first took root in the 1830s in the Gambia, and by the 1840s in the coastal regions of Siin and Waalo. African peasants turned to peanuts as European consumers increased demand for soaps, cooking oils, and lubrication for industrial machinery. Bordelais and African merchants based in Saint-Louis began buying increasing amounts of peanuts, providing incentives for African peasants to increase their production, often through the use of additional slave labor. From the modest exports of 500 kilos from the Saloum River in 1840 or 1841, peanut exports increased to 100 metric tons in 1845. Peanut production then expanded to Rufisque and the Petite-Côte, so that by 1853 3,000 tons were being exported. Peanut exports from Kajoor and the Senegal River swelled from 185 tons in 1845 to 3,000 tons in 1849. By 1870, nearly 23,000 tons of peanuts were exported from Senegal, and exports rose to 55,000 tons in 1878 and then to 83,000 tons in 1882. 85% of the total peanut exports came from Kajoor and Bawol (Brooks 1975; Searing 2002: 59). Peanut exports significantly shifted the internal tensions in Senegambian polities, resulting in a new wave of Islamic revival, resistance against the French, and internal civil wars in Kajoor and Siin-Saloum. Kajoor was subject to a protracted civil war from 1859 to 1886 that pitted 'traditionalists' against the reformist Muslims, including peasants. Maba Jaakhu launched a jihad against the Sereer in 1865. Peanut exports declined by over half until the French 'pacified' the region and established pliant protectorates by 1890 (Klein 1972; Searing 2002). Peanut exports then expanded dramatically from 1892, reaching 150,000 tons in 1903. By 1914, Senegal was exporting over 280,000 tons annually (Barry 1998: 215; Searing 2002). Increased demand for peanuts encouraged enslaved Africans to seek their liberation in order to work for themselves or as sharecroppers for African landowners.
- 16 Governor-general Roume decreed a new legal system in 1903, under considerable pressure (i) to clarify the legal foundations of the new West Africa Federation established in 1895, and (ii) to establish clearer boundaries of jurisdiction within the plural legal system that was French West Africa. Within that 1903 decree was the provision that clearly stated that French colonial justice no longer recognized the legal status of the slave.¹¹ This non-recognition effectively undercut the ability of masters to use the power of the colonial state to seek the return of their runaway slaves. In December 1903, Roume also ordered his administrators to stop issuing certificates of liberty, since in principle all inhabitants of the colony were free (P. Lovejoy & Kanya-Forstner 1994: 9). This order effectively ended the need to maintain the register of slave liberations. Within the next few years, enslaved individuals throughout French West Africa engaged in a massive exodus. In December 1905, Roume issued a decree once again prohibiting the slave trade and the various means through which individuals were alienated from their 'freedom' (i.e. new enslavement). Certainly not all enslaved Africans left their masters, but the institution of slavery fueled by steady supplies of new slaves had come to an end (Klein 1998; Miers & Roberts 1988; Lawrance & Roberts 2012).

Preliminary Analysis of the Slave Liberations from 1894 to 1903

- 17 The numbers of slaves seeking official liberation between 1894 and 1903 constituted 38% of the total number of slaves seeking official liberation across nearly five decades (1857-1904). We should note that the number of liberation cases differed slightly in each of the categories examined because of missing or unreadable information contained in the columns, as some of the registers were badly damaged and data could only be partially recovered.

Fig. 3. Proportion of Cases Analyzed to Total Cases in the Registers, *Répertoire des Libérations*.

Source: Senegal National Archives.

Sex

- 18 Scholars of slavery in Africa have generally agreed that demand in Africa for female slaves led to a higher proportion of enslaved women and girls than enslaved men and boys (Robertson & Klein 1983; P. Lovejoy 2012; Campbell, Miers & Miller 2007; Stilwell 2014). Scholars also agree that enslaved women were often more fully integrated in their masters' households and thus faced significant barriers to leaving. In many Muslim regions including Senegal, female slaves often became concubines or wives of their masters. In Northern Nigeria and Niger, for example, policies freeing slaves excluded enslaved women who were considered wives or concubines and thus subject to divorce. Seeking divorce and leaving children behind constrained the freedoms of liberated women (P. Lovejoy 1988; P. Lovejoy & Hogendorn 1992, 1993; Cooper 1997; Roberts 2005).
- 19 Despite these constraints, the sex ratio for liberated slaves remained generally balanced between male and female liberations, with female liberations accounting for 53% of the total. This slightly higher proportion of females is also represented in the separate register of unaccompanied minors, which we discuss more fully below.

Fig. 4. Distribution of Liberations by Sex, 1894-1903, *Répertoire des Libérations*.

Source: Senegal National Archives.

- 20 Unaccompanied female minors constituted 68% of the total pool of unaccompanied minors officially liberated. Despite the challenges facing enslaved women, the data unexpectedly show a relatively high number of females seeking official liberation.

Age

- 21 Our preliminary analysis indicates a population of liberated Africans from 1894 to 1903 that is generally young, with a mean age of 25.5 years old, and a median age of 26. Liberations of the elderly (those above the age of 50) are the least common of any age group at ~2%. Liberations of minors (aged <15) make up approximately 26% of the dataset, a large proportion of which were found in the register of unaccompanied minors. Young adults aged from 21 to 30 constituted 38% of the pool of liberated Africans. Teens between the ages of 15 and 20 make up 6% of the total.

Fig. 5. Age Distribution of Liberated Africans, 1894-1903, *Répertoire des Libérations*.

Source: Senegal National Archives.

Fig. 6. Age Distribution of Liberated Africans over Time, 1894-1903, *Répertoire des Libérations*.

Source: Senegal National Archives.

Seasonality

Fig. 7. Liberations by Month, 1894-1903, *Répertoire des Libérations*.

Source: Senegal National Archives.

- 22 Distribution of liberations by month and season showed clear intentionality. A majority of liberations occurred from the months of March to June (41%), with the months of October to January only making up 26% of total liberations over 1894-1903. Liberations decreased during the traditional harvest months for rice, peanuts sorghum, gum arabic, and other agricultural products. While climatic patterns varied widely across West Africa, the rainy season generally occurred from June to August, while the dry season mostly took place from October to May (Clark 1995; Webb 1995). Planting, weeding, and harvesting represented the most labor-intensive periods of the agricultural cycle. For groundnuts, planting took place around June and harvest in October and November; for millet and sorghum, planting from April to July depending on the rains, and harvests from September to November; for gum Arabic, which was a tree crop, harvest took place from November through May. While enslaved Africans seeking official liberation did so throughout the year, 41% of the liberations occurred in the four-month period from March through June, just before the heavy work of planting occurred. This evidence suggests that slaves were strategic in timing their liberations to avoid the heavy work on their masters' farms and to ensure that they arrived at their place of liberation in time to plant subsistence crops. Similarly, the fewest slaves sought their liberations during the harvest periods from October through January, despite the heavy work involved. This reluctance to leave during harvest also suggests strategic use of the agricultural calendar, in that enslaved individuals wanted to benefit from their share of the harvest.

Custody

- 23 The registers provide a window into whether slaves sought liberation singly or as groups related to one another.

Fig. 8. Liberated Africans by custody type, 1894-1903, *Répertoire des Libérations*.

Source: Senegal National Archives.

- 24 The overwhelming majority (74%) of slaves emancipated between 1894 and 1903 were released into their own custody, which indicates that they were adults. 10% of liberations were minors emancipated with other family members. Within this pool of minor children accompanied by parents, 90% were placed in the custody of their mothers and only 10% with their fathers. This provides tantalizing evidence that the family units of those seeking liberation were headed largely by women. 16% of liberations were minors without a family unit, and were allocated to a guardian under the *tutelle* program (Duke Bryant 2019). Unaccompanied minors were for the most part placed with guardians after their liberation, a process recorded in a separate register for these minors.

Unaccompanied Minors

- 25 The registers are inconsistent in their recording of unaccompanied minors. Sometimes they appear as regular entries in the registers; there is also a dedicated register for unaccompanied minors that begins in 1897. We define unaccompanied minors as those under the age of 18 who were not seeking their liberation with relatives. We had originally defined them as orphans, but the term is inappropriate for the condition in which many of these children found themselves. For example, the register contains a note from the Administrator of Podor indicating that two children (a boy aged 7 and a girl aged 3) were kidnapped from their liberated African mother. If these children were subsequently listed in the liberation registers, they would likely have been identified as orphans, but were not orphans as such.¹² In general, the unaccompanied minor records also indicate to which guardian they were assigned. Sometimes the records indicate that the guardianship has been changed subsequently and that the child has been transferred to a relative. In other cases, the entry has been cancelled—usually by means of a line crossing out the entry—and the liberated individual entered into a different register, usually because she or he was over 18. In other ways, the unaccompanied minor registers use the same forms as the regular registers.

- 26 Looking more specifically at the unaccompanied minor records, the mean age was 10 years old, with a median age of 9.

Fig. 9. Unaccompanied Minors by Sex, 1894-1903, *Répertoire des Libérations*.

Source: Senegal National Archives.

- 27 The vast majority, 82% of the liberated unaccompanied minors, were between the ages of 6 and 15, and 68% of them were female.

Fig. 10. Unaccompanied Minors Seeking Liberation over Time, 1894-1903, *Répertoire des Libérations*.

Source: Senegal National Archives.

- 28 According to our preliminary analysis, the sex and age distribution of the liberated unaccompanied minors from 1894 to 1903 are very similar to that found in Kelly Duke Bryant's study of children placed in guardianship in Saint-Louis between 1895 and 1911. Of the 1,325 children Duke Bryant identified, 62% were female, 30% male, and 7.5% of unknown gender. All liberated unaccompanied minors were allocated to guardians for whom control over the labor of their wards was similar to slavery. 'In practice', writes Duke Bryant, 'most guardians requested liberated minors to perform work that might

once have been assigned to slaves...' (Duke Bryant 2019: 218). Guardians had obligations to provide for their wards, teach them skills, and find them spouses. Liberated unaccompanied minors were released at age 18, although abuses were common. Colonial oversight over the treatment of liberated unaccompanied minors increased after 1903 as part of renewed antislavery efforts.

Fig. 11. Unaccompanied Minors' Knowledge of Parent over Time, 1894-1903, *Répertoire des Libérations*.

Source: Senegal National Archives.

- 29 Whether or not a liberated person had knowledge of her or his parents was another point of interest for our analysis because it indicates the persistence of family units under slavery or recent enslavement. In West Africa, knowledge of a person's family or surname helps to situate an individual in a social and temporal context (Irwin 1981) and thus serves as an indicator of whether an individual was enslaved as an adult or child or raised under slavery. 87% of liberated persons of all ages knew both of their parents' names; 10% knew no parent; and 3% knew at least one of their parents. Knowledge of parents was much less common in the unaccompanied minors' entries. Only 52% knew both of their parents; 39% knew neither of their parents; and 9% knew the name of only one parent. These data suggest that nearly 90% of those seeking their liberation were enslaved as older children or adults or that they were raised in family units under slavery. We also have evidence in the registers of the liberated Africans' knowledge of their birthplace, but we have not yet correlated this data with knowledge of parents. We believe that correlating knowledge of birthplace with knowledge of parents' names will help refine our understanding of whether our pool of liberated slaves were recently enslaved or were born into slavery.¹³

Comparisons with other Registers of Slaves and Slave Liberations in Africa

- 30 We are conscious of the fact that these are official records of slave liberations, and that most slaves who wished to leave their masters simply left without seeking formal

certificates of liberation. The colonial state was not capable of sufficient surveillance and coercion to demand adherence to its official forms of liberation. Martin Klein (Klein 1998: 173) estimates that there were likely over one million slaves in French West Africa around 1905. Paul Lovejoy and Jan Hogendorn estimate that there were 2.5 million slaves in Northern Nigeria at the turn of the century, or half of the total population (P. Lovejoy & Hogendorn 1993: 287). The proportion of slaves seeking official liberation in Northern Nigeria was thus only 4% of the estimated slave population.

- 31 Klein's evidence on Senegal liberations comes from the official governmental semi-monthly *Moniteur du Sénégal*. Klein only reports evidence for twenty years between 1868 and 1888, during which 8,759 slaves received their liberty. Klein admits that the evidence of liberations in the *Moniteur* was inconsistent, since some months and years were not recorded. Klein's total and our preliminary total (9,282, in addition to 1,765 unaccompanied minor entries) are similar in size, although our numbers reflect only one decade. In demographic terms, Klein's liberations were 60% female, compared to our more even gender ratio of 53% female. 40% of Klein's liberations involved minors. In our sample, accompanied and unaccompanied minors under 15 composed 26% of the total with those between 15 and 20 comprising only 6% of the total. In our sample, the single largest age group was 21-35, which comprised 48% of the total. The other striking difference is the presence of unaccompanied minors in these two datasets from Senegal. According to Klein's sample of minors, half arrived with their mothers, and were presumably liberated into their mothers' custody. Klein reports that 70% of the minors were girls and that 'close to four-fifths' of the girls were redeemed under the *tutelle* or guardianship program. In our dataset, 68% of the unaccompanied minors were female, which closely resembles Klein's findings. Klein also noted that most of the liberations took place in Saint-Louis. According to our data, nearly 75% of the liberations took place in Dakar. The discrepancy between the Klein and the Senegal Liberations Project data reflects the change in the seat of colonial power from Saint-Louis to Dakar, especially after the establishment of the government-general of Afrique occidentale française in 1895.
- 32 The records of slave liberations in Northern Nigeria analyzed by Lovejoy and Hogendorn are significantly more numerous than Klein's or those of the preliminary sample of the Senegal Liberations Project. Using records from both the Northern Nigerian provincial courts and the Islamic courts, Lovejoy and Hogendorn estimated that 102,750 slaves went to these courts to petition for their official liberty papers. Lovejoy and Hogendorn (1992) have analyzed the 'secret correspondence' between Frederick Lugard and the Colonial Office in London regarding the implementation of antislavery legislation. In Northern Nigeria, colonial officials sought to encourage enslaved Africans seeking their liberation to redeem themselves, and tried to prevent enslaved females from leaving their masters. Colonial administrations in both Senegal and Northern Nigeria pursued a double strategy of appealing to metropolitan antislavery sentiments while appeasing slaveowners in the colonies. Lugard's thinking on antislavery was enshrined in Proclamation 27 of 1904, which stated that the holding of slaves was not prohibited, but in fact 'lawful' under Islamic law, but that cases involving enslavement and slave trading would henceforth fall under criminal law in the provincial courts (P. Lovejoy & Hogendorn 1993: chapter 4). Slavery was not formally abolished in Nigeria until 1936, although Proclamation 2 of 1901 held that

those born after 31 March 1901 were free (P. Lovejoy & Hogendorn 1993: 30, 75). Those slaves born before that date remained slaves. Even before British conquest of the region, slaves in Northern Nigeria had several avenues to end slavery, including desertion, ransoming, and redemption. Ransoming and redemption involved official or public recognition of the slave's new status. Immediately after conquest, British provincial courts were active in slave cases, but over time they focused more on the crimes of enslavement and slave trading rather than on slavery itself. Slave and slave emancipation cases were directed to the Islamic courts. According to the data assembled by Lovejoy and Hogendorn, self-redemption remained the primary means through which slaves achieved their freedom through the courts, constituting around 62% of the recorded cases (P. Lovejoy & Hogendorn 1993: 287-304).

- 33 In terms of gender, the Northern Nigerian data indicate that despite obstacles put in place by colonial officials, females constituted between 60.4 and 64.8% of those seeking certificates of liberty through the courts depending upon the year and the location of the court. These figures are rather surprising given colonial policy and Islamic practices to restrict women's choice by promoting the shift from slave status to that of concubinage. On the other hand, the proportion of those seeking certificates of liberty through self-redemption is skewed heavily towards males in 1905-6 by 2.5:1. The age profile for slaves freed through the courts was influenced in part by Proclamation 2 of 1901 referred to above. Of the slaves freed by the courts in 1905-6 whose ages are known, 40.8% were fifteen or under; those of sixteen or older constituted just under 60%. By 1916, the court data on liberated Africans reflected the impact of the 1901 Proclamation, with less than 1% of the slaves being sixteen or younger. Given the gaps in the data used by Lovejoy and Hogendorn, the comparisons with the Senegal Liberation Project are limited. We look forward to the presentation of the new research by Edward Alpers and Daniel Domingues dos Santos (Alpers & Domingues 2020) on the Mozambique slave records in order to assess how their data compare to those we already have.

Conclusion

- 34 Preliminary results from our analysis of the 10,000 liberations conducted in Senegal from 1894 to 1903 suggest that the pace of liberations was clearly accelerating during this decade, which accounts for 38% of the total liberations recorded in the official register. Our results also indicate that young adults aged 21-30 constituted the largest group of slaves seeking their liberation, and that they did so principally in the months March through June just before the beginning of the busy planting season. Females slightly outnumbered males in the group seeking their liberation during this ten-year period. The number of female unaccompanied minors was, however, significantly larger than that of their male counterparts. These preliminary results raise a host of new research questions that will require both deeper analysis of the evidence in the registers and a more robust analysis of the wider context in which these liberations took place and were recorded.
- 35 Our research to date on the Senegal Liberations Project demonstrates the importance of this project as one of a number of digital history initiatives on slavery and emancipation. Unlike other projects that focus on the dynamics of slavery and emancipation in a broader Atlantic context, the Senegal Liberations Project's source

base offers a window onto the internal dynamics of emancipation in French West Africa. As it grows, the project will facilitate new insights into the social history of slavery and emancipation, and will be of particular interest to West Africa-based researchers. To that end, we are collaborating with the Institut d'Études Avancées in Saint-Louis, Senegal, and are in the process of creating a web-based research site in which we make available the entire list of coded liberations and space for posting new research based on this evidence. Our goal is for the Senegal Liberations Project to facilitate new, global research on critical questions of slavery and emancipation. We invite the readers of *Esclavages & post-esclavages/Slaveries & Post-Slaveries* to visit our site, www.senegalliberationsproject.com, once it launches, to access the coded evidence, and to participate in generating new insights into the end of slavery in French West Africa.

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NOTES

1. Stanford University Libraries acquired a microfilm of the register from the archives with permission in 2002. The original set of microfilms included seven reels. When we began serious research into the register in 2018, we realized that the quality of the film was relatively poor, reducing our ability to decipher the damaged and deteriorating original. With subsequent approval from the National Archives of Senegal, we digitized

the microfilm in order to better manipulate the images. We also returned a copy of the new digitized version of the register to the archives. The Senegal Slave Liberation Project is an ongoing collaboration between Stanford University, Hamilton College, The Institut d'Études Avancées in Saint-Louis, and the National Archives of Senegal.

2. All the data on liberations in Senegal cited in this article are drawn from the *Répertoire des Libérations* housed in the Senegal National Archives and digitized with permission.

3. See also the Liberated Africans database, section on courts (liberatedafricans.org/courts.php). All weblinks are valid in October 2021.

4. African Names Database is now part of www.slavevoyages.org. See also H. Lovejoy 2020 and Henry Lovejoy's Yoruba Diaspora website, which uses the Havana Liberated Africans registers and website. Some of the Liberated Africans in Sierra Leone seem not to have been recorded in the registers, accessed 3/10/2021. Anderson notes that 95,640 Africans destined for the Americas were diverted to Freetown as well as an additional 4,112 Africans liberated from the intra-African slave trade or from raids on coastal barracoons (Anderson 2020: 30).

5. "Abolition and the Registration of Slave and Freed Africans in Colonial Mozambique," presented at African Studies Association Annual Meeting, 2020.

6. According to Klein (1998: 25), in 1845 the slave population in Saint-Louis was 6,008 and in Gorée 3,735. Getz (2004: 80) argues that most slaves in Saint-Louis and Gorée stayed with their masters. Most slaves in these two French settlements were either domestic or skilled workers, including sailors/canoe men, who were hired out to French merchants and were able to retain a share of their earnings. This raises the important question of the value of 'freedom' for different kinds of slave, especially for female slaves. Klein argues that masters controlled housing and the labor market, thus limiting the 'freedom' of slaves and freed slaves. According to Grosbellet (1967: 83-4), in 1856 the population of Saint-Louis itself was 12,081 and when the larger arrondissement was included, the population was 23,315.

7. Significant ambiguity remains about the exact nature of the grant of citizenship in the two tiny settlements in colonial Senegal. See Coquery-Vidrovitch 2001; L. Kopytoff 2011.

8. According to Owen Westland ("The Profits of Coercion and the Origins of Urban Inequality," n.d., unpublished paper, pp. 40-1. Thanks to the author for sharing this chapter from his unpublished dissertation). 147 masters owned the 3,900 slaves on Gorée, indicating a high degree of consolidation of wealth in the hands of a few. See also the database on compensation to slave owners in Senegal as part of the 1848 abolition, "Repairs: Esclavage & indemnités, Empire colonial français du XIX^e siècle" (esclavage-indemnitees.fr/public).

9. The number of registered *rachats* remained low: in 1857 there were 5; in 1858 there were 77; in 1859, 36; in 1860, 71; and in 1861, 96. These figures from Grosbellet (1967: 49).

10. At this stage in our research and coding, we have noticed some duplication and gaps in the recording of the registers, which accounts for the differences in our calculation of the total number of liberations.

11. Martial Merlin, Instructions accompanying the decree of 10 November 1903, ANS-AOF K 16.

12. Administrator Podor, letter to Procureur général, Podor, 18 Aug. 1903, Répertoire des Libérations.

13. Such data will help interpret Igor Kopytoff's argument on which category of slaves left their masters when slavery ended (I. Kopytoff 1988).

ABSTRACTS

This is a preliminary analysis of 10,000 enslaved Africans who obtained formal liberation in Senegal from 1894 to 1903. It is a subset of the 28,930 liberations recorded in the official Registers of Liberation from 1857 to 1903. Most of the evidence we have on liberated Africans are from those on ships that were captured by European anti-slavery squadrons on the high seas, and who were then liberated by the Europeans into various Vice-Admiralty courts and Mixed Commissions established to deal with such cases. Most of the enslaved Africans listed in the Senegal Registers of Liberation actively sought their own liberation; a smaller percentage were freed from captured slave caravans.

The data used in this article comes from the twenty ledgers of the officially recorded liberations held by the National Archives of Senegal. This article provides a preliminary demographic characterization of this population of Africans and places these acts of formal liberation within a wider context of Senegalese political and economic history and French antislavery policies in Senegal.

The first part of this article examines the wider context of French antislavery policies in colonial Senegal from 1848, when the French formally abolished slavery in its territories, through 1903, when the government-general of French West Africa enacted a new colonial legal system that prohibited the recognition of slave status in disputes brought before the new courts, and in 1905 when the governor-general prohibited new enslavement. This was also a period of intensified colonial expansion during which antislavery policies were often subordinated to political goals; at the same time, it was a period of political and religious conflict within African polities, when the production of peanuts for export provided freed Africans with significant economic incentives to leave their masters.

The article then examines the demographic characteristics of those enslaved Africans who sought their liberation and were recorded in the registers from 1894 to 1903. 53% were female despite the barriers that enslaved females faced in seeking their liberation, and most of these were young adults from 21-30 years old. The registers also include evidence of unaccompanied minors, the vast majority of whom (62%) were female. The median age of the liberated Africans was 25.5 with young adults comprising 38% of the total. Liberations also reflected the agricultural calendar, in that 41% of them occurred from March to June just after the harvests were completed and when new crops were planted, suggesting intentionality on the part of enslaved Africans seeking their liberation. The final part of the article compares the evidence of Africans seeking their liberation within Africa from the Senegal Registers with that collected by other scholars using evidence from different sources for Senegal, and with the larger body of evidence for Northern Nigeria.

Cet article analyse le cas de 10 000 Africains réduits en esclavage qui, de 1894 à 1903, ont obtenu officiellement leur libération au Sénégal. Ils constituent un sous-ensemble parmi les 28 930

libérations enregistrées par l'administration coloniale de 1857 à 1903. La plupart des informations dont nous disposons sur les Africains libérés concernent ceux qui ont été trouvés sur les navires négriers arraisonnés en haute mer par les escadrons européens anti-esclavagistes. Ceux-ci ont ensuite été libérés par les Européens dans divers tribunaux de la vice-amirauté et par des commissions mixtes créées à cet effet. La plupart des Africains esclaves répertoriés dans les registres de libération du Sénégal ont activement recherché leur propre libération ; un plus petit pourcentage a été libéré de caravanes d'esclaves capturés.

Les données utilisées dans cet article sont issues des vingt registres recensant les libérations officiellement enregistrées au Sénégal, qui sont conservés aux Archives nationales du Sénégal. Cet article fournit un premier aperçu des caractéristiques démographiques de cette population et replace ces actes de libération formelle dans un contexte plus large de l'histoire politique et économique sénégalaise et de la politique anti-esclavagiste française au Sénégal.

La première partie de cet article examine la question des politiques anti-esclavagistes françaises au Sénégal colonial de 1848 (la France abolit alors l'esclavage dans l'ensemble de ses territoires) à 1903 (date à laquelle le gouvernement général de l'Afrique occidentale française instaure un nouveau système juridique colonial qui interdit la reconnaissance du statut d'esclave dans les litiges portés devant les nouveaux tribunaux) ; puis, jusqu'en 1905, quand le gouverneur général interdit de nouvelles mises en esclavage. Ce fut une période d'intense expansion coloniale, au cours de laquelle les politiques anti-esclavagistes furent souvent subordonnées à des objectifs politiques, mais aussi une période de conflits politiques et religieux au sein des régimes africains, alors même que la production d'arachides pour l'exportation fournit aux Africains libérés des incitations économiques importantes pour quitter leurs maîtres.

L'article examine ensuite les caractéristiques démographiques de ces esclaves africains inscrits dans les registres de libération entre 1894 et 1903. 53 % d'entre eux étaient des femmes, jeunes adultes de 21 à 30 ans, malgré les obstacles auxquels celles-ci étaient confrontées dans leur quête de libération. Figurent aussi, dans ces registres, des mineurs non accompagnés, des jeunes femmes dans la grande majorité (62 %). L'âge médian des Africains libérés était de 25,5 ans, les jeunes adultes de 21 à 30 ans représentant 38 % du total. Les libérations reflètent également le calendrier agricole, dans la mesure où 41 % de celles-ci eurent lieu de mars à juin, juste après la fin des récoltes et lorsque de nouvelles cultures avaient été plantées, ce qui suggère une intentionnalité de la part des esclaves africains voulant obtenir leur libération.

La dernière partie de l'article compare les informations issues de ces registres avec celles recueillies par d'autres chercheurs utilisant d'autres types de sources pour le Sénégal et les met en perspective avec les informations, plus nombreuses, disponibles pour le nord du Nigeria.

Este artículo analiza el caso de 10,000 africanos esclavizados que obtuvieron oficialmente su liberación en Senegal entre 1894 y 1903. Se trata de un subconjunto de 28,930 liberaciones inscritas en los Registros de Liberación oficiales de 1857 a 1903. La mayoría de las informaciones de las que disponemos sobre africanos liberados conciernen aquellos que fueron capturados por escuadrones europeos antiesclavistas. Quienes fueron luego liberados por europeos en distintos tribunales del Vicealmirantazgo y Comisiones Mixtas creadas con ese propósito. La mayoría de los africanos esclavizados que figuran en los Registros de Liberación de Senegal buscaron activamente su propia liberación; un porcentaje menor fue liberado de las caravanas de esclavos capturados.

Los datos utilizados en este artículo provienen de los veinte libros de contabilidad de las liberaciones registradas oficialmente, libros que están conservados en los Archivos Nacionales de Senegal. Este artículo proporciona una primera presentación de las características demográficas de esta población y ubica estos actos de liberación formal en un contexto más amplio de la historia política y económica senegalesa y de las políticas antiesclavistas francesas en Senegal.

En la primera parte se examina el contexto más amplio de las políticas antiesclavistas francesas

en el Senegal colonial desde 1848 fecha de la abolición de la esclavitud en Francia, que rige en todos sus territorios, hasta 1903, fecha en que el gobierno general del África Occidental Francesa promulga un nuevo sistema legal colonial que prohíbe la esclavitud y el reconocimiento de la condición de esclavo en disputas presentadas ante los nuevos tribunales; luego, en 1905, el gobernador general prohíbe una nueva esclavitud. Este fue también un período de intensa expansión colonial durante el cual las políticas antiesclavistas estuvieron a menudo subordinadas a objetivos políticos. A su vez fue un período de conflicto político y religioso dentro de los regímenes africanos siendo que la producción de maní para la exportación proporcionó a los africanos liberados importantes incentivos económicos para dejar a sus amos.

El artículo examina luego las características demográficas de aquellos africanos esclavizados que buscaron su liberación y fueron inscritos en los registros de 1894-1903. El 53% eran mujeres, jóvenes adultas de 21 a 30 años, a pesar de las barreras a las que se enfrentaban para lograr su liberación. Los registros también incluyen información sobre menores no acompañados, entre los cuales la gran mayoría (62%) eran mujeres. La edad media de los africanos liberados era de 25,5 años, y los adultos jóvenes de 21 a 30 años representaban el 38% del total. Las liberaciones también reflejaron el calendario agrícola ya que el 41% de las liberaciones ocurrió de marzo a junio, ya terminadas las cosechas y habiendo sembrado los nuevos cultivos, lo que sugiere una intencionalidad por parte de los africanos esclavizados que buscaban su liberación.

La parte final del artículo compara las informaciones disponibles en estos registros con las que han sido recopiladas por académicos que han recurrido a otro tipo de fuentes para Senegal y propone una comparación con las informaciones disponibles en mayor cantidad sobre el norte de Nigeria.

Este artigo analisa o caso de 10 000 Africanos reduzidos à escravidão que obtiveram oficialmente sua libertação no Senegal entre 1894 e 1903. Eles constituem um subgrupo das 28 930 libertações registradas pela administração colonial entre 1857 e 1903. A maioria das informações disponíveis sobre os Africanos libertos diz respeito aos que foram encontrados nos navios negreiros capturados no alto mar pelas esquadras europeias anti-escravistas. Estes Africanos foram a seguir libertos pelos Europeus em vários tribunais do vice-almirantado e por comissões mistas criadas para este efeito. A maioria dos Africanos escravos identificados nos registros de libertação do Senegal procuraram ativamente sua libertação ; uma percentagem menor foi libertada em caravanas de escravos capturadas.

Os dados referidos neste artigo fazem parte dos vinte registros recenseando as libertações oficialmente registradas no Senegal, que estão conservados nos Arquivos nacionais do Senegal. Este artigo fornece um esboço das características demográficas desta população e considera estes autos de libertação formal no contexto mais geral da história política e econômica do Senegal e da política anti-escravista francesa neste país.

A primeira parte deste artigo examina o problema das políticas anti-escravistas francesas no Senegal colonial entre 1848 – quando a França aboliu a escravidão no conjunto dos seus territórios – e 1903 – momento em que o governo geral da África ocidental francesa estabeleceu um novo sistema jurídico colonial proibindo o reconhecimento do estatuto de escravo nas demandas judiciais junto aos novos tribunais – ; e depois, até 1905 – quando o governador geral interditou novas escravizações. Foi um período de expansão colonial intensa, durante a qual as políticas anti-escravistas foram muitas vezes subordinadas aos objetivos políticos, mas foi também um período de conflitos políticos e religiosos no seio dos regimes africanos, enquanto a produção de amendoim para a exportação fornecia aos Africanos libertos motivos econômicos para deixar seus senhores.

O artigo considera a seguir as características demográficas destes escravos africanos identificados nos registros de libertação entre 1894 e 1903. Entre eles, 53% eram mulheres, jovens, apesar dos impedimentos que enfrentavam na sua busca de libertação. Aparecem também nestes registros

menores de idade não acompanhados, mulheres na sua grande maioria (62%). A idade média dos Africanos libertos era de 25,5 anos, os jovens adultos entre 21 e 30 anos representam 38% do total. As libertações também refletem o calendário agrícola, pois 41% dessas libertações ocorreram entre os meses de março e junho, logo depois das colheitas e quando novas culturas tinham sido plantadas, sugerindo a intenção dos escravos africanos que pretendiam obter sua libertação. A última parte do artigo compara as informações contidas nestes registros com as que foram recolhidas por outros investigadores utilizando outros tipos de fontes para o Senegal, e com as informações, mais numerosas, disponíveis para o norte da Nigéria.

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