Martin Klein’s eagerly awaited book is a history of slaves during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in three former French colonies. It investigates the changing nature of local slavery over time, and the evolving French attitudes towards it, through the phases of trade, conquest and colonial rule. The heart of the study focuses on the period between 1876 and 1922, when a French army composed largely of slave soldiers took massive numbers of slaves in the interior, while in areas near the coast, hesitant actions were taken against slave-raiding, trading and use. After 1900, the French withdrew state support of slavery, and as many as a million slaves left their masters. A second exodus occurred after World War I, when soldiers of slave origin returned home. The renegotiation of relationships between those who remained and their masters carries the story into the contemporary world.
Slavery and colonial rule in French West Africa
African Studies Series 94

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Slavery and colonial rule in French West Africa

Martin A. Klein

University of Toronto
In memory of
Etta Marcus Klein
1910–1993
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Preface

Most histories have neither a beginning nor an end. They are part of a seamless web. We cannot say when slavery began in western Africa, though it was certainly long before the period I am studying. And we cannot say when it ended, though there is no place in the three countries being studied where persons are legally owned by other persons. There are still people who are referred to as slaves in various local languages, though very few of them are under the control of another person. Historians impose beginnings and ends in trying to order our understanding of the past. This is a study of slavery in three African countries. I chose to begin with the abolition of slavery by the French National Assembly in 1848, but I am not interested in writing a history of French policy. I am interested in slavery within Africa, which involves understanding how Africans related to each other and to the European intruders in their lands. This means that I had to step back and look at the world in which the French were intruding and which they helped to create. There is no concluding date. The heart of the study deals with the period between 1876, when a maverick prosecutor named Darrigrand tried to enforce the law, and ends about 1921, when the disruptions caused by the return of tirailleurs from World War I ended. But the struggle was not over, and in some ways is not over yet. In each generation, the terms of the struggle change, but the fact of struggle remains. It has often been repeated that the export slave trade integrated Africa into the world economy, but it is even more important that the horror of centuries of slaving and slave-trading have left their impact on the social structures, cultures and personalities of Africa.

I originally intended to study all of French West Africa because I was not sure how much data I would find. I had already been struck by the silences in the record. I ended up with more data than I could cope with, in part because I kept digging on and off for twenty-five years. The oral record was the most difficult because almost all people of slave descent are reluctant to acknowledge that descent, but the interviews I did provided me both with moments of truth and with a more profound understanding of the peoples I was studying. Most of my documentation came from archival sources. Though often disappointing in their gaps, those records provided extensive documentation every time there was a crisis. I was also helped by the missionaries who responded in a very humane way to the suffering of a system colonial administrators and
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military men accepted and provided an insight on both slavery and the colonial administration.

It has been a long and very rewarding voyage and it has been shared by some wonderful friends and colleagues. I cannot list all of the people who in one way or another have helped me or stimulated my analysis, but I must thank some of them. At the head of the list have been those who guided on my forays into the field. My trip with Mohammed Mboj to Kaymor in Senegal in 1975 began twenty years of friendship. In Wasulu in 1988, Issaka Bagayogo taught me a great deal about research strategy. Jonkoro Doumbia traveled with us and enriched my understanding of Wasulune history. Aly Kampo helped me in Bamako and did research for me in Masina. Almamy Malik Yattara also helped me in Bamako in 1981. The late Abdoulaye Barry translated many of my tapes. In Dakar, Boubacar Barry and his wife, Aïda Sow, often provided me with a home, with introductions and with intellectual stimulation. Charles Becker gave generously of his knowledge of his adopted country. Abdoulaye Bathily often found time in his busy schedule to drag me off to lunch. Saliou Niang provided us with hospitality in Kabakoto in Saalum and the Ngom family in Kaolack and Dakar, especially Boubacar, Boubacar, Doudou, Frankie, Habib and their father, the late Alboury Ngom.

I had some other partners. Richard Roberts and I have had a twenty-five-year-long conversation and Paul Lovejoy has provided me with more ideas than I could use. More than anyone else, Claude Meillassoux has shaped my thinking about slavery, though I have sometimes argued with him. Fred Cooper is probably the most perceptive critic I have ever had. I have leaned at times on the research and collaboration of Bernard Moït and Ann McDougall. And I shared Senegal with Donal and Rita Cruise O'Brien, Wes and Marian Johnson, Jonathan Barker and Peter Mark. Richard Roberts, Fred Cooper, Paul Lovejoy, Charles Becker, Elka Klein and Suzanne Silk Klein all read this manuscript and helped me polish it. Parts of it were also read by Nehemia Levitzion, James Searing, David Robinson and Suzanne Miers.

I owe a debt to many archivists and librarians. I worked in more than a dozen archives, libraries and centers of documentation. I owe a special debt to Jean François Maurel in both Dakar and Aix, to his able successor, Saliou Mbaye in Dakar, the late Father Bernard Noël of the Holy Ghost Archives at Chevilly-Larue, to Father René Lamey of the White Fathers in Rome and Aly Onoigba in Bamako. Claude Ardouin was a guide to Mali and to Bambara cuisine. Of the many friends I made on archive staffs, special mention must go to Oumar Ba in Dakar and the gang in Bamako. Many fellow scholars sent me their theses or manuscripts, among them François Manchuelle, John Hanson, John O'Sullivan, Moustapha Kane, Andrew Clark, Kathryn Green, Maria Grosz-Ngaté, James Searing, Babacar Fall, Steve Harmon and James Webb. At different times, Judith Irvine, Commandant Louis Baron, André Wynkoop, Salmana Cissé, Peter Mark and Robert Baum have discussed their researches. Each one of them helped me resolve one or more questions. Marie
Preface

Perinbaum enriched my work with her scholarship and her friendship. I mourn her recent death, as I do that of Moustapha Kane and François Manchuelle. All still had much to give. Commandant Baron kindly gave me a typescript copy of Charles Monteil’s diary. Robert Harms provided a copy of Ismael Barry’s thesis. I also thank Mamadou Diouf, Pathé Diagne, Papa and Francine Kane, Momar Diagne, Omar Kane, Samba Dieng, Amady Ali Dieng and Mbaye Guèye in Dakar. I am grateful to Alpha Konare, now President of Mali, and his historian wife, Adam Ba in Bamako. Denise Bouche probably started me off on this quest, but Roger Pasquier, Jean-Loup Am- selle, Emmanuel Terray, Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, Marc Michel, Jean Bazin, Jean Boulêgue, François Renault, Paule Brasseur, Jean Copans, Jean Schmitz, Gillian Fleeley-Harnik, Sydney Kanya-Forstner, Myron Echenberg, Patrick Manning, Joseph Miller and Dennis Cordell have all helped. Countless grad students have done some research or translation for me, among them Maria de Sousa Lahey, Anshan Li, Chidi Nwaubani, Ugo Nwokeji and Chima Koreh. Igor Kopytoff has stimulated me by arguing with me. Philip Curtin has been a model of scholarship, though here too, I have sometimes honed my ideas in opposition to his.

This research has been generously funded over the years by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I also received grants from the Canada Council and the Social Science Research Council. A grant from the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington made it possible for me to start writing in a wonderfully collegial atmosphere. I would also like to thank various editors from the Cambridge University Press for their patience. I originally promised this book to Robin Derriocourt over fifteen years ago. In the final stages Jessica Kuper nurtured me through one final revision and Janet Hall was an eagle-eyed copy-editor.

Finally, I have three special debts. The first is to Suzanne, who got rid of both split infinitives and lapses into franglais. She has lived with this project since the beginning and has been one of its most perceptive critics. The second is to my mother. Her wit and her companionship have enriched my life and work. I wanted this book for her, but I think she understood that there were good reasons why it took so long. Finally, there are the elderly men with calloused hands and grey hair who received me into their lives, often lodged me and offered me their history. I particularly want to honor those who sought freedom and their offspring who have continued the rebuilding process. I thought at one time that I should keep the names of my informants secret, but as I got deeper into the research, I developed an admiration of those who overcame adversity and built new lives. The high points in my field research were small moments of self-affirmation. I remember Biraan Touré talking about how he worked by himself to create the settlement which is now a prosperous hamlet. I remember Dokoro Samake saying that those living in Ntntu were there because their parents returned from slavery and rebuilt the village. I remember most of all the old man in a village within sight of the trans-Gambian highway who kibitzed throughout the interview, and then at a
Preface

certain point, told me to look at the trucks carrying the peanut crop up the highway. Many of them, he said, were owned by and driven by jaam. And then, he announced proudly that he had only one master, Leopold Sedar Senghor, then president of Senegal. I celebrate them and their achievement.
Abbreviations

AEH  African Economic History
ANG  Archives Nationales de la Guinée, Conakry
ANM  Archives Nationales du Mali
ANSOM  Archives Nationales, Section Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence
ARS  Archives de la République du Sénégal
AWF  Archives of the White Fathers, Rome
BCEHSAOF  Bulletin du Comité d'Études Historiques et Scientifiques de l'Afrique Occidentale Française
BIFAN  Bulletin de l'Institut Fondamental de l'Afrique Noire
CEA  Cahier d'études africaines
CHEAM  Centre de hautes études administratives sur l'Afrique et l'Asie
CJAS  Canadian Journal of African Studies
CSE  Archives de la Congrégation du Saint Esprit, Chevilly-Larue, France
HIA  History in Africa
HSN  Haut-Sénégal-Niger
IFAN  Institut Fondemental d'Afrique Noire (originally Institut Français d'Afrique Noire)
IJAHS  International Journal of African Historical Studies
JAH  Journal of African History
JHSN  Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria
JO  Journal Officiel
JOAOF  Journal Officiel de l'Afrique Occidentale Française
JORF  Journal Officiel de la République Française
PRO  Public Record Office, London
PROB  Public Record Office, Banjul
RFHOM  Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer
S&A  Slavery and Abolition
UNG  United Nations Archives, Geneva
Glossary

Abd. pl., Abid. Arabic for slave
Almamy. Common title for Muslim rulers in West Africa. Derived from Al-Imam, the leader of prayer
Ardo. Poular. Chiefs among nomadic Fulbe
Assaka. Wolof. Derived from Arabic zakkat (see below), but in Senegal a payment made by slaves or former slaves to former masters
Banniya. Songhay. First-generation slave
Baraka. Arabic. Blessing, God’s grace. In some African languages has become synonymous with wealth
Bella. Songhay. Domestic slaves of Tuareg, usually born in slavery, who live in separate communities and farm
Canton. Fr. Smallest administrative jurisdiction in French administrative system. Commanded by an African chief
Captif de case. Fr. Domestic slave. Used for the slaves born in captivity (woloso, woroso, horso, raimaibe)
Captif de traite. Fr. Trade captive. Used for persons enslaved in their own lifetime
Ceddo. Wolof and Poular. Slave warriors in service of king
Cercle. Fr. In administrative terminology, the smallest subdivision headed by a European officer
Cour de Cassation. Fr. Highest appeals court of French West Africa
Damel. Wolof. Title of rulers of Kajoor
Dara. Wolof. A community of disciples. Originally a group which gathered for religious instruction and labored for the teacher, but, under Mourides, a community that worked for a Shaykh. Important in colonization of eastern Senegal
Denianke. Poular. Ruling dynasty of the Futa Toro before the Torodbe revolution of the 1770s
Diwal. Poular. Province in Futa Djallon
Escale. Fr. A port-of-call. Used for river ports which were approved locations for trade. Later extended to railway towns and secondary commercial centers
Glossary

Fama. Bambara. Traditional title of rulers
Farba. Title held by slave chiefs in many West African political systems. Term is of Mande origin
Feitoria. Portuguese. Agro-commercial centers. Along Guinea coast, they cultivated peanuts and were trading centers
Firdu. Workers in peanut basin who come for harvest. Originally from kingdom of that name on south bank of Gambia
Fulasso. Poular. Village communities of Fulbe in Futa Jallon
Futanke. The Umarian Fulbe in the Sudan
Geej. Wolof. A royal matrilineage in Kajoor
Ger. Wolof. The honorable classes. All who were neither slaves nor members of artisan castes
Grigri. Amulet
Griot. West African French. Caste of musicians, historians and praise-sayers
Guinée. Fr. A blue-dyed cloth much desired in western Sahara and Sudan used as currency in some areas
Habitants. Fr. Originally free African and Métis residents of Saint Louis and Gorée. Later, indigenous residents of Four Communes
Harratin. Arab. pl. hartani. Freed slaves
Hassani. Arab. Descendants of the Arabic-speaking nomads who invaded Mauritania from the fourteenth century. They are also often spoken of as warrior tribes since their victory in the Shurr Baba conflict in the first century disarmed their rivals
Hijra. Arab. Pilgrimage to Mecca
Homologation. Fr. An administrative and judicial review of lower court decisions to bring them into conformity with the legal code. Applied primarily to criminal cases
Horon. Bambara. Free person. Neither slave not caste
Horso. Songhai. Slaves “born in the house”
Indigénat. French colonial law code (1887). Gave arbitrary power to admin-
istrator
Jaam. Wolof. Slave
Jaka. Poular. See Assaka. Term used in Masina
Jamana. Bambara. In Wasulu and other southern Bambara areas, groups of villages that were linked socially and politically. Lacked any central authority
Jambuur. Wolof. Free man, noble, honorable
Jamgal. Poular. In Masina, obligation of the rimaibe to masters
Jassa (diassa). Malinke. Small temporary forts on a siege line
Jatigi. In various West African languages, refers to landlord or host
Jegom. Poular. A sixth of the harvest due to landowner in Masina after Tenenkou reform of 1908. Amount due has changed over the years
Jomlutung. Slave battalions in Umar’s army
Jon. Bambara. Slave
Juula. Malinke. Mande-speaking trading communities; sometimes used for
Glossary

specific communities; sometimes used for all professional traders
Kafu. Malinke. Small Malinke states, which succeeded Mali empire in Malinke areas
Komo. Soninke. Slave
Komo xoore. Soninke. Freed slave remaining as client
Laptot. Fr. Sailors, interpreters, workers in Senegal River trade
Maccube. Poular. sing. mattyudo. First-generation slave
Mansa. Mande. Title of ruler
Mariage à la mode du pays. Fr. Temporary marriages by Europeans posted in colonies
Marigotiers. Fr. Small traders who worked the creeks of Senegal river
Métayage. Fr. Sharecropping
Métayeur. Fr. Sharecropper
Murgu. Arabic. Payments by slave to master for the right to cultivate for themselves; self-redemption. Used in Masina for a tax
Muude. Also moule. Measure used in West African grain trade. Meillassoux gives it as 2 1/2 kg. Standardized by Senegal in 1826 as 1.75 litres
Nansoka. Soninke. Contract for labor between masters and former slaves
Navetane. Seasonal migrants in Senegal and the Gambia
Nyamakala. Malinke. Artisan castes
Nyenyen. Wolof. Artisan castes of blacksmiths, leatherworkers and griots
Oussourou. Tax on trade. 10 percent under French military in the Sudan
Pileuses. Fr. Women who pounded millet and did other domestic services
Pulli. Poular. Fulbe herdsmen in Futa Jallon
Razzia. Fr. Raid to gather booty or slaves
Rempescaen. Poular. Futa Toro. Sharecropping contracts
Rimaiba. pl. Poular. sing. dimo. Slaves born in captivity
Route de ravitaillement. French. The supply route from Kayes to Bamako
Runde. Poular. Slave village
Sahel. Arabic. Shore; refers to the areas just south of the Sahara
Sawal. Unit of capacity. Four muude
Shari’a. Arabic. Quranic law
Shaykh. Arabic. pl. Shayukh
Signares. Fr. Senegalese mulatto woman who were temporary wives of French men posted to Senegal. Became known for their elegance. Also were important property-owners and entrepreneurs in Senegal river trade
Sofa. Slave soldiers in various West African armies
Spahi. Fr. Colonial cavalry
Talibés. Arabic. sing. talib. Students, disciples
Tata. West African fortifications
Tefe. Brokers who specialized in slaves
Teug. Wolof. Members of smith’s caste
Tirailleurs. Fr. Riflemen. French West African infantry were known as Senegalese Tirailleurs
Glossary

Torodbe. Clerical elite in Futa Toro who won power in late eighteenth century
Tubakayes. People from Tuba in Guinea. Important as merchants and planters
Ulema. Arabic. Clerical elite
Vuluoso. Khassonke. Slaves
Woroso. Soninke. Same as woloso
Zakkat. Arabic. A charitable payment given to the poor. One of the five obligations of all Muslims. In theory, giver could chose those he wished, but many gave to a religious leader to distribute, and sometimes to a chief
Zawiya. Arabic. A religious establishment. Also refers to tribes disarmed after the Shurr Bubba conflict of the late seventeenth century. These are also referred to as marabout tribes