

**COLONIAL EDUCATION FOR AFRICAN GIRLS
IN *AFRIQUE OCCIDENTALE FRANÇAISE*:
A PROJECT FOR GENDER RECONSTRUCTION
1819-1960**

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Colonial Education for African Girls in AOF, 1819-1960

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a survey of the development of religious and secular colonial education for African girls and women in Afrique Occidentale Française, from 1819 to 1960. The historiography of colonial education in AOF has dismissed the education of African girls and women as they were numerically too insignificant to merit any special attention.

This study argues that an examination of educational objectives, institutions and curricula provides a rare and valuable window on French colonial discourse on African women. It was a discourse fed by sexism and ethnocentrism, that ultimately intended to refashion women's gender identities and roles to approximate those prescribed by the French ideology of domesticity.

The system took the form of a number of domestic sciences training centres that aimed to change the very social definition of what constituted an African woman -- to remake her according to the Euro-Christian, patriarchal ideal of mother, wife and housekeeper. Colonial educators argued that such a woman, especially in her role as mother, was the best conduit for the propagation of French mores, practices, and most importantly, submission to French hegemony.

The final decades of formal colonial rule in AOF saw the emergence of a small African male bourgeoisie. Members of this class, called "assimilés", accepted to varying degrees French language, lifestyle and values. This study further examines how many of them embraced the ideology of domesticity and became active in the debate on African women's education and the need to control and transform their gender identities.

RESUME

Ce mémoire étudie l'évolution de l'éducation coloniale religieuse et laïque des filles et femmes en Afrique occidentale française entre 1819 et 1960. L'historiographie de l'éducation coloniale en AOF, n'a pas retenu l'éducation des filles et des femmes, à cause du nombre insignifiant d'étudiantes.

Cette étude soutient qu'en s'attardant sur les objectifs de l'éducation, les institutions et les programmes, on parvient à décrypter le discours colonial français sur la femme africaine. Ce fut un discours nourrit de sexisme et d'ethnocentrisme, qui a eu l'intention de remodeler l'identité et le rôle des femmes, afin de les rendre conformes à l'idéologie française de femme au foyer (idéologie de "domesticité").

Ce système prit la forme de centres d'apprentissage d'art ménager dont l'intention était d'extirper de la femme africaine ce qui constitue socialement sa féminité pour la remodeler selon l'idéal euro-chrétien et patriarcal de mère, d'épouse et de maîtresse de maison. Les éducateurs coloniaux soutenaient qu'une telle femme, notamment dans son rôle de mère était le meilleur moyen de propager la morale et les us et coutumes français, et surtout la soumission à l'hégémonie française.

Les dernières décennies de pouvoir colonial en AOF ont vu l'émergence d'une bourgeoisie masculine africaine. Plusieurs membres de cette classe surnommés "assimilés" ont accepté à des degrés divers, la langue, le mode de vie et les valeurs françaises. Cette étude examine en plus, comment ils ont adhéré à cette idéologie de "domesticité", et comment ils se sont impliqués dans le débat autour de l'éducation des femmes, et de la volonté de contrôler et de transformer leur identité féminine.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Colonial education in the federation of *Afrique Occidentale Française* (AOF) was designed to ensure France's control of West Africa's wealth, both human and material. The education system aimed at one level to form an élite that would protect colonial interests, and on another to spread among the general population a belief that it was in its own best interest to cooperate with the colonizer. Underlying the entire system was the desire to control Africans so as better to exploit their labour and their lands. This study focusses on a seriously neglected area of colonial education in AOF: that devoted to the socialization of African girls and women. It is a broad survey encompassing the time of the establishment of the first school for girls in 1819, to the demise of classical colonialism in the 1960s. Greater emphasis is placed on the last forty years. This period is particularly important in demonstrating how newly formed African male élite found their voice, and class combined with race and gender to give the discussion on women's education a new dimension.

Geographically, this study focusses on the entire French West African federation. Available sources have not permitted close scrutiny of one or two colonies or regions. The educational structures, as established by the agents of colonialism, however, and the ideology that informed their development, were similar throughout the federation, making the study of AOF relevant. Where possible, regional variations are taken into consideration, for example in Sénégal where prolonged contact with Europeans prior to colonial rule had special implications for education; and in Dahomey where a

relatively high number of African girls entered the colonial school system.

Missionary societies and the colonial administration were the two groups most directly involved in the development of girls' education in AOF. To a lesser extent, philanthropic organizations were active as well. Each one is examined, focussing on the types of institutions they developed, and their reasons for doing so. Of course, these institutions, as envisioned by the above-mentioned groups, were altered by varying degrees of resistance, accommodation and intervention on the part of African groups and individuals. The issue of resistance to the colonial education system has not been fully addressed in this study because the relevant evidence has yet to be collected. It remains an important area for future inquiry.

A number of historical studies exist on colonial education in AOF. Many of them are largely descriptive, focussing on curricula, and their ideological foundations, types of schools, and administrative decrees, usually defined as either assimilationist or associationist. Denise Bouche's work on the system up to 1920 has clearly provided the foundation for much subsequent historical research and remains one of the most detailed, and cited, studies.¹ Unfortunately, it is largely a catalogue of changing personnel and fluctuating statistics, and provides very little analysis or interpretation. David Gardiner has also studied colonial education at the level of the Federation,

¹Denise Bouche, *L'enseignement dans les territoires français de l'Afrique occidentale de 1817 à 1920*, 2 volumes, published PhD dissertation, Paris, 1975.

although within a tighter, more coherent framework.

Other studies employ a narrower focus, concentrating on a theme, or particular school. Peggy Roark Sabatier has studied higher education in AOF, with a specific focus on one institution, the Ecole William Ponty, a federal boys' teacher-training, administrative and preparatory school established in 1903.¹ Another approach has been to compare and contrast education systems and their defining ideologies by different colonial powers.² There are also a number of studies that focus on the development of the education system

¹See for example, "The French Impact on Education in Africa, 1817-1960", in Wesley Johnson, ed., *Double Impact: France and Africa in the Age of Imperialism*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985.

²See Peggy Roark Sabatier, "Educating a Colonial Élite: the William Ponty School and its Graduates", unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1977; "Élite Education in French West Africa: The Era of Limits 1903-1945", *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 11:2 (1978), pp.247-66; and "Did the Africans Really Learn to Be French?" Johnson, ed., *Double Impact*.

³See, for example, Prosser Gifford and Timothy Weiskel, "African Education in Colonial Context: French and British Styles", in Prosser Gifford and William Roger Louis, eds., *France and Britain in Africa. Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971; and Remi Clignet and Philip J. Foster, "French and British Colonial Education in Africa", *Comparative Education Review*, 8 (1964), pp.191-98. Gail Kelly's work provides an interesting twist on this theme. She has compared French colonial education policies in AOF and Indochina. See "The Presentation of Indigenous Society in the Schools of French West Africa and Indochina, 1918-1938", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (Cambridge), 26:3 (1984), pp. 523-42.

within one colony of AOF.⁶ Finally, a group of general studies of Africa are useful in providing statistics on enrolment, numbers and categories of schools and colonial education policy.⁶

Common to all of these works is a failure to include women's education in their discussion of colonial education. Some, like Bouche, provide girls' enrolment figures, curricula and institutions established uniquely for African girls, but this information is relegated to a separate chapter and has no influence on the general framework of her study and discussion. All these studies state implicitly or explicitly that African girls' enrolment in colonial education structures was numerically too insignificant to merit any attention.⁷

⁶See R.W. Johnson, "Educational Progress and Retrogression in Guinea (1900-43)", in Godfrey Brown and Mervyn Hiskett, eds., *Conflict and Harmony in Tropical Africa*, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1975; Luc Garcia, "L'organisation de l'instruction publique au Dahomey, 1894-1920", *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 9 (1971), pp.59-91; and Denise Bouche, "L'école française et les musulmans au Sénégal de 1850 à 1920", *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer*, 61 (1974), pp.218-35.

⁷Particularly useful is Jean Suret-Canale, *French Colonialism in Tropical Africa, 1900-1945*, New York: Pica Press, 1971. His experience as a teacher in colonial Guinea makes him privy to special information and insights. See also, Raymond Leslie Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa*, 2 volumes, New York: MacMillan Co., 1928; Joseph Roger de Benoist is especially helpful with respect to the developemnt of student political organisations in his work, *L'Afrique occidentale française de 1944 à 1960*, Dakar: Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1983; and William Malcolm Hailey, *An African Survey: A Study of Problems Arising in Africa South of the Sahara*, London: Oxford University Press, 1957.

⁸The historiography of colonial education for African girls is somewhat better for former British and Belgian colonies and especially for South Africa. See, for example Kristin Mann, "The Dangers of Dependence:

Fortunately, more recent scholarship, in attempts to construct a theoretical framework for the discussion of the impact of European colonialism on African women, has deemed the virtual exclusion of African women from colonial education structures an important area of inquiry. It argues that the effect of colonialism and capitalism has in most cases led to the 'peripheralization of women', by reducing women's access to valuable resources, which include land, cattle, labour and notably education.⁸

Historians' decisions to dismiss French colonial education for girls as irrelevant to their studies, have effectively shut the door on a revealing and important area of research. This study argues that it is not sufficient to focus exclusively on the issue of women's

Christian Marriage Among Élite Women in Lagos Colony 1880-1915", *Journal of African History*, 24:1 (1983), pp.36-56; Barbara A. Yates, "Colonialism, Education and Work: Sex Differentiation in Colonial Zaire", in Edna G. Bay, ed., *Women and Work in Africa*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1982; Deborah Gaitskell, "Christian Compounds for Girls: Church Hostels for African Women in Johannesburg, 1907-1970", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 6:1 (October 1979), pp.44-69; and "Housewives, Maids or Mothers: Some Contradictions of Domesticity for Christian Women in Johannesburg, 1903-39", *Journal of African History*, 24:2 (1983), pp.241-56. It is also worth noting Francille Rusan Wilson's work, "Reinventing the Past and Circumscribing the Future: Authenticité and the Negative Image of Women's Work in Zaire", in Edna G. Bay, ed., *Women and Work in Africa*. While it does not focus on the colonial period, it discusses how the distorted images and roles of Zairois women created by agents of colonialism have been used by President Mobutu in his campaign of authenticité to define the "true" Zairois woman.

⁸See, Claire Robertson and Iris Berger, eds., *Women and Class in Africa*, New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1986, especially Claire Robertson, "Women's Education and Class Formation in Africa, 1950-80".

virtual exclusion from colonial education structures. Rather, it is precisely in focussing on educational objectives, institutions and curricula developed or planned for African girls and women in AOF, that other dimensions of French colonialism in Africa can be revealed. French colonials spent very little time discussing African women in the written record.⁹ Education is one of the rare areas of official colonial activity, however, in which there exists a comparatively extensive discussion concerning African women. As such, looking at education permits a rare glimpse of colonial perceptions of and attitudes toward African women. Such a focus provides an opportunity to explore another dimension of colonial ideology that was both sexist, and as will be seen, frequently misogynist. It also uncovers the role of gender in attempts by colonizers to destroy or degrade African cultures, in order to impose social control and entrench the colonial relationship more effectively.

Colonial education for African men and boys focussed on the training of a select number of translators, clerks and assistants to facilitate the business of imposing and maintaining French colonial rule and capitalist enterprise, as Albert Sarraut, Minister of Colonies, stated unabashedly in the 1920s,

In fact the first effect of education is to improve the value of colonial production by raising the level of intelligence among the mass of indigenous workers, as well as the

⁹Travelogues and novels are a different matter. For an overview of the depiction of African women by French men in such literature in the interwar period, see Ada Martinkus-Zemp, "Européocentrisme et exotisme: l'homme blanc et la femme noire (dans la littérature française de l'entre-deux-guerres)", *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 13:1 (1973), pp.60-81.

number of skills; it should, moreover, set free and raise above the masses of labourers the élites of collaborators who, as technical staff, foremen or overseers, employed or commissioned by the management, will make up for the numerical shortage of Europeans and satisfy the growing demands of the agricultural, industrial or commercial enterprises of colonisation.¹⁰

In contrast, the training of African women was rarely seen as critical to the development of the colonial bureaucracy or commerce. Rather, it fell more explicitly within the realm of cultural imperialism and social control. Women were colonialism's prime targets in its attempts to build a society it could recognize, understand and control. Central to this social and cultural reconstruction were attempts to change the very social definition of what constituted a woman -- that is, transforming African women's gender.¹¹

¹⁰Albert Sarraut quoted in Jean Suret-Canale, *French Colonialism in Tropical Africa*, pp.380-81. In fact, discussion of education, appropriately enough, employed at times military metaphors. As Governor General William Ponty put it:

Ce serait un grand tort de rester sur nos positions, et de ne pas pousser par l'école, comme nous l'avons fait par les armes, une offensive audacieuse et ininterrompue: l'installation d'une école de village dans une case indigène...Il faut que l'AOF en soit couverte.

Quoted in, Garcia, "L'organisation de l'instruction publique au Dahomey, 1894-1920", p.85.

¹¹This study employs the term gender in a dynamic sense, and follows Joan Wallach Scott's definition: The term gender suggests that relations between the sexes are a primary aspect of social organisation...; that the terms of male and female identities are in large part culturally determined; and that differences between the sexes constitute, and are

Throughout the period under study, the focus of girls' education was on domestic studies to train good wives, mothers and housekeepers according to Euro-Christian, patriarchal standards. Certainly, the promotion of this ideology of domesticity, defining woman as a non-economic being, as nurturer and caretaker and circumscribing her activities to the home, was not unique to colonial Africa. The ideology of domesticity also defined school curricula for girls in France and elsewhere in this period. The crucial dynamic that distinguished African girls' education from that of the metropole was race. The belief that African and French societies represented two poles on a scale of civilization permeated all aspects of the colonial relationship, including education. Thus, the education of African women was riddled with racist rhetoric of how to promote the evolution of African women from a state of backwardness to a state of civilization approaching, but never identical to that represented by French women.

Significantly, a new voice emerged in the 1930s that contributed to, and rendered more complex, the discussion concerning which path women should take to 'civilization'. This voice belonged to a nascent male African bourgeoisie articulating their own definition of what constituted a 'good woman', a definition closely honed to their class interests and unique position in colonial society as *assimilé*. They articulated their own discourse on gender in their search for a spouse who could answer their special needs. Consequently, there was a slight but perceptible shift in the debate on

constituted by hierarchical social structures. See, *Gender and the Politics of History*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1988, p.25.

women's education away from an earlier focus on motherhood and towards a greater emphasis on wifely duties. Invariably these men, while generally in agreement with the broad aims of colonial education for girls, were disappointed with its results and they actively tried to assert some control and influence over its formulation and implementation.

Nancy Rose Hunt must be credited with looking at the colonial socialization of women through a new lens. In her exemplary article "Domesticity and Colonialism in Belgian Africa: Usumbura's Foyer Social, 1946-1960"¹² she looks at women's education within the context of Belgian colonialism's attempts to redefine gender roles. The *foyers* were first initiated by the White Father and White Sister missionaries in an effort to stem the effects of the migrant labour system on the family.¹³ As part of a larger campaign of labour stabilization these *foyers* attempted to foster permanent family residence in the cities and centres of labour. However, unlike the other domestic training centres in Burundi, the *foyers* focussed exclusively on the training of wives for a male élite. Hunt's findings are strikingly similar to the results of this research on AOF,

[The foyers were part of] the Belgian colonial project to refashion gender roles and instill a Western family ideology into African urban life. The foyer was a prized agenda because it enabled colonial knowledge of African urban households, their redefinition and bounding as

¹²Nancy Rose Hunt, "Domesticity and Colonialism in Belgian Africa: Usumbura's Foyer Social, 1946-60", *Signs, Journal of Women in Culture and History*, 15:3 (Spring, 1990), pp.447-74.

¹³*Ibid.*, p.454.

the domestic, private sphere, and their differentiation according to new colonial representations of class.¹⁴

Many theorists of colonial socialization have contributed significantly to the types of questions asked in this study. Specifically, they have squarely set colonial education within a larger strategy of entrenching European imperialism. However, they share the common practice of relegating women to a paragraph or footnote, and ignoring them altogether as an important component in the formulation of their theories. This study argues that incorporating the study of colonial socialization strategies targeting women does not fundamentally alter their basic arguments, but it significantly deepens the analysis and critique of these strategies by revealing the gendered nature of the colonial education system and ultimately uncovering a whole new layer of colonial strategy.

One of the most important theorists informing this study is Frantz Fanon. His discussion of the development of African national bourgeoisies in the *The Wretched of the Earth*¹⁵ constitutes the basis from which this study explores the relationship between the development of this male bourgeoisie and its attempts to fashion and control a female élite. Most importantly, he clearly delineates how men's colonial socialization forged an identity that looked to the metropolitan middle-class as the model to emulate,

In its wilful narcissism, the national middle-

¹⁴*Ibid*, p.469.

¹⁵Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1969, (first published by François Maspero in 1961).

class is easily convinced that it can advantageously replace the middle-class of the mother country.¹⁶

Their identification with the metropole as a cultural mecca necessarily informed their attitudes concerning women's education.

Walter Rodney has skillfully put to rest the notion that there is a positive balance sheet to colonialism. Apologists for colonialism point to schools, hospitals and transportation networks to claim that the system was not without its merits. Rodney shows that to challenge this basic argument it is only necessary to look at numbers to understand that resources devoted to concerns like education represented a negligible return on the wealth and labour extracted from the colonies.¹⁷ Furthermore, he argues that colonial education fits comfortably into his thesis of the development of underdevelopment:

Education in Europe was dominated by the capitalist class. The same class bias was automatically transferred to Africa; and to make matters worse the racism and cultural boastfulness harbored by capitalism were also included in the package of colonial education. Colonial schooling was education for subordination, exploitation, the creation of mental confusion and the development of underdevelopment.¹⁸

While Rodney helps establish a theoretical framework within which this study explores education, it is hoped that this work will contribute to and even modify

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p.120.

¹⁷Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, London: Bogle L'Ouverture Publication Ltd., 1988, p.241.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

Rodney's assertions by adding gender to his discussion of race and class in colonial education.¹⁹

One of the most thoughtful studies on colonial education in AOF, combining a sharp theoretical argument with detailed research is Abdou Moumouni's *L'Éducation en Afrique*.²⁰ Sharing Fanon and Rodney's critique of colonial education, his argument is more compelling in that his study focusses exclusively on the education system, supplying important data and information not found elsewhere. Displaying a more detailed and knowledgeable understanding of the overall system, his theoretical arguments concerning colonial education's contribution to underdevelopment and neocolonialism are all that more convincing. Moumouni illustrates the violence colonial socialisation entailed in its efforts to create an élite separate from their fellow citizens by stripping them of their cultural identity and integrity.²¹ Central to this process of alienation was the strict prohibition of African languages, and the denial of Africans' histories in the colonial classroom.²² He also explores the two faces of colonial

¹⁹See also, B. Olatunji Oloruntimehin, "Education for Colonial Dominance in French West Africa from 1900 to the Second World War", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 7:2 (June 1974), pp.347-56; and A. Y. Yansané, "The Impact of France on Education in West Africa", in Johnson, ed., *Double Impact*.

²⁰Abdou Moumouni, *L'éducation en Afrique*, Paris: François Maspero, 1964.

²¹*Ibid.*, p.46.

²²*Ibid.*, pp.46,56. For a detailed discussion of the falsification of Africans' histories in the colonial education system, see Kelly, "The Presentation of Indigenous Society in the Schools of French West Africa and Indochina, 1918-1938".

education. The first involved imposing social control over colonized societies; the second involved the diplomatic work of legitimizing the colonizers' activities to the rest of the world and the voters at home. Pointing to the presence of an education system in the colonies was a powerful weapon against external criticism and internal dissent.

Significantly, Moumouni's study stands virtually alone. He is one of the first to take his discussion of women's education beyond the simple claim that women were largely excluded from the system. He briefly explores the colonial administration's attempts to train African women to meet the needs of the male African élite. He puts a human face on the phenomenon by describing the ridicule and social ostracism faced by many of the graduates of the École Normale des Filles de Rufisque,

L'orientation qui lui était donnée ressort nettement des divers sobriquets qui ont été donnés à ses élèves: Mlles 'frigidaires', 'femmes savantes', 'précieuses ridicules', etc.²³

Sadly, his work has been largely ignored by most of his successors in the area of colonial education in AOF. It deserves credit as unquestionably one of the best.²⁴

²³Moumouni, *L'éducation en Afrique*, p.123.

²⁴There are a number of other studies that are of varying value for this work, including a study by Pemi Clignet who looks at the colonial policies of assimilation and association, and their relationship to the colonial education policies. See, "Inadequacies in the Notion of Assimilation in African Education", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 8 (October, 1970) pp.425-44. For a more theoretical approach to colonial education in general see Martin Carnoy, *Education as Cultural Imperialism*, New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1974. He argues that colonial schooling attempted to destroy indigenous culture so as to better impose new hierarchies

While this study is a library thesis, there is fortunately a relatively rich base of available primary sources. Many of them proved to be particularly informative for the colonial discourse on gender. Colonial reports concerning education provide some important information on girls' education in the form of numbers and types of schools, enrolment figures and some limited information on curricula. An especially useful report, entitled *Africans Learn to be French*, by Bryant W. Mumford and Major G. St. J. Orde-Brown, was issued following their tour of schools in AOF in 1935 to evaluate the education system.²⁵ An essential source of information, used suprisingly little by many of the aforementioned studies, is the *Bulletin d'enseignement de l'Afrique occidentale française* (BEAOF), (renamed *Education Africaine* in 1934), a pedagogical journal

of externally controlled capitalist production. While many of his arguments are attractive, and he borrows much from Freire's, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, his extremely broad generalizations encompassing all colonizers on one side, and all the colonized on the other, coupled with a shallow knowledge of colonial Africa seriously limit the usefulness of his work. Finally, see the "Introduction" to Philip Altbach and Gail P. Kelly, eds., *Education and Colonialism*, New York: Longman, 1978.

²⁵Bryant W. Mumford and Major G. St. J. Orde-Brown, *Africans Learn to be French*, London: Evans, 1936. As their title suggests, Mumford and Orde-Brown argue that the French colonial education system was a replica of the metropolitan system. Much of the early writing on colonial education in AOF uncritically accepted their assertions. See for example, Ruth Sloan and Helen Kitchen, *The Educated African: A Country by Country Survey of Educational Development*, New York: Praeger, 1962. For a more recent example, see A. Babs Fafunwa, "African Education in Perspective", in A. Babs Fafunwa and J.U. Aisiku, eds., *Education in Africa. A Comparative Survey*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982. Peggy Roark Sabatier, in particular, has done much through her research to dispel this notion.

published by the colonial government.²⁶ It provides detailed information on the development of the system, perceived problems, stated aims and statistics, as well as instructional materials for the schools. It is priceless for its published discussions and debates concerning girls' education, and its contributions from teachers and students (all male) about problems encountered in girls' education, proposals for special girls' programs and conceptualizations for appropriate female socialization.²⁷

Some of the architects of the education system published their reflections and intentions. Most notable is Georges Hardy, who enjoyed a long career in colonial education. In 1912, when the post of education inspector was created as part of a range of administrative reforms in the education system of AOF, Hardy was the first to occupy the position.²⁸ He headed the system until 1919, when he was transferred to Morocco to fill the equivalent

²⁶The bulletin is examined, from 1913 to 1955. *Bulletin d'enseignement de l'Afrique occidentale française* (BEAOF), Gorée: Imprimerie du gouvernement général, 1913-34; *Education africaine* (EA), Dakar: Imprimerie du gouvernement général, 1935-43; New Series: 1950-1955. Publication was suspended in 1942 and 1946-47. Issues missing are: 1944-45; 1948-49.

²⁷This study relies heavily on the BEAOF. It is seen as representative of the ideas of both French colonial educators concerned with African women's education, and petty bourgeois African men addressing similar concerns. But this must be qualified. The BEAOF was a colonial publication and, therefore, not a forum for real debate and alternative views. As such, clearly absent from its pages are the perspectives of those holding fundamentally different opinions. It is beyond the scope of this study to search those voices out, but is certainly an area for further research.

²⁸Suret-Canale, *French Colonialism in Tropical Africa*, pp.375-76.

post until 1926."³¹ In 1933 he was named rector of the Academy of Algiers."³² He was a prolific writer on the subject of French education in the colonies, and clearly articulated his positions on colonial education policy including his rather vivid vision of proper education for women and strategies for implementing his ideas. His most notable work is *Une Conquête Morale: l'enseignement en AOF*, the title of which alone reveals the nature of his mission ."³³

The writings and policies of other colonial officials are examined as well, including Albert Sarraut, Minister of Colonies, known for his policy of *mise en valeur*³⁴; and Jean Capelle, former General Director of education in AOF, who has recently published a book on colonial education.³⁵

The establishment of the Institut Français de l'Afrique Noire in 1938 in Dakar served to bring together amateur and professional French Africanists pursuing ethnographic, historical and scientific studies.³⁶ Its

³¹William B. Cohen, *Rulers of Empire: the French Colonial Service in Africa*, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1971, p.87.

³²*Ibid.*, p.98. While in AOF Hardy completed his PhD thesis *La Mise en Valeur du Sénégal, 1817-1854*, published in Paris: Editions Larose, 1921.

³³Georges Hardy, *Une Conquête Morale: l'enseignement en AOF*, Paris: Armand Colin, 1917.

³⁴Albert Sarraut, *La mise en valeur des colonies françaises*, Paris: Payot, 1923.

³⁵Jean Capelle, *L'éducation en Afrique Noire à la veille des Indépendances (1946-58)*, Paris: Editions Karthala et ACCT, 1990.

³⁶Suret-Canale, *French Colonialism in Tropical Africa*, p.369.

published bulletin provides another window on colonial attitudes about women's education and African women in general.³⁵

There is a relative dearth of missionary writings on women's education, especially for the twentieth century. Writings by individual missionaries were useful. Henri Gravrand, a French Catholic missionary spent twelve years in Serer country and wrote an ethnographic monograph which includes some valuable information on French female religious orders and their work with Serer women in the years leading up to independence.³⁶

In the last forty years of classical colonial rule the wives and children of colonial administrators began to settle in significant numbers in the colonies for the first time. European women's organisations like the Association des femmes de l'Union Française (AFUF) were established in the colonies, and some set up household management schools. Unfortunately, without access to archives, attempts to trace the activities and types of relationships that organizations like the AFUF tried to establish with African women have proven fruitless. Individual French women, however, wrote about their experiences in the colonies including their concerns for

³⁵Unfortunately, due to constraints of time, only the Guinean edition was used for this study -- *Etudes guinéennes* (Bulletin IFAN -- Guinée) vols. 1-13 (1947-55). The Bulletin IFAN for the region of AOF was also examined, from 1939-53. See, *Notes Africaines*, Dakar: Institut français d'Afrique noire (1939-53).

³⁶Henri Gravrand, *Visage Africain de l'Eglise. Une expérience au Sénégal*. Paris: Éditions de l'Orante, 1961.

African women's education.³⁷

Early submissions to *Présence Africaine* by students expressing their aspirations and frustrations with the colonial education system is yet another source of valuable information.³⁸ Sadly, the students writing at this time were all men, a problem symbolic of the greatest methodological obstacle in this study. Without the possibility of conducting interviews with African women and access to women's letters or autobiographies their voices and their perspectives on colonial education are absent, leaving a serious gap in this study.³⁹ Certainly some reactions can be surmised, through, for example, an examination of figures on absenteeism, or drop out rates, but this is an unsatisfactory solution to the problem. It is recognized that women's perspectives on colonial education would render this study significantly more complex and could temper or alter some of its conclusions.

³⁷Clotilde Chivas-Baron was the only writer whose work was located for this study. Further work on this topic would benefit greatly from pursuing this line of inquiry. See, Clotilde Chivas-Baron, *Côte d'Ivoire*, Paris: Editions Larose, 1939; and by the same author, *La femme française aux colonies*, Paris Editions Larose, 1929.

³⁸See for example, Bernard Dadié, "Misère de l'enseignement en AOF", *Présence africaine*, n.s., no.11 (déc, 1956-janv., 1957), pp.57-70; and in the same issue, A. Sar, I. Fofana, and K. Barry, "Esprit et situation de l'enseigneemt en Afrique Noire", pp.71-83.

³⁹Andrée Blouin, a *métisse* woman born in the Belgian Congo, was raised in an orphanage run by nuns and she writes extensively in her autobiography about her experiences there, including her education, and its impact on her life. See, Andrée Blouin and Jean MacKellar, *My Country Africa: The Autobiography of the Black Pasionaria*, New York: Praeger, 1983.

An impressive model for such an investigation is the remarkable study by Shula Marks, *Not Either an Experimental Doll*⁴⁰. The issue of the socialization of African girls in South Africa is revealed, through the letter correspondence of three South African women, to be an extremely complex matter, escaping facile generalisations or conclusions. Marks traces the struggles of Lily Moya, a Xhosa girl, for a meaningful education. While Marks accepts the thesis of education as social control, she enables us to see, through Moya's story how individuals experienced and responded to the painful contradictions that education represents in a racist colonial society. The letters, forming the foundation and content of Marks's study, open up new, more profound ways of looking at the colonial socialization of African women.

This kind of work clearly needs to be done for AOF. The perspectives of African women linked in some way to colonial education in AOF are not simply seen as additional information required to complete the story, but rather are experiences that should help to define it. This area of research sadly falls outside the realm of what is possible for this thesis.

This sort of methodological problem has determined the nature of this study. This thesis is primarily an examination of the intentions of the colonizers, and those nominally linked to them, in their quest to create and impose a new social definition of woman, with its concomitant prescription of appropriate social and

⁴⁰Shula Marks, ed., *Not Either an Experimental Doll. The Separate Worlds of Three South African Women*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.

economic activity. By focussing on colonial education for women in AOF, gender joins class and race as an important factor in examining the imposition of colonial rule. It is also an important window on colonial ideas about colonized women, and the adoption of some of those ideas by a nascent African male élite forging its own identity.

The thesis is organised into five chapters. Chapters I and V are the introduction and conclusion respectively. Chapter II is a survey of the early development of girls' education in AOF from 1817, with the establishment of the first girls' school, to 1903 when the colonial administration took over the running of the schools from the missionaries. Chapter III is an examination of ideology. The focus is on colonial ideas about African women as revealed in educators' discussions about appropriate strategies for their socialisation. It also addresses how the colonial discourse on domesticity was adopted by an African male neobourgeoisie, and modified to address their particular needs. Chapter IV takes up where the second one left off, with a survey of the post-1903 institutional and program development, up to the demise of classical colonialism.

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CHAPTER II

SETTING UP THE SYSTEM 1819-1903

The first period of colonial education in *Afrique occidentale française* (AOF) was largely under the control of Catholic missionaries. In their scramble for African souls they participated in the colonial conquest of West Africa. Their mission was one of mass conversion and cultural imperialism. African women were central to the missionaries' plans as they were perceived as the principal transmitters of culture, and therefore, key to undermining and changing that culture.

This period of the history of colonial education dates from 1816, with the establishment of the first colonial school in Saint-Louis, to 1903, when the system was secularized and came under complete colonial government control.¹ This was the time of so-called "legitimate commerce", the precursor to formal empire and a time when the trans-Atlantic slave trade was slowing down and ever larger numbers of European explorers, merchants and missionaries were pushing beyond the African coast.²

Colonial control of various locations along the coast took firm root. The industrial revolution in Europe powered the expansion of the capitalist world market, spurring class restructuring in Africa, including the formation of a new commercial élite along the west

¹Gifford and Weiskel, "African Education in a Colonial Context: French and British Styles", p.670.

²Bill Freund, *The Making of Contemporary Africa. The Development of African Society Since 1800*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984, pp.61-62.

African coast. Dependent on European credit, these African merchants enthusiastically participated in the new business relationship emerging between themselves and the Europeans and aimed to cement this profitable alliance through the adoption of French cultural norms and practices.³ They came to be known as the *assimilés* and their children formed the majority of African students in colonial classrooms. By the turn of the century the *assimilés* were often the second, third or even fourth generation of African students in French colonial schools.⁴

An important segment of this new business élite were the *signares* (taken from the Portuguese *senhoras*). Dating back to the fifteenth century, the *signares* were an influential and wealthy group of women living and working along the west African coast, most notably and lastingly, in Gorée and Saint-Louis.⁵ They carved out

³Freund, *The Making of Contemporary Africa*, p.65.

⁴Bouche, *L'enseignement dans les territoires français de l'Afrique occidentale de 1817 à 1920*, Tome 1, p.423.

⁵The historical literature on the *signares* is small. See George E. Brooks, Jr., "The Signares of St. Louis and Gorée: Women Entrepreneurs in Eighteenth Century Sénégal", in Nancy J. Hafkin and Edna G. Bay, eds., *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change*, California: Stanford University Press, 1976; and the same author's "Artists' Conceptions of Senegalese Signares: Insights Concerning French Racist and Sexist Attitudes in the Nineteenth Century", *Genève-Afrique*, 18:1 (1980), pp.75-89; Régine Goutalier, "Splendeur et déclin des signares du Sénégal", *Le Mois en Afrique*, 217-218, (fév.-mars, 1984), pp.105-118. The *signares* and their descendants still hold the popular imagination, and are the focus of continued discussion, as evidenced by the recent re-issuing of Abdoulaye Sadjji's novel, *Nini: Mulâtresse du Sénégal*, Paris: Présence Africaine, 1988, (first published in 1953).

a lucrative entrepreneurial position for themselves at first as intermediaries between European and African traders, providing services for European merchants as translators, diplomats and guides. This partnership was usually consolidated through marriage. The *signares* frequently became important traders in their own right, and generations of daughters inherited their mothers' wealth and position.⁶ They were reknowned for their distinctive dress that combined European, Lebou and Wolof fashion,⁷ and their homes were remarked upon for their wealth and European furnishings.⁸ They hosted the most important social events that brought together the European and métis business communities. The *signares'* downfall came with conquest, but prior to this, as is shown below, due to their Europeanized ways, they were the primary focus of colonial educational efforts for girls.

With the establishment of administrative control over Sénégal, (France's first military stronghold in West Africa) towards the end of the nineteenth century, demand for personnel far exceeded the supply from France. The solution was the expansion of the colonial educational system in order to train African men to fill the

⁶Goutalier, "Splendeur et déclin des signares du Sénégal", p.105; and Brooks, "The Signares of St. Louis and Gorée", p.36.

⁷Brooks, "The Signares of St. Louis and Gorée", pp.23-24; Goutalier, "Splendeur et déclin des signares du Sénégal", p.108.

⁸Brooks, "Artists' Depictions of Senegalese Signares", p.78.

administrative positions."

The first and most important female teaching order to arrive in France's West African colonies was the Order of the Soeurs de St. Joseph de Cluny. The congregation, devoted to teaching and nursing, was established in France between 1807 and 1812 by Mère Anne-Marie Javouhey. Its mission was to provide education and health care for the children of France's poor.¹⁰ With the beginning of the Restoration the French government turned to the order to provide services in the colonies.¹¹ In 1819, upon the request of Colonel Schmaltz, Mère Javouhey sent six sisters from the Order to Sénégal to establish health and

⁹Patrick Manning, *Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa, 1880-1985*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988, p.100.

In the period up to the 1903 reforms, colonial education, especially for girls, was almost exclusive to Sénégal, the Four Communes in particular. Certainly direct government involvement was restricted to Sénégal. Nevertheless, there was some mission activity in other areas, primarily coastal, of what was to become *Afrique occidentale française*. By 1901 Guinée had six mission schools with 257 male students and 70 female students. The Soeurs de St. Joseph de Cluny, in collaboration with the Pères du Saint Esprit, opened a girls' school in Conakry in 1893; by 1901 in Cote d'Ivoire 15 girls and 350 boys were attending mission schools; and in Dahomey 1055 boys and 430 girls were attending fifteen schools. See Johnson, "Educational Progress and Retrogression in Guinea (1900-1943)" p.212; Suret-Canale, *French Colonialism in Tropical Africa, 1900-1945*, p.372; and J.B. Piolet, *Les missions catholiques françaises au XIXe siècle*, volume 5, Paris: A. Colin, 1902, pp.164-95.

¹⁰Yvonne Knibiehler and Régine Goutalier, *La femme au temps des colonies*, Paris: Stock, 1985, p.150.

¹¹Bouche, *L'enseignement dans les territoires français de l'Afrique occidentale de 1817 à 1920*, Tome 1, p.400.

educational facilities.¹² Their principal concern was to provide health care and moral direction to the European colonial community.¹³

The Sisters established the first girls' school in AOF in 1819, located in Saint Louis. From the beginning its existence was precarious, as it was little more than an annex to the hospital, and of secondary importance to the Sisters.¹⁴ They opened another school in Gorée in 1822.¹⁵ These early girls' schools catered exclusively to the European and *métisse* coastal élite. In fact, the first interest shown in the education of African girls came not from the religious organisations, but from the colonial administration. In 1826, Baron Roger, (more commonly known for his efforts to establish Sénégal as a slave-labour plantation colony), passed a decree for the establishment of an "école de jeunes négresses" in Saint Louis.¹⁶ Roger believed a program of French socialization was required to facilitate control over Sénégal's population. French had to be established as the language of communication and ultimately subjugation.

He believed African women had a key role to play in furthering the colonial project,

¹²André Picciola, *Missionnaires en Afrique. L'Afrique occidentale de 1840 à 1940*, Paris: Éditions Denoel, 1987, p.27.

¹³*Ibid.*, p.33.

¹⁴Bouche, *L'enseignement dans les territoires français*, Tome I, p.400.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p.401.

¹⁶Freund, *The Making of Contemporary Africa*, p.74; Bouche, *L'enseignement dans les territoires français*, Tome I, p.402.

...former de bonnes mères de famille (c'était)
préparer une génération améliorée.¹⁷

The "école de jeunes négresses" was a four-year boarding school that catered to single and engaged African girls and *métisse* orphans (no slaves were permitted). French was the only language permitted on school grounds. The nuns in charge were given virtually complete control over the school and imposed discipline at their discretion. The physical environment and mood were austere. During the four years the girls were under strict supervision. Visits with their parents were always under the scrutiny of one of the Sisters.¹⁸

This school was, however, more than simply a language training centre. Creating "bonnes mères de famille" involved an extensive program of training girls according to the European, patriarchal and bourgeois conception of domesticity. The ideology of domesticity took firm root in European thought in the second half of the eighteenth century. The triumph of the bourgeois class in the economy and society engendered the supremacy of bourgeois morality, and the glorification of family life under patriarchal authority.¹⁹ Definitions of femininity and women's social sphere were reconceptualized and their roles as mothers, wives and

¹⁷Cited in Bouche, *L'enseignement dans les territoires français*, Tome I, p.402.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹Barbara Corrado Pope, "The Influence of Rousseau's Ideology of Domesticity", in Marilyn J. Boxer and Jean H. Quataert, eds., *Connecting Spheres: Women in the Western World, 1500 to the Present*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, p.136.

moral guardians of home and society became paramount.²⁰ This was enshrined in the language of science as women's confinement to the domestic sphere was deemed in keeping with their "natural" role and capacities. In France the first decades of the nineteenth century saw a movement to fortify this through "maternal" education, where women were to assume the moral education of their children, and the training of their daughters to assume their domestic responsibilities of creating healthy, virtuous homes.²¹

Formal education supplemented this work, and curricula was strictly tailored to fulfill the goals set forth by the ideology of domesticity.²² The standard curriculum included sewing, cleaning, cooking, childcare, and the minimum of arithmetic to organize the family budget. Courses in dance, music and art were included to enable women to exercise appropriate social graces and display the charm expected of them.²³

This gender-based curriculum was transplanted to France's colonies, although concern with social graces was generally minimal, except for élite training. Thus the 'école de jeunes négresses' focussed on housekeeping, food preparation, sewing, bleaching, barnyard tending and vegetable gardening. Lessons in rudimentary reading, writing and arithmetic, the principal elements in boys'

²⁰Ibid., p.142.

²¹Ibid., pp.142-43.

²²Isabelle Bricard, *Saintes ou pouliches: L'éducation des jeunes filles au XIXe siècle*, Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1985, p.123.

²³Ibid., pp.104-23.

education, were secondary. This curriculum remained the core of girls' education in AOF for the duration of the colonial period. In fact the view was expressed that colonial teachers were really doing little more than simply showing African girls what was after all inherently feminine,

Manier des étoffes, bâtir des vêtements, broder en murmurant une chanson, panser une plaie, aller d'un meuble clair à des vaiselles brillantes, toutes ces préférences exquises du caractère féminin se retrouvent, sans trop de peine, sous la peau noire et les cheveux crépus.²⁴

The "école de jeunes négresses" never succeeded in attracting many students and in 1832 it was criticized for being ineffectual and too expensive. Its graduates were considered lazy and uneducated, and the school was closed shortly thereafter. In the same decade all educational efforts undertaken by the colonial administration were given to religious orders, in an effort to cut costs and put an end to what had been largely a dismal failure. They funded much of the missionary educational efforts, on the condition that French was the language of instruction.²⁵

²⁴Hardy, *Une conquête morale*, p.82.

²⁵ Gifford and Weiskel, "African Education in a Colonial Context", pp.670-71. The teaching orders were joined by the *Alliance Française*, a private organisation established in 1883 by a group of eminent French citizens including government officials, missionaries and colonials. They shared the common goals of cultural imperialism, and more specifically the global expansion of the French language. *Alliance Française* remained involved in educational matters throughout the colonial period and proved to be a significant source of funding for educational efforts. See, *ibid.*, pp.672-73; and "Alliance Française", *Grand Larousse Encyclopédique*, Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1960, p.284.

The Catholic Church shared wholeheartedly with the government the view of African women as unfit mothers. It looked upon African women as the sources of perversion in African societies. Polygamy, dance, nudity and "moral laxity" were all seen as evidence of women's degradation in Africa.¹⁶ The Church embarked on a mission that aimed at freeing them from what they saw as debasing, exploitative institutions and practices, while simultaneously working to break their authority. In 1868, Father Sequer, from the *Société des Missions Africaines*, working in Dahomey, argued for the isolation of children from their mother's influence. He claimed,

Rentrant à la maison, l'enfant est obligé d'inspecter ce troupeau de femmes, jusqu'à ce qu'il ait trouvé sa mère. Voici donc l'enfant exclusivement livré à sa mère, à une mère païenne qui lui apprend à faire fétiche et lui laisse de bonne heure des habitudes de vice et de vagabondage. Oh! oui, les mères sont ici une plaie pour l'éducation des enfants, et cependant jusqu'à l'âge de douze à quatorze ans les enfants restent sous la tutelle de leur mère."¹⁷

Another member of the *Société*, writing anonymously in 1885, was even more vehement in his belief of African mothers as evil beings, whose power over their children had to be broken if the children were to be saved from exploitation and moral corruption,

...les jeunes filles bien élevées par nos dévouées soeurs ne sont prostituées que par leur mère. Il faut avoir vu, pendant douze ans comme je l'ai vu, la corruption des mères pour pouvoir l'imaginer. Le diable les tient

¹⁶Bernard Salvaing, "La femme dahoméenne vue par les missionnaires: arrogance culturelle ou anti-féminisme cléricale?", *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 21:4 (1981), p.507.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p.510.

en première main sous son pouvoir."

In the quest to restructure African families according to the Christian model, and ensure their permanence, the Pères du Saint Esprit hoped to enlist the signares of Saint Louis and Gorée as allies in their work, and established an organisation to recruit them called the *Association des mères de famille*,

Ils formèrent ainsi un fervent noyau paroissial qui les aida à légitimer les mariages et à rétablir la famille.²⁹

Following the closure of the "école de jeunes négresses", the remaining students were absorbed into the educational facilities operated by the *Socurs de St. Joseph de Cluny*, but not before strict rules for racial segregation were established.³⁰ This policy reflected the ever-growing conviction among Europeans in this period of white racial superiority.³¹ French anthropologists, members of the *Société d'Anthropologie de Paris*, were influential in developing and promoting this racist ideology.³²

White supremacy provided a convenient and effective justification for colonialism in Africa. Various

²⁹*Ibid.*

²⁹Piolet, *Les missions catholiques françaises au XIXe siècle*, p.126.

³⁰Bouche, *L'enseignement dans les territoires français*, Tome I, p.403.

³¹William B. Cohen, "French Racism and its African Impact", in Johnson, ed. *Double Impact*, p.307.

³²*Ibid.*

colonial institutions, including educational, employed, in part or whole, its basic tenets. Léopold de Saussure, a racist ideologue interested in the matter of French education in the colonies around the turn of the twentieth century, published a veritable manifesto against the colonial policy of *assimilation*, based on racist argumentation.³³ He claimed that France's previous failures in colonial ventures were due to its incorrect assumption that non-white, colonized societies could be "uplifted" through education to the high point of French civilisation.³⁴

De Saussure advised that France would be wise to accept the fact of genetic inferiority of African peoples, and consequently stop wasting time and resources providing them with French education. He proposed instead, an education system tailored to Africans' limited intellectual capacities, which meant essentially, training an efficient and obedient labour force:

...des notions très simples, comprenant des éléments du calcul et quelques applications des sciences à l'agriculture, à l'industrie ou aux métiers manuels, suivant les régions, seraient beaucoup plus utiles...³⁵

French colonial educators accepted much of de Saussure's advice, and campaigns for mass education were generally conceived in such terms.³⁶

³³Léopold de Saussure, *Psychologie de la colonisation française dans ses rapports avec les sociétés indigènes*, Paris: Félix Alcan, 1899.

³⁴*Ibid.*, pp.8-10.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p.128.

³⁶There is an apparent contradiction between the racist foundation of colonial education and assimilationist aspirations to graft European notions of

Bernard Salvaing in his study of Catholic missionary activity in Dahomey, argues that missionaries generally did not subscribe to the race theories of the period, as evidenced by their educational activities. He explains that their denigration of African women came more from a combination of cultural chauvinism and clerical anti-feminism.³⁷ The practices employed by the Soeurs de St. Joseph de Cluny do not, however, support this argument. The Order only reluctantly accepted African students and never gave up its policies of religious and racial segregation. In Gorée it was only following the abolition of slavery that African girls were admitted to the Sisters' schools, and then classes were kept strictly separate, on the basis of race. Similarly, in Kita, the Sisters only admitted African girls for the first time when the Pères du Saint Esprit, in their attempts to free slaves, bought one hundred and sixteen slave children and in 1896 entrusted the girls to them.³⁸

Racial discrimination also determined school conditions and quality of education. In Gorée, in 1858, sixty-five white and métisse students were distributed among three classrooms while twice as many black students were put in two rooms in the basement, described as overheated and crowded. In Saint-Louis, the African

femininity on African women. French intentions, however, were never to level the ground between French and African women. Belief in racial hierarchy stood firm.

³⁷Salvaing, "La femme dahoméenne vue par les missionnaires: arrogance culturelle ou anti-féminisme cléricale?", p.507.

³⁸Piolet, *Les missions catholiques françaises*, p.141.

students were kept in the school corridor.³⁹ The curriculum reserved for the Sisters' African students was limited and of an inferior quality, consisting of prayer, elementary catechism, rudimentary reading, religious history and sewing. Given a large margin of freedom in operating their own schools, the Sisters chose to bar Muslim African girls from their schools.⁴⁰

While the Soeurs de St. Joseph de Cluny were the predominant teaching order concerned with girls' education in nineteenth century Sénégal, the Dames de l'Immaculée Conception de Castres were in charge of colonial educational efforts for girls in Dakar and Rufisque. They arrived in Dakar in 1848 and operated a number of orphanages and small schools with a simple curriculum of sewing, reading and prayer, open to all African girls in the region. Their activities in Rufisque commenced in 1883, and seventeen years later they had one hundred and seventy-six students in Dakar and eighty-four in Rufisque. In the same period the Soeurs de St. Joseph de Cluny had one hundred and eighty-six pupils in St. Louis and one hundred and three in Gorée.⁴¹

In 1883, the administration once again became directly involved in girls' education with the establishment of a secular school for girls in Saint-Louis. It never attracted more than a handful of students, however, and eleven years later it was closed amid accusations that the entire project had been little

³⁹Bouche, *L'enseignement dans les territoires français*, Tome I, p.417.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p.420.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p.407.

more than a corrupt patronage appointment for the school's director, Madame Veuve Duchesne.⁴¹

There were other, smaller educational efforts undertaken in this period by missionary organisations. Until 1903 schools were largely confined to the Four Communes, especially for girls. There were, nevertheless, a number of small schools linked to mission stations outside the communes, run by the Filles du Saint Coeur de Marie, a congregation founded in 1858 and directed by the Soeurs de St. Joseph de Cluny.⁴² They opened small mission schools in Carabane, Casamance, N'Gasobil and Joal. While termed "schools" by the Sisters, they did little more than teach catechism, sewing and possibly some French, often in an attempt to secure government subsidies.⁴⁴ They were not recognized as schools by the administration and do not appear in the government statistics. As stated in a report by the government of AOF the mission schools were preoccupied,

...beaucoup plus de blanchissage et de repassage pour le compte des soeurs que d'enseignement proprement dit.⁴⁵

On the eve of fundamental educational reforms, in 1903, there were 647 girls who had received a degree of colonial education as compared to 1205 boys. In Saint-Louis they were largely European and *métisse*, while

⁴²*Ibid.*, p.420.

⁴³Piolet, *Les missions catholiques françaises*, p.119.

⁴⁴Bouche, *L'enseignement dans les territoires français*, Tome I, p.421.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p.423.

Rufisque had the largest proportion of African female students.⁴⁶ What distinguishes this phase of colonial education from the later ones is the numerical parity between boys and girls in the educational structures of the Four Communes (except in Saint-Louis where significantly more boys than girls had received some colonial education).⁴⁷

The creation of the Ministry of Colonies in 1894 reflected the greater administrative control France was establishing over its colonies, and cleared the way for larger government control in all colonial matters, including education.⁴⁸ Two situations in particular provoked the colonial government to take complete charge of educational matters. The first, which almost exclusively dealt with men's education, was the ever-increasing need for cheap, readily available administrative personnel. The existing education institutions were simply not producing the numbers of trained men that the administration, and commerce, required.

The second situation ultimately determined the future of the colonial education system. In 1903, the political crisis in France stemming from the Dreyfus

⁴⁶*Ibid.* The labels "African", "métisse" and "European", employed to categorize students are not this writer's constructs (nor are they viewed as legitimate). These distinctions were made by the colonial authorities. In matters of education, "métisses" were viewed as distinct from the "Africans", and were more frequently grouped with the "Europeans".

⁴⁷There were 450 boys as compared to 180 girls. See, *ibid.*

⁴⁸Gifford and Weiskel, "African Education in a Colonial Context", p.673.

Affair catalyzed the secularization of the education system there.⁴⁹ This new policy applied equally to France's overseas territories, despite opposition from local colonial administrators who were content to leave responsibility for education in missionary hands. While mission education continued to play a role in France's West African colonies, it lost all public funding and its presence was significantly diminished, although this varied from colony to colony.

That same year Governor-General Ernest Roume implemented the Education Charter. Primary schools were divided hierarchically into village, regional and urban schools.⁵⁰ Graduates from each level were theoretically qualified for successively better administrative or commercial posts. The urban schools catered mostly to the European and "assimilé" populations and were the only primary schools that followed a metropolitan curriculum and granted a diploma that was recognized in France.⁵¹ Successful contestants had access to the next level in the system, that included the *école primaire supérieure*, *école professionnelle* and *école normale*.⁵² While this system was first planned to include boys and girls, not only was it overwhelmingly dominated by male students, but from the start the curricula were designed according

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p.674.

⁵⁰Ray Autra, "Historique de l'enseignement en AOF", *Présence africaine*, 6 (fév.-mars, 1956), p.69.

⁵¹Gardinier, "The French Impact on Education in Africa, 1817-1960", p.338.

⁵²Autra, "Historique de l'enseignement en AOF", p.69. See also, Sabatier, "Elite Education in French West Africa", p.249; Suret-Canale, *French Colonialism in Tropical Africa, 1900-1945*, pp.373-74.

to sex, with girls spending an ever-increasing portion of time on domestic sciences, instead of the training that would qualify them for positions in the colonial or commercial bureaucracies.

It was proposed, although never fully implemented, to establish a similar hierarchy of schools exclusively for girls that would train them to be successively better mothers and housewives, the graduates of the best schools being qualified to be the wives of the male African élite. The proposed regional schools for girls would have been domestic sciences training centres, with lessons in childcare, bleaching, ironing, sewing and cooking. Urban schools for girls would have had a similar focus.⁵³ While the colonial administration's rhetoric expressed concern for girls' education, the numbers remained very low. In 1904, there was one girl for every seven boys in the public school system, and the ratio widened with time.⁵⁴

The significance of this early period in the history of colonial education is not to be found in the numbers of students. It was only a tiny minority of boys and girls who saw the inside of a colonial classroom. In later years the numbers would grow, but the system never broke away from its élitist confines. Rather, an examination of this period reveals the origins of the nature and structure of the colonial education system. The dominant discussion on education in the African colonies was about the need for faithful male African servants for the colonial enterprise. But there was

⁵³Bouche, *L'enseignement dans les territoires français*, Tome II, p.756.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p.755.

another, perhaps more subtle, objective of colonial education. Women were not to be trained as clerks and interpreters, but instead to be "better" women. Racism and sexism merged to form a curriculum that would attempt to colonize African women's gender identities, without simultaneously creating a class of French women with black skins. In the next phase of colonial education the discussion on women's education became more focussed, and heated, as new players emerged and the system became more firmly established.

CHAPTER III

**"LYSISTRATA SOUS LES COCOTIERS"
IDEAS ABOUT COLONIAL EDUCATION,
AFRICAN WOMEN AND FRENCH HEGEMONY**

One central assumption, held by both secular and religious colonial educators, nourished a series of convictions about African women. A fundamental truth for colonial agents was the notion of African women as the primary purveyors of culture, and the building blocks of African societies. This assumption bestowed upon African women the ambiguous position of being the critical key, but simultaneously, the most serious obstacle, to a successful *mission civilisatrice*. Discussion around this fundamental theme of women's centrality to social and cultural change revealed an array of deeper convictions and attitudes about African women. Their activities as mothers and wives, and as social and economic beings, were attacked. And beneath it all lay an anxiety about African women's relationship to French colonial control.

Echoing throughout the colonial period was the statement that,

Il est en effet très important pour nous d'assurer notre influence sur la femme indigène. Par l'homme nous pouvons augmenter et améliorer l'économie du pays. Par la femme, nous touchons au coeur même du foyer indigène, où pénètre notre influence. "Quand on s'adresse à l'homme, a dit Saint-Simon, c'est l'individu qu'on instruit. Quand on s'adresse à la femme, c'est une école que l'on

fonde".¹

Administrators and educators alike pointed to African girls as the best conduits for the transmission of the French language, mores, practices, and ultimately, French hegemony.

This same assumption about African women's influence in the family had a more coercive side. While African women were potentially the beacons of French civilisation, they were also perceived as possible bulwarks against change, or more explicitly, "progress". Repeatedly, African women were characterized as bastions of conservatism that had to be broken down if the business of colonisation was to advance. Georges Hardy, in writing about colonized women throughout the French empire, epitomized this conflicting portrait of African women:

...il est bon que cette influence [morale, de la femme indigène] puisse être mise au service des progrès que nous rêvons, au lieu d'être, comme il arrive actuellement, le meilleur appui de routines et des préjugés, et il importe à cet effet qu'elle s'élève en dignité. Il est clair qu'une société piétine, tant que les femmes, conseillères des hommes, éducatrices des enfants, demeurent proches de l'animalité.²

¹Governor General Jules G.H. Carde, "Textes portant sur la réorganisation de l'enseignement en Afrique occidentale française, 1er mai, 1924", *BEAOF*, 12^e année, No.57, 1924, pp. 13-14. For variations on the same theme see, Hardy, *Une conquête morale*, p.76; and Governor General William Ponty, cited in Garcia, "L'organisation de l'instruction publique au Dahomey, 1894-1920", p.73.

²Hardy, *Nos grands problèmes coloniaux*, Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1929, p.64. This characterisation of women as forces against change persisted throughout the colonial period and beyond, as is discussed in the concluding chapter. In the fifties, when adult education became an important consideration in

Educators were preoccupied with women's apparent conservatism in two ways. As with respect to nineteenth century mission education, "uneducated" mothers were seen to be a negative influence on children. The charge continued to be made that at the end of the day mothers (and grandmothers) simply subverted what educators tried so hard to accomplish in the colonial classroom.³ Mme G. Le Goff⁴ (whose writings are examined more extensively in Chapter IV), recalled during her teaching experience in the twenties in Djenné, Soudan,

Un matin rentrant en classe, je trouve en larmes Kadidia Koumenséi, la plus intelligente, la plus travailleuse de mes élèves... On m'explique: Seli (une autre élève) est allée chez la mère de Kadidia et lui a dit que sa fille travaillait à l'école, que la maîtresse, disait bien souvent qu'elle était une bonne élève. Alors sa mère la punie.

[...] Ainsi on est puni, en Afrique, pour bien travailler à l'école. Ce qui ferait la

the colonial education system, women were identified as an area of utmost concern. The reasoning remained the same: "La femme reste un frein constant à l'évolution". See "Deux problèmes importants de l'éducation des adultes, particuliers à l'AOF", *BEAOF*, 39e année, Nos. 10-11, 1951, p.22.

³See, Bureau International Catholique de l'Enfance (B.I.C.E.), *L'enfant africain. L'éducation de l'enfant en fonction de son milieu de base et de son orientation d'avenir*, Paris: Editions Fleurus, 1960, p.199.

⁴Le Goff appears to have had a long and active career in colonial education. No published biographical information was located, but it is known that her writing spanned at least through the 1930s; she was the first director of the federal school for girls, the *Ecole normale de jeunes filles de Rufisque*; and she was a vocal participant in international congresses on colonial matters, including the 1937 Congrès international de l'évolution culturelle des peuples coloniaux. On this last point see, Knibiehler and Goutalier, *La femme au temps des colonies*, p.231.

joie d'une maman européenne fait le désespoir d'une mère soudanaise.⁶

Of even greater concern was women's perceived resistance to the colonial education of their children, and especially their daughters. Here it becomes clear that the discussion around women's so-called conservatism was really part of a larger concern over women's power in the family and the community at large. Hardy strongly believed that the missionary-driven image of the African woman, exploited as a beast of burden by men, victimized by polygamy, and oppressed by Islam, masked the larger truth of women's decisive power in the family.⁷ In evaluating the causes of resistance to children's recruitment to colonial schools, Hardy pointed the finger at women.

Par deux fois à Dakar, nous avons fait visiter l'école des filles par des notables indigènes; ils ont assisté à des exercices de langage, à des leçons de chant, à des travaux de couture, et ils sont sortis émerveillés. Résultat: pas une élève en plus. La maman noire a mis son veto.⁷

He came to the striking conclusion that:

⁶G. Le Goff, "La vie de l'instituteur en AOF -- En brousse soudanaise -- Djenné", *BEAOF*, 20e année, No. 76, juillet-sept., 1931, p.10.

⁶Hardy, "De l'enseignement des filles en AOF", *BEAOF*, 1er année, No.6, juin, 1913, pp.199-200.

⁷*Ibid.*, p.201. Emphasis his. Another recurring portrait drawn by educators, was the contrast between women and men. Women represented stagnation, even regression while men were more receptive to French socialisation and generally more progressive. This was repeatedly invoked by religious authorities as well: "...la mère est un élément conservateur, un poids à traîner pour le père, qui représente l'élément de progrès." See, B.I.C.E., *L'enfant africain*, p.214.

"L'anti-féminisme, ici, vient des femmes."⁸

Hardy, and others, were clearly offended by the authority they understood African women to possess,

"Hardy, "De l'enseignement des filles en AOF", p.201.

The reasons for resistance to girls' attendance in colonial schools are multiple and complex. They cannot be adequately explored without conducting interviews of parents and their daughters. Also, the geographic scope would have to be scaled down to a number of regional or cultural case studies. In the colonial literature, Islam is the most often repeated "culprit". Islam as a monolithic obstacle is an insufficient explanation. In the case of Hélène Senghor, Léopold Sédar Senghor's sister-in-law, it was perhaps decisive. She was a brilliant student with a bright academic future, as nurtured by her maternal Catholic Serer aunt. Her Muslim parents, however, did not share her aunt's enthusiasm. When Hélène was offered a scholarship to study in France, her parents refused her permission. See, Janet Vaillant, *Black, French and African. A Life of Léopold Sédar Senghor*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990, p.26. The situation was more nuanced, however, than this. The first girls' school was opened among the Maures in 1947 in Boutilimit under the pressure of an influential Muslim notable, Cheikh Ould Sidia. See, Capelle, *L'éducation en Afrique noire*, p.81.

Many parents viewed girls' enrolment in colonial schools as an introduction to bad morals. See, Moumouni, *L'éducation en Afrique*, p.119; and Suret-Canale, *French Colonialism in Tropical Africa, 1900-1945*, p.378. Furthermore, the force of the much hated indigénat, or judiciary system for colonial subjects, was the ultimate tool employed to recruit students from unwilling parents. See, Capelle, *L'éducation en Afrique noire*, p.80. There was also no doubt, a rejection of the notion that domestic training under French tutelage provided girls with better skills than the ones they acquired through indigenous institutions and practices.

There may be some truth to the charge that girls' mothers and grandmothers were the most resolute in their resistance to efforts to recruit girls to colonial schools. In some cases this may have been a response to loss of valuable household and agricultural labour. See, Penelope Roberts, "Rural Women's Access to Labor in West Africa", in Sharon B. Stichter and Jane L. Parpart, eds., *Patriarchy and Class*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1988.

within the family and especially in relation to their husbands. The distribution of power within the family was not compatible with their notions of family relations, and men were instructed to assert their patriarchal control, while women were told to submit to male authority, as a hallmark of their femininity. One of Hardy's most remarkable texts, particularly revealing of his attitudes about African women, was a guide he prepared in 1918, for African men employed in the colonial civil service.⁹ In the guide, Hardy depicted African women as lazy, spoiled and dishonest. He charged men with what he termed their patriotic duty to assume responsibility for the education of their wives and daughters until such a time as the education system could properly fulfill that role.¹⁰ This entailed assuming their rightful place as the supreme authority in the household and firmly guiding women towards their proper responsibilities, essentially fulfilling their husbands' needs. Men were requested to inculcate their wives with habits of hard work, orderliness and thrift.¹¹

Vous aurez donc à faire comprendre à votre compagne bien des choses, dont elle ne soupçonne pas l'intérêt: l'importance de vos devoirs professionnels, votre conception de la vie matérielle, morale et sociale, son rôle à elle dans l'administration de la maison et des vêtements, qu'elle couse, qu'elle vous facilite de toutes façons la vie

⁹Georges Hardy, "Les Deux Routes: Conseils pratiques aux jeunes fonctionnaires indigènes", *BEAOF*, 7^e année, No.40, nov., 1918. See Appendix I for a more extensive citation of this guide, that is a veritable diatribe against African women, and what Hardy clearly viewed as African men's emasculated state.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp.45, 48.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p.45.

domestique...¹²

In order to do so, men were told unequivocally to assert their control over their wives. This involved, according to Hardy, breaking their spirit and transforming their very being.¹³ He promised great reward for executing such a duty:

...ressaisissez l'autorité légitime du père de famille, qui est ce me semble, beaucoup plus apparente que réelle et continue dans les sociétés indigènes, et servez-vous pour en imposer à votre petit monde une vie meilleure, mieux organisée, conforme aux idées que vous avez acquises au cours de vos études.¹⁴

René Fil, director of schools for the Sine Saloum region, echoed a number of Hardy's concerns. Addressing his advice to young male African teachers almost twenty years after Hardy, he encouraged them to choose wives from among the small but growing number of so-called *evoluées*, graduates of domestic sciences schools -- who understood what it was to be "excellentes ménagères, qui pourront être pour vous de bonnes épouses et collaboratrices, de bonnes mères pour vos enfants."¹⁵

Concretely, what did it mean to be a good wife and mother? Firstly, it meant clearly understanding one's place, in relation to family, husband and home. A teacher's guide, prepared for European women teaching domestic sciences in AOF, reminded them that this

¹²*Ibid.*, p.45.

¹³*Ibid.*, p.46.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p.48.

¹⁵René Fil, "La vie scolaire de l'AOF: L'école rurale -- Essai de définition", *EA*, 24e année, No.89, janv.-mars, 1935, p.63.

entailed reinforcing a strict division of labour between men and women within the family. Teachers' responsibilities were to enforce the notion that house and family were women's concerns and earning wages was the domain of men.¹⁶

Secondly, it also meant being told to be "better" than one's own mother and grandmother. Perhaps most painful was the recurring message, both implicit and explicit, in girls' curricula, that their mothers failed to fulfill what was "natural" to them. Their knowledge of cooking, and childcare, as well as their behaviour in general, was quite simply inadequate, if not "backwards". As such, the discussion of girls' education continued to be couched in the rhetoric of the *mission civilisatrice*, prodding girls to do what their mothers did, only better. The contrast between primitive and civilized was repeatedly employed to promote colonial education. An essay on girls' education in Soudan in 1938 exploited this image rather typically. A village girl who had never received the "benefits" of French tutelage in the classroom was depicted preparing a "typical" meal: she perched a pot on three stones above a fire and prepared the only sauce she knew. She shared the meal with her mother and sisters, as they sat on the ground and ate from the same calabash, using their fingers as utensils. The same village girl, this time a student at a domestic training center, painted another picture altogether:

Il faut la voir ensuite à l'école ménagère,
allumant un fourneau, maniant les casseroles,

¹⁶M. You and Mme Allainmat, "Classes de filles. Cours élémentaire. Programmes de: Enseignement ménager", *EA*, 30e année, No.107, 1943, p.37. Along the same theme, missionaries demanded of Serer women that they abandon "la séparation complète des biens et des récoltes." See, Gravrand, *Visage Africain de l'Eglise*, p.152.

confectionnant des plats européens, ...mettant sur la table une nappe qu'elle-même a lavé et repassé, disposant le couvert, dégustant enfin son oeuvre avec cuillère et fourchette.¹⁷

By the interwar period, and especially after the Second World War, French women became a significant presence in the colonies of AOF.¹⁸ They were held up as models for African women to emulate. Colonial educators called upon them to further the work of spreading French notions of domesticity, both directly by providing their services as teachers, and indirectly by opening their homes to class visits; and by carefully displaying in their public appearances the embodiment of femininity and womanhood.¹⁹

Guides were published to prepare European women for

¹⁷D. Moran, "Une société des 'Filles de l'école'", EA, 27e année, No.101, juillet-déc., 1938, p.69.

¹⁸By 1926 there were 1 500 French women in Sénégal alone. See Rita Cruise O'Brien, *White Society in Black Africa: The French of Senegal*, London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1972, p.57. Only recently have historians begun to examine carefully the role of European women in Africa during colonial rule, especially for the former British colonies. See, Helen Callaway, *Gender, Culture and Empire: European Women in Colonial Nigeria*, Basingstoke: Macmillan in association with St. Anthony's College, Oxford, 1987; and Margaret Strobel, *European Women and the Second British Empire*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991.

¹⁹Calls were frequently made in the BEAOF, for the wives of European teachers to establish classes for girls. See, for example, J.L. Monod, "Conseil supérieur de l'enseignement. Session des 27 et 28 juin, 1921", BEAOF, 9e année, No.47, avril-sept., 1921, p.86; See also, B.I.C.E., *L'enfant africain*, p.225. European women were expected to run model households, and provide demonstrations to classes of African girls. See, *ibid.*, pp.343-44, 349.

their sojourn in the colonies. They proposed suitable activities for them, including teaching, social work, childcare, and studies of local flora and fauna.²⁰ Behavioural codes were also prescribed, stressing the French woman's duty to exemplify those precepts being taught to African girls in domestic sciences classes.

...la femme coloniale doit garder la dignité de sa tenue. On la regarde vivre. Ceux et celles qui la regardent sont des êtres en voie d'éducation, ou de très vieux civilisés, des raffinés d'une civilisation différente. A ceux-ci, comme à ceux-là, il faut prouver que la Française, représentante de la civilisation nouvellement imposée, est une femme bien élevée, digne.²¹

French women were also encouraged and expected, as responsible members of colonial society, to conduct visits to the homes of young African housewives and provide critical advice and guidance.²² These expectations of French colonial women also exposed them to harsh criticism. Failure to exemplify all that was expected of the perfect wife and mother was met with condemnation by those working in colonial education.²³ Jean Capelle, General Director of education in AOF from

²⁰Cruise O'Brien, *White Society in Black Africa*, p.57.

²¹Chivas-Baron, *La femme française aux colonies*, p.121.

²²*Ibid.*, pp.134-35.

²³This evidence would suggest that there was resistance among French women in the colonies to being role models of domesticity. Did life in the colonies enable these women to escape, at least in part, from the confines of their gender identities and responsibilities? Did the realities of race and class hierarchies particular to the colonies permit colonial women the space to remould gender definitions? This is a fascinating area for further research.

1947 to 1949, and then again from 1954 to 1957, criticized French women in the colonies for being lazy and spoiled. He argued that their delinquency was so pervasive that African men visiting France were shocked at the sight of French women engaged in domestic activities. Capelle claimed this had deleterious effects on élite African women, who attempted to emulate their French sisters.²⁴

There were some French women, however, who enthusiastically embraced their mission to guide African women and girls toward more appropriate identities and activities. The *Association des Femmes de l'Union Française* (AFUF) was a maternalist organisation established after the Second World War in Paris, by French women preoccupied with issues of social welfare in the colonies. Its aims were to provide structures through which colonial women could impart their domestic skills to their colonized counterparts. The AFUF defined itself as a service organisation, answering to the needs of African women while claiming to be more sensitive to cultural differences:

...peu à peu chez les Africaines naît le désir de connaître ce qui, chez la femme européenne représente des vieilles habitudes. [...] et tout en respectant les coutumes et les usages ancestraux, améliorer l'existence de la société en comprenant le rôle complet qu'une femme doit jouer.²⁵

²⁴Capelle, *L'éducation en Afrique noire*, pp.48-49.

²⁵"L'Association des Femmes de l'Union Française en Guinée", *Etudes Guinéennes*, 1951, p.83. It would be fascinating to know more about this organisation, and others like it. It is beyond the scope of this study, but certainly worth pursuing. Another important area that unfortunately cannot be addressed in this thesis is the emotional impact that these differing definitions of femininity had on the young girls attending colonial

There is one final element to be explored on colonial ideas about African women and their education. There existed a subtle undercurrent in discussions among colonial educators, that had not so subtle implications. Colonial education was ultimately about control. In 1923, this was once again underscored when Albert Sarraut, the Minister of Colonies, published *La Mise en valeur des colonies françaises*. This study represented the first State plan for the development and consolidation of the French empire. It was the culmination of two years of surveys overseen by Sarraut. His experience as Governor-General of Indo-China influenced the direction and tone of the work. In particular his fear of nationalist movements in Indo-China informed his advice for social policy throughout the empire.²⁶ He expressed the firm belief that colonial education was a crucial tool for social control. He urged the expansion of the education system as the best means to insulate the colonial regime against external agitators manipulating the passions of an ignorant population, as yet unconvinced of the benefits and permanence of French rule.²⁷ Sarraut's counterparts on the ground, those most closely linked to the education system, were not pointing to external influences, but to internal forces -- grandmothers, mothers and wives -- as likely sources of social disruption.

schools. Marks includes an interesting discussion on this theme. See, *Not Either an Experimental Doll*, p.206.

²⁶See, A.G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa*, London: Longman Group Ltd., 1973, p.190.

²⁷Albert Sarraut, *La mise en valeur des colonies françaises*, p.99.

Ultimately, "uneducated" women at the heart of the family were viewed not simply as inconvenient obstacles to efficient socialization, but as conducive to social disorder and threatening to colonial rule. If girls were not sent to domestic training schools, and "uneducated" women were not reigned in, there would persist an underclass, unwedded to French ways -- in essence unconvinced of French superiority and hegemony. Educators saw an ever-growing gulf between educated men and uneducated women -- the creation of two camps: one friendly to French rule, the other hostile. Hardy was particularly vivid on this point,

...si nous développons exclusivement l'enseignement masculin, nous créons à plaisir un état de déséquilibre social, nous désorganisons la vie familiale, nous partageons le pays en deux camps adverses: le camp des hommes, instruits et rapprochés de nous, le camp des femmes, ignorantes et hostiles à notre oeuvre, -- Lysistrata sous les cocotiers.²⁸

French colonials were not alone in their concern for African women's education. From the 1930s they were joined by a select group of African men who voiced

²⁸Hardy, *Une conquête morale*, p.76. Lysistrata was the heroine in an anti-war play by Greek dramatist Aristophanes. She united the women of Greece in a successful movement to end the Peloponnesian war. They pledged to deny their husbands and lovers fighting the war all sexual relations until peace was restored.

Missionaries, concerned with building Christian households, expressed similar views regarding the threat "uneducated" women posed to the expansion of Christianity, and French influence in general. See Georges Goyau, *La femme dans les missions*, Paris: Ernest Flammarion, 1933, p.235.

similar preoccupations. A native neobourgeoisie" was born out of Africa's incorporation into the world capitalist system, and its development was nurtured in AOF by colonial educational and political programs. Implicit in the French colonial policy of assimilation was the possibility, through extensive acculturation to French ways, for a small group of Africans to achieve equality with their colonial masters. These aspirations were further strengthened by the presence of a small community of African "citizens" in the Four Communes. By 1887, the inhabitants (also known as *originaires*) of Gorée, Rufisque, Saint-Louis and Dakar had been granted French citizenship.³⁰ Most "citizens", as well as many others who had graduated from the upper echelons of the colonial education system, looked to France as a cultural mecca and adopted (albeit to varying degrees) the political and economic philosophy of their French rulers.³¹

Among the reforms instituted after the Second World War in France's African colonies, was the significant

²⁹This term is employed by Moumouni, who prefers it to Fanon's use of "national bourgeoisie". Moumouni argues persuasively that the term "national" is an inaccurate description of the African bourgeoisie as it developed under colonialism and persists under neocolonialism. It is neither national in its characteristics in that it is divorced culturally from the mass of the population, nor in its aspirations in that it is a compradore class, serving the interests of an external bourgeoisie, instead of truly controlling the national economy. See Moumouni, *L'éducation en Afrique*, p.74.

³⁰Manning, *Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa, 1880-1985*, p.60.

³¹Ruth Schacter Morgenthau, *Political Parties in French Speaking West Africa*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964, p.129; Moumouni, *L'éducation en Afrique*, p.73.

increase in educational opportunities for African men, in secondary or professional training institutions. Consequently, a professional class of some importance developed to join the growing bureaucratic élite.³² In most cases they also became the political élite and played a pivotal role in guiding their countries out of direct colonial rule.³³

The aspirations among most of the members of this neobourgeoisie, to conform to French norms and practices, engulfed their social and private lives as well. Among the various beliefs that the neobourgeoisie adopted from the colonizers was the ideology of domesticity. Imperative to their ideal of assimilation was a European-style home and wife. They too spoke out on how to reconstruct African women's gender identities effectively, and much of their discourse matched the kinds of demands Hardy had made years earlier. But their ambiguous position in colonial society informed and subtly altered their definition of the ideal spouse, and they hoped to assert some control over the process of women's education.

There was a consensus among those who wrote about African women's education that the colonial regime should significantly expand and improve domestic training.

³²Moumouni, *L'éducation en Afrique*, p.128.

³³This élite dominated the political structures created after the Second World War by the French who hoped to channel and control the growing political discontent in AOF. For example, well over half of the members of the Territorial Assemblies, established in 1946, were African civil servants, educators and administrators. See, Victor T. Le Vine, "Political Elite Recruitment and Political Structure in French Speaking Africa", *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 8:3 (1968), p.377.

Among such advocates was Fall Papa Gueye, an originante, and founder of the *Foyer France-Sénégal*, an association devoted to assimilationist cultural ideals.³⁴ These beliefs prompted him to convert to Catholicism, marry a Catholic *métisse* woman, and request that he be addressed as Jean Octave Papa Gueye Fall.³⁵ A veteran of the two world wars, he became an influential voice in veterans' affairs following the Second World War. He also enjoyed an important career in the colonial education system, and in 1947 was posted briefly as an attaché to the Ministry of Overseas France in Paris.³⁶ As principal of the Ecole urbaine de l'avenue Faïdherbe à Dakar in 1934, he urged the adoption of the education Inspector's recommendations for expanded and more structured domestic training institutions in Sénégal.³⁷

Members of the male élite also reiterated the notion of women's pivotal role in family and society as caretaker and moral guardian. As Joseph Yaméogo, a teacher in Haute Volta, stated,

Eduquer la jeune fille africaine, c'est former des familles heureuses, développer l'hygiène, faciliter l'entretien des enfants, c'est enfin rénover et peupler l'Afrique.³⁸

³⁴Schacter Morgenthau, *Political Parties in French Speaking West Africa*, p.128.

³⁵Myron Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts. The Tirailleurs Sénégalais in French West Africa, 1857-1960*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991, p.130.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷Fall Papa Gueye, "La vie scolaire de l'AOF: L'enseignement des filles au Sénégal et dans la circonscription de Dakar", *BEAOF*, 23e année, No.87, juillet-déc., 1934, p.193.

³⁸Joseph Yaméogo, "L'éducation de la fille africaine", *EA*, 39e année, No.13, 1951, p.56.

The central concern fuelling men's interest in women's education was their quest for a wife who corresponded to the picture of the feminine ideal colonial educators had painted for years. To these men the very antithesis of that ideal was the "uneducated" village woman. Yaméogo charged that she was rooted in atavism, and wedded to "primitive" custom. In her ignorance such a woman running the household of an African civil servant would surely lead him down the path of moral degeneration,

Nul n'ignore l'état déplorable d'un grand nombre de foyer de fonctionnaires noirs. Le mari sort de l'école avec l'idée de mener une vie digne, de fonder un foyer heureux. Il se marie donc...puis ne trouvant pas la joie rêvée, il s'adonne à diverses passions: fréquentation de camarades, cabarets, cartes, etc...³⁹

Yaméogo called for the establishment of domestic sciences centres in each colony, with effective and extensive training sessions. Only then would the carefully cultivated assimilated status of the African civil servant be preserved.⁴⁰

One of the most outspoken critics of the shortcomings of colonial education for women was Ouezzin Coulibaly. Coulibaly enjoyed an influential career in education and nationalist politics. He was director of studies at the Ecole William Ponty for a number of years, and was pivotal in establishing the first trade union for teachers in AOF in 1937.⁴¹ His political career in

³⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹Schacter Morgenthau, *Political Parties in French Speaking West Africa*, pp.19, 22.

Haute Volta and Côte d'Ivoire included positions as deputy and senator, and he headed the first African government in Haute Volta. He was also an important force behind the *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain*.⁴²

Coulibaly was apparently alarmed by the shortage of "qualified" wives for men of his stature. He argued that the situation had reached such crisis proportions that the actual average age of marriage for men was being pushed forward. Furthermore, an increasing number of men, in a move towards self-preservation, were simply opting for permanent bachelorhood. In an essay on women's education he explained that educated African men were confronted with three equally undesirable categories of women. The first echoed Yaméogo's concerns, that in being forced to marry a "primitive" woman, men were robbed of the opportunity to reap the benefits due an évolué,

...il faut se contenter d'une femme ignorante, c'est alors une régression, un complet renoncement à l'idéal rêvé. Pour la compréhension et l'entente, le mari est obligé de s'abaisser jusqu'au niveau de sa femme. Dès lors il ne profite plus de son évolution.⁴³

The second category represented those women who had received only minimal colonial education, and were consequently trapped in an identity crisis, feeling affinity for village women, but also aspiring to belong to the élite. The result: they adopted the worst

⁴²*Ibid.*, pp.22, 180.

⁴³Ouezzin Coulibaly, "La vie scolaire de l'AOF: Sur l'éducation des femmes indigènes", *EA*, 27e année, Nos.99-100, janv.-juin, 1938, p.34.

features of both groups, and failed miserably at answering their husbands' needs.⁴⁴ Finally, there were the women who had received the best education colonialism could offer. They were the midwives, nurses and teachers, the rare graduates of professional training institutions. Coulibaly charged that as "emancipated" women they were the least desirable of all. Financially independent, they ignored their husbands' needs and authority, and neglected their domestic responsibilities,

Mais, indépendamment de la situation rémunérée, il y a un autre motif, beaucoup plus grave, de répulsion entre deux éléments théoriquement formés l'un pour l'autre: c'est la manque d'éducation ménagère de nos évoluées. La formation morale doit susciter chez l'épouse le sentiment élevé de sa condition, un renoncement de sa personne au profit des siens. La formation pratique lui fera aimer, et embellir son intérieur. Or, que voyons nous souvent? Des maisons sans personnalité, ne portant pas trace d'une présence féminine. Une ignorante remplacerait avantageusement ces maîtresses de maisons.⁴⁵

He concluded by endorsing an extensive domestic training program designed by Le Goff (this program is examined in

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p.34.

⁴⁵*Ibid.* pp.35-36. It is interesting to contemplate Coulibaly's reaction to the types of activities in which his wife and daughter engaged. Mme Makoukou Ouezzin Coulibaly headed the women's section of the Parti démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire -- RDA, and endured the repression of the colonial state at mass demonstrations. She later became a member of the Voltaic legislature. His daughter, Denise, enjoys the distinction of being the first African woman to earn her pilot's license. See, Sister Marie-André du Sacré Coeur, *The House Stands Firm: Family Life in West Africa*, Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1962, p.224; and Gabriel Lisette, *Le combat du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain pour la décolonisation pacifique de l'Afrique Noire*, Paris: Présence Africaine, 1983, pp.110-11.

detail in Chapter IV). Fall Papa Gueye's conservatism and assimilationist aspirations contrasted markedly with Coulibaly's nationalist commitment. The two men's politics clearly merged, however, in their concerns and attitudes about women's roles in a changing society.

Coulibaly stated explicitly what was implicit in the overall discussion among élite men about women's education. In the quest for equality through assimilation, women held a crucial key. Coulibaly and his colleagues believed that the door to full and respectful acceptance in the French community could not be opened without wives that played the proper role as prescribed by the French. If appropriately educated, "Elle comprendra son mari, est c'est alors que la civilisation s'effectuera en profondeur, et que l'Ecole sera fière d'avoir réalisé la vraie civilisation franco-africaine."⁴⁶

The African neobourgeoisie was trapped in the painful politics of colonial exclusion. They adopted the language, lifestyle and values of the French in the hopes of gaining entrance to the privileged world of the colonials. But, despite the promises, the door was kept firmly shut. Some responded to this rejection by pointing accusing fingers at their wives. Uncultivated in French ways, they dragged their husbands down, and

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p.36. The politicians and teachers were joined in their cry for suitable wives, by literary figures. The novelist, Ousmane Socé Diop, also an *originnaire*, wrote about the ideal of the Franco-african community. In his novel *Karim*, the protagonist is critical of his girlfriend's lack of French education: "...une évolution décisive de la société ne pourra se faire sans le concours de l'élément féminin." See Ousmane Socé, *Karim: Roman sénégalais*, Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1948, p.91.

away from the dreamed of Franco-African community. Such was the desire to be seen at important social functions with a woman well versed in proper French graces, some men even hired suitable partners for such occasions. Known as *femmes libres*, these women, usually educated and relatively wealthy, would sell their services as appropriate, but temporary, wives for the purposes of an important social event.⁴⁷

It is clear from the above examination that colonial domestic training centers in AOF were about restructuring the power relations and roles within the family; inculcating "new and improved" gender identities, while denigrating the old; and enabling colonialism to establish a strong foothold in the most fundamental of institutions -- the family. Evidently, African women were problematic in this scheme. To colonial educators, they were both their best allies and their worst enemies. The need to control them, therefore, was strongly advocated. Elite African men incorporated the basic elements of the ideology of domesticity in their quest for greater political power. Consequently, they too participated in the redefinition of appropriate female activity and identity, in an attempt to create a group of women compatible with their new class interests and needs.

⁴⁷Margarita Dobert, "Civic and Political Participation of Women in French Speaking West Africa", unpublished PhD dissertation, George Washington University, 1970, pp.52-53.

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CHAPTER IV:**PUTTING IDEAS INTO PRACTICE:
INSTITUTIONAL AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT
1903-1960**

During the fifty years following the educational reforms of 1903, colonial educators and administrators mapped out, with varying degrees of enthusiasm and ambition, programs, curricula, institutions and structures for African girls' education. While much ink was spilled on elaborate schemes, no coherent system was ever implemented. A whole panoply of schemes and institutions, both religious and secular, did nevertheless see the day. Most were short-lived, however, vanishing due to lack of funds, personnel, coordination or sustained interest. This chapter examines the immediate impact of the 1903 reforms; broad policy or structural changes for the remainder of the colonial period; and offers a more detailed look at specific institutions and programs, beginning with Le Goff's wide-ranging proposals.

The secularisation of the school system effectively shut down most educational activity by male religious orders. This situation changed in 1913 when a decree was passed permitting educational activities by religious orders, although under government regulation (a move taken largely to resolve the chronic shortage of teachers).¹ Female teaching orders, however, defied the new rules and discreetly continued to run small domestic sciences and catechism classes for European and African

¹Capelle, *L'éducation en Afrique Noire*, p.27. In fact the 1903 reforms essentially put a brake on most educational activity for a number of years as there were no teachers available to fill the positions vacated by the missionaries. See, *ibid.*, p.21.

girls.² While Sénégal's Lieutenant Governor, Camille Guy, complained about the Sisters' quasi-clandestine activities, the colonial administration generally turned a blind eye on their initiative, as an effective alternative had yet to be established.¹

In 1907, the Director of the public girls' school in Dakar complained that competition from the Soeurs de St. Joseph de Cluny and the Dames de l'Immaculée Conception de Castres was emptying her classrooms of both European and African pupils.⁴ Denise Bouche posits that European families preferred to entrust their daughters to the mission schools because the Sisters maintained strict racial segregation.⁵ It has been argued that African families who had the means and inclination favoured mission schools over State institutions because of their greater flexibility, enabling parents to take their students out of school during periods of peak agricultural activity, or to answer other specific needs.⁶

Lack of serious initiative, consistent and serious underfunding, and a shortage of teaching personnel in the public schools of AOF led in general to the stagnation of girls education, and despite continued missionary

²Bouche, *L'enseignement dans les territoires français de l'Afrique occidentale de 1817 à 1920*, Tome II, p.757.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*, p.758.

⁵*Ibid.*, p.759.

⁶See Garcia, "L'organisation de l'instruction publique au Dahomey, 1894-1920", p.64.

efforts, the gap between boys' and girls' education widened in the first twenty years of the 1900s.⁷ In Guinée, the local colonial administration resorted to force to fill classrooms that usually did not even have qualified teaching personnel. In 1905, Lieutenant-Governor Frézouls ordered the schools in Kouroussa, Kankan and Siguiri in Haute Guinée to fill a minimum quota of twenty girls and eighty boys. Despite this policy of forced recruitment, a tour by the education inspector in 1910 found classrooms in girls' schools virtually empty. The policy was abandoned two years later.⁸

Dahomey was the exception that proved the rule. It was unique in its possession of a relatively long-established European-educated, catholicized "Brazilian" community. Liberated slaves returned from Brazil beginning around 1845, and the descendents of liaisons between European (mostly Portuguese) merchants and African women, combined to form the basis of this community.⁹ Many of the returned slaves had been converted to Catholicism by Jesuit missionaries in Brazil.¹⁰ They established important trading links on the Dahomean coast with European merchants, first in slaves and later in palm oil. Their economic base, however, was eroded with colonial conquest, and they

⁷In 1904 there was one female student for every seven male students. By 1917 the ratio was 1:10. See Bouche, *L'enseignement dans les territoires français*, Tome II, p.755.

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 765-66.

⁹Dov Ronen, "The Colonial Elite in Dahomey", *African Studies Review*, 27:1 (April, 1974), p.55.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p.56.

sought to preserve their élite status by entering the colonial bureaucracy. This prompted them to send their children to Catholic schools to acquaint them with European lifestyles, in an attempt to perpetuate their relatively privileged status within colonial society: "For us Blacks education is a matter of life and death."¹¹

When the colonial administration secularised the education system, the Brazilian community clamoured to save their Catholic teaching institutions, and secured the necessary funding from the community itself to keep the Catholic schools operating. Consequently, Dahomey, more than any other colony in AOF, possessed greater educational opportunities through parallel secular and religious educational systems.¹² Dahomey subsequently came to be known as the *quartier latin* of AOF.¹¹

The Soeurs de Notre Dames des Apôtres, the most active female teaching order in Dahomey, actively pursued a policy of parallel educational development for boys and

¹¹From a 1932 issue of *La Voix du Dahomey*, cited in Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *Africa: Endurance and Change South of the Sahara*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988, p.270.

¹²Capelle, *L'éducation en Afrique noire*, p.22.

¹³There was a strong regional bias to educational development. The Brazilian community was concentrated in the urban areas of the southern, coastal region of Dahomey, and consequently so too were the schools. The northern and rural areas saw few colonial schools until the post-Second World War period. See Ronen, "The Colonial Elite in Dahomey", p.68.

girls.¹⁴ The colonial administration, for its part, opened a coeducational primary school in Porto-Novo in 1906 which expanded so quickly that it was divided into two separate regional schools. By 1920 about two hundred girls were in attendance.¹⁵ Girls in Dahomey also attended village schools in significant numbers, and with

¹⁴An attempt to establish comparative statistics of girls' enrolment in colonial schools in Dahomey as compared to the rest of the federation proved frustrating. The difficulties encountered in providing statistics for this study in general are extensive. Numbers provided in colonial reports and other relevant primary texts are unreliable. In a number of instances, boys attended girls' schools. See, for example M. Rouselle, "Au sujet de l'enseignement des filles", in *BEAOF*, no. 52, oct.-déc., 1922, pp.47-48. According to Rouselle in the 1921-22 school year of the Ecole des Filles de Dakar there were 213 enrolled students; of those students 89 were boys. Enrolment statistics also do not reveal attendance rates. In many cases students may have been enrolled in name only, as there are frequent references to high absenteeism. Linked to this is the fact that under the *indigénat*, recruitment of a fixed quota of students was mandatory. This conceivably led to artificially high enrolment figures. This unreliability extends to the secondary literature. Bouche claims that by 1912 there were 569 girls in mission schools under the direction of the Missions africaines de Lyon in Dahomey (under whose authority fell the Soeurs de Notre Dames des Apôtres). See Bouche, *L'enseignement dans les territoires français*, Tome II, p.767. She contradicts this in a later statistical table when she claims that in 1912 there were 569 girls in missions schools for all of AOF. See, *ibid.*, p.777.

¹⁵Bouche, *L'enseignement dans les territoires français*, Tome II, p.768. There was apparently less resistance in this region to the enrolment of girls in colonial schools. It is unclear at this point of research why this was the case. It is conceivable that the history of women's political and military power in Abomey had something to do with this. Women's strong participation in commercial activity may also have been a factor. On this last point see, Patrick Manning, *Slavery, Colonialism and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640-1960*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, p.138.

enrolments stable or increasing from year to year this does not appear to have been the result of forced recruitment, as was the case in Guinée.¹⁶

From 1915 to 1922, institutions beyond basic primary education were developed in AOF. Each colony established a higher primary school (*école primaire supérieure*) whose graduates potentially qualified for the lower echelons of the élite as clerks in the local colonial administration, teachers, or commercial agents. Others were selected to continue to the highest level of the education system.¹⁷ Girls were virtually excluded from the higher primary schools until the 1930s.¹⁸

The creation of federal schools was part of a reform package, introduced in 1924, which aimed to consolidate and streamline the colonial education system. This process led to the opening, fourteen years later, of the Ecole Normale des Jeunes Filles de Rufisque, a teacher-training college similar to its more renowned counterpart for boys, the Ecole William Ponty.¹⁹

Following the Second World War, the numbers of

¹⁶Bouche claims the total number of girls attending colonial primary schools in AOF, both public and private, in 1912 was 1725. Using Garcia's statistical tables, it would appear that almost one half of those girls were from Dahomey. In 1910, 872 girls were attending colonial primary schools in Dahomey. See Bouche, *L'enseignement dans les territoires français*, Tome II, p.701; and Garcia, "L'organisation de l'instruction publique au Dahomey, 1894-1920", p.92.

¹⁷Peggy Sabatier, "Elite Education in French West Africa", p.249.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p.252

¹⁹Moumouni, *L'éducation en Afrique*, p.47.

African girls and boys attending colonial schools grew for a number of reasons. Improved access to and quality of education became a key nationalist demand.²⁰ This was also the era of the *Union Française* (or the Franco-African community), which saw a renewed emphasis on the colonial policy of *assimilation* in an attempt to answer the most moderate nationalist demands and thus thwart the development of an effective anti-colonial struggle. These shifts resulted in the reform of course content and structure to bring the education system more in line with that of the metropole.²¹ The abolition of the *indigénat* ended the forced recruitment of students, and consequently made the schools more attractive.²² Nevertheless, despite greater colonial efforts to increase the appeal of the colonial schools, continued assertions of the importance of girls' education²³, and growing demands by Africans for better educational services, the ratio of girls and boys attending colonial

²⁰*Ibid.*, p.78; Sabatier, "Elite Education in French West Africa, p.248.

²¹De Benoist, *L'Afrique occidentale française de 1944 à 1960*, p.143.

²²Moumouni, *L'éducation en Afrique*, p.93.

²³The Brazzaville conference, purporting to offer a post-war new deal to Africans under French rule, included among its resolutions, a call for expanded girls' education. See, "Brazzaville Conference: Report on Education", in David Scanlon, ed., *Traditions of African Education*, New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers' College, Columbia University, 1964, p.131.

Four years later, following up on Brazzaville, the *Commission de Modernisation des Territoires d'Outre-mer* published a report on education in the colonies. It included a call for the establishment of "domestic arts" schools at regional and local levels, and girls' colleges. See, "Educational Report of the Committee for the Modernization of Overseas Territories: Plan for the Development of Education", in *ibid.*, pp.135-37.

schools remained stable, with girls representing around ten per cent of all African students in primary schools in AOF.²⁴

Throughout the colonial period, the greatest emphasis in girls' education remained practical domestic training. A series of different institutions and programs was proposed and implemented to achieve this goal. The 1921 session of the *Conseil Supérieur de l'Enseignement* repeated what was and continued to be the standard yearly appeal,

qu'un effort énergétique soit tenté par chacunes des colonies du groupe pour commencer à organiser partout où il sera possible, un enseignement des filles...²⁵

The appeal for greater emphasis on girls' education, and consequently an intensified effort to impose French ethnocentric definitions of femininity, was largely an assimilationist mission. Once placed within the larger discussion on education in the interwar period, however, it is clear that the foundation was racist. As revealed in Governor General Merlin's opening speech at the same session, there was an ever-present anxiety that education might weaken the colonial politics of subjugation and exclusion of the colonized population. In order to avoid this, racist notions of the natives' limited intellectual capacities and abilities were employed to justify

²⁴According to Moumouni, this ratio widens with each successive level of the system. Unfortunately he provides no figures. See, Moumouni, *L'éducation en Afrique*, p.118.

²⁵The *Conseil Supérieur de l'enseignement* sat yearly and was presided by the Governor General of AOF, the federal education inspector, and various school directors and bureaucrats. See, *Conseil Supérieur de l'Enseignement, Session des 27 et 28 juin, 1921*", in *BEAOF*, 9e année, No. 47, avril-sept., 1921, p.86.

extremely limited educational training,

Sans refuser de donner à l'enfant toutes les connaissances qu'il peut normalement assimiler, il faut éviter d'offrir à son esprit des notions supérieures à ses facultés de compréhension, de lui inculquer des idées trop étrangères à ses conceptions. Une hérédité ancestrale sans culture limitant plus ou moins ses facultés d'assimilation, il serait sans profit de vouloir lui donner un enseignement dépassant ses facultés d'entendement.²⁶

While it has been difficult to ascertain what impact educational policy formulations had on the ground, there is some evidence that there was effective communication between inspectors at the top and teachers on the ground. As such demands for expanded girls' education did not fall on deaf ears. In a letter published in the *BEAOF* in 1922, Mme Rousselle, the Director of the Girls' school in Dakar, responded with some anger to criticisms made by the education inspector of the size and composition of the school's student body.²⁷ She refuted the inspector's accusation that the school was dominated by non-African students in the 1921-22 school year.²⁸ She also countered the argument that enrolment was too low and had not shown any progress, and provided statistics from 1904 to 1922 to demonstrate that enrolment had steadily increased at the school.²⁹

²⁶*Ibid.*, p.82.

²⁷M. Rousselle, "Au sujet de d'enseignement des filles", *BEAOF*, 10e année, No.52, oct.-déc., 1922, p.47.

²⁸The numbers Rousselle provides are: 7 Europeans, 12 Syrians, 46 Portuguese, 9 métisses, 50 "natives".

²⁹*Ibid.*, p.48.

One of the most elaborate and ambitious domestic training schemes for African girls was proposed by Mme G. Le Goff in 1937.³⁰ She essentially called for a revamping of African girls' education. The primary objective was to intensify the practical aspect of girls' education in order to make of

...la fillette indigène une excellence ménagère, elle veut lui donner toutes les connaissances que les mères indigènes ne peuvent lui donner parce qu'elles ne les connaissent pas.³¹

In conception, scope and zeal, Le Goff's program was a practical answer to Hardy's ideals. Both shared the same ambitious and urgent interest in African women's femininity.

Le Goff proposed a three-tiered system of domestic training which progressed from mass to élite education. The first, most basic level aimed to popularize European notions of women's domestic responsibilities among the widest number of African girls possible. Even French language training was scaled-down to a minimum required to communicate, dropping grammar and syntax and relying on phonetics. This level entailed twenty-seven hours of classes per week. The curriculum was faithful to previous domestic training initiatives:

Toutes doivent savoir entretenir une maison propre et conforme à l'hygiène, confectionner des vêtements, les laver, les raccomoder. Toutes doivent savoir cuisiner, connaître l'hygiène de la femme et de l'enfant, la soin

³⁰Unfortunately, it is impossible at this stage of research to determine to what degree this proposal was implemented.

³¹G. Le Goff, "L'enseignement des filles en Afrique occidentale française", *EA*, 26e année, No.97, juillet-sept., 1937, p.190.

à donner aux malades, les premiers soins en cas d'accidents...Elles fabriqueront elles-mêmes leur savon, là elles feront de la poterie ou tresseront des nattes.³²

To supplement their lessons, the girls occasionally went on "fieldtrips" to the best-kept homes in the village, to learn by example.³³ Free time at the end of the school day was devoted to recreation, "...et leurs jeux, comme leurs travaux, les attacheront à l'Ecole française, à la civilisation française."³⁴

Le Goff distinguished herself from her predecessors in the innovations she introduced to the second and third levels of her system. The second level represented the pinnacle of her mission to make better homemakers and it also demonstrated the ethnocentrism which nourished her zeal. She envisioned the establishment of more élite and sophisticated domestic sciences boarding schools in the larger towns and cities which would cater to the daughters of chiefs, notables and bureaucrats, with the ultimate aim of training them to become the wives of men of similar stature.³⁵ The students boarded at the school for two years during which time they were divided into small groups organised to run model households.

Les jeunes filles, groupées par quatre ou cinq dans chaque case, l'organiseraient, l'entretiendraient. Elles auraient à tout faire pour elles-mêmes. Elles ne seraient plus comme dans les écoles du premier degré des apprenties ménagères, mais de vraies

³²Ibid., p.191.

³³Ibid., p.195.

³⁴Ibid., p.196.

³⁵Ibid., p.197.

maîtresses des maison...³⁶

Le Goff expressed the belief that total immersion and twenty-four hour surveillance would make of these girls model homemakers.³⁷ Their general education included more advanced language and math training, as well as music and drawing, presumably to develop more well-rounded "ladies"; however, this was still marginal to the larger task of domestic sciences.³⁸ The students' domestic training was designed to promote self sufficiency, thus everything from gardening, mattress-making and clothes manufacturing was included in the curriculum. Concurrently, they were inculcated with the qualities believed to be essential to a dedicated wife and mother: politeness, gaiety, industry and devotion.³⁹ If necessary, humiliation was employed to eradicate their existing "crude and coarse" demeanour.⁴⁰

Le Goff hoped to stimulate the students to strive for such goals by encouraging competition among the simulated households, pushing them to out do each other in running the cleanest and happiest household. She expected them to do this with joy and view themselves as privileged in their chance to participate in the program. Her conception of the ultimate prize for the best kept home speaks for itself:

...une note pourrait être donnée pour la bonne

³⁶*Ibid.*, p.192.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p.193.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p.197.

³⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p.198.

tenue de chaque case et celle qui aurait obtenu la meilleure note aurait l'honneur de voir flôtter pendant toute une semaine le drapeau français sur son toit.⁴¹

The third and final level was a domestic sciences teacher-training centre that recruited the best graduates from the previous level. Already cultivated in French ways, Le Goff dreamed for these young women a happy marriage to their male counterparts, who would themselves be products of the colonial education system, and trained as teachers. Together they would patriotically reproduce and extend the system: "Nous aiderions sans doute ainsi à la création en Afrique Noire du ménage d'instituteurs qui rendrait à la cause de la civilisation franco-africaine les plus grands services."⁴² These women were expected to go on to set up girls' schools, and spread the word of happy homemaking across the federation.⁴³

The praises of practical domestic training were frequently sung. This was not simply the promotion of an effective teaching strategy. Such "practical training" was transformed at times into officially sanctioned

⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴²*Ibid.*, p.193.

⁴³Le Goff's call for restructuring and consolidating girls' education was a detailed elaboration of demands made two years earlier, in 1936, at the *Conseil Supérieur de l'enseignement*, by the General Inspector of Education, M. Charton: "Comme pour les garçons, il faut envisager dans l'enseignement des filles: 1. l'enseignement pratique et populaire; 2. l'enseignement de sélection ayant pour but la formation des cadres indigènes féminins...". See, M. Charton, "La Vie Scolaire de l'AOF: Rapport Statistique d'Ensemble pour l'Année Scolaire 1934-35", *EA*, 25e année, No. 93, janv.-mars, 1936, p.95.

exploitation of the students' unpaid labour, to the benefit of their European teachers. In some instances, for example, "hands-on training" entailed students cleaning teachers' houses. A domestic sciences curriculum guide prepared in 1943 for European female teachers in AOF, and fashioned after the existing program at the girls' school in Conakry, advised teachers to have their students clean their homes each week, purportedly as an effective teaching strategy.

C'est en faisant un vrai ménage que la fille verra comment il doit être fait, c'est en voyant une maison coquettement arrangée qu'il lui viendra l'idée d'arranger la sienne: amenez vos élèves chez vous. Faites-leur faire chaque jeudi le grand nettoyage de la maison en exigeant de l'ordre du soin, de l'entrain: que l'on chante, que l'on bavarde, afin de rendre le travail plaisant. Les parents s'apercevront vite que ces visites chez vous donnent à leurs filles le goût de la maison bien tenue.⁴⁴

Religious teaching orders continued to operate and establish new girls' schools. Long-term instruction, (in boarding schools where possible), was viewed as the most effective strategy to inculcate women fully with Christian values and European norms guiding their behaviour as homemakers. As Father Henri Gravrand stated:

Il s'agit là de choses si nouvelles qu'une longue formation, par imprégnation plus que par explication, est nécessaire pour transformer les mentalités et comportements.⁴⁵

As these goals were never fully attained, the Church felt it necessary also to implement a series of smaller

⁴⁴M. You and Mme Allainmat, "Classe de filles. Cours élémentaire. Programmes de: Enseignement ménager", EA, 30e année, No. 107, 1943, pp.74, 78.

⁴⁵Gravrand, *Visage Africain de l'Eglise*, p.153.

measures, and established a number of centres which provided what can best be termed crash-courses in domesticity. These small institutions, called *écoles de fiancées*, or *Sixa*, targeted girls who were engaged to be married and had received little or no colonial schooling.⁴⁶ In Sénégal, for example, from the thirties to the fifties *Sixas* were established in the Sine Saloum region, namely in Fatick, Joal, Thiaroye, and Diohine by a number of different congregations.⁴⁷

The *Sixa* provided intensive short-term immersion in catechism and domestic training, preparing the young fiancées for their responsibilities as wives and mothers, as conceived by the Sisters in charge. According to Father Gravrand, not only were these women's husbands pleased by this last-minute intervention, but,

...ces élèves du *Sixa* sont considérées par les autres femmes sërères comme plus évoluées et plus expertes que les autres dans la tenue d'un ménage.⁴⁸

The Church believed that women's migration to urban centres to search for seasonal employment posed a threat to proper feminine behaviour. For example, fear that domestic and Christian training received by Serer girls

⁴⁶These centres, like most orphanages, were under the exclusive control of the Church. See, Kniebiehler and Goutalier, *La femme au temps des colonies*, p.230.

⁴⁷Gravrand, *Visage Africain de l'Eglise*, p.150. The congregations were: Dames de l'Immaculée Conception de Castres, Saint Thomas de Villeneuve, Saint Charles d'Angers, and Saint Coeur de Marie du Sénégal respectively.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p.151. While applauded by some, the *Sixas* were condemned by others who claimed they delayed the implementation of more extensive domestic training. See, B.I.C.E., *L'enfant africain*, p.231.

in the Sine would be eroded during periodic work stays in Dakar prompted several religious communities to establish welcome centres in the neighbourhoods of Champ de Course, Médina and Grand Dakar to ensure housing, and presumably surveillance and continued training.⁴⁹

The Soeurs Blanches, active in Soudan since 1897, and later in Haute-Volta, ran a number of small domestic training centres. In 1916, they launched the first of a series of small, more specialized centers that involved women in small-scale commodity production, with the stated aim of providing African girls and women with marketable skills in weaving, rug making and lace production. The first centre, established in Ouagadougou, recruited young girls to learn how to spin and weave rugs for commercial sale.⁵⁰ Many of its graduates, once married and running their own households, continued to spin thread to sell to the Sisters. By 1931 there were five hundred girls engaged in such workrooms, with another three hundred women working out of their homes.⁵¹ The Sisters argued that providing African girls and women with a marketable skill fit very comfortably within their *mission civilisatrice*:

Hier encore, qu'était la femme soudanaise? Une sorte de "chose" qu'un prétendant avait achetée, et qui ne disposait de rien, et dont le mari disposait. Aujourd'hui, celle qui a un pécule...acquiert du même coup, grâce à ce petit avoir procuré par les Soeurs, une importance économique parallèle à la dignité

⁴⁹Gravrand, *Visage Africain de l'Eglise*, p.150.

⁵⁰This centre apparently acquired some notoriety when the Emperor of the Mossi, the Mogho Naba, bought a rug there. See, Goyau, *La femme dans les missions*, pp.187-88.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p.189.

morale dont les Soeurs lui ont inculqué
l'idée...

This type of activity was certainly compatible with nineteenth century European notions of appropriate income generating activity for women, for it did not challenge gender roles. The work could be done at home and the nature of the activity itself, sewing, weaving, and the like, was considered feminine. By the twentieth century, however, and certainly by the First World War, working class women in Europe were established in the paid work force outside the home. It is possible that the Sisters' very narrow definition of appropriate feminine wage-earning activity in the colonies was a reactionary response to women's expanding role in the wage economy at home.

The economic gain for African women involved in this program is dubious. There is certainly evidence that this scheme proved more profitable for the Sisters involved than for their students, and the broad lines of the system resemble those of master and servant in an apprenticeship. The girls in the workrooms did not control their revenue. Rather, upon completion of their term there, they were given a small sum of money, the amount determined by the Sisters.⁵³

The dignity that the Sisters argued the women would acquire through this apprenticeship was certainly

⁵³*Ibid.*, pp.189-90.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p.189. The exact nature of the economic and social relationship between the Soeurs Blanches and the women who produced at home for sale to the Sisters is difficult to determine due to lack of evidence.

stripped away when fifteen Soudanese women were put on display for the French public to see at the Colonial Fair in Vincennes. The women were part of an exhibit to illustrate, through their production of rugs, the "moral and social progress" engendered by the Sisters' good work.⁵⁴

The Sisters may have been responding to external criticism in their adoption of training geared towards income generating skills. Clotilde Chivas-Baron, a Frenchwoman who apparently travelled extensively in the colonies in the twenties and thirties, was critical of the work being performed by the Soeurs de St Joseph de Cluny in Côte d'Ivoire.⁵⁵ She charged that their educational training did not provide its students with skills which would permit them to survive economically.

La Mère Supérieure me présente leurs fins travaux de patience: ravissants brimborions, lingerie fines, service de table ou à thé, napperons, beaucoup de napperons. Délicieuses inutilités qui ne peuvent assurer le pain quotidien en notre dure époque de vaches maigres.⁵⁶

Chivas-Baron suggested to the Mother Superior the establishment of courses in Parisian high-fashion. She argued that trained African seamstresses would provide a valuable service to the growing number of French women in the colony.

J'ai constaté qu'à Bingerville, à Abidjan où les réceptions de la très aimable femme du gouverneur sont brillantes, beaucoup de jeunes femmes se désolent de n'avoir rien à se mettre, de trouver trop peu de couturières

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, pp.190-91.

⁵⁵Chivas-Baron, *Côte d'Ivoire*, p.113.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, pp.113-14.

dans la Colonie, de ne pouvoir, à temps, faire
venir de Paris la toilette rêvée...⁵⁷

She added that lessons in hairdressing and manicure would complete the needs of the colonial society's "finest". Her suggestions were apparently ill-received by the Mother Superior:

Cette fois, je crois que j'exagère. La chère
Mère est presque scandalisée de ma coquetterie
hors de propos...⁵⁸

Finally, orphanages, nursery schools and kindergartens were seen as particularly effective places to commence inculcating young girls with European notions of domesticity. By the 1920s nursery schools were operating in most large centres in AOF. They provided services for both European and African parents. Hardy cited them as especially valuable, for they delivered up to colonial educators children at a particularly malleable age.⁵⁹

Despite the overwhelming emphasis on basic domestic training for African girls in the colonial education system, a small space did develop for professional training. The nature of that training faithfully mirrored that for women in Europe. An extremely small number of African women received advanced training in professions viewed as "safe", that is, in professions that maintained the integrity of their "natural"

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, pp.114-15.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p.115.

⁵⁹Hardy, *Une conquête morale*, p.84. Religious authorities concurred and worked toward the establishment of such institutions. See, B.I.C.E., *L'enfant africain*, pp.236-44.

functions as nurturers and caretakers. Thus, programs were developed in midwifery, nursing and teaching. While some training was also given in clerical work, the argument of the efficiency of women's "nimble fingers" did not gain great currency, and African male clerks dominated the field.⁶⁰ This professional training was, of course, strictly executed within the framework of domesticity, with the curricula heavily weighted with sessions in domestic sciences.

The Medical School in Dakar was established in 1918, largely as a response to the shortage of medical support personnel during the First World War.⁶¹ A three-year midwifery program was given by the School until 1953, when a separate school was created.⁶² Entrance requirements for girls into the Medical School were considerably lower than those for boys, who were required to take two years of preparatory medical training. Girls were eligible to take the entrance exam with a primary school certificate, although this changed with the establishment of the girls' teacher-training school in

⁶⁰It should also be noted that a significant number of European women were employed as clerks, typists and secretaries, further narrowing the employment opportunities for African women in clerical work. By 1955 there were 2 000 European women who filled clerical posts in Dakar. See, Cruise O'Brien, *White Society in Black Africa*, p.85.

⁶¹Sabatier, "Elite Education in French West Africa", p.252.

⁶²Knibiehler and Goutalier, *La femme au temps des colonies*, p.238. As early as 1935 the Inspector of education, M. Charton, was calling for the separation of the midwifery school into an independant institution that would simultaneously train domestic sciences monitors. See, "Conseil Supérieur de l'Enseignement. Session du 23 décembre, 1935", in *EA*, 25e année, No.93, janv.-mars, 1936, p.86.

Rufisque in 1938.⁶³ Candidates ranged in age from eighteen to twenty-five and came from all over AOF and *Afrique équatoriale française*. A relatively large portion of the student body came from orphanages run for abandoned métisse children in Kayes and Grand Bassam.⁶⁴ By colony, the largest representation was from Dahomey, followed by Soudan, and then Sénégal.⁶⁵ From 1921 to 1944 an average of fifteen students graduated yearly from the midwifery school.⁶⁶ There was also a very small class for district nurses at the school. The few women who entered these classes were generally those who had failed the midwifery entrance exam.⁶⁷

Professional training in midwifery did not provide relief from colonial lessons in morality and rules for feminine behaviour. The entrance exam is a case in point. The exam tested candidates' aptitude in spelling, French composition and arithmetic. To test spelling the women were required to read an essay and answer questions. The essay was a deliberate message to the candidates, warning them not to view their admission to

⁶³Sabatier, "Elite Education in French West Africa", p.252.

⁶⁴Mumford and Orde-Brown, *Africans Learn to be French*, p.139.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p.140. From 1921 to 1934 almost 40% of the midwifery students from AOF came from Dahomey (out of 186 students from AOF, 73 were from Dahomey; 41 from Soudan; and 28 from Sénégal).

⁶⁶Knibiehler and Goutalier, *La femme au temps des colonies*, p.238. They cite 336 graduates from 1921-44. According to Mumford and Orde-Brown, there were 191 graduates between 1921 and 1934. Both average out to the same thing. See, *Africans Learn to be French*, p.140.

⁶⁷Mumford and Orde-Brown, *Africans Learn to be French*, p.140.

medical school as an escape from domestic duties. The underlying threat was that such a misconception would make them unmarriagable, as is clear in the example of an exam essay, cited below in its entirety:

Il y avait une fois une jeune fille qui était fiancée à un jeune homme laborieux et sage. Elle était jolie, mais paresseuse. Quand on l'obligeait à filer sa quenouille elle arrachait avec colère des poignées de filasse et les jetait à terre. Sa servante, fille travailleuse, ramassa tous ces brins, les nettoya, les fila et s'en fit faire un beau boubou.

La veille du mariage, tandis que la servante dansait gaiement avec son boubou neuf, la future épouse se mit à chanter: "la servante se fait honneur des restes de ma quenouille". Le jeune homme, étonné, se demanda ce que cela voulait dire. Il suit l'histoire, et, après avoir réfléchi, voyant la paresse de l'une et l'activité de l'autre, il laissa la première et prit la seconde pour femme.⁶⁸

The female students at the medical school were closely supervised. With residency at the school mandatory, this entailed twenty-four hour surveillance. A brochure on the medical school included a section on moral training that was largely devoted to the female students at the school. They were watched over by two Europeans, including a female hostel warden who lived with the students, and "...advised them in all the details of their everyday life..."⁶⁹ This control extended to the students' free time on Sundays when they were permitted excursions around Dakar. Like the female

⁶⁸"Concours d'admission", *BEAOF*, 11e année, No.55, juillet-sept., 1923, pp.30-31.

⁶⁹"Translation of Brochure on the African Medical School at Dakar", in Mumford and Orde-Brown, *Africans Learn to be French*, pp.153-54.

students attending boarding schools in France in this period, midwifery students were put under the strict chaperonage of a school official at all times.⁷⁰

The largest professional training institution for girls in AOF was the post-primary Ecole Normale de Jeunes Filles de Rufisque, established in 1938. Its establishment was a key component in the strategy to expand mass domestic training through the development of a qualified cadre of African teachers. As such the curriculum was essentially a four-year immersion program in domestic sciences.⁷¹ The school shared many of the characteristics of elite training centres for men. Like the École William Ponty, the students were overwhelmingly from urban, coastal areas. For example, of the girls entering Rufisque in its first five years, 76% of the Senegalese students were *originaires* from the four communes, and 80% of the Dahomeans were from Porto Novo, Cotonou, Ouidah and Grand Popo.⁷² The students in majority were from petty bourgeois backgrounds, most of their fathers being employed in the colonial administration or in commercial enterprise.⁷³

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, pp.146-47.

⁷¹Sabatier, "Elite Education in French West Africa", p.254.

⁷²*Ibid.*, p.258.

⁷³*Ibid.*, p.259. Only 7% of the girls in the first four classes at Rufisque were from peasant families, which is especially striking in contrast to 38% of the student body at William Ponty in 1940. See, *ibid.*, p.260.

It should be noted that the late Mariama Bâ, a well-known Sénégalaise novelist, was a graduate of this school. Her novel, *So Long a Letter*, reflects that experience, and attests to the importance of the use of African women's fiction writing in historical research. It would

The school aimed to cultivate this élite status and carve out for its pupils a special place as "évoluées" in colonial society. Mme Le Goff, the school's first director, clearly set the tone in her opening speech to the school's first forty-six students:

Ce soir, j'inscrirai vos noms sur le registre du l'École, je les inscrirai avec émotion en pensant à vous qui aurez la tâche difficile de montrer à tous, ce que peut devenir une femme indigène bien guidée et de bonne volonté.⁷⁴

The École Normale de Jeunes Filles de Rufisque was never the colonial showpiece the École William Ponty came to be. Its graduating classes were small, averaging thirty students a year from across the federation. It was almost shut down after the Second World War when entrance qualifications were toughened. This development virtually extinguished the pool of eligible candidates, thus attesting to the continued poor quality of primary education for girls.⁷⁵ Once again in 1956, with the implementation of the *loi-cadre* which strengthened the individual colonies at the expense of the federation, there was an erosion of many federal institutions including the girls school at Rufisque, and it fell under serious neglect.⁷⁶

certainly be pertinent to a discussion of African women's attitudes and experience with respect to colonial education. See, Mariama Bâ, *So Long a Letter*, London: Virago Press, 1982.

⁷⁴G. Le Goff, "Petite allocution aux élèves de l'École Normale de Jeunes Filles", *EA*, 28^e année, Nos. 102-103, 1939, p.80.

⁷⁵Moumouni, *L'éducation en Afrique*, pp.122-23.

⁷⁶*Ibid.* Apparently even its physical appearance left much to be desired. When Le Goff addressed the school's first class, she alluded to the school's

While the Medical School and the teacher-training college at Rufisque were the two most important professional training institutions for African women in AOF, there were a few smaller establishments created.⁷⁷ Furthermore the fifties saw the development of secondary and post-secondary education, including the establishment of several high schools and colleges, all in urban areas (reinforcing the existing urban bias of educational institutions). Some were coeducational, others exclusively for girls, including the modern colleges in Dakar, Saint-Louis, Bamako, Conakry, Porto-Novo and Bingerville.⁷⁸

In 1903 the colonial state took firm control of the education system. Missionaries saw their role in education dramatically reduced, but never eliminated. New groups and individuals concerned with women's education emerged, and contributed to the elaboration of programs and the establishment of new institutions. The system itself was expanded to include post-primary education for women, although it was severely limited in both scope and access. The ideological foundation and mission of African women's colonial education, however,

dissappointing buildings and surroundings. But, pointing out that interior design and landscaping were in the repertory of a good homekeeper, the students could look upon the improvement of the school's appearance as their first project. See, "Petite allocution aux élèves de l'Ecole Normale de Jeunes Filles", p.80.

⁷⁷This included a two-year certificate program in Grand Bassam to train African social workers; and a series of three year programs that granted Certificats d'aptitude professionnel in domestic sciences, sewing and childcare. See, Knibiehler and Goutalier, *La femme au temps des colonies*, pp.238-39.

⁷⁸De Benoist, *L'Afrique occidentale française de 1944 à 1960*, p.269.

did not change. Its aim remained to refashion women's gender identities and roles to approximate those prescribed by the ideology of domesticity.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Colonialism has had an enduring and destructive legacy in Africa. Thirty years after "independence" true decolonization is still in its infant stages, thwarted by neocolonialism that maintains a tenacious grip on the continent. A fundamental result of colonialism has been the peripheralization of Africa in the world economy and concurrent with that, the intensification of gender differences and the marginalization of women within Africa. Colonial education played a key role in this process.

Whereas in the past women made important contributions to the economy, they have been squeezed to the margins over the course of colonial and neocolonial rule. In rural areas their crucial contribution to subsistence agriculture (and consequent economic autonomy and power) has been devalued in favour of male-dominated cash-crop production.¹

Women's socio-economic marginalisation in urban centres is even more extreme. In the cities a distinct gender-based class formation has taken place. Men have a near monopoly on access to scarce wage labour and other resources, while most women constitute an underclass.²

¹Fatou Sow, "Femmes africaines, emploi et division internationale du travail: le cas du Sénégal", *Labour, Capital and Society*, 19:2 (November, 1986), p.202; and Marjorie J. Mbilinyi, "The 'New Woman' and Traditional Norms in Tanzania", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 10:1 (1972), p.57. Although Mbilinyi's study focusses on Tanzania, her discussion in a number of areas encompasses sub-Saharan Africa as a whole.

²See, Robertson, "Women's Education and Class Formation in Africa, 1950-1980".

This situation is explicitly linked to the impact of the colonial education system. Women's virtual exclusion from that system blocked their access to training crucial to qualify them for participation in the capitalist economy. Men's greater access to professional and technical training has given them a decisive advantage in extremely competitive urban job markets.³ This has left most women in a situation unemployment; forced dependence on male relatives; or of self-employment in vulnerable economic sectors, as petty traders or producers.⁴

The extremely limited training that was opened to women in the colonial period (the nature of which has persisted largely unchanged to the present) was designed according to sexist notions of appropriate female activity. As a result paid work available to women today is concentrated overwhelmingly in so-called feminine occupations: secretarial work, nursing, teaching, domestic work, and so on.⁵ While women's access to higher education has increased since independence, it remains limited and has been decisive in reproducing this situation. In Sénégal, for example, by 1960, ten years after the establishment of the University of Dakar, there were only twenty women in attendance. Furthermore, the university did not effectively contribute to widening women's economic options, as most of those students were

³Sow, "Femmes africaines, emploi et division internationale du travail", p.208.

⁴Mbilinyi, "The 'New Woman' and Traditional Norms in Tanzania", p.65. Claire Robertson has clearly demonstrated this process in *Sharing the Same Bowl: A Socioeconomic History of Women and Class in Accra, Ghana*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.

⁵Sow, "Femmes africaines, emploi et division internationale du travail", p.204.

enrolled in programs stereotyped as feminine.'

Claire Robertson has argued that the post-colonial expansion of primary school for girls, without equivalent growth in secondary and higher education, has in many cases simply contributed to women's disempowerment. Attendance in primary school can reduce valuable time spent in apprenticeship training in trading, potting or sewing. Consequently, girls graduating from primary school, with no possibility of furthering their formal education may be worse off than those who never attended, but who are fully trained in a skill that potentially will enable them to engage in petty production or trade.⁷

Women's education in the independent countries of francophone West Africa has also preserved courses in domestic sciences from its colonial roots. As M. Eliou so succinctly stated, "The road which leads [girls] to school is in fact only a detour, which leads them back to the home."⁸

In many ways the colonial schooling of African girls was ultimately an instrument to legitimate ideologically women's economic subordination to men, and their marginalization in the economy. Domestic sciences attempted to inculcate new gender roles and identities

⁶*Ibid.*, p.211.

⁷See, Claire C. Robertson, "Women in the Urban Economy", in Margaret J. Hay, and Sharon Stichter, eds., *African Women South of the Sahara*, New York: Longman, 1984, pp.44-46.

⁸Cited in Robertson, "Women's Education and Class Formation in Africa, 1950-1980", p.93.

that justified locking women into the home, and out of the paid labour force. Such a transformation entailed attacking women's existing roles and practices as uncivilized and unfeminine. The term "traditional" (employed to explain women's resistance to such change) became a dirty word synonymous with reactionary conservatism. This simply supplied colonial educators with more ideological ammunition to promote shifts of greater power to men depicted as more open to change.

The small community of male "*assimilés*" contributed to this discussion on gender-reconstruction in the colonial period. They sought to further confine women's scope of acceptable activities by denigrating the "emancipated" woman -- the *élite* of female professionals. The echo of such accusations still rings today. Ayesha Imam and Audrey Wipper have shown that in contemporary political discourse the terms "traditional" and "emancipated" (or "modern") are employed to depict "bad" women. Some politicians have found the exploitation of such images useful. Plagued with political and economic difficulties, and suffering crises of legitimacy, politicians have employed these images to blame women for the lack of national progress. They argue that the "conservatism" of some women constitutes a major brake on modernization; while the "emancipation" of others is equated (hypocritically) with Westernization, and thus an obstacle to forging a cohesive national identity.⁹ Neither Imam nor Wipper, however, provide an historical

⁹See Ayesha Imam, "Ideological Manipulation, Political Repression and African Women", *AAWORD* in Nairobi, Occasional Paper Series, No.3 (1985), pp.18-22; and Audrey Wipper, "African Women, Fashion and Scapegoating", *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 6:2 (1972), pp.329-49.

context for their discussion of this phenomenon of using women as scapegoats for political problems.

This study has attempted to demonstrate that along with so many of Africa's contemporary political, social and economic problems, the use of denigrating and disempowering characterizations of African women in the process of their marginalization is firmly rooted in the continent's colonial past. This thesis has focussed on the development of French colonial education programs for African women. It has argued that such a focus provides a window on the colonial discourse on African women, and shown how that discourse was fed by French sexism and ethnocentrism. It was a discourse that led colonial agents to propose a further dimension to the entrenchment of colonial rule: that is, the colonisation of women's gender identities and roles. And it was a discourse that an élite of African men found attractive in their pursuit of power. It is hoped that this study contributes to the exposure of some of the historical roots of contemporary patriarchal discourse and control.

APPENDIX

Excerpts from

**"Les Deux Routes:
Conseils pratiques aux jeunes
fonctionnaires indigènes"¹**

Le Mariage...Il me paraît, en tout cas, difficile que la formation intellectuelle que vous avez reçue et qui a, si peu que ce soit, modifié en vous les idées traditionnelles, ne vous portez pas à chercher, dans la femme que vous épouserez, autre chose qu'une poupée reproductrice: une vraie compagne, une amie capable de comprendre vos soucis et de vous soutenir dans l'épreuve. Je ne saurais trop vous conseiller de prendre ce parti et de préférer, à tout un gynécée frivole et trompeur, une véritable épouse.

Vous voilà donc à la recherche d'une femme, d'une femme qui devra vous suivre sans jérémiades dans vos changements de poste, d'une femme qui aura part à l'administration de votre budget et qui vous facilitera le travail, d'une femme que sera la mère de vos enfants...

Ne vous hâtez donc pas de conduire un marche dont dépend votre avenir. Etudiez attentivement les candidates, et éliminez impitoyablement, dût-il vous en coûter quelque chagrin, celles qui ont des vices rédhibitoires, tels que la paresse, la prodigalité, la coquetterie excessive, l'habitude de mensonge: ce sont là des tares que le temps ne peut qu'aggraver et qui empoisonneront votre existence. Ne vous laissez pas aveugler par les qualités extérieures: beauté, richesse,

¹Georges Hardy, "Les Deux Routes: Conseils pratiques aux jeunes fonctionnaires indigènes", BEAOF, 7e année, No.40, novembre, 1918, pp.45-48.

et il cherche avant tout le bon sens, la bonne humeur, la métetété, l'activité: si vous trouvez réunies ces qualités dans la femme que vous épouserez, vous serez certain d'avoir tiré un bon numéro à la loterie.

Puis dès votre entrée en mariage, il faudra entreprendre l'éducation de votre femme. Tâche mal aisée dans laquelle il faut procéder avec discrétion, sans précipitation, sans brutalité. Si votre femme est allée à l'école, le terrain sera tout préparé; mais, d'ici longtemps, ce seront les jeunes filles que l'école aura élevées d'une façon un peu suivie. Vous aurez donc à faire comprendre à votre compagne bien des choses, dont elle ne soupçonne pas l'intérêt: l'importance de vos devoirs professionnels, votre conception de la vie matérielle, morale et sociale, son rôle à elle dans l'administration de la maison. Vous exigerez qu'elle ait des occupations régulières, qu'elle veille personnellement à la propreté de la maison et des vêtements, qu'elle couse, qu'elle vous facilite de toutes façons la vie domestique, et vous lui interdirez sévèrement les longues flâneries, les promenades à travers le village, les bavardages et les cancans.

Enfin et surtout, vous ne lui permettiez pas de bouleverser votre existence par ses caprices, ses frivolités ou ses rancunes; vous lui ferez accepter vos habitudes d'ordre, de régularité, d'économie, de travail: vous resterez le maître chez vous, et vous ne consentirez jamais à être un mari ridicule. Je connais un jeune moniteur qui a divorcé, parce que sa femme l'empêchait de préparer sa classe;...

Rude tâche en somme, mais combien méritoire et féconde. Tout humble que paraisse en général sa condition, la femme indigène dispose d'une géante influence dans la famille; bien des progrès sont arrêtés

par elle, bien des routines trouvent en elle leur plus sûr appui. Efforcez-vous de la transformer, de démailloter son esprit, de stimuler son activité et, par là encore, vous aurez travaillé pour votre pays...

L'éducation des enfants:...Si vous avez des filles, ne les laissez pas accaparer par leur mère ou leur grandmère; envoyez-les à l'école sans qu'on vous en prie: veillez à ce qu'elles deviennent des bonnes ménagères, adroites et soigneuses: vous en serez récompensés les premiers par la joie d'avoir un intérieur plus confortable et plus gai.

En un mot, ressaisissez l'autorité légitime du père de famille, qui est ce me semble, beaucoup plus apparente que réelle et continue dans les sociétés indigènes, et servez-vous pour en imposer à votre petit monde une vie meilleur, mieux organisée, conforme aux idées que vous avez acquises au cours de vos études.

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