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*WHAT IS A “SLAVE”? NEO-ABOLITIONISM AND THE SHIFTING  
MEANINGS OF SLAVERY IN TWO AFRICAN CONTEXTS  
(HIGHLANDS OF MADAGASCAR, SOUTHERN SENEGAL)*

*Abstract*

Historical and ethnographic research in two post-slavery African contexts, the Highlands of Madagascar and the Kolda region in Senegal, opens a window on the reaction of the grassroots to emerging human-trafficking/modern slavery discourses, which in both countries have thrived in response to the “neo-abolitionist” stances of the US Department of State and other humanitarian organizations since the early 2000s. The analysis of the resignification of vernacular lexicons for a slave after the legal abolition of slavery in colonial times is a precondition for understanding why the people who still face the consequences of a slave past are often the most reluctant to address their contemporary predicament in terms of human trafficking/modern slavery. Patterns of continuity and discontinuity between histories of slavery and the slave trade and contemporary marginalities are understandable only through the careful historical and ethnographic examination of the cycles of emancipation and re-subjection that have characterized the exit from slavery in these two African contexts.

KEY WORDS: SLAVERY, POST-SLAVERY, TERMINOLOGY,  
HUMAN TRAFFICKING, HISTORICITY

*Introduction*

Led by the US Department of State, “the fourth wave of Anglo-American abolitionism”<sup>1</sup> reached Africa in the early 2000s. The objective was to prompt the implementation of legislative (and other) measures against “trafficking in persons”, as defined by the 2000 United Nations Palermo Protocol against human trafficking, and to continue to monitor progress through yearly reports<sup>2</sup>. The effects on the ground have ranged from the revision of the Nigerien penal code to

1. A. Choi-Fitzpatrick, “Letting Go. How Elites Manage Challenges to Contemporary Slavery”, in A. Bunting, J. Quirk, eds., *Contemporary Slavery: Popular Rhetoric and Political Practice*, Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 2017, 279.

2. See USDOS yearly reports, <https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/> (accessed 10 February 2019).

include “specific punishments for slavery practices”<sup>3</sup> to the overwriting of the modern slavery rhetoric onto practices of child adoption in Benin<sup>4</sup>. Efforts to liberate contemporary African slaves from the clutches of their exploiters resonate with the paternalist tones typical of the colonial civilizing mission: for Benjamin N. Lawrance and Ruby P. Andrews, the term “neo-abolitionism” aptly describes the contemporary period<sup>5</sup>. Although anti-trafficking and anti-slavery have different historical genealogies<sup>6</sup>, the US Department of State and the humanitarian organizations operating along similar lines have made attempts “to recast all forced labor as trafficking, and all trafficking as slavery [...] in what appears to be a strategic effort to garner increased commitment to their eradication”<sup>7</sup>. The International Labour Organization, too, has recently adopted “modern slavery” as a general term for abuses as broad as forced labor and forced marriage<sup>8</sup>. Critics of these conceptual developments have underlined the need of a more nuanced analysis of the experiences of subjection and exploitation in terms that account for both the “specificity of contemporary examples of extreme dependency”<sup>9</sup> and their long-term historical roots<sup>10</sup>.

The wealth of historical and ethnographic knowledge on the emancipation trajectories of African slaves and their descendants is key to putting human trafficking/modern slavery discourses in perspective, since it shows both the resilien-

3. T. Kelley, “Unintended Consequences of Legal Westernization in Niger: Harming Contemporary Slaves by Reconceptualizing Property”, *The American Journal of Comparative Law*, 56, 4, 2008, 999-1038.

4. S. Morganti, N. Howard, “(Not!) Child Trafficking in Benin”, in M. Dragewicz, ed., *Global Human Trafficking, Critical Issues and Contexts*, London, Routledge, 2014, 105-118.

5. B.N. Lawrance, R.P. Andrew, “A “Neo-Abolitionist Trend” in Sub-Saharan Africa? Regional Anti-Trafficking Patterns and a Preliminary Legislative Taxonomy”, *Seattle Journal for Social Justice*, 9, 2, 2011, 599-678. See also: J. Quirk, “Trafficked into Slavery”, *Journal of Human Rights*, 6, 2, 2007, 181-207; *The Anti-slavery Project: from the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.

6. J.O. Davidson, “The Presence of the Past: Lessons of History for Anti-Trafficking Work”, *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 9, 2017, 1-12; J. Allain, “Genealogies of Human Trafficking and Slavery”, in R. Piotrowicz, C. Rijken, B.H. Uhl, eds., *Routledge Handbook of Human Trafficking*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2018, 3-12.

7. J.A. Chuang, “Exploitation Creep and the Unmaking of Human Trafficking Law”, *The American Journal of International Law*, 108, 4, 2014, 611.

8. O. Patterson, X. Zhuo, “Modern Trafficking, Slavery, and Other Forms of Servitude”, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 44, 2018, 407-439.

9. R. Botte, “Traite des êtres humains et esclavage: du Congrès de Vienne (1815) au protocole de Palerme (2000), les réponses du droit”, *La Pensée*, 336, 2003, 16.

10. B.N. Lawrance, R.L. Roberts, eds., *Trafficking in Slavery’s Wake: Law and the Experience of Women and Children in Africa*, Athens, Ohio University Press, 2012; G. LeBaron, A.J. Ayers, “The Rise of a ‘New Slavery’? Understanding African Unfree Labour through Neoliberalism”, *Third World Quarterly*, 34, 5, 2013, 873-892; J.O. Davidson, *Modern Slavery: The Margins of Freedom*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan Ltd, 2015; M. Dottridge, “Trafficked and Exploited: The Urgent Need for Coherence in International Law”, in P. Kotiswaran, ed., *Revisiting the Law and Governance of Trafficking, Forced Labor and Modern Slavery*, Cambridge, Cambridge Studies in Law and Society, 2017, 59-82.

ce of old statutory distinctions between people of slave and freeborn ancestry and the processes of resignification of what it is to be a "slave" in specific contexts. The study of these semantic shifts<sup>11</sup> is a privileged point of entry into the discussion of freed slaves' and slave descendants'<sup>12</sup> quest for honour, of their political struggles to acquire full citizenship in national contexts<sup>13</sup> and of the ambiguous emancipatory results of their migration strategies<sup>14</sup>. Local terms of a "slave" help here to explore the encounters between, on the one hand, post-slavery histories of emancipation and, on the other hand, contemporary discourses on human trafficking/modern slavery.

Our empirical data come from historical and ethnographic research carried out individually in the Highlands of Madagascar (the cities of Antananarivo, Ambositra and their provinces) and in Southern Senegal (Kolda region) between 2014 and 2019. The collection and analysis of life and family histories, informal conversations, linguistic analysis, and semi-structured interviews with slave and master descendants, and with people who potentially fall into the category of victims of human trafficking/modern slavery, have supplemented the ethnographic effort to understand regional and interregional histories of slavery, abolition and emancipation according to local experiences and sensibilities. A bottom-up approach is especially important since, as shown by Charles Tilly, social categories ensure the historical and social reproduction of inequality, and they "transfer shared understandings, practices, and interpersonal relations from setting to setting, making old routines easy to reproduce in new settings"<sup>15</sup>. In our research contexts, processes of essentialization, silencing, expansion, and politicization of slave ancestry have reworked

11. For example: E.A. McDougall, "The Main Role One Can Ascribe to Slavery Today, Looking at the Society as a Whole, Is as a Political Catalyst", Interview for SWAB website, 2016, <http://www.shadowsofslavery.org/experiences.php> (accessed 10 February 2019). See also J. Brachet, J. Scheele, "A 'Despicable Shambles': Labour, Property and Status in Faya-Largeau, Northern Chad", *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 86, 1, 2016, 122-141, and V. Colosio, "'The Children of the People': Integratin and Descent in a Former Slave Reservoir in Chad", PhD Thesis, University of Sussex, 2018.

12. M.A. Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998; E. McMahon, *Slavery and Emancipation in Islamic East Africa: From Honor to Respectability*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013.

13. E.K. Hahonou, "Democratic Decentralization Reforms and Their Unintended Consequences in Postslavery Northern Benin", in A. Bellagamba, S.E. Greene, M.A. Klein, eds., *African Slaves, African Masters: Politics, Memories, Social Life*, Trenton, New Jersey, Africa World Press, 2017, 107-126.

14. L. Pelckmans, "Moving Memories of Slavery among West African Migrants in Urban Contexts (Bamako, Paris)", *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, 29, 1, 2013, 45-67; M. Rodet, "Escaping Slavery and Building Diasporic Communities in French Soudan and Senegal, ca. 1880-1940", *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 48, 2, 2015, 363-386; P. Gai-bazzi, "The Rank Effect: Post-emancipation Immobility in a Soninke Village", *The Journal of African History*, 53, 2, 2012, 215-234.

15. C. Tilly, "Historical Perspectives on Inequality", in M. Romero, E. Margolis, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Social Inequalities*, Hoboken, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005, 21. See also: C. Tilly, *Durable Inequality*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1998.

the local significance of slavery once the days of enslavement were over. After comparing the two regions in this respect, the article illustrates some grassroots reactions to the neo-abolitionist trend of the 2000s. In both the Highlands of Madagascar and in Southern Senegal, our interlocutors, and particularly those with a slave ancestry, resisted the mapping of contemporary human trafficking/modern slavery discourses onto the post-slavery trajectory of their localities. Vernacular terms for “slave” are not only rich of nuances that the English word only partially translates. They have also kept evolving after the abolition of slavery. The top-down discourse of neo-abolitionism rarely considers this complexity<sup>16</sup>. It may even hide efforts by people of slave ancestry to be upwardly-mobile: this sadly ironic twist is an useful reminder of the danger of lumping many different situations in the all-encompassing categories of human trafficking and modern slavery. “Categories”, as Tilly reminds us, “matter”<sup>17</sup>.

*Essentialization, silencing, expansion, and the politicization of slave ancestry*

The abolition of slavery took different legal paths in Madagascar and Senegal. In Madagascar, slavery was outlawed and slaves set free in 1896, just a few months after the French conquest of the island. In Senegal, after decades of increased enslavement and slave trade spurred by internal political conflicts, French colonial conquest, and the spreading of commercial agriculture<sup>18</sup>, the Roume Decree of 1905 abolished enslavement and the slave trade. The Decree, however, did not proclaim emancipation, though in some areas it was understood in these terms<sup>19</sup>. Legally free, Malagasy slaves either ran away from their masters or tried to renegotiate the terms of their subordination, while striving to appropriate the symbols of free status (e.g., family tombs). Senegalese slaves did the same. Yet, all those who could not claim a freedom certificate in the aftermath of the Roume Decree remained in a condition of servitude: their children were not born free. French administrators re-qualified them as home servants or voluntary serfs in order not to contradict the official abolitionist position of the colonial state. Personal liberty arrived for these people only with national independence, which Senegal, like Madagascar, achieved in 1960. This historical period testified also to the rising political awareness of Malagasy and Senegalese slave descendants. By this time, the vernacular terms *andevo*, in Malagasy, and *jiyaabe* (sing. *jiyaado*), in Fulfulde (the majority

16. B. Rossi, “African Post-Slavery: A History of the Future”, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 48, 2, 2015, 324.

17. Tilly, “Historical Perspectives on Inequality”, 21.

18. G. Campbell, “Madagascar and the Slave Trade, 1810-1895”, *The Journal of African History*, 22, 2, 1981, 203-227; M.A. Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, 136-140.

19. M.A. Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, 140; P.E. Lovejoy, A.S. Kanya-Forstner, *Slavery and its Abolition in French West Africa: The Official Reports of G. Poulet, E. Roume, and G. Deherme*, Madison, University of Wisconsin-Madison, African Studies Program, 1994.

language of the Kolda region), which in the late nineteenth century identified chattel slaves, war captives and their enslaved descendants, meant “slaves” in a classificatory sense<sup>20</sup>: slavery was directly or indirectly part of their social past, and they endured the social and moral consequences of this association, despite their struggles to avoid stigmatization and subordination by the former masters’ class.

The literature on post-slavery Madagascar uses the term “essentialization” for the process, which, after abolition, resulted in the freezing of statutory distinctions between the three pre-colonial social categories of the nobles (*andriana*), the freeborn (*hova*) and the slaves (*andevo*)<sup>21</sup>. Before abolition, an *andriana* or a *hova* could become a slave because of raids, debts or crimes (thus descending the social ladder) or, more rarely, a slave could be freed by his master and become a *hova* again (thus ascending local hierarchies). This kind of mobility ended with colonial rule. There are parallel developments in the Kolda region, where the old term for nobles, *rimbe* (sing. *dimo*), also meant freeborn people. In the turbulent decades preceding colonialism, one was either a freeborn or a *jiyaado*, i.e. a slave, because of capture, trade or voluntary subjection to a powerful and wealthy *dimo*. The *rimbe* risked enslavement like anybody else, but their family networks ensured a system of protection through ransom, which facilitated the exchange of one or more slaves for the liberty of a freeborn Fulbe man or woman. Although the Republican constitution of independent Senegal asserted the equality of all citizens, the *rimbe* and the *jiyaabe* have kept seeing themselves as two distinct social categories, with different physical, moral and social characteristics. The freedom of the *rimbe* has a genealogical legitimation, while that of the *jiyaabe* has not. The latter term has acquired the meaning of “slave descendant/person of slave ancestry”, which indicates that there is a slight but significant difference between “free” and “freed”.

“Silencing” is a second, complicated process. In both our research contexts, it is deemed offensive to talk of social origins in public. Memories of slave ancestry are transmitted to younger generations through whispers and private conversations: they may surface in times of social conflict, only to be cast aside again as soon as the parties involved agree to a mediation. The outcomes of silence, though, have varied greatly with contexts and situations. One outcome has been that legally freed slaves and their children have been granted the possibility of effective emancipation from the stereotypes and stigma associated with their condition: their slave past socially silenced, they could claim to belong completely to the category of the freeborn<sup>22</sup>. The contrary is also possible, as Luke Freeman<sup>23</sup>

20. B. Rossi, ed., *Reconfiguring Slavery: West African Trajectories*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2009, 5.

21. D. Regnier, “Clean People, Unclean People: The Essentialisation of ‘Slaves’ among the Southern Betsileo of Madagascar”, *Social Anthropology*, 23, 2, 2015, 152-168.

22. C. Meillassoux, *The Anthropology of Slavery*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991, 125. See also: M.A. Klein, “Studying the History of Those Who Would Rather Forget: Oral History and the Experience of Slavery”, *History in Africa*, 16, 1989, 209-217.

23. L. Freeman, “Speech, Silence, and Slave Descent in Highland Madagascar”, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 19, 2013, 614.

has noted in Madagascar: “the effect [of this silence] is cumulative: the more the stigma of slavery is avoided, the more ‘unspeakable’ it becomes”, and “the more it is reproduced”. In the Kolda region, silences on the past of slavery and the slave trade have paved the way to post-slavery cohabitation (and collaboration) between the *jiyaabe* and the *rimbe*.

The process of “expansion” increased the numbers of *andevo* and *jiyaabe* after abolition, following the demographic trends of the two countries but also through the integration into their ranks of people who did not fit the criteria of inclusion among the descendants of the ancient nobles/freeborn. Benedetta Rossi<sup>24</sup> remarks that it is unclear whether those who are today labelled as “slave descendants” in Africa do actually “share the same circumstances”. Our researches show a plurality of conditions and trajectories. While slaves, freed slaves and slave descendants were actively trying to build – often with uneven results – their own paths to social emancipation in colonial and post-colonial Madagascar and Senegal, vernacular lexicons for a “slave” were redrawn, renegotiated and, in some cases, stretched so as to include individuals at the bottom of the local social hierarchies: this means that, today, the ranks of the *andevo* and the *jiyaabe* may well include people without a historical connection with slavery. The politicization of slave ancestry began in both countries during the nationalist struggles that led to decolonization. The acquisition of citizenship strengthened the *andevo* and the *jiyaabe*’s self-awareness of their historical agency and created the conditions for the transformation of the disadvantages of a slavery past into a basis for collective mobilization, with comparable but different results in Madagascar and Senegal<sup>25</sup>.

### *The andevo of Antananarivo and its province*

Antananarivo, Madagascar’s present-day capital, was the political and administrative centre of the Merina Empire in the nineteenth century. European powers recognized the rulers of this centralized kingdom as kings and queens of Madagascar, although they controlled only a portion of the island<sup>26</sup>. The expansion of the Merina Empire during the nineteenth century considerably increased the numbers of slaves coming from recently conquered regions. In the rural regions of the Highlands, between 33 and 40% of the entire population consisted of slaves. In Antananarivo, they accounted for more than half of the urban popula-

24. Rossi, “African Post-Slavery”, 314.

25. M. Gardini, “L’activisme politique des descendants d’esclaves à Antananarivo: les héritages de Zoam”, *Politique Africaine*, 140, 2015, 23-40; A. Bellagamba, “Legacies of Slavery and Popular Traditions of Freedom in Southern Senegal (1860-1960)”, *Journal of Global Slavery*, 2, 1-2, 2017, 72-99. For comparison see: R. Botte, “Stigmates sociaux et discriminations religieuses: l’ancienne classe servile au Fuuta Jaloo”, *Cahiers d’Études Africaines*, 34, 133, 1994, 109-136; Rossi, *Reconfiguring Slavery*; Hahonou, “Democratic Decentralization Reforms”.

26. G. Campbell, *An Economic History of Madagascar 1750-1895: The Rise and Fall of an Island Empire*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

tion<sup>27</sup>. The *andevo* were the exclusive property of their masters. They could be sold and inherited, they had no parental rights over their children and they could neither construct family tombs nor claim ancestorhood<sup>28</sup>. Variability in their conditions was the rule rather than the exception. Some slaves enjoyed a degree of economic autonomy vis-à-vis their masters, some had the right to own other slaves, and still others could not be resold. Some slaves were economically better off and politically more influential than poor but formally free rural families.

Some slaves were imported from the East African coast<sup>29</sup>, others were captured in raids, taken during wars, and enslaved because of debts and crimes. Despite the agreement to end the slave trade, signed in 1817 and again in 1820 between the British and the Merina king Radama I, the internal slave trade continued throughout the nineteenth century. In a renewed effort to stop it, in 1877, the Merina Queen Ranavalona II freed all the slaves coming from East Africa (called *Masombika* or *Makoa*) and their descendants<sup>30</sup>. After having ended Merina rule in 1895, the French freed all the slaves in 1896. Some of them left their masters and found new land to occupy, or profited from opportunities offered by colonial conquest (e.g., employment by the military, the colonial administration or commercial companies), while others renegotiated terms with their former masters and stayed on, working as sharecroppers<sup>31</sup>. *Andevo* family histories testify to these multiple trajectories and efforts to create varied paths of economic emancipation in both urban settings and new rural contexts. At the same time, they also disclose the discriminatory attitude towards freed slaves and their offspring on the part of the *andriana* and *hova*, the descendants of, respectively, the Merina ancient nobility and of the freeborn class. Upward social mobility was not easy. The great majority of the *andevo* who moved into Antananarivo, for example, entered the urban *lumpenproletariat*, partly because of lack of material and social resources and partly because of the strong attachment to endogamy of local elites, who thus safeguarded their historically advantageous access to western education and to commercial activities. Opportunity hoarding<sup>32</sup> by the *fotsy* elite continued during the colonial and post-colonial periods, affording both the slave descendants of Antananarivo and those coming from other regions little space for upward mobility.

27. G. Campbell, "Slavery and Fanompoana: The Structure of Forced Labour in Imerina (Madagascar), 1790-1861", *Journal of African History*, 29, 2, 1988, 463-486.

28. I. Rakoto, "Être ou ne pas être: l'Andevo esclave, un sujet de non-droit", in I. Rakoto, ed., *L'Esclavage à Madagascar. Aspects historiques et résurgences contemporaines*, Antananarivo, Institut de civilisations, Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie, 1997, 65-84.

29. D.A.M. Razafiarivony, "Les descendants des anciens esclaves importés d'Afrique à Madagascar: tradition et réalités", *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 70, 2005, 63-80.

30. J.P. Domenichini, B.D. Ramiamanana, "1877: une abolition de l'esclavage?", in Rakoto, ed., *L'Esclavage à Madagascar*, 233-244.

31. M. Bloch, "Modes of Production and Slavery in Madagascar: Two Case Studies", in J.L. Watson, ed., *Asian and African Systems of Slavery*, Oxford, Basic Blackwell, 1979, 100-134.

32. Tilly, "Historical Perspectives on Inequality", 22.

Essentialization was one of the earliest processes that reshaped the significance of the term *andevo*<sup>33</sup>. In its contemporary usages, the term belittles all people of slave ancestry, regardless of economic condition, power position or personal success<sup>34</sup>. For the *andriana* and the *hova*, the *andevo* are unclean and inferior by default, and both aspects are inheritable. There is a marriage interdict between the members of these two social categories and slave descendants. The offspring of a “mixed” couple are considered *andevo* and cannot enter into *andriana* or *hova* family tombs. Rivo<sup>35</sup>, a nobleman from Antananarivo, explained: “Family tombs are our way to prove that we belong to the nobility. We cannot allow ourselves to mix with impure people. Our ancestor forbade this a long time ago to preserve our honour”. This way of representing the *andevo* is common both to localities where *andevo* have had very little recognition as landowners<sup>36</sup> and to communities where they enjoy the same economic conditions and access to land as the freeborn<sup>37</sup>. As for silence, slave descendants keep quiet on the legacies of slavery, because the strategy of hiding social origins or inventing new ones has sustained their struggles for the same social dignity as the noble/freeborn. The latter in turn try to avoid conflicts with neighbors of slave ancestry<sup>38</sup>.

Taken together, marriage interdiction and silence have opened up a range of criteria by which people’s social origins can be ascertained without direct questioning. The first, and probably the most accurate, is the age of the oldest family tomb of a lineage. Only after abolition could former slaves start to build their own family tombs, a privilege previously reserved to *andriana* and *hova*. However, it can be difficult to ascertain exactly when the family tombs of slave descendants were constructed, since slave descendants have a strong interest in hiding this kind of information. Behaviour is a second criterion. Freeborn people met during the research for the present study considered eating voraciously, being rude, vulgar or quarrelsome, to be clues to slave origins. This is combined with a complex – and often incomplete – topography that charts the statutory group to which an individual belongs. In some villages the dwellers of the south-western half of the settlement (the impure half, according to Malagasy cosmology) are regarded as slave descendants by default<sup>39</sup>. Phenotypical characteristics are a third way of identifying *andevo*. Particularly in the city of Antananarivo, the dichotomy between *fotsy* (white people, who claim a Southeast Asian origin) and *mainty* (black

33. Regnier, “Clean People”.

34. S.J.T.M. Evers, *Constructing History, Culture and Inequality: The Betsileo in the Extreme Southern Highlands of Madagascar*, Leiden, Brill, 2002; L.N. Razafindralambo, “Esclavage et inégalités, entre constructions sociales et différences ‘naturelles’”, in I. Rakoto, S. Urfer, eds., *Esclavage et libération à Madagascar*, Paris, Karthala, 2014, 95-106.

35. Interview with Rivo, Antananarivo, 26 January 2018.

36. Freeman, “Speech”, 603.

37. Regnier, “Clean People”, 154.

38. Freeman, “Speech”.

39. See for example Evers, *Constructing History*.



people) has overlapped the distinction between free lineages (*andriana*, *hova* and *mainty*) and slaves (*andevo*). The category of *mainty*, which before the expansion of Merina rule indicated lineages holding important ritual, military and administrative offices in the service of the kings, had, during the nineteenth century, progressively lost their status relative to emerging *hova* families. They were not, however, subsumed under the category of *andevo*<sup>40</sup>. After 1896, many freed slaves in the Merina regions tried to pass as *mainty*, thus provoking the debasement of the category itself, which became a synonym for *andevo*<sup>41</sup>. *Andriana* and *hova* started to view people with darker skin or frizzy hair as slave descendants, regardless of the fact that many slaves were from Madagascar itself, as opposed to mainland Africa. Slave descendants who did not have these phenotypic characteristics profited from this situation to hide their origins more successfully, while *mainty* lineages who had shared neither the conditions nor the stigmatized status of the *andevo* found themselves considered as such. This exemplifies well how the category itself expanded.

The social geography of Antananarivo betrays old statutory distinctions<sup>42</sup>. The *hauts quartiers*, the neighborhoods at the top of the central hills, are inhabited mainly by the descendants of the ancient Merina nobility (*andriana*) and by people of free origin (*hova*). The *bas quartiers*, the poor neighborhoods at the bottom of the central hills, are traditionally stigmatized as home to slave descendants (*andevo/mainty*) and migrants from the coast, whom the Merina denigrate as *côtiers*, or from other highland regions (mainly Merina and Betsileo). In local representations, the divide between neighborhoods often follows the colour line between *fotsy* ("white people"), and *mainty* ("black people"). People of the *hauts quartiers* tend to consider all the *lumpenproletariat* of the *bas quartiers* as slave descendants – poor, vulgar, and potentially dangerous – even when they are migrants of free origin from other regions of the island. For instance, Rivo, the Merina noble quoted above, was quite ready to extend the stigma of slave origin to all those who live in the *bas quartiers*: "They live together, they marry together. They are all the same. It is for this reason that, often, they also vote for the same candidates"<sup>43</sup>.

His words refer to the crucial role that *mainty*, *andevo* and *côtiers* played in the local political struggles during the latter part of the twentieth century<sup>44</sup>. The politicization of people of real and alleged slave origin has added new layers of

40. B. Ramanantsoa Ramarcel, "Mainty = Andevo, un amalgame statutaire de l'Imerina", in Rakoto, ed., *L'Esclavage à Madagascar*, 147-160.

41. Razafindralambo, "Esclavage et inégalités"; Ramanantsoa Ramarcel, "Mainty = Andevo".

42. C. Fournet-Guerin, "La géographie invisible de la ville. L'inscription des castes dans l'espace urbain à Tananarive (Madagascar)", in R. Sechet, I. Garat, D. Zeneide, eds., *Espaces en transactions*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008, 293-304.

43. Interview with Rivo, Antananarivo, 26 January 2018.

44. G. Althabe, "Les luttes sociales à Tananarive en 1972", *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 20, 80, 1980, 407-447; J.R. Randriamaro, "L'émergence politique des mainty et andevo au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle", in Rakoto, ed., *L'Esclavage à Madagascar*, 357-381.

meanings to the word *andevo*. Since the end of the Second World War, and more intensely after independence, many ruling parties have sought the support of the people of the *bas quartiers* and the coasts. In 1947, the Padesm (*Parti des Dëshérités de Madagascar*), strongly supported by the French, started to forge a political alliance between *mainity* and *côtiers*. On the eve of independence, and for the following 12 years, the Psd (*Parti Social Démocrate de Madagascar et des Comores*) led by Philibert Tsiranana tried to do the same (again with strong French support). This strategy was also used by Arema (*Avant-garde pour la Révolution malgache* to 1996, and, thereafter, *Avant-garde pour la Rénovation de Madagascar*), the party, led by Didier Ratsiraka, which ruled the country from 1975 to 1993 (and again from 1997 to 2002) and made much use of the young people of the *bas quartiers* in curbing opposition. In 1972, the inhabitants of the *bas quartiers*, seeing clearly that the ruling parties were unable to meet their expectations, played an active role in the overthrow of the Tsiranana government, and then again in 1993 and in 2002, when it was the turn of Ratsiraka's regime. In 2009, they participated in the coup of Andry Rajoelina against Marc Ravalomanana.

These political processes have left their mark, spreading the idea among the nationalistic nobility of the Highlands that the *andevo* can easily be manoeuvred, both by authoritarian ruling parties and by rising opposition forces. Marie, an old noblewoman of Antananarivo stated: "The servile attitude is in the blood of the *andevo*. When we, the nobles, were in power, they served us. Then the French came, and they started to serve them. They preferred to be ruled by strangers than by the Merina. They are not real Malagasy"<sup>45</sup>. Like many of the *andriana* met during the research<sup>46</sup>, Marie considered slave descendants as "internal traitors" who profited first from French colonial rule and then from post-colonial governments supported by foreign powers: they are people who have continued to prove their "slave attitude" by selling themselves to the highest bidder, instead of following the lead of their former masters. Of course, people of slave ancestry<sup>47</sup> were ready to tell an entirely different history, according to which the descendants of the pre-colonial Merina elite have maintained their privileged economic position thanks to their historical advantage in terms of education and access to resources. They have, moreover, directly or indirectly pulled the strings of all governments since independence. Liva, a man in his sixties living in the *bas quartiers* of Antananarivo, remarked: "Look at the family names of those who have held powerful positions in the public administration: governments change, but these families are always at the top, and generally they are people from the *hauts*

45. Interview with Marie, Antananarivo, 28 January 2018.

46. Interview with Rakoto, Ambositra, 4 January 2015; interview with Lucie, Ambositra, 6 November 2016; interview with Rado, Antananarivo, 26 January 2018.

47. Interview with Arivo, Antananarivo, 4 June 2015; interview with Tsoa, Ambositra, 8 November 2016; interview with Mihanta, Ambositra, 30 January 2018; interview with Ignace, Antananarivo, 28 January 2018.

*quartiers, they are andriana and hova*"<sup>48</sup>. First endogamy, and then a mixture of economic and political competition, have kept statutory distinctions alive in Madagascar and charged them with meanings that are continuously renegotiated in shifting historical circumstances. Similar processes also took place in Senegal, sometimes producing analogous results, the differences between the contexts notwithstanding.

### *The jiyaaɓe of the Kolda region*

For Abdarahmane N'gaïdé<sup>49</sup> and Sylvie Fanchette<sup>50</sup>, half of the current population of the Kolda region are *jiyaaɓe*. Their estimate draws on late colonial censuses, as the term disappeared from official use in Senegal after independence<sup>51</sup>. Some contemporary municipalities, such as Kanjaye, close to the town of Velingara, consist almost exclusively of *jiyaaɓe* communities, which strive to make ends meet in an impoverished rural environment. Some of these communities have cordial relations with *rimbe* villages and families, while others resent their earlier histories of dependence. Three factors underlie this contemporary set-up: the emancipation of some of the *jiyaaɓe* in the second half of the nineteenth century, a new submission to *rimbe* in the colonial period, and the politicization of their ancestry since independence<sup>52</sup>.

In the 1860s, Kolda, as well as the neighboring regions of The Gambia, Guinea Conakry, and Guinea Bissau, were in turmoil. Raiders from the Guinea Conakry highlands – then controlled by the Imamate of Fouta Jallon – pillaged local communities. The ruling elite indulged in marauding activities: internal divisions undermined their ability to keep their people and territories safe. One section of the elite followed local polytheistic traditions, while the other was converting to Islam thanks to the preaching of Muslim reformers hailing from the Fouta Jallon and other Islamic centers of the period. Islam brought ideas of equality among men, as servants of God, while the gradual closure of Atlantic slave markets and the parallel expansion of commercial groundnut cultivation were creating an economic environment favorable to the social emancipation of subordinated and politically mar-

48. Interview with Liva, Antananarivo, 5 June 2014.

49. A. N'gaïdé, "Conquête de la liberté, mutations politiques, sociales et religieuses en haute Casamance: les anciens maccube du Fuladu (région de Kolda, Sénégal)", in R. Botte, J. Boutrais, J. Schmitz, eds., *Figures peules*, Paris, Karthala, 1999, 152.

50. S. Fanchette, *Au Pays des Peuls de Haute-Casamance: L'intégration territoriale en question*, Paris, Karthala, 2011, 93.

51. *Les Villages du Fouladou en 1959, Recensement socio-démographique des cantons, Document produits dans le cadre des études préparatoires au Premier Plan de Développement du Sénégal*, [www.histoire-ucad.org/archives/index.php/ressources/accueil-bibliothequevirtuelle.html](http://www.histoire-ucad.org/archives/index.php/ressources/accueil-bibliothequevirtuelle.html) (accessed 8 July 2015).

52. Bellagamba, "Legacies of Slavery".

ginal categories<sup>53</sup>. The result was social upheaval. Youths, immigrants from other areas, and slaves stepped to the forefront of political change. By the 1880s, Molo Eggue Baldeh a military leader of slave origins, a *jiyaado*, had successfully brought today's Kolda region, together with the neighboring Gambia, under his political control. British, French and Portuguese recognized him as a powerful and legitimate interlocutor of their burgeoning economic and political interests in this part of West Africa. His son Mussa Moloh Baldeh (who succeeded him in 1881) played the competing colonial powers off against each other to expand his political influence and to tame the rival claims of the *rimbe*. Some of them had supported the initial efforts of Molo Eggue, but when he claimed political leadership, their reluctance to obey a *jiyaado* showed itself.

The completion of the colonial conquest at the turn of the twentieth century ended forty years of continuous conflict. Molo Eggue and Mussa's military activities had facilitated the upward social mobility, and the effective liberation, of the slaves (and non-slaves) who fought by their side, and had kept at bay the ambitions of the wealthy and powerful *rimbe* who contested their rule. Warfare had produced new generations of captives, who had been traded at the interregional level or absorbed locally by *rimbe* as much as by the recently emancipated *jiyaabe*. When Mussa fled to The Gambia in 1903, he was the major slave-owner of the entire region. That year, the French took over the present-day Kolda region. For the *jiyaabe*, the colonial conquest inaugurated a phase of resubordination. Colonial officials "believed in hierarchy", even when they showed a progressive attitude<sup>54</sup>. In their eyes, the *rimbe* stood as the true representatives and leaders of the Fulbe "race", while the *jiyaabe* were a black, captive population that the Fulbe had subdued. In discreet ways, trading in slaves continued throughout the colonial period: wealthy *rimbe* would buy girls to serve as wives for their male slaves and children to tend herds in the bush; local chiefs bought boys to labor on their farms<sup>55</sup>. Supporting the authority of the wealthy *rimbe*, who held the canton chieftaincies, the French turned a blind eye to such practices.

Popular etymologies of the term *jiyaado* are significant to understand the playing out of these processes. From the root *jeyi* (to own), *jiyaado* could mean "he, who is owned"; from the same root comes the term *jeyal*: property<sup>56</sup>. This association clearly situates nineteenth century Fulbe slave systems in the framework of chattel slavery, although the idea of property, for that historical period, needs to be contextualized in productive and reproductive systems that va-

53. B. Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998; J. Bowman, *Ominous Transition: Commerce and Colonial Expansion in the Senegambia and Guinea, 1857-1919*, Aldershot, Avebury, 1997.

54. Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*.

55. Interviews with Dijidere, Bissabor (Kolda region), 20 February 2014, 11 August 2014, 16 August 2014; interview with Samba, Kolda, 12 February 2014.

56. Botte, "Stigmates sociaux", 109.

lued control over human beings (and herds of cattle) more than material wealth. In the twentieth century, an alternative etymology started to emerge and gained currency after independence. The term *jiyaado*, it was now argued, may have come from *jiyeede* (to be seen), meaning “somebody who is seen”<sup>57</sup>, i.e. somebody who arrives and asks for assistance. This version stresses the voluntary dimension of the *jiyaabe*’s subordination to *rimbe*. Some of the *jiyaabe* whom the French found in place were young men and women captured and sold during the late nineteenth century conflicts. Their only option was to stay with their masters. Other *jiyaabe* had freed themselves under the leadership of Molo Eggue and Mussa, but difficulties in maintaining their social and economic autonomy brought them once again under the protection (and control) of the *rimbe* in the colonial period<sup>58</sup>. This alternative etymology indicates that the category of *jiyaado* could also identify an immigrant, or a socially dispossessed person, without social networks, who sought refuge under the protection of a wealthy *rimbe* family.

*Rimbe* used unilateral marriage alliances to reproduce the boundary: they could obtain the daughters of *jiyaabe*, but the reverse was forbidden. Their present-day family genealogies reveal a carefully orchestrated politics of intra-lineage marriage or marriage with other *rimbe* lineages. Some *rimbe* elders are extremely vocal on the topic of intermarriages with the *jiyaabe*. For Alassane, “Children of mixed marriages with the *jiyaabe* are dumb”<sup>59</sup>. This statement included a set of racial stereotypes on the strong-built, black-skinned, and ill-mannered *jiyaabe* that paralleled the description of the *andevo* made by many Merina nobles. In both cases, the result is to emphasize, by way of contrast, the alleged genealogical purity of the nobility and to reinforce endogamy.

While many *andevo* try to conceal their past connections with slavery<sup>60</sup>, the *jiyaabe* often talk frankly about the enslavement of their ancestors<sup>61</sup>. What they resent, strongly, is their condition being disclosed by *rimbe* in a public setting. As a rule, *rimbe* comply with this request for silence, as they know that the relatively relaxed attitude some *jiyaabe* display vis-à-vis their slave background does not mean lack of resentment: “Our masters were the Fulbe of Kulinto. Madia owned my parents: he did with them what he liked”, Demba stated in 2014<sup>62</sup>. In other words, although silencing has brought cohabitation and collaboration between

57. A. N’gaïdé, *L’Esclave, le colon et le marabout. Le royaume peul du Fuladu de de 1867 à 1936*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 2012, 92, footnote 132.

58. Interview with Bassy, Bissabor (Kolda region), 17 February 2014; interview with Tening, Pakane (Kolda region), 15 January 2015; interview with Fente, Bissabor (Kolda region), 2 January 2016.

59. Interview with Alassane, Kolda (Kolda region), 6 February 2014.

60. A. Bellagamba, “The Postslavery Gambia River: Silences, Memories, Signposts”, in A. Bellagamba, S.E. Greene, M.A. Klein, eds., *African Slaves, African Masters. Politics, Memories, Social Life*, Trenton NJ, Africa World Press, 2017, 201-218.

61. Interview with Ibrahimia, Wassadou (Kolda region), 2 January 2015.

62. Interview with Demba, Bissabor (Kolda region), 20 February 2014.

the two social categories, the current situation is tense. In the course of the twentieth century, the *rimbe* have felt increasingly side-lined by the expansion of the *jiyaabe* communities boosted by the arrival of freed slaves and slave descendants from the neighboring territories of French and Portuguese Guinea (today Guinea Conakry and Guinea-Bissau). Immigration started in the colonial period and continued after independence, due to the politically favorable conditions of Senegal and the local availability of land for settlement and agriculture. The *jiyaabe*'s agricultural vocation has always been labor intensive, but as they could not afford dependents, being themselves dependents of the *rimbe* in the colonial period, they welcomed alliances with newcomers and other historically subordinated groups. Discussing the history of the *jiyaabe* with his two *rimbe* friends, the elderly Dembayel looked them straight in the eye and remarked: "I think we are more numerous because we have never discriminated"<sup>63</sup>. Dembayel insisted on the difference between the *jiyaado* and the slave. The latter is either captured or sold; the *jiyaado* is man proud of his strength, and of his labor abilities against the physical weakness and laziness of the *rimbe*<sup>64</sup>.

Since Senegal's independence, this perspective has sustained the politicization of slave ancestry. Today, *rimbe* candidates win only with the *jiyaabe*'s support, while *jiyaabe* candidates have their own constituencies. Political antagonism is significant in the local struggles for access to valuable resources: land, credit for commercial agriculture, participation in development projects, market facilities, education and religious prestige. The state-driven agricultural development of the 1960s and 1970s was organized by means of local alliances and power networks, which the wealthy *rimbe* families of the Kolda region managed to control, despite being demographically inferior and in many cases politically sidelined. By the late twentieth century, although poorer than their ancestors, their opportunity-hoarding strategies were proving successful. In the rural areas, people have always had an easy way to calculate inequalities: measuring the herds of cattle. But now another yardstick is the number of civil servants, professionals and international migrants who belong to a family and live either in the big cities of Senegal or abroad. In the Kolda region as in the rest of rural Senegal, external support is crucial to carving out a living, and even more so for achieving some kind of upward social mobility in a context where, according to official statistics, living conditions are highly challenging<sup>65</sup>. For Fode, a young political

63. Interview with Dembayel, Bissabor (Kolda region), 19 February 2014.

64. There is another term for slaves in Fulfulde: *macchube* (sing. *maccudo*). It was an equivalent of *jiyaabe* in the late nineteenth century, but it is rarely used today in the Kolda region because it is considered too closely associated with the process of enslavement by capture or purchase. In principle, the term *jiyaabe* is equally offensive, but its reading in terms of someone who was "seen", differentiates twentieth and twenty-first century examples of submission and dependence from the nineteenth century ways of producing slaves either by capture or by economic transaction.

65. ANSD, Situation économique et sociale régionale. République du Sénégal, Service Régional de la statistique et de la démographie de Kolda, Dakar 2017, [www.ansd.sn/ressources/ses/SES\\_Kolda-2011.pdf](http://www.ansd.sn/ressources/ses/SES_Kolda-2011.pdf) (accessed 6 July 2018).

militant of Lingewal, a *jiyaabe* community in the municipality of Kanjaye, the *jiyaabe* are mistrustful of *rimbe* political candidates because they fear that, behind the appearance of collaboration, they will revert to their old, dominating ways once in power<sup>66</sup>.

*Human trafficking/modern slavery: the view from the grassroots*

Both in the Highlands of Madagascar and in the Kolda region, people continue to discuss their nineteenth century association with slavery and the slave trade through many apparently trivial wrangles, from the antiquity of a family tomb in Madagascar to the *rimbe* girl who favors a wealthy educated *jiyaado* as a husband instead of her paternal cousin in the Kolda region. The political impact of slave ancestry is, however, different in the two contexts. In the Kolda region, the *jiyaabe* have been active only at the local level, while the *andevo*, because of their presence in Antananarivo, are at the center of national politics. In the twentieth century, the categories of both *andevo* and *jiyaabe* expanded, thanks to the inclusion of people whom the other strata of society refused to integrate. The neo-abolitionist trend of the 2000s has inaugurated yet another phase in these ongoing histories of post-slavery.

Lawrance and Andrew's preliminary taxonomy<sup>67</sup> of anti-trafficking legislative responses in Africa makes clear that Madagascar and Senegal have followed a "blanket" human trafficking model. Their laws established "a wide legislative tool to encompass all forms of trafficking, including of adults and organ theft"<sup>68</sup>. Implementation on the ground has been difficult, however. In the reports of the US Department of State, Madagascar, on the first-tier in 2008, receded to the third-tier in 2011-2012, only to rise and fall again in the following years<sup>69</sup>. Senegal<sup>70</sup> shows similar oscillations, though it has never reached the red threshold of the third-tier, reserved for Mauritania, Mali, Guinea Conakry and Guinea-Bissau. In 2018, both the Senegalese and the Madagascar government were described as "making efforts", although their results were considered unsatisfactory in terms of the prosecution, prevention, and protection of victims. Although ordinary citizens like the ones who participated in our research are unaware of the impact of these official rankings on international relations and development aid, they have learnt from the national media about the people who fall into the new category of trafficked person/modern slave.

In the case of Madagascar, a media debate has emerged that addresses the abuses and violence faced by young Malagasy domestic workers in Lebanon,

66. Interview with Fode, Bissabor (Kolda region), 17 February 2014.

67. Lawrance and Andrew, "A 'Neo-Abolitionist Trend'".

68. Lawrance and Andrew, "A 'Neo-Abolitionist Trend'", 635.

69. [www.state.gov/reports/2018-trafficking-in-persons-report/](http://www.state.gov/reports/2018-trafficking-in-persons-report/) (accessed 15 July 2018).

70. [www.state.gov/reports/2018-trafficking-in-persons-report/senegal/](http://www.state.gov/reports/2018-trafficking-in-persons-report/senegal/) (accessed 15 July 2018).

Saudi Arabia, Mauritius, and more recently China. In spite of the great variety of their experiences abroad – some good enough to justify multiple trips, others, conversely, characterized by violent abuses, sexual exploitation and in some cases death – expatriated Malagasy domestic workers began to be described as the “new, trafficked slaves” *par excellence*. This prompted the government to ban and criminalize the formal and informal recruitment agencies that offered people the opportunity to migrate<sup>71</sup>. Many domestic workers met during the research, both in the rural areas and in Antananarivo, were wary of this provision. In their eyes, it limited their chances to work abroad. Manja, a 36-year-old woman happy about the years she spent in Lebanon as a domestic worker, said: “You can find bad employers and be abused everywhere, also here in Madagascar. In Lebanon, at least, I was paid five times more. Now I cannot go there anymore, because the government has trapped us here”<sup>72</sup>. Fanja, who worked in Lebanon (and also in Saudi Arabia), had a similar point of view, reinforced by the fact that her earnings abroad supported her family members in their efforts to be legally recognized as landowners<sup>73</sup>. Fanja’s family, indeed, were *andevo*, and their former master had been trying all along to regain possession of the land they gave to Fanja’s great-grandfather (who was their slave) after abolition. For Fanja, being included in the category of modern slaves was a denial of her family’s past and present efforts to emancipate itself from the legacies of past enslavement. Other domestic workers thought that media emphasis on the modern slaves trafficked abroad distracted attention from the exploitative (and less visible) labor conditions now current in Madagascar.

In Antananarivo, Bozy, the 19 year-old maid of a rich family that did not allow her free time and paid her less than the legal minimum wage, remarked: “The newspapers have talked a lot about the bad conditions of domestic workers abroad, but none talk about how we are treated here. Many employers think they can treat us as if we are their ‘slaves’, but I do not like this word. It is shameful”<sup>74</sup>. Interestingly, the domestic workers met during the research used metaphors such as “to work as a slave (*andevo*)” and “to be treated as a slave (*andevozina*)” to denounce the humiliations, abuses and exploitative working relations they faced outside and inside the country. At the same time, they regarded being called *andevo* by the media, the international agencies, the government, or their employers as humiliating and potentially dangerous. It could, in fact, turn their class position into a statutory one in situations in which they could not easily mobilize their social networks to prove the contrary. Bozy explained this point clearly: “Many

71. For similar dynamics in UK, see: B. Rossi, “Modern Slavery, Brexit, Migration, and Development: Connecting the Dots”, *Open Democracy*, 2017, [www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/modern-slavery-brexit-migration-and-development-connecting-dots/](http://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/modern-slavery-brexit-migration-and-development-connecting-dots/) (accessed 6 July 2018).

72. Interview with Manja, Antananarivo, 27 January 2018.

73. Interview with Fanja, Ambositra, 30 July 2015.

74. Interview with Bozy, Antananarivo, 5 July 2014.



employers call their domestic ‘slave/*andevo*’ as if they were slave descendants. It is an insult here. None would marry you if they think you are a slave descendant. I am a worker, an exploited worker, not an *andevo*”<sup>75</sup>. The effort of building distance with the essentialized category of *andevo*, with which they risked being associated, was even more crucial for people like Fanja, who descended from that side of society. Her case shows that people who must deal with the consequences of a slave past can be most reluctant to address their contemporary predicament in terms of modern slavery, a point that international organizations working in this field are hardly aware of.

The Kolda region provides another significant example. When, in 2017, the United Nations Security Council denounced the slave trade of sub-Saharan migrants in Libya, national and social media spread the news across Senegal<sup>76</sup>. In Kolda people were happy to talk about their fellow countrymen settled in Libya, who returned twice a year to assist the departure of local youths willing to reach Europe. Some had been active for a number of years, but nobody ever described them in criminal terms: they were travel facilitators, not human traffickers. Interviews show that building up parallels with the pre-colonial slave trade was not relevant. The internal circulation of captives in the late nineteenth century had left only individualized traces in oral history: some *jiyaabe* families knew that a wealthy Fulbe freeborn bought their ancestor or that he/she had been given by parents in exchange for food and assistance. This was painful but different in their perception from the slave trade, which they mostly associated with the Atlantic world, and thus with actors outside Senegal. Dembayel, whose four children were in Libya, remarked: “How do we know what happens there? Most parents here are sceptical of the phone calls in which their children demand assistance to escape from the hands of Libyan sequesters; they see it as instrumental to drain assistance from home”<sup>77</sup>. Throughout his life, he never hid his *jiyaabe* background, but thinking of his children in terms of slavery would have entailed the public recognition of a failed emancipation trajectory. The connection was also problematic for the *rimbe*. Tidiane spent several years in Libya before being repatriated thanks to the assistance of an international organization. He hailed from a wealthy and respected *rimbe* family. Why did he not frame his experience as slavery, even metaphorically<sup>78</sup>? Under the nineteenth century leadership of Molo Egue and Mussa Molo, *rimbe* women and children were enslaved<sup>79</sup>. *Rimbe* fami-

75. Interview with Bozy, Antananarivo, 5 July 2014.

76. For instance [www.rfi.fr/afrique/20170416-esclavage-migrants-temoignage-jeune-senegalais-retour-libye](http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20170416-esclavage-migrants-temoignage-jeune-senegalais-retour-libye); [www.jeuneafrique.com/493884/politique/esclaves-en-libye-dalpa-blondy-amahamadou-issoufou-une-vague-de-reactions-choquees/](http://www.jeuneafrique.com/493884/politique/esclaves-en-libye-dalpa-blondy-amahamadou-issoufou-une-vague-de-reactions-choquees/); [www.dakar-echo.com/colere-sur-les-reseaux-sociaux-apres-la-decouverte-de-la-vente-dafricains-comme-esclaves-en-libye/](http://www.dakar-echo.com/colere-sur-les-reseaux-sociaux-apres-la-decouverte-de-la-vente-dafricains-comme-esclaves-en-libye/) (accessed 6 July 2018).

77. Fieldwork notes, Kolda region, 2018, conversation with Dembayel. Dembayel was one of the elderly *jiyaabe* we met more frequently during the research on the legacies of slavery.

78. Interview with Tidiane, Sare Colly Salle (Kolda region), 18 January 2017.

79. Interview with Bouly, Pakane (Kolda region), 15 January 2015.

lies have kept alive this part of their past, but never liked to publicize it. By making enslavement a historical circumstance, which cut across social boundaries, these kinds of admissions would have contradicted the essentializing perception of the *jiyyabe*'s identity, which has long served to guard the *rimbe*'s claims of genealogical purity. The same controversial result would have been achieved by Tidiane's association with modern slavery victims.

People like Dembayel were equally reluctant to consider the phenomenon of the *talibé* – children entrusted by families to Islamic scholars to get an education, who end up begging for their teachers on the streets of Dakar and other Senegalese cities<sup>80</sup> – as a kind of slavery. The *talibé* issue began to emerge in the 1990s thanks to Senegalese civil activists and NGOs<sup>81</sup>. The US Department of State took it up in the 2000s<sup>82</sup>. It is now at the core of all national discussions on human trafficking/modern slavery, and external observers describe the Kolda region, together with neighboring areas of Guinea-Bissau, as a major provider of *talibé*<sup>83</sup>. During our visit to Lingewal, the local chief proudly pointed to the small hut that they had built to serve as a mosque and Quranic school. The Imam was a young man. The summer before he had moved to Dakar with his squadron of pupils. In the city, he served as a spiritual advisor and healer to distressed urban dwellers, while the children begged on the street. The young man regarded himself as neither a trafficker nor a slaver, and nor did his community ever think of him in these terms<sup>84</sup>. Villagers considered the stay in Dakar as crucial to the broadening of the children's life horizon, and to the community's connections with the capital city. The late nineteenth century military upsurge by some of the *jiyaabe* took place under the banner of Islam: today, religion remains a privileged path through which to build up reputation and social networks for the "have-nots". Thus, ironically, what the people of Lingewal feel is a form of upward social mobility is depicted by the US Department of State, other international organizations, Seneg

80. UNICEF, "Enfants mendians dans la région de Dakar", Understanding Children's Work Project Working Paper Series, 2007, [www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/2008\\_Senegal\\_Enfants\\_Mendians\\_Dakar.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/2008_Senegal_Enfants_Mendians_Dakar.pdf) (accessed 6 July 2018); A.K. Zoumanigui, "On the Talibé Phenomenon: A Look into the Complex Nature of Forced Child Begging in Senegal", *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, 24, 1, 2016, 185-203.

81. S. Diouf-Kamara, "Islam, mendicité et migration au Sénégal", *Hommes et Migrations*, 1186, 1, 1995, 37-40.

82. For some examples of the representation of the *talibé* in terms of slavery: [https://www.seneweb.com/news/Societe/des-dakarois-deplorent-les-conditions-d-rsquo-apprentissage-des-talibes\\_n\\_64671.html](https://www.seneweb.com/news/Societe/des-dakarois-deplorent-les-conditions-d-rsquo-apprentissage-des-talibes_n_64671.html) (accessed 6 July 2018); [www.seneweb.com/actualites/societe/haro-sur-les-clavage-des-enfants-au-senegal-par-le-pr-gorgui-dieng\\_59488.html](http://www.seneweb.com/actualites/societe/haro-sur-les-clavage-des-enfants-au-senegal-par-le-pr-gorgui-dieng_59488.html) (accessed 6 July 2018).

83. S.E.L. Thiam, "Forced Begging, Aid and Children's Rights in Senegal: Stories of Suffering and Politics of Compassion", PhD Thesis, McGill University, 2014; I. MacAuslan, A.S. Fall, "Children in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and Budgets: Senegal Perspectives", UNICEF, 2010. For an example of local mobilization driven by external donors see: [www.peacecorps.gov/senegal/stories/talibe-child-protection-conference-mobilizes-kolda-communities-modernize-daaras/](http://www.peacecorps.gov/senegal/stories/talibe-child-protection-conference-mobilizes-kolda-communities-modernize-daaras/) (accessed 6 July 2018).

84. Interview with Bassy, Bissabor (Kolda region), 17 February 2014.

galese NGOs and civil activists as the continuation of enslavement. On the contrary, it is regarded as a difficult, but possible, option by families and rural communities who cannot afford to build a proper mosque, do not have members educated enough to lead the prayers and are predominantly illiterate. Only more detailed and substantive analysis – precisely what is lacking in contemporary anti-trafficking and modern slavery activism<sup>85</sup> – will help us explore the intersection of contemporary marginalities with the cycles of emancipation and re-subordination that have characterized the history of the *jiyaabe* in the Kolda region, and of their *andevo* counterparts in the Highlands of Madagascar.

### *Conclusion*

Despite the many differences between the historical trajectories of the Highlands of Madagascar and the Kolda region, local processes of essentialization, silencing, expansion and politicization of slave ancestry have played similar roles in both contexts. These processes have loaded the categories of *andevo* and *jiyaabe* with new layers of social and political meanings, in terms of both access to material resources and political and economic positions. In many cases, freed slaves and their descendants have been able to emancipate themselves economically from exploitation by their former masters. But categories rooted in the history of slavery have proved much more difficult to overcome, and have contributed to the reproduction, expansion and politicization of the stigma of slave ancestry in new settings.

As neo-abolitionist discourses enter African daily lives from afar and above, the effort of tracking the shifting meanings of vernacular terms for “slave” acquires a new relevance. Both *andevo* and *jiyaabe* stand today for individuals and groups of alleged slave ancestry, and both terms are discriminatory, although in Southern Senegal people of slave origin tend to recognize their ancestry more often than in Madagascar. The study of these post-slavery dynamics is crucial to understand the reluctance of our interlocutors to extend the usage of old vernacular terms for slaves to the kinds of unfreedom, labor exploitation or forced mobility that are the targets of neo-abolitionism. The living history of conflicts and stigmatization, of unspoken words and painful memories, of social hierarchies and of efforts to gain political and economic emancipation, certainly resonates with the categories of *andevo* and *jiyaabe*. And it certainly intersects with the contemporary dynamics of migrant mobility and personal subjection in both Madagascar and Senegal, but establishing these intersections is never a simple and uncontested process<sup>86</sup>. Although it is clear that the legacies of the slave past

85. Bunting, Quirk, *Contemporary Slavery*.

86. Davidson, “The Presence of the Past”; M. Dottridge, “Eight Reasons Why We Shouldn’t Use the Term ‘Modern Slavery’”, *Open Democracy*, 17 October 2017, [www.opendemocracy.net/beyondslavery/michael-dottridge/eight-reasons-why-we-shouldn-t-use-term-modern-slavery](http://www.opendemocracy.net/beyondslavery/michael-dottridge/eight-reasons-why-we-shouldn-t-use-term-modern-slavery) (ac-

underpin current forms of social, political and economic marginalization and of racial discrimination in many post-slavery African contexts, this does not happen in a deterministic or a linear way. The past of slavery interlaces with changing labor regimes and new historical opportunities of social and political emancipation to produce a variety of outcomes and situations. As researchers, we keep exploring these outcomes and situations fully aware both of the various, asymmetrical political agendas that inhabit the human trafficking/modern slavery arena and of the ongoing efforts of people burdened by a slave past to explain to themselves and others what being a “slave” means today\*.

cessed 18 December 2017); A.J. Gross, C. Thomas, “The New Abolitionism, International Law, and the Memory of Slavery”, *Law and History Review*, 35, 1, 2017, 99-118.

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