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► **To cite this version:**

Romain Tiquet. Education Through Labor: From the deuxième portion du contingent to the Youth Civic Service in West Africa (Senegal/Mali, 1920s-1960s). Damiano Matasci; Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo; Hugo Gonçalves Dore. Education and Development in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa, Springer, pp.83-105, 2020, Global Histories of Education, 978-3-030-27800-7. 10.1007/978-3-030-27801-4\_4. hal-02439236

**HAL Id: hal-02439236**

**<https://hal.science/hal-02439236>**

Submitted on 14 Jan 2020

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Education Through Labor: From  
the *deuxième portion du contingent*  
to the Youth Civic Service in West Africa  
(Senegal/Mali, 1920s–1960s)

*Romain Tiquet*

This chapter focuses on two forms of participation and education through labor in Senegal and Mali: The *deuxième portion du contingent*, a form of forced labor used during the colonial period, and civic services for young people set up in the two countries after their independence in 1960. This chapter sheds light on the organization of these two forms of mobilization and education through work and aims at highlighting the differences but also the similarities and permanencies in their goals and functioning as well as in the discourses used by the (post)colonial authorities to justify them.

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Research for this chapter was supported by the SNF Project “Decolonization as regional experience and global trend.”

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Every year, throughout the Federation of French West Africa (FWA), military recruitment is divided between the first portion, which is meant to join the army, and a second portion, considered as a reserve of soldiers, brought to the Federation's public worksites for two years. This form of forced labor, regulated by the decree of October 31, 1926,<sup>1</sup> was abolished only in 1950. The recruitment is specific to the colonies and is not inspired by previous metropolitan experience. The *deuxième portion* has rarely been the core of detailed analyses—apart from the French Sudan (now Mali)<sup>2</sup>—because of its hybrid status, which put it at the crossroads of two historiographies: the history of forced labor and the history of West African soldiers.<sup>3</sup>

In the aftermath of African independence in 1960, in a context of national construction but also in the fight against unemployment and the deruralization of the youth, a national civic service is gradually being set up in Senegal and Mali to mobilize young people for the country's development and to provide them with physical, professional, and civic training. These initiatives are not isolated and are part of a broader movement to establish civic services in a majority of African countries during the 1960s.<sup>4</sup> While the historiography on young people in Africa

<sup>1</sup>This decree is inspired by an experiment launched a few months earlier in Madagascar, the *Service de la Main-d'oeuvre pour les Travaux d'Intérêt Général* (SMOTIG). However, it seems that in Senegal, the 1926 decree only legalizes a situation that has previously existed. A report by the Governor of Senegal on the availability of labor stipulates that more than 1000 men classified as *deuxième portion* had already been recruited in 1923 on the colony's construction sites. Archives Nationales du Sénégal (ANS), K58(19), Gouverneur du Sénégal au gouverneur de l'AOF, 14 August 1928.

<sup>2</sup>Myron Echenberg and Jean Filipovich, "African Military Labour and the Building of the 'Office du Niger' Installations, 1925–1950," *Journal of African History* 27, no. 3 (1986): 533–552; Catherine Bogosian, "Forced Labor, Resistance and Memory: The Deuxieme Portion in the French Soudan, 1926–1950," PhD in History, University of Pennsylvania, 2002.

<sup>3</sup>Romain Tiquet, "Enfermement ordinaire et éducation par le travail au Sénégal (1926–1950)," *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'Histoire* 140, no. 4 (2018): 29–40.

<sup>4</sup>Jean-Luc Chapuis, "Les Mouvements de service civique en Afrique noire francophone: l'exemple centrafricain. Armée, jeunesse et développement," MA diss., University Paris 1, 1972; Jeffrey S. Ahlman, "A New Type of Citizen: Youth, Gender, and Generation in the Ghanaian Builders Brigade," *The Journal of African History* 53, no. 1 (2012): 87–105; Claire Nicolas, "Des corps connectés: les Ghana Young Pioneers, tête de proue de la mondialisation du nkrumahisme (1960–1966)," *Politique Africaine*, no. 147 (2017): 87–107.

is abundant,<sup>5</sup> very little has been written about the role played by the youth in the national construction of French-speaking African countries after independence. This observation is surprising when we consider that the youth of francophone West African countries constitute a central ideological category that the authorities wish to integrate and politically and socially control for the country's development.<sup>6</sup>

The focus of this chapter is twofold. First, while the *deuxième portion du contingent*, a form of forced labor, is justified as a means of education of colonized populations within the context of the "civilizing mission,"<sup>7</sup> youth national service emerging in the 1960s is conceived as means of civic and professional education but was rapidly transformed into pool of cheap workers for the national development. Second, the similarities between these two forms of education through work allow us to interrogate the weight of colonial legacies that influenced postcolonial elites.

This chapter proposes a comparison between two countries, Senegal and Mali, which share a common history in many aspects. Both countries were part of the FWA and the vast majority of the recruits of the *deuxième portion* came from Mali (call French Sudan at that time) for the colony's public works or sent to worksites in Senegal. In 1959, after the promulgation of the French Community which gave a share of autonomy to the FWA colonies, the ephemeral Federation of Mali was initiated by the representatives of Senegal, French Sudan, Upper Volta, and Dahomey. The Federation was recognized within the French Community by General De Gaulle in May 1959. However, after the withdrawal of Upper Volta and Dahomey, relations between the two enemy brothers, Senegal and French Sudan, quickly deteriorated regarding the further political development of the Federation. Senegal then proclaimed its independence on August 20, 1960, breaking up the

<sup>5</sup>Catherine D'Almeida-Topor (ed.), *Les jeunes en Afrique* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 1992); Filip De Boeck and Alcinda Honwana (eds.), *Makers and Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa* (Oxford/Dakar: J. Currey/Codesria, 2005).

<sup>6</sup>See on Mali Serge Nedelec, "Jeunesses, sociétés et État au Mali au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle," PhD diss., University Paris 7, 1994. On Senegal, see Mamadou Diouf, "Urban Youth and Senegalese Politics: Dakar 1988–1994," *Public Culture* 8 (1996): 225–249; Romain Tiquet, "Encadrement de la 'jeunesse' et service civique national au Sénégal: l'expérience limitée de Savoigne (1960–1968)," in *Décolonisation et enjeux post-coloniaux de l'enfance et de la jeunesse (1945–1980)*, ed. by Yves Denechère (Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2019), 161–170.

<sup>7</sup>Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895–1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

Federation of Mali. Léopold Sédar Senghor was declared President of the Republic and Mamadou Dia became President of the Council. Mali then proclaimed its independence on September 22, 1960, and Modibo Keita is elected President of the Republic.

First, this chapter sheds light on the *deuxième portion du contingent* which is designed primarily as a labor pool employing thousands of forced laborers in the FWA. The use of these labor brigades is then justified by colonial authorities as a means of education through work as part of the “mise en valeur”<sup>8</sup> (in this regard, see Chapter 5 by Jakob Zollmann, Chapter 6 by Caterina Scalvedi, and Chapter 7 by Michael A. Kozakowski in this book). Second, the establishment of civic services after independence is thought as a means for the rural and civic education of young people. Although education is the key word for the establishment of civic services in Senegal and Mali, they are quickly diverted to mobilize the young men for the country’s economic development. Finally, without falling into a simplistic mimicry, the chapter raises three types of similarities between these two forms of mobilization: Legislative similarities, a legacy through the dialectic of civic obligation and duty, and finally the weight of the legacy of forced labor left by the second portion in populations’ memories after independence.

## THE *DEUXIÈME PORTION DU CONTINGENT*: A DISCIPLINARY HETEROTOPIA

### *Education Through Labor*

In a context where labor appears as the cornerstone of colonial policy,<sup>9</sup> the *deuxième portion du contingent* represents in the eyes of colonial administrators an inexhaustible source of inactive men to be used on public worksites of the FWA. In addition to this important economic aspect, the *deuxième portion* is also conceived by colonial authorities as

<sup>8</sup>The “mise en valeur des colonies” was a political and economic plan launched in 1923 by Albert Sarraut, French minister of colonies. It was the basis of economic colonization, suggesting the use of a local workforce to “develop” the colonial territories. See Albert Sarraut, *La mise en valeur des colonies françaises* (Paris: Payot et Cie, 1923).

<sup>9</sup>Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Romain Tiquet, “Challenging Colonial Forced Labor? Resistance, Resilience, and Power in Senegal (1920s–1940s),” *Journal of International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 93 (2018): 135–150.

a means of educating colonized populations through work, in the context of the so-called civilizing mission and in a broader international framework where forced labor started to attract widespread criticism in the 1920s.<sup>10</sup> The way in which this form of forced labor is thought and organized sums up a large part of the colonial *clichés* in that time regarding the fight against the so-called idleness and immaturity of colonized populations. For colonial authorities, “indigenous people” need to be educated in a strict but fair manner:

The units of workers constituted under the 1926 decree do not only respond to an economic necessity; they also respond to a duty of the educating nation. It would be a failure of our civilizing mission to renounce defeating atavistic laziness and let millions of people languish in a miserable condition that generates physical decay that once caused so many murderous famines.<sup>11</sup>

Another interesting point linked with the will to educate the second portion is the implementation of a *pécule*, a salary deduction. The sums withheld, corresponding to a deduction of one-third of the pay, are recorded in a booklet given to the recruit at the time of his release.<sup>12</sup> The establishment of the *pécule* meets on a major objective that corresponds with the colonial ideology of education through work: to educate recruits to foresight through forced savings. The *deuxième portion du contingent* is then described and justified as a laboratory of civilization. It is depicted as an instrument of economic and social modernization of the populations, and as a means of social control and discipline of the workers during their two years of service. The Minister of Colonies Léon Perrier, in a report presented to the President of the Republic in 1926, insisted on this point:

<sup>10</sup>The International Labor Organization (ILO) enacted two conventions on Slavery (1926) and Forced Labor (1930) in order to abolish (but in reality, regulate) coercive form of labor recruitment.

<sup>11</sup>ANS, 2G29/13, L'utilisation de la deuxième portion du contingent en AOF, Memorandum du directeur des Affaires Politiques et Administratives, Dakar, 18 December 1929.

<sup>12</sup>Article 3. Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer (ANOM), Affpol, Carton 2808, Dossier Activités économiques et main-d'œuvre, BIT Séries Législatives, Décret du ministère des Colonies du 22 octobre 1925 réglémentant le travail indigène en AOF. The *pécule* should not overtake one quarter of the monthly salary in Senegal. Article 13 of decree of 4 December 1926.

[...] The serious problem of labor would be considerably reduced at the same time as the indigenous people of our West African colonies would benefit socially from their time in training courses where they would have acquired the notions of discipline, work and hygiene. When they return to their homes, they would benefit the populations of their home region from what they acquired.<sup>13</sup>

Between 1926 and 1950, when this form of forced labor was abolished, more than 10,000 men are recruited per year, mainly from French Sudan for various public works in the FWA and on the Dakar–Niger railway line. A 1935 political report indicates for instance that the French Sudan is “the only colony in which this recruitment system has really worked.”<sup>14</sup> Indeed, in the 1920s, the colony set up a labor-intensive major works program, the *Service Temporaire d'Irrigation du Niger* (STIN). STIN or Office du Niger is a large-scale irrigation project in the Niger River Valley, with the aim of attracting African farmers from neighboring regions to the area to intensively cultivate cotton, rice, and other market gardening crops.<sup>15</sup> STIN yards employ the vast majority of the *deuxième portion du contingent* in FWA. In comparison, in 1933, the demand for workers from the *deuxième portion* was 900 men for the Dakar–Niger line in French Soudan and more than 3500 for Office du Niger.<sup>16</sup>

In Senegal, the use of the *deuxième portion du contingent* appears uneven. There was a low use of around 500 men in the 1930s in the colony. The majority of recruits were directed to the worksites of the Dakar–Niger line and came mainly from French Sudan. However, as part of the war effort, the employment of the *deuxième portion* in Senegal abruptly

<sup>13</sup>ANOM, 7affeco, Carton 31, Rapport du ministre des Colonies au président de la République, Exécution des travaux d'intérêt général en AOF par des travailleurs prélevés sur la deuxième portion du contingent indigène, 31 October 1926.

<sup>14</sup>ANS, 2G35/25, AOF Rapport annuel sur l'emploi de la main-d'œuvre, 1935.

<sup>15</sup>See, amongst other, Echenberg and Filipovich, “African Military Labour,” 533–552; Monica M. Van Beusekom, *Negotiating Development: African Farmers and Colonial Experts at the Office du Niger, 1920–1960* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2002); Chéibane Coulibaly, Koffi Alinon, and Dave Benoît, *L'Office du Niger en question* (Bamako: Les cahiers de Mandé Bukari, no. 5, éditions Le Cauri d'Or, 2005).

<sup>16</sup>ANS, K226(26), Gouverneur général de l'AOF à Messieurs les gouverneurs de la Côte d'Ivoire, de la Guinée française et du Sénégal, Appel à la main-d'œuvre volontaire pour les grands travaux soudanais, 24 October 1933.

increased in the early 1940s to constitute the essential lever for recruiting forced laborers throughout the decade, as the territory undertook new public work projects, mainly in Dakar (Dakar harbor and airport). More than 3000 men from all over the FWA were mobilized on Dakar worksites.<sup>17</sup> In 1942, for the whole FWA, 3500 men were recruited in Senegal and more than 800 for French Sudan.<sup>18</sup> Nearly 13,500 men were even recruited in 1946 throughout the Federation, even though the Houphouët-Boigny law abolishing forced labor in the French colonies had just been enacted.<sup>19</sup>

### SOCIAL CONFINEMENT AND HAZARDOUS LIVING CONDITIONS

According to the 1926 regulations, the recruits of the *deuxième portion du contingent* were confined into work camps designed as a heterotopia, in the Foucauldian sense of the term: A space that would obey a precise and specific type of organization and sanitary and disciplinary rules.<sup>20</sup> In addition to the economic interest, these camps had a social objective: to promote a certain order and education at work. The 1926 decree organized the camp as the living space of the worker and his family, a disciplinary place where everything was codified.

Based on the model of the military camp, the workers' camps are organized around a central square where barracks, disciplinary rooms, kitchens, latrines, and an infirmary are arranged all around.<sup>21</sup> In Senegal, work camps for Dakar construction sites are located in the heart of the capital. The colonial authorities, for fear of collusion with the outside tried to avoid any contact between the workers and the rest of the city population by putting in place a "strict discipline<sup>22</sup>" and external

<sup>17</sup>ANS, K306(26), Mise au point, disposition en vue recours plus large aux travailleurs de la deuxième portion, 30 July 1943.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>ANS, K374(26), Tableau général de répartition de la seconde portion en AOF, 10 May 1946.

<sup>20</sup>Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits* (1984), T IV, "Des espaces autres" (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 752–762.

<sup>21</sup>Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer (ANOM), AGEFOM, Carton 381, Dossier 63bis/1 Travail Sénégal avant 1945, Camp des travailleurs de Yoff, Rapport médical annuel, 1944.

<sup>22</sup>ANS, K306(26), Lettre pour le directeur des travaux publics, visite camps travailleurs deuxième portion du contingent Yoff et zone nord port en compagnie de Monsieur l'inspecteur général des colonies Gayet et de Monsieur le gouverneur Martine inspecteur général du travail (19 juillet 1943), 23 July 1943.



fences that locked up the living space of the workers in the camp.<sup>23</sup> The organization of the workers day is strictly supervised, with 8 hours of activity, 6 days a week, with a rest day spent in the camp. However, the weekly rest period is not a space of free time, but rather a time of training and education. The workers are responsible for cleaning the camp and various *corvées* and receive basic hygiene training.<sup>24</sup>

The salary received by recruits is similar to the salary of *tirailleurs* serving in AOF, at 0.75 francs in 1934.<sup>25</sup> On Senegalese construction sites, a daily bonus of between 0.50 and 3 francs can be granted to workers to speed up the pace and guarantee maximum labor productivity.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, workers in the *deuxième portion du contingent* can be sanctioned for 4 types of misconduct: negligence, laziness, unjustified absence, and refusal of obedience.<sup>27</sup> The reasons for the sanctions are essentially linked to the efficiency and effectiveness of the workers, recalling that the productivity of the worksites remains one of the priorities in the daily functioning of the *deuxième portion*.

The labor camp appears above all as a place of spatial and social confinement, with recruits living in a miserable environment, where insalubrious conditions and daily violence prevail, leading to many illnesses and deaths. Concerning the living conditions of the workers, the inspection reports are unanimous: The labor camp constitutes a space of alarming insalubrity and transmission of diseases, contrary to the hygienist project initially defended by colonial authorities. In 1944, in the Yoff camp devoted to the work at Dakar airport, there was no access to water.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup>ANS, K306(26), Gouverneur général de l'AOF à l'administrateur de la circonscription de Dakar et dépendances, A/S Travailleurs de la deuxième portion de contingent, 4 février 1944.

<sup>24</sup>In Senegal, local regulations stressed the need for soap distribution for cleaning workers and the construction of cemented spaces for ablutions and laundry washing. ANS, K393(26), Instruction pour l'emploi de la main-d'œuvre de la deuxième portion du contingent au Sénégal, non daté (mais vers le début des années 1940). See also Bogosian, *Forced Labor, Resistance and Memory*, 35.

<sup>25</sup>It corresponds to the half of the salary of a skilled worker at that time in FWA. Echenberg and Filipovich, "African Military Labour," 544.

<sup>26</sup>ANS, K335(26), Gouverneur général de l'AOF au gouverneur du Sénégal, Solde des travailleurs de la deuxième portion, 18 February 1946.

<sup>27</sup>Article 18 of decree of 4 December 1926.

<sup>28</sup>ANOM, AGEFOM, Carton 381, Dossier 63bis/1 Travail Sénégal avant 1945, Camp des travailleurs de Yoff, Rapport médical annuel, 1944.

Another example, among others, is the latrine system set up, which consists of trenches dug in the ground, covered with boards pierced with holes, hidden by branches. As a consequence, “numerous flies” were abounding in the camp.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to the insalubrious environment of the camp, the food of the recruits is also problematic. A minimum ration is theoretically provided to each worker under the 1926 regulations. However, many cases of malnutrition and weight loss are noted in inspection reports. In 1943, in the Yoff camp, the new recruits from Mauritania were in a “state of manifest malnutrition.”<sup>30</sup> In addition to not being adequately fed, workers are often malnourished. On construction sites in French Sudan, workers even give a name in Bambara to the ration, often made up of millet or undercooked barley: *sakaroba*.<sup>31</sup>

Hygiene conditions and malnutrition have a direct impact on the daily health of the second portion. In Yoff, there is one doctor for every 2000 workers. Workers are being forced to heal their wounds with “makeshift bandages” made out of leaves.<sup>32</sup> Between September and December 1944, a medical report indicates that more than 1500 people were admitted to the infirmary of the Yoff camp for illnesses or accidents.<sup>33</sup> In 1943, Senegal’s inspection reports noted nearly 54 deaths in Yoff camp, nearly 5 deaths per month, as a result of intestinal problems, general weakening of the nervous systems, and respiratory disorders, particularly tuberculosis.<sup>34</sup> However, the labor camp does not appear to be a “the

<sup>29</sup>ANS, K306(26), Lettre pour le directeur des travaux publics, Visite camps travailleurs deuxième portion du contingent Yoff et zone nord port en compagnie de Monsieur l’inspecteur général des colonies Gayet et de Monsieur le gouverneur Martine inspecteur général du travail (19 juillet 1943), 23 July 1943.

<sup>30</sup>ANS, K306(26), Pour le directeur des travaux publics, Visite chantiers aéroport Yoff et camps travailleurs, 24 May 1943.

<sup>31</sup>Bogorian, *Forced Labor, Resistance and Memory*, 38.

<sup>32</sup>ANS, K306(26), Lettre pour le directeur des travaux publics, Visite camps travailleurs seconde portion du contingent Yoff et zone nord port en compagnie de Monsieur l’inspecteur général des colonies Gayet et de Monsieur le gouverneur Martine inspecteur général du travail (19 juillet 1943), 23 July 1943.

<sup>33</sup>ANOM, AGEFOM, Carton 381, Dossier 63bis/1 Travail Sénégal avant 1945, Camp des travailleurs de Yoff, Rapport médical annuel, 1944.

<sup>34</sup>ANS, K306(26), Administrateur de la circonscription de Dakar et dépendances au gouverneur général de l’AOF, Deuxième portion du contingent, Décès survenus du 1er janvier 1943 au 1er mars 1944.

protected place of disciplinary monotony” dear to Foucault.<sup>35</sup> Living conditions in the camps lead to a number of reaction and resistance from workers: desertion, slower pace, feigned illness, refusal to receive pay, or collective work stoppages. These forms of protest increase in the aftermath of the Second World War, in a context of reconfiguration of colonial policy and political and social unrest that makes it possible to renegotiate the living and working conditions of recruits. These reactions push authorities to remove the last avatar of forced labor in 1950.

## CIVIC SERVICE: A DEVELOPMENTALIST HETEROTOPIA

### *Mobilize and Control the Youth*

The main ambition of the development programs set up by the Senegalese and Malian regimes after they gained independence in 1960 is primarily focused on the economic and social reconstruction of the territories and the promotion of the rural masses.<sup>36</sup> By restoring trust between rural populations and the State, the postcolonial authorities intend to initiate a new dialogue and encourage the populations to participate in national construction. In this context, the country’s youth, which at the time represented nearly 60% of the total population under 25 years of age (the situation is similar in Senegal and Mali), is under the spotlight of the authorities.<sup>37</sup>

Youth generation in West Africa embodies both the rupture with the colonial past and the starting point of national construction. It represents the possible but also and above all what is desirable for postcolonial authorities. The open call of the participation of the youth for the development of the countries is numerous. The Senegalese Ministry of Youth and Sports, for example, argues that the country “can count on

<sup>35</sup> Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 54.

<sup>36</sup> Cissé Ben Mady, “L’Animation rurale base essentielle de tout développement. Où en est l’expérience sénégalaise?” *Afrique documents* (1963): 115–128; Daouda Gary-Toukara, “Quand les migrants demandent la route, Modibo Keïta rétorque: ‘retournez à la terre!’: Les Baragnini et la désertion du ‘chantier national’ (1958–1968),” *Mande Studies*, no. 5 (2003): 49–64.

<sup>37</sup> UNESCO, *Sénégal. Plan d’un programme en faveur de l’éducation extrascolaire des jeunes* (Paris: UNESCO, 1969), 6.

its dynamic YOUTH, more dedicated than ever and ready to invest itself for the peace and prosperity of the nation.”<sup>38</sup> In the same manner, in 1962, the Ministry of Information in Mali calls for the “participation of the Malian youth to the construction of the nation.”<sup>39</sup> However, and it is an obvious anthropological truism, the youth, considered by post-colonial authorities as a real economic and political stake, fascinates as much as it worries. Young African people appear as an opportunity for development, but they are also often described by the authorities as rebellious, unstable, and volatile. One can then find a discourse of infantilization, of disempowerment which aims to justify the establishment of control structures and the ordering of the youth.

The question of political control of young people then appears central in a context where the youth, affected by many economic difficulties (training, access to employment, etc.) is increasingly leaving the countryside to try their luck in the urban centers. Consequently, in order to control a rapidly changing urban space, the Senegalese and Malian political elites are setting up disciplinary structures in order to control the youth. It is in this context that West African postcolonial authorities attempt to establish a national civic service. The initial objectives of these civic services are threefold: rural, political, and civic training during a two-year enrollment period to prepare the country’s youth to become peasants able of leading their own villages and communities. However, the daily functioning of the civic service shows that it has been quickly diverted to provide a source of labor for the national construction rather than to educate the young generation of West Africa.

### *The Senegalese and Malian Experiences of Civic Service*

Initially, in Senegal, the idea is to incorporate all young people not integrated into the army into the civic service. At the turn of the 1960s, the Senegalese authorities consider that nearly 34,000 young people are available.<sup>40</sup> But the government does not stop there. In a summary

<sup>38</sup>In capital letters in the report. ANS, 2G60/08, Ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports du Sénégal, Discours de Mamadou Dia, around 1960.

<sup>39</sup>Yiriba Coulibaly (ed.), *Le Mali en marche* (Bamako: Édition du secrétariat d’État à l’information, 1962), 98.

<sup>40</sup>ANS, VP269, Service Civique, Premières options à prendre immédiatement, around 1960.

report of the work of a commission on unemployment, the Senegalese authorities propose to extend the conditions of recruitment for civic service, “not only to young people likely to be called up to the armed forces, but also to all those without proper work.”<sup>41</sup> This comment perfectly sums up the spirit at work in the formulation of civic service: There is a twofold desire to supervise and control a significant part of the population, while at the same time fighting idleness by compelling all inactive young people to participate, in labor, to the national construction.

In Senegal, various attempts are being set up to mobilize the youth and involve them in national development through work. A first attempt is launched in 1959 with the setting up of youth volunteer camps (*chantiers de jeunes volontaires*) bringing together “young people aged 14 to 25 years old, in order to work on a voluntary basis to carry out a work of public interest, such as the construction of roads, schools, dispensaries, etc.”<sup>42</sup> These *chantiers* are quickly reformulated into youth camps (*camps de jeunesse*) in January 1960. This new mobilization formula aims to “integrate into development actions, unemployed young people in cities and rural youth idle by the off-season in order to adapt them to production tasks.”<sup>43</sup> We notice the change in vocabulary and objectives. While the 1959 formula, aimed at “young volunteers,” encourages them to participate “voluntarily” in actions of public interest, the youth camp is aimed at populations considered inactive, who must be put to work in rural areas. Young people still have to do work of public interest: Planting trees and building gutters in Tambacounda, establishing local tracks or markets in Kédougou, for instance.<sup>44</sup>

The Senegalese civic service is then used as a labor pool and is diverted from its main objective, to integrate the youth into the national project. Many young people then desert the sites, the lack of supervision and resources helping. For example, in the Richard-Toll *camp de jeunesse* in the north of the country, the camp is described as “more of a burden than a help.” This failure then prompted the

<sup>41</sup>ANS, VP302, Rapport de synthèse sur les travaux de la commission sur le chômage, 1959.

<sup>42</sup>UNESCO, *Sénégal. Plan d'un programme en faveur de l'éducation extrascolaire des jeunes* (Paris: UNESCO, 1969), 35.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>ANS, 2G60/08, Ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports, Camps de jeunesse, around 1960.

authorities to consider a new form of civic service to ensure a massive and more effective mobilization of young people. After the failure of the youth camps, a new formula is introduced in 1962 with the implementation of the *chantiers-écoles*. The main ambition of this new attempt is to combine the active participation in work of young recruits—called “pioneers”—with intellectual, physical, and civic training. The objective is to set up sites with a specific agricultural vocation and to train people to become future farmers who will be able to take the lead of the *chantier-école* that has become a village pilote after two to three years of training. This new formula reflects the major concern of the Senegalese authorities: to encourage the promotion of local areas while fighting against congestion in urban centers by encouraging the (re)settlement of hundreds of young people in the countryside.

It is in this context that the Senegalese army took the initiative to open its own *chantier-école* in 1964 in Savoigne in northern Senegal. The army calls for the recruitment of young men between the ages of 16 and 20, single, voluntary, and qualified for medical examinations, to take part in this project. The leitmotif of this new attempt was: “To become a useful citizen capable of ensuring your individual destiny.”<sup>45</sup> About 150 pioneers were recruited and sent on 11 November 1964, to Savoigne, where 500 hectares were allocated to the army to set up the crop fields and build pioneer housing. Savoigne was then a small town, located 35 km north of Saint-Louis, a few minutes from the Mauritanian border. The Savoigne camp is supervised by a Senegalese army lieutenant and is divided into 3 sections of 50 recruits, each of whom is led by a sergeant. The young people, dressed in military uniform, are subject to a military schedule. A pioneer remembers being woken up every day at 6 a.m. to go water the plantations. Between 7 a.m. and 8 a.m., recruits jog before gathering in the camp’s central square for a flag call. After breakfast, they are sent to the various sites until the end of the afternoon. Then comes the time of the study until nightfall when the pioneers receive general literacy training. Weekend permissions are granted to some sections.<sup>46</sup> The three pioneer sections are divided between public works and agricultural sites. In 1965, with the support of the Senegalese military engineer, the pioneers built a bridge crossing the Lampsar River,

<sup>45</sup>Anonyme, “L’Armée Sénégalaise recrute de jeunes pionniers pour le chantier école de Savoigne,” *Dakar-Matin*, 24 October 1964.

<sup>46</sup>Interview with Malick Bâ, Savoigne, 24 January 2015.

more than 110 meters long. The pioneers also dig 3.5 km of canals, 3 wells, a health post, and participate with the engineers in the construction of the road linking Saint-Louis to Mauritania. A French agricultural engineer, Erwan Le Menn, is sent on the camp and trained pioneers in agricultural techniques and launched crop production. Production in 1965–1966 is good: 24.4 tonnes of Paddy rice, 4 tonnes of tomatoes, and several tonnes of potatoes. The pioneers also plant nearly 500 fruit trees, some of which still bear fruit in the village today.

After three years, the *chantier-école* was transformed into a cooperative village. Savoigne was one of the few successful civic service experiences in Senegal. Indeed, the Senegalese experience of civic service can be summed up as the story of “a great idea that has never been fully implemented,”<sup>47</sup> the ambitious youth mobilization program launched in the aftermath of independence having been reduced to a shagreen. The difficulties encountered in the establishment of civic service by the authorities highlight the many limitations—particularly budgetary and political—of a Senegalese government unable to organize on a large scale the mobilization of thousands of young people and to offer them opportunities after their civic service to integrate them into the country’s economy.

In the neighboring Mali, a similar system is established in 1960 by Modibo Keita’s government. The *service civique rural* is a central part of the program of building a socialist and self-sufficient Malian state. Young men of eighteen to twenty-one years old were called into a rural civic service that was to be considered equivalent to service in the army. The civic service was first enacted into law during the short-lived Mali Federation (1959–1960): “the Soudanese Republic [set up] a rural civic for young men recognized as fit for military service.”<sup>48</sup> Two decrees describing methods of recruitment were then passed on October 29, 1960, right after the independence of 22 September 1960. The goal of the civic service was to: “give to all the youth of the Malian Republic a

<sup>47</sup>Alain Gillette, “Les services civiques de jeunesse dans le développement de l’Afrique rurale: nouvelles réflexions sur l’art de coiffer Saint-Pierre sans décoiffer Saint-Paul,” *Cahiers de l’animation*, no. 18 (1977): 40.

<sup>48</sup>“Loi no. 60–15 A.L.-R.S. portant institution d’un Service civique rural,” *Journal Officiel de la République Soudanaise*, 15 July 1960.

formation that will develop in them good citizenship, conscience and a sense of responsibility in the building fatherland.”<sup>49</sup>

The youth was recruited into the civic service in order to learn modern agricultural methods. They receive lessons in literacy and become familiar with the values of the socialist state and the duties of citizens within that state.<sup>50</sup> The recruits are dressed in uniforms and worked together on state farms. Unlike Senegal, which has only recruited a few hundred recruits, Mali’s civic service mobilized about 40,000 young people in the early 1960s, in highly controlled structures linked to the Single Party of Modibo Keita (US-RDA). Indeed, contrary to the government of Léopold Sédar Senghor and Mamadou Dia in Senegal, which advocates an *auto-gestionnaire* socialism, the Single Party in Mali was the lever for revolutionary development.<sup>51</sup> As in Senegal, the initial educational objectives of the civic service in Mali were also progressively diverted to the mobilization of young people as laborers for the mean of national construction. Desertions became more and more frequent and the numbers of recruits in the Malian civic service gradually declined.

## THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME

### *Legislative Legacies*

In analyzing the justification and the functioning of civic services in Senegal and Mali, it is difficult not to see a number of similarities with the *deuxième portion du contingent*. In Mali, the men in the civic service were often described either as farmers in uniform or as soldiers armed with shovel. This image echoes the one depicted by Léopold Sédar Senghor in 1947, deputy of Senegal at that time, in a letter sent to the Governor of AOF. He called the recruits of the *deuxième portion du contingent* “tirailleur-shovel” (*tirailleurs-la-pelle*) as opposed to the

<sup>49</sup>“Décret portant organisation du Service civique rural and décret portant mode de recrutement du Service civique rural,” *Journal Officiel de la République du Mali*, 15 November 1960.

<sup>50</sup>Catherine Bogosian, “The ‘Little Farming Soldiers’: The Evolution of a Labor Army in Post-colonial Mali,” *Mande Studies*, no. 5 (2003): 83–100.

<sup>51</sup>Oumar Diarrah Cheick, *Le Mali de Modibo Keita* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1986).



tirailleurs of the first portion wearing a rifle.<sup>52</sup> He expressed furthermore emotion at the use of these recruits as forced laborers even though the 1946 Houphouët-Boigny law was passed.

The legislation of the *deuxième portion du contingent* in AOF and the civic services in Senegal and Mali share some similarities. Article 3 of the initial draft law on civic service in Senegal stipulates that: “Persons subject to the civic service shall be kept in their homes at the disposal of the Government; the latter may prescribe their temporary employment for work of interest to the national economy.”<sup>53</sup> The wording, than can also be found in the Malian legislation on the civic service, recalls the 1926 regulation that distinguished the first military portion and a second reserve portion, compelled to work on public work for 2 years. While the colonial authorities saw in the *deuxième portion* a stable and directly available labor pool for the “mise en valeur” of the colonies, the Senegalese authorities formulated the civic service as a means of massively mobilizing a segment of the population to participate economically and politically in national construction.

Senegalese and Malian authorities’ willingness to set up a civic service on the territory embodied the central problem facing West African governments after their independence: How was it possible to mobilize the greatest number of people in order to meet the challenges of national development, in a country with a limited budget and limited capital? This legislative mimicry does not seem to escape the legal service of the French cooperation mission, which wondered in the early 1960s whether Senegalese civic service was really “a mode of civic education for the contingent or a convenient method of recruiting labor for public utility work?”<sup>54</sup> It is not unimaginable that politicians in newly independent Senegal and Mali looked to colonial legislation as templates for their own laws. As Catherine Bogosian argued for Mali, “though colonial laws

<sup>52</sup>ANS, K260(26), Lettre de Léopold Sédar Senghor au gouverneur général de l’AOF, 20 March 1947.

<sup>53</sup>Centre des archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN), Fond Ambassade de France à Dakar, 184PO/1, Dossier 326 Camp de pionniers de Savoigne, Projet de loi sur le Service Civique, around 1960.

<sup>54</sup>CADN, 184PO/1, Dossier 383 Service Civique, Note sur l’organisation du Service Civique au Sénégal par le service juridique de mission aide et coopération, 30 October 1962.

were problematic, they provided a starting point for resolving some basic logistical concerns at a time when Malian politicians were faced with creating their new government.”<sup>55</sup>

### *Obligation, Civic Duty, and Memory*

The concern over how to incorporate rural youth into of the colony or the state was voiced in two ways: The law establishing the *deuxième portion* first used a language of obligation of the colonial subjects to contribute to the general interest and the economic development of the colony. One can find the same language in the discourse on civic service, the new independent state calling for a mandatory participation of the youth in labor for the national construction. Furthermore, we find in the notion of civic service itself, as well as in the public discourses of the Malian and Senegalese authorities, the ideology of the moral duty, of the civic duty, already used under the colonial period to legitimize the mobilization of the populations for the “mise en valeur.” For the French colonial authorities, the *deuxième portion du contingent* constituted a “collective social effort,”<sup>56</sup> a duty to work equivalent to other civic obligations such as the payment of taxes or military service. For post-colonial authorities, the civic obligation of participation was at the core of the political project of the newly independent countries for national construction.

It is also interesting to notice that as the recruits of the *deuxième portion* have played with the rhetoric of civic obligation to call for respect for their rights and dignity,<sup>57</sup> some participants in the civic service have done the same using the repertoire of mutual obligation and reciprocity when the working and living conditions imposed by the civic service exceeded the regulations put in place. The pioneers of Savoigne organized for instance a collective refusal of work in 1966 to protest on the postpone of the transformation of the *chantier-école* into a *village pilote*,

<sup>55</sup>Bogosian, “The ‘Little Farming Soldiers’,” 94.

<sup>56</sup>ANOM, 7affeco, Carton 31, Rapport du ministre des Colonies au président de la République, Exécution des travaux d’intérêt général en AOF par des travailleurs prélevés sur la deuxième portion du contingent indigène, 31 October 1926.

<sup>57</sup>Tiquet, “Enfermement ordinaire et éducation par le travail au Sénégal (1926–1950),” 29–40.

arguing that the terms of the initial agreement (liberation of the *chantier-école* after 2 years) were not respected.<sup>58</sup> Populations shared another legacy: a communal memory distaste for requisitioned labor in any form. Especially in the case of Mali where the *deuxième portion* was intensively used for the Office du Niger's work, Bogosian argues that "this dead weight that subtly but effectively hindered the civic service."<sup>59</sup> One might not forget that the *deuxième portion* ended in 1950 after twenty-three years of existence. Only ten years later, the civic service was born in newly independent West African countries.

In Mali, youth enlisted for the civic service were often called "farming asses," "little farming soldier," or people mocked them telling that they had been "given a belt and ordered to bend."<sup>60</sup> Such reaction implies that the men of the civic service were less honorable than regular soldier. Despite the very different natures of the two organizations, both the civic service and the *deuxième portion* were coercive by essence. The coercive aspect of these forms of mobilization combined with the lack of prestige of being part of a "second army," an army with shovel rather than with rifle, plays a central role in the distaste of the civic service both in Senegal and Mali. Populations remembered the decades of obligations and coercion under French colonial rule. Such memories lingered and shaped their interpretations of the demands made upon them by the new postcolonial authorities. Many people remembered the pain of the colonial years and the civic service, as a new obligatory form of participation in labor for the State, unpleasant reminders of colonial forced labor embodied by the *deuxième portion*.

The link was also made at a transnational level. In the 1960s, youth mobilization projects for national development in newly independent African countries received special attention from International Labor Organization (ILO) officials. In 1962 the annual report of the permanent Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (COE) proposes a general survey of the situation on the ground since the new Forced Labor Convention of 1957 was enacted. According to the report, a range of forms of forced and

<sup>58</sup>Romain Tiquet, "Service civique et développement au Sénégal. Une utopie au cœur des relations entre armée et pouvoir politique (1960–1968)," *Afrique Contemporaine*, no. 260 (2016): 45–59.

<sup>59</sup>Bogosian, "The 'Little Farming Soldiers'," 84.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 83.

compulsory labor outlawed by the Conventions of 1930 and 1957 had survived African countries' independence. The report listed many West African countries, including Mali and Senegal, whose methods of mobilization of labor were described as incompatible with forced labor conventions, especially regarding youth labor service.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, the ILO considered, under Article 1 of the 1957 Convention on the Abolition of Forced Labor, that the military recruitment of young people for the purpose of participating in labor in development was considered a form of forced labor. The reaction of West African countries, most of which had rightly ratified the 1957 Convention unlike the former colonial authority, France, was swift.<sup>62</sup> They reacted with virulence, feeling unfairly attacked of a "colonial" crime even though their entire discursive apparatus and policies were intended to be at odds with past colonial practices. As historian Daniel Maul argues:

At first they vehemently defended the immense importance, in their view, of youth service for development. They had no time for the scruples of the COE, which, while recognizing the need of these countries to build up a qualified workforce and to tackle the problems of growing cities, youth unemployment and underemployment, still rated the danger of abuse intrinsic to systems based on coercion as more relevant than their potential benefits.<sup>63</sup>

Yet, they did not stop the mobilization of the youth for economic purpose for all, Senegalese official enacted a new law in 1968, generalizing the model of Savoigne military camp to the entire country.<sup>64</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has highlighted two forms of mobilization and education through work in Senegal and Mali. The *deuxième portion du contingent* was conceived as a reservoir of labor for the "mise en valeur" of

<sup>61</sup>Daniel R. Maul, "The International Labor Organization and the Struggle Against Forced Labor from 1919 to the Present," *Labor History* 48, no. 4 (2007): 489.

<sup>62</sup>Senegal signed the convention in 1961 and Mali in 1962, France only in 1967.

<sup>63</sup>Maul, "The International Labor Organization," 490.

<sup>64</sup>Mamadou M. Diouf, *Stratégies de formation citoyenne et de préparation à une vie professionnelle: l'exemple du service civique national au Sénégal* (INSEPS, UCAD, 2002).

the colonies and justified, in an international context increasingly critical to the use of forced labor, as a means of education, within the framework of the “civilizing mission.” After independence, the Senegalese and Malian civic services were conceived above all as means of education and training for young people but were finally diverted to put hundreds of young people to work as part of the national construction.

While the colonial authorities saw in the *deuxième portion* a stable and directly available labor pool for the “mise en valeur” of the colonies, the independent Senegalese and Malian authorities formulated the civic service as a means of massively mobilizing a segment of the population to participate economically and politically in national construction. Although it would be too simplistic to reduce the spirit of civic services to a direct colonial legacy, the emphasis on the second portion and youth education experiences in Senegal and Mali showed a number of similarities and allowed a broader reflection on the borrowings, inspirations, and legacies in projects, discourses and mentalities in colonial and postcolonial times in West Africa.

The French empire relied on the moral argument of the “civilizing mission” to justify the colonial conquest of African territories and the coercive forms of mobilization and employment of the population. With regard to the establishment of civic services in Senegal and Mali and certain similarities both in spirit and in practice with the *deuxième portion du contingent*, the postcolonial Senegalese and Malian elites also propose to be in a certain way “civilizing,” no longer in the name of the “mise en valeur” but in the name of national development.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>65</sup>In this regard, John Lonsdale speaks of a “new civilising mission of ‘development’” from postcolonial African State in the 1960s. See John Lonsdale, “Political Accountability in African History,” in *Political Domination in Africa*, ed. by Chabal Patrick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 153. See also, Romain Tiquet, “Le renouveau de la «mission civilisatrice»? Développement et mobilisation de la main-d’œuvre au Sénégal (années 1960),” *Relations Internationales*, no. 177 (2019): 73–84.

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