

Tragedy and Triumph: Visual Depictions of *Ceddo* and *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* in the *Memoryscape* of Contemporary Senegal

Tragèdia i triomf: Interpretacions visuals de *ceddo* i *tirailleurs sénégalais* al paisatge de memòria (*memoryscape*) del Senegal contemporani

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Sarah Davis Westwood
GESA / Universitat de Lleida

Abstract

This article centres on the visual memoryscape of military figures in Senegal, which has been shaped by historical remnants, including street art, statues, and films in popular circulation. As originally envisioned, a memoryscape is based on orality and performance, but I consider the physical landscape of Dakar as a site of memory. I observe the artificial division between heroic anti-colonial warriors, represented by *ceddo* soldiers, and victimised *tirailleurs sénégalais*, who are more closely associated with French colonial control. Specifically, I outline the portrayals of these figures in two films by Ousmane Sembène and statues and murals depicting the precolonial hero Lat Joor Joob and *tirailleurs sénégalais*. These interpretations of *ceddo* and *tirailleurs sénégalais* exemplify the struggle in post-independence Senegal over national identity.

Keywords: memory; Senegal; military history; *ceddo*; *tirailleurs sénégalais*

Resum

Aquest article se centra en el *memoryscape* (paisatge de memòries) de figures militars al Senegal, el qual ha estat definit per records històrics, com per exemple art de carrer, estàtues i pel·lícules de circulació popular. En el sentit original, un *memoryscape* es basa en l'oralitat i la *performance*, però aquí entenc el paisatge físic de Dakar com un lloc de la memòria. Observo la divisió artificial entre herois guerrers anticolonials, representats per soldats *ceddo*, i víctimes, els *tirailleurs sénégalais*, que estan més estretament associats amb el control colonial francès. Concretament, exposo els retrats d'aquestes figures en dues pel·lícules d'Ousmane Sembène i estàtues i murals que representen l'heroi precolonial Lat Joor Joob i els *tirailleurs sénégalais*. Aquestes interpretacions de *ceddo* i *tirailleurs sénégalais* exemplifiquen la lluita al voltant de la qüestió de la identitat nacional en el Senegal de després de la independència.

Paraules clau: memòria; Senegal; història militar; *ceddo*; *tirailleurs sénégalais*

Introduction

Within the visual memoryscape of Senegal, which has been shaped by historical remnants and is comprised of street art, statues, and feature films, I observe the artificial division between heroic anti-colonial warriors, represented by *ceddo*, and victimised *tirailleurs sénégalais*, who are more closely associated with French colonial control.¹ This depiction is not generally grounded in historical reality and engages in an anachronistic and ahistorical approach: the *tirailleurs* have an extensive history in the region reaching back to the early 19th century, much longer than that of their conscription into French forces during World War I and World War II; for the *ceddo* soldiers, there was no “Senegal” for them to protect. They had no historical reference for the Senegalese nation as we know it today, despite their appropriation by Senegalese political leaders in the post-independence period.

Within the caste systems of the Mande, Wolof, and Pulaar speaking peoples of the greater Senegambia region, *ceddo* is an ambiguous term that seems to have developed into a definable corporate identity by roughly the mid-18th century. As Tal Tamari has demonstrated, within its Tukulor origins, *ceddo* signified temporal power (Tamari, 1997). Due to the presence of slavery and the failure of many outside observers to understand the nature of patron-client relationships, Europeans wrote about armies of “slaves” instead of recognising that many of these men, known as *ceddo*, were professional soldiers and former war captives (Westwood, 2018).

Various mediums have stripped *ceddo* of their military value and symbolism, and the second goal of this project is to address the perpetuation of an ahistorical myth of *ceddo* as non-Muslim. The term *ceddo* is often rendered as “unbeliever” or “nonbeliever” as in Ousmane Sembène’s film, *Ceddo*, tellingly translated into English as *The Outsiders*. In this same vein, *ceddo* are typically depicted as heroic figures, echoing a heroic “Senegalese” past, whereas *tirailleurs* are tragic figures who are either complicit or impotent in the creation of their livelihoods.² This depiction contrasts with that of *tirailleurs sénégalais* in France, for example, where they are more often memorialised as heroes in the battle against fascism, fighting in WWI and WWII as part of the French colonial army.³

1 I would like to thank Dr. Albert Roca for the invitation to participate in this ongoing project on memory and memorialisation in Africa. I have also benefited from helpful comments from Albert, Jordi Tomàs, and the two anonymous reviewers. Exchanges with Ferdinand de Jong and Allen Roberts also informed this project. Any errors or omissions remain my own.

2 Typically translated as “sharpshooters,” the term *tirailleurs* refers to Senegambian and, in the 20th century, West African infantrymen who fought in the French colonial army.

3 For recent discussions on memorialisation of *tirailleurs sénégalais* in France, see Julien Fargettas (2013), *Les tirailleurs sénégalais: Les soldats noirs entre légendes et réalités 1939-1945*; Pascal Plas (2019), “De la mémoire des *tirailleurs sénégalais* en France”; Cheikh Sakho (2020), *Mémoires des tirailleurs africains: célébrations et représentations. Des origines aux indépendances africaines* (Tesi doctoral, Université de

The depictions of *ceddo* and *tirailleurs sénégalais* exemplify the struggle in post-independence Senegal over identity. Should those alive today celebrate the struggles against colonialism that the *ceddo* represent, hearkening back to a glorified precolonial past but ignoring the wars they waged against other kingdoms in the territory of present-day Senegal? What about the more complex role of *tirailleurs*, who served on behalf of France as a force of occupation in Africa and further abroad, particularly Algeria and Vietnam, but who also embodied courage and military acumen during World Wars I and II? A brief overview of language serves as a further illustration of the Wolofisation of Senegal. Though the term *ceddo* is rooted in Pulaar, its social and cultural heritage in the 21st century is very much Wolof. Similarly, scholars and artists no longer portray *tirailleurs* as Senegalese, but West African more broadly, in keeping with their reclassification as a West African force beginning in 1900.⁴

Memoriscapes: The framing of historical artefacts

The historian David Lowenthal has argued that “the remembered past is both individual and collective” (Lowenthal, 2003, p.194). Remembrances, whether collective or individual, are also selective, a topic discussed at length by anthropologist Jennifer Cole in her study of sacrifice and memory-making in Madagascar. Cole maintains that our perspectives are coloured by “representations of the past that highlight some aspects of experience and neglect others” (Cole, 2001, p.102). This article draws upon Cole’s framing of the “memoriscap,” defined as:

the array of schemas through which people remember and the social-historical forces that draw these schemas into action and sometimes enable them to be formulated in narrative. It also encompasses the broad spectrum of commemorative practices through which people rehearse certain memories critical to their personal dreams of who they think they are, what they want the world to be like, and their attempts to make life come out that way...the memoriscap both elaborates some memories and diffuses others. (Cole, 2001, p.290)

Though Cole focuses on a memoriscap based on orality and performance, I consider the physical landscape of Dakar as a site of historical memory. I also

Reims); and William Robin-Detraz (2021), “Haut-lieu et appropriations de la mémoire des *tirailleurs sénégalais*: le Tata de Chasselay,” *Bulletin de l’association de géographes français*, 97(3), 280-303.

⁴ Another topic of interest is the comparison between the *ceddo* armies protecting the states of the former Jolof Empire and the *sôfa* soldiers who fought in *jihāds* in the interior, and who are best known as soldiers in the *jihād*ist army of Al-Hajj Umar Taal and his successor Amadu Seku Taal. I have discussed this more broadly elsewhere (Westwood, 2019).

consult the films of Ousmane Sembène as additional references to the larger historical imaginary of post-independence Senegal. What I refer to as the memory-landscape of the military is embodied both in physical objects that serve as everyday reminders, like statues and street art, and filmic representations of past events that are, in their own way, fixed in time.⁵

According to Lowenthal, the primary role of memory is not “to preserve the past” but to “enrich and manipulate the present” (Lowenthal, 2003, p.210). Though there is always an interplay between these motives, I favour the claim of anthropologist Rosalind Shaw that memories of the past are not neatly configured to relay “interests and concerns of those in the present” (Shaw, 2002, p.12). As she has noted concerning memories of the Atlantic slave trade in Sierra Leone, present-day renderings of historical events are neither wholly based on the past nor can they be “reduced to present interests alone” (Shaw, 2002, p.13), even when the repercussions of those events affect contemporary concerns. Further, she maintains that memory moves “both forward and backward in time” (Shaw, 2002, p.15).

As Shaw argues, one of the dangers of focusing on the present as an interpretive lens is that we may lose the historical context that shapes specific memories of events or the lives of particular figures. An example of this conundrum appears in Joe Lunn’s oral history of the Senegalese *tirailleurs sénégalais* who fought in World War I. Lunn’s interpretation of *ceddo* as “unbelievers” (Lunn, 1999, p.40) is not entirely based on the historical record, as *ceddo* has for centuries implied a warrior ethic. In the military context, it is understandable that some soldiers would call upon that legacy, a factor that is lost when *ceddo* is translated as “unbeliever,” devoid of a martial identity. Not only does this not correlate well historically, but it echoes the views of the greatest critics of the *ceddo*, like the Abbé David Boilat, who described Senegambia in the mid-19th century. A Catholic priest with French and Senegalese roots, Boilat wrote that *ceddo* were the opposite of Islamic leaders, or *marabouts*, signifying their “impious” or pagan roots (Boilat, 1853, pp.308-309). It is the “unbeliever” definition that has survived.

Selective remembrance, or selective forgetting, has been discussed at length in the field of oral history, exemplified in the work of Alessandro Portelli in his study of a Nazi massacre in Rome. Regarding the function of memory in remembering, forgetting, or indeed reimagining the narrative of events, Portelli argues that historical memory is not passed neatly from generation to generation in a linear manner (Portelli, 2003, p.286). Instead, memory can skip a generation or

⁵ I have focused here on visual representations in part due to time and space limitations. A larger study might consider depictions of *ceddo* and *tirailleurs* in literature and song. Numerous oral traditions and songs discuss the history and role of *ceddo*, including contemporary songs by Senegalese artists including Boubacar Diébaté, Ismaël Lô, Baaba Maal, and Mamadou.

change within it, creating different and perhaps contradictory memoryscapes able to exist simultaneously (Portelli, 2003, p.286). Though Portelli documents how only a small percentage of what happened will be relayed to subsequent generations, this is not in itself equivalent to a full loss, as the lack of memory can also open up “spaces for imagination and elaboration” (Portelli, 2003, pp.288-289).

Because young people, in particular, may not have received a particularly biased narrative, they may create an alternative “interpretation out of what they know” (Portelli, 2003, p.289). A particular youth-based reimagining of the past appears in the *set/setal* movement in 1980s Dakar, as described by historian Mamadou Diouf.⁶ Focused on street cleaning and reconfiguring the urban landscape as a site of collective memory, *set/setal* centred on the creation of Senegalese identity based on “the Wolof identity of the *ndiggel*⁷ (the groundnut basin and the regions around Touba and Tivaouane) and the Atlantic commercial ports (Dakar, Rufisque, Saint Louis)” (Diouf, 2005). Diouf also describes the practice through which youth reimagined Senegalese identity on the streets of Dakar. One example cited is the removal of colonial-era statues, which were replaced by those of *ceddo*. Diouf refers to this process as “recreating the past”, integrating references to precolonial symbols with those of the nationalist state “and its appropriation of space” (Diouf, 2005).

Senegambian societies in the 18th and 19th centuries

As Martin Klein has written, by the 18th and 19th centuries, around 80 per cent of the population of the Senegambia region comprised Wolof, Seereer, Mandinka, Fulbe, and Tukulor men and women, whose societies had roughly similar political organisations based upon aristocratic control (Klein, 1972, p.419). Adherents of Islam spread their faith beginning in the 11th century. By the 16th century, Senegambia had developed its own Islamic traditions and, toward the late 19th century, an indigenous Muslim brotherhood: the Murids (Babou, 2007).⁸ Oral traditions in Kajoor also show that the Wolof have believed Islam to be a part of their society and governance since the beginning of the Jolof Empire

⁶ The *set/setal* movement employed physical cleanliness as a metaphor for the political and social reforms believed necessary by younger generations of Senegalese in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It also involved the youth-dominated reclamation and redecoration of public spaces in Dakar.

⁷ As noted by Babou (2007, p.86), *ndiggel* or *ndigel* generally refers to the recommendations of the founder of the Murid brotherhood, Cheikh Amadu Bamba Mbacké.

⁸ A second Senegal-based Islamic brotherhood is the Layene or Layeniyya, which is most prevalent among the Lebu in the Cap-Vert region and also dates to the 19th century. Two further Islamic brotherhoods, the Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya, have broader followings but are not indigenous to Senegal.

(Colvin, 1974, p.592). However, this should not be conflated with the *jihād*ist states of Fuuta Tooro or Futa Jalon, where Islam served as the organisational centre of the government.

The social structure of most Senegambian societies has been likened to a caste system with varying degrees of rigidity.⁹ During the period in question, caste status defined occupational roles and the hierarchy of power in Senegambian states. The most comprehensive study of caste in West Africa sketches out this system and provides an illuminating look into Senegambian societies during this time (Tamari, 1997; Wane, 1969). In particular, castes of the former Jolof Empire and the region of Fuuta Tooro in Northern and Northeastern Senegambia can be divided roughly into three groups: nobility and other free persons (known among the Wolof as *geer*), artisans, and slaves.

In the territory that makes up present-day Senegal, *ceddo* and *tirailleurs sénégalais* descend from the same military tradition. Though not unique to Senegal or even the Senegambia region more broadly, this system privileged military life and allowed for military reaffiliation into a conquering force following a defeat. In most cases, the alternative was enslavement, though that does not mean all soldiers agreed immediately to enlist in the force of the opposition. Some of the greatest generals, military strategists, and confidants of kings and other political figures were former war captives. They dominated the forces of many Senegambian kingdoms, including Kajoor, Kaabu, and Fuuta Tooro, and, eventually, came to make up a large part of the French colonial forces in 19th-century Senegambia.

The conscription process has a longstanding history in the states that comprised Senegambia, where regional powers raised armies through regular levees and calls to arms from at least the mid-18th century. The presence of conscripts is obscured in the accounts of European explorers and colonial officials by their consistent misidentification of these men as “slaves” (Westwood, 2018). Certainly, some of these men would have been identified as slave caste within the societal divisions of Senegambian states and their Wolof, Tukulor, Fulbe, Mandinka, Seereer, and Bambara residents. However, many were just as likely to be peasant farmers with feudal obligations, not unlike France’s domestic conscription practices. The terminology applied features the elision of two terms: *captif* and *esclave*. The widespread use of *captif* provides a window through which to view the military nature of enslavement throughout the region. For the most part, *captif* identified a person enslaved through warfare and did not thus impose upon them

⁹ The caste system of Senegambia should not be confused with the better-known caste society of India. In the Senegambia region, castes are regularly defined by occupation. Caste status is perpetuated by endogamy and castes are often delineated hierarchically but do not adhere to a sense of inherited blood purity, where certain people are designated “untouchable.”

a permanent slave status (Holder, 1998). In local languages, particularly Wolof and Pulaar, this differentiation was also apparent in delineating between warriors subjugated through warfare, *ceddo*, and slave caste individuals within the social structures of Haalpulaar¹⁰ and Wolof societies: *maccube* and *jaam*, respectively.

Ceddo

During the precolonial period, observers often characterised *ceddo* as drunk, aggressive, pillaging soldiers. This depiction obscures the patron-client relationships between *ceddo* and the royal lineages to which they were bound. Fighting in defence of the king, they often performed bureaucratic functions in addition to military responsibilities. Indeed some, if not most, converted to Islam, but they marked their separate status by their style of dress and behaviour.

Much of the emphasis on drinking *eau-de-vie* (brandy) or *sangara* (alcohol) and the perceived pagan-Muslim divide between *ceddo* and *marabouts* stems from the extensive use of sources critical of the government, including the *métis* Abbé David Boilat's 19th-century survey of the region. Boilat, who often referred to *ceddo* as amoral and irreligious, stressed that not only did these men form "the militia" of Kajoor, Waalo, Bawol, Siin, and Saalum, but also that they were employed and fed by their patrons (Boilat, 1853, pp.308-309). The focus of Europeans and those aligned with the French "civilising mission" tended to overemphasise the drunkenness and "vice" engaged in by *ceddo*. However, they provided sought after military service within Senegambia, demonstrating that their behaviour was not a subject of significant concern within their communities.

There is little consensus historically whether to identify *ceddo* in terms of a pagan identity, a warrior identity, or a combination of the two.¹¹ This controversy, at least in part, stems from the need to delineate between *ceddo/sebbe* among

¹⁰ Haalpulaar meaning "Pulaar speakers". Dialects of the Pulaar/Fulbe/Fulani language are spoken throughout and beyond the Sahelian region, from the countries of present-day Mauritania as far east as Chad and Cameroon.

¹¹ A sample of the multitude of definitions for *ceddo* in Kajoor and other Wolof states follows: in *Le Kajoor au XIXe siècle: Pouvoir ceddo et conquête coloniale*, Mamadou Diouf (2014, p.82) describes *ceddo* as a class formed from *jaam* (slaves) who were armed by the nobility of Kajoor; in *La société wolof: tradition et changement: les systèmes d'inégalité et de domination*, Abdoulaye Bara Diop (1981, pp.56, 216, 224) equates *ceddo* with "pagan" and discusses their importance in the political hierarchy. Later, Diop (1981, p.226) refers to *ceddo* as supporting Latsukaabe in the "war of the *marabouts*" but differentiates *ceddo* from the "corps of elite slaves of the crown" that Latsukaabe armed to support his claim to the throne of Bawol; in *Le Royaume Du Waalo*, Boubacar Barry (1985, p.90), describes *ceddo* as warriors recruited from within the "captives of the crown" or "crown slaves"; finally, in *Portrait of an Island*, Mark Hinchman (2015, p.31), refers to *ceddo* as "warrior-slaves."

the Tukulor of Fuuta Tooro and the Fulbe of Fuuta Jalon and *ceddo* among the Wolof and other inhabitants of the Jolof Empire. In a comprehensive study of the social structure of the Tukulor of Senegambia, Yaya Wane specifies the difference between the temporal power of *ceddo/sebbe* and the spiritual power of *toorobbe*, the Muslim clerics known as *marabouts*, *imams*, and *cernos* within Tukulor society (Wane, 1969, pp.39-40). However, Wane clarifies that the characteristics of *ceddo/sebbe* are that they may convert to and practice Islam but not follow all of its pillars. Their temperament is marked by courageous actions, even to the point of rashness, and insensitivity to physical pain (Wane, 1969, p.41), characteristics of *ceddo/sebbe* that made them excellent soldiers. Their position as military professionals led to the establishment of *ceddo/sebbe* villages, typically located where garrisons would have been stationed in an earlier era.

The real power of the Wolof *ceddo* grew at the end of the 17th century with the restoration of aristocratic power in Kajoor (Searing, 1988). The Damel (ruler) created a vast army of *ceddo*, men typically described as “slaves of the crown” (Searing, 1988, pp.483-484). These men were then given positions of privilege as military specialists and enforcers of dynastic power.

One of the rulers of Kajoor who benefited from the power and military acumen of the *ceddo* is one of the last independent Damels of Kajoor, Lat Joor Joob, who serves as an outsized figure within the historical imaginary of Senegal. Indeed, alongside Al-Hajj Umar Taal and Cheikh Amadu Bamba Mbacké, Joob is viewed today as a central figure in Senegal’s fight against colonial rule. However, as Searing has written, the period of the 1860s saw a civil war between the Wolof kingdoms of Kajoor and Bawol as opposed to a unified movement against French domination. Though Muslim peasants were sporadically agitating against aristocratic rule from the 1790s through the 1830s, French meddling and a succession crisis fuelled the unrest of mid-century Kajoor (Searing, 2001).

In January of 1862, *ceddo* forces loyal to Lat Joor deposed the Damel Majoojo, a French ally from the important Faal lineage. Lat Joor was subsequently overthrown by French forces and their allies and forced to seek refuge in 1864 under the protection of Almaami Maba Jakhu Ba in Saalum. It is widely believed that Lat Joor converted to Islam during his time in Saalum, and it was the head of his army, the *ceddo* warrior Demba War Sall, who encouraged him (Searing, 2001, p.43). Here again, we see the linkage between *ceddo* identity and Islam instead of opposition. Following the death of Maba in 1867, Lat Joor returned to Kajoor with his army but failed to receive French support to return to the throne. The shifting alliances and political turmoil of the late 19th century indeed found Lat Joor in opposition to the *ceddo* who had once supported his claim to Kajoor, and he was killed in battle against the combined forces of the French and his former second in command, Demba War Sall, in 1886 (Babou, 2007, p.31).

Tirailleurs sénégalais

From the 1860s to the 1880s, many of the opposing forces faced by Lat Joor and his *ceddo* army involved at least some *tirailleurs sénégalais* troops, though France was dependent on auxiliary forces for military supremacy (Westwood, 2019). For example, in his description of the “column of Cayor” he led in pursuit of Lat Joor’s army, *Émile* Pinet-Laprade (later Governor of Senegal) discussed the makeup of his forces in support of the *Damel* Majoojo. It was composed of the following: 100 naval infantry troops, 100 *disciplinaires* (penal troops); 40 “natives” of the engineering company; 35 *spahi* cavalry; 75 naval artillery soldiers; and 250 *tirailleurs sénégalais* (Westwood, 2019, p.180).

As I referenced in the introduction to this article, for much of the 19th century, French colonial forces came from Senegambia, though the term *tirailleurs sénégalais* only came into regular usage following the official recognition of this army in 1857. Most histories of *tirailleurs* focus on this post-1857 period, and the title of Myron Echenberg’s text on the *tirailleurs sénégalais*, *Colonial Conscripts*, identifies the French approach to recruitment in West Africa during the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Echenburg, 1991).

Prior to the 19th century, French officials and merchants were dependent upon *laptots*, men who served in both commercial and military roles, many of whom had captive or slave caste origins. They served as captains and crew members for business ventures or what J. Malcolm Thompson has termed “commercial escort duty” (Thompson, 1989, p.3). The inception of the *tirailleurs* force began in 1803, with the first significant attempt to establish a “volunteer” force in Saint Louis under the direction of Governor François Blanchot. He proclaimed that the 30 “volunteers” must be aged 18 to 26, born in Senegal, and able to bear arms and speak French (Westwood, 2019, p.90). These soldiers were meant to serve as a small garrison or national guard for the European and *métis* inhabitants of Saint Louis. It is unclear whether or not the *volontaires* ever operated as more than a standing force. Instead, for the majority of the 19th century, soldiers in Senegambia were one part of a multi-ethnic army made up of Europeans, Algerians, and African officers, cavalry, and infantry.

At the end of 1853, five years after the ostensible abolition of slavery in French territories, only 310 men were serving in the colonial force made up of the *compagnies du Sénégal*. Free men served seven-year terms, while men who were conscripted through the *rachat* process served 14-year enlistments (Westwood, 2019, pp.94-95, 194).¹² *Rachat* transactions often dictated a period of indentured servitude

¹² *Rachat*, literally “redemption” but often translated as “ransom,” was employed by French administrators and merchants to “redeem” men from captivity.

followed by emancipation, though, in reality, most people bought and sold through the process of *rachat* were captives in all but name (Robinson, 1975, pp.113-114).

The first battalion of *tirailleurs sénégalais* was established by imperial decree on 21 July 1857 under the direction of Napoleon III and his minister of the navy and colonies, Admiral Alphonse Ferdinand Hamelin (Westwood, 2019, p.200). The battalion would comprise four companies led by three officers each. All other companies would be dissolved to create the battalions of *tirailleurs*. That included the *compagnies indigènes*, the “native companies,” that until 1857 provided the most significant military support in Senegal. Other *tirailleurs* forces were created during the middle to late 1800s, including *tirailleurs soudanais*, generally of Malian origin, the *tirailleurs haoussas*, from what is today Benin. However, in 1900 all colonial troops in West Africa were designated *tirailleurs sénégalais*, regardless of origin, and thus most of the literature on *tirailleurs* for the early 20th century focuses on their multi-national character.

This brief historical overview of the precolonial and colonial military background of the Senegambia region will inform the following section, which is centred on the representations of this history in physical artefacts, including statues and street art, as well as film, mainly two films by the Senegalese auteur Ousmane Sembène.

Historical artefacts: Representations of the Senegalese military in popular culture

As the African military historian Richard Reid has observed, the memory and memorialisation of conflict are complex processes confronted by nations worldwide, with “no easily chartable manner in which histories of violence can be mapped and understood” (Reid, 2019, p.1042). As a result, governments and citizens create representations of the past that may be more or less faithful to the historical record. One of the particular problems among African countries in the post-independence landscape was the anxiety about reproducing dark and violent imagery that would feed ideas of Africa as the “dark continent” (Reid, 2019, pp.1041, 1050).

Reid points out that one of the most considerable difficulties in repurposing or repackaging precolonial military history for a post-independence audience is the question of boundaries and borders. Because most modern African states do not adhere to the lands of the kingdoms and empires that once marked the continent, “national” heroes can be hard to come by. However, those precolonial territories of Senegambia have not met that same fate, as modern Senegal broadly encompasses the states of Bawol, Kajoor, and much of Fuuta Tooro, Siin, Saalum, Waalo, Kaabu, and Futa Jalon. Many of the leaders of these polities did

hope to build a state for themselves, though they would not have called it Senegal or thought of themselves as Senegalese.

Lat Joor and Ceddó: Representations of the precolonial past

The most famous depiction of *ceddó* is the 1977 film of Senegalese auteur Ousmane Sembène, *Ceddó*, centring on the relationship between Islam, Wolof culture, and European intervention before the colonial period. This controversial film provoked debates in the public sphere over everything from the place of *ceddó* in the history of Senegal to its contemporary context. In her overview of the history of popular culture in Africa, the cultural anthropologist Karin Barber considers one aspect of memory-making: the importance of African filmmaking in the years following independence, particularly in West Africa. Barber argues that films like those of Sembène, though unintentionally, remained like much of Francophone cinema, “essentially an international intellectuals’ film tradition” (Barber, 2018, p.148). These films were not released widely, but over decades they have come to define, in some cases, the Senegalese memoryscape. Indeed, many may reach a wider audience today as a result of digitalisation and their availability via the internet. This development is a positive move for artists like Sembène, who described African filmmakers as *griots*, defining a *griot* as a “historian, the raconteur, the living memory and the conscience of his people”, responsible for living “within his society” and discussing what has gone wrong (Sembène in Amkpa and SenGupta, 2010, p.16).

The depiction of *ceddó* in Sembène’s film, *Ceddó*, is often discussed in terms of its politically controversial reception by the government of then-President Leopold Sédar Senghor or its cinematography. It also serves as a historical artefact, a transmission of memory that tells the story of the states of precolonial Senegal and the relationship between religious orders, French imperialists, and those who resisted efforts to control and dominate the local population. The film also relies on oral traditions, uniting and recovering popular memory to reconstruct a history of precolonial Senegal (Cham, 2008, pp.20-25). It depicts Islam as an imposed belief system similar to Christianity or the imperial project, a subject of heated discussion to this day. It is also notable for its use of Wolof, separating it linguistically from the preponderance of French-language films and television programmes in Senegal. This feature equates the history of Senegal with that of the Wolof people, a process referred to as Wolofisation.

As the cultural historian and critic Mbye Cham has argued, the films of Sembène represent “some of the most compelling and indeed radical filmic revisions and reinterpretations of history in Africa” (Cham, 2008, p.21). *Ceddó* takes a

radically different view of “Senegalese” history and retroactively applies anti-colonial sentiment that is not necessarily based on the historical record. I agree with Cham that the film represents “a radical revision and representation of the African past in ways which not only purge it of imposed European and other foreign remembrances” that also was meant as a “reconstructed” history that addresses “the present challenges of postcolonial African societies” (Cham, 2008, p.21). As Cham contends, “Sembène reconstructs the origin of, and the reasons for, the absence of traditional secular power figures and structures, and the hegemonic status and power of Muslim marabouts and brotherhoods in Senegal today” (Cham, 2008, p.24).

The main anachronism is, of course, the portrayal of Islam. The kingdom in the film of Sembène is threatened not only by Christianity and colonialism but by a “foreign” Islam. The film privileges the position of the *ceddo*, the last vestiges of precolonial power, in contrast to the compromised ruler of the kingdom, who is beholden both to the French colonial office, the French Christian missionary, and the zealous Imam attempting to wrest control from the royal seat. Though not based on historical events, the film references much of the iconography and practices of *ceddo* and the Wolof states.

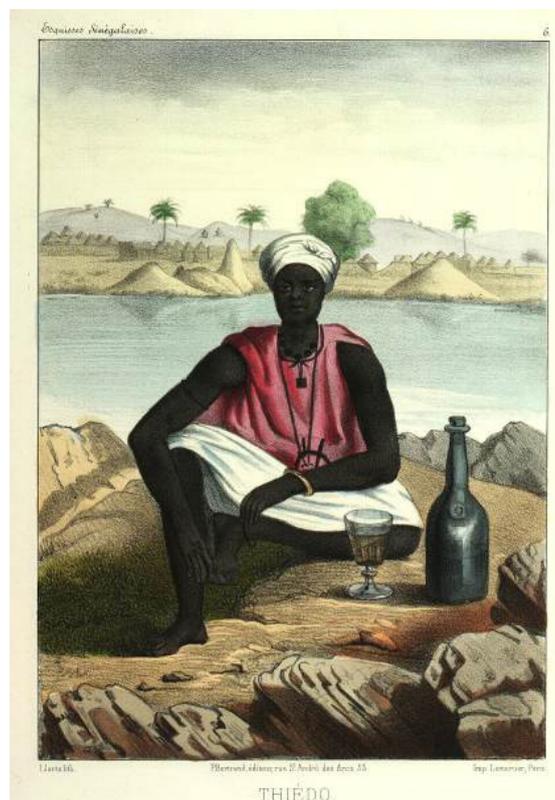


Figure 1. Image of Ceddo in *Esquisses sénégalaises: physionomie du pays, peuplades, commerce, religions...*, by Abbé David Boilat (Paris: p.Bertrand, 1853).

Awam Amkpa and Gunja SenGupta point out that the film also takes on the role of slavery in Senegal, which occupies a contested space—particularly about the military—and is complicated by patron-client relationships. Presented as *jaami buur*, “slaves of the crown”, the *ceddo* have their villages razed by warriors of the Imam, armed with torches and guns, following the refusal of the *ceddo* to convert to Islam. A subsequent scene depicts their exodus when, in reality, most soldiers would have been given the option to join the conquering force. In another scene, the princess Dior Yacine tells her *ceddo* captor that he is a slave. In response, he threatens to kill her if she steps out of a space that he has demarcated by a rope on the ground. This action echoes the irons military leaders were forced to keep in their houses to mark their subordinate status in the kingdoms of Kajoor and Waalo (Westwood, 2018, p.525).



Figure 2. Still from Sembène, *Ceddo*.

Amkpa and Gupta describe the *ceddo* in the film as “crown slaves” (Amkpa and SenGupta, 2010, p.18), which perpetuates this mythology of *ceddo* as more beholden to the Wolof monarchy than was likely the reality at this point. According to the authors, though *ceddo* are crown slaves, they “enjoy rights and privileges that distinguish them from chattel”. Amkpa and SenGupta also incorrectly frame *ceddo* as anti-Islam though they mention ahistorical aspects of the film, particularly the trivialisation of French colonial officials (p. 20). Noticeably, the French officials who appear in the film do not speak. (Amkpa and SenGupta, 2010)

As I state in the introduction, the depiction of *ceddo* as anti-Islam is not supported by the historical record. Instead, the majority of *ceddo* were most likely Muslim, though they marked themselves as different through certain practices

like drinking alcohol and growing their hair long. These behaviours are referenced in scenes of alcohol consumption and during the conversion of *ceddo* when devotees of the Imam shave their heads. I cannot say for sure whether Sembène was familiar with the description of *ceddo* by the Abbé Boilat or his familiarity with the image Boilat included in his book on Senegambia (Fig. 1). It is noticeable, though, that the image Boilat provided of *ceddo* does not include weaponry or, indeed, any military reference. In the film, the *ceddo* warrior who captures Dior Yacine is skilled militarily, particularly with a bow and arrow, which is contrasted with the guns of his enemies, bought from the French traders (Fig. 2). However, the majority of *ceddo* appear not as warriors but peasants: they do not carry weapons, nor are they generally depicted in a battle setting.

As noted above, Sembène refutes the Senegalese Islamic version of the West as the sole source of Africa's cultural contamination. In many cases, Muslims appear as scheming, violent fanatics with little regard for religious and cultural freedom. The rise of the Imam and his attack on the "pagan" practices among the *ceddo* indirectly rebukes the Wolof secular authority, the Damel, who is now a convert. However, historically this was rarely the case. Though French observers and their supporters sought to separate practising Muslims from supposedly secular local leaders, they exhibited a lack of understanding that, for the most part, the men they criticised and those they praised *were* Muslims, despite their alcohol consumption and other supposedly anti-Islamic practices depicted throughout the film.



Figure 3. Image of Lat Joor Joob and Governor Faidherbe. Dakar, Senegal. Photo by the author.

The precolonial past also appears in the statuary and street art of Dakar, particularly embodied in the statue of Lat Joor's horse, Maalaw, and a panel painted by the street artist Mamadou Pape Samb, better known as Papisto Boy, juxtaposing the images of Lat Joor and the famous Governor Louis Léon Cesar Faidherbe, serving here as a representative of the French colonial state (Figs. 3 and 4). Similar to the depiction of *ceddó* in the film of Ousmane Sembène, the images of Lat Joor, or in one case his horse, represent Senegal as in conflict with the French colonial state. In this case, Lat Joor emerges as a hero of Senegal, which, as we have seen, was not quite the case historically. This depiction of Lat Joor is dynamic, juxtaposed against the more staid image of Faidherbe. The past viewed through the lens of these artworks is also dynamic, referencing an untamed Senegal, unbowed by French aggression. However, Lat Joor, the man, as opposed to Lat Joor, the historical artefact, was not defending Senegal against the French. Instead, he represented one state, Kajoor, and shifted between alliances with other indigenous kingdoms and military leaders, for example, Amadu Seku Taal, and the French. This depiction of a dynamic past is in high contrast to that of *tirailleurs sénégalais*.



Figure 4. Statue of Maalaw, Dakar, Senegal. Photo by the author.



Figure 5. Still from Sembène, *Camp de Thiaroye*.

The colonial subject: Tirailleurs sénégalais in the Senegalese imaginary

Martin Mourre has also identified the oppositional construction of *tirailleurs* versus *ceddo*, noting that the negative view of *tirailleurs* in Senegal “was constructed as a counterpart to another figure: that of Lat-Dior, a warrior and king of Kayor who died in 1886 and was considered in Senegal the ‘last great opponent of colonisation’” (Mourre, 2018, p.522). As referenced above, Lat Joor was not the last opponent of colonisation and, at various points in his career, actually made peace with the French in order to preserve his territorial control over Kajoor. Mourre specialises in the collective memory of one of the most violent encounters between French colonial officials and their Senegalese subjects: the 1944 massacre of *tirailleurs sénégalais* at Thiaroye. Interestingly, Mourre describes the public memory of this event as one that is “in constant evolution” (Mourre, 2018, p.519).

One incarnation of the *tirailleurs sénégalais* and their position in the Senegalese memoryscape is a further film of Ousmane Sembène, *Camp de Thiaroye*, which considers the massacre referenced above (Fig. 5).¹³ Despite the title of the film, the massacre at Thiaroye is the final event of the film, which instead focuses on the stories of the returned soldiers, centred around one Senegalese man, in particular, Sergeant Diatta, who exemplifies the “success” of the French “colonial project”: he speaks and writes in fluent French, listens to the work of classical European composers, and is deferential towards his French superiors. Despite these qualities, Diatta is subjected to numerous indignities at Thiaroye and a violent attack by U.S. soldiers. As opposed to Sembène’s depiction of *ceddo*, the *tirailleurs* in the film serve less as tragic heroes than tragic victims. I believe this serves as a telltale representation of the complex memory of *tirailleurs* in Senegal and their role as defenders of French colonial expansion and the maintenance of French control in the period after WWI and WWII. Despite their bravery in the two world wars, *tirailleurs* acted as agents of the French in what is today Vietnam and Algeria to suppress anti-colonial movements.

This less favourable view of *tirailleurs* compared to *ceddo* also appears in the public eye through the statue of a French officer and a *tirailleur sénégalais*, often referred to as Demba and Dupont, which today stands in the Place du Tirailleur in Dakar (Figs. 6 and 7). In a discussion on relics, including statuary like Demba and Dupont, the historian David Lowenthal asserts that changing relics of a previous era may also change society, writing that “the revised past in turn alters our own identity” (Lowenthal, 2003, p.411). That impact depends, however, on who instigates a particular change, like the restoration of a colo-

¹³ Due to limits of time and length, I have not been able to include additional films by Sembène that also deal with the subject of *tirailleurs sénégalais*, including *Emitai* and *Borom Sarret*.

nial monument, and their reasoning, which in 2004 was to remind the French public of the debt owed to Senegalese soldiers who fought in the European theatres of WWI and WWII.



Figure 6. Picture postcard of Demba et Dupont [blank], 1923. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

Anthropologist Ferdinand De Jong also discusses the importance of the restoration of the statue as a rebuke of France’s failure to appropriately compensate Senegal for its sacrifice in WWI and WWII (De Jong, 2008, p.209). As declared by De Jong, former President of Senegal Abdoulaye Wade was responsible for an attempt to “reconcile the colonial past” in contrast to narratives that “ignored the colonial past as a disruption,” thus recentering the “first foundational mythos of the postcolonial state” upon “claimed precolonial origins for the state” based for the most part in Wolof states of precolonial Senegal (De Jong, 2008, p.205).

As recalled by De Jong, the *Demba and Dupont* statue was recycled and reinstated as part of the 2004 commemoration ceremonies in the newly renamed

Place du Tirailleur in the Plateau neighbourhood of Dakar. The statue, designed by the French sculptor Paul Ducuing and unveiled in 1923 to commemorate the contribution of African troops to Allied victory in WWI, was initially located in the Place de l'Étoile, today's Place Soweto. The original base of the statue included tributes to the French architects of empire: Louis Faidherbe, Griffon du Bellay, William Merlaud-Ponty, François-Joseph Clozel, and Joost Van Vollenhoven, many of whom were responsible for French colonial aggression in the territory that would become Senegal and West Africa more broadly. It was relocated in 1983 by the government of Abdou Diouf to a Catholic cemetery on the outskirts of Dakar (Ginio, 2006, p.144). In 2004, only the representation of "Demba" and "Dupont" was restored to the newly dedicated Place du Tirailleurs, on top of a new pedestal that noticeably omits the visages of French colonial officials.



Figure 7. Demba and Dupont statue, 2012. Wikimedia. (CC) Raimund Liebert.

Reimagining Senegal's military heritage

The artificial demarcation between a precolonial past marked by anti-French sentiment and the collaborative *tirailleurs sénégalais* has been breached in a few cases.

One of the places that attempts to meld together the precolonial, colonial and post-independence forces of the Senegalese military is the military museum in Dakar, first inaugurated in 1997 after more than a decade of planning (Ginio, 2006, p.146).

Ferdinand De Jong describes a public event from 2004 when then-President Abdoulaye Wade held a series of events to honour the *tirailleurs sénégalais*. Unexpectedly, the attraction that drew the most attention was a spectacle that pitted the army of Lat Joor, represented by “horsemen in African dress” who “stormed to the centre of the pitch,” against the more ordered forces of the *tirailleurs sénégalais*, organised by regiment and dressed in historical uniforms of the *tirailleurs*, in Iba Mar Diop Stadium (De Jong, 2008, pp.201-202). According to De Jong, the audience “got on its feet, shouted and went out of its mind with enthusiasm” upon the entrance of the forces of Lat Joor (De Jong, 2008, p.202).

As highlighted by Mourre, the Senegalese army, referencing this storied past of the *ceddo* and the army of Lat Joor, took on the motto “We are killed / They kill us, we are not dishonoured / they do not dishonour us” (Mourre, 2015, pp.25-26). This phrase was adapted from the words of the former colonial Governor of Senegal, Louis Faidherbe, who was referring to the *ceddo* army of Lat Joor, another symbolic reference to the precolonial warrior ethic of the kingdom of Kajoor. Mourre terms this a “fictitious/fantastical genealogy” between the national military and the kingdom of Kajoor. It also echoes the Wolofisation of numerous Senegalese institutions in the post-independence period. Notably, one of Lat Joor's sons, Mbakhane Joob, was educated at the short-lived School for the Sons of Chiefs and eventually served as a clerk and interpreter in the French colonial regime (Searing, 2001, p.138).

In an interview with the scientific adviser to the Musée des Forces Armées, the military museum of Senegal located in Dakar, the link between *ceddo* and *tirailleurs* resurfaces. The adviser, the historian Mamadou Koné, argues that the “memory of combat did not begin with colonisation. In the precolonial period, there were well-structured traditional armies that resisted colonial penetration” (Koné quoted in Mourre, 2018, p.525). The goal of those who created the historical exhibits within the military museum was to begin their historical narrative within this precolonial period and link it to the present day. Thus, Koné drew a line directly from *ceddo* to *tirailleurs*, claiming that “the adventure of the *ceddo*

is directly related to that of the *tirailleurs* and plays a part in the writing of the modern *jaambaar*¹⁴ (Koné quoted in Mourre, 2018, p. 525).

Conclusion

Today, Senegal is home to one of the most successful professional militaries in sub-Saharan Africa, having experienced a post-independence history that to date has never featured a military coup or a large-scale war. Despite a long-running conflict in the southern Casamance region that began in 1982, Senegal is known regionally for its stability. This reputation for military professionalism may have featured in the desire by successive governments and Senegalese citizens to glorify precolonial figures like Lat Joor Joob and the *ceddo* forces who supported him for decades, even though the historical record is unsupportive of this view.

Further, the receding memory of *tirailleurs sénégalais* as agents of the colonial state, who helped to suppress Senegalese peoples as well as those as far abroad as Vietnam and Algeria, has allowed for the adoption of *tirailleurs* as the descendants of the indigenous armies of Senegambia. Interestingly, this integration does reflect the history of the region, where many soldiers were military professionals who shifted allegiance for a variety of reasons, including avoiding enslavement or death after capture. In this way, perhaps the Musée des Forces Armées is paving the way for a reimagined future, a military memoryscape where the professionalisation of the Senegalese military is less a result of French intervention and military training than the result of centuries of military professionalism prior to French contact. In this reconfiguration of remembrance, *tirailleurs* and *ceddo* can both be valorised as forebears of the professional army.

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¹⁴ In Wolof, *jaambaar* can be translated both as “soldier” and as a “brave” or “courageous” person. It most likely derives from *jaambuur*, traditionally members of the *geer* caste who were either of middle or high status among free commoners of the Wolof states (Searing, 2001, pp.12-13).

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