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Kathleen Keller, *Colonial Suspects: Suspicion, Imperial Rule, and Colonial Society in Interwar West Africa*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2018. xi + 243 pp. Map, notes, bibliography, and index. \$55.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-0-8032-9691-6; \$55.00 U.S. (eb). ISBN 978-1-4962-0618-3

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In a global context, surveillance strategies were of critical importance to the everyday maintenance of modern colonial empires from the beginning of the nineteenth century. From British India and Singapore, to apartheid South Africa, through French and British North Africa and the Middle East, many attempts to supervise, inspect and monitor colonial societies and subject populations at large were centered on, inter alia, immigration, sanitation and hygiene, urban and rural planning, transportation, labor force, arms etc. These areas have been already heavily researched in inter-disciplinary and multilateral contexts because they were essential for the continuation of colonial regimes, and for the success of colonial endeavors more generally.^[1] This book however, takes an original perspective by carefully studying a much more specific mode of colonial surveillance, which has only rarely been researched in regard to sub-Saharan Africa in general and to French West Africa in particular: the surveillance of suspicious individuals.^[2] This type of security apparatus has been traced by the author against the historical background of French West Africa (AOF, Afrique Occidentale Française), where it normally took place in the federation's urban areas and especially in its capital cities. Focused on the period of the First World War to the early 1930s, the book deals with three groups of people: French, foreigners (mainly of European and Levantine origin), and indigenous Africans from the AOF.

Despite a great diversity between these groups and the individuals within them, it appears that the common denominator in their consideration as "suspects" is that they appeared to present varied threats to the French colonial project in Africa. The author therefore makes an innovative effort to answer a few simple questions that run through the book: What were the reasons for this particular type of "suspiciousness" that necessitated the intervention of the intelligence services (the Sûreté Générale in most cases)? Who was regarded specifically as a "suspect" in terms of personal profile, apparent intentions or behaviors, socio-political agenda or religious beliefs, moralities, nationalities etc.? In essence, any aspect of behavior could be considered grounds for suspicion. Aside from the suspects' detailed portraits that arise from the historical accounts, we also benefit from the collection of individual narratives that present, albeit indirectly, a portrayal of the contemporary character of the French colonial state, its fragilities, paranoias, limits of tolerance, its self-image and political position in West Africa.

The book is organized into an introduction and five chapters: the first two chapters are occupied with the development of a surveillance system in the AOF by the colonial authorities from 1914 through the interwar period to 1939. These chapters converse with the emerging doctrine of *association* on the one hand, and with the very strategies of inspection on the other, such as shadowing, postal control, international and regional port control, informants and gossip, denunciation and home searches (strategies that were almost completely abandoned under Vichy). Methodologically, such information is gained from the author's examination of hundreds of relevant files (from the Sûreté and the political affairs bureau), mostly located at the central government archives in Senegal and the colonial archives in France. The following three chapters scrutinize the lives of the suspects themselves, structuring an outstanding "history from below" with an ethnographic quality by critically reading the colonial sources against the grain, often with an implied humor. A nuanced tapestry is therefore woven by the author through her careful analysis of a considerable number of micro-scale personal narratives, and artfully fitting them into her meta-narrative. The engendered history deals with the colonial society from its stubbornly "unruly" margins that constantly challenged core presumptions, norms and beliefs. At the same time, this history is sensitive to the variety and diversity of the suspects' personal backgrounds as they came across to the colonial authorities during the defined time span and not withstanding a certain post-war ambiance.

Suspect profiles range considerably, starting with foreigners—from Europe, British Africa, Asia, South America and the United States—who could easily be blocked or expelled from the AOF, to ones from other French colonies such as Vietnam and Algeria. They also include metropolitan French, from expatriates to travelers passing through; and indigenous Africans, both citizens and subjects of the AOF who could not be expelled, and who were affiliated with political, ideological or religious networks. The rainbow of individual profiles exposes a panorama of actual and imagined fears on the part of the colonial authorities, fears that necessitated surveillance, data collection and regulation. Amongst these fears, the colonial authorities were particularly preoccupied with the emerging influence of communism, pan-Africanism and pan-Islamism, and with anti-colonialism and anti-republicanism and royalism. They also include criminal and immoral activities, especially from returning veterans and "lovers of natives." Anything but a monolithic group, the suspect profiles also expose the dynamism inherent in the imperial endeavor and its network of globalizing port cities, communication and transportation. This network generated an increasingly mobile cosmopolitanism that simultaneously nurtured and complicated the culture of suspicion. Dakar's port became a prominent locus in the colonial maritime network, a transient point of international and transnational "flows" of traffic of all kinds in terms of humans, interests, ideas, politics and cultures. As the capital of the AOF, Dakar's maritime gates, its central streets, cafes, night clubs, restaurants and hotels were constantly under surveillance—an attention that decreased dramatically, or was totally impossible, in the less or non-urbanized areas.

The entanglement of some of Foucault's theories on disciplinary power and the "dispositif"—as an apparatus for maintaining social power through institutional, physical, administrative and knowledge-based mechanisms—could meaningfully enrich the book. Foucault is only mentioned once in the body of text (p. 71), with a citation that was borrowed indirectly from a secondary source, though this might be forgiven as historical monographs are not always framed by an all-embracing philosophy. Together with this, on the purely historiographical level, some more explicit comparative glimpses to other colonial "intelligence states" in Africa and beyond were

missing from the introduction. Even if explored briefly, such examples could better posit and locate the reader in terms of relativism between the case study of the French colonialism in the AOF and some other contemporary relevant case studies of other colonial regimes, geographies and types of suspect profiles. Such examples would also help the reader to draw some intersecting sub-themes between the variety of cases, and identify common and diverse points in his/her imagination, even if only in an anecdotal way.

The book will be of interest to historians of West Africa who have long been focused on the socio-political history and colonial cultures beyond and within the AOF, especially in Senegal.[3] Its conclusions complete and bolster similar conclusions, but ones that have already been made in other fields, and in disciplines that deal with different aspects of modern colonialism, especially urban planning. In other words, it emphasizes the growing understanding that the colonial apparatus was far from operating as a comprehensive disciplinary power equipped with highly-efficient suppressive means.[4] The colonial state in sub-Saharan Africa was rather characterized by a chronic lack of funds and human resources, and in unsystematic policies and practices that often produced a variety of autochthonous responses. The useful perspective of the “intelligence state” throws further light on the fragility, fragmentation and incoherence that had its roots in the colonial project.

NOTES

[1] For exemplary book-length studies in modern colonial contexts see, for instance: David Anderson and David Killingray, eds., *Policing the Empire: Government Authority and Control, 1830-1940* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1991); Christopher Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Myron Echenberg, *Black Death, White Medicine: Bubonic Plague and the Politics of Public Health in Colonial Senegal, 1914-1945* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2002); James Hevia, *The Imperial Security State: British Colonial Knowledge and Empire-Building in Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Martin Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence: Security Services and Colonial Disorder after 1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Martin Thomas, *Violence and Colonial Order: Police, Workers, and Protest in the European Colonial Empires, 1918-1940* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Frederic Wakeman, *Policing Shanghai, 1927-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

[2] Some rare book length-studies regarding sub-Saharan Africa, though not centered on individual surveillance, are: Philip Terdoo Ahire, *Imperial Policing: The Emergence and Role of the Police in Colonial Nigeria, 1860-1960* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1991); Anthony Clayton and David Killingray, *Khaki and Blue: Military and Police in British Colonial Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1989); Laurent Fourchard and Isaac Albert, eds., *Security, Crime and Segregation in West African Cities since the 19th Century* (Paris: Karthala, 2003).

[3] On Senegal, see: Nicole Bernard-Duquenot, *Le Sénégal et le Front Populaire* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1985); Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1997); Michael Crowder, *Senegal: A Study of French Assimilation Policy* (London: Methuen, 1967); Donal Cruise O'Brien, *The*

Mourides of Senegal: The Political and Economic Organization of an Islamic Brotherhood (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971); Rita Cruise O'Brien, *White Society in Black Africa: The French in Senegal* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972); Myron Echenberg, *The Tirailleurs Sénégalais in French West Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991); Elizabeth Foster, *Faith in Empire: Religion, Politics, and Colonial Rule in French Senegal, 1880-1940* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2013); Wesley Johnson, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1971); Hilary Jones, *The Métis of Senegal: Urban Life and Politics in French West Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); Martin Klein, *Islam and Imperialism in Senegal, Siné-Saloum, 1847-1914* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1968); David Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation: Muslim Societies and French Colonial Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880-1920* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2000); Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[4] For some colonial urban-planning literature that echoes this conclusion see, for instance: Raymond Betts, *Uncertain Dimensions: Western Overseas Empires in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Liora Bigon, *French Colonial Dakar: The Morphogenesis of an African Regional Capital* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016); Liora Bigon, *A History of Urban Planning in Two West African Colonial Capitals: Residential Segregation in British Lagos and French Dakar (1850-1930)* (Lewiston: Mellen, 2009); Robert Home, *Of Planting and Planning: The Making of British Colonial Cities* (London: Spon, 1997); Ambe Njoh, *Planning Power: Social Control and Planning in Colonial Africa* (London: UCL Press, 2007); Jennifer Robinson, "A Perfect System of Control? State Power and 'Native Locations' in South Africa," *Environment and Planning*, 8 (1990): 135-162; Brenda Yeoh, *Contesting Space: Power and the Built Environment in Colonial Singapore* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

ILLUSTRATIONS

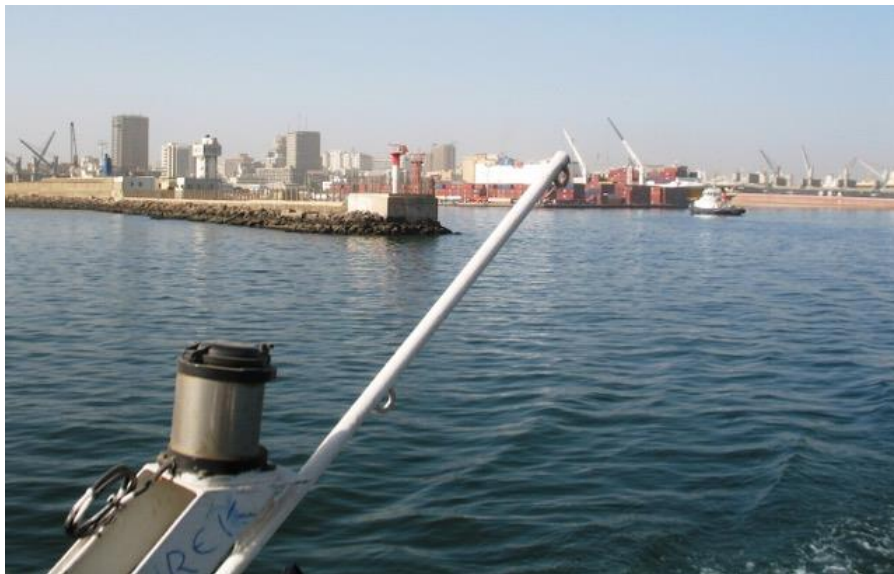


Figure 1: Recent view on the port of Dakar. As the main entry gate to the AOF federation in colonial times that also constituted the *raison d'être* of the establishment of its regional capital, this port operated as a primary site of individual inspection in colonial times (photo: Liora Bigon).



Figure 2: An old colonial police station on the margins of the prestigious Plateau quarter in today's Dakar. This gridded expatriate quarter was one of the most highly-inspected areas in the AOF (photo: Liora Bigon).

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