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Céline Labrune Badiane, *Le pari de l'école: une histoire de l'institution scolaire en Casamance, 1860-1960*. Paris: Hémisphères Éditions and Maisonneuve & Larose Nouvelles Éditions, 2022. 384 pp. Maps, tables, figures, notes, and bibliography. €18.00 (pb). ISBN 9782377011162.

Review by Kelly Duke Bryant, Rowan University.

In *Le pari de l'école: une histoire de l'institution scolaire en Casamance, 1860-1960*, Céline Labrune Badiane sets out to interrogate—and ultimately to provide richly nuanced evidence for—several widely accepted assumptions about Africans' experiences of colonial schooling in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She situates her study in Casamance, a region in southern Senegal that has often received less attention from scholars of Senegalese history or of the history of education in Africa. Relying on copious evidence from at least five archives, oral interviews, and documents found in the collections of individual schools in southern Senegal, she explores the notions that, first, colonial schools were places where Africans negotiated their relationships to the colonial state; second, families evaluated colonial schools and the opportunities and burdens they presented from a utilitarian perspective, incorporating them into family economic strategies when it made sense to do so; third, there was considerable variation in people's responses; and, fourth, that demographic factors such as origin, religion, gender, or degree of urbanization influenced whether children enrolled in school and how long they attended. Though her study does not break new ground in terms of its arguments, which will be familiar to anyone who has read recent scholarship on the history of education in French West Africa, it does offer new methods, approaches, and sources to demonstrate convincingly what we already accepted (often without sufficient evidence) as true.[1]

The book consists of seven chapters, an introduction, a conclusion, and a preface by the preeminent Senegalese historian, Ibrahima Thioub. The introduction outlines some of the demographic factors that affected access to colonial education and the kinds of calculations that shaped families' responses to these institutions; discusses major shifts in the scholarship on colonial schooling in French West Africa; and briefly describes Labrune Badiane's primary sources. The first four chapters cover some familiar ground, focusing on French rhetoric and ideology, the development of institutions and policies, and the expansion of colonial schooling. But the regional focus on Casamance offers a different lens through which to view the history of French colonial schooling, and Labrune Badiane's interest in students' and families' experiences differentiates her study from some of the foundational work on the topic.[2]

Chapter one explores French thinking about education and French values during the one-hundred-year period covered by the book, highlighting its centrality to colonization and the

civilizing mission. Labrune Badiane makes the point that the system was designed to train an elite, official rhetoric about mass education notwithstanding. Though others have made this argument, Labrune Badiane brings new and abundant evidence to bear, using data from student registers recorded in individual schools in Casamance from 1945 to 1960 to show when and why many students left, or were asked to leave, French schools.<sup>[3]</sup> Chapter two covers considerable ground, tracing the history of both public and mission schools—and the interplay between them—from 1860, when the first French school opened in the region, to laicization in 1904. In addition to providing an institutional history, Labrune Badiane explores the methods teachers and administrators used to recruit and retain students, describing both successes and failures, and she analyzes student demographics. In chapter three, Labrune Badiane offers institutional history for the period from 1903 to 1960, beginning with Governor General Ernest Roume's *arrêté* that structured education in the French West Africa federation, detailing several reforms in the 1920s and 1930s and the further elaboration of schooling in the postwar period, and ending with Senegal's independence. Given the importance of the Catholic Church in Casamance, Labrune Badiane appropriately maintains her focus on both public and mission schools, noting that Catholic schools saw particular success attracting students in the 1950s and beyond. Revisiting the 1903-1960 period in chapter four, Labrune Badiane asks why school infrastructure and enrollment in Casamance lagged behind much of the rest of the colony for decades, and suggests that factors ranging from the region's remoteness to its separate administrative status to personnel issues played a role. To this reader, one of the most interesting aspects of this chapter was the discussion of African teachers, drawn partly from interviews. I would have liked to read more about these professionals who, especially early on, tended to come from Senegal's northern regions and, according to Labrune Badiane, to view Casamance either as an undesirable posting due to distance from home, or as a refuge from family tensions or obligations.

In chapters five through seven, Labrune Badiane uses interdisciplinary methods, drawn from geography and sociology, to better understand the variable impacts of colonial schools on communities and individuals in Casamance. Chapter five centers the question of scale, showing how conclusions about people's responses to colonial schools differ when the unit of analysis changes from the entire region to smaller parts of it: major towns, rural areas, individual villages. She demonstrates that urban children were more likely to attend school than rural children, and that in rural areas, local political considerations and pressure from the chief for or against schools could have a huge impact. In chapter six, she relies on matriculation records and other data to create a demographic picture of the region's students and school dropouts and to consider whether factors like religious affiliation, parents' professions, ethnicity, gender, or status correlated to increased school attendance. She also reconstructs education biographies for a few of her interviewees, most of them born in the 1930s, using these to illustrate the range of factors involved in families' decisions about schooling.

Labrune Badiane pursues the issue of family calculations even further in chapter seven, focusing on an issue that troubled teachers and education personnel—fluctuating attendance and attrition. Here, she shows that even when they agreed to enroll one or more children in school, families did not relinquish control over their children. Rather, they often continued to include them in the family's economic calculus, pulling them out of school when the family needed their labor (during the harvest months, for example). They also withheld children to protest curricular choices or teacher behavior of which they did not approve. In these chapters, Labrune Badiane most clearly pursues the argument that Africans approached colonial schools strategically, sending one or more children (or not) in accordance with their economic or political goals. This

is not a new argument, as noted above, but she provides considerable new and very persuasive evidence to further elucidate and support it. The conclusion offers a brief overview of Labrune Badiane's major arguments and gestures toward a connection between the disillusionment of school leavers who had trouble finding jobs in the post-independence period and the emergence of the Casamance separatist movement in the early 1980s.

The book has many strengths, not the least of which is its solid grounding in copious archival research, supplemented by some oral interviews conducted by the author. Labrune Badiane's thorough reading of the colonial and mission archives allows her to bring new evidence to light, to paint a demographic portrait of children who left school in addition to those who stayed, and to offer some useful quantitative data allowing us to better understand the demographics of students, school-leavers, and their families. The book engages with the relevant French language scholarship and with a number of studies in English, and it takes seriously the knowledge produced by numerous Senegalese scholars in their published and unpublished work. Finally, it centers the history of colonial education in Senegal on Casamance, a region that has not received as much attention from scholars interested in education.

Although outweighed by its strengths, the book also has some weaknesses. While Labrune Badiane's research is impressive in its depth, some readers may find the level of detail and number of examples overwhelming. To this reader, the detail sometimes made it more difficult to follow the main argument, and some of it easily could have been left out or placed in the notes. I also found the analysis to be repetitive at times, and I wondered whether the earlier chapters, which contained a lot of background information, could have been condensed. Finally, while I appreciated Labrune Badiane's efforts to engage with English language scholarship, her book did not mention a few key studies that might have provided additional context for some of her findings. Overall, these shortcomings are minor, however, and should not detract from Labrune Badiane's achievement. Though its length and the density of its prose may limit the book's use in anglophone undergraduate classrooms, graduate students and other scholars who are interested in the history of education, the French empire, or colonial Senegal will find it useful.

## NOTES

[1] For other works making one or more similar arguments, see Harry Gamble, *Contesting French West Africa: Battles over Schools and the Colonial Order, 1900-1950* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017); Kelly M. Duke Bryant, *Education as Politics: Colonial Schooling and Political Debate in Senegal, 1850s-1914* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015); Jean-Hervé Jézéquel, "Histoire de bancs, parcours d'élèves: Pour une lecture 'configurationnelle' de la scolarisation à l'époque coloniale," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 43:169/170 (2003): 409-433.

[2] Abdoulaye Sadj, *Éducation Africaine et civilisation* (Dakar: SAFEP, Imprimerie A. Diop, 1964); Denise Bouche, "L'Enseignement dans les territoires français de l'Afrique occidentale de 1817 à 1920" (Ph.D. dissertation, Université de Paris I, 1974).

[3] For example, James F. Searing, *"God Alone is King": Islam and Emancipation in Senegal: The Wolof Kingdoms of Kajoor and Barwol, 1859-1914* (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 2002), pp. 259-260.

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