

Abstract

The Atlantic era, which spans from the 15th to the 19th century, was a period marked by great security instability for West African communities; slave trade and the reconfiguration of the geopolitical space that accompanied the rise of Atlantic trade were the main causes of danger encountered by the people. Faced with this almost permanent insecurity, many communities organized their defence by building fortifications in their villages.

The main objective of this book is to study the fortifications, commonly known as *tata*, built and used by the communities of the Faleme valley (Eastern Senegal). To understand the context in which these fortifications were settled, this study primarily focuses on the history of the main state entities that emerged and evolved in the Faleme valley; To the North is the Pular kingdom of Bundu, and in the South the Malinke kingdoms of Dantila, Beledugu and Sirimana. Beyond this, the specific history of each site was studied in order to identify the causes that led to the establishment of defensive structures during the Atlantic era. This research then delves into documenting materials and architectural techniques used to build fortifications and finally, our research aims to question the role of defensive structures in the history of the recent settlement of the Faleme valley.

To achieve these objectives, the research method combines a historical approach, based on the collection and study of written and oral data, and an archaeological approach based on surveys and excavations. With regard to the historical approach, historical texts, travel accounts and colonial archives were analyzed. Ethnohistorical surveys were also conducted in 28 villages to collect oral traditions related to the history of state entities and the history of communities living near archaeological sites. Through 3 field trips, carried out in 2016, 2017 and 2018, a corpus of studies of 15 archaeological sites was compiled, including sites that still had visible ruins of defensive architecture. On the other sites, although the architectural remains are no longer visible, there are oral and written testimonies enabling the reconstruction of the history and evolution of these sites. For sites with architectural remains, a general profile picture of the ruins was drawn from a general survey of screens. Sections of screens were also excavated to uncover the foundations of the walls and to study the techniques used to build them. Stone and kneaded raw earth (*banco*) were the two materials mainly used for the construction of the walls. The use of stone was primarily done through stone masonry bonded with *banco* mortar, while the absence of *banco* remains did not make it possible to determine which one was used with this material.

In its first chapter, this work deals with generalities by approaching, in a global way, the reasons for the construction of defensive structures. Then a classification of West African endogenous fortifications is proposed according to their anthropogenic or non-anthropogenic nature. Based on this classification, an overview of the research carried out on endogenous fortifications found from Senegal to Cameroon is drawn up. The second chapter presents the geographical setting of the Faleme valley and then focuses on the history of the Pular kingdom of Bundu and the Malinke kingdoms of Dantila, Sirimana, and Beledugu. This historical presentation focuses on the relationships between these kingdoms, which by their conflicting nature are at the origin of the defensive structures that constitute this corpus of study. This corpus, consisting of 15 archaeological sites, is studied in the chapter sixth. Finally, the relationship between fortifications, history and West African society in the Atlantic era is discussed, alongside with a reflection on the place of endogenous fortifications in the Atlantic era, in Senegal's tangible cultural heritage.

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