78. French colonization impacts to West African city forms

ーComparative study between pre-colonial with colonial city forms in the Republic of Maliー

フランス植民地化が西アフリカの都市に与えた影響について
ーマリ共和国においてブレ・コロニアルとコロニアル都市型の比較研究ー

ムッサ デンベレ*・古山正雄**

Moussa Dembele and Masao Furuyama

19世紀後半のフランスによる植民化は、西アフリカ都市に根本的な影響を与えたと同時に、近代的都市計画の発展をもたらした。西アフリカのブレ・コロニアルな都市はフィジークルやメタフィジークルな記号によって構成され、住民にとって生活規律や伝統生活の社会的意味を持つ空間である。本研究はマリ共和国の植民地都市であるジャンナやバマコにおける都市発展過程の考察を通じて、伝統的都市空間がどのように植民地化による変容と近代化の影響を受けたかを明らかにした。ブレ・コロニアルとコロニアル都市の比較研究により、マリの都市空間が物理的変化を受けた結果生じた社会構造の変化を考察した。こうした都市の物理的变化によって人と空間の関係が失われたことで伝統社会のコミュニケーションが変容したことを明らかにする。

Keywords: space meanings, ethnic group, semiological urbanism, French colonization

空間の意味、民族、記号的都市論、フランス植民地化

I Introduction

French colonization of late 19th century was principally constituted by transportation of modern planning principles to cities in West Africa. Colonial systems resulted to fundamental modification of traditional city forms which not only affected physical assessment, but also forces regulating the essence of community life. Physical changes such as neighborhoods reconfiguration created subsequent transformation to the nucleus of West african community life. The essence of these changes is an outgrowth of cultural difference between Europe and Africa. To understand this process within the context of colonial cities, the study conducts analysis of both historic (non existing) and existing physical signs to determine the process which characterizes the evolution of colonial cities in the Republic of Mali (thereafter noted as Mali). Field works conducted to contemporary city forms seek to contrast and clarify relation between city space with traditional societies. The debate launched over pre-colonial with colonial means to clarify shadowed points about tradition and modernism, semiology and colonial land use in West African context.

1.1 Background

The historical repartition of Africa by European political powers held in Berlin conference of 1885, proceeded to the division of domains related to various ethnic groups without consideration of their cultural map. (1) French colonization which covered the most part of West Africa, was organized in regional political zone known as "A.O.F" (Afrique Occidentale Française). Modern Planning principles were brought by colonial administrations, these constituted serious deflection to local traditional patterns of city forms. Our research goes on the presumption that the two concepts known as tradition and modern rather than constituting separate concepts, must be considered in complementary set, in order to create better urban life for African population. French colonial regime implanted in to Africa, city forms which express Western capitalist and social values by means of alien forms through planning principles. These contributed to create a dichotomy between "African traditions" and "Western modernization". The hypothesis that city forms laid along endogenous sensibilities by local people, constitute the rational expression of their needs and the nature of communication available to them is the basis of our research. Changes due to complete replacement of traditional elements, affected directly or indirectly the core of existing society.

1.2 Purpose of study

Forty years after independence, the time is ripe to build cities that responds to the needs of African population socio-cultural development today and in the future. The study aims to shade lights on mechanism that determine colonial cities formation and discuss its subsequent effects to ethnic issues in West African societies. Through analysis based on physical expression of city forms, the study seeks to clarify tangible relation between physical signs and social organization. Case study of Djenne and Bamako cities that appears as typical expression on rural and urban city forms in Mali, intends to clarify paradigm of colonial systems in city forms of Mali.

* 正員京都工芸繊維大学大学院工芸科学研究科（Graduate School, Kyoto Institute of Technology）
** 正員京都工芸繊維大学工芸学部造形工学科（Kyoto Institute of Technology）
1.3 Method of studies

French colonization was principal agent of spread of various aspects of Western civilization in African cities, this is found expressed in varying degrees of modernization from rural to urban milieu. This article is based on materials of historical evidence combine field work results conducted to city forms of both rural Djenne and urban Bamako in Mali. The study investigates on universal and specific character of French colonial city formation. In Mali through historical maps before and after the colonial era, the study conducts analysis of the relation between physical forms with social structure of West African cities. Yet no less important is the pre-colonial phase of cities development, because it throws valuable lights on the evolving patterns of urban development of French colonization in Africa. The migration from Europe of urban principles to another part of the world creates interactions between Western and African systems of values.

1.4 Past studies

Recently academic attention has turned to colonial architecture, however very little attention has been paid to French colonial cities in west Africa in the standing point of indigenous system of values. African studies were oriented to sociological or the functional aspects of African culture and grounded on political organization or on material culture rather than cosmological and semiological dimension of African life. Cosmological symbolism were less considered or interpreted as functional components in the social machinery than on their own term as intellectual phenomena. Previous studies about African traditional dwellings brought clarification on various aspects of traditional architecture. Susan Denyer conducted studies on traditional dwelling (2) Paul Oliver clarified aspects of African vernacular architecture (3). P. Boudier conducted analysis of African dwelling and cultural artifacts (4). E. Le Bris conducted investigations on prototype architecture of French colonization in West Africa (5). Kotsuke Matsubara conducted research on French colonial urbanism in Morocco Islamic city. Sacko investigated on behaviour of city residence in Bamako (6). All these researchers underline the importance of local cultures but show little interest to qualities which involved spiritual dimension of community life, which this research is focused and its deterioration by French colonization constitute the rupture between rural and modernizing urban areas of African cities today. This article aims to fulfill theoretical analysis of colonial city formation based on West African indigenous systems.

II Pre-colonial West African city formation

2.1 Socio-political background of West African cities

In order to understand the cultural milieu in which emergence of cross-cultural city forms was carried out, it is important to present the sociopolitical background of pre-colonial West African cities. The city formation emanates from constitution of cultural areas known as West African great empires.

2.2 West African great Empires

The formation of West African cultural areas is resulted from the succession of different political organizations which constituted the great empires of West Africa. These political organizations under powerful states created cities that support life of various ethnic group in sub-Saharan Africa. The great empires under dynasty leadership were in search of perpetual extension which presupposes permanent contradiction and interdependence between dynasties. The empire of Mali reached its peak under the dynasty of Keita in 13th century and wide geographical area known as Manding cultural area. By late 19th century fratricide wars between West African empires lead to their fragmentation. The insecurity of slavery was determinant factor of West African city morphology. French colonial empire entered in West Africa through the strength of its modern military force. The west African territories felt in direct control of French colonialism. (see figure 1)

2.3 Formation of Trans-Saharan cities

The Trans-saharan trade which was principal link of the vast interior of West Africa, is mostly inhospitable region of forest, mountains, savanna, and desert. The economic effects of this continental trade produced diversified communication centers, where cities of great importance have emerged and
homed various professional groups including nomads, traders, farmers, fishermen and cattle herders. The trade organized along different axes was a major factor of city development where products transaction had been accompanied by ideas of different background of ethnic diversity. Principally it consisted of spirits, gold, salt, Kola on the transported by long caravan across the desert.

The Islam religion at first, spread through this trade despite the proliferation of Islamic cultural values. Muslim communities played important role to cities of pre-colonial Bamako and Djenné.

2.4 Relation between social structure with land
Determinant factors which characterize pre-colonial city forms is constituted by land ownership and control within the traditional communities. Customary land ownership and transaction within multi-ethnic societies based on set of laws regulated land transactions.

+The relation between different ethnic group with their space occupied is more than ownership expression about lands. In this social concept boundaries appeared to be areas with specific meaning and these boundaries are defined symbolically by means of legends sign and symbols. The different ethnic group organized around distinguished districts are inter-related by mutual compensation through their various products.

III Pre-colonial physical and metaphorical city forms
Our study conducts observation to pre-colonial city signs in sub-Saharan cultural zones where the tomb of Tapama is associated to myths and symbolic means is vital force to unify traditional community in their diversity of ethnic group. The tomb of Tapama represents human sacrifice concealed to protect the city from desasters such as deseases other calamity which was seen as controlled by divine spirit. (see map)

Djenné city). The tomb exerts important means by its character of unification of various communities. Human sacrifice which regulated urban life of different ethnic groups represent semiological expression within the city core.

![Photo 1: Mosque of Djenné (by author)](image)

![Photo 2: Tomb of Tapama (by author)](image)

**Legends**
The great Mosque of Djenné principal worship space for all people of different ethnic group represent important characteristic of city urban life. The only existing since pre-colonial era bear symbol of unification. In the model of Islamic city the mosque located in the proximity of markets constituted the socio-cultural center of pre-colonial Djenné.

Gates were constituted important space of pre-colonial Djenné city, there were fourteen gates which have meaning for the ethnic groups and city authorities.

Pre-colonial cities of Bamako was constituted by physical signs such as city surrounding walls pierced by gates, ethnic group neighborhoods open spaces and markets which were regulative means of social life. In addition to physical signs the existence of metaphorical signs such as sacred space located outside the city walls in a way life was conducted between profane world (Inside the city wall) and sacred world (outside city wall) This dualistic conception of world was principal factor of semiological life carried in daily life.

Community life grounded in ancestral beliefs was bearing psychological strength which involved ethnic group, clanic group to city forms.

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**Table 1: Ethnic Group Professional Structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Products</th>
<th>Specific Symbolic Representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fula</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Fish, oysters</td>
<td>Water, fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soninke</td>
<td>Agriculture, artisan craftsmen</td>
<td>Agriculture, craft</td>
<td>Fire, fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mande</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Fish, oysters</td>
<td>Water, fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogon</td>
<td>Fishing, agriculture, artisan craftsmen</td>
<td>Agriculture, craft</td>
<td>Fire, fire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: Social Structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Class</th>
<th>Land &amp; Economy</th>
<th>Land &amp; Transaction</th>
<th>Religion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fula</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soninke</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mande</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3: Gates of Djenné City**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gate</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>g1</td>
<td>Mondio Kataa</td>
<td>Related to king Kataa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g2</td>
<td>Bokoomba</td>
<td>Related to Bokoomba family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g3</td>
<td>Maiga Kanza</td>
<td>Related to Maiga family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g4</td>
<td>Kwan Sebeka</td>
<td>Related to place name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g5</td>
<td>Fono Kataa</td>
<td>Related to keeper name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g6</td>
<td>Tininka</td>
<td>Related to place location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g7</td>
<td>Djibércé</td>
<td>Related to ethnic space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g8</td>
<td>Konofia</td>
<td>Related to ethnic space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g9</td>
<td>Tomna Gouna</td>
<td>Related to keeper family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g10</td>
<td>Alagba</td>
<td>Related to ethnic space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g11</td>
<td>Hamman</td>
<td>Related to ethnic space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g12</td>
<td>Korandé</td>
<td>Related to ethnic space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g13</td>
<td>Sankore</td>
<td>Related to ethnic space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g14</td>
<td>Unattached</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4: Signs of Bamako City**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Common Space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>q1</td>
<td>Niarela</td>
<td>realm of Niarela</td>
<td>Ex External wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q2</td>
<td>Bozola</td>
<td>realm of Bozola</td>
<td>In Internal wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q3</td>
<td>Dravela</td>
<td>realm of Drave</td>
<td>w water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q4</td>
<td>Twatia</td>
<td>Realm of Twat</td>
<td>open space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr</td>
<td>Drave</td>
<td>Land of Drave</td>
<td>sp sacred space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tw</td>
<td>Wati</td>
<td>Land of Wati</td>
<td>M Mosque</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Map 1: Bamako City 1883
Scale 1/400km

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IV Comparative study between pre-colonial with Colonial city forms

Pre-colonial city forms

Neighborhoods location

Map 2: Bamako city 1883
Scale 1/600km

Map 4: Djenne city 1904
Scale 1/300km

Customary laws
Land acquisition by fire right (right of first settler)
Resulted to city development from center to periphery (Djenne/Bamako)
Land acquisition by lineage characterized clanic group, ethnic group areas.
Land acquisition by transaction (Interpersonal relationship)

Social hierarchy

Fig 2: Bamako city

Fig 4: Bamako city
Pre-colonial city of Bamako express cosmological order through location of its four Neighborings in two directions.
(1) Horizontal/vertical as [fire] [water]

Fig 3: Djenne city

Religious structure

Sacred
Sacred
Sacred
Sacred
Fig 6: Ancestral belief

M = Mosque

Bamako/Djenne city

Ethnic group

Fig 7: Islam religious

Colonial city forms

Neighborhoods location

French camping
Indigenous master

Rail road center

Bamako city 1906
Scale 1/200km

Map 3: Bamako city 1906
Scale 1/200km

Millet field

Niger River

Tomb of Tapsa

Map 5: Djenne city 1921
Scale 1/000km

Empty land without master
Empty land without master was considering open space as vacant and its acquisition by colonial authority.

Social hierarchy

First class
Cols. blancs
Evolees
Sujets

Second class

Third class

Fig 5: Hierarchic order of

cols. blancs French colonizer
Evolees Indigenous who received French education
Sujets common people

Religious structure

Ethnic group

Fig 8: Christian religious
Bamako city

Fig 9: Islam religious
Djenne city
4.1 Interpretation of comparative study
The study combine field works conducted in contemporary city of Djenne and Bamako, analysis of pre-colonial/colonial city forms and pre-colonial/colonial rule to determine physical changes with effects to social life in Djenne and Bamako. Pre-colonial cities obey to a set of rules expressed by physical signs and traditional patterns that bear meaning for local people (see table 3). In such a way city forms expression through walls, gates, neighborhoods, open spaces and sacred spaces are determinant factor for indigenous spiritual enhancement within traditional societies. The physical assessment of city is responsive of communication means and protective concerns translated through cosmological expression and city traditional patterns constituted by open spaces and walls. The question raised is concerned on how French colonization occured changes as following: neighborhoods location, social hierarchy, space and religious structures within the city core.

4.1.1 Cosmological meaning of space
Traditional mode of settlement dominated by cosmology has is been clarified in precocolial city. Cosmogony constitutes the way African people view and understand the World around themselves. For instance the spatial assessment of pre-colonial Bamako city characterized by gates running to cardinal directions, social hierarchy from center to periphery are among other determinant expression of cosmological principles. The pre-colonial city of Bamako was constituted by four different ethnic groups laid along order related to their specific elements as water and fire. The fire which is determinant factor of fertilization of agriculture is specific element for bambara ethnic group in Niarela and also the Arab and Maure ethnic group whose are traders and Aisan in Dravela and Twatla. In other hand the Bozo ethnic group practising fishing are located in crossing direction of the others. The element specific of Bozo group is constituted by water. The two elements constitute principal complementarity of cosmology (see fig 4). Characteristics which determine city forms of Bamako is translated by organic order of physical signs inexpressive in dualistic forms as profane/sacred, identity/difference, unity/multiplicity, appearance/reality, signifier/signified that constitute important component of African religious belief (see Fig 6). They are based on systems which constitute a coherent and autonomous spheres of thoughts. The protective role assigned to the tomb of Tapana in Djenne city as well as the sacred spaces of precocolial Bamako are shared by all communities. Religious participation which start before birth and continue after death is principal factor of social structure. Life appears as continuous drama in the space. For instance the great mosque of Djenne until nowadays is bears vital meanings of unity (see fig 7, 9).

Major concerns of pre-colonial city constituted by communication and protection factors has been conceived on sign vocabulary voiced through a complex attention of physical and metaphysical signs. The city forms reflected communication different signs, communication between people and space and communication between different ethnic groups have characterized traditional city patterns (map 4).

4.1.2 Transformation of physical signs
Comparative study that involved the traditional settlement of Djenne and Bamako the capital of Mali is significant to clarify impact of French colonization to west African cities. The colonial administration occurred direct spatial assessment of African city forms in ways of Western system of values. The city of Djenne was little affected by colonial land re-ajjustment. The French Fort and the “campement francais” have a position of specular importance as they were meant to be a clear and visible symbol of authority (see map 5).

The colonial land re-ajjustment permitted a new spatial assessment where different ethnic group have been required to live in same neighborhoods was principal means of change. With the proliferation of roads and boulevards ease the transport of goods and people as results the population growth was important factor of change characterized by the influx from rural to urban areas. Consequently the dislocation of traditional city patterns directly or indirectly was constituted by desaparuing vernacular elements and emergence of modern one (see map 3). The transformation of existing city patterns, dominated by ethnic group location where physical boundaries, open spaces, were due to new land use on the basis of colonial concept of “Terres Vacantes sans maîtres” as notice as TVSM “empty land without master” was transported to Africa by colonial authority (7).

The concepts of empty lands without master which considered open space as vacant and justify their acquisition by French authority this provoked destabilisation of ethnic mode of communication within the city. The traditional social structure has been replaced by new pyramidal order constituted by French colonizer on top indigenous people related to colonial administration and the base represented by common people (Fig5).

The consequence of colonial land use created dislocation of ethnics systems of values grounded on land use which affected their means of communication.
4.1.3 Social effects of colonial land use

French colonization directed fundamental changes to city spatial assessment. The laws that regulated land use of pre-colonial cities, shifted from customary laws to new speculation form of land use. The French concept of "empty space without master" was a major factor of transformation of open space between different ethnic groups. These resulted to the weakening of traditional community and the strengthening of colonial authority. Principal consequence of these physical changes is constituted by the lost of continuity of ancestral beliefs transmitted from generation to another through community activities.

V Conclusion

Colonial land use which was considered as superior paradigm to African traditional cultures resulted to the complete replacement of precolonial city forms. These have created city on the basis of spatial functionality with exclusion of meaning associated to space or place making. The consequence of these spatial alteration give way to the dislocation of the core of ethnic group structure in Djenne and Barnako. The principles of modern planning contributed to furnished cities with necessary arteries of circulation expressed by roads and boulevards. Emergence of forms reflecting technical achievement of city spatial assessment had been characterized by forms where roads and boulevards cutting at right angles in consequence easing transport of people and goods. The comparative study between pre-colonial with colonial city forms permitted to clarify change as follows: [1] Modification of spatial organization with emergence of two cultural realms known as colonial (white) and indigenous (black) realms. [2] Change of indigenous urban center characterized by the shift from cultural nucleus from traditional cultural center to colonial quarter dominated by the French campement and boulevard. These spatial transformations of city forms were associated to subsequent effects of social structure. Pre-colonial city forms based on semiological expression was disregarded by colonial land use. Colonial land use resulted to emergence of space where local urban living patterns were totally disregarded in a ways that no attention was given to urban living related to people and space connection. These alteration of city forms occurred in Djenne and Barnako were likely to alienate the local inhabitants in replacement of city forms which house traditional living environment shaped over century according to their needs.

VI Notes

(1) Berlin conference held in December/January 1884/1885, contributed the division of Africa between Western political powers
(2) Denyer S. African traditional architecture pp 30 ppl 88
(3) Oliver Paul , Encyclopedia of world Architecture pp 661, 701
(4) Boudier JP, Drawn from African Dwelling, Dwellings settlements and tradition
(5) E. Lebris Famille et residence dans les villes africaines p 101
(6) sakou Ououo 
(7) Koutele Matsubura, モロッコ・フンスにおける鎮民都市と旧市街の複合過程
(8) Concept of “Terres vacantes sans maître” was introduced in Africa by French colonization in order to legitimate colonial land use in Africa “enjeux fonciers en Afrique Noire” pp 66

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4) La France et les villes d'Afrique noire Francophone, Sothe Dolç Paris 1997
5) African Traditional Architecture, Susan denyer, 1966
6) Djenne Chef-d'oeuvre architectural, Pierre Mass, 1994
8) Famille et residence dans les villes Africaines, Emile Le Bris al 1995
9) L'appropriation de la terre en Afrique noire, Emile le Bris 1991
10) Enjeux fonciers en Afrique noire, E. Le Bris al 1982
11) Espaces disputés en Afrique noire, pratiques foncières locales B.Croisse,al 1986
12) CARPOL, Barnako, Republic of Mali Pre-colonial/colonial maps