Religion and the Public Sphere in Senegal: The Evolution of a Project of Modernity

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Abstract
This essay examines the relationship between religion and the state as articulated in the thought of the founding fathers of the Republic of Senegal: Léopold Sédar Senghor (Senegal's first President) and Mamadou Dia (Senegal's first Prime Minister). Although Senghor was Catholic and Dia a Muslim, they shared a vision of a state built upon the philosophical foundations of an African socialism that was at once secular and spiritualist. Indeed, religion was central to their project of modernity. While fundamentally convinced of the necessity of a secular state, Senghor and Dia also believed just as firmly that religious fervor was a cultural energy essential for achieving modernization and development. According to Senghor, secularism made possible the liberation of religion from political control and also protected religion from fossilization, by encouraging its constant movement and progression. The disposition towards pluralism and tolerance found in Sufism was highly compatible with this vision. But Senghor's spiritualist discourse disappeared with him, replaced by a compromise pact that assured politicians the support, especially during elections, of the marabouts, who thus became participants in the "political game." This art of securing the political support of the marabouts is widely considered to be characteristic of the "Senegalese social contract"—a contract that can be efficacious while the country awaits the actual establishment of a true democracy and an open society. Indeed, the marabouts have often played the role of social moderators or peacemakers in the public arena. Nonetheless, many observers have noted the more recent appearance of new phenomenon that threaten to blur the line between politics and religion—particularly the increased implication of the Sufi brotherhoods in public life—and which pose challenges for Senegal. The author concludes that, since the programs of modernity and development have largely failed in Senegal, it would be useful to revisit and rework the modernity project articulated at independence, in which Senghor and Dia envisaged religions playing an essential role.

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Introduction

Those who led Senegal to independence and established the institutions of the new State, notably Léopold Sédar Sengor and Mamadou Dia, intended it to be based on the philosophical foundation of a socialism that would be both African and spiritualist. And they also meant it to be secular. African socialism, spirituality, secularism, those were the concepts that were to guide the State toward modernity and development. Socialism had transformed Russia into a world power; it was at work in China and elsewhere to bring progress to the lives of the "damned of the earth." It was logical to think that in its African guise it would offer the promise of a new kind of development. But spirituality? Especially when combined with secularism, a term that is intimately linked to its particular French history in which it connotes anticlericalism, pronounced and haughty opposition to any manifestation of religion in the public sphere? That is why the very Catholic Senghor and Dia, the pious Muslim, both fundamentally convinced of the necessity of a secular State, believed just as firmly that religious fervor was a cultural energy essential for achieving modernization and development. And that is why they charged themselves and their fellow nation builders, the institutions, the party and especially political discourse with the mission of realizing the ideal of a nation uplifted by the spirit, committed to secularism and thus, ultimately prosperous. Some excellent studies on the role of religion in the public sphere in Senegal have shown how the connection between politics and the Islamic brotherhoods functions, after having reviewed the developments leading up to the present state of this collaboration from the time when the French colonial administration understood that its authority would necessarily be conditioned by special forms of compromise with the domain of the marabouts. If one sees the post-colonial Senegalese State as the heir of the colonial administration in this regard and reduces the question exclusively to the way in which Senghor and his successors secured the political support of the marabouts in order to attain and remain in power, one omits an essential dimension: the philosophy which, at the moment of independence, defined the role of religion, considered the driving force in the modernization and development of a secular Senegalese nation. What was this philosophy? What was its evolution? Is it significant today for Senegal's future?

Léopold S. Senghor and Mamadou Dia's Spiritual Socialism for a Modern Secular State

In 1960, the same year of independence for a majority of African countries, at a time when public discourse was directed toward nation building and development, Léopold Sédar Senghor, thinking it urgent to insist on the role of the religions in this construction, published an article in several newspapers calling for "Islamo-Christian cooperation".[1] If Senghor mentioned only these two religions inherited from Abraham it was because, as he said, "Negro-African animism is dying out"[2] and it was then up to Islam and Christianity to pour their spirit, that is to say their life and their heart, into forging a socialist model of modernity, given – and this point is crucial to the definition of Senghor's spiritualist socialism –that in so doing these two religions simply would have been true to their own *telos* once this was well understood. As Senghor writes:

> The aim of Islamism and of Christianity is *to fulfill the will of God*. For in order to fulfill this will, which is to gain heaven, we must achieve brotherhood among men through justice for all men here on earth.

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[1] The text is entitled "Pour une coopération entre l'islam et le christianisme", and Senghor published it again in *Liberté I : Négritude et Humanisme* :Paris, Seuil, 1964, pp. 304-307.

[2] *Liberté I, p. 307.*

Indeed, what is this justice if not equality of opportunity given from the beginning to all men regardless of race or condition; and, along with work, the equitable distribution of national revenue among citizens, of world revenue among nations and finally, the equitable distribution of knowledge among all men and all nations?[3]

We can readily see in this passage an essential aspect of the doctrine that charges man, the lieutenant (caliph) of God on earth in Quranic terms, with the task of transforming the world. Gaining heaven does not mean turning one's back on earth, for that would be abdicating the responsibility that defines man and gives him a role in the organization of creation. The Qur'an speaks of the mandate that no creature, were it the highest mountain, could honor, and yet man has received it even if he proves quite often to be unworthy of it. Gaining heaven means first of all accepting this mandate which is, among other dimensions, the duty of aligning the world with the demands of justice. To define justice is, by the same token, to enumerate the duties incumbent upon the believer: work toward equality of opportunity beyond individual differences; maintain equity among citizens of the same nation; undertake the mission of promoting equity through solidarity among the nations themselves, with the understanding that this just distribution among men and among nations embraces not only material wealth but also immaterial wealth, the first of which is knowledge. Every individual, believer or not, says Senghor, can contribute to the implementation of this program; the believer, whether Muslim or Christian, who understands the aim of his religion sees in it, according to Senghor, the call to fulfill himself by fulfilling the will of God. To understand this aim is to understand that religion is direction and striving toward a future that will see justice gradually impose its order on the earth instead of the slavish imitation of a tradition. It is this dynamic movement that Senghor finds in the word of the Gospel that says: "seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" and in the Qur'an that states: "God does not improve a people's situation until a people improves its soul."

It is useful to point out the parallel between Senghor's aforementioned views and the reflections of Mamadou Dia on Islam in order to show to what degree they shared the same faith in this spiritualist socialism that was to be, according to them, the motivating force of development in Senegal and in Africa.[4] In *Islam, African Societies and Industrial Culture* Mamadou Dia writes in the concluding lines of the work:

Islam must remind the Muslim world, at this juncture when it is taking its Promethean leap, that *if it is required to act, it is so that one may fulfill oneself, that one may achieve even richer being.* For industrial development to be a boon and not the ruin of mankind, it is crucial that it retain a human dimension, that it not give rise to a new kind of slavery under the pretense of promoting productivity or efficacy, that it not create progress that is in reality perversion, desire of well-being and not of better-being, that it not produce a world where ethics is sacrificed to power and spirit to matter, a world of inanimate objects. Islam cannot accept just any model of economic development

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[3] *Liberté I*, pp. 305-306.

[4] It is Senghor himself who insists, in the foreword of his book *Nation et voie africaine du socialisme (Nation and the African Way of Socialism)* (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1961) dated December 31, 1960, on the intellectual complicity and convergences between himself and the man he calls "my friend Mamadou Dia." In presenting the two texts that comprise the book he writes that "the works of Mamadou Dia must be added [to them]" in order to have "the results of [their] research efforts." p. 9.

without denying itself. It will give its blessing only to a development program that tends toward an order of social justice and human solidarity and is founded upon code of ethics.[5]

Although this book was published some fifteen years after the founding moment of independence, it is the expression of a philosophy that informed Mamadou Dia's first commitments and it is the philosophy of a modern Islam actively participating in a process of transformation of itself and of the world in conformity with the demands of justice. In analyzing more closely Dia's remarks one can see that these two thinkers are in total agreement in their vision of a dynamic world, where religions are both spiritual energy and call for social justice; and despite the events that separated them, one day history, in retrospect, will soon join these two men of action in one bicephalous figure that presided over the birth of modern Senegal. Note well this affirmation of Mamadou Dia: "if it is required to act, it is so that one may fulfill oneself, that one may achieve even richer being." Translation: we must participate in self-transformation (improve one's soul, according to the Quranic passage cited by Senghor) and this is accomplished through actions to transform the world; this world is itself life, becoming, where being is perpetually tending toward this better-being, this fuller life that the rest of the quotation tells us must not be confused with the mere quest for well-being, for satiation. There is also the work of Teilhard de Chardin influencing not only the thought of the Catholic Senghor, a well-known fact, but also that of the Muslim Dia, a less well-known fact. Or rather, in the latter's thought, a great deal of the modernist philosophy of the Indian Muhammad Iqbal whom Senghor called a "Muslim Teilhard de Chardin." Declaring that man fulfills himself not through contemplation but through action in a world that is open and evolving, that is the basis of the shared vision.

If such was the philosophy of Dia and of Senghor, that of a spiritualist socialism bearing the seed of modernity in Senegal, what happened to it in the actual context of the religious and socio-cultural realities?

On June 7 1963, three years after the official proclamation of Senegal's independence, and some six months after what is commonly called "the December 1962 crisis", which totally destroyed the bond between Senghor and Mamadou Dia, one of the worst tragedies in the political history of the country they had both created, Léopold S. Senghor went to Touba, the spiritual capital of the Murid tariqa to attend the inauguration of the new mosque which, as we know, is, with its five minarets, the very symbol of the spiritual doctrine founded by Cheikh Amadou Bamba. Responding to the words of welcome of the then caliph, that is the lieutenant, of the founder, Cheikh Falilou Mbacké, Senghor delivered a speech devoted to the significance of "secularism" for Senegal as stated in its constitution and, going even further, to what he called "the basis of our national policy."[6] To define "secularism" is to say first of all what it is not: neither atheism, explained the President in his speech, nor the desire to banish from the public sphere, through intense propaganda, religions and currents of thought in their diversity and mutual understanding. In insisting on this point Senghor of course wanted to show that in this regard Senegal is not an heir of France, at least not of its history where secularism, born of a long and violent anticlerical movement, is

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[5] Mamadou Dia, *Islam, sociétés africaines et culture industrielle (Islam, African Societies and Industrial Culture)*, Dakar: Les Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1975; p. 164. The expressions in italics in the quotation are my emphasis.

[6] This text was published under the title "Laïcité" in *Liberté I, Négritude et Humanisme*, Paris: Seuil, 1964, pp. 422-424. Senegalese laïcité is treated in this series of working papers, in relation to "religious education and human rights" by Penda Mbow and from the judicial angle by Abdoulaye Dièye.

a kind of permanent hostility to any manifestation of religion. In showing that, on the contrary, the aim of the Constitution was to guarantee the "autonomy" of the religious communities, it seemed more fitting to refer to the "secularism" of the pluralistic Anglo-Saxon model. After showing what secularism was not, the President's speech addressed the meaning of religion and its role which was not only compatible with but even required by the very notion of the secularism to be implemented: a role by which it supports the State, a role of *culture,* said Senghor, who defined the concept shall we say cosmogenetically, paraphrasing his master Teilhard de Chardin, meaning "the demiurgic process of socialization, of totalization" which would culminate in "the Civilization of the Universal". It is a totally unique philosophical concept that Senghor called "secularism" that he presented on that day of June 1963, in circumstances that were rich in spiritual significance on the occasion of that ceremony that was also a homage to the legacy of Ahmadou Bamba. Secularism is defined by what it *does,* by what it makes possible, which is of course the liberation of religions from political control but also and perhaps especially their liberation from their own fossilization, their "scleroses," said Senghor, one sign of which is superstition: "magical practices." The efficiency of the philosophical concept of secularism would then be that religions would be restored to their own cosmic movement toward ever more unity, toward the realization of the complete earth that will be humanized after having been hominized, as Teilhard de Chardin liked to say. For Senghor the spiritualist socialist, what is called "liberation theology" is not a political choice, it is the very *nature* of things, a willingness to understand and promote the cosmogenetic movement of the world. Evidence of this view is found in this passage of the *Postface* written for the Proceedings of the colloquium entitled *Black Priests Ponder Their Mission and Offer Suggestions:* "The Church would not be catholic if it resisted this movement of 'panhuman convergence' (…) [It] would be neither catholic nor apostolic if it worked independently for the totalization and the socialization of the Earth." These words follow a quotation establishing "an intimate link between the presence of Christ in the Church and the presence of Christ in the poor."[7] One sees once again the parallel to be made between what Dia said of the *internal* link between an Islam faithful to its spirit of movement and a political program oriented ethically toward solidarity and social justice.

It would be wise to examine the way in which Senghor conceived of this renewal of religions through a return to their principle of movement so as to be more open to the future: he said they must "assimilate scientific discoveries as well as social realities."[8] Religions that would be mindful of the evolution of societies and the movement of ideas and so of the way in which scientific concepts modify our way of thinking including how we think of religion itself (how can we not think of the evolutionist theology of Teilhard de Chardin?), these religions provide the spiritual energy that the poet-president thought would contribute to development and modernity in collaboration with the secular State. The concluding homage that Senghor made to the work of the founder of Muridism reiterated these ideas. In saluting the sanctification of work, one of the pillars of Cheikh Amadou Bamba's doctrine, he saw in it a clear indication that the spiritual development of the individual is realized not in contemplation but in the action of transforming the world by transforming oneself.

Brotherhoods and Modernity

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[7] Senghor, "*Postface"*in *Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent et suggèrent (Black Priests Ponder Their Mission and Offer Suggestions)* Paris: Présence Africaine,1963.
[8] *Op. cit.,* p, 423.

If the sanctification of work as a spiritual endeavor is often associated with Muridism it is, in reality, an essential component of what could be called a Sufism of action which was precisely the origin of renewal movements that arose at the end of the eighteenth century in the Islamic world in Africa, Morocco, the Sudan and all the Sahel, leading to the creation of new tariqas or revitalizing traditional tariqas.[9] That Sufism, rather than dissociating them, placed the *vita contemplative* at the very heart of the *vita activa*. Thus the *Tijaniyya* (this tariqa, the Muridiyya, the Qadiriyya and the Layene[10] are the four most visible tariqas in Senegal) adheres to the spirit of a school of Sufism known as *malamatiyya* (literally "the blameworthy ones") which requires that the essential reality of spirituality be covered by the veil of commitment in and for the world. It is then to this neo-Sufi spirit of the spiritual significance of work and of commitment in the world that Senghor as well as Mamadou Dia appeal for the project of modernity they conceived. This appeal can sometimes seem hostile to Sufism; one might say it is the rejection of a Sufism of contemplation and immobility in the name of a dynamic Sufism in which, according to Muhammad Iqbal, the aim is not to see but to be, to become. Certain passages of Mamadou Dia's book also seem anti-Sufist when he writes, for example: "The submission to the will of God gave rise to a philosophy of resignation and an ethic of passive quietism only because of an indisputable travesty of Quranic teaching *due in part to Sufism* and a no less evident distancing from the tradition of the Prophet whose entire life was a constant struggle both to save souls and to reform the established material order."[11] This rejection of a fatalistic Sufism turning its back on the world and refusing the primary human responsibility, which is to reform it constantly, is a founding criticism of modernist Muslim philosophy, found also in the thought of Al Afghani, of Iqbal and many others. But it is often made in the name of a Sufism that needs no other label than to profess itself a return to the source in accordance with the Prophet's example, whose message was to transform the world by and for justice.[12]

What Senghor did not fail to praise as being the very spirit of Sufism and thus of the Islam of brotherhoods is the disposition to pluralism and tolerance which is the respect of the difference that allows dialogue with it. That is the meaning of the conclusion of the speech that insisted on unity, in prayer to the "same God", of Muslims and Christians "believers of equal status". We must open here a long parenthesis to examine this linking of Sufism to tolerance, open-mindedness and pluralism, which is a crucial question, especially now when much is being said of a "conflict of civilizations" or even of religious wars.[13] It is not possible to give a definition of Sufism, for it is not one of the major divisions created by the schisms that have characterized the Islamic world (Shiites, Sunni, Khariji,…); nor is it one of the several juridical or theological schools existing in Islam; Sufism refuses the designation of a philosophical doctrine, even if eminent scholars in the field have written treatises setting forth the metaphysical bases of what is, above all, a spiritual *way*. In short, the

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[9] On this Sufi renewal see also Zachary V. Wright, *On the Path of the Prophet. Shaykh Ahmad Tijani and the Tariqa Muhammadiyya,* African American Islamic Institute, 2005.

[10] Actually, the Layene way became a brotherhood after having first been a Mahdism.

[11] M. Dia, *op.cit.* pp. 16-17. My italics.

[12] M. Dia thinks along the same lines, finding the fervor of Sufism when he meditates on the words of the Muslim pilgrim to Mecca as he repeats "here am I, Oh Lord, here am I": "We can then understand," writes Dia, "the eminently purifying virtues of the pilgrimage, an earthly voyage toward God, offering of self and renunciation of everything, of one's riches, honors, pleasures, to drink at the very source of eternal life, of eternal glory, of eternal bliss." (*op. cit.* p. 31).

[13] The simplistic assertion is often made that the Sufis are the "nice" peaceful Muslims as opposed to the "bad" fundamentalists. In his working paper, Alexander Thurston examines the relative absence in Senegal of a radical Islamist discourse.

"je ne sais quoi" designated by this term, the origin of which is not known, is better explained as being an attitude, a disposition of the spirit, a way of life that can be found in all the sects and schools and which thus transcends them all. We might say that the "invitation to the voyage" that is Sufism is based on the following Quranic verse: "And when your Lord brought forth descendants from the loins of Adam's sons and made them bear witness unto themselves: 'Am I not your Lord?' they replied 'Indeed yes, we bear witness to that…' so that you may not say on the Day of Resurrection: 'Verily we were not mindful of it' or that you may not say (simply): 'Our ancestors in the past gave allies to Allah and we are their descendants, [having come] after them. Will You destroy us for what the impostors have done?'" (Al A'raf:7:172-173).

This passage, often quoted in Sufi literature, evokes the moment beyond time when God, after having placed in His presence all future humans, makes them bear witness to the fact that it is indeed He who has created them: thus their identity is this moment, this "day" when they passionately said "yes" to their Creator by giving themselves to Him. Once they enter into time and live in the world they will forget, humans that they are, this first encounter imprinted by fire on their essential nature. That is why desire ever pushes them to undertake the voyage, through remembrance (*zikr)*, toward their deepest being: that "yes" of their submission to God on the day He asked them "am I not your Lord?"

The Quranic evocation of this first Covenant has a double consequence. First, the notion of a primordial nature *(fitrah)* of the human being who professes that there is no other god but God and affirms the individual's responsibility to his Lord by eliminating every possibility of finding an excuse for his ignorance in that of his forefathers. Secondly, and it is this aspect that defines the spirit of Sufism, this covenant between man and God means that He is always the ultimate object of the desire and the quest of His creature. Muhammad Iqbal expresses this in these famous verses that reflect the pervasive influence of his spiritual master Rûmî:

> *L'amoureux ne trouve nulle différence entre la Ka'aba*
> *Et le Temple des idoles*
> *Celui-ci est l'apparition de l'Ami, celle-là en est le sanctuaire.[14]*

The attitude described by these lines, the expression of understanding and love for the different ways in which the truth manifests itself is the essence of Sufism; tolerance is not a value adopted from without; it is its nature to be restlessness for God and to recognize this same restlessness in the force that moves all beings. When in the twelfth century Sufism was incorporated in mass movements, the brotherhoods, whose faithful are counted by the millions, this spirit of hospitality for the different ways of worshiping the same God remained the essence of these spiritual doctrines. It is important to go back to the origin of Sufism's tolerance for difference because the concept, an ethnological one, of a "black Islam" that has been used to explain why African societies were particularly disposed to syncretisms and compromises, is, in the final analysis, a catchall simplification. Observe how Islam is practiced in Indonesia, the largest Muslim country numerically speaking, to appreciate how, in that country also, it has incorporated local spiritual traditions that predated the spread of the

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[14] "Love sees no difference between the Ka'aba
 And the Temple of idols:
The latter is the epiphany of the Beloved, the former His sanctuary."

Quranic message.[15] And this is true of the Muslim world in general, from Pakistan to North Africa. In a word, it is not because Islam in sub-Saharan Africa is *black* that it embraces pluralism, it is because it is, in general, *Sufi*. Finally, on this point, it is to this natural pluralism that Senghor appealed when he ended his speech by inviting all to a communion of "believers" in prayer.

To sum up: commitment to transforming the world, acceptance of modernity, a spirit of tolerance and of pluralism, such are the characteristics that the Dia/Senghor modernity project wanted to find in Islamic brotherhoods and in the Church in Senegal. Their philosophy of spiritualist socialism was largely based on these principles and was meant to translate into collaboration between the secular State and the Christian and Muslim religions with both remaining faithful to their spirit of movement and, in a spirit of cooperation, participating in the promotion of *education* which, for Senghor, in the final analysis is the real meaning of development.

There could have been no better emblem of this collaboration and this cooperation for a profound social transformation than the Family Code adopted by Senegal in 1972. It was under Mamadou Dia that the first committee was created by the decree of April 12 1961, charged with the mission of reflecting on a family code that would take into account the totality of the laws and customs in force in the country. We will probably never know what would have resulted if the Dia administration had completed this project. We could suppose, given the modernist commitment of the President of the Council that would have precluded any fear of opposing the marabouts, that radical decisions would have been made, along the lines of reforms made by Habib Bourguiba in the newly independent Tunisia. But this is of course pure speculation since the Dia administration disappeared, victim of the coup d'état of 1962. It was then under Senghor, alone at the helm, that in 1965 a "Committee of Options for the Family Code" took up the work that would lead, seven years later, to the Code as it exists today, born in controversy and still giving rise to criticism from both sides, conservative and reformist. It is interesting to note that the marabouts vehemently expressed their opposition to a text that, according to them, dared to legislate in areas where divine law had already ruled. Nevertheless, the State adopted the code that established into family law the option between a secular way and that of religious law. The code was to signify the State's will of transformation; the marabouts had declared that the space they controlled symbolically (and sometimes physically) was extra-territorial: thus was established a *modus vivendi* that satisfied neither the conservatives nor the partisans of change.[16] *Modus vivendi:* the art of living together

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[15] *The New York Times* in the issue of Sunday, January 27, 2008, writing about the "mysticism" of former President Suharto, gave an enlightening presentation of this Islam of compromise to which Wahhabite rigorism is so hostile.

[16] It is definitely a simplification to say, as does Roman Loimeier in his enlightening analysis "The Secular State and Islam in Senegal" (p. 187 in David Westerlund, ed., *Questioning the Secular State,* New York: St. Martin Press, 1996) that there is one legal system for urban areas and another legal system for rural areas. Ramatoulaye Diagne, in a contribution to the ISITA conference titled "Women and the Public Sphere: Is Islam an Obstacle?", demonstrated that the question of the Family Code remains open. In her paper, she described the plan of an Islamic Committee for the Reform of the Family Code (CIRCOF) to replace the current code with a text that would be inspired by sharia; the goal being to return to the possibility of repudiation of the wife by the husband, to remove the restrictions on polygamy (clearly the philosophy of the Code was to accelerate progressively the disappearance of the practice), to a veritable guardianship which insists upon the wife's obligation of obedience to her husband. She reported on the visits by members of that organization to gain the support of the marabouts: all would have thus affixed their signature, according to the Imam Mbaye Niange, who headed the project, on the revised text. Ramatoulaye Diagne also evoked the social movement, led especially by NGOs, politicians, and intellectuals to make the current Code evolve in the direction of greater emancipation and responsibilisation for women, in particular on the question of an equal sharing of parental authority, all

while mutually supporting one another will soon be all that will remain of the ambitious project of realizing together the vision of education for transformation in which a modern, committed religion would be spiritual energy for development. This option of compromise was the same one the colonial administration had used to deal with the brotherhoods. In his speech at Touba in 1963 Senghor did not fail to mention the protection and support given him as a political figure by Cheikh Fallou Mbacké. It was no accident that this was said a few months after the crisis with Mamadou Dia who had not been quite as accommodating with the marabouts who had opposed his reformism, the philosophical aspect, and his project of development of cooperatives in rural areas, the economic aspect.[17]

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the more necessary as it corresponds to the economic situation of a large number of households, where often it is the woman who supports the family.

[17] Roman Loimeier accurately describes the confrontation between Dia and the marabouts. In *op. cit.*

The Post-Senghor Period

Senghor himself had been obliged to renounce the philosophy of a spiritualist modernism based on the collaboration of the State and the religions and accept a compromise pact that assured the politicians the support, especially during elections, of the marabouts who thus became participants in the "political game".[18] We can well imagine that after him, there would be no further mention of this project of spiritualist socialism. It was said of his successor, Abdou Diouf, by way of reproach, that he had launched a process of de-senghorization and had abandoned the philosophy of his predecessor. It remains to be seen if there was indeed a systematic and programmed de-senghorization. But one question must be asked: can we even imagine what it would have been like to continue a Senghorian discourse without Senghor himself? Who could have attempted it without exposing himself to ridicule? Senghor and his word were as one and it could have been spoken only by him. To follow him meant, obviously and necessarily, to speak and act differently.

Thus ended the spiritualist discourse on the demiurgic role of religion, leaving only the art of securing the support of the marabouts and of demonstrating that one benefited from it or of presenting oneself as a faithful member of the Church. From the head of State to the smallest civil servant of the administration this art is widely practiced and is an integral part of the relations between politics and religion in Senegal. All agree, however, and that is also characteristic of the "Senegalese social contract,"[19] that as long as this art is practiced in the context of pluralism and equilibrium between the doctrines and cliques, and republican and secular decorum is respected, the contract can withstand the multiple difficulties posed by the negotiated interventions of the brotherhood leaders in the political sphere. This contract can be efficacious while the country awaits the actual establishment of the political reality and the open society yet to be realized.

This is all the more true, in fact, given that the tariqas' role of social moderator, their function as peacemakers in the public arena is deemed necessary. And so, in a recent interview published in *Echoes of the World Bank* the spokesman of the Tijani brotherhood of Tivaouane, Abdoul Aziz Sy, declared in regard to the role of religious leaders like himself: "We are the firefighters of the political arena."[20] And, after recalling that during the colonial period his own father, the caliph Ababacar Sy worked toward peaceful elections in the "four communes" (Saint-Louis, Dakar, Rufisque and Gorée whose residents were French citizens), he explained in these terms this comparison with firefighters: "In the present situation in Senegal our role remains and those who protest that religious leaders should not speak out on the political situation do not understand the meaning of our action. We do not speak of politics. The marabout who interferes in politics is someone seeking privileges or positions of responsibility from those in power. The marabout must not interfere with politics in this way; his mission is to assume his responsibilities in matters of religion. But if the political game begins to create negative consequences for the people then our role is to intervene in order to preserve peace." Concerning the nature and forms of this intervention he explains: "…our discourse must insist that promises be followed by results and that neither invectives nor vulgar language serve the country (…) we

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[18] Roman Loimeier insists on the importance of this notion of a "political game" where the marabouts are implicated in the process.

[19] Cf. Cruise O'Brien, Donald B., "Le contrat social sénégalais à l'épreuve", in *Politique africaine,* 45, 9-20.

[20] *Echos de la Banque Mondiale, Magazine du Bureau régional de Dakar (Sénégal, Cap-Vert, Gambie, Guinée-Bissau, Niger), No. 9, novembre 2007; pp. 14-17.*

constantly ask the ruling party to engage in dialogue, all the while enjoining the opposition to argue in a respectful manner."[21]

The first thing to point out in Abdoul Aziz Sy's statement is the fact that what he calls the intervention of religious leaders in the political sphere is often the inability of the leaders in this arena to find, on their own, strategies that would make dialogue between the ruling party and the opposition a permanent process, make the democratic arena a space of calm debate. The implicit consequence of this way of looking at the situation is that the answer to religious interventionism in the public sphere will be primarily in a consensus of the political leaders to make up the democratic deficit and remedy the lack of mechanisms that would guarantee that this sphere remain one of pluralism but also of convergences that would ensure peace and stability. In other words, to defend the autonomy of the public sphere is to work at giving it rules of operation that ensure both stability and the continually deepening development of a democracy of permanent dialogue: it is when the mechanisms are lacking or insufficient that the nature of things, which abhors a vacuum, calls upon the marabouts.

The second point is that the religious leader's remark concerning the nature of the marabouts' intervention in the political arena is more a prescription for what should be than a description of what really happens. For, in the present state of the situation in Senegal, a country that is particularly characterized by the role of the brotherhoods and their leaders in the political arena, many people are of the opinion that too many new phenomena have appeared that are, as the journalist interviewing Abdoul Aziz Sy put it, "likely to blur the dividing line between politics and religion."

First of all, there is a certain blurring of the vitally necessary distinction between private individuals, followers of a spiritual doctrine and the institutions of the Republic. That newly elected members of Parliament go to thank their marabout should in no way have any bearing on the republican ideal, unless they intend to take the parliamentary *institution as such* to pledge allegiance. The same thing is of course true for the presidential institution. An article was written to protest the image of the President of the Republic prostrating himself before the leader of a brotherhood; this article became a reference, constantly quoted and reproduced by many citizens who thought, like the author, that a line had been crossed, leading to the blurring of the delimitations that define the meaning of the institutions. The coming together of a pen dipped in talent and the need of many to express the growing uneasiness with a policy of permanent display of brotherhood membership accounted for the success of that article.[22]

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[21] *Op. cit.* p. 15. Just before the last presidential elections in 2006. Abdoul Aziz Sy was part of a Group of Elders, so to speak, with other religious leaders, among them the head of the Catholic Church in Senegal, designated to serve as "firefighters." This is how the newspaper *Sud Quotidien* of July 26, 2006 described this Group: "A group of religious intellectuals has set itself up as a rampart against the irregularities and verbal excesses noted in political intrigue and in the press. Following an audience with the President of the Republic yesterday, Tuesday, July 25, religious leaders like El Hadji Moustapha Cissé, Serigne Abdou Aziz Sy Junior, El Hadji Moustapha Gueye, Seydina Issa Thiaw Laye, Monsignor Théodore Adrien Sarr, among others, decided to create a group of religious intellectuals. According to the bulletin received the same day their group is motivated by the duty to defend and promote the values of peace, truth and justice. 'Indeed, for some time now verbal excesses resembling insults and personal attacks have appeared in the political milieu and in the national press. We often hear remarks that are not compatible with our cultural and religious values. (…),' we read in the bulletin signed by the coordinator of the Group, the religious leader and ambassador Moustapha Cissé. For him, 'if freedom of opinion and expression must be scrupulously respected, it is no less true that in Senegal, we must never abandon the values inherited from our ancestors.'"
[22] Ousseynou Kane's text, "La République couchée," was first published as a "contribution" in the daily paper *Wal Fadjri* for May 8, 2001. It quickly became a text of reference for many people attached to the neutrality of the State as well as those who are symbols of it with regard to the religions and the

Among the new phenomena that have blurred the lines of demarcation between religion and politics there is the one that has been termed "the marabout –politicians." This is not exactly new and Abdoul Aziz Sy recalled in his interview that his brother, Cheikh Tidiane Sy, had himself created a political party in opposition to Senghor: to have entered politics to succeed his brother was, he confessed in the interview, "the greatest error of [their] life." But today an intensification of this phenomenon makes one wonder whether the marabout- politicians are not transferring to the public sphere their confusion as to their own identity.[23]

Conclusion

Senegal is sometimes called "the paradise of the brotherhoods" where, according to the Senegalese historian Mamadou Diouf, "the marabouts are an integral part of the political system."[24] President Abdou Diouf long benefited from their support, as did his predecessor Senghor, and such support is not lacking today either for President Wade. Interviewed after he left his political functions about the possibility of political Islamism developing in his country, President Diouf declared, in substance, that the existence of brotherhoods and the Sufi character of Senegalese Islam were ramparts against such a possibility. It is doubtless true, actually, that the mindset characteristic of Sufism[25] and present in the different spiritual persuasions in Senegal would support this view. It is highly unlikely they would produce or support a real Islamist agenda that would threaten the secular character of the State.

On the other hand, it is correct to say that increased implication of the brotherhoods in public life, signs or mere premises of which are in greater evidence today, constitute greater challenges for Senegal. Ultimately they come down to the question of the future of the aborted modernity project. Much has been said about the promises of independence that were never kept. The programs of development and modernization failed, leaving in their stead techniques of adjustment and reduction of poverty in its most unbearable aspects. But there is no alternative to the modernization and development of an open society in constant movement toward greater open-mindedness. The answer to the failure of modernization programs is the revival and reworking of the modernity project. For such a project, Senghor and Dia, during their intellectual and political partnership in their philosophy of spiritualist socialism, envisaged religions playing an essential role as they returned to their principle of movement. In today's circumstances and terms the need to articulate such a project of modernity, more necessary than ever, raises the issue once again.

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brotherhoods. Thus President Mamadou Dia, by quoting the text in one of his works, amplified its effects. During the ISITA conference, Ousseynou revisited the sense of "secular" anger that his text had given rise to and pondered the risks—which are real according to him—of disequilibrium brought about by a perception of a State that has become "confrérique" (brotherhoodized).

[23] During the ISITA conference, the journalist Bakary Domingo Mané, head of the Political Desk of the *Sud Quotidien*, examined the phenomenon and shared his experience of the difficult cohabitation between marabouts engaged in active lobbying where they believe they can invest the weight of their religious authority, and a democratic press intent upon their independence and professionalism. Nonetheless he recognizes that one of the problems of this press is that sometimes journalists submit to the orders of marabout politicians, often because they do not make a clear distinction between what should be dictated by their professional code of ethics, and what should be dictated by their brotherhood affiliation, and also often because of greed.

[24] In an interview in the daily paper *Le Soleil* for January 30, 2008.

[25] See the working paper by Alexander Thurston, "Why is Militant Islam a Weak Phenomenon in Senegal?"

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