The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation and the Civility of the Originaires of the Four Communes (Senegal): A Nineteenth Century Globalization Project

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses French assimilation policy towards the four communes of the colony of Senegal, placing it in a new conceptual framework of ‘globalization’ and ‘post-colonial studies’. Between the end of the eighteenth and the middle of the nineteenth century, the four cities of Saint-Louis, Gorée, Rufisque and Dakar were granted municipal status, while their inhabitants acquired French citizenship. However, the acquisition of these political privileges went together with a refusal on the part of these ‘citizens’ to submit themselves to the French code civil. Their resistance manifested itself in particular in the forging of an urban culture that differed from both the metropolitan model and the Senegambian models of the independent kingdoms on the colony’s fringes or the societies integrated as protectorates. This article argues that, at the very heart of this colonial project and despite its marked assimilationist and jacobin overtones, a strong project of cultural and political hybridization developed. The inhabitants of the quatre communes forged their own civilité which enabled them to participate in a global colonial culture on the basis of local idioms.

“We have left Senegal, the ballot boxes colony, Blaise’s Kingdom, the ten thousand citizens of the four ‘fully empowered’ communes — empowered to practice prestidigitation, boxing and kickboxing! Here are the Blacks, the real ones, the pure ones, not the children of universal suffrage, but those of Old Cham. How polite they are! They rush out of the bush to say Hello to you!’”

(Albert Londres, Terre d’ebène, 1929)

This study is part of a broader project of rewriting the history of the French policy of assimilation and its outcomes in Senegal’s Four Communes

1. This article is a heavily revised version of a piece that will appear in V. Y. Mudimbe (ed.) Encyclopedia of African Religions and Philosophy, under the title ‘Islam, christianisme et assimilation: Histoires des religions dans les Quatre Communes du Senegal’. I thank René Collignon, who agreed to read and comment on this paper.
2. On this, see the classic studies of Michael Crowder (1962) and G. Wesley Johnson (1991/1971). The prevailing interpretation stresses that the natives lost their African identity.

The Four Communes of Senegal are the result of the French presence on the western coast of Africa, beginning with their settlement in Saint-Louis in 1659. Although the French presence in that region of Senegambia was interrupted by English occupations of the French colony during the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, the French took definitive possession of their colony of Senegal in 1817. The development of this area, urbanized very early in the cases of Saint-Louis and Gorée, was driven by territorial conquest, European rivalries, and the workings of an often indecisive administrative organization. It was marked by two significant turning points. One was the drafting of the Register of Grievances by the prominent men of Saint-Louis, and its dispatch to the States General of Versailles during the French Revolution. The Register’s principal demands were: the abolition of the Compagnie du Sénégal’s trade privileges, the abrogation of the colonial pact restrictions that worked against the habitants to the benefit of metropolitan merchants, and freedom of trade. During the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, following the colony’s isolation as a result of English occupation, the first local assemblies emerged. They served as foundations for municipal institutions in Saint-Louis and later in Gorée. From then on, the Four Communes were granted the same rights as their counterparts in the metropolis (Johnson, 1991; Marcson, 1976). The rationale for this situation, which distinguishes the originaires from the Africans of the interior, was: ‘the

3. Léopold Sédar Senghor, Senegalese poet and thinker, was the first president of independent Senegal (1960–80). On his life and work, see Janet Vaillant (1990).
4. The negritude movement, of which Senghor was a promoter, had as its goal precisely the restoration of the values of the Black world that had largely been undermined by the policy of assimilation.
5. Habitants or originaires are African people and mulattos residing in the Four Communes who accumulated enough wealth and capital to go into business and other activities and were granted French citizenship status. They did not consider themselves and were not considered natives (indigènes). They were different from French colonial administrators and commercial agents (metropolitans) posted and operating in the colony.
6. On this point, see Marc Marcson (1976).
contributions made by the African Muslims for generations in Saint-Louis and Gorée ... In fact, they pay the blood tax, which none of the other colonies pay, by fighting in our colonial armies’ (quoted in Johnson, 1991: 44). The crux of the political struggle was repeated attempts on the part of the colonists to strike the Muslim *habitants* from the electoral lists (Boilat, 1984/1853; Marcson, 1976: Ch. 1). The latter claimed French citizenship without submitting to French cultural and civil codes, claiming a special status conferred by Islam.

The other turning point was the impact of the Revolution of 1848 on the French colonial empire, with the Second Republic’s decision to offer its colonies, including Senegal, the power to send a representative to the French National Assembly. This power resulted in a general election in Saint-Louis and Gorée: all *habitants* who could prove five years’ residence could participate. The decision of 1848 lent more legal and regulatory formality to practices of political representation, at the same time that slavery was abolished. As Johnson argues: ‘Although French Senegal had evolved its own municipal institutions and had been given a General Council and an advisory representative to the Ministry of Marine in 1840, the election of 1848 was the first time the general populace actively engaged in a political contest’ (Johnson, 1991: 26).

The colonial administration showed a certain reticence with respect to this policy, as witnessed by the reaction of the colony’s governor, Captain Baudin:

I don’t share the view of those in France who think universal suffrage an admirable thing; here [in Senegal] I would go further and call it absurd and nonsensical. If it were possible to explain how the election for the colony’s representative took place here, it would frighten even the most dedicated partisans of universal suffrage. The poor blacks were beset by the agents of all the candidates. Ballots printed in advance were handed out to some, torn up by others, redistributed, and recirculated perhaps fifty times in the days preceding the election. On election day, the battle was even more murderous; it got to the point where I would defy any black to know positively which candidate he voted for; and if such a business should take place often, all the paper manufacturers in Europe would not be able to meet Senegal’s needs (Baudin, quoted in Johnson, 1991: 26).

Nevertheless, the movement continued, and on 1 August 1872, a decree was signed granting Gorée and Saint-Louis the same municipal prerogatives and rights as French communes. Thus they became fully empowered communes (*communes de plein exercice*). Combined with this participation by the Saint-Louisians and the Goréans in a European-style political activity, which constitutes the central characteristic of assimilation, a twofold movement began with General Faidherbe’s nomination as Governor in 1854: the acceleration of the conquest of Senegambia and the consolidation of possessions on both the economic and the political fronts. The exploitation of the peanut crop intensified the commercial activities and the urbanization of the coastal regions. Rufisque was the first locality to benefit from these new
economic conditions, attracting shopkeepers who used to set up commercial operations from Gorée. According to Johnson (ibid: 32):

Rufisque soon became the commercial centre of southern Senegal. Although not endowed with a good harbor, it was close to the inland areas that were now producing peanuts for market. Unlike Dakar, it was an established city; and it had space for warehouses, offices, and depots that could not be built on the small island of Gorée.

Because of the economic importance the city had acquired, Rufisque joined Saint-Louis and Gorée during this period, becoming a fully empowered commune in 1880. For the same reasons, Dakar would be included within the circle of fully empowered communes in 1887.

Thus in the course of the nineteenth century ‘the three primary institutions of local government were established: the municipal councils and mayors, the deputyship, and the General Council of Senegal’ (Johnson, ibid: 38). In contrast with the establishment of the legal framework of the Four Communes, which granted the habitants the status of French citizens, the lands of the protectorate (pays de protectorat) fell under the authority and arbitrary power of the French colonial administration, which most often relied on traditional chiefs — ethnic leaders or marabouts — to establish its domination. The natives of these regions had the status of French subjects, and were subject to the Native Code (le Code de l’indigénat).7

The dates marking the definitive establishment of the Four Communes are the following: in 1840 a General Council of the colony was established; in 1848, Senegal was granted a seat in the Chamber of Deputies in Paris; on 10 August 1872, the decree was signed that registered the creation of the communes of Senegal. Finally, Rufisque (1880) and Dakar (1887) also benefited from these privileges, achieving the status of fully empowered communes.

In the areas of demography and social structuring, there were two sharply different situations. In Saint-Louis and Gorée, the population was composed of metropolitans, habitants, and, depending on the period, freed slaves or captives. Among the habitants were mulattos, gourmets (Catholic Blacks), signares (women living with or having affairs with European merchants), and Muslims. The freed slaves were considered animists, but after staying in the colony for an extended time, they would convert to one of the revealed religions. In contrast, the populations of Dakar and Rufisque were much more homogeneous ethnically: they were Lebu and Wolof. The composition

7. The terms originaire and habitant are equivalent. They describe the status of the residents in the cities of Saint-Louis, Gorée, Rufisque and Dakar when they obtained the status of fully empowered communes and their habitants acquired citizenship. They also establish and make clear a difference between the originaires and the metropolitans with whom they live, and the Senegambians (the natives), their neighbours, subject to autochthonous powers before their conquest, then integrated into the colonial arena as subjects.
of the population is indicative of the religious membership of the social
groups. While few Muslims were listed in Goreé, in Saint-Louis, Dakar and
Rufisque, by contrast, the African population proclaimed allegiance to an
Islam very heavily modified by local beliefs.

The civil and civic status of the originaires caused a prolonged conflict
between the colonial magistrates and the colonial administration. The crux of
the conflict was whether or not the originaires should be eligible for French
citizenship which would both accord them political rights and shield them
from the rigours, if not the universality, of the French Civil Code. Their
refusal to submit to the Civil Code was connected with their stubborn
defence of their special status. This illustrates the various issues pertaining to
citizenship which characterized the players in the Senegalese colonial scene: a
nit-picking, universalist magistrature; a colonial administrative power; and
the originaires; all joining together only in affirming the gap within the empire
between the colonies and the metropolis.

These configurations, revealed in the overlap of contradictory elements
and the spectacular events that they fostered in areas that were so non-
African, have had the effect of isolating this urban area and its habitants from
sociological, anthropological, and even historical studies. Their globalization,
both economic and religious, has certainly contributed to their marginaliza-
tion. The social sciences have paid little attention to their evolution and
they have been allowed little space in studies on Senegal. Considered
detribalized and overly assimilated, the originaires had little appeal for an eye
in search of the exotic.

However, the Africa that is revealed in the social, cultural, political, and
economic practices of the originaires, as well as their very diversity, is neither
the Africa of the villages nor that of the local religions. On the contrary,
those practices are expressed in an urban space, incorporated in a French
imperial economy that determines its ebb and flow, with its conflict of
interests. On the other hand, the intellectual appropriation of Islam and
Christianity, the two religions in the native area, produces an original
structuring of the representations and symbols of identity of the habitants of
Saint-Louis, Goreé, Rufisque and Dakar. Thus the identities that they
produce is part of the story of colonization and the religious, political and
economic pattern of the French colonial empire, while at the same time
borrowing elements from an autochthony revised by colonial contact. It is
in this perspective that one must understand the central idea in the
originaires’ struggle: special status. At the same time that they were pro-
claiming allegiance to a French citizenship on which were based their rights,
duties and individual pursuit of wealth and the defence of their commercial
interests, they buttressed themselves with a culture all their own — they
were not French culturally, but they were French politically and
economically.

The aim of this article is to contribute toward an investigation connected
with new intellectual territories, and the opening of at least two fields:
postcolonial studies and cultural studies (see Dirks et al., 1994). These new fields are particularly concerned with the relations between the West and the Third World and in the ways in which the former has constructed the latter; modes of appropriation, derivation (Chatterjee, 1986, 1993), and hybridization (Young, 1995); and/or the rejection of the processes by which colonial empires were created and deconstructed.

The contribution of this study in these new areas is centred on the following concern. The prevailing readings of the French imperial experience, especially in Senegal, emphasize the policy of assimilation. In contrast to the English policy of indirect rule, the policy of assimilation followed Enlightenment Philosophy, which promoted both a unilinear evolutionism and the unity of reason, and so considerably reduced the possibility of preserving an African identity. Assimilation, it is argued, could only mean the loss of a historical initiative and of a cultural creativity, because of total subordination to the metropolitan culture. In contrast, this study defends the thesis that assimilation as a policy did not reduce the areas of innovation and creativity available to the colonized. On the contrary, in the colonial experience that most fervently emphasized the cultural side of the civilizing mission and the colonial enterprise, people possessed and indeed exploited possibilities for hybridizing and selecting modes of acculturation. Here ‘acculturation’ means the recreation of a culture and a society in the context of the colonial experience, an original production built on the continual reorganization of precolonial and colonial experiences. It is expressed by a continued tinkering with unstable constructions of identity, which were assembled from different social codes, modes of belief, forms, representations, and staging of politics, and the celebrations, commemorations and feasts that directed social relations in colonial Senegal.

The article is organized around three themes: urbanism, religion, and citizenship. Urbanism is composed of expressions of life in cities. Cities appear to be unique locations in the African environment, departures from the traditional and the tribal, for cities exist in a universal geographic context. As ‘colonization areas’ — Coquery-Vidrovitch’s lieux de colonisation (1993: 11–22) — they participate in the economic, political and social project of a colonial empire; in this case, the French colonial empire. In the Senegalese context, this urbanity appeared at the precise moment that Johnson called ‘the birth of contemporary Senegal’. The new model that emerged after the trading-post stage was characterized by the development of the peanut-based economy and the institution and consolidation of a colonial area and urban system controlled by the Four Communes. These events opened up spaces in which a threefold modernity blossomed: Islamic,

8. For a general overview, see among others Baker et al. (1994); Bhabha (1990); Chatterjee (1986); Monga (1996); Said (1979); Spivak (1993); Young (1991).
Christian, and political. The dialectic of land and territory\(^9\) explains to a certain extent socio-spatial dynamics and architectural forms, and provides a context for the political struggles. Land is a geographic and spiritual reality, which unfolds a totalizing world made of coherence and balance, whether real or fictitious (Diouf, 1992: 274, note 3). It is at the same time a community and an imagined world that appropriates a space in a discriminatory and exclusive way. It is first and foremost an ethnic space, in opposition to a territory which is more open and heterogeneous, in which the signs, in this case analysed as Islam and colonization, each proclaim allegiance to a universality that is an act of dispossession (Berque, 1964), through openness and conversion (either by colonial violence or its ‘scientific’ rationality), driven by their desire to classify and construct the other. From the confrontation of homeland and territory are derived phenomena that are either processes of transforming and/or destroying of homeland — deterritorialization — or processes of adapting, redefining, or inventing new modalities — reterritorialization — in order to adapt to the territory. To account for this twofold process, while stressing the capacity of African societies for initiative and innovation, MBembe (1988: 29) uses the concepts of ‘unruliness’ and ‘intractableness’ (\textit{indiscipline} and \textit{indocilité}).

The second theme is the total domination in the \textit{originaires’} urban space of the revealed religions, Islam and Catholic Christianity, although these had taken on a local colouring. The two religions, through their mission of conversion and their claims of universality for their rites, texts, liturgy and ethics, had the presumption to erase local laws and social structures or to revise and subvert them. The characteristics of exegetical and intellectual Islamic religiosity, which exhibits a scholastic arrogance, are radically different from those of the rural Senegalese offshoots of Islam, which are charismatic, organized in brotherhoods, and rooted in the beliefs and practices of the local cultures and religions. Certainly, expressions of religion (beliefs, imagined worlds, knowledge and practices) participate in a discontinuous space where local practices are entangled with the Islamic and Christian professions of faith. Those practices include the disparate and multifarious memories of the \textit{originaires}, specific ways of appropriating space, architectural productions, the organization of culinary art, ways of perfuming and arraying oneself (clothes and jewellery), as well as usages deployed in Senegalese novels.\(^{10}\)

The third theme relates to the consequences of the colonial policy pursued by France in Senegal. It has already been pointed out that the Four Communes are the products of two apparently contradictory enterprises: on the one hand, a colonial project founded on the logic of French assimilation,

\(^{9}\) For a clarification of the notion of communal land/homeland versus territory, see Diagne (1992) and Diouf (1990).

\(^{10}\) I am thinking especially of the novels of Ousmane Socé Diop and Abdoulaye Sadji.
of which Catholicism has in certain eras been the religious side; and, on the other hand, a long historical accumulation of many commercial transactions between the two banks of the Sahara which hatched different variants of Islam. In this perspective, citizenship is the expression of political status: the originaires’ right to elect a municipal council and a General Council, and to send a representative to the National Assembly, while continuously refusing to submit to the French Civil Code. In some ways it is a problematic citizenship stated in terms of political rights and special status.

CHURCHES AND MOSQUES: A MONUMENTAL ESTABLISHMENT OF ORDER

Establishing religious order by erecting monuments stems from a desire for visibility, for the public display of worship. In colonial urban logic, it tries to combine architecture with a city product that together can identify the communities and also inscribe in the soil a text that can be read at first glance. The search for an identity construction that delineates the spaces of life, leisure, work, and religious practices had an impact on the morphology of the Four Communes. In particular, a spatial translation of religious practices has innumerable effects on religious worship. It especially explains the transactions between the religious symbolic orders, commemorations and languages of Muslims and Catholics, and the connections between the appropriations of those two religions and the ancestral cults, which refer to patterns that are hard to inscribe in the urban topography.

Both Muslim and Catholic forms of worship asserted themselves over genies and ancestral spirits, which from then on retreated into private space, obscure regions of the memory, of the seaside (Gorée, Dakar, Rufisque), and of the river (Saint-Louis). The reorganizations and interference between public and private space in religious transactions are translated into processions and libations linked to the genies of urban lands: Maam Kumba Bang (Saint-Louis), Maam Kumba Castel (Gorée), Maam Kumba Lambaay (Rufisque) and Lék Daawur (Dakar). It is presumptuous of buildings to try to contain them, and this leads to a growing tension with urban monumentalism (Sinou, 1993).

The transactions and accommodations between the Muslim and Catholic religious practices did not preclude competition in the occupation of public space — deciding who should dictate the urban syntax and grammar — any less than in determining the definitions and practices of citizenship, that is, the ability to exercise political (and especially electoral) rights and duties. The tension between citizenship and inscription in the city is apparent in the search for a discriminatory organization of space in relation to religious practices and the provoking desire to convert, the acceptance of the civil law and, by way of consequence, the systematic adoption of monogamy and the European way of life.
Having sought a public display since 1819, the Catholic priests acquired some land and mobilized wealthy mulattos to erect a church, which was finished in 1828. Located in the reputedly Christian South Quarter of Saint-Louis, the religious building lacked architectural originality (Sinou, 1993: Ch. 7) because the missions wanted to reproduce a universal symbolism, especially since they were in a ‘barbaric land’ of ‘moral turpitudes’. In the same period, a church was built in Gorée in an identical style. In 1930, after the discovery of ‘Sudanese’ architecture with its decorative lines, a Sudanese colonial architecture was invented, symbolized in the religious sphere by the cathedral of Dakar, which is Sudanese in the buttresses of the façades, Byzantine in its cupola (Sinou, 1993: 339).

The Islamic logic of public display was somewhat different. In Dakar and Rufisque, whose populations were predominantly Muslim, the mosque functioned as the centre of gravity in the composition of social space. In Gorée, where Muslims were in the minority, the small, very discreet mosque backs onto the sea, almost invisible and out of place. By contrast, in Saint-Louis, the Muslim community demanded a plot facing the Catholic church’s monumental inscription in the public space. It got one in the North Quarter of the reputedly Muslim island, but since it was unable to raise the funds to build a mosque, the colony stepped in for the ‘Mahometan’ (that is, Mohammedan, Muslim) community:

The edifice constructed between 1844 and 1847 is somewhat evocative of the church of Saint-Louis ... The steeples turned into minarets, and the signs of Islam, taken from the architecture of the Arab world, are limited to the arcades and the embryonic cupolas placed at the top of each tower. (Sinou, 1993: 135–6)

The stylistic influences on religious monuments are expressions of culture in the process of formation and purification. If Sudanese architecture was invented in Catholic edifices, Muslim buildings purged Christian forms and adopted North-African Arabic forms after independence. The Great Mosque of Dakar is the best illustration of this nationalist style. Echoing the Catholic indigenization was the pressure towards an Arabism (arabité) invented by the Muslim intellectuals of the Four Communes. In its plenitude and arrogance, their religious architecture expresses an original culture in its design, which tells of an exegetical and elitist liturgy.

The topography of religious monuments illustrates both the output of the Four Communes and the modalities of inscription in those spaces by communities whose identities are revealed in their adopted religions. Nevertheless, if the Catholic community posed fewer problems precisely because it adopted the religion of colonization, it did not distance itself from the originaires’ culture with which it combined in its own way. That brought it closer to the Muslim community than to the priests and metropolitan missionaries. In this sense conversion was not a way of insinuating oneself into a colonial society, which was composed of many fragments. Precisely because emphasis was placed on a common culture despite religious
differences, and because of the long distance involved in its link with the metropolitans and their culture, the Catholic community was able to join in the secular and antclerical policies of the administration. That helped delineate an *originaires*’ space where religious display was essential without being competitive or proselytizing.

**STYLES AND HYBRIDS: FRAGMENTS OF RELIGIOUS CULTURES**

The indigenization of religious architecture resulted from the quest for a local rooting for Christ’s message, a rooting rejected by Father David Boilat (1984/1853: 14). For Islam, however, the constraints of the colonial policy of assimilation and an opposition to the Islam of brotherhoods of the Senegalese countryside produced an intellectual Islamic tradition, the former relying on the guidance and leadership of a ‘marabout’, the latter based on the reading and interpretation capabilities of literate Muslims (Diagne, 1992: 290).

Father Boilat mentions the existence, from the very beginning, of Catholic communities in Saint-Louis and in Goreé, composed of mulattos (‘Christians from the outset because of their fathers’ religion’), *signares*, and ‘the most intelligent of the Blacks, the closest to the Europeans’ (Boilat, 1984: 5), a group generally referred to as *gourmets*. These are:

Catholics of either sex who take pride in living apart from the Muslims, of dressing in European fashion, and of being civilized … According to Lamiral, the name *gourmet* denoted Blacks filling the ships trading on the Senegal River, working as pilots and helmsmen, that is, positions of trust that required professional expertise and heavy responsibilities. (Jore, 1965: 25, note 1)

The captives of Goreé are to be included in this community, at least the captives of Christians, for they were always baptized by their masters. In Saint-Louis, on the other hand, the captives ‘were all Mahometans … The habitants of Saint-Louis always believed that it was not permitted to hold Christians as slaves’ (Boilat, 1984: 213).

Father Boilat’s testimony is interesting in that it helps us understand the reasons for adopting the Catholic religion. Three factors are adduced: origin (mulattos and *signares*), proximity to Europeans (*signares* and *gourmets*) and subordination (captives). Father Boilat’s emphasis was on language. Considering the absolute necessity of offering assistance ‘especially [to] girls who need the help of piety and Christian virtues’, he lamented the unsuitability of the local language, *Wolof*, for stating Christian dogma:

This language lacks all theological words; how can one accurately teach them dogma, Christian duties without the French language … One puts in their hands the most moving prayers, the heroic acts of the saints of their same age and condition, the most moving spiritual readings; they read them with the most frigid indifference … Many youngsters have
been led astray because they lack a clear understanding of French . . . Owing to the lack of understanding of the French language, religion is, as it were, still in its birth, so one might be allowed to doubt that it will ever grow. (Boilat, 1984: 14)

It might seem paradoxical that Father Boilat, one of the first three native priests, ordained in 1840 (the other two were Arsène Fridoil and Jean-Pierre Moussa), objected to using the local language to deliver the Christian message. Father Fridoil, the priest in Goreé, was to proceed in a completely different manner. He made numerous conversions among the slaves freed by the decree of 1848, basing his evangelizing on a catechism in *Wolof* that was translated and printed by a certain Father Lambert (Boilat, 1984: 14). Discussing Father Fridoil’s results, Boilat again repeats the need to bring the Gospel especially to women and girls:

Monsieur Fridoil went to the trouble of putting all the Catholic dogma in the form of canticles, and having them sung with the same tunes as Black songs. It is a moving spectacle, hearing the mixed choir attentively singing, accompanied on the organ by Father Luiset, whose talent is well known in Senegal; I myself was touched and moved to tears. How many conversions followed!! Every Sunday and feast day, thirty or forty adults of all ages and both sexes were baptized. A lot of libertines from overseas disliked that catechism, because religion brought more morality to Negresses. For that reason they resorted to gossip, satire and calumny. (Boilat, 1984: 18–19)

The opposition between the approaches taken by Fathers Boilat and Fridoil was only superficial, however, and resulted from the diversity of situations and spiritual transactions in the Catholic community of the Four Communes. The quest to root Christ’s message clashed with cultural and colonial habits that were the target of Boilat’s ire, and which stemmed from the intermittent presence of priests in the French possessions of West Africa.

Priests did not gain a permanent presence until 1815, when the colony of Senegal was restored to France for good. That presence was consolidated with the beginning of primary education, provided by the Sisters of Saint Joseph de Cluny (1826) and the Brothers of Ploërmel (1841), the establishment of a mission and a school in Dakar by the Brothers of the Holy Spirit, and the abortive attempt on the part of Fathers Boilat, Moussa, and Fridoil to create a secondary school to educate seminarians (1840–9).

Despite its undeniable successes, the main concern of the Church was to impose orthodox religious practices in order to thwart:

> Mahomet [Mohammed] . . . [and] his absurd, regressive religion that destroyed everything. I would only say that a religion that was established by force and promises its followers carnal pleasures as rewards would have to spread quickly: the state of ignominy, stupidity, servitude, and corruption in which all peoples are plunged who have submitted to the law of Mahomet is an obvious demonstration of that. (Boilat, 1984: 232)

The Church wanted to rub out once and for all indigenous and Muslim influences in the colony’s Catholic community: Boilat (1984: 207–8) clearly expressed this drive when he called for the Koranic schools to be banned and
for children to be obligatorily sent to French schools, where teaching of Arabic would be introduced. According to him: ‘So they were Christians by baptism … superstitious like the Mahometans and fetishists. Their behaviour was pretty much the same … They were Christians without instruction, in a country that was pre-eminently Mahometan’ (Boilat, 1984: 214–5).

The constraints Father Boilat ran up against in his quest to purify Catholic religious practices were of a social nature. They were manifested in marriage, baptism, communion and a resorting to mystico-religious protective practices, and they found expression in the indigenous idioms and repertory. Marriages were predominantly traditional local weddings (*marriage à la mode du pays*), in which no mention is made of Christian elements (Boilat, 1984: 221–7; Durand, 1803: 28; Lamiral, 1789). This type of union did not decline until the second half of the nineteenth century. According to Boilat (1984: 226–7), there were fewer than a hundred legitimate marriages in Saint-Louis between 1783 and 1840. The most spectacular manifestation of the indigenous character of marriage was the way in which weddings were celebrated, in particular verifying the bride’s virginity, publicly displaying the proof, and retaining polygamy (Marcson, 1976: 43).

Like marriage, the baptism of newborns was closer to Wolof practices than to Christian ones. Infants were given their name eight days after birth. In most cases, especially in Saint-Louis, infants were circumcised at birth. Here again, local Wolof forms of celebration were the rule, with griots (traditional bards), laudatory chants, and gifts. Truly Christian religious practices were very rarely celebrated: excerpts from the registers of Father Fournier, the prefect apostolic of Senegal, give just a few descriptions (Boilat, 1984: 215–16). The first communion ever celebrated in Senegal took place in Saint-Louis in 1823 (ibid: 218).

Not only were the Catholics of the Four Communes circumcised at birth, but gourmets as well as mulattos celebrated Muslim religious holidays and carried amulets, gris-gris (charms) and talismans made by marabouts, containing verses from the Koran. The available sources mention that the greatest sources of revenue for marabouts were the signares and mulatto women, who paid them for making gris-gris, telling fortunes, predicting the future, protecting them against the evil eye, providing love potions, and so on (Boilat, 1846; Durand, 1803: 28; Lamiral, 1789: 43). On this matter, Father Boilat passes on Father Fournier’s testimony:

In the evening, before vespers, they returned to the baptismal fonts to renew their baptismal vows there. Father Fournier had succeeded in enlightening those children about the superstitions of Mahometanism, but their parents were not so enlightened. He took away from them and made them take off the gris-gris, or talismans, that they were laden with … but their parents soon gave them back to them, because those gris-gris preserved them from witches, devils and illnesses of all kinds … In the beginning of January 1824, the whole church was filled with people, all of them wearing their gris-gris like real Mahometans. The prefect stepped up into the pulpit and explained that those talismans were useless and that
they were being deceived by the marabouts, who were abusing the habitants’ trust. The speech had its effect. All the venerable ladies of Saint-Louis took off their gris-gris, placed them on a big loincloth, presented them to the prefect apostolic, and swore to renounce them forever. (Boilat, 1984: 219–20)

This episode, which was presented as a success, was repeated again and again through time. Nowadays, Muslim and fetishist divination and amulets have again insinuated themselves into the Catholic practice of the natives. They testify to a religious invention, which, according to Marcson (1976: 41) is the distinctive mark of the syncretic nature (with French, Muslim and Wolof elements) of the native culture, which is disparagingly referred to as ‘being assimilated’. The most spectacular manifestation of the Catholic side of the natives’ culture was the religious procession in Saint-Louis, celebrating the Assumption of the Virgin Mary:

… organized by the Christian habitants, but which included Europeans and Muslims. Floats were made and the finest costumes and clothing were worn in the procession. In the eighteenth century, these religious processions, celebrated on the day of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, became a grand tradition of St Louis for both Christians and Muslims. The picture of the habitants that emerges from the evidence is that of a cohesive group tied together by kinship, common social rank, internal self-government, distinctive culture, and a common role in the economy. (Marcson, 1976: 45)

The testimony of Father Fournier, quoted in the Esquisses Sénégalaises, offers the following gripping description of the procession which he organized on 15 August 1823:

The indigenization of Christianity in the Four Communes was one of the modalities of struggle against ‘Mahometanism’ and conversion: acquiring the idioms, repertories and images found in the collective imagination of the originaires. It is in this rooting that ‘religious options’ (Chretien, 1993: 239) are made available, which even today make rural Christianity diverge from that of the originaires. In this case religious options operate within the imagined world of the revealed religions: a cultural world which, on the Muslim side, is illustrated by the centrality of mastering the text (Koranic reading and exegesis). In this context, the mandatory conversion of freed slaves to one religion or the other was a mode of acquiring citizenship, even
though citizenship had no bearing on their social status. Social emancipation was impossible in the Wolof conception of slavery, even if there was liberation from providing work for the profit of another, the master. Residency provided a territorialization that furnished access to cultural expressions.

Like Christianity, the Islam of the Four Communes was mixed with elements that came from the cultures of the Wolof, Halpulareen, Moors and Lebu. More than a religion, it is the primary cultural expression of the originaires. The Moorish connection to the Islam of Saint-Louis and the role that it played in the formation and spread of tijaan religious thought, whose leading figure was El Hadj Malick Sy, added an intellectual impetus to Muslim religious practices.

The brotherhood of tijaan was very open to the umma (Islamic world community) and Arabic culture; it firmly implanted itself among the originaires. It won over a number of taalibe (followers) to its cause (Marty, 1917: vol. 1: 208). The pedagogical mission that it undertook as a command line for spreading Islam created the energy to establish Koranic schools. This ‘Puritan’ insistence on Islamo-Arabic education, reading, and writing was present very early on in Saint-Louis. Father Boilat listed a dozen Koranic schools, as opposed to just two missionary primary schools, in the 1840s. The same vitality was found throughout the Four Communes at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century as a result of the programme of moving into the main cities marabouts trained by Malick Sy. The compilation that was made by Marty and partly continued by Johnson attests to the scope of the movement (Johnson, 1991: 164, note 20). It expresses the universalist goal that is at the heart of the unique Islamic modality of appropriation of the originaires. This universality is also an entry into colonial society (modernity?) without renouncing one’s special status.

In dealing with the paix franc¸ aise, this Islam thus opens up to a developing originaires élite a way to participate in a universal that cannot be reduced to ethnology and colonial (de)tribalization. It is radically opposed to the presentation suggested in Cheikh Hamidou Kane’s novel, L’aventure ambigué (1961).

After Father Boilat’s efforts to diminish Islam had failed, the colonial administration took the dynamic of this intellectual Islam into account and tried to develop a French Muslim policy based on it. This policy found a convinced leader in General Faidherbe, who was elevated to the governorship of Senegal in 1857, after a stay in Algeria where he familiarized himself with Arabo-Islamic culture. He took Bou El Moghdad Seck, who had been a cadi and tafsir since 1850, and made him the focus of his policy, especially against the jihadist propaganda of El Hajj Umar Tall. With the Colony’s support, Bou El Moghdad made his pilgrimage to Mecca (1861). This was the period when state sponsorship of pilgrimages to the Holy Sites of Islam began, a policy which has continued to the present.

This tradition, despite changes that testify to the nature of transactions with traditional religions of the land and with sea and river genies (more
significant in the *Lebu* environment of Dakar and Rufisque than in Saint-Louis), attests to the opening to Islamic universality, an opening which found ways of compromising with the colonial order, indeed of taking advantage of it, becoming a side of it. Against the graphic rationality of French civilization learned in school, it opposes, adjoins, or superimposes another graphic rationality, whose concept of the divine implicitly invents an *originaires* identity. Johnson (1991: 164) gives an illustration of this:

In Senegal, twentieth-century Islam was at the same time conservative and progressive. In rural areas it ended up reinforcing traditional values, whereas in the cities it facilitated the adaptation and unification of Africans who were cut off from traditional society and their family environment.

Social regulation was accomplished by religion, whose graphic expression became an essential element in the culture of the *originaires*. Father Boilat, in his frantic search for a Christian identity cleaned of all the chaff and expressed in impeccable French, was aware of the need to put an end to the embedding of Christian religiosity in the *originaires’* identity, which was stripping away all its orthodoxy.

**ASSIMILATION AND PERSONAL STATUS: CIVIL LAW OR ISLAMIC JUSTICE**

“Let’s disembark. [From a ship arriving from France.]

′Yo! Porter!’

′Porter?’ answers my companion, ′You have delusions of aristocracy.

Negroes don’t carry luggage in Senegal, they vote.’

Going down the accommodation ladder, he muttered:

′They vote! They vote! And soon they’ll be dancing the gavotte . . .’

I’m at the gangplank. I stop. We can’t pass. A White and a Black are kickboxing on it.

′You hit?’ said the Black. ′Ah! You hit? This not France, this Senegal, you understand?

Senegal my country, my home, you understand?’

The Negro had been caught checking out the inside of a cabin.

The lad had seen him out rather more with his feet than with his hands.

′This is France’, answered the lad, ′and if you get on again . . .’ He pointed to his shoe.

′You, if you get off, me take you to police, you understand? This Senegal, eh? Not France.’

And he spat, as if to drown in one expectoration the lad, the ship,

all the Whites, the whole shebang, in the enormity of his contempt.′

(Albert Londres, *Terre d’ébène*, 1929)

It is hard to resist citing these comical scenes written in the cheeky, florid, precise yet militant prose of Albert Londres. They render so well the old-fashioned, precious, yet paradoxically popular aroma of the *originaires*: a free and subversive relationship with the French language; a strong claim and a supreme affirmation of equality with the metropolitans; rights to defend and promote; political rights that express an identity connected with a special status that safeguards a unique civility.
The deep significance of Muslim religion and practices in the everyday life of the originaires was manifested in the stubborn quest for a special status from the moment the decision was made in 1840 to apply the metropolitan Civil Code and Penal Code in the colony. While there was now an explicit questioning of the legality of traditional marriages and rules of inheritance, in the domain of the family, however, one observes an informal preservation of Islamic laws.

Before 1840, matters of the administration of justice came down to the following directives: the Letters Patent of 1728, presented to the Director General of the East India Company, giving him the power to judge all crimes and offences, along with the assistant director and three clerks to be appointed by himself (Jore, 1965: 294); and the Instructions of the Duke of Lauzun of 20 November 1778, which mentioned the absence of a court of justice in the colony, requested the application of some simple rules ‘almost entirely having to do with policing’, and stipulated that only crimes fell under the competence of the metropolitan courts. At the same time, the mayor of Saint-Louis retained powers of preserving law and order, such as justices of the peace (Jore, 1965: 296).

Customary usage had resulted in a rather lax situation, with an administration of justice that was more the product of evolution and local transactions than a deliberate decision to transfer the metropolitan judicial system. It was rather that people were inspired by ‘French laws’. Baron Roger (cited by Jore, 1965: 297, note 1) gave this testimony in 1823: ‘It is impossible for judicial organization to be too simple in Senegal; in this nascent society, justice should be administered as it is in a family, not with our European lawmaking . . . To send the entire judiciary from France would be the greatest calamity’.

In the shilly-shallying of the French colonial administration the destiny of the policy of assimilation was played out, the stakes raised by questions of the administration of justice. Three problems were at issue: religion, polygamy and the care of orphans. The administration’s procrastination stemmed from the natives’ very firm opposition to repeated attempts to impose the French Civil Code from 1827 on. To simplify a complex situation: on one side, the originaires’ struggle for the recognition of their political rights (citizenship, the rights to elect and be elected, the right to go to court) was part of a permanent challenge of metropolitan civility, whose grammar and repertory is the Civil Code, and whose place of validation is the French civil court. On the other side, the French administration was caught between the demands of the magistrates and the search for the indispensable support of the colony’s Muslim community, in the context of the holy wars (jihad) that filled northern Senegambia with fire and blood (Klein, 1968; Robinson, 1985, 1988).

From the end of the 1830s up to 1847, the colonial administration tried to formalize the collection of rules in a situation where the juridical norms of the magistrates conflicted with the political rationales that governed the
norms of the colonial administrators. Depending on which group the balance of power would favour, and in line with their immediate concerns, they would develop different responses illustrating a trial-and-error approach to the administration of justice in the colony of Senegal. Those can be traced by reading the numerous ministerial directives, gubernatorial decrees and ordinances. Thus the Decree of 1840 provided that the Civil Code be applied as if Senegal were an integral part of the metropolis. Consequently, every freeborn individual living in Senegal or its dependencies enjoyed the rights of French citizens to the extent that they were guaranteed by the Civil Code (Leroy, 1994: 298). The Decree of 1830 had not produced the desired results (Boilat, 1984: 226): it did not prevent the Muslims of Saint-Louis from regularly sending petitions demanding that a Muslim court be established in the colony. Analysing one of those petitions, from 1843, Schnapper (1961: 94) observes:

the Civil Code had been promulgated in the colony, but no exception, no distinction had been made for the Muslims. Did that mean that they were subject to French laws in all details? That it was necessary to apply those laws with respect to marriage, divorce, inheritance? Certainly not, no-one had dreamed such a thing: they were subject to the laws of the Koran which was both their civil and religious law, and the government had never intended to force on them laws contrary to their laws, much less force them to convert to Christianity … They asked to be granted the rights accorded to the Muslims of Algeria: namely, that it be recognized and decreed that in no case would the Muslims of Saint-Louis be subject to civil laws that were contrary to their religious laws; and that to accomplish that there should be constituted a court made up of their religious leaders, to whom would be referred disputes that are both religious and civil in nature.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the Algerian model was at the centre of the debate on the administration of justice in the colony of Senegal. As Schnapper indicates, the parallel established between the evolution of Muslim justice in Algeria and the situation in the Senegalese colony made the colony’s Muslims determined ‘to demand of the French government the same juridical guarantees that the Algerians then possessed’ (ibid: 91). This interest in comparing themselves with Algeria is tied to historical events and circumstances: what was at stake was preserving or challenging certain forms of colonial government and cultural and political transactions. Depending on which cause was embraced by the debaters of colonial justice, the Algerian reference allowed them either to defend the need for establishing the French Civil Code without any concessions, or to insist that it be adapted to the environment and history of the subjugated populations. As archives show, for proponents of the former thesis, Senegal was not Algeria. In fact, they opined:

Islam was the only religion that existed in Algeria when we effected its conquest. It was natural as well as wise to respect it and even to facilitate the practice of its laws, despite all the obstacles it would put in the way of our colonization and all the uprisings that it would periodically produce. But it is not the same here, and I am a long way from thinking that we are subject to the same obligations as we had down there. (ANS, 1889: M8, 103)
Proponents of the latter thesis, meanwhile, insisted on the difficulty of distinguishing:

renouncers and non-renouncers among our Muslim natives . . . He doesn’t see what serious advantage it could bring people, to have the option of abandoning their status in the eyes of all their coreligionists in order to assimilate to us. If the category in question exists in Algeria, there was a distinction that justified it: renouncers were there considered as real French citizens and they alone enjoyed all the prerogatives associated with that designation. (ANS, 1889: M8, 103)

As for the colonial administrators, who were most worried about keeping the peace in the colony, they thought that:

[the] main objective is to draw a very clear line of demarcation between French Justice and Muslim Justice. Recognizing the difference that exists between Muslim laws, behaviour, and customs and our own, he could not agree that one should create a promiscuity that would leave it to our magistrates to judge matters totally alien to our law. He couldn’t say straightforwardly what he would have desired in the bottom of his heart, but he believes the commission took his meaning. According to him, Muslim Justice should operate completely independently, and remain politically under the supreme authority of the head of the colony. (ANS, 1889: M8, 103)

The terms of the debate on the administration of justice sum up very neatly the procrastination on the part of the colonial administration and clearly express the interests at stake throughout the nineteenth century. In this framework, the Algerian reference suggests two solutions, the first being some combination of French and Muslim magistrates, and the second being the possibility of renouncing one’s special status as a Muslim. At the heart of these controversies is the question of how to read the individual histories of France in Algeria and Senegal. In one reading, the principal model for the colonial administrators, be they judges, soldiers, or civil officials, is the civilizing mission and commercial benefits. For many of them, however:

the political conditions there aren’t the same as here. In Algeria, Muslim mores have deep and ancient roots, which they do not have in Senegal. Furthermore, the importance of the role that Islam plays there was one of the conditions of conquest and surrender, so one cannot diminish or question it as one can in this colony. One must also take into consideration that our indigenous people are a long way from having the education and abilities of the indigenous Algerians. So shouldn’t one avoid letting them play a totally illegitimate role in our organization, which could become highly burdensome at any given moment? By the time danger was recognized, it might be very difficult to put an end to it. (ANS, 1889: M8, 103)

The first reference to Muslim law is found in the Ordinance of 1847, which established an Advisory Council alongside the court of Saint-Louis. It was the first sign of an attempt to create a judicial framework without reference to that of the metropolis. In subsequent discussions about politics and the courts, the question of whether the Advisory Committee’s competence was limited to the newly annexed populations was a recurrent theme. It is thus not
clear whether the natives were affected by this new judicial structure, which was only consultative (ANS, 1889: M8, 103).

The establishment of the Advisory Council was the product of a long string of petitions from prominent Muslims, of deliberations by committees charged to study and make recommendations on the reorganization of the judiciary in the colony of Senegal, and of very bitter conflicts between the magistrates and the colonial administrators (ANS, 1832: 3E9; 1846: 3E18). It did not put an end to Muslim demands to set up a Muslim court. The difficulty of reconciling the two positions on the administration of justice for Muslims resulted in a reformulation of the competence of the Advisory Committee, which was now ‘called on to give its advice on questions of Muslim law, problems that are submitted to it by the courts’ (ANS: decree of 9 August 1854, article 35). The Muslim Petition of 1856 (ANS M8 C folio 6: letter of 11 June 1856) contained an almost exhaustive enumeration of the differences between the Civil Code and Muslim law, emphasizing the following points:

[the Civil Code] forbids investigating paternity, the Muslim law authorizes it; the Koran permits and in a way even orders multiple lawful wives, and the penal code denigrates bigamy; the Koran rejects letting natural children be heirs, whereas the Civil Code gives them the same rights as legitimate children; French law does not recognize divorce and repudiation; finally, there are rules contradicted by other laws in the matter of inheritance, gifts, and wills.

Louis L. Faidherbe,11 named governor of Senegal in 1854, launched the enterprise of creating a modern colony. Drawing on his Algerian experience, he temporarily put an end to the controversies, petitions, and administrative committees by creating a Muslim court in 1857. He thereby assured a written regulation of a body of law inscribed in the Koran and the Sunna. Muslim autonomy in matters of family law was officially acknowledged.

Governor Faidherbe’s decision was part of a specific framework, that of pacifying the colony so as to undertake, with the originaires’ help, the conquest of the independent territories of the colony, especially those that adjoined Saint-Louis and Gorée. The particular context in the surrounding regions was that of holy wars and mobilization under the banner of Islam, particularly under the leadership of El Hadj Umar Tall (Robinson, 1985). As Ndiaye Seck (1984: 11) observed:

The new strategy of El Hadj Oumar Tell in 1855 pushed Faidherbe’s Muslim policy in a new direction. The Tukulor marabout was inciting the Saint-Louisians to boycott French trade

11. Faidherbe, who is considered the creator of modern Senegal, was governor of Senegal from 1854 to 1861 and from 1863 to 1865. He spent part of his career in Algeria, where he learned Arabic. He was the principal architect of the conquest of Senegambia. His knowledge of Senegalese languages, his interest in history and customs, and his publications in geography, history, and languages, all make him, according to Bathily (1976), the founder of French Africanism.
on the river. In order to avoid a possible response to this appeal and assure the military and commercial co-operation of the Saint-Louisians, on 13 September 1856 Faidherbe supported a Muslim petition that stressed the need for creating a Muslim court in Saint-Louis. The success of his social policy depended in large part on the success of this institution. It constituted his principal means of bringing the two societies together, and in addition was one of the mechanisms in his judicial administration for making Islam lose its social influence.

With the establishment of the Muslim section of colonial justice, Faidherbe reached out to plan Islamic education, Koranic and Arabic. He introduced into the colony the model of the Algerian médersa (a religious school), combining Islam with colonial modernity, the French language with Arabic. These were modalities whose public display, exegetical and literate, was expressed in Wolof with affected overtones of Arabic and French. This development and its appropriation by the originaires radically distinguishes the Islam of the Four Communes from the rural logic of the Islam of the Senegalese brotherhoods. The colony’s participation in the institutionalization and monumental inscription of the Muslim community, especially in Saint-Louis, explains the soliciting of religion in constructing the originaires’ civic and civil identity. The ministerial decree of 20 May 1857 explicitly limited the competence of the Muslim jurisdiction to the purely civil, to matters relating to personal status. Its significance was recalled by a colonial magistrate when the judicial debate was relaunched in 1889:

It is strange to see not only French subjects but also French citizens having different civil rights, mostly incompatible with the state of being a citizen, unless one tries to go back to what was done in 1857 and remove from the indigenous people who are Muslims by birth or conversion the personal status that was accorded them. Isn’t it possible to tighten the ties that bind them to us? Do we have to let them create another state within the State, whose influence we would have all the more reason to fear, that would have no other guide but fanaticism, whose members would be called upon as voters to take part in our public affairs?

(ANS, 1889: M8, 103)

The product of a political transaction, the main objective of the decree was to win over the Muslim populations of the colony of Senegal to the French cause, at a time when the colony was concerned about aggressive developments in the Muslim propaganda of bellicose marabouts. When the colonial administration became more firmly established in the greater part of Senegambia, the motivation for compromise disappeared:

Senegal is a colony created by France; the city of Saint-Louis was constituted by the French, and it is only little by little, graduallly and virtually clandestinely that Islam infiltrated the Black population of the city, introduced by the Moors of the river’s right bank; so it couldn’t have city rights and demand prerogatives analogous to those of Algeria. Here more than anywhere else, the Muslim, because of his profound ignorance developed by his fanaticism, is absolutely recalcitrant with respect to our ideas, our customs, our language, our behaviour, our civilization. He’s like a people apart, next to ours, living and growing on our flanks for nearly a century, without managing to be stimulated by our progress and contact with us. To the contrary, he is gaining territory every day toward the south, and it is very much to be
feared that if the powers of the Cadi are extended, that expansion will be encouraged, and may end up getting us in the most awkward quandaries in the not-too-distant future. (ANS, 1889: M8, 103)

Similarly, when the cadis’ judgements were challenged by recourse to French jurisdictions, especially in matters of divorce, succession of property, and inheritance by women and natural children, petitions would pile up on the desks of the governor and the minister. In the face of these petitions from a Muslim community bracing itself for an intransigent defence of its special status, the magistrates kept trying to reconcile the jurisdiction of the colonial courts with metropolitan traditions in order to restrain or abolish the competence of the Muslim judge, the cadi.

The battle surrounding the organization of Muslim justice rebounded in 1889, when the Muslims sent a petition concerning the treatment of vacant successions and Muslim judicial sales liquidated by the court. In response to this petition, a ‘Commission charged to study the reorganization of Muslim justice in Senegal’ was instituted. The Commission’s report shows that the stakes had not changed, that neither camp had shifted its position. On the contrary, for the first time the colonial administration had to expand the discussion to the second arrondissement (Gorée, Rufisque and Dakar), where demands for instituting a Muslim court became emphatic. This was the rationale that was invoked:

While the Muslim code governs the indigenous population of the first arrondissement, the Civil Code governs that of the second. It is not acceptable, gentlemen, that in one colony like Senegal there should be two weights and two measures. Our populations of the second arrondissement, composed in large part of children of the Saint-Louisians, are just as religious as the people of the first arrondissement and should enjoy the same prerogatives. I appeal, gentlemen, to your sense of fairness and beg you to express the wish that the Decree of 1857 should be extended to the second arrondissement and that it should get a new Muslim court of the first instance, whose seat would be in Dakar. (ANS, 1889: M8, 103)

The reaction of the colonial magistrature was a reprise of the position that had been adopted with Faidherbe’s first mandate. It was based on applying the Civil Code and strictly controlling the growth of Islam, in favour of assimilation. The chief observations made by its representative on the commission are a clear illustration of this position, especially when it came to expanding Muslim jurisdiction to the second arrondissement:

[He] feels that the populations of the second arrondissement are in general less Muslim than those of the first, and if there is no way to refrain from giving them a judge, then at least we should avoid, in the interest of the French cause, bestowing on them a tamsir or Muslim religious leader whose official appointment would contribute to the consolidation and spread among them of the influence of the Islam that unfortunately is already too much implanted in the capital (ANS, 1889: M8, 103)

For its part, the colonial administration, subject to the constraints of the colonial conquest, strove to avoid controversies, in order to ensure the
support of the Muslim community (Sarr and Roberts, 1991: 131). Depending on whether the magistrature prevailed over the colonial administration or vice versa, the prerogatives of the cadi were restricted or expanded (Schnapper, 1961). The magistrates thought that any refusal to apply the Civil Code was contrary to Natural Law and the policy of assimilation (Carrère and Holle, 1855). Their aggressiveness was matched by the Muslim community’s considerable means of bringing pressure to bear on the colonial administration through representatives, deputies and municipal councilmen, and their position as intermediaries in the trade with Senegambia. The administration, caught between these opposing demands, wavered between connivance with the originaires (establishing or re-establishing Muslim courts) and unifying the judicial systems. In 1903, for example, a decree was promulgated that unified the systems of justice and their administration, subjecting originaires, metropolitans, and assimilated peoples alike to the authority of the same law, while guaranteeing to the indigenous people that their customs would be preserved in private matters, provided that these did not contravene principles of humanity and civilization (Quellien, 1910: 227). The Decree of 1903 is interesting because it abolished the special status of originaires and recognized the Muslim authorities in the same category as ‘fetishist’ judicial customs, bringing them in a single stroke to the same level, designating them as dominated populations liable to subjection to ‘the civilizing mission’. By expanding, or at least including Muslim justice in a geography of custom, the Senegalese colonial magistrature tried to win two wagers: to drive the originaires out of colonial society, and to redefine the notions of domination and submission, which had been strongly challenged by the emergence of a plural colonial society and an unstable equilibrium. When the expansion/inclusion did not withstand the petitions from the Muslim community, the administration tried to forbid publishing judgments in Arabic. In reaction, the religious erudition of the originaires achieved a cultural hybrid which was expressed in the mastery of Arabic and of theological and judicial sciences, and, paradoxically, the mastery of French. This gave birth to a colonial Islam distinct from the Islam of the brotherhoods and/or Black Islam (Monteil, 1964), strongly dominated by the Sufi outlook: the centrality of the figure of the marabout, holy places and objects, and the abnegation of the Self.

The colonial colouring of the Islam of the originaires opened up a new field to the colonial culture, structured in two domains: a public domain subject to French law, and a private domain under the influence of a religiosity that identified the citizen of the Four Communes. Equally, it opened up the universality of the republican tradition of the metropolis, and the uniqueness of its product as colonial subject, inventing for itself a distinction in religion and the judicial system. The demand for instituting a Muslim court should be read not as the struggle for a judicial system that fits in with a religious tradition, but as the delineation of a space for producing an indigenous identity protected from the violence of colonial domination and cultural
arrogance. One can trace the objects at issue, around which the opposition between the Muslim community and the metropolitan actors (judges and colonial functionaries) took shape: polygamy, which preoccupied the imagined world of the colonists with the fantasy of a torrid indigenous sexuality, unbridled and fertile; community care of orphans, which brought up problems of inheritance and succession, and conversion, when nobody claimed them; leviratic marriage; and cohabitation. The amount of stress placed on polygamy and the levirate was unusual, but it was part of that colonialist conception of the subjugated as lacking intellectual capacity and as being primitives with an animal sexuality. The extraordinary vitality of the native culture, in its multiple manifestations and complex recompositions, contained those colonial detours, establishing itself as a constituent of the colonial culture.

In 1912, the colonial administration reaffirmed its recognition of political rights and the Muslim community’s submission to Koranic law to the exclusion of the French Civil Code. The outbreak of the First World War and the need for African troops in the war effort afforded Deputy Blaise Diagne the opportunity to secure legal recognition of the *originaires*’ citizenship through a series of laws known as the ‘Blaise Diagne Laws’.\(^{12}\) To put the finishing touches to the edifice of this new legality, the Decree of 20 November 1932 recognized the exclusive competence of Muslim courts in the civil affairs of Muslim natives and their descendants, such as marriage, inheritance, gifts, wills, and so on (Sarr and Roberts, 1991: 141).

The pluralism and diversity that are so much celebrated in the cultural manifestations of the *originaires*, in religion and in the constant conflicts that set the metropolitan components against the indigenous people of the protectorate, did not withstand the unitary and authoritarian ideology of African nationalism and its Senegalese side, *negritude*.

**CONCLUSION**

The identity of the *originaires* of the Four Communes is thus revealed in multiple practices, as much in their diversity as in their manifestations in the economic, political and social registers. Their religious expression, especially in cultural idioms and their public display, whether pertaining to the divine or to social and political transactions, is carried out in a space produced by colonial logics, in which social groups and plural practices are expressed. The

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\(^{12}\) The most important of the Diagne Laws of 1915 and 1916 was the law of 19 October 1915 that gave the *originaires* the right to enlist and serve in the regular army of France (Johnson, 1991: 232). In September 1916, Diagne introduced into the Chamber the following resolution: ‘The indigenous people of the fully empowered communes of Senegal and their descendants are and shall remain French citizens, subject to the military obligations imposed by the Law of 19 October 1915’ (Johnson, 1991: 234).
specific morphology of the colonial space in the Four Communes is the product of these plural logics and of transactions that produced the fully empowered communes of the colony, at the same time that the latter produced fragments of cultures and societies that negotiated their statuses, civil as well as civic. It is in the invention of a culture which is taking on the responsibility of producing a new community that a two-sided religiosity is deployed, Catholic and Muslim, within one and the same \textit{originaires} identity, whose civility is the product of a compromise and of revisions of cultural outlooks, the blending of which is a creole. Therein the culture of the Four Communes presents a religiosity expressed in the design of Atlantic civil- ization, whose outlines are sketched by the Atlantic slave trade and filled in by European colonization. This design supports an architecture and a civility that is tested in the production of a citizenship opposed to a metropolitan civility whose syntax is the French Civil Code. The principal characteristic of the production of a city and an urban civility is at the heart of a globalization project, the colonial civilizing mission, imposing on it the special rhythm of societies that adapt to an economic and political situation in order to secure for themselves a status whose hybrid nature follows from a frenzied resistance to colonial assimilation in its metropolitan version. The \textit{originaires} imposed on the colonial administration and the magistrates the indigenous version of colonial history, that of colonial contact and unstable but continuing transactions between two sides, the one autochthonous and the other foreign. From this dialogue and this opposition were produced the fully empowered communes and the citizenship of the \textit{originaires}.

Colonial violence has always been considered capable of imposing the figures of its domination and hybrid nature by deploying its knowledge of classification and its arrogance, which is rooted in the superiority of its civilizing mission. The \textit{originaires} paths, in their gaudy esthetics, the monumental- ity of their mosques and churches, and their stubborn rejection of the Civil Code and conversion, reveal histories of identities and transactions where a native pluralism and distinction has established itself at the centre stage of the colonial project: an obvious desire to participate in the world on their own terms.

The paradox of the Senegalese situation is that the postcolonial logics deployed an even more weighty authority to produce a distinction with the colonial project, whether falsely or not, and achieve assimilation within the nation. On the shores and drifts of postcolonialism, it is necessary to pursue those arabesques where, through rips in authoritarianism, protests are expressed with clothing, festive demonstrations, culinary art and the display of social, religious, and economic identities, and a unique history whose landmarks are: the drafting of the Register of Grievances by the population of Saint-Louis, directed to the States General of 1789; the successes in colonial commerce of the traders who followed the troops of Governor Faidherbe and his successors; the election of municipal councilmen and a deputy to the French National Assembly in 1848; resistance and
collaboration during the Vichy regime; and an intellectual and enlightened Islam . . . so many signs of a memory required to (again) become African by the philosophy of negritude and the Wolof ideology of diggêl.\footnote{A maraboutic prescriptive directive, whether in the religious or political domain.}

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