Full Length Research

Political Islam and the Negotiation of Political Roles among Peripheral Sufi Leaders in Senegal

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Islam in Senegal is dominated by Sufism, a mystical form of religiosity governed by different Muslim brotherhoods (tarixas). A number of researches on the political influence of the Senegalese tarixas have approached Sufi-Muslim authorities from a globalized perspective, thus paying less attention to internal segments within each tarixa. In this article, the author emphasizes the political roles of Sufi segment leaders ('peripheral shaykhs') as they build clientelistic relationships with secular politicians. Peripheral Sufi leaders are charismatic Muslim guides (shaykhs) who earned political legitimacy either through blood lineage with a Sufi founder or through a privileged relationship with a Sufi central leader (Khalif-Général). Speaking of a fragmented Senegalese Muslim authority, the article proposes that the negotiation of political roles among peripheral Sufi leaders has had a double impact on Senegal's democratization. On one hand, it stifles the constructive role of the Khalif-Général as a transethnic religious mediator. On the other hand, by allowing client shaykhs to proliferate voting commands (electoral ndigëls), it fuels clientelism and prebendalism in political regimes. Based on field observation and analysis of diverse secondary sources, the article concludes that electoral ndigëls, although in decline, have consequences that continue to challenge fuller democratization in Senegal.

Keywords: Senegal, Political Islam, Sufism, Muslim brotherhood, Electoral Ndigël.

INTRODUCTION

The politicization of Senegal's powerful Muslim brotherhoods (*tarixa in* Wolof) dates back to, at least, a century.[1] Over the last two decades, however, the structure of the Senegalese Sufi-Muslim authority has undergone various sociopolitical changes that have significantly impacted the country's political landscape. In fact, while the Sufi central leaders (or *Khalif-Générals*) of the *tarixas* served traditionally as "religious mediators" who facilitated the negotiations of coexistence between the majority-Muslim population and the secular state, the emergence of influential peripheral Sufi leaders in the last

decades has threatened the 'conciliatory' dialogs through which Senegal's 'democratic' model has historically been negotiated (Behrman, 1970; Cruise O'Brien,1992; Schaffer, 1998; Schraeder, 2004; Gellar, 2005; Diouf, 2013).[2]

This article subsequently argues that the increased negotiation of political roles among charismatic peripheral Sufi leaders bears a double impact on the democratization process in Senegal. On one hand, it stifles the traditional role of the *Khalif-Général* as a transethnic religious mediator. On the other hand, it

allows the development of clientelistic ties between the secular politician and the client peripheral Sufi *shaykh*, thus fueling both clientelism and what Richard Joseph (1987) has termed prebendalism. When discussing prebendalism in Nigerian politics, Joseph identifies the political phenomenon as resulting from the struggles about the allocation of state services and goods through patron-client relations based mostly on "class and ethnicity" (p.8). In some examples used in the present study of Senegalese politics, aspects of prebendalism are identified, not forcibly through ethnicity, but in relation to the politicized segments of Sufi authority whose leaders tend to depend on strong patron-client relationships with secular politicians in order to garner special favors and earn greater access to state goods. Examining prebendalism in this sense, the article suggests that the phenomenon subsequently undermines democratization in Senegal in several ways. In fact, by prioritizing the individualized interests of their respective Sufi segments, the peripheral Sufi leader progressively stifles the *Khalif-Général*'s central authority as well as his traditional power to help caution accountability among secularist state elites. Further, the article suggests that the historical fragmentation of Muslim authority in most of Senegal's Sufi *tarixas* has increased in the last two decades; in part, due to the growing number of Sufi segments of authority existing within the *tarixas*. Subsequently, the authority of the *Khalif-Général*, especially in the *Tijaniyya* and *Muridiyya tarixas*, often faces an unspoken rivalry with internal segment authorities over the control of Sufi followers, especially at the level of electoral participation.

The political fragmentation of Senegal's Sufi authorities has influenced the rapid growth of a new wave of political Islam driven by increased negotiations of political roles among peripheral Sufi leaders. Additionally, this wave of political Islam also results from historical interactions between the secular state and the Senegalese "*ulama*" (or Muslim scholarship) in general. Between the 1950s and 1980s,for instance, this interaction culminated with the rise of reformist Islamic movements such as the Muslim Cultural Union (*Union culturelle musulmane-UCM*), *al-Falah*, the *Jama'at Ibadu Rahman* (JIR) (Markovitz, 1970; Loimeier, 2003; Mbacké, K. 2006; Loimeier, 2009).This new wave of political Islam is characterized by an increased politicization of several Sufi segments (or *tarixa* segments) and the emergence of what one can call '*tarixa*-based' political parties. The latter are *tarixa*-based because the party leader, or the political *shaykh*, draws his political legitimacy from the traditional circles of the affiliated Sufi *tarixa* where he also pulls most of his party members.

In a broader sense, the major arguments of the article relate to the phenomenon of voting commands (or electoral *ndigëls*) as fueled by increased political activism among Senegalese peripheral Sufi leaders. In the Senegalese Muslim context, *ndigël* is traditionally viewed

as a religious command issued by a Sufi guide towards the construction and expansion of the Muslim community. Over time, however, the increased instrumentalization of this religious concept in politics has produced the paradigm of electoral *ndigël*. Thus the electoral *ndigël* emerges as a voting command issued by political *shaykhs* – either as party-leaders or as mere political clients – to their respective Sufi followers in support of one political party or another in exchange for high kickbacks. In addition, it should be noted that the electoral ndigël can take various forms. It can be explicit, when the religious guide decides to openly urge his followers to vote for a particular candidate. Modou Kara, for instance, issued an explicit electoral ndigël in favor of former presidents Diouf and Wade respectively in 2000 and 2012, but in vain. The same also occurred with Bethio Thioune who openly supported former President Wade in 2012. The electoral ndigël can also be implicit when other Sufi guides choose, instead, to only provide implied messages of support in favor of a politician whose qualities they commend or appreciate in a public address. This form of electoral ndigël, which is often subjected to the taalibé-voter's interpretation, remains common within almost all Senegalese Sufi circles, especially during famous festivals such as the Gamu (celebration of Prophet Muhammad's birthday), the Maggal (commemoration of Ahmad Bamba's 1895 exile to Gabon), or also the commemoration of Seydina Issa Laye's Call among the Layeen. Through a close observation of recent political events in Senegal and an analysis of diverse secondary sources, the article concludes that the electoral *ndigël* discourages democratization in Senegal, given that its embedded clientelistic essence only fuels political regimes where clientelism and prebendalism are normalized.

Methodology

Aside from the researcher's native background on Senegalese politics, the study depended heavily on close field observations and analysis of secondary sources. Field observations were conducted during summers 2012 and 2013 when the researcher was investigating about a broader topic on the influence of Sufism on electoral outcomes in Senegal. Besides the academic literature about Senegalese politics, the secondary sources examined in this research included Senegalese newspaper articles, online archives in both French and English, and interview records found both online and at the *Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire* (*IFAN*) at the Dakar Cheikh Anta Diop University. At the theoretical level, the study drew from the literature on democracy, while emphasizing universal suffrage as a key element in the measurement of democracy. Additionally, the literature review also considered how democracy was

analyzed in relation to the attitude of the political regime vis-à-vis political accountability and the realization of voters' 'common good' as a political goal. Finally, in examining the link between the electoral *ndigël* and democratization in Senegal, the theoretical framework allowed the research to show how clientelistic prioritization of the Sufi segments' individualized interests has undermined the *tarixa*'s central authority whose historical legitimacy contributed significantly to the negotiations of democratic rule in the past.

The Topic of Islam and Politics in Senegal

Religion and politics in Senegal is a topic that attracted and still attracts many researchers in the fields of history, political science, anthropology, and sociology. Thus a significant volume of literature has been produced in the domain. Behrman's 1970 *Muslim Brotherhood and Politics in Senegal* is probably one of the pioneering Anglophone studies on aspects of political Islam in Senegal. It examines Senegal's major Muslim brotherhoods as powerful political forces. Behrman argues, however, that the Senegalese secular political elite remain in control of the government, while its attempts to collaborate with the religious leaders only seem to perpetuate what the French colonial administration adopted in the past.

Following similar lines of research, Cruise O'Brien has made interesting developments on the religion-politics nexus in Senegal. In his 1992 article, he perceived former President Abdou Diouf's (1981-2000) advent to power and his modernization projects as a possible threat to the historical relations of collaboration that helped ground the "social contract "upon which Senegalese democracy has, so far, been peacefully negotiated. Additionally, in his *Symbolic Confrontations* (2003), Cruise O'Brien explores a much broader topic on the relationship between the state in Africa, perceived as a profane domain, and religious authority, as a sacred realm. In his examination of the Senegalese case, he analyzes the 1970s tensions between the Senegalese state and religious leaders which, in the *Muridiyya* order for instance, resulted from the *Khalif-Général*'s discontent about the state agricultural politics. In his broader focus on the *Muridiyya* Sufi entity, Cruise O'Brien shows how, sometimes, misunderstanding between the two 'collaborators'– state and Sufi-Muslim authorities – can also impede political negotiations, especially when an unhappy religious leader casts state power in the image of "Devil" (pp.32-48). Leonardo Villalón (1995) appears even more straightforward in his study of the political functions of Senegalese Sufi circles. Focusing his study of Senegalese politics at the regional level – Fatick region, – he contends that the mediational roles of Senegalese Sufi orders at the grassroots level have been crucial to

making the country's political stability a historical model on the African continent.

In addition to these studies, more recent research on the Islam-politics nexus in Senegal have also sought to relate the country's 'democratic' model to its cultural and even linguistic peculiarities. Shaffer (1998) is one example. Overall, he argues that democracy, understood among his Senegalese interviewees as *demokaraasi* (in Wolof), is simply what people believe it is, and not forcibly what it means in its Western theoretical framework. According to Shaffer, many Senegalese perceive democracy as one's adherence to the majority's political viewpoint. *Demokaraasi* as such differs from the Western idea of democracy. What is important, however, is that Shaffer's findings suggest that it is important to consider collectivist political viewpoints – as mostly defined in Senegal by Sufi structures – in order to better capture the dynamics of democratization in the country. Shaffer's analysis is important in many ways, especially because it encourages reconsideration of the traditional theoretical frameworks for studying democracy and, by extension, politics in Senegal as well as in other milieus in the "non-West."

In sum, to a great extent, these field studies, like many others, have made important contributions to understanding political dynamics in the Senegalese Sufi landscape. However, as some of them tend to either focus on one *tarixa* or on an inappropriately globalized Sufi authority, there is little coverage of how internal dynamics of authority fragmentation/segmentation within the *tarixas* has changed the distribution of leadership roles and influenced the issuance of electoral *ndigëls* over the last two decades. In addressing this specific issue in Senegalese political Sufism, this article proposes to cover a research area yet poorly explored.

The Context

Senegal is a relatively small country with an area of 196, 200 square kilometers, about the size of South Dakota. The 2011 World Bank census estimates the country's population to about 13 million. About 94 percent of Senegalese are Muslim and 92 percent of the Muslim community is affiliated to four different Sufi orders (*tarixa*) (Pew Research, 2010). A Sufi order can be understood as a Muslim brotherhood led by a saint Muslim and whose followers, on top of the five pillars of Islam, also share other Islamic mystical rituals and practices.[3] Sufi orders in Senegal are commonly called *tarixas* (sing. *tarixa*), or *tariqas* (sing. *tariqa*) in Wolof, and include *Qadiriyya* (10 percent), *Tijaniyya* (51 percent), *Muridiyya* (30.1 percent) and the *Laayen* (6 percent) (Mbacké, 2006). The Wolof word *tarixa* is borrowed from the Arabic *tarîqat* that literally means "way" or "path." Besides the five pillars of Islam, each *tarixa* is also governed by a

specific set of religious rituals and practices aimed at training the Sufi disciple (or *taalibé*) in the quest of spiritual perfection.[4]

Among the four major *tarixas* in Senegal, *Tijaniyya* and *Muridiyya* remain politically and economically the most influential, not only because of the important number of their respective followings, but also because of the latter's significant involvement in the country's economic, financial and political affairs. Since the early post-World-War-II era, *tarixa* leaders (*shaykhs*) have continuously played important roles in electoral outcomes in Senegal. Most of this political influence has been channeled through the issuance of electoral *ndigëls*.

In the last two decades, such a *ndigël*-based political influence has been monopolized by the growing number of peripheral Sufi *shaykhs* who, since the 1980s, have become politically more active than the traditional central authority of the *tarixas* – the *Khalif-Générals*. A peripheral Sufi leader (or authority) refers to a Muslim guide who belongs (or once belonged) to a *Khalif-Général's* entourage (or council) and whose charisma has earned a distinct personal following over time. Today, many peripheral *shaykhs* lead distinct Sufi segments of authority within the broader structure of the affiliated *tarixa*. Over the last decades, this phenomenon has caused the proliferation of 'peripheral *ndigëls*' and their political instrumentalization by Sufi segment leaders has served for the acquisition of important kickbacks that first benefit to the segment and its leader.

This sociopolitical development sets the ground for a new era of political Sufism in Senegal where the politicized *ndigël* of the peripheral *shaykh* removes itself from the central authority of the *Khalif-Général*, in one way or another. In fact, in many instances, the peripheral *shaykh* seems to ignore the electoral neutrality of the *Khalif-Général*, at least unavowedly, while engaging in politics either directly by creating a political party or indirectly by building strong patron-client relations with secular politicians. While this clearly speaks to the increased politicization of the Senegalese *tarixa* structures, the article suggests that it also reflects a degree of fragmentation within the respective religious authorities in the *tarixa*s. Further, as one can observe, this paradigm of authority fragmentation impacts heavily on the evolution of Senegalese contemporary politics, mostly because it fuels the electoral *ndigël* phenomenon that, in turn, slows down the consolidation of Senegalese democratization in a number of ways.

A new wave of Political Islam: Peripheral Sufi Leaders Negotiating Political Roles

This wave of political Islam is new because it replaces an earlier 1970s-80s reformist trend that involved Islamic reformist movements such as the Muslim Cultural Union (*Union culturelle musulmane-UCM*), *al-Falah*, the *Jama'at Ibadu Rahman* (JIR), and a few others (see Loimeier, 2003; Samson, 2005; Mbacké, 2006; Loimeier, 2009; Samson 2009). Before an in-depth discussion of this new wave of 'political Islam' in Senegal, it is important first to explicate what is meant here by a '*tarixa*-based' political party and how it fits in the political Islam umbrella. According to article 4 of the Senegalese constitution, a political party can only be secular with no religious, ethnic, linguistic or geographical bias before it can be legalized. In other words, *de jure* Islamic political parties are constitutionally banned. Thus, given that the so-termed '*tarixa*-based' political parties must meet this requirement; one assumes that the existing *tarixa*-based parties are just as constitutionally legal as secular political parties in Senegal. In other words, *tarixa*-based political parties are 'secular', at least 'on paper.' As such, the association of the *tarixa*-based political party with political Islam speaks only to its *de facto* Islamic-ness as reflected in two peculiar aspects. One, the political leadership of the *tarixa*-based political party is fundamentally Sufi-based, given that the political leader is often viewed by the electorate as a religious guide as well. Two, the members of the *tarixa*-based parties are often essentially constituted by members of a Sufi segment from within the broader *tarixa*'s religious structure. These are two key factors which, in this article, are used to define such political parties as typically *tarixa*-based and as part of a broader trend of moderate political Islam.

In the Senegalese political landscape, the *tarixa*-based political parties, as thus defined, differ from secular (or non-*tarixa*-based) political parties in a number of ways. First, unlike *tarixa*-based political parties, leaders of the secular parties do not forcibly come from a Sufi-Muslim lineage or religious structure, in general. Second, while the membership of *tarixa*-based parties is mostly constituted by the followers of the affiliated *tarixa*, the secular parties draw their party members from a religiously diverse and multi-ethnic constituency. In addition, in the Senegalese political arena, the *tarixa*-based political parties also tend to be less salient than the secular parties whose budgets are more important as well.

Now, how does the political agenda of the *tarixa*-based party relate to the broader Islamist thought? For many scholars, political Islam, or Islamism, refers to the activities of Islamic movements, sects, parties or groups that engage in politics with the ideology that Islamic legalistic texts – *Sharia* (Islamic law), in particular – are the sole doctrine that should govern state politics and rule the society (Roy, 2007; Scott 2010; Paracha, 2013). This implies a radical position of the Islamists who militate for the establishment of an Islamic state. In the Senegalese context, however, the framing of the *tarixa*-based political parties within the political Islam umbrella is not forcibly

based on militancy for the establishment of an Islamic state in the country. Instead, most leaders of *tarixa*-based parties whose political activism depends mostly on clientelistic relationships with secular politicians seem more interested in securing a political and financial force to help consolidate and legitimize religious authority in the Senegalese public sphere. Nevertheless, there is also a few political *shaykhs* who do embrace an Islamist rhetoric that condemns secular politics and institutions, while promoting Islamic reformist rhetoric. Over the last two decades, these developments gave rise to two forms of *tarixa*-based party leaders: moderates, on one hand; and a few radicalists on the other, although most of the latter often end up having to negotiate with moderation.

As for the moderate political *shaykhs*, they obviously form the most ubiquitous pattern of political Islam in Senegal compared to a much smaller number of reformist political *shaykhs* most of whom, like Abdou Samath Mbacké, promote a radicalist discourse. Additionally, the moderate political *shaykhs* often claim to be secularist politicians and prefer to be perceived as such. One example is Sëriñ Mansour Sy Djamil in the 2012 electoral campaign. During his widely mediatized speeches, he would insist that his primary concerns were secularist, not religious. He would even go as far as shaking off from the traditional dressing style – long and loose Moroccan *jellaba*, hat, etc. – that reminded of his Tijani Sufi background. Besides, Djamil also founded a yearly and mixed-religion humanitarian summer camp named *Inond' Action* that allows disadvantaged kids to stay away from their flooded family compounds (Ndoye, 2012). Indeed, as reflected in the Senegalese media, many Senegalese find these constructive efforts highly commendable. Yet, as one can discern in the perceptions of many Senegalese, Djamil, as a political *shaykh*, is still simply viewed as a Muslim guide whose public profile remains tied to a distinct religion, Islam, and a distinct Sufi *tarixa*, *Tijaniyya*.

Indeed, Djamil shares this cultural profiling with several other Senegalese political *shaykhs*, even though his 2012 electoral achievement – the winning of 4 parliamentary seats – speaks, indeed, to his peculiarity, not just as a Western-educated moderate political *shaykh*, but also as someone who, unlike several other political *shaykhs*, struggles to avoid subjugating his tarixa-based party to the clientelistic needs of secular politicians. Such a profiling of political *shaykhs* is partly fueled by the fact that the socio-religious status of the political *shaykh* as both Muslim and descendant of a revered Sufi-Muslim founder/precursor are solidly engraved in the social perception of the ordinary Senegalese, irrespective of religion or *tarixa*. This sociopolitical fabric is what underlies this new wave of political Islam in Senegal and the framing of the *tarixa*-based political parties as a trend of peculiarly Senegalese political Islam. Additionally, while *tarixa*-based political parties pull most of their

supportive electorate from the structure of the affiliated *tarixa*, they also face a number of challenges to attract non-Muslim Senegalese voters or others who belong to a different *tarixa*. As a result, *tarixa*-based political parties remain weakened; and despite their common-shared rhetoric on matters concerning Islamic ethics and morality, they can hardly form a coalition to run against the salient secular political parties. Despite such a challenge of Senegalese political Sufism, however, several *tarixa*-based political parties continue to exist with a quite non-negligible role to play in elections.

About three decades after *Shaykh* Ahmed Tidiane Sy founded the first *tarixa*-based political party (PSS) in 1959; similar political parties were launched by younger Senegalese Muslim guides and scholars. A first attempt was made in 1991 when a group of *arabisants*, or Arabist scholars (non-Sufi), led by Cheikh Oumar Tall founded the Party for Liberation and Islamic Democracy (*Parti pour la Libération et la Démocratie Islamique-PLDI*). But the party was not legalized because of its "Islamic bias." In 1996, Cheikh Bamba Dièye founded the Front for Socialism and Democracy/Union for Justice (*Front pour le Socialism et la Démocratie/Benno Jubël-FSD/BJ*). Despite the prominence of Dièye's Islamic profile, the party was still legalized, in part, because its written agenda complied with the constitutional requirements of political secularity. The party still exists today but has completely lost its Islamic character since the death of its founder who is now replaced by his son and current minister Cheikh Abiboulaye Dièye.

In the following years, many *shaykhs*, mostly from the *Tijaniyya* and *Muridiyya tarixas*, abandoned indirect politics to personally engage in the political arena by creating their own political parties. Most of these party-leader *shaykhs* benefit from blood relation with a revered Sufi founder/precursor, a fact which, to some extent, confers a political privilege upon them. Shaykh Modou Kara, for instance, is the grandson of Mame Thierno Birahim Faty Mbacké, the junior brother of Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba (Samson, 2005). Similarly, Sëriñ Mansour Sy Djamil, the current leader of Bës Du Ñakk party, is the great-grandson of Al-hajj Malick Sy, founder of the Sy Tijaniyya *tarixa*. These patterns of Sufi lineage play determinant roles in the political profiles of the political *shaykhs* and weigh heavily on their charisma and power of influence.

In February 1998 *Sëriñ* Moustapha Sy, the second and current spiritual leader of the *Dahirat-al Moustarchidine wal Moustarchidati* (DMWM) movement and son of current Tijani *Khalif-Général Shaykh* Ahmed Tidiane Sy, founded the Party for Unity and Rally (*Parti de l'Unité et du Rassemblement-PUR*). The *Shaykh* intended to participate in the 2000 presidential election but suddenly withdrew his candidacy at the last minute. In 1999, a young *Baay Faal shaykh* named Sëriñ Ousseynou Fall founded the Citizens' Movement (*Mouvement des*

Citoyens-MDC).[5] In August 2000, Ahmet Khalifa Niass founded the Patriotic Alliances Front (*Front des Alliances Patriotiques-FAP*). In October 2000, Imam Mbaye Niang founded the Reform Movement for Social Development (*Mouvement de la Réforme pour le Développement Social-MRDS*). Sëriñ Mamoune Niass founded his People's Rally (*Rassemblement du Peuple-RP*) in 2002. In 2004, Murid *Shaykh* Modou Kara founded the *Parti de la Verité de Dieu* (PVD) following his leadership of the Murid movement called *Diwan Silk al-Jawahir fi-Akhbar Sagharir* (shortened *Diwan*). Again, on the Tijani side, Seriñ Mansour Sy Djamil who engaged in politics since the 1970s finally established One Day Will Come (*Bes Du Ñakk*) in 2007, which has remained the most powerful among *tarixa*-based parties since 2012, after winning four parliamentary seats at the Senegalese National Assembly. In the same year, Murid guide Abdou Samath Mbacké launched the African Movement for Social Renovation (*Mouvement Africain pour la Renovation Social*-MARS), a movement which has been active since 2005 (Diouf, 2010).

Among these politico-religious leaders, there is a small number that openly calls for a Islamic reformist change in political orientations. They make up the other wing of Senegalese political Islam that one may call "radicalist," even though the intensity of their political rhetoric is no way comparable to, for instance, the Salafist perspective of Jihadist movements in other parts of the worlds. Abdou Samath Mbacké is one example of a radical political *shaykh*, even though he seems compelled to embrace moderation, now. During his inaugural speech, for instance, he insisted, "*[n]otre parti compte prendre des mesures radicales dans tous les domaines pour réconcilier le Sénégalais avec lui-même … Il faudra rompre avec le modèle produit par l'école occidentale*" (Diouf, 2010). In these terms, the *shaykh* promotes a return to the Senegalese Islamic tradition and values, which the reformist leader believes can only be achieved through a rupture from the models produced by the Western school. Such a radical and anti-Western political discourse reminds of the Islamist rhetoric once embraced by leaders of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in the 1930s and those of the leaders of the Senegalese UCM, *al-Falah*, and the JIR through the 1970s and 80s (Behrman, 1970; Loimeier, 2003; Kane, 2011).

Thus, one can only note the significant presence of *tarixa*-based political parties in the Senegalese political arena, although, so far, none of them has independently run in a presidential election. Causes of such limitation are essentially based on the fact that *tarixa*-based political parties are aware of their lack of popularity at the national level compared to salient secular political parties. In greater part, this results, as one interviewee put it, from the fact that "[...] most [Senegalese] voters tend to believe that the secularist politicians are more competent than the *marabouts-politiciens* [political *shaykhs*] in terms

of governance…and promoting secular and more inclusive national policies" (my translation).[6] Consequently, not a single *tarixa*-based party has yet been able to rival the secular political parties that remain stronger than ever. This is probably why political *shaykhs* in Senegal are unwilling to run for presidential elections, which remains a 'luxury' that necessitates high electoral participation fees currently amounting to 65 million CFA (about 130,000 dollars).

Ultimately, most political *shaykhs* remain in the Senegalese political arena only to feed the clientelistic interests of the salient secular political parties. From one election to another, several political *shaykhs*, with the exception of a few like Djamil, keep shifting political allegiance from one side to another, often regardless of whether the supported party's political agenda favors the cause of Islam or not. In these instances, issuance of a favorable electoral *ndigël* by a political *shaykh* depends more on whether a secular patron promises the highest kickback in terms of both money and state services. In sum, one retains that the new wave of Senegalese political Islam does not yet provide another alternative to the paradigm of patron-client politics that simply obfuscates the consolidation of democratic regimes in Senegal.

Further, in light of such contestations between Sufi political actors, one understands that authority fragmentation in the *tarixas* and its associated patterns of clientelistic political Islam undermines the traditional role of the *Khalif-Général* as a religious and transethnic mediator between state and Sufi followers. In fact, as Schraeder (2004) notes, Senegal's early (central) Sufi leaders– first the founders, then the *Khalif-Générals*– served as formidable religious mediators who helped transcend ethnic differences which, in other African Muslim countries, fueled political unrest. In present-day Senegal, however, the fragmentation of the Sufi authorities, resulting mostly from the rise of peripheral Sufi leaders, is weakening this role of a politico-religious mediator due to the subsequent decline of the *Khalif-Général*'s political influence.

On the same lines, one can further argue that if the political influence of Senegalese Sufi precursors during late colonial and early post-colonial times had been more productive in democratic negotiations, it was certainly because their charisma rested on a more centralized spiritual authority to which Sufi masses paid both religious and political allegiances. Additionally, the fact that there were less political contestations among politicized segments of Sufi authority as in today's *tarixa* structures, allowed central Sufi leaders such asTijani Al-hajj Malick Sy and Murid Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba, for instance, and later *Khalif-Générals* such as Tijani Shaykh Ababacar Sy and Murid Shaykh Muhammadu Mustafa Mbacké to play greater roles as democratic intermediaries between the state and their respective Sufi

followings. Also, the fact that the *tarixa*'s political authority was essentially concentrated around the *Khalif-Générals* facilitated the conclusion of productive compromises with political administration. In the end, although this did not create an ideal democracy in Senegal, at least the collaborative efforts to balance state power with grassroots social needs helped set the grounds for a tradition of democratic negotiation and compromise.

Today, the historically centralized political authority of the Senegalese *tarixas* seems to progressively fade away as a result of the *Khalif-Générals*' retreat from politics beginning in the 1980s. Subsequently, political roles within the *tarixa* structures have greatly turned to the Sufi peripheral leaders, while facilitating the political instrumentalization of the religious *ndigël*. On these grounds, the *ndigël*-centered logic of political participation grows unconstructive and becomes more based on a corrupt *shaykh-taalibé* (leader-follower) relationship. It is corrupt because, in this instance, *ndigël* does not forcibly serve for the religious purpose of building the Muslim society; but is, instead, used for the individual ends of the political Sufi segment and its leader. As a result, the electoral *ndigël* phenomenon, by fueling clientelism and internal divisions among Sufi religious authorities, weakens the Senegalese *tarixa* structure and its authority to fruitfully mediate the negotiations for democratic power balance between the Senegal's secular state and Sufi masses.

At the Crossroads of Democracy and Ndigël

As previously mentioned, *ndigël* is a Wolof word that literally means a command, or an order, issued to an individual to do something. In the Senegalese Sufi context, *ndigël* along with the concept of *njébbël* (surrendering) constitutes a crucial element to the very foundation of the Senegalese *tarixa* institutions. This is truer in the famous Wolof saying that goes, "*taalibé ndigël*," meaning, a true Sufi follower surrenders to the spiritual command (of the religious guide).

From this narrative, even from a superficial understanding of the concepts of democracy and electoral *ndigël*, one may come to a conclusion that the implications of individual freedom in the first dismiss the second. Almost similarly, the realm of a political *ndigël*, given its assumed implications of the follower's unconditional submission, fails to accommodate the key principles of the first. However, summarizing the problem in this way might seem quite simplistic or even reductionist. Thus, for a deeper analysis of this antinomy, it is important to explore the concepts of democracy and *ndigël* in greater depths. For that purpose, I explore first the key definitions of democracy in an attempt to examine how the implications of the concept have evolved overtime.

First of all, as already noted by many researchers, the definitions of democracy have faced issues related to the universalization of the concept; which, in part, has made it more difficult to measure, especially with regard to the diversity of political regimes and "good governance" (Coppedge and Gerring, 2011).[7] A review of the literature on democracy informs that different approaches to the concept have come to quite different conclusions, often depending on what methodology has been employed or the variables that have been emphasized.

In the nineteenth century, many social scientists emphasized universal suffrage as a key element in measuring democracy. At this point, satisfactory electoral participation is made a major variable in defining democracy. For instance, while commending what he calls American democracy, Alexis de Tocqueville associates the latter with patterns of universal suffrage, "I have the chance to observe its [universal suffrage] effects in various places [in America] and among races of men whom language, religion, or customs turn into virtual strangers to each other, in Louisiana, as well as in New England, in Georgia as in Canada" (Tocqueville, 2003, p.228). Thus, in his admiration of what he perceives as free and fair elections in postcolonial America, the French lawyer not only views universal suffrage as a key element for a democratic rule, but he also emphasizes how the electoral system in nineteenth-century US outdistanced Europe's stagnant monarchies in terms of electoral freedom and egalitarianism.

Yet, although such focus on universal suffrage as a key element of democracy prevailed throughout the twentieth century, social scientists began soon to give a greater attention to aspects of inclusiveness and participatoriness in elections. In *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, for instance, Schumpeter presents democracy as a specific "method" that facilitates decision making (Schumpeter, 1976, pp. 269-270). In reference to the same method, Schaffer writes, "In specific terms, this method involves the selection of leaders through competitive elections" (Schaffer, 1998, p.2). As Schaffer notes, Schumpeter's method-based definition of democracy later influenced many political scientists although some believed that it was insufficient. Today while some contemporary political scientists go on to include deeper electoral details in the definition of democracy, others, like Frederick Schaffer, argue that, on top of "electoralism," a democratic government must serve for the purpose it was elected. "Democracy, after all," writes Schaffer, "is a concept that encompasses both purpose and institution." And he adds, "[i]t is used to refer to both political ideals and a set of institutions designed to realize these ideals" (Schaffer, 1998, p.5). One understands that, for Schaffer, whether an elected government is democratic or not also depends on whether or not it abides by the voter's will in the electoral aftermath. In contrast, Huntington defines a government as democratic only when it is elected "through fair, honest, and periodic elections" (Huntington,

1991, pp.7-12). Thus unlike Schaffer's, Huntington's definition cares less about the electoral aftermath. But, again, such definitional contrasts in defining democracy are just a few examples that epitomize major challenges in establishing a universally common meaning for the concept democracy.

Over time, however, social scientists have further sought to make the concept of democracy even more encompassing and inclusive. In Dahl's thick definition of democracy, for instance, he itemizes various elements including "*effective participation*," "*voting equality*," "*enlightened understanding*," "*control of the agenda*" and "*inclusion of adults*" (Dahl, 2000, pp. 35-43). For Dahl, these five variables, together, help guarantee electoral democracy, especially by ensuring that voters cast a free, conscious, and secret vote. In brief terms, although Schaffer's quite idealistic definition and Huntington's and Dahl's procedural definitions of democracy present slight disparities, all of them, together, look into universal suffrage as a necessary pathway towards establishing a democratic regime. However, Dahl's perception is even more interesting for it suggests that a major challenge to a fuller democratization lies in the citizen's ability to cast what one could term an 'o*bjective* vote.' In the Senegalese context, as well as in many developing countries, one can argue that the primary drives for such an ideal objective vote would, first of all, aim at suppressing the chronic networks of systematic corruption, prebendalism, and abuse which do not only emanate from a lack of governmental accountability, but also from sociocultural practices in which the citizen is consciously or unconsciously trapped. In Senegal, the paradigm of electoral *ndigël*, especially the peripheral one, is one of those traps.

Further, in sharing the idea that achievement of democracy lies significantly in the electoral process, Schaffer writes, "[a]s an ideal, democracy has something to do with the goal of people participating *meaningfully* in their own governance, a goal that democratic theorists have closely associated with other ideals…including *autonomy*…equality…*civic-mindedness*…and moral and *intellectual development*" [stress mine] (Schaffer, 1998, p. 5). In this context, meaningful participation, "autonomy," "civic-mindedness," and "intellectual development" imply not just a conscious and informed consent of the voter, but more importantly a conscientious vote which, ideally, no cultural, religious or social practice or belief would hinder.

At this particular point, the issue of electoral *ndigël* comes into play. Indeed, it represents one strong link connecting the *tarixa*-based political parties (as well as other politicized Sufi segments) to the existing challenges that stifle Senegal's electoral democracy. In fact, the major connection between the democratic loopholes in Senegal and the *"tarixa*-based" political parties is that the latter simply fuel the electoral *ndigël* phenomenon that

illustrates, indeed, the political instrumentalization of the Sufi religious structure. The link between the two becomes thus reinforced by the solid *shaykh*-follower relationship where the former chooses to invest his religious charisma in politics. While this situation contributes significantly to the propagation of various patterns of prebendalist politics embedded in the very phenomenon of electoral *ndigël*, it subsequently undermines civil equality – as a component of democracy. In fact, the *taalibé*-voter's electoral surrendering to the political *shaykh*'s individualized political orientations sets the grounds for a systematic political inequity between the two as both legal citizens.

Further, in this context, and as Huntington would certainly agree, undemocraticness of an elected government vis-à-vis the electoral *ndigëls* is not forcibly determined by whether or not it earned a *ndigël* support. Procedurally, a *ndigël*-supported government can be democratic as long as the *taalibé*-voters went freely to the booths and consciously casted their votes for the winner. However, undemocraticness of the electoral *ndigël* stems more from the prebendalist post-electoral outcomes associated with the very practice and the resulting dynamics unsuitable for *objective* voting as discussed above. Here, objectivity is also synonymous to the existence of a platform where the vote, whether individual or 'collective', is a responsible one and aims for leadership accountability with respect to the common good for all. In other words, the peripheral electoral *ndigël* – that pushes for a collective vote – only seeks the personal good of the Sufi segment and its leader, while largely ignoring the actual concerns of the broader national collective. Subsequently, such a peripheral electoral *ndigël* fails to fit in the spirit of democracy where, as Shaffer noted earlier, the leader is expected to account for the preferences of the governed even in the electoral aftermath.

In this article, just as suggested by Dahl and Schaffer, the consolidation or the weakening of democracy is not only defined in relation to universal suffrage and its procedural democratic implications, but it is also analyzed in relation to what happens to power and people *in the post-electoral period*. Further, democracy, in this sense, is understood as the procedural capacity for a community – leaders and followers – to build an accountable political system that can free itself from systematic relations of prebendalist partisanship and clientelism that ultimately condemn the regime to serving a minority instead of a broader national collective. For instance, continuities in successful patron-client collaborations between political *shaykhs* and secular political leaders may become one way of transforming administrative units into prebends for a long time. Indeed, besides the anti-democratic procedural implications of the electoral *ndigël* phenomenon, these post-electoral outcomes constitute part of the major loopholes in Senegalese electoral

democracy.

As mentioned earlier, this status quo in Senegal's electoral democracy has a history. In fact, landmark political events such as the 1988 presidential election that saw Murid *taalibé*-voters challenge the then *Khalif-Général*'s electoral *ndigël* have since altered the distribution of political roles within the Senegalese *tarixa* structures. Subsequently, while the electoral *ndigël* began since to decline in influence, the *Khalif-Générals* became progressively silent in politics to the great advantage of the peripheral political *shaykhs*.

Indeed, this transformation has undermined *objective* voting among *taalibé-citizens* and affected the Senegalese electoral democracy in two major ways. On one hand, and as mentioned earlier, the subsequent decentralization of political authority among Sufi peripheral leaders has weakened the *tarixa's* traditional political unity that allowed the *Khalif-Général* in previous times to help balance the power of the ruling elite by imposing an informal sense of accountability. Today, the multiplicity of peripheral electoral *ndigëls* has negatively impacted on the concerns of political leaders about accountability, in part, because they can periodically shift alliances from one client-*shaykh* to another, thus avoiding a punitive vote. For instance, while campaigning for the 2012 presidential election, former President Abdoulaye Wade, conscious of the Murid *Khalif-Général*'s political neutrality, toured the compounds of Murid peripheral *shaykhs* in different cities and regions – Modou Kara (Dakar), Bethio Thioune (Mbour), Sidy Abdoul Ahad Mbacké (Touba Bélel), Muhammadu Makhfouss Mbacké (Darou Wahab), etc. –in order to collect peripheral *ndigëls* (Diallo, 2012; *Leral.net,* 2012).

Wade engaged intensely in this enterprise during the 2012 run-off opposing him to current President Macky Sall who not only benefitted from the support of the entire opposition, but also from many anti-Wade civil movements as well as a few client *shaykhs*. This was a period of hard times for incumbent President Wade and his regime. And it is in an attempt to make up for the lost allegiances of some client *shaykhs* who supported his victory earlier in 2000 and 2007 that Wade began seeking to build those new alliances. As largely reported in 2012 in the Senegalese media, Wade was able to gather new support from peripheral Sufi guides, despite the neutrality of the different *Khalf-Générals* and some of his former client *shaykhs*. For instance, both *Shaykh* Kara and Bethio Thioune offered to help, although this came out vain.

What one learns, however, is that the availability of multiple peripheral *ndigëls* creates the possibilities for continuous shifts in political allegiances. Such a multiplicity of electoral *ndigëls* and the fragmentation of the Sufi-Muslim authority break the relations of balance between the secular politician and the influential power of the strong and unified voice that has politically

characterized the major *tarixas* until recently. Consequently, this discourages political accountability, mostly because the secular politician feels less compelled by the *Khalif-Général* to whom he would once collaborate for reelection. In addition, the multiplicity of electoral *nidigëls* has also led to non-constructive clientelistic relations that simply fuel a chronic system of clientelism and prebendalism. For instance, between 2000 and 2012, Wade's regime issued a record number of over 35,000 diplomatic passports most of which were distributed among his political clients, including several political *shaykhs,* their families, and lieutenants (*Jawriñ*) (*Lesenegalais.net*, 2012). Indeed, such an excess corroborates the political "rot" during Wade's governance that was essentially based on the prebendalist terms of "*paacó rééw mi*," a Wolof expression once in vogue, meaning "dividing up state goods." Thus, in one way or another, the multiplicity of peripheral *ndigëls* fuels political regimes that create room for neither accountability nor equal distribution of national services and goods.

Further, at the procedural level, the electoral *ndigël* also empties the *taalibé*-citizen's vote of most of the above discussed criteria of democraticness, including "autonomy," "civic mindedness," "voting equality," and "enlightened understanding." In fact, the peripheral *ndigël* phenomenon is one of the social and cultural traps where the *taalibé-voter* loses the sense of a conscientious political autonomy, given that s/he systematically delegates her/his vote to another citizen, the *shaykh*. This status quo is also largely fueled by the assumption that the religious leader is not an 'ordinary citizen.' In fact, when President Macky Sall, in one of his 2013 reformative speeches, uttered that "*marabouts* [*shaykhs*] are citizens just like others," he encountered a bitter response from many Senegalese citizens and Sufi families, with a slight exception of the Sy branch of *Tijaniyya* in the city of Tivaouane where religious guide *Shaykh* Mbaye Sy Mansour considered President Sall's statement as constitutionally valid.[8] Yet, despite the social constructs which fuel the electoral *ndigël* phenomenon, its implication of a vote delegated to an 'extraordinary citizen' – the *shaykh* – makes it clearly undemocratic. Better yet, how this paradigm stifles electoral democracy is well expressed in Huntington terms when he writes, "if some members are given greater opportunities than others for expressing their views, their policies are more likely to prevail" (Huntington, 1991, p. 39). Indeed, this political inequity is what happens with the preeminence of the electoral *ndigël* that systematically grants a greater say to peripheral Sufi *shaykhs*.

In addition, unlike the traditionally centralized authority of the *Khalif-Général*, the peripheral electoral *ndigël* lacks a constructive sense of democratic mediation (between state and lay followers) in that it simply fragments political authority in the broader *tarixa* structure where, so far,

only a strong sense of unity has helped influence 'good governance' in Senegal. Indeed, the power structure of the Senegalese *tarixas* is significantly based on a unifying Sufi symbolism existing within the broader brotherhood and which is politically epitomized by the religious command (*ndigël*) of the *Khalif-Général*. Conversely, with the emergence of internal *tarixa* segments along with the multitude of peripheral (electoral) *ndigëls*, political *shaykhs* appear more concerned with developing their respective individual segments (or "factions") than consolidating unity within the broader *tarixa*. If this is not the case, one wonders then why, for instance, political *shaykhs* in one *tarixa* pay conflicting political allegiances to different secular political parties. In the Muridiyya *tarixa*, for instance, why would political *shaykhs* Modou Kara, Ousseynou Fall, Abdou Samath Mbacké, form different political parties that never lent support to each other? Similarly, on the Tijani side, why has there been no attempt to build an electoral collective by bringing together Moustapha Sy's PUR and Djamil's Bes Du Ñakk *tarixa*-based political parties?

Based on these developments, one argues that the proliferation of electoral *ndigëls*, which speaks to the multiplicity of *tarixa*-based political parties, undermines the historical role of the *tarixa*'s supreme authority – the *Khalif-Général* – as a powerful mediator whose salient and unified voice helped build command accountability among state elite vis-à-vis the Senegalese masses. As a result of authority fragmentation in the Senegalese Sufi authorities, the multiplicity of peripheral *ndigëls* not only weakens the Sufi constructive unity vis-à-vis the secular state elite, but also it threatens the social contract under which the Senegalese model of democracy has, so far, been peacefully negotiated.

Furthermore, due to its exclusively Islamic drives, the electoral *ndigël* is not always politically supportive of religious pluralism, despite the fact that most of the political *shaykhs* in Senegal are moderate Muslim leaders. This argument arises in a Senegalese political context where, despite the predominance of a moderate form of political Islam, there is a small minority of radical reformists who embrace an extremist political rhetoric. As quoted earlier, Murid Abdou Samath Mbacké's inaugural speech is one example; and it echoes the same Islamist rhetoric that always underlay the politico-religious philosophy of Senegalese reformist *arabisants* (Arabist scholars) – including, for instance, the founding members of the *Jama'at Ibadu Rahmane* (JIR) in the 1970-80s. Indeed, although such rhetoric is not currently eminent among Senegalese, it should not be excluded that realities may change at any time, especially in the current African context where Islamism continues to follow transnational networks (Walker, 2012). Thus, consolidation of the electoral *ndigël* paradigm, if associated with an excess of radicalism, could constitute a potential threat for destabilizing democratization efforts

in Senegal.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the religion-politics nexus in Senegal is historical and its evolution into the paradigms of peripheral voting commands (*ndigël*) weighs significantly on current political transformations. The proliferation of electoral *ndigëls* following the increase of *tarixa*-based (Sufi-based) political parties is a consequence of the progressive fragmentation of Senegal's Sufi-Muslim authorities. Today, the peripheral *shaykhs* who have practically taken over the political wing of the *tarixa* have become more and more engaged in politics either directly by creating their own political parties or indirectly by building strong clientelistic relations with secular political parties. It must be noted, however, that not all tarixa-based party leaders have the same attitude with regard to the instrumentalization of the electoral *ndigël* for individualized interests. Moderate political shaykhs such as Mansour Sy Djamil seem to avoid an end into clientelstic politics. Others, however, remain constantly dependent on prebendalist clientelism, not only to ensure their financial survival, but also to help consolidate and legitimize their religious authority in the public sphere. The latter trend in Senegalese political Islam only hinders the consolidation of democratization processes because its clientelistic essence remains closely tied to division, corruption and prebendalism.

Further, in analyzing such new developments in Senegalese political Islam with respect to the fragmentation of the Sufi authorities, the article is not simply proposing a nostalgic return to a centralized religious authority. Instead, it questions how far the attempts to integrate Sufi-Muslim structures in Senegalese politics, especially through decentralization of the *tarixa*'s political authority, has ironically played against democratization itself by weakening the traditional platforms where (re)conciliation between the religious and the secular have been negotiated.

Moreover, the subsequent multiplicity of peripheral *ndigëls* only discourages state accountability for it allows the ruling secular elite to easily shift allegiance whenever previous Sufi allies choose to decline collaboration for re-election purposes. Today, many Senegalese political Sufi leaders have recorded failures in their political agendas to either counterbalance increased secularization or to simply support the development of Senegal's Muslim society for two reasons. On one hand, they failed to generate a powerful political force to either negotiate or successfully rival with the secular parties that have ruled the country since independence. On the other hand, most of the *tarixa*-based political parties end up simply becoming political instruments that feed the clientelistic interests of the secular political parties.

ENDNOTES

[1]Wolof is the lingua-franca in both Senegal and Gambia where it is spoken by more than 80 percent of the population in both countries.

[2]"Sufi" is an adjective deriving from Sufism. The terms *tarixa*, Muslim Brotherhood, and Sufi order are used interchangeably in the text.

[3] The five pillars of Islam include: (1) *Shahadah* (sincere utterance of the Muslim profession of faith); (2) *Salaat* (proper performance of the five ritual prayers each day); *Zakat* (giving an alms/charity (tax) to benefit the poor and the needy); *Sawm* (proper fasting during the month of Ramadan); *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca if possible).

[4] Also, see Sow, *Les logiques de travail chez les mourides*, (mémoire de D.E.A d'Etudes Africaines) (1998).

[5] The *Baay Faal* constitute a segment of Murid *taalibés* who trace their status of 'privilege' – they believe they are exempt of the five pillars of Islam – from *Shaykh* Ibra Faal, the first *taalibé* of *Muridiyya* founder Ahmadu Bamba.

[6] Interview with C. O. T. in Dakar, Senegal (summer, 2012).

[7] Schaffer (1998) also discusses the difficulty in defining democracy. Also, for more on this definitional issue of the concept, see Coppedge and Gerring, "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: A New Approach," In *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 9 (2011).

[8]For more on developments on this issue, see "Serigne Mbaye Sy Mansour: « Les Marabouts sont des citoyens comme les autres »," In *Lasenegalese.com*.

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