



Senegal: The Roles of Religious Media

This paper was prepared in 2015 by Mouhamadou Abdoulaye Barro, WFDD consultant, journalist, and coordinator of the Réseau des journalistes pour l'information religieuse (Network of Journalists for Religious Information, REJIR). It was edited by WFDD staff. The context was a WFDD project, supported by the Hewlett Foundation, to engage religious leaders in Senegal in national family planning efforts. The study's purpose was to provide the context for media outreach on religious dimensions of family planning. Given the paucity of information about Senegal's religious media, we are making this available as an informal working paper.

Context

Senegal's population is about 94 percent Muslim, and most belong to one of several Sufi orders. Some affiliate with Sunni or Shiite reform movements. About 4 percent of the population is Christian, which includes Roman Catholics, Protestants, and syncretic Christian animist groups. The remaining 2 percent practice local indigenous religions exclusively, other religions, or no religion. Senegal is thus religiously and ethnically diverse. Despite notable integration of all religious groups, Muslims are more concentrated in the north, Christians in the west and south, and groups that practice local indigenous religions are found mainly in the east and south.

Religion has always occupied a special place in Senegalese media programs (radio, television, newspapers, and the internet). Senegalese media schedules almost always include religious programs, both Muslim and Christian. Major religious events are widely covered, as well as smaller religious events. The media mobilize for weeks, with reports, programs, documentaries, and live coverage, for Magal Touba (commemoration of Sheikh Amadou Bamba's return from exile), Gamou (the celebration of the Prophet's birth), and the Popenguine pilgrimage (Christians honor Mary, the mother of Jesus, each year in this coastal town).

The Place of Religion in Senegalese Media

Most reviews of Senegal's media barely hint at the existence of religious media. Religious media do not have only religious programs, but most often they reserve the greatest space for general information and thematic shows (politics, health, society, culture, the economy, etc). General media have always included religious shows in their programming schedules. This space reserved for religious programming has two principal purposes: to contribute to public education and awareness through preachers, but also to attract the maximum of listeners, viewers, and advertisers for strictly commercial ends.

Religious programs, especially those that are interactive, are very popular. This explains strong revenues of media marketing departments resulting from viewers' calls, as calls through these vocal servers remain more expensive. The main hosts of religious programs, especially for the media giants, have become big stars who increase audience and media appeal. That means that media, including religious media, are in constant competition to expand their audience, and even certain religious programs often take on the air of a media show.

Invited guests on religious programs are primarily religious actors (preachers, Arabic instructors, leaders of Islamic organizations, imams of mosques, etc.). Often, others may be invited if the topic is technical. Hosts of religious programs may at times call on doctors, journalists, lawyers, etc.

The keen interest in religious programs is driven by three factors: the opening of Arab universities to Senegalese students who, upon their return to Senegal, pursue teaching and preaching as their main activity; the Middle East conflict, which leads many Senegalese to be interested in Islam and religious life; as well as the place of Islam in globalization, which is no longer perceived as a space of dialogue and exchange, but rather, a field of contention and ideological confrontation.

The Evolution of Media in Senegal

The first French-language newspapers were established in 1956 with the publication of the *Bulletin administratif du Sénégal* and the *Moniteur du Sénégal et dépendances*, both created by the colonial authorities. From 1956 to 1960, political ferment led to the emergence of partisan political media that were much more the business of political parties and trade unions that followed a leftist ideology. From 1960, when Senegal became independent, "the plural press inherited from the colonial period gave way to a media monopoly with the establishment of a de facto single party, despite the audacious few who ventured to create their own newspapers."¹ The real turning point came in the second half of the 1980s when an independent press emerged in the context of structural adjustment inspired by the IMF and the World Bank.

After 2000, when Senegal's first political changeover took place, the number of media grew with the advent of private television channels. In 1963, with the support of UNESCO, television began in Senegal. Regular programming did not begin until 1965, two years later. Today, RTS (Radiodiffusion Télévision Sénégal) no longer monopolizes the media market. Great diversity exists among television stations, like RDV, SN2, TFM, Walf TV, Toubia TV, 2sTV, Canal Info, SenTV, Africa7, Lamp Fall TV, and Mourchid TV.

The Evolution of Religious Shows in the Media

"Elhadj Cheikh Gassama's *Manhar Al Islam* program and the Catholic broadcast *Le Jour du Seigneur* (*The Lord's Day*) on ORTS (Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision du Sénégal) are pioneering works that marked the first steps of religious programs in the press."² *Manhar Al Islam* goes back at least to 1957 and was the first of its kind, not only in Senegal, but in colonial French West Africa.

In 1974 Ahmed Bachir Kounta, an Islamic scholar of the Qadiriyya (the first Sufi order in Senegal) was appointed head of the national network. He then became secretary general of the commission on religious affairs at the national network. There, he introduced five Islamic programs in national languages (beyond Wolof). In 1981, the Minister of Information, Djibo Ka, issued an instruction that

created a new committee on religious affairs composed of eight members, including a Christian representative, responsible for supervising all religious programs at ORTS. From the 1990s, the private media, following in the footsteps of the public media, began recruiting preachers trained, at first, in the Senegalese *daaras* (traditional Islamic schools) in places like Touba, Tivouane, Pire, Ndiassane, and Medina Baye in Kaolack, and then, some years later, at universities in the Maghreb and Egypt.

Like Senegal's political system, Senegal's media have become more diverse after years of state monopoly on media. There are now 16 television channels, including three religious channels (Lamp Fall TV, Mourchid TV, and Touba TV); public radio with regional stations; 20 or so private commercial radio stations; 60 or so community radio stations; 20 daily newspapers, including *Le Soleil* (public media); many periodicals; and several online newspapers. Generally, these media have an online presence. This dynamic media have developed hand in hand with the establishment of private press groups that have become, over the years, real business enterprises, among them Sud Communication, Futurs Médias, Walfadjri, Avenir Communication, and D Media.

The Internet, Social Media, and Religious Discourse

Traditional media (radio, television, newspapers) no longer have a monopoly on religious information in Senegal. Over the past ten years, the internet has become a powerful information tool for religious organizations and preachers. Social networks are becoming a place to popularize imams' sermons, religious conferences, and major events. Websites and social networks, especially Facebook, are widely used due to their easy accessibility, low financial cost, and their capacity to reach an audience of internet users that is growing rapidly.

The most active religious websites in Senegal remain www.degdine.net and www.xamsadine.net. These websites convey radio, video, and television programming. They are present on social networks and are followed by thousands of Senegalese living in Senegal and abroad. These sites are often close to Islamic trends in Saudi Arabia, whose main religious representative in Senegal is Dr. Ahmad Lo. This well-known preacher runs an Islamic university in Pikine, a suburb of Dakar, and is very influential among the youth. His sermons and lectures are broadcast across websites and social networks.

Religious Discourse in the Media

Today, Muslim and Christian religious programs can be found on all channels, filling much of the broadcast schedule. Television preachers are some of the most watched media hosts. Religious discourse in the media by preachers of all faiths aims to promote religious traditions through the ideals they extol. The discourse targets both faithful believers and non-believers; it is based not just on dogma, but it also addresses political, cultural, and socio-economic issues. However, religious discourse in the media has two principal orientations:

- A holistic orientation, embodied by those in reform movements. This tendency addresses all aspects of life in its discourse, with a strong political and religious orientation. Those who use this type of discourse are found mainly in non-Sufi Islamic association and in some *confrérie* groups that are influenced by reformist ideas.

- A typically doctrine- and worship-focused orientation, embodied by preachers who come from traditional Sufi circles and limit their discourse to questions of dogma, thought, worship of saints, and Islamic jurisprudence.

Religious discourse in the media was marginal before the 1970s, with respect to its scale and the limited number of actors dedicated themselves to it. This situation was also exacerbated by the strong influence of Western culture left from French colonization.

It was the birth of the Islamic reform movement in the 1950s, the ramifications of structural adjustment in the 1980s, and the liberalization of media in the 1990s that encouraged the creation of private media, and consequently, a proliferation of religious programs and media preachers. The media preachers focus primarily on Qur'anic exegesis, the history and lives of the Prophet and his companions, and themes revolving around the oneness of God and recalling the great deeds of religious leaders.

The use of local languages in religious programs has been a strategic choice to reach the maximum number of listeners and viewers while allowing Arabic speakers time on the air (in speaking in local languages like Wolof or Pulaar instead of in French). Many Senegalese imbibe their religion through these programs. As general media, especially private, have begun to introduce national languages in news programs, the broadcasters selected are those who were trained in traditional Islamic schools and the Arabic Department at the University of Dakar. This is the case for Sud FM Dakar, Senegal's first private radio station (1994). These preachers are called upon to facilitate religious conferences, especially during Ramadan.

There have, however, been some lively episodes around religious discourse given current news and challenging issues that the Muslim world and Senegalese face. “During the 1990s, a group of Senegalese intellectuals promoted a Personal Status Code and repeal of the 1973 Family Code. [...] In 1996, the High Islamic Council in Senegal established the Comité islamique pour la réforme du Code de la famille (Islamic Committee for the Reform of the Family Code in Senegal, CIRCOFS) that sharply criticized the Family Code.”³ The media became the natural place where the pro- and anti-reform arguments around the Family Code were debated. Most preachers in the media who were favorable to the CIRCOFS cause used their shows to amplify the debate and mobilize public opinion.

Christian religious discourse in the media is generally dominated by the Catholics. The Catholic Church has many more time slots than Protestant and evangelical churches. The new evangelical churches that began to find a place in Senegal in the last ten years must pay large sums of money to buy airtime in the media. This is the case for the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God that pays for shows to diffuse their message. These evangelicals have taken over most of the old movie theaters across Senegal, with messages that focus especially on the teachings of Jesus Christ and exorcism.

The Islamic Reform Movement and the Media

The most active Muslim preachers who have invested in Islamic periodicals in Arabic and in radio and television programming, come mainly from the Islamic reform movement, which has positioned itself as an alternative to the traditional Sufi orders.

The media were thus powerful conduits of communication that facilitated the spreading of religious messages that were far more limited when confined to mosques and religious circles. Those preachers who offered their services as volunteers to the media became very popular because of the notoriety that they gained. At first, these preachers were not paid, but they are increasingly becoming employees with regular contracts, especially among large media groups.

The Islamic reform movement, born in Senegal in the 1950s, is characterized by a discourse that calls for a return to the teachings of the Qur'an and the tradition of the Prophet of Islam. The movement emerged in a context that was strongly anchored in Western cultural influences and what it considered as a departure by the *confréries* from the traditions of the Prophet of Islam (the Sunnah). This alternative discourse, put forth by a movement that claimed to be authentic, rapidly occupied a significant place in different Senegalese media. The reform movement, broadly understood, includes some progressive currents and organizations that come out of the *confréries*. It includes non-Sufi organizations like the Al Falah movement, the Union culturelle musulmane (Muslim Cultural Union), the Jama'atou Ibadou Rahmane (JIR), and the Shiite movement (inspired by the teachings of Imam Khomeini), but also movements that emerge from the *confréries*, like Moustarchidina Wal Moustarchidaty (from the Tidianes) and Hizbut Tarqiyyah (from the Mourides).

All of these organizations have more or less developed a strategy for preaching and communication as part of their approach, which has led to them creating their own information tools or investing in the general news media.

The Hizbut Tarqiyyah movement was created in 1975 by a group of Mouride intellectuals at the University of Dakar. It established many media outlets, ranging from community radio—Hizbut Tarqiyyah FM 95.6, which covers the entire rural community of Touba Mosquée—to the website www.htcom.sn. They publish the quarterly journal *L'abreuvoir des assoiffés* (*Drinking Trough of the Thirsty*).

The Moustarchidina Wal Moustarchidaty movement was founded in the 1970s, but in 1980, the structure emerged from the family circle and expanded, thanks to Serigne Moustapha Sy, who is its main leader. The son of the Khalifa of the Tijaniyya order, he established the Mourchid Communication press group, whose slogan is “The Channel of Values” in March 2013. The television station, based in Dakar, is followed in part in Thiès, Saint-Louis, and Louga.

The Shiite Muslim community of Senegal, through the Mozdahir International Institute, also established, a community radio—Mozdahir FM 93.2—in 2014 in Guédiawaye, a suburb of Dakar. The station's promoter is Chérif Mohamed Ali Aidara, founder of the Mozdahir International Institute, established in 2000. Radio programming accompanies the activities of the Mozdahir movement, which is active in Islamic education, vocational training, health, culture, and microcredit. Radio is also a means to diffuse and promote Shiite thought. The bulk of funding for the Mozdahir movement is provided by its partners and Shiite organizations in Iran and elsewhere in the world.

The Al Falah movement was established in 1946 by Mamadou Ba Djéwol, an Arabist who was educated in Saudi Arabia. In 1975, the association officially began as the Mouvement Al Falah pour la culture et l'éducation islamique (Al Falah Movement for Islamic Culture and Education), led by former disciples of Mamadou Ba Djéwol. Early on, the movement invested in the creation of modern Islamic Arabic schools with financial support from Saudi Arabia. Although this movement did not create its own communications media, it nevertheless encouraged its preachers from early on to be active in the religious news media. The movement also sponsors some religious programming on radio stations across the country. These broadcasts mostly feature preachers from the movement who generally deal with themes that revolve around Muslim dogma and the oneness of God (Al-Aqidah).

Jama'atou Ibadou Rahmane was founded in 1978 by dissidents from the Union Culturelle Musulmane. JIR was officially recognized on January 30, 1979. The founding members came out of Islamic universities in Tunisia, Egypt, and Sudan. JIR was inspired by the international reform movement, including the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt. Early on, JIR established a newspaper in Arabic and French, *Le Musulman (The Muslim)*, which positioned itself as an alternative to public information. Beyond that, JIR encouraged its members to use the general news media for preaching. The first hosts of Islamic shows in the private media in Senegal were primarily active members or leaders of JIR.

The newspaper *l'Etudiant Musulman (The Muslim Student)* was created in the 1990s by the Association des Etudiants Musulmans de Dakar (Muslim Student Association of Dakar), whose headquarters is at the mosque of Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar. The bimonthly newspaper is published in French and is directed by professionals and students. It covers current news, geopolitics, economics, culture, and religion.

In 1992, Fadel Gueye established the paper *Al sahwa (The Awakening)*. It is published monthly in Arabic and French and is supported by the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Dakar.

Other smaller Muslim magazines and newspapers are published in Arabic and French with a particular audience. These publications are put out by organization or simply by Arabic-speaking individuals.

Confréries and the Media

All of the *confréries* in Senegal have invested in national media space. Besides their presence and their influence in general news media, they have created their own media (radio, television, newspapers, and websites). Some of these media concentrate solely on Islamic programs, but the majority combines religious and general programming.

The Mouride order of Touba has been the most active in establishing religious media. Among these media are the groups Lamp Fall TV and Lamp Fall radio, based in Dakar, and Touba TV and Disso FM radio in Touba Mbacké. Disso FM radio was established in Touba in 2003 by Abdou Aziz Moustapha Mbacké and was offered to the *Khalife Général* of the Mourides in 2011, who then set up a management team led by Samba Ndiaye, the former station chief of RTS Touba Mbacké. It is worth noting that the religious city of Touba hosted many private radio stations, but due to misunderstandings between religious leaders and the leaders of these stations, they were ordered to

leave the city. The radio stations began relocating to the city of Mbacké in 2003, which borders Touba.

Touba TV

This television station was launched on Friday, January 29, 2009. It was established by two Senegalese investors, both active members of the Mouride order. The largest shareholder is Mbakiyou Faye, the representative of the *Khalife Général* of the Mourides in Dakar. The television station is a satellite channel whose stated objective is: “to educate, inform, and entertain in constant conformity with our values and fundamental moral principles.” It offers only Islamic and educational programs, especially those focused on the Mouride *confrérie*. There are programs that discuss the situation of the Muslim world. Most hosts come from within the *confrérie*. This is the case for Cheikhouna Mbacké, son of former *Khalife* of the Mourides, Serigne Bara Mbacké. Most of the station’s reporting and documentaries speak of Islam, science, and the Muslim world. The network is marked by its approach to covering religious events in Senegal. It provides live coverage of most major Muslim religious events, especially those of the Mourides.

Lamp Fall TV and Radio Lamp Fall FM

The Lamp Fall TV channel launched its programs on Friday, October 28, 2011. It is part of the media group Lamp Fall Communication, which broadcasts radio Lamp Fall FM and Lamp Fall TV. The group’s promoter, Alioune Thioune, a member of the Mouride community, is in this business to popularize Islam and the Sheikh Amadou Bamba’s *confrérie*. Religious programs in these media generally focus on Islam, Mouridism, and Islamic geopolitics. They mainly broadcast religious information through reports and documentaries on Senegalese religious figures and the situation of Islam in the world. All thematic programs in these media have a strong moral or religious underpinning. They also provide direct coverage of most major Muslim religious events, especially those of the Mouride order.

Radio Al Bayan FM or Tivaoaune FM 103.6

The Tidiane community of Tivaoaune has established its own radio station, Al Bayan FM or Tivaoaune FM, which aims to be the voice of the *confrérie* and an outlet for the aspirations of the local population. The radio station is based in the city of Tivaoaune, capital of the Tidiane order of Senegal. The radio launched its programs in 2008 on the occasion of the celebration of the Prophet Mohammed’s birth (*Gamou*). The station transmits religion programming, as well as broadcasts that tackle various themes, such as health, education, environment, sports, gender, and agriculture within a 40-kilometer radius. The station is run by officers of the Comité d’organisation au service de Khalifa Ababacar Sy (Organization Committee in the Service of Khalifa Ababacar Sy), the structure responsible for coordinating the city’s religious programming.

Niassène Media

The Niassène community (a branch of the Tijaniyya), founded by Ibrahima Niase and with its center in Kaolack, has also invested significantly in media. The large press group WalFadjri was established by the *marabout* and Arabic-speaking intellectual Sidy Lamine Niase, son of Abdoulaye Niase, one of the most illustrious religious figures of his era and of the Niassène community. The media conglomerate is composed of a newspaper, a radio station (99.0 FM) that reports on general

information, a television station, and an Islamo-Arabic radio station (96.3 FM). It also operates radio stations in various regions of Senegal.

In the city of Kaolack, there are four radio stations whose principal promoters belonging to the Niassène community. These stations are Al Madina FM 98.8, Alfayda FM 90.1, Baye FM 88.3, and Lamp Fall FM 99.7. In Dakar, Al Madina FM 100.8 was established by Mansour Niasse, son of Serigne Mamoune Niasse (son of Ibrahima Niasse). Mamoune Niasse was a great religious leader, wealthy, and founder of the political party Rassemblement Populaire (RP). Mansour Niasse is also the owner of the bilingual Arabic-French magazine (*Al Madina*), run by Babacar Niang, a former religious host for the Walfadjri media group. The radio's religious program runs every Thursday from 7 to 7:30 PM with an Arabic news program. The Islamic programs are broadcast on this radio station from Thursday after 8 PM to Saturday at 6:30 AM. Some are interactive and synchronized with the Al Madina FM Kaolack 98.8 station.

Layene Media

The Layene community at Yoff in Dakar has also invested in the media sector, with the creation of a community radio station, Diamalaye FM 92.3 in August 2014. This station is based in Dakar and has only religious programming, notably spiritual chants (*zikr*), interactive religious programs, and preaching. Most programs on this radio station focus on the life and thought of the founder of the Layene order, Seydina Liamamou Laye, born in 1875 and whose call to Islam began in 1883.

Financing of Religious Programs in Senegal

Senegalese religious programs are rarely sponsored, although marketing departments are able to obtain some financing from certain companies for ad space and programs with Islamic competitive games. The Islamic shows of large media groups are those that benefit most often from sponsorship and businesses advertising. Sponsors and advertisers are attracted by the religious hosts whose broadcasts have the largest followings. This is the case for radio Sud FM Dakar 98.5, whose flagship presenter, Oustaz Aliou Sall, attracts listeners and sponsors through his interactive programs on Thursday nights and Fridays. On television (SenTV) and on radio (Zik FM of the D Média group), the famous preacher Ibrahima Badiane, known as Iran Ndao, has widely followed programs and attracts many advertisers. However, apart from sporadic sponsorships of some Islamic broadcasts by Islamic organizations and NGOs, the biggest financial windfall from sponsoring comes Senegalese commercial enterprises.

Saudi Arabia, through certain organizations like the Al Falah movement, sponsors some Islamic broadcasts, particularly on regional stations. Broadcasts financed by Al Falah are often hosted by preachers who are selected and paid by the movement. That is the case for Radio Dunya Mbour 102.8, where Al Falah regular buys hourly slots for programs whose themes mostly center on the oneness of God.

In Ziguinchor, the humanitarian Islamic NGO Agence Musulmane d'Afrique (Muslim Agency of Africa, AMA) often supports Islamic shows on radio stations like Sud FM Ziguinchor, Dunya FM Ziguinchor, and Zig FM 100.8. AMA, which was founded in 1981, is based in Kuwait with a presence in Senegal (Ziguinchor) and in other African countries. The funding total for these shows, which generally have a one-year contract, is about US\$1,000.

The themes developed in these broadcasts center on Islamic practice (jurisprudence) and the work of the AMA, which is active in the areas of Islamic education and culture (literacy, teaching, awareness) and welfare (care of orphans and street children, health, financing of social projects, water, microfinance, mosque construction, support for women, and food distribution).⁴ Programs are hosted in the various national languages to reach the greatest number of people possible. The hosts of these shows sponsored by AMA are generally recruited and paid by the NGO.

The Place of Women Preachers in the Media

The diversification of media in Senegal has allowed for the rise of women, which is also linked to pluralism and evolving politics in the country.

The emergence of women preachers in the media began with their presence as guests on religious programs. Men, who were much more likely to host religious media programs, would often invite women preachers, especially on topics related to sexuality, family, and Islamic morality. This is how women preachers gradually secured their own programs, especially in the late 1990s. Even today, however, the discourse of women preachers is generally limited to the status of women, with such corollaries as abortion, marriage, family planning, the issue of divorce, and polygamy. However, despite the presence of women preachers in the media and the audiences their programs attract, an open and scientific discourse has been slow to emerge. These women are often confined to a moralizing and sexist discourse backed up by the interpretation by men. Women who host Islamic religious programs are generally those who were trained in the *daaras* or the large universities of the Arab countries. There are women who have double training in Islamic schools and in Senegalese and Western universities. One such preacher, Aicha Diagne, hosts popular Islamic shows on national television station RTS, especially during the month of Ramadan.

Some women hosts have made a good place for themselves in the media through their strong performances and popularity with audiences. This is the case of Sokhna Bintou Diop of Télévision Futurs Médias (TFM), of Sokhna Absa Lo of Radio Dunya Vision (RDV), a member of the national movement of women of Jama'atou Ibadou Rahmane, and of Aicha Guèye, of the Radio municipal de Dakar (Municipal Radio of Dakar, RMD).

The women who host Catholic programs generally come from the churches. They are often nuns even, though certain Catholic lay women are also invited based on their background and the themes of the programs.

The Place of Religious Programs in the Media

Despite the breadth of religious programs in the media, political news is still clearly the most covered in the print media and on the airwaves. Religion occupies a greater place on radio and television than in newspapers. Newspapers generally treat religious information simply as general information. What is particular about radio and television in Senegal is that religious information and Islamic shows are broadcast on Thursdays and Fridays. Catholic programs are carried on the radio and television channels on Saturdays and especially on Sundays. These are rarely interactive, but these take the form of preaching with a priest commenting on Biblical texts.

Handling of Religious Information by Professional Journalists

In Senegal, religion is still the most fundamental element in the construction of the nation, thanks to the beliefs, symbols, values, and culture that it promotes. Despite this, the media do not adequately deal with the various questions that involve religion. This situation is largely caused by journalists' lack of education in this domain and lack of support for the need for training on religious matters in the different journalism and communication schools and among editorial boards.

This lack of mastery of religious facts applies to the three major religions (Islam, Christianity, and Judaism) and for traditional African beliefs. A journalist's religious experience is thus a significant asset when he or she is tackling issues that touch the lives of millions of people. The problem results most often less from hostility toward religions, but more so from difficulty in understanding them: journalists stay at the surface level without being ill-intentioned. Or journalists treat religious topics superficially, anecdotally, or even caricaturally.

A decent command of religious information by professional journalists would allow a better understanding of international issues, social life, and the challenges of living together. Subject to the pressures of time, space, viewership, and budget, journalists are obliged to simplify in extreme ways how they treat complex events. The imperatives of today's media (immediacy, rapidity, superficiality, sensationalism) are in total contrast to religious time. Religious actors in Senegal most often denounce the way in which the media machine functions, where information is characterized by speed. The media cannot take the time to linger on the complexity of religious issues, either because they do not have that time, or because exposing these complexities risks boring the reader or audience who is accustomed to the sensational.

Islam runs the same risks as Christianity and Judaism insofar as religious are forced to express themselves through short bytes, even slogans, as they are subject to the dictatorship of the emotional that is particular to screen culture. Thus, media's choice of subjects and the way in which they deal with them are very often similar. Religions offer a greater source of information in the areas of civilization, history, maternal health, family welfare, doctrine, environment, development, spirituality, etc. Unfortunately, though, the population is often horrified by the performance of certain preachers who use simplification and populism in their approaches.

Many Senegalese journalists are unaware of the differences that distinguish Sunnis, Shiites, and Sufis. They lump together Jews and Zionists and do not understand the nuances of terms like anti-Semitic, Judeophobic, and Islamophobic. They do not know, for example, the difference between a council and a conclave, a Lutheran and an Anglican, and so on. There are almost no specialists in religion among Senegalese professional journalists. Muslims often feel that Islam is not approached objectively in the media, and Christians also complain about the way their religion is portrayed.

In light of this, Senegalese professional journalists interested in religious information decided to set up a network to fill the gaps in the way the media treats religious matters.

The Réseau des Journalistes pour l'Information Religieuse (Network of Journalists for Religious Information, REJIR) has defined four objectives. These are:

- To bring together professional journalists responsible for religious matters in print, spoken, online, or audiovisual media;
- To promote continuing education for journalists;
- To contribute to research on religions, dialogue, and peace;
- To strengthen comradeship among members.

To attain these objectives, REJIR offers its members meetings with experts or leading religious personalities, as well as trips, within Senegal or abroad, in order to develop active solidarity with foreign colleagues and to give them additional experience. Training seminars are regularly offered to members and other journalists on questions that affect religion.

REJIR's training policy aims to provide the public with quality religious information and to improve dialogue and relations between religions and the media through getting to know each other better and communicating each other's expectations. A further goal is to make the most of speakers' experience, as well as that of the journalists, to advance the debate on religious information. The idea is to familiarize journalists with the religious world, giving them some useful tools to become informed and some keys to decode religious information. This training aims to equip journalists with the history and evolution of religions, religious concepts, currents of thought, etc.

Catholics and the media

From early on, Senegalese Catholics have invested in general media for their sermons. Most Christian programs are aired on Saturdays and especially on Sundays throughout the country. Catholics, who are the majority among Christians in Senegal, are most active in the media, especially in television and radio. Catholic programs are often hosted by clerics designated by the dioceses or laymen active in organizing church activities. Unlike Muslims, the Church has a centralized and unified organization that allows it to coordinate, more or less, the programs and discourse of its presenters. Programs address diverse themes, mostly touching on spiritual and social issues. In addition to religious programs with preaching and sermons by priests, hosts organize interactive programs.

The Catholic Church has tried to establish its own media for several years. The creation of Espérance FM 95.2 (Hope FM 95.2) is a perfect example. The station launched in 2013 with the blessing of Cardinal Théodore Adrien Sarr. It was financed by the the Association des dirigeants, entrepreneurs et cadres catholiques du Sénégal (Association of Catholic Leaders, Entrepreneurs and Executives, ADECCS), created in May 2013. Espérance FM Radio is a limited company with a capital of 200 million FCFA. It is managed by a board of directors composed of the ADECCS, the Diocese of Dakar, and individuals. The Archbishop of Dakar, who is the honorary president of this station, officially inaugurated it on October 25, 2014. The radio's slogan is "the voice of hope, the radio of the youth" and covers the Dakar region with a project to extend toward Mbour. The station seeks to be a generalist body on Christian obedience with religious programming that covers 80 percent of the schedule. The hosts and journalists are composed of laymen and religious who are under the direction of Abbé Roger Gomis, who is the chaplain (spiritual advisor of the station) and is charged with the communication of the Archdiocese of Dakar. The station operates 24 hours a day with live programs

from 6 a.m. to midnight. Religious programs are not yet interactive, in contrast to many of those in Senegalese society. Themes that are disseminated cover several fields (health, environment, gender, etc.). Program themes are chosen according to the current events and the moral and ethical orientation of the Church. The Archdiocese's communication also relies on other media, such as the newsletter put out by the communications office.

Besides this, there is a station in the city of Thiès called Coorkat FM 90.2 whose promoters are of the Christian faith. Through its programs, this community radio promotes Christian values, reserving Friday night for Muslim programs.

Endnotes

¹ Barry, Moustapha. "Médias et pouvoir au Sénégal depuis les indépendances (1960)." Doctoral dissertation, Université Panthéon-Assas, 2012. Translated by WFDD.

² Kasse, Mamadou. "RELIGIONS ET PAIX - Pourquoi les médias doivent-ils assurer leur mission de veille et d'alerte ?" *Sud Quotidien*. 2013. Available at: http://www.sudonline.sn/religions-et-paix---pourquoi-les-medias-doivent-ils-assurer-leur-mission-de-veille-et-d-alerte-_a_12044.html. Translated by WFDD.

³ Mbow, Penda. "Contexte de la réforme du Code de la famille au Sénégal." *Droit et cultures* 59(2010): 87-96. Translated by WFDD.

⁴ Sogoba, Seydou. "Contribution des ONG musulmanes à l'accroissement de l'offre éducative de base au Burkina Faso: Cas de l'Agence des musulmans d'Afrique." Thesis, Université de Koudougou, 2011. Translated by WFDD.