A COMMUNITY OF «GOOD CITIZENS»? URBAN DWELLERS AND CITY MANAGEMENT IN THE FOUR COMMUNES (SENEGAL, 1919-1939)

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ABSTRACT

Citizenship is today the central point of a republican governance’s critique. A return in the past suggests how much it was never once acquired. In the Four Communes of Senegal, the Originaires acquired this status, as early as 1848, while retaining the peculiarity of their personal status, in particular the existence of Muslim courts. My proposal is to follow, from the municipal management site during the interwar period, the vicissitudes of the status of French citizen in these enclaves of colonial Senegal. This status was not only the defense of a particular way of life or a legal discussion for a community that was not culturally French. It induced the participation, the invention of a space where to exercise powers, skills and rights that the colonial administration worked to curb. How to assume a municipal power and respond to the concerns of the inhabitants in the core of the sending general inspection’s missions? This period is fundamental to understand the meaning of struggles for citizenship. Proving that French citizens outside of France assumed their municipal duties better than the inhabitants of the communes on the banks of the Seine, was to open an opportunity for questioning and closing the Empire and for restoring the Republic of Equals. Even the Popular Front of Leon Blum, well known for its social advances, maintained the statu quo on the municipal question.