

## **CHEIKH ANTA DIOP: THE GREAT THINKER AWAKENING AFRICAN SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS**

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**Abstract.** The article is devoted to the analysis of the scientific and political activities of the outstanding African thinker of the 20th century—Cheikh Anta Diop, who is considered the founder of African historical science and a symbol of the African Renaissance. Written in commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birthday, the paper gives a description of his multidisciplinary scientific activity in both the humanities and the exact sciences. Special attention is paid to his development of various methods of dating archaeological and geological samples, which helped Diop contribute to the study of human origins and the promotion of ideas that Ancient Egypt was inextricably linked with the African people. The paper also analyzes his political activities, from an activist of the student movement for the independence of Black Africa in France to the founder and leader of political parties in Senegal, and his opposition stance towards the political authorities of the country, including President L.S. Senghor—a stance based on his disagreement with the existing political system of Senegal, which he believed to be lacking democracy and independence. The work concludes by stressing the importance of the legacy of the great African thinker for modern historical science and the development of social thought in Africa. His works continue to inspire Africans and people of African descent around the world, despite the negative attitude of some representatives of the European school towards his theory about the origin of human civilization in Africa. In addition to his contribution to world historical science, the paper also analyzes the prospects for the future generation of African researchers who will be following in his footsteps.

**Keywords:** Cheikh Anta Diop, origins of Africa, Ancient Egypt, Afrocentrism, federal state, political struggle, African revival

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*On the 100th anniversary of the birth of C.A. Diop*

In 2023, the centenary of the birth of an outstanding African figure, Cheikh Anta Diop, one of the most renowned anthropologists and Egyptologists in the world, was commemorated across the globe.

From 21 to 29 December, 2023, commemorative events were held in his honor at the University of Dakar, which bears his name, and at the Fundamental Institute of Black Africa (IFAN)<sup>1</sup>, where the renowned Senegalese worked from 1960 to 1986. The opening ceremony was attended by the President of Senegal M. Sall. During the celebrations in Dakar, an exhibition dedicated to the life and work of Cheikh Anta Diop was inaugurated at the Theodore Monod Museum.

It is beyond question that the impact of his legacy on African academic and social thought in a changing world is quite great. The ideas of Diop are being developed in Africa, primarily at the Institute of Egyptology at the University of Dakar, as well as by a number of scholars from several countries, including such renowned researchers as the Congolese T. Obenga [Obenga 1996] and the African-American M.K. Asante [Asante 1990]. The study of the legacy of Diop was also carried out by renowned Russian scholars, including L.E. Kubbel [Kubbel 1969], E.S. Lvova [Lvova 2012], D.M. Bondarenko [Bondarenko 2016], and N.E. Khokholkova [Khokholkova 2012, 2023].

In order to gain a deeper insight into the phenomenon of C.A. Diop, it is essential to gain an understanding of the circumstances that shaped the personality of the future scientist, his views and beliefs, and later—his scientific discoveries.

#### STAGES OF PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

Cheikh Anta Diop was born on December 29, 1923, in Thiéytou (Caytou), near Dakar. At birth, the boy was given the name of his uncle, Cheikh Anta M'Bake, one of the younger brothers of Cheikh Ahmadou Mbamba M'Bake, the founder of the largest Sufi order of the Muridiyya [Ponomarev 2020: 65].

Long before the birth of Diop, in 1895, both brothers were expelled from the country for criticizing the policies pursued by the colonial administration. Anta M'Bake was forced to go to Gabon, Ahmadou Mbamba to the French Sudan (modern Mali)<sup>2</sup>.

Diop lost his father at an early age and lived with his mother, Mame Magatte, in Diourbel until he was 5 years old, when he was sent to a Koranic school in Koki. There he spent several years “in moral and material solitude,” which, according to the murids, is necessary for the shaping of the young mind. Subsequently, at his mother's insistence, he entered a French school in Diourbel. In 1937, Diop proceeded to Saint-Louis to take his first baccalaureate exam. The second he passed already in Dakar<sup>3</sup>.

Diop's extraordinary abilities were evident from an early age, when he was still in high school (1938–1943). Even at this early stage, he began writing the history of

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<sup>1</sup> Since 1966, IFAN (*Institut fondamental d'Afrique noire*, IFAN) is a research institute that emerged from the French Institute of Black Africa, which was integrated into the University of Dakar in 1963.

<sup>2</sup> de Saint Perier L. Cheikh Anta Diop, une vie d'historien africain. *Jeune Afrique*. 28.12.2023. <https://jeuneafrique.com/1519243/culture/cheikh-anta-diop-une-vie-dhistorien-africain/> (accessed: 05.01.2024)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

Senegal. He had already conceived his initial ideas about creating a project for the cultural renaissance and political independence of black Africa<sup>4</sup>. Of course, all this predetermined his future success in various scientific fields, including history, anthropology, Egyptology, chemistry, physics, philosophy, and others.

In 1946, the young Senegalese went to study in Paris, wanting to become an aeronautical engineer. He enrolled in the faculty of higher mathematics at the Lycée Henri-IV in Paris and, at the same time, in the Faculty of Philosophy of the Sorbonne, where he studied Egyptology and linguistics.

Immersing his entire self into the simultaneous study of both the exact and the human sciences, including philosophy, history, and linguistics, Diop combines different areas of knowledge and never ceases to test his theories in practice.

At the Sorbonne, he studies with some of the most brilliant minds of the time, including the historian Henri Lhote, the philosopher Gaston Bachelard, the ethnologist Marcel Griaule, the physicist Frederic Joliot-Curie. In 1948, he receives a degree in philosophy and enters the Faculty of Natural Sciences.

Along with studying philosophy, Diop is researching the origins of the Wolof and Serer languages, which are spoken in his homeland of Senegal.

His first academic work, "A Linguistic Study of the Ouolove. The Origin of the Language and Race of the Valaf," was published by C.A. Diop in 1948 in the journal *Présence Africaine* [Diop 1948a], which was founded in 1947 by the famous cultural figure Alioune Diop. In the same year, an article by the young scholar entitled "When Can We Talk About an African Renaissance?" appeared in a special issue of the journal *Le Musée vivant* [Diop 1948b], which was partly devoted to the issue of the use and development of African languages. In this article, he first addressed the necessity of developing African humanities, beginning with Ancient Egypt, in the same way that Western historians had done on a Greco-Latin basis [Diop 1948b: 59].

In 1949, C.A. Diop registered the topic of his doctoral thesis at the Sorbonne registry: "The Cultural Future of African Thought," supervised by Professor Gaston Bachelard.

In 1950, he was awarded two diplomas, in general and applied chemistry, and in 1951, he presented his second thesis at the Sorbonne, entitled "Who were the Predynastic Egyptians?" His supervisor was Professor Marcel Griolle.

Simultaneously with his scientific work, the young scientist immerses himself in active political activity. He becomes the Secretary General of the Federation of Students of the African Democratic Rally (AERDA, l'Association des étudiants du Rassemblement démocratique africain). In the same year, 1951, Diop organizes the conferences "The Origins of the Wolof and the People Who Speak This Language" and "The Cultural Foundations of Modern African Civilizations" at the Museum of Man in Paris.

From 1956, Diop taught physics and chemistry at the Voltaire and Claude Bernard schools in Paris, which did not prevent him from participating in the First Congress of Black Writers and Artists, held at the Sorbonne in 1956, and in 1959, in the Second Congress, where he presented a report on the importance of African cultural unity.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

In 1957, Diop specialized in nuclear physics at the Collège de France Laboratory, which was headed by Frédéric Joliot-Curie, and subsequently at the Pierre and Marie Curie Institute in Paris. The young Senegalese highly valued the great French physicist F. Joliot-Curie, whom he met back in 1953.

On January 9, 1960, C.A. Diop successfully defended his doctoral thesis at the Sorbonne, entitled “Pre-Colonial Black Africa.” In 1960, he returned to Senegal permanently together with his wife, Louise-Marie Maes, and the first of his four children, and devoted his life entirely to scientific and political activity, which he would continue until the end of his life. The outstanding thinker passed away at his home in Dakar on February 7, 1986.

### THE FOUNDER OF AFRICAN HISTORICAL SCIENCE

Cheikh Anta Diop is the first African who theorized the African Renaissance from a political, scientific, cultural, humanistic, and ideological perspective. For Diop, Africa is the “cradle of human civilization,” and thus, no thought or ideology is foreign to it since it was the land of their birth [Diop 1967: 231].

This position destroyed many Eurocentric ideas about the origins of Africa and its peoples. In one of his works on prehistory and history, “The African Origins of Civilization: Myth or Reality?”, he proves that humanity and civilization began with black people, that ancient Egypt was mainly black during the first two thousand years of its history [Diop 1967: 230].

It is worth noting that the idea of Diop regarding the African origin of human civilization was not confirmed by most scientists, neither during his lifetime nor after his death. The emergence of new scientific disciplines, such as paleogenetics, which studies the DNA in the remains of ancient organisms, enabled modern researchers to shed some light on many controversial issues, including the origin of the bearers of the ancient Egyptian civilization, which was neither the most ancient nor the only one on Earth. Pockets of civilization emerged in different regions of our planet and developed independently of each other until a certain point in time.

However, for an African researcher, such as Diop, the ancient Egyptian civilization was obviously closer and more important. He believed that the culture of ancient Egypt was more like that of Africa than that of Europe. He saw evidence of this in the existence of such a social structure as matriarchy and such a custom as circumcision, which was not typical for Europe, within its territory. In addition, the Egyptians had many gods, like the Nubians. In their drawings, they were painted black. Under Diop’s leadership, a laboratory in Dakar analyzed several skin samples from ancient Egyptian mummies and found high levels of the pigment melanin, indicating that the inhabitants of ancient Egypt were dark-skinned.

The conference, held in Cairo from January 20 to February 3 1974, under the auspices of UNESCO, brought together the most eminent Egyptologists from all over the world. It noted the “deepest level of elaboration” of Diop’s concept of the “Africanism of Egypt” and confirmed his idea “of the African origin of man both at the stage of *Homo erectus* and *Homo sapiens*” [The Peopling of Ancient Egypt ... 1978: 91].

The paradigm that Diop adhered to, that the Egyptians were indigenous Africans, underwent a process of transformation over time. Later paleontological studies showed that the ancient Egyptians were actually genetically closer to the inhabitants of the Middle East than to those of sub-Saharan Africa [Schuenemann et al. 2017]. As for the Senegalese scientist's hypothesis that their skin had a darker tone, it has been confirmed by modern science. The theory of the African origin of man as a biological species (*Homo sapiens*), which he supported, also proved to be unquestionably correct. Despite the fact that in the mid-20th century the theory of the non-African origin of man was seriously considered by many representatives of mainstream science, it currently exists only as a fringe science hypothesis.

While studying the problem of the origin of the Egyptians, in 1977, Diop published the book "The Genetic Relationship of the Egyptian Pharaohs and the Negro-African Languages" [Diop 1977]. In it, the scientist tried to prove that the languages of Black Africa belong to the same group, the main one of which is Ancient Egyptian. In this work, he makes a linguistic comparison of the Ancient Egyptian language with the West African language Wolof and finds similar forms in them. In his opinion, most of the pronouns in both languages are the same, and some Wolof words differ slightly from Ancient Egyptian in pronunciation: [lad]/[nad]—to ask, [funa]/[fula]—usual, [lah]/[nah]—to prohibit, to hide, etc. [Diop 1977:317].

It can be noted that the idea of Diop that the ancient Egyptians belonged to the Negroid race and that the ancient Egyptian language was closely related to the Wolof language was refuted by a number of Eurocentric Africanist historians, including Raymond Mauny, Maurice Caveing, Jean Devisse, and linguists Maurice Houis and Emilio Bonvini [Houis 1980], among others.

However, there were also those who shared his idea that the Egyptians were black. Among them was the African American Molefi Kete Asante, who called Diop's theory of the African origin of humanity "Afrocentrism,"<sup>5</sup> that is, a method of returning to the true Africa in all areas of thought [Asante 1990].

And although Diop himself did not consider himself an Afrocentrist, in fact, "Diop's thought" is a paradigm of Afrocentrism. Throughout his life, he argued that there is a common cultural continuity among African peoples, which is more important than the different development of ethnic groups, manifested over time in linguistic and cultural characteristics.

As the famous Russian anthropologist D.M. Bondarenko observes, the presence of a Pan-African layer of identity among Africans, even if not as the main one, indicates that sometimes it is precisely in colonialism, in the policy of the colonizers based on the principles of "divide and rule," that they see the origins of the disunity of African peoples and the conflicts that persist on the continent today [Bondarenko 2016: 82–83].

Diop was able to prove that over the past 500 years, European and American historians have written or rewritten history, glorifying people of European descent and distorting the history of the rest of the world.

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<sup>5</sup> M.K. Asante, in his theory of "Afrocentrism," went further than not only C.A. Diop and his African followers but also those African-American public figures of the 19th to mid-20th centuries, who also "imagined Africa in past centuries as a technologically and culturally highly developed continent, colonized by white people through deceit and fraud" [Bondarenko 2016: 62].

After returning to Senegal, he wrote that he hoped, so far as his capabilities and means would allow, to make an effective contribution to the development of scientific research in the humanities and exact sciences. As for Black Africa, he believed that here it was a question of creating its own history in order to morally support the people in their struggle for independence. The scientist was guided by the fact that “every nation has its own history” and that “intellectuals should study the past, not in order to get bogged down in it but in order to learn from it.”<sup>6</sup>

## THE IDEA OF UNITING THE COUNTRIES OF BLACK AFRICA

In arguing for a common cultural continuity among Africans, Diop was a proponent of a federal state for black Africa. In his work, “The Economic and Cultural Foundations of a Federal State for Black Africa,” he argued for its economic, political, and cultural necessity [Diop 1960].

It was the imperative of a black federal state and the obstacles that had to be overcome to create it that prompted the scholar to turn to the study of the continent’s history. In his study of the past, he had three goals: firstly, to replace the existing destructive prejudices about Africa with a true African history and thus instill pride in the people of this continent; secondly, to identify the common roots of all its people in order to lay the foundation for unity and their belonging to one people; and thirdly, to explore early political and economic theories that could be used to build a future federal state.

The multidisciplinary scientific training of this outstanding thinker allowed him to turn to research that addressed geostrategic issues. Diop understood that colonial education and even foreign religions (Christianity, Islam) had the goal of making the indigenous population weak and submissive, without the opportunity for self-realization. He believed that if “the Western model of social organization, imposed by violence and barbarity, is recognized as oppressing and destroying the continent, then it should be changed, preferably with the help of a system of African values” [Diop 1954: 13]. It is no coincidence that Diop is called “a pioneer of the decolonization of history and the reevaluation of the African historical narrative.”<sup>7</sup>

Being a versatile scholar and pragmatist, he predicted the threats facing the new states and suggested the only path they should follow in the future—the path of political unity. The African thinker proposed to form a Council of Heads of State, which would ensure the gradual transfer of local competences and sovereignties to federal power.

The idea of the need for federalism for African states can be found in almost all of Diop’s works. In his book “Negro Nations and Culture” [Diop 1954], he tries to prove that the independence of small former colonies such as Senegal, the Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, Togo, Dahomey, and others is merely an illusion since they will have to suffer from all kinds of external pressure and automatically fall into the orbit of the economic influence of the colonial powers [Diop 1954: 21].

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<sup>6</sup> Sanghare S. Biographie et Bibliographie du Professeur Cheikh Anta Diop. *Xippil-Xool-Le Courrier du Visionnaire*. 6.2.2012. <https://levisionnaireafric1.wordpress.com/2012/02/06/biographie-et-bibliographie-du-professeur-cheikh-anta-diop/> (accessed: 26.08.2024)

<sup>7</sup> de Saint Perier L. Cheikh Anta Diop, une vie d’historien africain. *Jeune Afrique*. 28.12.2023. <https://jeuneafrique.com/1519243/culture/cheikh-anta-diop-une-vie-dhistorien-africain/> (accessed: 05.01.2024)



In his analysis of international politics, Diop was convinced that only powerful “geographical blocs” could adequately protect their interests and ensure the security of their peoples. In his opinion, the scattered African colonies, which were striving for independence at that time, were too small to withstand the world they encountered upon becoming independent. “Remaining isolated from each other,” noted C.A. Diop, “they will ultimately find themselves crushed in the international arena.” And if Africans do not unite, then “their slavery and colonization will continue, only in a different form” [Diop 1954: 13]. The scholar considered unity to be the natural calling of the peoples of Africa south of the Sahara because they share one common civilizational, linguistic, and socio-political origin<sup>8</sup>.

Diop was against preserving the “colonial languages” because they would allow the European powers to leave Africa formally (politically), yet continue to exert influence in the economic and cultural spheres. In his opinion, united Africans would certainly need a common language in both governance and culture. This should be an African language chosen by all together and taught in schools [Diop 1960: 110].

It is worth noting that on this issue, C.A. Diop’s views were fundamentally at odds with those of the former President of Senegal, L.S. Senghor (1960–1981). Unlike his opponent, who advocated the official recognition of six languages in Senegal, L.S. Senghor advocated the use of French throughout the country as a “neutral” language. He believed that choosing one of the national languages as the state language could lead to ethnic conflict. Senghor was against identifying the state with one ethnic group (even the most numerous), the Wolof. For Diop, preserving the colonial language as the state language would allow the former metropole to exert influence over all spheres of the socio-economic development of his country.

In the second part of his study, entitled “The Economic and Cultural Foundations of a Federal State in Black Africa,” the scholar defines a direction that can lead to the unity of the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa. He places the study of its energy resources, which are necessary for development, as a matter of priority, at the forefront. Diop believed that it was important to unite natural resources and then draw up a continental integration plan [Diop 1960: 112].

Of course, as his opponents noted, there was much that was utopian in Diop’s recommendations. Nevertheless, for him, the main thing was a radical change in the consciousness of the Africans themselves in order to prepare them to solve the difficult problems associated with achieving real independence. Diop draws attention to the obstacles that they face on the path to unification. In addition to the African mentality, “humiliated” by colonial education, he sees another problem in the disagreements among the Africans themselves, who consider themselves different from each other and, moreover, often feud with each other. This is reflected in tribalism, interethnic wars, etc.

The question inevitably arises: how would Diop view the current situation in Africa? He would probably regret that he was so little wrong. As early as 1960, the Senegalese predicted that without an immediate and necessary federal union, he would see “the

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<sup>8</sup> Ten years after the publication of his work “Economic and Cultural Foundations of a Federal State of Black Africa” [Diop 1960], C.A. Diop came to the conclusion that the unity of the states of the North and South of the continent was necessary since it corresponded to their global interests. He believed that the advantages of a continental federal state would become obvious.

proliferation of small, weak authoritarian states under the economic domination of the former colonial powers” [Diop 1960: 116].

### ON THE ORIGIN OF “NEGRO” CIVILIZATIONS

In his search for a solution to the problem of creating a federal state, Diop made a discovery about the origins of the Egyptians, whom he considered to be black. “For us,” he wrote, “the return to Egypt in all areas is a necessary condition in order to be able to lay the foundations of modern humanities and renew African culture” [Diop 1981: 12].

The idea of studying the problem of the African origin of the Egyptians prompted the scholar to use such methods of scientific research as radiocarbon dating of artifacts and remains, as well as testing the melanin content of Egyptian mummies. He was the first in French-speaking Africa to engage in research in this field of knowledge.

In 1963, three years after returning to Dakar, Diop was appointed head of the radiocarbon dating laboratory (part of the Archaeology and Prehistory Department of the Fundamental Institute of Black Africa, *IFAN*). It is worth noting that since 1966, with the installation of the RA14 radioactivity counter, the laboratory has been fully operational. This was possible with the support of the Atomic Energy Commission (CEA, La Commission de l'énergie atomique) from Saclay (France) and thanks to a working partnership between IFAN and the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS, Le Centre national des recherches scientifiques). Diop received great assistance in the work of his dating laboratory from French physicists, including Jean Le Run, who introduced the first radiocarbon dating system at the CNRS, Jacques Labeyrie, director of the Weak Radioactivity Center (CFR, Le Centre de la radio-activité faible) and Georgette Delibrias, director of the Radiocarbon Laboratory (LDC, Le Laboratoire de datation au carbone)<sup>9</sup>.

Diop named one of the rooms for dating measurements after Theodore Monod and the other one for the chemical processing of samples after Jean Le Run. This was a sign of gratitude to the first one as an outstanding scientific figure who founded and headed the IFAN until 1965, and to the second one as one of the pioneers of the carbon-14 dating method. In black Africa, only Senegal and Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) had such a carbon-14 dating laboratory. Diop considered this institution the core of a future African scientific center engaged in the study of weak radioactivity and the development of various dating methods. He believed that these methods would be useful for many branches of science, such as, for example, archeology, geology, climatology, etc.

Guided by these convictions, the scientist published the work “Nuclear Physics and Complete Chronology” in 1974. In it, he outlines various methods of dating archaeological and geological samples using radiocarbon, tested in his laboratory [Diop 1974].

Relying on ancient and modern Egyptian sources, on the iconography of the pharaohs, on linguistics, and also using craniometry<sup>10</sup>, the study of blood groups, and epidermal pigmentation, Diop argued that “the basis of the Egyptian population in the

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<sup>9</sup> de Saint Perier L. Cheikh Anta Diop, une vie d'historien africain. *Jeune Afrique*. 28.12.2023. <https://jeuneafrique.com/1519243/culture/cheikh-anta-diop-une-vie-dhistorien-africain/> (accessed: 05.01.2024)

<sup>10</sup> Craniometry is a method of measuring the skull, used to study its structure.



predynastic period (the period of the pharaohs), wherever the autochthonous racial type is expressed with the slightest clarity, was the Negroid type.” “The characteristic Negroid features of the pharaoh Narmer of the 1st dynasty, the founder of the line of pharaohs, Djoser of the 3rd dynasty (under whom all the technological elements of Egyptian civilization already existed), suggest that all strata of Egyptian society belonged to one black race,” emphasized Diop [Diop 1977: 93].

He considered Egypt to be the “matrix of African cultures” [Diop 1977: 85]. For the scientist, who received an education in physics and chemistry, the Nile Valley was not only the crucible, in which black people created a civilization that amazed the world for thousands of years, but also the “matrix of social, dynastic, and ritual structures of a later period.” According to Diop, this is evidenced by numerous linguistic connections and customs [Diop 1981].

In addition, the scientist insisted on the enormous influence of Negro-African Ancient Egypt on the cultural development of ancient Greece and Rome, the Ancient East, and modern Western civilization. In other words, Diop was looking for the ancient Egyptian influence throughout human history.

Thanks to his work on the history of the origins of Egypt as well as his contribution to the study of human origins, Diop played an important role in refuting the idea of European intellectual superiority based on biological differences between races. His idea of the African origin of the human species (*Homo sapiens*) supported the position that all people have a common biological history and that there are no intellectual differences between them as the racial theory claims.

## POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

When studying the phenomenon of C.A. Diop, one cannot help but pay attention to his participation in political activities. Even during his student years, which he spent in Paris in the 1950s and 1960s, Diop was already a prominent political activist among African students studying in France. Taking an active part in the anti-colonial movement, in 1951 he became the organizer of the First Pan-African Students’ Conference, which was held in Paris. By that time, C.A. Diop was a member of the Democratic Rally of Africa (*Rassemblement Démocratique Africain, RDA*) and one of the leaders of the Federation of Black African Students in France (*Fédération des étudiants d’Afrique noire en France, FEANF*), which was the first to put forward the slogan of immediate independence for the continent. He was its Secretary General from 1951 to 1953. From then until the end of his life, he led a political struggle for the liberation of Africa. In 1952, Diop published an article entitled “Towards an African Political Ideology” in the journal *La voix de l’Afrique Noire*, which contains the basic principles of the struggle for national independence for all Africans. The first five are formulated as follows:

- we must fight for ideas, not for people;
- the destiny of a people is primarily in its own hands;
- it does not depend on the eloquent demands of any member of any European chamber or assembly;
- this destiny can be improved here on earth by means already successfully used by other peoples, <...> man can transform society and nature;

– for this purpose, such means as organized collective action (strikes with economic demands, hunger strikes, demonstrations, political strikes, other mass actions coordinated on a continental scale—and as quickly as possible) are used in practice<sup>11</sup>.

The politician believed that “guided by these principles, it will be possible to coordinate the forces, change their balance in the anti-colonialist struggle, and become masters of life”<sup>12</sup>.

In 1960, after defending his doctoral thesis at the Sorbonne and returning to Senegal, the young scientist received a position as an assistant at the French Institute of Black Africa (*IFAN*). He saw his main goal as making an effective contribution to stimulating scientific research in the humanities and sciences, as well as providing moral support to his people in their struggle for independence.

Diop combined his academic activity and political activities. He created a party—the Senegalese Masses Bloc (*BMS, Le Bloc des masses sénégalaises*), in opposition to the current regime of L.S. Senghor and Prime Minister Mamadou Dia, and became its secretary general.

In 1962, for his political activities (his party opposed the pro-French policy of President L.S. Senghor), he was imprisoned in the city of Diourbel from mid-July to mid-August 1962. In 1963, Diop refuses a ministerial post offered to him by the president. As a result of this confrontation, the BMS party was banned. However, in 1976, Diop created a new one—the National Democratic Rally (*RND, Le Rassemblement national démocratique*), which he led until his death in 1986. This party first published the journals *Siggi* and then *Taxaw* in the Wolof language, both edited by himself<sup>13</sup>. In these journals he published several articles on both domestic and international politics.

On March 19, 1976, a document known as the “Law on the Three Schools of Thought” was published in Senegal: socialist, liberal, and Marxist-Leninist<sup>14</sup>. The ruling Socialist Party of Senegal appropriated the label of socialist, the Democratic Party—liberal, the Party of Independence and Labor of Senegal—Marxist-Leninist.

Diop refused to comply with the demand to affiliate with one of these schools of thought and entered into a confrontation with the government and the president, which lasted for 5 years. In 1977, on the initiative of the National Democratic Rally, a petition was signed calling for a return to a genuine multi-party system, and not the three schools of thought that suited the ruling class. It was signed by several hundred intellectuals from Senegal.

It was not until April 7, 1981, after L.S. Senghor had already left the post of president, that the Dakar court put an end to the legal proceedings initiated by the Senegalese government against politician C.A. Diop. The National Democratic Rally party was officially recognized after many years of persistent struggle for its existence and for the adoption of a law lifting restrictions on the multi-party system.

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<sup>11</sup> Dialo D. Cheikh Anta Diop, savant et politique. *Senepus*. 30.03.2020. <https://senepus.com/opinions/cheikh-anta-diop-savant-et-politique> (accessed: 31.07.2024)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> The adoption of the “Law on the Three Schools of Thought” allowed the Progressive Union of Senegal, whose leader was the President himself, to join this international organization at the XIII Congress of the Socialist International (Geneva, November 1976).

It should be noted that the relationship between L.S. Senghor and C.A. Diop was complex. It can be characterized as a conflict of intellectuals, which was not just an ideological dispute between the leaders of opposing political parties. In addition, Diop did not support the cultural and philosophical doctrine of negritude, one of the ideologists of which was Senghor, considering it humiliating for Africans themselves. He advocated an African renaissance based on the heritage of Pharaonic Egypt, as well as the popularization of Negro-African languages<sup>15</sup>.

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The latest scientific research and socio-political evolution in the world further enhanced the relevance, fruitfulness, and accuracy of Cheikh Anta Diop's academic work.

Today, the dating laboratory at the *IFAN* continues its work while expanding its research on environmental issues, such as quantifying air pollution in Dakar. Although closed in 1980, it resumed its work in 2003, confirming the relevance of the scientific research begun by C.A. Diop more than half a century previously.

The invaluable legacy he left behind will certainly be used to build the future of Africa. Diop's work destroyed colonial beliefs and showed Africans the surest path to rebirth.

Despite the fact that the scholar repeatedly won the academic battles he waged with his opponents, they persistently attempted to diminish his impact on African public thought. However, Diop always believed that the seeds he had sown would grow and that future generations of Africans would continue to work in the areas of his research in various fields of knowledge, including the creation of a federal state in Africa. It is no coincidence that his previously unpublished articles and speeches were included in the collection "*Science et Philosophie. Textes 1960–1986*," published by the University of Dakar on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of his death [Diop 2007].

The Senegalese researcher Dialo Diop, in his article "Cheikh Anta Diop, scientist and politician," compares his encyclopedic mind with the famous theoretical physicist, Nobel Prize winner Albert Einstein, noting that the African thinker "was engaged in politics as if it were a matter of science" and, conversely, "science as if it were a matter of politics."<sup>16</sup>

The writer Boubacar Boris Diop (Senegal) considers the scientist "a symbol of political and cultural resistance in Africa, well known throughout the continent."<sup>17</sup> As confirmation, he writes that "in Nigeria, Cheikh Anta Diop is one of the rare French-speaking intellectuals who are read with great attention," and in Bamako and Johannesburg there are schools named after him<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Lubabu T. Léopold Sédar Senghor – Cheikh Anta Diop: la guerre idéologique. *Jeune Afrique*. 31.12.2009. <https://jeuneafrique.com/199095/politique/1-opold-s-dar-senghor-cheikh-anta-diop-la-guerre-id-ologique/> (accessed: 30.05.2024)

<sup>16</sup> Dialo D. Cheikh Anta Diop, savant et politique. *Senepus*. 30.03.2020. <https://www.seneplus.com/opinions/cheikh-anta-diop-savant-et-politique> (accessed: 1.07.2024)

<sup>17</sup> Lubabu T. Léopold Sédar Senghor – Cheikh Anta Diop: la guerre idéologique. *Jeune Afrique*. 31.12.2009. <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/199095/politique/1-opold-s-dar-senghor-cheikh-anta-diop-la-guerre-id-ologique/> (accessed: 30.05.2024)

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

The works of the Senegalese thinker remain a subject of analysis, criticism, and commentary from specialists in various fields of knowledge. They provide a powerful impetus for the development of our own African school in various areas of research on the continent.

A familiarity with the works and ideas of the African scientist reveals to the reader the remarkable genius of C.A. Diop, including his intuition, courage, wisdom, and understanding of the most pressing issues of his time, as well as his unwavering love for his people.

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## **ШЕЙХ АНТА ДИОП: ВЫДАЮЩИЙСЯ МЫСЛИТЕЛЬ, ПРОБУЖДАЮЩИЙ АФРИКАНСКОЕ САМОСОЗНАНИЕ**

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**Аннотация.** Статья посвящена анализу научной и политической деятельности выдающегося мыслителя Африки XX столетия – Шейха Анта Диопа, который считается родоначальником африканской исторической науки и символом африканского возрождения. Она приурочена к 100-летию со дня его рождения. В работе показана его многодисциплинарная научная деятельность как в области гуманитарных, так и точных наук. Обращено внимание на разработку различных методов датирования археологических и геологических образцов, которая помогла Ш.А. Диопу внести вклад в изучение происхождения человека и продвижение идей о том, что Древний Египет был неразрывно связан с народами Африки. Исследуется политический аспект его деятельности от активиста студенческого движения за независимость Черной Африки во Франции, до создателя и руководителя политических партий в Сенегале.

В статье рассматривается его оппозиционная деятельность по отношению к политической власти страны, включая президента Л.С. Сенгора. Противоречия касались несогласия Ш.А. Диопа с существующей политической системой Сенегала, которая, как он полагал, не была демократической и независимой. В работе делается вывод о значении наследия африканского мыслителя для современной исторической науки и развития общественной мысли в Африке. Его труды продолжают вдохновлять африканцев и людей африканского происхождения по всему миру, несмотря на негативное отношение некоторых представителей европейской школы к его теории о зарождении человеческой цивилизации в Африке. В работе анализируется не только вклад ученого в мировую историческую науку, но также и перспективы для будущего поколения африканских исследователей, которые продолжают работу по основным направлениям его деятельности.

**Ключевые слова:** Шейх Анта Диоп, происхождение Африки, Древний Египет, афроцентризм, федеративное государство, политическая борьба, африканское возрождение

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