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Contextualizing “Muridiyyah” within the American muslim community: Perspectives on the past, present and future

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This paper examines the presence of the West African Sufi order, known as the “Muridiyyah”, within the broader context of muslims in America. The advent of the Murids in the American muslim community has not been the object of much research. This paper draws on the historical experience of the American muslim community in order to situate the Muridiyyah within these temporal and spatial parameters. Based on analyzing commonalities and differences, as well as changes and continuity in this formative experience, the paper will illustrate possible challenges to the ongoing globalization of the Muridiyyah order.

Key words: Muridiyyah, muslims in the US, American muslim community, African diaspora, Senegalese communities, Africans in the US, Dayira, Marabouts, Tuba, Murids, Seikh Amadou Bamba, Daara

MAPPING THE HISTORY OF ISLAM IN AMERICA

There are many approaches to understanding the history of Islam in America. Historically, most experts have tended to look at American muslim history from the view of Arab immigration to the country. In so doing, they equated the development of Islam in America with the three major waves of Arab immigration to the United States (Macron, 1978; The encyclopedia of Cleveland history, Lovell, 1992; Lo, 2004). This approach posits that, the appearance of Islam on the American religious scene came with the earlier Arab immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century. These Arabs were mostly from the Levantine areas of greater part of Syria (Including areas that are today called Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine). They were followed by a second wave of immigrants in the aftermath of world war (WW) II. These immigrants comprised mostly educated professional Palestinians. The third wave came as a result of the 1965 Immigration Act. These Arab muslim immigrants were

mostly from Egypt, Syria and Palestine. However, a previous case study of muslim history in Cleveland, Ohio (Lo, 2004) has illustrated the conceptual flaws in this approach. Since the overwhelming numbers of earlier Arab immigrants to the United States were not muslims and since no evidence of religious centers and mosques has been associated with the first wave, the utility of this framework is limited. This approach is only based on a conflation of Arab with muslim, and no insight is offered regarding the experience or practices of this group.

Therefore, the history of Islam in America from the bottom-up, using temporal and spatial frameworks and adopting the mosque as a symbol of community existence was called for. Throughout Islamic history in Madinah, Mecca, Asia, Africa and Europe, the mosque has stood as the symbol of the Muslim community. In Islam’s normative teachings, the mosque is not only the center of worship, but also, the point from which the temporal and spatial history of a Muslim community is framed. Using this framework, the earliest intellectual history of Islam in America, dating back to Alexander Russell Webb, a white American diplomat who converted

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to Islam in 1872 and established a publishing company in New York in 1887, where he worked on promoting Islam was revisited (Ferris, 1994). The Sylvianne Diouf's postulation that many African slaves were Muslims in both name and practice was also reviewed (Diouf, 1998). Using these spatial and temporal frameworks, American Muslim history was divided into two chapters: earlier Muslim communities and the present Muslim communities. In this context, distinctive group behaviors are not exclusive to the elements of time and place. These two groups are interrelated. The former suggests the path of the latter and the latter legitimizes its sociopolitical existence from the former. By early Muslim communities, it means the Ahmadiyyah Movement and the Nation of Islam, while by present Muslim communities; it means the African-American Muslim communities, Muslim immigrants and U.S born Muslims.

EARLIER COMMUNITIES

The Ahmadiyyah Movement

The Ahmadiyyah Movement, which started in India in the last decade of the nineteenth century, was the first organized Muslim group to propagate Islam in the western world. In 1902, they started the review of religions, which was the first publication dedicated to the propagation of Islam in the English speaking world. In the following years, the group settled itself in England and the United States. Their missionaries distributed the group's official newspaper, *Moslem Sunrise*, the review of religions and other translated commentaries on Islamic sources such as Bukhari, Muslim and the Qur'an (Mirza, 1974). The group started establishing mosques in major cities in United States in the 1920s. After unsuccessful efforts to convert white Americans, the Movement concentrated its efforts on the African-American community. They successfully converted Garveyites and black nationalists. Most pioneers of Islam in the African American community such as: Timothy Drew Ali, founder of the Moorish Science Temple; Farad Muhammad, the spiritual founder of the Nation of Islam and Imam Wali Akram, founder of the Moslem Ten Year Plan in Cleveland, Ohio, were influenced by the Ahmadiyyah missionaries (McCloud, 1995). They established the first generation of mosques in the United States. Among these mosques are Chicago's first mosque, Cleveland's first mosque and Cincinnati's first mosque.

The nation of Islam

Although, mainstream muslim scholars often criticize the nation of Islam for its past black nationalist rhetoric, the nation of Islam was the most influential factor in shaping the history of Islam in America. Most American social

historians agree that the Civil Rights Movement was the most dynamic social movement after World war (WW) II and it is safe to postulate that this Movement in its moderate form was mostly influenced by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. It is also safe to say that, this movement in its extreme form was greatly influenced by the nation of Islam. Martin Luther King Jr. offered a non violent approach that exemplified the thinking of a Christian organization, while Malcolm X, also known as Al-Hajj Malik El-Shabbaz, offered an approach that in some ways was informed by a muslim organization's viewpoint. Unlike European popular culture, which has continued to depict muslims as the other and the foreign, Islam is no stranger to American popular culture, due to the nation of Islam. During the 1960s, the great heavy weight-boxing champion, Muhammad Ali, brought Islam to the center of American sports. The black muslim rebel, as he was depicted in most newspapers around the country, publicly displayed his affiliation with the nation of Islam, challenging anyone who referred to him by a name other than his muslim name. This attitude prompted one of Ali's opponents, Floyd Patterson, who was a Roman Catholic, to declare in 1965 that "the black muslim influence must be removed from boxing" (Gardell, 1996).

Islam appears at the center of the classical literature of the Civil Rights Movement. Claude Brown's autobiography, which is an authoritative documentation of the everyday life of blacks in the ghettos of Harlem in the 1950s, did not miss the influence of the nation of Islam. He notes, "The muslims were the home teams...They were the people talking for everyone. This was the first time that many of these people had ever seen the home boys get up and say anything in front of a crowd" (Brown, 1965). Furthermore, the activism of the Nation of Islam in the prison system made Islam the prisoner's religion par excellence. According to Brown, "from 1955 through 1959, just about everybody who came out of jail came out a muslim. By 1959, I had come to the conclusion that, few Negroes could go to any of the city prisons in New York and not come out a Muslim" (Brown, 1965). Inmates were not the only demographic of black converts to Islam. A number of the leading black musicians and artists of the time were also muslims. Among them are LeRoi Jones, founder of the Black Arts School in Harlem, who adopted the name Amiri Baraka and Rolland Snellings, another nationally renowned poet, who also converted to become Askiya Muhammad Toure. After his conversion, many of Toure's poems adopted a metaphorical style to express Islamic concepts (Nyang, 1992).

PRESENT MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

The African-American muslim community

The African American muslim community is the largest within the general community of mainstream American

muslims. They are often estimated to represent between 33 - 40% of the total muslim population in the United States. Many of them came to mainstream Islam through their association with the nation of Islam or through direct conversion/ reversion to Islam. For the first group, transition to mainstream Islam occurred through two methods: The first method is the type of individual transition that occurs in mosques, social gatherings and schools. Malcolm X's journey from the Nation of Islam to the mainstream muslim community is the blueprint on which many African American muslims modeled their journey to mainstream Islam. The second method is the collective transition to mainstream Islam that occurred in 1975 upon the death of the supreme leader of the nation of Islam, Elijah Muhammad. Mr. Muhammad's son, Wallace Muhammad, envisaged reforming the movement from its nationalist philosophy to a non racial orthodox Islam. Wallace Muhammad, who is now known as Imam Warith Deen Muhammad, changed the name of the nation of Islam to the World Community of Islam in the West and led the Movement's followers to mainstream Islam. In 1977, Minister Louis Farrakhan disagreed with Mr. Muhammad's teachings, calling for the reactivation of the original nation of Islam based on its black nationalist rhetoric. Many of the older ministers of the nation of Islam joined his call (Lo, 2004).

The second group of African- American muslims are converts/ reverts to Islam. It has been noted that most American converts/ reverts to Islam are African Americans. Steven Barbosa's 1994 study stated that 85 percent of American converts are African-Americans (Barbosa, 1994). A few years later, Ihsan Bagby's survey provided a similar estimate, that out of 19,706 American converts, 13,783 were African- Americans (Bagby, 2002). American writers differ on explaining the root cause of this disparity. African- Americans hardly make up 12% of the American population, so why do they represent more than 80% of the converts?

American social scientists have the tendency to explain this phenomenon in the context of an identity crisis generated by the systematic subjugation of blacks to slavery, racism and discrimination (Essien-Udom, 1962; Clark, 1991; Dannin, 2002). According to these social scientists, Islam was a means "of liberation and freedom from their low status in society" (Hasan, 2000). Another group of historians, propose a broader framework through which African-American conversion/ reversion to Islam can be understood. They interpret it within the context of all people of West African descent in the New World. Their argument centers on the assumption that, since most slaves came from West Africa and most West Africans were muslims, it should come as no surprise that in the process of rediscovering their cultural roots, many African- Americans are drawn to the religion of their ancestors (Adib, 1995; Quick, 1997; Ali, 1998). The argument is that, both approaches have some merit. But it should also be added to the fact that, the very nature of Islam that makes it very appealing to those at the bottom

of any society, is how Islam started at the beginning of its inception in Mecca, Egypt, Iraq, India, West Africa and in other societies. Within such a broad context, it is easier to understand why some of the most famous figures of African-American social philosophy such as Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832 -1912), W.E.B. Du Bois (1868 -1963), Marcus Garvey (1887-1940) and Malcolm X (1925 -1965) all explored Islam as a tool for social justice.

MUSLIM IMMIGRANTS

Although, muslim immigrants to the United States have come from all corners of the world, there are three distinctive immigrant trends that have shaped the landscape of Islam in America. These groups are immigrants from the Indian subcontinent, immigrants from the Arab world and immigrants from sub Saharan Africa. Most are Sunni muslims, but their impact on Islam in America is not equal. The level of individual commitment to the three normative duties of a muslim - Da'awa (propagation of Islam), promoting good and warding off evil and jihad (striving for the sake of Allah) varies depending on the individual and his or her cultural and regional background.

Immigrants from the Indian subcontinent

This immigrant group is not related to the earlier Ahmadiyyah missionaries, who were mostly from the Punjab region. These groups came after India's independence from Great Britain in 1947 and especially after the immigration Act of 1952 known as the McCarran Walter Act, which extended the national origin quotas and allowed the entire Indian families to move to the United States. These muslim immigrants came from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. According to Regula B. Qureshi and Saleem Qureshi, they were "characterized by dominant supra local elite that had much in common across the region, including primarily, religious ideology and practice" (Qureshi, 1983).

This group's strong religious ideology and practice accounted for the significant institutionalization of Islam in the United States. As they attempted to create social networks and religious spheres in their newly adopted country, they created the first muslim umbrella organizations in North America. The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), founded in 1982, is now an umbrella organization of local and regional Muslim organizations and associations throughout the United States and Canada. The Islamic Circle of North America started as an Urdu speakers' organization in 1970. By 1980, its constitution was changed from Urdu to English and it is now the second largest umbrella organization in the United States. Many other professional muslim organizations such as the Association of Muslim Social Scientists and the Association of Muslim Scientists and

Engineers are mostly led and organized by immigrants from the Indian subcontinent.

Immigrants from the Arab world

Only the last wave of Arab immigrants to the United States, discussed previously, has impacted the growth of Islam in America. Arab immigrants, following the Arab-Israeli wars of the 1970s, were mostly conservative Palestinians or members of the muslim Brotherhood who contributed significantly in institutionalizing political Islam in the United States. For instance, during the 1980s and 1990s, tens of thousands of Palestinians arrived in Cleveland, Ohio. They came from Bethlehem and Beit Haninah in Palestine. One notices a correlation between their arrival and the increase in the establishment of mosques in the region (Lo, 2004). These groups also constituted the first generation of the Muslim Student Association Movement. Muslim civil rights groups such as the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and Muslim American Society are also outgrowth of muslims from these backgrounds.

Immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa

Immigrants from sub Saharan Africa are distinctively known for bringing a taste of Sufism to the American muslim community. The oldest documented sheikh from sub Saharan Africa was Sheikh Ahmed Hassoun of Sudan, who came with Malcolm X as a teacher of orthodox Islam. But the assassination of Malcolm in February 1965 ended Sheikh Hassoun's mission. Other than this, it is correct to say that the immigration of Muslims from the muslim countries of sub Saharan Africa is a recent phenomenon of the 1980s. In general, African immigration to the United States at present is small in comparison to that of individuals coming from other parts of the world. The first group of African immigrants after World war (WW) II was from eastern Nigeria during the Biafran war between 1967 -1970. They were mostly Igbo from southeastern Nigeria. The immigration trend after the Nigerian Civil War remained small and comprised people from Ghana, Nigeria and some other English-speaking countries, along with those escaping the apartheid regime in South Africa.

The 1980s signaled the first wave of economic immigrants from the traditionally muslim countries of West Africa: Senegal, Gambia, Mali, Northern Nigeria and the Northern region of Ghana. The impact of this group was on an individual, rather than an institutional level. Sufi sheikhs of West Africa were able, through visiting their disciples, to set up Zawiyahs (houses) of Sufi orders in major urban areas. Sheikh Hassan Nyass of Senegal was nationally known for his efforts in building bridges with African-American muslims. Within this trend,

also lies the presence of the Muridiyyah order within the American muslim community. In recent years, as many Murids immigrated to America, they established Murid houses, opened stores and extended the network of the brotherhood throughout urban America. This enabled the grand Sheikhs of Touba – the leaders of the Muridiyyah Movement, to pay frequent visits to this network of brotherhoods, especially in New York, Cincinnati, Chicago and Washington D.C.

U.S. - born muslims

There is a sizeable number of muslims who were born and raised in the United States. They have come from immigrant parents as well as parents who converted/reverted to Islam. These Muslims often associate themselves with their cultural backgrounds. No significant outlook has been developed or noticed from this group. This group's absence from the sociopolitical sphere might have to do with the small numerical size of the U.S born muslim population and the fact that more time is needed for this group to develop its own identity and construct its own distinctive agenda within the muslim communities.

FINDING THE MURIDIYYAH IN AMERICA

As discussed in the previous section, the Muridiyyah came to America through muslim immigrants from sub Saharan Africa. It is a Sufi order of Islam, which cuts across the two main branches of Islam. Sufism refers to many modes of spirituality within Islam, which are ascetic, esoteric, poetic interpretations of the Qur'ān and Prophet Muhammad's tradition. Muridism relates to Sufism within these esoteric and poetic confraternities.

The Muridiyyah brotherhood is the second largest brotherhood in Senegal, but it is the most effective in terms of its economic and political capacities. It is also the only brotherhood founded in Senegal on nationalistic principles. In 1883, Sheikh Amadou Bamba established the Muridiyyah order to express the constant will to pull oneself from earthly possessions and to be totally devoted to the esoteric principles of Islam. After the birth of the Muridiyyah, former traditional aristocrats who were conquered by French colonial armies started to flock around Bamba, who left his birthplace and founded the city of Touba in 1887 as he attempted to accommodate the increasing number of his followers. This popularity drew the resentment of the French Governor, who accused the marabout (spiritual/religious leaders, who are generally held to have certain supernatural powers), Bamba, of provoking the colonial authorities (O'Brien, 1971). On September 5, 1895, the French Council of Afrique Occidentale Francaise decided to exile Sheikh Bamba to the rainforest of Gabon, where he spent seven

years before being returned to Senegal, only to be exiled again to Mauritania on June 3, 1903. On April 4, 1907, he was once more returned to Senegal and put under house arrest for five more years. He died on July 19, 1927, and left behind a body of literature that constitutes the philosophy of the Murid brotherhood (Mbacke, 2003). The mystery surrounding his encounter with French colonial authorities, his survival in Sufu Toubab (foreign land) and his nationalist approach to religion are the source of a plethora of legendary stories on which Murid marabouts have relied to maintain prestige among their disciples. Senegalese brotherhoods, and the Muridiyyah in particular, are the most salient feature of Senegalese society (Villalon, 1995; Hunwick and Mbacke, 2005; Geller 2005). The reasons for their salience are many. First, unlike most African societies in which kinship is the strongest form of primary association, in Senegal, it is the brotherhoods. Most Senegalese citizens, regardless of their ethnic background or economic class, belong to a brotherhood, thus, creating a heterogeneous society in which ethnicity matters less. Second, Senegalese brotherhoods do not function exclusively or primarily as religious institutions; they stand as an illustration of social legitimacy and political stability in society. This is due to their political roles in colonial history. When the aristocratic systems of the late nineteenth century disintegrated, the marabouts of the brotherhoods replaced the nobles as political leaders and filled the gap caused by the French dismantling of the traditional aristocracy (O'Brien, 1988; Copans, 1988). During colonial rule, the brotherhoods played a key role in bridging the gap between colonial authorities and traditional societies. In the post colonial state, they have continued to play the broker's role between society and the state.

Third, the brotherhoods are also social institutions that generate a balance between modernization, secularism and the religious tradition that encourage grassroots social participation (Villalon, 1995). Their influence and role in society centers on two social institutions: the marabout and the dayira. An exploration of the sociohistorical roles of each is crucial in understanding the role Muridism plays in Senegal and in the Senegalese diaspora. The term marabout comes from the Arabic word *Murabbi*, meaning educator. Marabouts were the educated elite in precolonial Senegal. Their competence in writing and reading made them the preferred consultants for the traditional aristocracies of the precolonial era. The first generations of marabouts were Maures from Mauritania and North Africa. As time passed, marabouts were associated with the early groups of the educated Fulani tribes of northern Senegal and then to anyone with substantial knowledge of the Islamic sciences and the Arabic language (the classical oral history as collected by Birago Diop, 1964)). Also, two types of marabouts emerged: aristocrat marabouts and daara marabouts. Aristocrat marabouts devoted more

time to studying and consulting the traditional aristocracy. They were the official correspondents with the Moors across the Sahara and with the Europeans of the Atlantic trade. These types of marabouts were influential to the extent of which some aristocrats collaborated with or resisted French colonial expansion (Copans, 1988). The second type, daara marabouts are known as Serignou Daara in the Wolof Language. This group devotes more time to teaching and healing. Families send their children to marabouts for education and occupational training. In exchange, the children farmed and begged to compensate the marabout. The incorporation of aristocrat marabouts into the brotherhood lifestyle emerged during the political developments and social changes of the mid 19th century (O'Brien, 1971). When the French exterminated the last warrior aristocrat of the Kayor Kingdom in 1886, his Wolof soldiers, entourage, supporters and aristocrat marabouts shifted their traditional modes of social dependency to the brotherhoods' establishments, who were generally proactive and accommodating of the French authorities (Copans, 1988). The Murid brotherhood, in particular, championed the restoration of the social and economic orders of the Wolof Kingdoms of central Senegal. The philosophy of Amadou Bamba (1850-1927) depended on two principles: a strict work ethic and *ndigal* or 'obedience' to those in charge (Bamba, 1987). After many years of conflict, the French authorities allowed Bamba to establish the Touba village, which became the center of groundnut cultivation in West Africa (Amin, 1970).

The Murid beliefs in promoting a high moral order, economic independence and obedience to authorities combined with a strict work ethic gave the Murid marabouts great financial advantages in Senegalese society. Traditionally, Murids' disciples devoted their time to cultivating groundnuts for their marabouts, while the marabout took charge of their spiritual and material needs. Many of the followers of the dismantled traditional aristocrats moved to villages that were established by Murid marabouts. They reorganized the traditional agrarian structure by establishing new economic and residential units in non ethnic based villages (Diop, 1981). When groundnut production was the core of France's devastated post World War II economy, O'Brien (1971) estimates that the Murids' groundnut production represented 25% of total groundnut production in Senegal. Copans (1988) argues that Murid groundnut economy has increased during the postcolonial state to represent one-third to two-thirds of the country's production. In modern Senegal, marabouts are entrepreneurial leaders who dominate the informal and private economy of many major cities. Marabouts' role includes extending the commercial activities of the disciples and gaining political leverage for or against government policy. Many observers consider the success of the Socialist Party (PS) in monopolizing the Senegalese State (1960–2000) to be based on its ability to work with

marabout establishments. Behrman (1970) notes that Senegal's marabouts "has a great deal of influence on appointments at the national level as well as in regional politics." President Senghor, who built his two decades' rule on an alliance with the brotherhoods, describes the marabouts' social networks as "La politique politicienne", which perpetuates traditional patterns of subordination and dominance in the society within the state's limits. For example, during the 1989 presidential election, the re-election of president Abdou Diouf was due to the Grand Caliph of the Murid brotherhood's call for his disciples and followers to vote for the man he called "his favored son" (Triaud, 1997). Furthermore, the Murid establishment has often been used to maintain stability and order. The state often seeks the brotherhoods' mediating role in settling political unrest and violence. Following the 1988 presidential election, in which a Supreme Court judge was assassinated and the main opposition leader jailed, the Brotherhoods' intervention was the key to establishing public order and returning political legitimacy to the state. Same thing happened in 1989, when hundreds of Mauritians and Senegalese were killed, while the two governments failed to stop street mobs from attacking each other's citizens (Amnesty International, 1990). The second social institution of the Murids is the Dayira. Dayiras are very influential in associational life in Senegal. There are Dayiras in each Senegalese neighborhood, as well as throughout the Senegalese diaspora (Diouf, 2000; Babou, 2002).

Although, all Senegalese brotherhoods have a network of Dayira, Murid migrants to urban areas have transformed the Dayira into an instrument for socialization and integration in city life. They comprised followers of a particular marabout: those who attend meetings regularly and those who pay their dues and adhere to the group's social and educational programs. Dayiras are the primary source of income for all brotherhoods. For example, the yearly visit/pilgrimage to Touba and the holy city of the Murid brotherhood usually attracts more than one million followers. In this context, Dayiras are networks of patronage led by a marabout who works with members to establish credit lines and helps group members face socioeconomic challenges of the city, or wherever they may have taken up residence. While the members sustain the marabout's material needs, the marabouts provide Dayira members with spiritual guidance and counseling and negotiate with the state or the foreign embassy on their behalf. The Dayira's role also includes extending the business capacity of members and gaining political leverage for or against a government policy. Major Dayira associations such as: Matlaboul Fawzain, Hisbut Tarqiyya and Mam Jara Buso build hospitals, run clinics and operate public schools in areas where government capacity is limited. For example, Matlaboul Fawzain, which is a Dayira umbrella organization of more than 60,000 members, was solely responsible for building the Touba Hospital, which is a

main health center in Senegal (World Bank, 2003). Through these institutions, the Murids filter socioeconomic dependency on the state by providing jobs, counseling and playing entrepreneurial roles in Senegal's modern economy. The social role of the Dayira has contributed to creating Senegal's heterogeneous society, in which ethnicity matters less to a greater extent, than it does elsewhere in Africa.

Murids' immigration throughout the diaspora was the next step after their migration to the major urban areas of Senegal. This migration to urban Senegal was due to the economic setbacks of Diouf's years during the 1980s. The region of Diourbel, the birthplace of Muridism, was one of the areas most impacted by the drought and the subsequent falling price of peanuts in the international market. As Murids moved to urban areas of Dakar, Thies and other major Senegalese cities, Murid traders found themselves lacking in education or occupational training (Babou, 2002). The early destinations of Senegalese immigrants were France, neighboring countries and Central Africa (Mancuelle Migrant, 1997). Murid traders were among these early groups of immigrants. However, what changed in the 1980s was a rising middle class of African-Americans who were committed to re-discovering their African roots. In the process, they came into contact with the Murid traders of urban Senegal. Another related factor was the tightening of immigration laws in Europe. In 1987, James Brooke summed up the three reasons for Murid arrival to New York in a New York Times article, noting, "In Dakar, the phenomenon is attributed to a combination of causes: the ending of exit visa requirements for Senegalese citizens in 1981 was a severe drought that devastated peanut farmers from 1973 to 1985 and a knack among people of this West African nation for trading" (Brooke, 1987). By the 1990s, the Muridiyyah hub of urban Senegal had been duplicated in New York City, as thousands of Murid traders immigrated to American cities. The rise of what is currently known as Little Senegal in Harlem (New York) and an estimated 10,000 immigrant members of the Muriddiyah throughout the United States, is in fact a by-product of the growth of marabouts' initiatives in establishing vibrant brotherhood communities in the diaspora (Stoller, 1996; Babou, 2002). These diaspora communities have not only become the engine of economic growth in many areas of Senegal (Diouf, 2000), but have also contributed to a new trend of religiosity in America. The concept of the Dayira is becoming familiar to many indigenous American Muslims. In American urban centers such as: Cleveland, Cincinnati, New York and Raleigh NC, the weekly Dayira has become a place for cultural exchange between Murid immigrants and mostly African American Muslims. Dayira, for many American Muslims, is a source of spirituality and a hub of ritual brotherhood that is often absent in the platform of the often politicized American mosque. In New York City, the Muridiyyah community has revitalized the old

neighborhoods of Harlem, by establishing restaurants, shops, community centers that have contributed significantly to transforming of economic activities around 116th Street, prompting the city to recognize the positive role of the Order and the potential opportunities in promoting the legacy of the founder. As a result, July 28 was proclaimed Sheikh Ahmad Bamba Day in New York. There is also another dimension of civic engagement that the Muridiyyah has injected into the American muslim community, as the Dayira offers its members a sense of personal responsibility and opportunities for economic networking. The growth of the Dayira in America, with its emphasis on group solidarity and a disciplined outlook, has strengthened muslim-owned businesses in Chicago, Cincinnati, and Raleigh. In commenting on the Murids contribution to the betterment of urban America and Harlem, Linda Beck notes, "most of all Murids offered their strong sense of community, family and piety as an example, or may be, even as a core around which a larger multi-ethnic and religious coalition grew" (Beck, 2008).

THE FUTURE OF THE MURIDIYYAH IN AMERICA

In assessing the future of the Muridiyyah in America and the potential challenges to its continuity, on the one hand, and changes, on the other hand, it is necessary to address three related issues: (1) the transnational theory and experiences of American religious culture; (2) local factors that exhibit influences on America's muslim communities and (3) the forces of continuity and change within Murid practices.

The transnational theory and experiences about American religious culture

As Sufi orders became successful, they became "Americanized", that is, to use Hermansen's term (Hermansen, Year, 2004). In this sense, they became both informative and inadequate. By informative, Hermansen means that the movements develop a "signified activities base in the U.S, and do adopt styles and practices in resonance with American ways of doing things" (Hermansen, 2004). Here, the question ask is, "what is the American way of doing things?" In short, American religious practices, culture and identity is rooted in the enlightenment value of individualism. As Emanuel Kant argues: "Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage . . . (whose) cause lies not in the lack of reason, but in the lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another." In the nineteenth century, De Tocqueville sensed this individualism in the manner in which Americans shifted doctrinal practices to the moral character of individual beliefs and religious liberalism (Democracy in America, 1961). Although, this religious liberalism continued to

exert an influence through all periods of American history, it also exerted the greatest amount of influence during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. The success of the Civil Rights Movement lies not only in the enacting of the Voting Right Act, but also in the establishment of the notion of diversity at the center of America's civic values. The Civil Rights Movement provided a spatial context for the rise of many sociopolitical revolutions: the Sexual Revolution, the Movement against the Vietnam War, the Movement for Women's Rights and the movement toward what became known as religious pluralism and the inclusion of other religions-Yoga, Transcendental Meditation, Buddhism, Hinduism and Sufism into American popular culture. All these social revolutions and religious alternatives challenged the three traditional beliefs of a Protestant, Anglo-Saxon and white male American. As a result, the notion of America as a melting pot no longer held in the popular culture. Protestant Christianity, which in the past was perceived to be the religion of America, has been challenged by Catholic and Jewish voices and in recent years, muslim voices as well.

As a result of this new ethos of religious diversity, American popular culture has come to reflect the civil values of democracy, equality and separation of church and state. Since America is the only country in which the private sector shapes the public sector (Waldo, 1951;1974), growth of religious orders and groups relies heavily on their success in catering for the market elements of commercialization and the advertising of their core principles. Commercialization here implies the democratization of religious practices, allowing things such as: female leadership and participation in public space, equality in terms of spiritual mobility and access to leadership. Above all, one finds the umbrella belief in the separation of religion and state. Advertisement means using the current technology to promote one's faith and network of adherents. Radio broadcasting, television and the internet have become the most powerful tools for promoting religious values. Consequently, the most attractive Islamic doctrines for mainstream Americans have been its most liberal, spiritual and least political of the Sufi orders. The Sufi orders' therapeutic nature and their stress on voluntarism, interfaith activities and an orientation that gives less prominence to "worldly success", has been the driving force behind their success as the most attractive avenue of white Americans' conversion to Islam. Obviously, these Sufi elements have some common ground with the American values of democracy, equality and secular society.

Contextual influences on America's muslim community

As discussed previously, the diverse backgrounds of the American muslim community has impacted to its unity of purposes and contributed to its many different outlooks. While the African- American community geared its focus

on mending local issues, addressing racial injustices and adopting Islam in its long struggle for sociopolitical equality, immigrant muslims tend to use Islam as a platform to correct U.S foreign policy in the Middle East. In this pendulum of local versus international agenda, the image of Islam is often tarnished for many Americans. Therefore, two major factors have been exhibiting their influence in shaping the political outlook and the organizational agenda of American muslims. The first one is historical, which is the method by which Islam reached indigenous American muslims, especially members of the African American community. The second is political, as seen in the muslim immigrants' political activism regarding American foreign policy. One should also note that the tragedy of September 11, 2001 has had an impact on both groups. As Islam was used as a justification by the perpetrators, both groups were affected. As a result, muslim umbrella organizations such as ISNA, ICNA, the American Muslim Society, Warith Deen Muhammad's group and many others are now much closer to one another than ever before.

Sufism in America has always been conceptualized outside the American mainstream muslim community. This is primarily due to the fact that immigrant muslims, who developed the major muslim institutions; including mosques, centers and umbrella organizations, are often highly educated and from the upper classes. As such, they have the tendency to deassociate themselves from popular Sufi practices. In some cases, the Salafi and Wahabi's anti Sufi stances have also been adopted in mainstream muslim institutions. The relative success of many Sufi orders such as: the Guru Bawa fellowship, the Turkish originated movement of the Helveti-Jerrahis and Mevlevis and the Naqshabandi have been credited for Sufi groups' ability to transcend the African American muslims' black nationalist legacy and the immigrant muslims' political activism. The French observer, Lisbeth Rocher has argued that the success of Sufism within mainstream America is due to the existence of some American qualities in it (cited in Westerlund, 2004). Sufi tendencies such as: a fondness for public performance, use of media cyber space and dancing are very attractive to Americans who are looking for religious healing. Most American conversions/ reversions to Islam take place in the inner city among African Americans, and most white American conversions to Islam start on university campuses and among Sufi orders. It is noteworthy that during American crises, American Sufis have appeared to be the 'good' muslims, courting the government and renouncing the politicization of Islam by mainstream muslims. Sheikh Hisham Kabbani of the Naqshbandi order appeared with President Clinton on the cover of the muslim magazine and led interfaith activities with the state department.

Continuity and changes within Murid practices

So far, the success story of the Muridiyyah in America

has been partially due to the fact that, the forces that shaped its success in urban Senegal are the same forces that are driving its globalization. The Dayira and the marabout are still the pillars of Muridism in diaspora. Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba's motto, 'hard work and profits brought adherents to the Heaven's gate,' remains at the center of Muridism. Theorists of sociology have developed a theory of immigration and assimilation in America. The first generations of immigrants tend to keep their cultural uniqueness and do not assimilate into the larger society, their cultural characteristics which remain identifiable. This is much like the ingredients in a salad bowl. They are always identifiable, but still contribute to the overall taste of the salad. However, the descendants of immigrants tend to adopt enough of the American culture that they become uniquely identifiable as "Americans". This theory is also applicable to the Murid context, which is still at the very end of the first phase. The phase developed as follows: Murid immigrants began as street vendors who lived on the fringes of the economic strata in the mid 1980s. These vendors occupied Fifth Avenue, Lexington, 42nd and 34th Street, Times Square, Canal Street and Broadway in New York City. By the mid 1990s, they had moved to institutionalizing themselves in the business world. Many had established their own businesses, creating "Little Senegal" in the process and to this late phase, belongs the rise of cultural enclaves within the community. Murid traditional institutions occupy the center of this Little Senegal in New York. It is likely that there will be continuity in this phase, to be followed by changes in the next and in it, institutional development will be obvious.

The two major roles of the marabout and Dayira have continued to shape the diasporic community. In New York, Murids attempt to cope with the challenges of life in the Big Apple, while maintaining the traditions of the Dayira network. At present, they have also been successful in making the Dayira more efficient, functioning in the manner of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). They formed the Senegalese Murid Community of the Khadimul Rasul Society, which represents a continuation of the traditional functions of the Dayira by helping members navigate through the prevailing financial institutions and maintaining a line of communication with urban and rural markets in Senegal, thereby making the transition from national to international markets more efficient. The role of the marabout continues to be that of offering the Talibe (student) security, guidance and blessings. In addition to keeping traditional values, marabouts have been successful in coping with the international dimension of commoditization. In this, one understands the establishment of a publishing house/press for Murid literature in New York by Sheikh Moustapha Mbacke. The Muridiyyah's potential for impacting the religious map of American muslims is attainable. Traditional values of hard work, discipline and volunteerism are valuable commodities in the American landscape. The Murid traditional educational triangle of

Tarbiya, Ta'lim, and Tarqiyyah (training, education and mobility) should be revisited in the diaspora and possibly re-interpreted to address the challenges of living in a consumer society, dysfunctional families and individualism.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Despite the success story of the Murids in the diaspora, there are several straightforward challenges that serve as obstacles to its continued existence in bridging the division between Senegal and the diaspora and reconciling the disputes between local and international dimensions of Islam. With respect to bridging the division between Senegal and the diaspora, the globalization of the Muridiyyah constitutes a challenge to its domestic roots in Senegal. Although, Touba's role as a religious shrine and destination offers an organic relationship between Muridism and Senegal, the increasing globalization of Muridism will result in the further incorporation of it into the broader mainstream sphere of political Islam.

In the incorporation of Muridism into political Islam, there is the potential for traditional conflict between the Sufi and Sunni, or "orthodox" political Islam to reemerge. However, the establishment of Murid schools and modern educational centers throughout the diaspora may serve to mitigate such traditional tensions. Schools such as the Khidmatul Khadim International Sufi School of Peace and Service and the internationalization of Touba University to address new values and produce new horizons, can reconcile both the cultural and political attitudes of mainstream Muslims with those of the Murids in diaspora. It is necessary to put the Muridiyyah's wealth of scholarship and literary production at the crossroads of the international debate on the Islamic discourse. Sheikh Amadou Bamba's treatises on jihad and violence, not only addresses many of these issues, but his life story also embodies the applications of the proper normative teachings of Islam. With the challenge of reconciling the local and international dimensions of Islam, there is also the issue of being an American Muslim and a Murid Talibe. The former is increasingly defined by the political currents in the Middle East comprising Palestine, Iraq, Al-Qaeda and Afghanistan, while the latter is constructed through the domestic and spiritual dimensions of local and individual practices. Thus, the problem of reconciliation will always remain. Moving inward will come at the expense of moving outward. However, moving outward is necessary, if Muridism is to assume an American/global dimension. In assuming such a dimension, it will eventually participate in the conversation on the inherent American problems of race, equality and freedom.

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