
The Senegalese Murid Trade Diaspora and the Making of a Vernacular Cosmopolitanism

Mamadou Diouf

Translated by Steven Rendall

Modernity, globalization, and cosmopolitanism are concepts whose meanings and projects (as manifest in social science literature, as well as in everyday and journalistic communication), largely overlap and coincide at the level of procedures and operational modes. African discussions of these concepts tend to privilege unilateral assimilation of the civilizing mission of colonialism and the modernization necessarily defined by the West. For some time, the latter has been supplemented by Islamic modernity, which is both modern and cosmopolitan. And while Islamic fundamentalist movements have attacked, sometimes in a violent manner, these local and unique forms of Muslim appropriation, postcolonial subjects continue to pursue their ambivalent and ambiguous projects of constructing autonomous or subordinate identities while also struggling to reconcile native temporalities and forms of spirituality with the temporality of the world at large.

There are clearly disappointing outcomes produced by the paradigm that opposes the traditional character of African forms of spirituality to the modernity of world time (*le temps du monde*), whether it celebrates resistance to assimilation or condemns the alienation in which the latter results.¹ The issue that continues to defy analysis is how to elaborate a single explanation of both the process of globalization and the multiplicity of individual temporalities and local

1. “Le temps du monde” refers to the development process as exclusively liberal and Western driven. As a result, for non-Western cultures, it refers to a process of Westernization.

rationalities that are inserted into it. Can we fully account for the overlapping of local systems of mercantile, cultural, and religious values with the capitalist system—which is Western and universal, at least in its claims and practices—by reference to the concepts of hybridization, postcoloniality, and cosmopolitanism? By contrast, there is the crucial question raised by Arjun Appadurai's work: How can something local be produced within a process of globalization so solidly committed to the celebration of cosmopolitanism? Is it a matter of appropriating this process by “annexing” it? or, rather, of exploiting this process to lend new strength to local idioms, so as to impose on the global scene the original version in place of its translation and adaptation?²

The complexity of these situations is the source of Stuart Hall's bafflement when confronted by “the discourse of globalization” and the “discourses of hyper-globalization.” He explains that in these discourses, “*everything* is transformed; *everything* is an outcast in the same way by the global processes. There isn't any local that isn't written through and through by the global. That just doesn't seem to me to be true. It doesn't ring true; I think it's a myth.” Reviewing some of the questions that have been raised regarding globalization, Hall emphasizes “the intensification of the commitment to the local.”³

This essay examines and tests two issues raised by Hall. The first issue is the role of capitalist modernity in the process of globalization, and I focus on the possibility of the emergence of modernities that are not, properly speaking, capitalist⁴ but are, at the most, non-Western versions or modalities of dealing with acquisition of wealth.⁵ The second issue concerns what Hall calls “vernacular modernity,”⁶ which is, as we interpret it here, the totality of the possibilities and powers of making transactions implemented through both the geography of globalization (the world as a space in which people are able to trade) and the discourses and practices of globalization (the actual operations to make ends meet—that is, to accumulate wealth). I am concerned here with the various forms and expressions of incorporation and inscription into the process of globalization on the basis of a significant locality. From this point of view, we must inquire into the modes on the basis of which native modernity relies on, confronts, and/or

2. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); see especially p. 4.

3. Stuart Hall, “A Conversation with Stuart Hall,” *Journal of the International Institute* (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, fall 1999): 15 (Hall's emphasis).

4. Hall, “Conversation,” 15.

5. Jean-François Bayart, ed., *La réinvention du capitalisme* (Paris: Karthala, 1994).

6. Hall, “Conversation,” 15.

compromises with global modernity and with cosmopolitanism, the latter considered an instrument and a modality of the incorporation of the local into the global.

The “locality” in question here is that of the Murid brotherhood, a Senegalese religious group founded in the nineteenth century by a Senegalese marabout named Amadou Bamba Mbacké. The literature on this brotherhood is more extensive than that on other Senegalese brotherhoods and Islamic movements in black Africa.⁷ One can distinguish three generations of scholars of the Murid brotherhood. The first generation was concerned primarily with the theological aspects of the group and with gauging the differences and/or the conformity between Murid practices and “Muslim orthodoxy.”⁸ The second generation attempted to develop an anthropological, political, economic, and sociological analysis of the brotherhood.⁹ The third, most recent, generation of scholars has traced Murid urban migrations in Senegal, the rest of Africa, and the countries of Europe, Asia, and the Americas, their inscription in new geographies, and the invention of specific circuits of accumulation, as well as new images and representations of their community.¹⁰ This privileged place in

7. See Jean Copans, “Jean Copans répond. Les chercheurs de la confrérie et la confrérie des chercheurs: À chacun son Khalife et Marx pour tous?” *Politique Africaine* 1, no. 4 (November 1981): 111–21.

8. This first generation is exemplified by Paul Marty, *Etudes sur l’Islam au Sénégal*, 2 vols. (Paris: Leroux, 1917).

9. Donal Cruise O’Brien, *The Mourid of Senegal: The Political and Economic Organization of an Islamic Brotherhood* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); O’Brien, *Saints and Clerics: Essays in the Organization of a Senegalese Peasant Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); Jean Copans, *Les marabouts de l’arachide* (Paris: Le Sycomore, 1980); J. Copans, J. Couty, J. Roch, and G. Rocheteau, *Maintenance économique et changement sociale au Sénégal*, Vol. 1: *Doctrine et pratique du travail chez les mourides* (Paris: ORSTOM, 1972); Christian Coulon, *Le marabout et le prince: Islam et pouvoir au Sénégal* (Paris: Pédone, 1981); and Momar Coumba Diop, “La confrérie mouride: Organisation économique et mode d’implantation urbaine” (Ph.D. diss., Université de Lyon, 1980).

10. M. C. Diop, “Les affaires mourides à Dakar,” *Politique Africaine* 1, no. 4 (November 1981): 90–100; M. C. Diop, “Fonctions et activités des dahiras mourides urbains (Sénégal),” *Cahiers d’Etudes Africaines* 11 (1982): 81–83; Gérard Salem, “De Dakar à Paris, des diasporas d’artisans et de commerçants: Etude socio-géographique du commerce sénégalais en France” (Ph.D. diss., Paris, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1981); Salem, “De la brousse sénégalaise au Boul’Mich: Le système commercial mouride en France,” *Cahiers d’Etudes Africaines* 21 (1981): 81–93; D. Cruise O’Brien, “Charisma Comes to Town: Mouride Urbanization, 1945–1986,” in D. Cruise O’Brien and C. Coulon, eds., *Charisma and Brotherhood in African Islam* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 135–55; A. Moustapha Diop, “Les associations Murid en France,” *Esprit* no. 102 (June 1985): 197–206; A. M. Diop, “Un aperçu de l’Islam négro-africain en France,” *Migrants Formation*, no. 82 (1990): 77–81; A. M. Diop, “Le mouvement associatif islamique en Ile-de-France,” *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales* 7 (1991): 91–117; Victoria Ebin, “Mourides Traders on

ethnological, anthropological, and historical studies reflects the remarkable Murid presence in the world. Should this presence be interpreted as indicating cosmopolitanism?

In its desire to appropriate possibilities offered by globalization, the Murid locality does not seek to annex the global but, rather, to take advantage of it and to be borne by it in every sense of the word. Consequently, the approach adopted here differs in one respect from Hall's analysis, since I do not share his view that localism "is the only point of intervention against the hegemonic, universalizing thrust of globalization."¹¹ Most members of the Murid brotherhood come from the central part of the Wolof homeland. (The Wolofs are the largest ethnic group in Senegal.) When it first emerged, the brotherhood was favored by a twofold dynamic. On one hand, by destroying the traditional aristocracies, colonial conquest opened opportunities for Muslim religious proselytizing. The Murid Islamic brotherhood established a large clientele by offering a new religious form, a new memory, and new images to peasant communities that had been disrupted and severely disturbed by colonial military campaigns and by the bloody struggles for power in the Wolof homeland that followed raiding and a series of epidemics connected with the Atlantic slave trade. On the other hand, the brotherhood compromised with the colonial order and adopted its hierarchy and structures of command, while at the same time it evaded the colonial policy of assimilation.

Within the colony, Muridism elaborated a formula of development based on growing peanuts (the quintessential product of French colonial agriculture in Senegal) that was strongly rooted in local values. In this way, it was able to support forms of dissidence and autonomy with regard to the French imperial model—a model whose point of reference, the "four communes" of Senegal (Saint-Louis, Dakar, Rufisque, and Gorée) contrasted strongly with Murid

the Road: The Transition of a Senegalese Brotherhood from Agriculture to International Trade," unpublished manuscript, Social Science Research Council, n.d.; Ebin, "Commerçants et missionnaires: Une confrérie sénégalaise à New York," *Hommes et Migrations*, no. 1132 (May 1990); Ebin, "A la recherche de nouveaux poissons: Stratégies commerciales mourides en temps de crise," *Politique Africaine* 45 (1992): 86–99; Ebin, "Making Room versus Creating Space: The Construction of Special Categories by Itinerant Mourid Traders," in *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe*, ed. Barbara D. Metcalf (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); D. M. Carter, *States of Grace: Senegalese in Italy and the New Europe Immigration* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); and Cheikh Gueye, "L'organisation de l'espace dans une ville religieuse: Touba (Sénégal)" (Ph.D. diss., Université de Strasbourg, 1999).

11. Hall, "Conversation," 15.

colonial modernity.¹² Murids thus first incorporated themselves into the colonial agricultural economy, and, at the same time, they preserved, in a displaced manner, Wolof values that had been renegotiated and reinvested in the authoritarian architecture of the colonial administration of management and labor. Today Murids, dressed in their traditional *bubus* (robes) and wearing their tasseled hats, “clutter” the sidewalks of urban centers in the developed world, the commercial centers of international business, financial institutions, and construction sites and factories in the Americas, Europe, and Asia.

The precedent of the four communes helps us understand what is at stake in the debates regarding modernity and cosmopolitanism, ways of being that are too often perceived as incorporation into Western universality and the abandonment of one’s own traditions in order to slip into new configurations uninfluenced by custom and religion. The privileged locus of these arabesques—free compositions if ever there were any—is the city, and the natural actors of these operations are the intellectuals, especially the artists. In his most recent work, *In Search of Africa*, Manthia Diawara addresses the question of African modernity in the context of globalization, adding politicians to the actors just mentioned.¹³ If only indirectly, this essay responds to Diawara’s views regarding African ways of being modern in relation to the bearers of Western modernity who are the object of his book. Diawara adopts the perspectives of assimilation/alienation and mimesis/resistance that were brilliantly dramatized in Cheikh Hamidou Kane’s *L’aventure ambiguë*. This dramatization was already perceptible in C. H. Kane’s reflections as a member of the planning commission for the new independent Senegalese state in the early 1960s.¹⁴ In fact, it seems certain that the

12. In a sense, the first process of globalization took place in Senegal under the four communes system. From the time of the French Revolution through the nineteenth century, inhabitants of these four Senegalese cities were granted French citizenship by French policy of assimilation. Their legal status as French citizens was confirmed by the law passed at the French National Assembly on 29 September 1916, stating that “the natives of the *communes de plein exercice* of Senegal are and remain French citizens as provided by the law of 15 October 1915.” Consequently, they upheld their political rights while also asserting a distinct cultural identity as Muslims who need not abide by French civil code. See Mamadou Diouf, “The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation and the Civility of the Originaires of the Four Communes (Senegal): A Nineteenth-Century Globalization Project,” in *Globalization and Identity: Dialectics of Flows and Closure*, ed. Birgit Meyer and Peter Geschiere (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 71–96.

13. Manthia Daiwara, *In Search of Africa* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

14. Before publishing his book, C. H. Kane presented this tension in his talk at a colloquium organized by the review *Esprit* in October 1961: “A culture of orality cannot be taken serious in a world in which time and distance have ceased to be obstacles to communication. The orality of our cultures limits their range of diffusion, and thus their competitive power; as a result, we are put in a position of inferiority in our relationships with the rest of the world. This also constitutes a serious handicap in

temporalities mentioned—namely, the nationalist period of decolonization and the beginning of the construction of African nation-states—and the “libraries” selected (to adopt V. Y. Mudimbe’s terms) are not the only phases or the only bodies of knowledge and practices that Africans are using to incorporate themselves into the global process.¹⁵

This essay contends that the context has changed. At the heart of globalization, new actors, bearing a new memory that differs from that of Western modernity, are putting together their own economic scenario, buttressed by constantly remodeled traditions. These traditions anticipate a future saturated with projects of an indisputable modernity. This is the case for the Murid community in Senegal, all through its history.

The Making of a Brotherhood

The construction of the Murid community has passed through three phases, each corresponding to specific modes of inscription in space, relations with the outside world, and formulas of financial accumulation and economic production. The first phase is that of the beginning and formulation of the Murid *tariqa* (way) at the end of the nineteenth century. France had just completed the conquest of Senegambia and found peanuts to be a product suitable for agricultural exploitation and for French industry’s need for vegetable oils. Thus the peanut was adopted as the chief product for developing the colony of Senegal, and peanut monoculture was even continued throughout the first three decades of the post-colonial period. After having almost entirely destroyed the hegemony of the traditional leading classes, French colonialism opened up a space for Muslim religious proselytizing. However, the French continued to mistrust the marabouts, who were suspected of wanting to wage a holy war. Nonetheless, despite the opposition and hostility of the French colonial administration to the marabout Amadou Bamba, the formation of the Murid brotherhood relied heavily on peanut growing, at which it was phenomenally successful in the first half of the twentieth century. Murids became the largest producers of peanuts in their region, the peanut-growing basin. By joining in colonial production, Murids also participated

coming to terms with the world at large. Our inner feeling about our cultures will not survive our entry into the cycle of technological progress; *we will be obliged to put our soul in some secure place before donning the mechanic’s blue overalls.*” C. H. Kane, “Comme si nous nous étions donnés rendez-vous,” *Unité Africaine* 4 (1961) (emphasis added).

15. V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

in the distribution of manufactured products in the rural areas. They thus carved out, in a contradictory way, a space for themselves within the colonial system and its economy.

From the start, Muridism attracted people from every level of society, but particularly freed slaves and people belonging to castes such as jewelers, cobblers, itinerant minstrels, coopers, and weavers.¹⁶ As it developed, Muridism maintained a constant tension—on the brink of rupture—between Muslim universalism and the local version of Islam whose images and grammar it expressed. Thus in African, European, American, and Asian commercial centers, the Murids participated in Islam's cosmopolitanism on the world stage. Rather than adopting the technology or operational procedures of the West, Murids made a conscious effort to incorporate their unique temporality and rationality into world time by using their own vocabulary, grammar, and worldview to understand the world and operate within it. Adopting Jean Copans's perspective, we see that it was precisely in the initial period that Islam enabled the Murids to incorporate colonial modernity by engaging in peanut growing, thereby ensuring the success of the peanut crop at the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁷ The peanut played a crucial role in defining the colonial governance of the Wolof region and the whole of the colony of Senegal: it ensured peaceful relations between the colonial administration and the marabouts, and it sketched out a geography of maraboutic villages and *dahras*—Koranic schools that combine teaching with agricultural work and whose center is the village and the sanctuary in Touba.¹⁸ Furthermore, as Vincent Monteil argues, the adoption of the universalist religion of Islam by incorporating “traditional ideologies,” as well as some key aspects of the colonial project, makes the Murid Islam a specifically “black Islam.”¹⁹

Incorporation into colonial modernity was accompanied by a strengthening of the Murid community's organization that occurred only after conflicts over succession following the death of its founder in 1927.²⁰ To guarantee its discipline

16. See Martin Klein, “The Muslim Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Senegambia,” in *Western African History*, ed. Daniel F. McCall, Norman R. Bennett, and Jeffrey Butler (New York: Praeger, 1969).

17. Copans, “Jean Copans répond.”

18. Copans, “Jean Copans répond.” Dahras are rural schools in which children live in the marabout's compound (far from their parents), learn the Koran, and cultivate the marabout's field. As adults, they are released and settle nearby the marabout or migrate—either way, they remain disciples.

19. Vincent Monteil, “Une confrérie musulmane: Les Mourides du Sénégal,” *Archives de Sociologie des Religions* 14 (1962): 77–101.

20. See Christopher Harrison, *France and Islam in West Africa, 1860–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

and cohesion, the group appropriated the colonial administration's structures and logic of command, which required total submission to an unchallengeable authority. The Murid hierarchical system, with the caliph general at its head, adopted the same rules of the *talib*'s (disciple's) absolute submission to his marabout. The native translation of the logic of command and obedience is neatly summed up by a formula attributed to the founder of the brotherhood: "The talib must be like a corpse in the hands of the mortician." A categorical imperative, prescription (*ndigel*) is thus inscribed at the heart of the relation between marabout and talib. The brotherhood's modes of administration and governance, combined with the formulas for mobilizing labor, particularly in the dahras, gave it a privileged place in the colonial apparatus. It established itself as the chief source of peanut production, and its leaders became the main intermediaries between the colonial administration and the Wolof peasants, who it succeeded in incorporating into the brotherhood. Paradoxically, this position enabled the community to maintain its ideological autonomy and avoid colonial assimilation—particularly assimilation in terms of Islamic practices. The Murid's Islam was and is less universalist and scriptural than the Islam of the inhabitants of the four communes. For the rural Murid disciples, reading the holy words is less important than working for the marabout. This contrasts with residents of the four communes for whom the confrontation with the French over the civil code resulted in their valuation of literacy in Arabic.²¹ The economic and financial accumulation produced by growing and commercializing peanuts became the instrument that made it possible to constitute "Murid objects." In this register, as in that of Islam, Muridism established itself in its uniqueness and provided itself with the signs of an identity that allowed it to maintain its distance from other identities, signs, and temporalities. In this way, it organized a unique cosmopolitanism consisting in participation but not assimilation, thus organizing the local not only to strengthen its position but also to establish the rules governing dialogue with the universal.

The material power gradually acquired by the brotherhood was to open more ample opportunities for producing a unique trajectory whose dominant figure is Cheikh Amadou Bamba. The latter's saga is the text that foreshadows the brotherhood's future power, and particularly its economic success.

Amadou Bamba, the founder of the Murid brotherhood, was the chief victim of anti-Muslim and anti-marabout colonial policies. Because of the influence acquired by his message and the strong attraction he exercised on the peasant

21. See Diouf, "The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation."

masses that joined his movement, he was considered a marabout who might raise troops for a holy war. He was arrested by the French colonial authorities and deported to the Mayombé region of Gabon from 1895 to 1902 and to Mauritania from 1907 to 1912, before returning to Diourbel, where he lived under surveillance until his death in 1927. He was buried in Touba, the village he founded and where he lived only from 1887 to 1895. His burial there led to the founding of the Touba sanctuary, “a city on the hill.” Concerning the foundation of the village, Cheikh Abdoulaye Dièye writes:

Tradition reports that one day in 1888, as the Prophet’s servant (RA)²² was leaving Darou Salam, he felt himself impelled by a divine force that only saints who have attained the final stage of devotion can feel. It was then that the signs that were to guide him to the location of this secret place were revealed to him! He was led to the light, then flames appeared over a bush in this desert country inhabited by cactuses and wild beasts. Cheikh Amadou Bamba (RA) was transported under a tree called *Mbeep*: he trod for the first time the sanctified earth on which Touba was to be born.²³

The holy character of the place was increased by the construction of the Touba mosque, which contains the founder’s mausoleum. Begun in 1931, construction of the mosque was interrupted for financial and managerial reasons, and it did not begin again until 1945. The mosque was completed in 1963 and inaugurated by the caliph general and the president of the Republic of Senegal, Léopold Sédar Senghor. At the same time, the project of restructuring the village was launched. According to Cheikh Gueye, this marked

the starting point for the operation that produced the current arrangement of the great mosque’s esplanade and the neighborhoods . . . each one has an opening on the mosque. . . . Serigne Cheikh and his technical team, aided by the *baye fall*,²⁴ laid out straight streets 20 to 25 meters wide leading to the mosque, as well as perpendicular streets 15 meters wide that defined the islands of construction. Reconstruction began on the great central *pentch* [esplanade]; each concession facing the mosque was required to respect a distance of 120 meters from the latter, in order to facilitate the organization of large demonstrations and to enlarge the great mosque’s esplanade, which is considered sacred. It was also decided to

22. “RA” is a prayer meaning “peace and reward upon him” that Muslims use when referring to the prophet and some leading Islamic figures.

23. Cheikh Abdoulaye Dièye, *Touba: Signes et symboles* (Paris: Editions Deggel, 1997), 48.

24. This is a branch of the Murid brotherhood that emphasizes labor rather than prayer.

confirm the granting of concessions around the mosque to Cheikh A. Bamba's surviving sons.²⁵

The inauguration of the mosque did not mark the end of its construction—as a Murid sign and symbol its construction is an ongoing project. Thus Touba became the place where the Murid memory and *imaginaire* were elaborated, the place where their economic, social, architectural, and cultural successes were inscribed. Occupying the center of this space, the mosque is also at the center of the Murid community's *imaginaire* and symbolism. It is the point of reference, the monument in which the identity of the brotherhood is concentrated. It produced both texts and images that were organized in the second phase of Muridism's development in order to make sense of the journeys of a community that had become an extensive commercial diaspora. The absolute symbols of this production are the minaret of the mosque, known as *Lamp Fall*,²⁶ and the cemetery where every Murid disciple wants to be buried. Places carried along to signify identity and to actualize memory, they complete the circular trajectory of the Murid disciple's life.

This center was the starting point for various efforts to colonize new land for growing peanuts and, in the later phases of Murid development, for activities related to recycling urban waste and investing in the informal and commercial sectors in the world's business centers. Thus Touba was gradually invested, not only with the quality of the Murid sacred city but also with the attributes of a significant place reevaluated by a postcolonial liturgy that emphasizes resistance, autonomy, and the creative cultural and economic capacities of a society freeing itself from the grip of colonialism and from the bearers of imperial modernity.

In perfect harmony with the construction of the brotherhood's material base

25. Gueye, "Les marabouts urbanisants," unpublished manuscript, n.d., 6–8. Gueye (12, n. 34) explains that pentch "designates the central square of a locality where councils and markets are held. In Touba, the different pentch, where mosques and mausoleums have been built, constitute sacred spaces and are the most important structural elements of the town."

26. *Lamp* means "light," and *Fall* is a patronym; *Lamp Fall* is the sobriquet given to Cheikh Ibra Fall, one of Amadou Bamba's first disciples. He preferred to devote himself to his master's service more than to prayer and observation of Islamic rules from which he and his disciples were exempted by the marabout. He symbolizes the Murid conception of the equivalence of labor and prayer. Eric Ross offers a rather convincing interpretation of the meaning of the minaret's nickname: "Rising eighty-seven meters above Touba is the mosque's central minaret, known popularly as Lamp Fall, after Cheikh Ibra Fall, Ahmadou Bamba's most fiercely devoted mûrid. Lamp Fall is one of the tallest structures in the country, its height far in excess of the needs for call to prayer, and there can be no doubt that its main function is representational. It is a visible concrete manifestation of the Tree of Paradise, and it figures prominently in popular Mouride iconography: on tombstones, on pamphlets and calendars, and on the sides of buses." "Touba, A Spiritual Metropolis in the Modern World," *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Etudes Africaines* 29 (1995): 227.

through peanut growing and commerce in manufactured products, we witness Amadou Bamba's "Wolofization" of Islam. After being initiated into the ways of *Qaddiryya* and *Tijaanyya* that were present in West Africa, Amadou Bamba developed his own mystical way "by abandoning all ways and all masters. He went beyond them toward the fundamental light, the divine sun, and achieved his pact with Muhammad (SAWS), the master of masters."²⁷ The properly native and black character of Amadou Bamba's way is strongly affirmed by Cheikh Abdoulaye Dièye, who writes: "The Cheikh thus inaugurates a new era in the history of Islam and the black man. In fact, the black peoples of Senegal were accustomed to go to Mauritania in search of spiritual masters. But Cheikh Bamba (RA) inverted the roles by becoming the first black spiritual guide followed on a large scale by people of the white race, thus showing that all men come from the same soul, and transcend themselves only through their reverential fear of their creator."²⁸ During the period of upheavals and social crises following the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade (1815) and slavery (from 1848 on), this fear was accompanied by a major ethnic and social reorganization. It was probably during this turbulent period that the Wolof ethnic group, which had early developed an ability to integrate and assimilate members of other ethnic groups, reinforced this cosmopolitan tendency. To a certain extent, by its more democratic character Muridism gave greater scope to these operations, exploiting the twofold cosmopolitanism of Islam and the Wolofs.

The Murid's unique cosmopolitanism is particularly evident in the second phase of the community's development, when the first adventurous Murid merchants established themselves in the colonial ports of call. In fact, long before large numbers of Murids moved to the cities in the 1970s, and contrary to their common image as an exclusively rural brotherhood, some Murid merchants were already involved in peanut trading in cities such as Rufisque and Kaolack. In addition, confronted by the cosmopolitanism of the ports of call, particularly in the four communes, they had already produced forms of identification by drawing on idioms borrowed from the rural repertoire of the brotherhood and combining them with urban trading procedures to make sense of urban situations. By re-creating in the city Murid religious associations (*dahiras*),²⁹ they established the solid armature of a genuine "ritual community."³⁰ The rule of the talib's

27. "SAWS" has the same meaning as "RA" (see n. 22). Dièye, *Touba: Signes et symboles*, 17–18.

28. Dièye, *Touba: Signes et symboles*, 30–31.

29. See Diop, "Les affaires mourides à Dakar," 79–91.

30. See Abner Cohen, *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 141.

submission to the marabout and the restrictive character of the religious rules kept the Murid community on the margins of urban civility. In the city, Murids appropriated glass painting, the religious lithography introduced by the Lebanese, to narrate their own stories, alongside and/or against this colonial civility.³¹ They thus constituted another library that does not draw on either the colonial imagination or that of natives of the four communes.

Glass painting usually recounts the prophetic saga and the battles of Islam when the prophet Mohammed was constructing the Muslim empire. Murids turned it to another purpose, using it to tell the saga of Amadou Bamba and emphasize the travails imposed on him by the colonial administration. At the same time, these repressive acts produced his holiness and his election, the stages of his deportation, and the sanctification of the journey as the perfect way of realizing oneself. In this way, the Murid merchant created a Murid enclave within the city that grounded the transitory character of his presence there. Mistreatment by the colonial administration and the miracles it produced became the founding texts of a community that defined itself and distinguished itself in a movement that requires a process of congregation taking the forms of exclusivity and closure: This is a black history and mythology in the making.³² By hanging such pictures in their houses and shops in the markets and commercial streets, Murid merchants displayed in urban centers the marks of their appurtenance, images that referred to texts brought back from their travels and from Touba. And by securing this communitarian autonomy in the city, they guaranteed the groups' discipline under the vigilant supervision of their respective marabouts and of the caliph general.

To a large extent, the desire for an autonomous and distinctive community explains the fact—which we will return to at the end of this essay—that Murid intellectuals on one hand and commercial travelers and laborers on the other differ in their interpretation of the Murid presence in the world. This desire, interpreted as native, legitimizes the preeminence of the Baol region, the Murid homeland, at the expense of Senegal as a nation-state. The sanctification of the region of origin that confers on Murids incomparable abilities in labor and commerce is constituted precisely as the place from which the conquest of the world

31. Glass painting (sometimes called “reverse-glass painting”) is painting done directly on the inside of glass but to be viewed from the outside. Murid glass painting depicts life stories of the founder and his most important disciples.

32. See M. Stroobel, “La peinture sous verre du Sénégal: Etude anthropologique” (Ph.D. diss., Université de Strasbourg, 1982), and M. Diouf, “Islam: Peinture sous verre et idéologie populaire,” in *Art pictural zaïrois*, ed. B. Jewsiewicki (Quebec: Editions du Septentrion, 1992), 29–40.

is to be achieved, at the same time as it ensures the salvation of Senegal as a whole in the near future. In this respect, the development of the nation can be realized only by adopting modes of economic, social, and political organization that are firmly rooted in Muridism. It is supposed to come to pass in a future whose forms are inscribed in the founder's prophecy.³³

Two major events brought to an end these first two phases, during which the Murid Muslim community was essentially rural. The first of these relates to the death in 1968 of the second caliph general, El Hadj Falilou Mbacké. His successor, Abdou Lahat Mbacké, distanced himself from the government and sided with the peasants from whom the Senegalese government was demanding, sometimes by violent means, the repayment of debts owed to public institutions that financed agricultural activities. The third phase of Murid development began with the cycle of drought during the 1970s, which, combined with debt and impoverished soils, launched a wave of peasant movement to Senegalese cities. This subsequently inaugurated a second episode of Murid emigration out of Senegal to the great global metropolises (second, that is, to the emigration of Murid merchants to colonial ports). In this phase, the mobility organized by travel for business or labor established itself as an expressive element of the imaginaire of travel and of economic success as it was constituted in the interpretation of the founder's deportations.

“Like the sand, we are blown everywhere”: The Geography of Dispersion

The Murids' movement toward the cities took place in three successive waves.³⁴ The first occurred during the period between the two world wars. The second, more extensive in scope, began at the end of the Second World War and created the first neighborhoods that called themselves by the names Touba, Colobane, and Gouye Mouride.³⁵ The third wave followed the worsening of the drought in

33. Vis-à-vis the construction of the Senegalese nation-state, it should be noted that, on one hand, Murids dismiss the nation-state as a political and cultural unit irrelevant to their economic project, for their success is rooted in the brotherhood. On the other hand, Murids believe that their economic success makes them the one group able to revitalize the nation-state by injecting their ideology and practice through a Murid-inspired government.

34. The first part of the heading for this section (with emphasis added) is borrowed from an interview conducted by Ebin with a Murid merchant in New York: “Our homeland [in Western Senegal] is built on sand, and like the sand, we are blown everywhere. . . . Nowadays, you can go to the ends of the earth and see a Mouride wearing a wool cap with a pom-pom selling something to somebody.” Ebin, “Making Room versus Creating Space,” 93.

35. The first two names are names of the villages of Murid dignitaries, and the third means simply the “Murids' Baobab.” They are found in all the Senegalese cities where Murids live.

the 1970s. It went beyond the boundaries of Senegal to include Africa, Europe, the Americas, and, more recently, Asia and Australia.

We have already indicated that when a Murid left his homeland his first stop was usually a Senegalese city. He became involved in either commerce or informal economic activities. In every case, he kept busy and tried to build up a nest egg to establish himself or to be able to seek his fortune outside Senegal. The emblem of success was the acquisition of a tin trunk in the Sandaga market, the economic counterpart of the religious sanctuary in Touba. The extraordinary growth of the market seems to have been strongly stimulated by the activities of Murid migrants. Initially a market in foodstuffs and textiles, Sandaga has become a center for the sale of electronic devices coming from Asia (Hong Kong), the Middle East (Djedda), and America (New York).³⁶

The transformation of the Sandaga market and the intensification of commercial activities were promoted by the Senegalese government's abandonment in 1986 of the policy of protecting products manufactured in Senegal. By authorizing the emergence of activities of recycling and recuperation, this decision led to the rapid development of two extremely dynamic sectors, the import-export sector and the service sector.³⁷ Murids quickly seized a monopoly on these activities and made them part of their identity in Senegalese urban society. The new situation favoring informal activities benefited from the gradual suppression of quotas and monopolies on certain products, such as rice, in the 1990s. In fact, the radical reorientation of economic policies from public decision-making to the laws of the market, opened, in a time of crisis, an extraordinary opportunity for Murids to invent new traditions and a new mission. As D. M. Carter suggests, "the brotherhoods have presented themselves as one of the features of a post-modern world in the streets of New York, Paris, Rome and Tokyo, as traders and in the small businesses of these and other centers as workers and trade persons,"³⁸ thus becoming active and inventive participants in economic globalization.

From Senegalese cities and sometimes directly from their villages, Murids headed for African, European, American, and Asian cities. They wove an immense network with two poles, the spiritual (Touba) and the economic (Sandaga). During the 1970s, these Senegalese poles were complemented by network centers set up in France—at Strasbourg in the east, in contact with Germany and the wealthiest European tourists; at Marseilles in the south, near the French and Ital-

36. Ebin, "A la recherche de nouveaux poissons," 86.

37. Ebin, "A la recherche de nouveaux poissons," 86; Diop, "Les affaires mourides à Dakar:"

38. Carter, *States of Grace*, 47.

ian beaches crowded during the summer; and at Paris, at every season.³⁹ In Strasbourg, they were involved in violent polemics and were the object of a number of attacks. And as a merchant interviewed by Gérard Salem bitterly points out, “they speak German, too.”⁴⁰ This remark not only indicates the Murids’ linguistic adaptation but also the position they have acquired in the Strasbourg tourist sector. They compete aggressively with Strasbourg merchants whose most lucrative activity is selling plastic or plaster storks to tourists, especially German tourists, during the summer season. Using their global connections, the Murids are able to obtain these same products in the Chinese neighborhoods of New York at prices their Strasbourg competitors cannot match.⁴¹

During the 1980s, these networks grew larger as Murids established communities in Belgium, consolidated their positions in New York, and established themselves in Italy, from north to south.⁴² Carter describes the contours of the Murid community in Turin: “The world of Mouridism in immigration is vast and extends from the holy city of Touba in Senegal to the major cities of Africa, Europe, the United States, Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Japan, Canada, and Australia: New York, Atlanta, Los Angeles, Turin, Livorno, Milan, Rome, Paris, Toulon, Lyon, Hong Kong, Berlin, London, Yaounde, and Madrid.”⁴³ Victoria Ebin sketches edifying portraits of Murids who frequent this terrain, such as the five Fall brothers, based in Sandaga. They began as peddlers and salesmen in the streets of Dakar and now hold a monopoly on “cosmetic products from the United Kingdom and the United States and shoes from Taiwan”; with Korean partners, they have built a factory in Dakar for producing hairpieces.⁴⁴ The Fall brothers’ business trips connect cities as different as New York, Djedda, and Dubai for jewels; New York, Rome, and Milan, for cosmetics; Djedda for perfumes and television sets; and Hong Kong for radios and costume jewelry.⁴⁵ In each city they have one correspondent and many salesmen from the Murid community who have established privileged relations with local intermediaries.⁴⁶ The center of the Fall brothers’ vast web is their store in Sandaga. According to Ebin: “Known by the nickname of ‘the United Nations,’ it is one of the most

39. Salem, “De Dakar à Paris.”

40. Salem, “De Dakar à Paris,” 37.

41. Salem, “De Dakar à Paris,” 42.

42. On the Murids in New York, see Ebin, “Making Room versus Creating Space.”

43. Carter, *States of Grace*, 73.

44. The quotation comes from Ebin, “A la recherche de nouveaux poissons,” 87–88.

45. Ebin, “A la recherche de nouveaux poissons,” 88.

46. Ebin (“A la recherche de nouveaux poissons,” 95) gives the example of a Pakistani-American in New York who has become the chief supplier of electronic products for the Sandaga market.

cosmopolitan places in the city. Murid merchants, who are all connected in some way with the Falls, flock there from all over the world. They come to buy new products and to deliver others for sale. They listen to news about other people, exchange information, and discuss the possibility of obtaining a visa.”⁴⁷

The efficacy of the Murids’ commercial networks and their work can be attributed to several factors. The first factor relates to the structures and ideology of the brotherhood, in particular to the talib’s total submission to the marabout, which has become the strongest pillar of a brotherhood that controls a vast, dynamic network of disciples and economic activities. The second factor is the establishment of connections between the distribution points in Dakar and the Murid emigrant communities living in the international centers of wholesale commerce.⁴⁸ The third factor is participation in complex circuits of buying and selling that allow Paris or Strasbourg street merchants to sell merchandise bought in New York’s Chinese neighborhoods or in Hong Kong, and merchants in Brussels to sell copper articles from Morocco to the city’s Muslims.⁴⁹

The intensity of the connections that give material form to the Murid diaspora in the world draws simultaneously on family relationships, appurtenance to the same village, the difficulty of the talibs’ lives in village dahras, and allegiance to the same marabout. Inside and outside Senegal, Murids maintain the ritual community as soon as they take up residence in a new locale. They reproduce Touba by renaming the neighborhoods and cities where they live and work: Touba Sandaga and Touba Ouakam in Senegal, but also Touba in Turin. Precisely because of their logics of accumulation and their forms of organization, Murids occupy special neighborhoods in the cities where they are present in large numbers. Their overriding concern is to preserve their identity and the “rites of social exclusiveness”⁵⁰ that are displayed and experienced in ideological, symbolic, and mythical intensification—that is, the affirmation of loyalties, the conscription of a local space at the heart of the megalopolis, the daily celebration of religiously inspired ritual ceremonies such as the reading of the *xasaiids* (the founder’s poems), and the collective participation in meals and leisure activities.

The communitarian reflexes thus described are strengthened by the fact that the Murids of the diaspora live, for example, in crowded apartments in dangerous neighborhoods of Marseilles and New York. Murids are often cloistered in their neighborhoods, and they are marginalized or marginalize themselves because of

47. Ebin, “A la recherche de nouveaux poissons,” 89.

48. Ebin, “A la recherche de nouveaux poissons,” 87.

49. Ebin, “A la recherche de nouveaux poissons,” 87.

50. Cohen, *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa*, 156.

the incredible number of people packed into their apartments. Thus the logic of ideological enclosure is accompanied by a territorial enclosure. In a territory thus delimited, Murid diasporic culture is homogenized in a way that excludes foreign values by dramatizing and acting out Murid rituals in a systematic and exclusive manner. And by carrying out these daily acts, the diasporic culture produces intense feelings of solidarity, affection, cooperation, and mutual support. The community imposes on itself norms, values, and regimentation that outline the indisputable contours of the group's discipline. This discipline grounds the organization of financial relationships among members of the community and the establishment of a trust that is never broken. Social and ritual interaction—the recourse to mystical practices ensuring wealth, health, and success—circumscribe rules of economic exchange that conceal the community from its environment, except in business relationships.

It is in this wandering life full of privations that the *modu-modu* (as the non-Western-educated group of Murid migrants are nicknamed) is constructed.⁵¹ He is an Italian, a New Yorker, a Marseillais, a Spaniard. He is constantly in movement. His stopover points are hotel rooms or overcrowded apartments in the main cities of the world where merchandise is piled up. He is always just stopping off, always in transit, thus erasing the notion of a fixed residence.⁵² But a center nonetheless remains: Touba—the place of spiritual and economic investment and the desired last resting place for eternity.⁵³ Touba is the sanctuary to which everyone must annually make a pilgrimage on the occasion of the *magal*, a two-day commemoration marking the return of Amadou Bamba from his exile in Gabon. Attracting more than a million believers in recent years, the *magal* repeats the community's memory and actualizes its mission, rejecting permanent establishment elsewhere as improbable. (And in so doing recalling the importance, noted earlier, of mobility as an expressive element of the Murid imaginaire.)

The *modu-modu*'s mobility is solely geographical. He travels with his objects—his *bubu* cut from dark, heavy fabric; his tasseled hat; his big plastic sacks with

51. *Modu-modu* refers to Mamadou Moustapha Mbacké, the oldest son of the founder Amadou Bamba, who became the first caliph (1927–1945). *Modu* is a common nickname for Mamadou.

52. As this essay is a discussion of the construction and experiences of Murid males, the use of the pronoun “he” is deliberate.

53. Ross (“Touba, A Spiritual Metropolis,” 227) describes this desire: “The cemetery is the next most important element of the city’s spiritual topography, and its location in the very heart of the sanctuary confirms its elevated status in Mouride cosmology. It is the prevailing view among the Mourides that burial in the earthly Touba virtually guarantees access to the heavenly one. The cemetery is the Gate to Paradise; physical burial amounts to passage through the Gate.”

white stripes; his enormous trunks and suitcases. And increasingly, among young people who wear jeans and sweaters to work, there is the necklace on which hangs a photo medallion of the marabout. The photo indicates that after adopting (during the colonial period) the glass painting inspired by Shiite lithography, the Murids now borrow some of their signs from the new technologies of information and communication. They display their memory with these photo medallions, as well as with posters depicting marabouts and the Touba mosque and decals of extracts from the founder's poems. As much by their attire as by their mobilization of Touba, its symbols, and its saints, and by adding the name of the holy city to that of the place where they reside, Murids escape the Westernized attire of the bearers of colonial and postcolonial modernity, as well as that of the Islamic-Arabic fashion that accompanies the trajectory of Islam as a modern, global religion.⁵⁴

Mobility supports the Murid economic project that is realized in commercial relationships. Modu-modu is a synonym for merchant, even if, in all the cities where they are found, some Murids are also salaried workers (as in Turin), or jewelry makers or tailors (as in several African cities), or illegal street vendors or taxi drivers (not to mention intellectuals, discussed later in this essay, who are not considered "modu-modu"). Territorial mobility is combined with a considerable professional mobility.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, self-identification with the community through commerce is now the central element in the new Murid trajectory. And in this domain Murids are showing an extraordinary flexibility, not only in the registers of commercial practices, choice of products, definitions of markets, and modes of financing but also with regard to profit margins. They have thus appropriated the most important reflex of contemporary liberal cosmopolitanism, taking advantage of economic opportunity: sell whatever is in demand at a lower price, always respond to demand, and acquire captive markets. Through their networks and modes of operation, and by basing themselves solidly on their ritual community, with its structures, liturgy, texts, and images, in their own way they impose an order on the chaos of the market. They are globalizing themselves.

The objects and liturgies they produce in everyday life and their dramatizations and acts of ritual community are not forged with a view to resisting the movement of globalization. These objects and liturgies are the chief idioms

54. Bernal, "Islam, Transnational Culture, and Modernity in Rural Sudan," 132.

55. See, for example, the account of the life of Amadou Dieng collected and analyzed by Ebin, "Making Room versus Creating Space," 97.

Murids use to compete in the world market. Their recourse to a native grammar probably explains their ability to refuse to appropriate or assimilate, in the course of their many journeys, the language and habits of modernity as conceived by the West and world Islam. Is this because the rhythm of the brotherhood, its messages and texts, its (fictive or real) point of departure and return (after the accumulation of capital or at the time of death) are an insurmountable barrier to the assimilation of transnational Islamic or Western culture? Or is it because Touba is always there to sift, select, and propose a way of interpreting events in the world? Murid grammar does not limit itself to these operations alone. It makes openings for itself in the transnational culture, slips into them, and negotiates their share, in accord with secret rules and commercial practices. But for all that it does not subvert the world economic system. It allows itself to be borne by the system, impressing new points of inflection on it by demanding that it deal with new actors, new operations, and unprecedented and flexible forms of accumulation.

The triumph of the modu-modu as representative of the Murid community took place in the second half of the 1980s at the expense of another group much more active in the 1970s, the Murid intellectuals—students and Senegalese professionals living in Western countries, particularly in France. While there has never been any direct confrontation between the two groups, a competition between them is at the heart of tensions and conflicts that afflict the Murid brotherhood. The stakes are the management and supervision of Touba, on one hand, and questions of how to interpret, dramatize, and act out the Murid heritage and the founder's message, on the other.

“We are like birds, who think of home when flying high above the earth”

Both the formation of the ritual community in a group in constant movement and the emergence of the modu-modu as exclusive identity have not only required a powerful standardization of practices, rites, and modes of socialization but have also provided a foundation for submission to strong moral obligations.⁵⁶ As Abner Cohen has observed with regard to the Hausa living in the Yoruba homeland, the ritual community presents itself as “the institution of stability-in-mobility.”⁵⁷

56. The heading for this section is borrowed from an interview conducted and discussed by Ebin, “Making Room versus Creating Space,” 98.

57. Cohen, *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa*, 159.

The logic governing Murid mobility requires the constant presence of the Touba sanctuary, along with the places constituting Murid identity: the mosque, the cemetery, and its extensions, on one hand, and the Sandaga and Okass markets, on the other.⁵⁸ The acts of re-creation implied by the existence of a sanctuary elicit new traditions and references. The construction of Murid identification was not easy to achieve, because of tensions between different groups within the brotherhood and between the brotherhood and other actors in Senegalese political, religious, and economic life. Internally, the intellectuals and the *modu-modu* fought for control of the brotherhood, especially of its outward signs and modes of inscription in the world.

The image of Touba as absolute reference point and sanctuary seems to have accompanied the Murid diaspora and bound it firmly to Baol, the Murid homeland. These new procedures, whether imaginary or real, are strongly connected with the growth of Murid migration. There is an undeniable concomitance between the construction of the point of reference and mobility, as if to create a fixed site, a single and unique residence. This double process of reference to construction and migration is manifested in three domains: the spectacular development of the city, the creation of Murid objects, and financial investment in Touba as symbolized in the construction of the Touba city library.

The first domain, the city's development, has been studied from a geographical point of view by Eric Ross and Cheikh Gueye. In 1913, Touba was a village of slightly more than 500 inhabitants;⁵⁹ by 1976 its population had grown to 29,634; in 1988 it was 138,896; in 2000 it is slightly more than 300,000, making it the second largest city in Senegal, after Dakar.⁶⁰ Touba is expected to have a population of about 500,000 in the course of the first decade of the twenty-first century. The Murids' holy city continues to be dynamic, and its strong attraction, which began with the first phase of the construction of the mosque, persisted and even accelerated under the caliphate of Abdou Lahat Mbacké (1968–1989). Given the sobriquet of “the builder,” Abdou Lahat enlarged the mosque, began the creation of huge subdivisions for new construction, and called Murids to come and live in

58. According to Ross (“Touba, A Spiritual Metropolis,” 240), “Okass acquired national renown as a center for contraband merchandise—acting as a wholesale purveyor for markets in Senegal other cities. . . . Today Okass remains Touba’s economic heart. Despite the fact that the city’s thoroughfares converge on the Mosque, its public transit network (minibuses, buggies, and carts) converges on Okass. The market occupies several city blocks.” On the development and management of this market, see Diop, “Les affaires mourides à Dakar,” 91–93.

59. Marty, *Etudes sur l’Islam au Sénégal*, cited by Ross, “Touba, A Spiritual Metropolis,” 252.

60. Gueye, “Les marabouts urbanisants,” 1. Gueye estimates the average annual rate of Touba’s demographic growth between 1976 and 1995 to be 13 percent.

the holy city. With the help of financial success, his call was heard, as the increasing population figures show. In 1991, the current caliph adhered to the same course by creating a new, large-scale subdivision with 100,000 lots.

The second domain of construction and migration concerns the creation of Murid objects. The background to these objects is the construction of a memory whose armatures are the exiles and travails of Amadou Bamba, as well as the triumph displayed in the city of Touba and in the symbolism of the mosque and its minaret. The miracles that accompanied the exiles, in particular the exile in Gabon and the sojourn in Mayombé, constitute the library on which Murids draw in order to make sense of their project of accumulation, the difficulties involved in their travel through the world, and their promised success. The miracles are the motor and the signs of the reconstruction of Touba wherever disciples reside. The attire, the trunks, and the big plastic bags identify a trajectory that reproduces—like the posters of the mosque and marabouts in hotel rooms and apartments—a history, an ambition, and a philosophy of work and community that Murids consider to be unique.

The final domain, which gives meaning to the first two, is the creation of the Touba city library. It is the work of the third caliph of the Murids, Abdou Lahat, “who undertook, following the example of Uthman (RA), to collect all the writings of Cheikh Amadou Bamba (RA) in order to make them available to the public. Then, in order to safeguard the Cheikh’s works, he established a press and built the rich and sumptuous library in Touba.”⁶¹ The main consequences of these achievements were the extraordinary diffusion of the founder’s *xasaïds* and easier access to his thought, in the form of pamphlets and books. Accompanying the Murid merchant in his travels through the world, these texts recount the Murid saga and express its principles, its norms, and its discipline. They have become the backbone of the ritual community, and they speak to the Murid’s everyday experience. Texts adapted to mobility, they continue to bind the disciple even more strongly to a shared history—that of the success of the cheikh, of the brotherhood, and, collectively, of the disciples. They organize other borrowed objects—posters, medallions of the marabouts, and pictures accompanied by extracts from Amadou Bamba’s poems.

These are three domains and three ways of domesticating the foreign and the global by recourse to native idioms that constantly seek to assert themselves in the world and to profit from it, concretely through economic activities, and symbolically by borrowing its modes and techniques of diffusing information. How-

61. Dièye, *Touba: Signes et symboles*, 64.

ever, this information is not only native but disdains Islamic and Western texts with global pretensions. In contrast to the Sudanese village studied by Victoria Bernal, where local, Sufi Islam is succumbing to the restrictions of modern, cosmopolitan Islam, whose strength is “among other things, a movement from local, particularized Islams to Islam as a world religion,”⁶² Murids resist with their texts, their objects, and Touba, the point of reference. All these resources allow Murids to establish their uniqueness and their presence in the world. In particular, the reading of the *xaisaïds* firmly anchors them in the space where cosmopolitan and modern Islam is deployed—the space of writing and the book.⁶³

The Murids’ inscription as a community in the world was not easily achieved. In their shifting and erratic trajectories, the *modu-modu* produce a ritual community constantly realized in the reference (Touba) and in the texts and images that constitute the memory of Muridism. This community is manifested in the acts of the founder and of his first disciples and children. In this sense, the mercantile component of the Murid community pursues, in its economic, political, cultural, and religious expressions, a peculiarly native project within a global environment. It refuses to universalize its message, even if it adopts—for example, in the attachment to Touba—strategies and modes of organization and financing associated with pentecostal and other religious movements currently experiencing phenomenal growth in Africa.

By contrast, in opposition to the native approach, since the 1970s Murid intellectuals have attempted to carry out a modernization of the brotherhood’s presence and acts on both the national and the international scene. They were the first to put Muridism on the world map, first in France with their socio-professional and student organizations, and then in Senegal with the creation of the *Dahira des Étudiants Mourides à l’Université de Dakar* (The Murid students’ association of the University of Dakar) in 1975. These organizations aimed to free the brotherhood from its strong Wolof coloring and to reorganize its apparatuses with a view to globalizing Muridism and ridding it of its images and texts that focus on miracles accomplished by Amadou Bamba. For them, it was a question of drawing support from the new library in Touba and the founder’s work in order to incorporate the Murid trajectory and its scriptural grammar into the dynamics of

62. Bernal, “Islam, Transnational Culture, and Modernity in Rural Sudan,” 131–32.

63. Bernal (“Islam, Transnational Culture, and Modernity in Rural Sudan,” 133) emphasizes this issue: “At both the local and the national levels, the move toward a more scripturalist Islam is a move away from local parochial identities toward perceived conformity with a more universal set of beliefs and practices.”

global re-Islamization. The search for this much more individual and much less familial religious identity was expressed in the form of allegiance not to a marabout, but to the point of reference, Touba. It emerged very early among university alumni whose movement is called the Hizbut Tarkya (soldiers of the brotherhood). They have established themselves in the holy city by creating their own domain, their own commercial structures, and their own networks of membership based on the “principle of personal commitment” (for instance, by giving part of one’s wealth for the exclusive use of the caliph general, who guaranteed a certain legitimacy to the *daara*—as the members of the movement like to be called).⁶⁴ This legitimacy has been deployed to challenge the genealogical principle of succession that has governed the brotherhood’s life since the founder’s death. In opposition to the founder’s grandsons, members of Hizbut Tarkya call for an end to genealogical rule by asserting the importance of the mastery, through reading and commentary, of Amadou Bamba’s message.⁶⁵ Through its organization, rule of communitarian life, and modes of financing, the Hizbut Tarkya movement participates in an effort to break with the native project of the community. A violent conflict in 1997 and 1998 between this movement and Amadou Bamba’s grandsons shows the depth of the crisis and the latent tensions within the brotherhood.

According to Murid intellectuals, the search for a modern interpretation of the founder’s message is voicing an urgent need not only to emphasize the Islamic orthodoxy of the Murid message but also to propose a theological and philosophical version of it that is accessible and acceptable to both the West and the East. This need implies, as the editor of the newspaper *Ndigël* wrote more than a decade ago, the “de-Senegalization of Amadou Bamba’s thought by restoring its splendor as the Cheikh drew it from the Koran and from the Prophet’s Sunnah. When this is done, Muridism will have access to the world at large.”⁶⁶

The future of an African commercial diaspora, always in transit, will be played out in this tension between a presence manifested in the display of a native cosmopolitanism and an acceptance in the world. And within this framework, it must be understood that the order and temporality of the world are not univocal, and they do not necessarily require imprisoning the immemorial and undisciplined temporalities of the new actors on the modern scene. Therefore, we

64. Gueye, “Les marabouts urbanisants,” 19–20.

65. This concern is also found in the Paris Murid association known as Khitmal Khadim (saint, chosen by God), whose scholarly committee not only provided the preface for the book by Cheikh Abdoulaye Diéye but also financed its production and publication.

66. El Hadj Fallou Ndiaye, *Ndigël* (Paris), no. 21, second semester 1990, 1.

must conclude that the alternative modernities that are emerging in the disparate processes of globalization are not situated in a synthetic perspective whose backbone is Western modernity and its injunctions. As the foregoing remarks show, it is not a matter of trying to demonstrate these modernities by the synthesis or the hybridization of the autochthonous and the global that current discourses on globalization seek to achieve, usually in an inept way, without accounting for the creativity involved in the slow and shrewd deployment of the local in global space and time. In the Murid case, there is neither a dissolution of the local in the global nor an annexation of the latter by the former. Rather, the Murid experience involves constructing original texts and images that establish themselves at the heart of the world, and by so doing create new forms of cosmopolitanism whose manifestations no longer refer necessarily and obligatorily to the acquisition of an identity through assimilation but, rather, to the display of a unique identity added to global temporality and not simply informed by the Western trajectory of modernity alone. The Murid diaspora in the world, precisely because it presents itself in the mode of a ritual community, participates in this plural representation of the world on the basis of unique achievements. Its modes of operation make its vernacular contribution to cosmopolitanism by exhibiting it at the heart of the procedures of globalization, thus promoting pluralization of cosmopolitan forms and of local variations of world time. Such pluralization of cosmopolitan forms are illustrated by the introduction of products, actors, and relational systems that have long been excluded from the Senegalese market because of the colonial pact that established a privileged and exclusive relationship with France. Actors in an international geography completely foreign to the intellectual and political elite, Murids are pursuing the enterprise of modernization through practices sanctioned by an economic success that is not only compatible with globalization but also an integral part of the process.

Mamadou Diouf teaches history at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. His publications include the edited volumes *L'historiographie indienne en débat: Colonialisme, nationalisme et sociétés postcoloniales* (1999) and (with Momar Coumba Diop) *Les figures du politique en Afrique: Des pouvoirs hérités aux pouvoirs élus* (1999).

Steven Rendall is a freelance translator currently living in France. He formerly taught romance languages at the University of Oregon and was editor of *Comparative Literature*.