



THE MOURIDE ORDER

Compiled by Saliou Mbacke

Preface: Sheikh Saliou Mbacke, great-grandson of Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Mbacke, has long worked to promote interfaith dialogue, and is an international consultant. He is a partner of the World Faiths Development Dialogue in its work in Senegal and West Africa. He prepared this paper on the Mouride order as part of WFDD and Berkley Center research on Senegal and has agreed to share the paper publicly online. The paper includes fascinating background on the order and its leading personalities as well as his reflections on current challenges and future directions.
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HISTORICAL NOTES

Mouridism (or *Al-Mouridiya* in Arabic) is an Islamic Sufi doctrine established in Senegal (West Africa) in 1882/1883 by Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Mbacke.

*Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Mbacke*¹

Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Habibullaah (his full name) carried the name of his father's master, Muhammad Sall, who came from the village of Bamba. Cheikh Bamba was the second son of Maam Mor Anta Saly Mbacke and Maam Mariyama Bousso (better known by the name Maam Diaara Bousso, or Diaratoullah in Arabic, which means "neighbor of God"). Both his parents are direct descendants of the famous patriarch Maam Mahram Mbacke (the grandfather of Bamba, Maam Balla Aicha, was the youngest son of Maam Mahram). The other great figure of Sufi Islam of Senegal, El Hadji Malick Sy Tidiane, was also a direct descendant of Maam Mahram Mbacke by his father's mother (Maam Maty Mbacke, daughter of Mame Thierno Farimata Mbacke, who is also a son of Mahram).

Cheikh Bamba's ancestors, on both the maternal and paternal sides, came from Fouta in northern Senegal. His maternal family's village was Golléré, near the villages of Mbacke and Fouta.

Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba's father, Maam Mor Anta Saly, was a great and respected scholar in Islam. In the light of his moral qualities and his erudition, the Damel (who was the King of Cayor), Lat Dior Diop Ngone Latyr, appointed him advisor and legal advisor. Maam Mor was a great teacher whose school was never empty. He did not want to live in the same village as the king, preferring to live in another village near his students, to ensure the tranquility needed, so that studies were not disturbed by the atmosphere of the king's court. He founded his own village next to that of the King (Souguère) and called it Mbacke-Cayor.

Cheikh Bamba's son and biographer, Sheikh Bachir Mouhamadou, described the Cheikh's blessed mother:

¹ An excerpt from "L'universalité de l'enseignement de Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba" by Cheikh Fatma Mbacke

"His mother, Diaratoullah Maryam Bousso, was pious, chaste, and faithful. Submissive to her Lord, she prayed often, fasted during Ramadan, gave alms, and wanted sincerely to carry out the duties that religion required of her with regard to God and her spouse, the sheikh and imam. She educated their children in order to develop in them caring, religious sentiments and moral purity. She often told them stories about pious people to encourage them to follow their example. Gifted with remarkable intelligence and a pure nature, our Cheikh listened attentively to her stories and learned them by heart. He also began to imitate the holy men before he reached the age of maturity.

A trusted relative told me that he [Ahmadou Bamba] had heard Diaara say that pious people had the habit of praying during the night. Our Cheikh thus started to pray as soon as night fell, and went into the village square to meditate in the dark of night, as do the devout."

Born in 1272 Hijri (1853) in Mbacke Baol, the Cheikh did his studies with his maternal uncle, Muhammad Bousso, who introduced him to the Qur'an before handing him over to his uncle, that is to say, the Cheikh's grandfather, Tafsir Ndoumbé Mbacke.

Bamba's companion and biographer, Sheikh Mouhamadou Lamine Diop Dagana, recounts in his book *Irwa'u Nadim* (The source of wisdom):

"Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba remained with his father and continued his education and shone in all the Islamic disciplines. During this time he visited Khadi Madiakhaté Kala, the qadi of the Damel who was a scholar renowned in particular for his excellent poetry. Ahmadou Bamba studied with him to deepen his knowledge of the Arabic language."

The Cheikh also worked with a Moorish scholar, Muhammad al-Karim Bani of Dayman, to learn rhetoric and logic. Seeing how well his son, Maam Mor, mastered many disciplines, including literary studies and religion, the Cheikh decided to entrust the Islamic center he directed to him. It was during this period that the Cheikh began writing books in various fields such as Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Sufism (*tassawuf*), Theology (*tawhid*), rules of good conduct, grammar, etc. It is even said that his father, Maam Mor Anta Saly, used some of these books in teaching his students. Maam Mor Hijir died in 1300 Hijri (1882). People came to recognize Cheikh Bamba for his bold pronouncements.

Sheikh Mouhamadou Lamine Diop wrote:

"... Ahmadou Bamba accompanied the procession that carried the mortal remains of his father up to Dékhelé. Along the way, some offered him their horses, but he replied that he preferred to walk. The large crowd gathered for the funeral chose Serigne Taiba Muhammad Ndoumbé March Syll to lead the funeral service. When the service was over, Serigne Taiba ordered the crowd to observe silence, and gave a funeral oration in which he presented his condolences to the family of the deceased and in particular addressed Ahmadou Bamba as follows:

'Where is Serigne Bamba?' [this is what he was then called]. Ahmadou Bamba, who was at the edge of the crowd answered and stood up.

'Come closer!'

He approached the speaker so that they could see, hear, and answer him without raising his voice (he did not come closer in order not to create any disturbance).

'Come closer!'

'I hear you well'

The speaker presented his condolences before continuing:

'I want you to accompany us and other dignitaries and colleagues and your father to the Damel so that we can present our condolences to him, because the deceased was his intimate friend, his personal adviser and guide, and we commend you to him to enable you to have the same place with him that your father enjoyed and have the same benefits.'

'I thank you for your condolences and advice. Regarding the Damel, it is not my habit to visit monarchs. I have no ambition with regard to their wealth and do not seek honors before the Supreme Lord.' These statements sowed confusion in the crowd. The pious were astonished to see a young man transcend the trivialities of temporal power and dare implicitly to criticize those who aspired to earthly riches. Some people from the crowd were surprised to see him turn away from the free offer of prestige. Some even viewed him as unbalanced.

The attitude of these two groups inspired him to compose two beautiful poems. In one of them he said: "As I turned my gaze away from them, they treated me as an alien." And in the other: "Move toward the doors of the sultans," they said, "to obtain enough gifts that will last you forever." "God is enough for me," I said, "and I am content with him," I replied. "Religion and science alone satisfy me. I fear only my King and hope only for him, because he, the majestic, enriches me and saves me "

THE GENESIS OF MOURIDISM²

After his father was called to God, Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba inherited his school. He continued to provide formal education as his father had during his lifetime. Some months later, he entrusted the direction of the school to Serigne Dame Abdourahmane Lo, so that he could begin a spiritual quest across Senegal, then travel to Mauritania. Mauritania was, at the time one, of the most powerful spiritual centers of the Arab world, and Moorish scholars there were renowned for their scholarship. He met scholars of all persuasions during this period: Quadriya, Tidjaniya, and Chadiliya, and temporarily adopted their speech and Sufi doctrine.

When he returned, he began to see the Prophet in his dreams, who gave him directives.

On Friday, Ramadan 27 1302 Hijri(1882-3), Cheikh Amadou Bamba gathered the students and teachers in the school and announced that the Prophet had instructed him to educate the students who are attached to him to purify their souls and secure spiritual fulfillment: "He urged me to introduce my disciples in purification (*tabliya*) as a way to realize spiritual perfection (*takhliliya*)." Spiritual education was to be grounded in action and knowledge. This was to be the path of Mouridiya, those who long to please Allah. Some who were present were perplexed at the Cheikh's statement, asking of those who wanted to follow him a pact of allegiance to this new Islamic path.

Sheikh Adama Gueye was the first to respond, followed by Sheikh Ibra Sarr, Sheikh Massamba Diop, Sheikh Dame Abdourahmane Lo Sheikh Mbacke Bousso ... It is said that some 27 people embraced the new Mouride path that day. Other major Mouride figures followed later, including the eminent Sheikh Maam Ibrahim Fall, whose dedication, commitment to the Cheikh, and scrupulous respect for the rules of good conduct towards him, resulted in him being called "Babul Mouridina " (Mouride door). Most students at the school went to other centers to continue a traditional education, because they did not understand what the Cheikh offered in terms of spiritual realization.

WHAT IS THE MOURIDE DOCTRINE?³

Al'mouride is an Arabic term meaning "aspiring", longing for God's approval. Mouridism is based on the search for God through the sunnah and spiritual perfection (*tassawuf* in Sufism). As the Prophet Muhammad

² An excerpt from "L'universalité de l'enseignement de Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba" by Cheikh Fatma Mbacke

³ An excerpt from "L'universalité de l'enseignement de Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba" by Cheikh Fatma Mbacke

(PBUH) recommended when the Badr holy war resumed: "We are moving from the small to the large battle", he meant the carnal soul. The holy war against the vices of greed, falsehood, slander, pride, and all that can harm either oneself or others.

If you take the Doctrine of Mouridism as the image of a house, then the foundations are:

- *Al Imaan* (The Muslim Faith)
- *Al Islam* (Muslim worship practices)
- *Al Ihsaan* (Purification of the soul)

The pillars are:

- Practical Sciences (religious and secular)
- Good Deeds
- Muslim etiquette

*Building Blocks of Mouridism*⁴

Non-violence: from its creation in 1882 to today, Mouridism has won the hearts of almost half of the Senegalese population and other nationalities without ever resorting to holy war or any other form of violence.

The Ndiguel: This is the symbol of submission to the orders of the spiritual guide of the Mouride faithful, provided that the true spiritual guide is one who fully complies with divine orders. Thus the *ndiguel* cannot be an instrument for typical personal interests.

The Khidma: The teacher-scholar Serigne Saliou Salam defines it as the Sufi doctrine of Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba, which is to be of service to God and his Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Spiritual practice involves writing countless eulogies, praying to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), etc., but as the Servant of the Prophet (PBUH) the Cheikh was always and forever at the service of Muslims and all humanity, in the sense of saving them, to benefit them.

Serigne Saliou Salam said that the *khidma* of the *talibés* must be a contribution to the grand *khidma* of the Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba, by being constantly in search for God and spirituality, through the example of the Cheikh and serving the Muslim community and ultimately all humanity.

In his book titled *Khidma*, the author Aziz Abdou Mbacke Majalis writes:

"What was the political vision of Serigne Touba? It is called *khidma*. What good citizenship, patriotism, or even modern humanism are to the atheist republican system, inherited from the French Revolution or the Roman polytheistic system, the sense of *khidma* is to the *res publica* (the public thing) of believers, inherited from the original Islamic civilization." While some thinkers have defined theories of liberalism or Christian democracy, others have advocated socialism, Marxism, Maoism, and other political and economic systems to manage and ensure the progress of their community. Serigne Touba advocates *khidma*, which is by no means the Anglo-Saxon Laborism or even a supposedly Africanized version of Calvinist Protestantism, as some have suggested a bit too readily, but a development model based on the quest for God's approval through the benefits generated for its citizens.

But we must be clear that the type of development proposed here is not at all that of GDP or one that is expressed only in terms of physical infrastructure and economic performance, but rather,

⁴ An excerpt from "L'Architecture qui caractérise le Mouridisme" by Cheikh Fatma Mbacke

without in any way denying these important factors, the type of integral progress that raises man morally, spiritually, and intellectually, places them in ideal material and social conditions (where GDP becomes "Goodness and Domestic Piety") to live their faith with dignity and guarantee the quality of their relations with his Lord and his ilk, here and especially for eternal life."

CHEIKH AHMADOU BAMBA'S APPROACH TO EDUCATION

Bamba's approach to education included six characteristic elements:

1. *A model.* Cheikh Bamba focused initially on the spiritual education of his disciples. He highlighted the *sahabas* (companions of the Prophet Mohammed [PBUH]) as their absolute model. They were to adopt, from every perspective, their values of piety, modesty, generosity, and patience in the face of trials. Once these first disciples were well trained and experienced, he conferred on them the status of "Sheikh", that is to say, Mouride religious and spiritual guide. These "sheikhs" were then assigned to other parts of the country to train other disciples and serve as models.

2. *A Place (Daara):* The Cheikh's educational method also involved putting the Mouride disciple in an isolated place called a *daara*, where he was trained in Islamic teachings and where he was safe from any bad influences in the society. The *talibé* (disciple) remains in the *daara* until the end of his spiritual training, then is ready to return to society (villages, cities), immune to its vices and bad influences. He becomes instead a model able to influence his family and the whole society in positive ways.

3. *The struggle against the carnal soul:* One component of Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba's educational method is the struggle against the carnal soul. This method is to accustom the disciple to remain patient in the face of trials, hunger, lack of sleep, and other events, able to forego all pleasures of worldly life in society.

4. *Religious practices:* Disciples had to comply with canonical Islamic religious practices (prayer, fasting, etc.), but it was also recommended that they add other religious practices such as *zikr* (invocation), meditation, etc.

5. *Work:* Physical labor was another integral part of Cheikh Bamba's educational approach. At the *daara* disciples were engaged in agriculture, for their own needs but also for the needs of the community, near and farther away.

Senegalese society was characterized by a hierarchy of castes that did not mix, for example through marriage. The "castes" were restricted to certain professions such as shoemaker, weaver, blacksmith etc. The intellectual professions, such as teaching or calligraphy of the Qur'an, were reserved for certain groups. Cheikh Bamba tried to erase these differences in his *daaras* by assigning those from "castes" to so-called noble occupations such as teaching or Qur'anic calligraphy, and asking people from noble families to undertake tasks such as binding pages of the Holy Qur'an handwritten by people from different "castes". For him work was also intended to address the individual's tendency to lazy behavior.

6. *Teaching:* The *daaras* were equipped with Qur'anic teachers and specialists in Islamic sciences. Disciples were thus taught alongside physical work and other occupations.

Thus Mouridism is grounded in Islamic doctrine and has solid foundations, which characterize its architecture and clear approach to education. We can affirm that Mouridism is not a cult; it is not a group that lives in the blameworthy Islamic innovation (*bidaa*). It is a Sufi doctrine and philosophy perfectly in keeping with the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba is an Islamic reformer; as he said: "*Lil Moustapha nawaytou Maa youdiadidou sounatahoul kharaa, wa inii Ahmadou*" ["For the Prophet Muhammad El Moustapha I, Ahmadou, fully intend to renew his Sunnah (Tradition)].

CHEIKH AHMADOU BAMBA AGAINST THE FRENCH COLONIZERS: PRECURSOR OF PEACEFUL RESISTANCE BEFORE GHANDI OR MARTIN LUTHER KING⁵

Starting with a small group of disciples facing unimaginable difficulties that echo the first *sahabas* (companions) of the Prophet (PBUH), Cheikh Bamba soon had crowds that came to the Mouride founder to pledge their allegiance. The commitment of new Mouride *talibés* and dedication to their Sheikh removed all anxieties and fears of the then *Tieddo*⁶ and all other authorities. Followers included not just common people as is commonly said, but family members of the deposed kings of Cayor, Djolof, Baol, etc.

In 1884, cheikh Ahmadou Bamba founded his first village, not far from Mbacke, giving it the name Darou Salam (House of Peace). His oldest sons Serigne Mouhamadou Moustapha and Serigne Fallou were born there. In 1888, he founded the city of his dreams, called Touba. He wrote: "it is a city built exclusively to worship God, respect the pact that men have signed with God, lead a healthy life on earth respecting the Qur'an and the tradition of Muhammad (PBUH), the most illustrious of Allah's envoys."

At that time, the *Tieddo*, who saw their authority challenged by the Mouride people, were quick to pick Cheikh Bamba as the enemy to defeat. And they were not slow to use all means, basically slander, to try to make trouble with the colonial powers that had defeated their sovereigns. The colonizers had just emerged from a long and painful period, marked by valiant armed African resistance. They thought they had finished with armed resistance with the death of Lat Dior in 1886. They were troubled by the emergence of a new force, which had in its ranks former dignitaries of the fallen regimes, including a cousin of Lat Dior, who French officials thought harbored a spirit of revenge and wanted nothing more than to use the nascent power available to the Sheikh to wreak vengeance. All this led the French colonial power to accuse the Cheikh of preparing holy war against them and trying to seize temporal power.

These accusations culminated in the arrest of Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba, on 18 Safar 1313 (August 10, 1895) at 14h in Djéwal (now Louga region) by a detachment of French colonial authorities. He was exiled after an unfair trial and held in the chamber of the Privy Council, located at French colonial headquarters in St. Louis until September 5 of the same year. Following the final judgment, the Privy Council decided "unanimously, after hearing the reports of Mssrs. Leclerc and Merlin, and appearance by Ahmadou Bamba, that it was necessary to exile him to Gabon until the agitation caused by his teachings is forgotten in Senegal". (Sources: Privy Council report, August 1895). He left his country on September 20, 1895, alone, leaving behind his family and faithful to the unknown of a hostile environment in equatorial Africa. Note that the Cheikh wrote in one of his poems in the ship that took him into exile that God Almighty informed him that he had become the Servant of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): المدينة ذي خديم بأمني السفينة في الرحمن علمني . The exile in Gabon lasted seven long years.

In 1902, Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba returned home from exile in Gabon on board the ship *Cape Lopez*. He was greeted triumphantly by a large and enthusiastic crowd. His prestige was enhanced and Senegalese adherence to Mouridism became massive, just the opposite of what the Privy Council had hoped for. But his stay in Senegal was short lived, as he was deported again, to Mauritania in 1903, for five years. He returned again to Senegal, but was placed under house arrest in Djolof for five years, then to house arrest in Diourbel beginning 1912, where he remained 15 years until he was called to God on July 19, 1927. In accordance with his fondest wish, he was buried in the holy place of Touba.

⁵ An excerpt from "L'universalité de l'enseignement de Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba" by Cheikh Fatma Mbacke

⁶ *Tieddo* were warriors of the ancient kingdoms of Senegal, followers of traditional African beliefs who refused to convert to Islam.

Sheikh Bashir Mouhamadou, fourth son and biographer of Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba, said in his book in 1913, *Minanil Bakhil Khadim*, that a new administrator of the Baol region was appointed whose mission was to investigate thoroughly the true intentions of Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba. Serigne Bassirou recounts that this man, named Lasselves, showed such zeal for his work and disregard for the Sheikh, with an arrogance and the casualness that gave no concession. The faithful were so outraged that they appealed to the Cheikh to invoke God so that this man would bother them no longer. The Cheikh told them not to worry because God had sought that the colonizer, the French authorities, bring these charges against him. After an investigation that lasted over two years, Antoine Jean Martin Arthure Lasselves wrote, among other things, in his report:

"This Cheikh Bamba certainly has an innate power; reason cannot grasp the source and explain his ability to elicit sympathy. The submission of men and their unconditional love for him are extraordinary... He seems to have a prophetic light and a divine secret similar to what we read about in the history of the Prophets and their peoples ... This one [the Cheikh], however, is distinguished by a purity of heart, by kindness, a generosity of spirit and a love of good both for the friend and for the enemy. Qualities that his predecessors desired, however great were their virtues, their piety, and their prestige... The most unjust men and the most ignorant of human realities are those who brought false accusations against him of the ambition of seeking temporal power. I know that the saints and the prophets who have led a holy war did not have half the strength that the Cheikh possesses..."

MAJOR LESSONS WE CAN LEARN FROM THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF CHEIKH AHMADOU BAMBA THAT HIGHLIGHT THE UNIVERSALITY OF HIS MESSAGE⁷

1. First, the Cheikh and knowledge. His extraordinary ability to acquire knowledge in all areas, as well as production of books of all kinds and quality, should be underlined. From an early age he wrote books on Islamic sciences from that even his father used in teaching the Cheikh's own brothers.

2. Another lesson to take from the Cheikh is that he gave the black man his full dignity and pride. As we know, many Africans have often fed an inferiority complex vis-à-vis the Western, white man but also the Arabs. And for some Muslims, no work, no matter how beautiful, deserves consideration as long as it is written by a black. This is also what led the French colonialists to think that by deporting Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba to Mauritania, his followers would certainly go there to see him. And they hoped that in the presence of Arab Sheikhs, the disciples of Cheikh Bamba would leave him for the Arabs. Just the opposite happened. Many Mauritians became faithful to the Cheikh, to the point that they later went to Diourbel to visit him. This phenomenon continues to this day, especially during the *Magal Touba* [annual pilgrimage to celebrate Bamba's return from exile].

As he wrote early on in *Massalikul Jinane* ("Roads to Paradise"): "Do not be fooled by my being a black man, not to benefit from me." "The man most esteemed by Allah is he who fears him the most, without discrimination of any kind... Skin color has nothing to do with a man's foolishness or of his poor understanding." Sheikhul Khadim made clear that he gave the black man his dignity and his pride, asking him to believe in his own abilities and merits, contrary to what the colonial power at the time had made him understand. In this, the Cheikh is a precursor of the black emancipation movement, long before Césaire, Senghor, and Léon Damas.

3. Among lessons from the Cheikh's life, is cultural and peaceful resistance. Here too we can say that before Gandhi in India and Martin Luther King in the US, he theorized and was successful in resistance to oppression by the holy war of the soul, cultural resistance through peace and forgiveness. Indeed looking at

⁷ An excerpt from "L'universalité de l'enseignement de Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba" by Cheikh Fatma Mbacke

what happened to great African resistance leaders, who despite their merit and courage could not repel the military and political power of the colonizers, Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba understood the need to resist and look to results over time. He did not choose this form of resistance because he did not have the means. As we saw earlier with the testimony of Lasselves: "I know that the saints and the prophets who led a holy war did not have half the strength that that the Cheikh possesses..."

The French colonization, besides seizing African wealth by military and political force, was also a system of religious alienation and cultural assimilation. Sheikhul Khadim knew and said that the country would recover its political independence sooner or later. But if the colonized people did not resist the colonizer's dominating will to impose its religion, culture, and civilization, the people would never regain independence of the soul and mind, which ultimately is the greatest independence. The Cheikh thus undertook to educate and train the masses to be rooted in their religion and culture and to be proud of who they are. The result is that today the Mourides are recognizable by their civilized and respectful language, their dress, and many other qualities that are typically African and Islamic. Thus the Sheikh succeeded in his peaceful resistance to the French.

If we take only dress, certain types of clothing immediately make one think of the Mourides. "Tourki Ndiarèm", "Baay Laat," and "Serigne Chouhaibou" ... The last two refer to two sons of the Cheikh who wore almost exclusively these types of clothes. And the *talibés* made it a fashion. When Westerners say that their civilization is what is modern and universal, and that everyone should dress in ties, suits, or jeans to be "connected", this is not just an innocent cultural issue, but a major issue for business and international trade. The "connecting" in question here is nothing but a deliberate attempt to push all people to buy their products that is of course in their own interest. When Thomas Sankara promoted the "Faso Dan" or when Mandela wore colorful shirts made by Africans, this is very much in tune with what Cheikh Bamba taught the Mourides. The Cheikh did not teach the rejection of everything that comes from the West! His rule was to take all that is positive. The Prophet (PBUH) said, "*Al'Hikmatou Dalatul Mouminine, Anna wadia daba Fahouwa Mawlaa Ha* [Wisdom is the treasure of the believer; he can take it wherever he finds it]..."

4. The final example of lessons we learn from the Cheikh's teaching is that he pushed his followers to make work an act of divine worship: "*Ligèy thi diamou Yalla la bok* " ["Work is part of Divine Adoration"]. His goal was to encourage them to be independent in order to keep their dignity and also preserve their spirituality. As they say in Wolof, "*Koula amal manal la*" ("He who gives to you, will have power over you.") The work ethic of the Mourides, their optimism towards God and their guide, Sheikhul Khadim, boosts their initiative, entrepreneurship, and risk-taking. Some might say that Mouridism involves liberalism. No, they apply the Cheikh's teachings about the value of work, but, contrary to liberalism, wealth is not an end in itself. As much as work is prized in Mouridism, so also sharing and generosity are intimately involved. The Mouride faithful prize selfless contribution to any Islamic work or something helpful to daily human life. In this sense socialists might think that the Mourides practice some of their theories.

In the 1920s, to avoid a devaluation of the French franc at the time, the colonial authorities needed financial contributions throughout the colonial empire. The Cheikh's personal contribution, 500 000 FF at the time, was one of the largest, if not the largest in French West Africa. The Cheikh made this gesture out of concern to be useful to the people who would assuredly have suffered from a devaluation of the FF.

In 2012, the current caliph, Sheikh Sidy Mukhtar, allocated one billion FCFA to support the government after serious floods. If he had asked that the money be used in Touba, which was hard hit, no one would have found fault, but his contribution was for all victims in Senegal, without discrimination. The financing of certain infrastructure by the Mourides is a great service to all Senegalese. Indeed, the construction, for example, of the Matlabul Fawzayni hospital by the *talibés* instead of the government to the tune of six billion

FCFA made it possible for the state to satisfy the demands in health centers and in clinics of many Senegalese towns and villages. Perhaps if the state had done what it should have to finance the second largest city of the country, it would not have been able to provide financing for health facilities for all these cities and villages. The Mouride capacity for initiative and risk-taking had its origin in the fact that the Mourides are eternal optimists: not a smug optimism but one that optimizes hard work.

An anecdote about some Mouride businessmen, willing to take risks to build thriving businesses, is telling. Take for example Sheikh Mbacke Seye of the company Diprom, who worked in the iron and steel industry. One day he contacted various oil companies like Total, Shell etc. offering to manufacture gas cylinders. They seemed interested and took time to respond to the offer. But he began immediately to manufacture cylinders. The oil companies then rejected his proposal, preferring to use imported cylinders. He ended up with thousands of bottles on his hands. What did he do? He said, 'If that's how it is, I will do as they do and import gas, fill my cylinders, and sell them'. Thus Touba Gaz was born. A few years later Touba Gaz had become so powerful that some oil companies like Shell have sold their gas division due precisely to the aggressive competition of Touba Gaz, that took over their market share.

THE MOURIDE CALIPHATE AFTER CHEIKH AHMADOU BAMBA'S DEATH

Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba had not designated a successor before his death. He left several children, including an older son, then aged 39, Sheikh Mouhamadou Moustapha and younger brothers, Mame Thierno Birahim, Mame Sheikh Anta, Serigne Massamba, etc. all great "Sheikhs" who he had educated and trained spiritually. Each had his own disciples. Some thought that the succession should follow the line of the Cheikh's brothers, others that it should go to his son. Thus succession was not obvious or easy. But eventually the eldest son was recognized as the new caliph and chief of the Mouride community.

The first Caliph, Sheikh Mouhamadou Moustapha (Caliph from 1927 to 1945): He kept the community together and began construction of the Great Mosque of Touba, a recommendation handed down by his father. And despite harassment by the colonial authorities, it was funded with Mouride funds. The railroad from Diourbel to Touba met the needs of the mosque. His caliphate coincided with the crisis of the 1930s and the Second World War, but by the time of his death in 1945 the foundations and structures of the Great Mosque were already visible.

The second Caliph, Sheikh Mouhamadou Fallilou (Caliph from 1945 to 1968): The accession of Sheikh Fallilou to the caliphate was not easy because some wanted the successor to be the eldest son of his deceased older brother, Sheikh Moustapha. But with the wisdom of several, especially the son of Cheikh Bamba who came after Sheikh Fallilou, that is to say, Sheikh Mouhamadou Bashir, the difficulty was overcome.

FORMALIZATION OF THE MOURIDE CALIPHATE

The fourth son of Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba, Sheikh Bashir, had his personal secretary write a document in which he laid out the order of succession of Bamba's sons, from the eldest, that is, Sheikh Fallilou, to the youngest, Sheikh Mourtada, and then the first grandson after the son, Serigne Sheikh Gaindé Fatma (eldest son of the first caliph). At the initiative of Sheikh Bachir this list was signed by all who were present and filed with the colonial Governor General in St. Louis. It is this document that settled in an orderly way, for decades to come, the question of succession to the Mouride caliphate. This succession among the 12 male children of Cheikh Bamba was in birth order. And after the sons came grandsons of these 12 families, still following the birth order.

The caliphate of Sheikh Fallilou was marked first by the caliph's decision to call the faithful to come to Touba to celebrate the 18 Safar, marking Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba's departure to exile in Gabon. Thus the Grand

Magal of Touba was born, though the founder Sheikh himself had initially established it: the *talibés* had earlier celebrated the Magal. It also marked the completion of the Mouride flagship project, the Great Mosque of Touba, in 1963; the opening prayer was led by caliph himself.

The 3rd Caliph, Sheikh Abdou Ahad (1968-1989). He became the third caliph, since the next in line, Sheikh Bashir, had died in 1966. It was he who truly modernized the holy city of Touba with the extension of electrification, increased number of water points, paved roads, extension of the Great Mosque, construction of the great Islamic library and a university, etc.

The 4th Caliph, Sheikh Abdou Khadr (1989-1990). His caliphate lasted less than a year, but he was the grand imam of the great mosque from 1968 until his death in 1990. He was a great scholar of Islam, also famous for his generosity and his actions for the poorest.

The 5th Caliph, Sheikh Saliou (1990-2007). A man of great piety, renowned for his asceticism and detachment from the things of the worldly life, Serigne Saliou was nevertheless one of the largest agricultural producers in Senegal and even Africa. His agricultural centers, the most famous of which is Khelcom, were also and above all Qur'anic and Islamic sciences teaching centers. It was during his caliphate that the Mourides, rather than the Senegalese State, managed to build a hospital at a cost of nearly 6 billion FCFA, a first in Senegal. Serigne Saliou was the last son of Bamba on earth.

The 6th Caliph, Sheikh Mouhamadou Lamine Bara (2007-2010). He opened the era of the grandsons as Mouride caliph, as he was the son of the second caliph, Sheikh Fallilou. Many feared or hoped (if they were enemies of Mouridism) for disorders and loss of momentum among the Mourides after the death of Bamba's last son, but the new caliph managed to weld the family and the community together around the ideal of pursuing and implementing Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba's legacy.

The 7th Caliph, Sheikh Sidy Moukhtar (2010 to present). The son of Bamba's third son, Sheikh Mouhamadou Lamine Mbacke, continued the work of his predecessors. Immediately after his accession he launched the expansion and modernization of the Great Mosque of Touba. He also continued with the planned mosque in Dakar, which begins to take shape under his leadership. With him we are also witnessing some form of formalization of the association of other Bamba families in the management of community affairs. The caliph of Sheikh Bashir was appointed as his right arm in charge of religious affairs. A son of Serigne Fallou is empowered on educational issues. Serigne Mame Mor, son of Bamba's younger son (Sheikh Mourtada), is responsible for the Mouride diaspora. A son of the fourth caliph is spokesperson of the caliph and responsible for the organization of the Grand Magal of Touba, etc. This summary of the collegial management of Mouridism shows the way forward to the future, designed to establish the foundations of a better organization of the community.

CENTRALIZATION AND DEVOLUTION IN MOURIDISM

We have outlined the different caliphs of Mouridism, who played a central role in building and developing the community. The person of the caliph is the symbol of Mouride unity. He has the final say on all major issues—religious, social, and political. However, Mouridism is distinguished by a certain autonomy of the great families of Sheikh Bamba, families from the "Sheikhs" trained by Bamba. Thus the disciple does not necessarily have a direct link with the caliph that is as strong as he has with his direct religious leader or the head of the family group to which he belongs. In general one might say that such a faithful belongs to Khoudos Darou (the neighborhood of Sheikh Mouhamadou Moustapha Khaif 1) at Darou Minan (district of the fourth son of Bamba, Sheikh Mouhamdoul Bachir), Khahira (district of the second caliph, Serigne Fallilou). Or that the faithful is part of Sahm (city of Sheikh Bamba's older brother, Mame Mor Diaara), of Darou Mouhty (City of the Cheikh Bamba's brother, Mame Thierno), Darou Salam (City of the brother of

Sheikh Mame Sheikh Anta Mbacke). Or that he is a Baay Fall, referring to those faithful to the great devotee of Bamba, Mame Sheikh Ibrahima Fall, etc.

For any Mouride project, the *Khalif général* calls on the heads of the great families of Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba's sons, the families of his brothers, or of his great "Sheikhs", leaving them to mobilize their direct disciples. Thus we see that the person of the caliph represents the centralization and unity of the Mourides but at an operational level the faithful are mobilized through their affiliate families, indicating a great devolution. Thus, looking at Mouride history, access to the caliphate is not necessary, which somewhat limits the reach of the position, ensuring that it does not become a source of division and greed.

BESIDES THE CALIPHS, GREAT FIGURES THAT HAVE MARKED MOURIDE HISTORY WITH RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL ACHIEVEMENTS

Sheikh Mouhamadou Lamine Bara Mbacke (1891 - 1936). Third son of Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba, marked the Mouride imagination through the many miracles attributed to him. Though he died at the age of 45, he was known to be a very esoteric, educated, and cultured man. He was the father of the current caliph, Sheikh Sidy Moukhtar.

Sheikh Mouhamadou Bachir (1895 – 1966). Fourth son of Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba, born at the time his father left for exile in Gabon, was considered one of the leading intellectuals of Mouridism. He was the initiator of the document on the succession to the caliphate mentioned earlier. Author of the most significant biography of his father (*Deeds for Eternity*), he is considered the reference point on knowledge about Cheikh Bamba because he lived beside him for nearly 20 years. His younger brother, Sheikh Mourtada, said of him that he considered him not a brother but a "father" because he passed on everything he knew of his father to him. He was the right hand of the first and second caliphs and the mediator for any conflicts and intra community issue within Islam in Senegal. His family manages Porokhane, the very symbolic village where the mother of Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba was buried and where there is the annual Magal dedicated to Maam Diaara Bouso. He was also in his time one of Senegal's largest farmers.

Sheikh Abdoulaahi "Borom Darby" (1908 - 1960). Fifth son of Serigne Touba, Serigne Abdoulaahi Mbacke was born in 1908 in Darou Rahman, commonly known as Thiéyène in Djoloff, after the Sheikh was exiled to Mauritania. His mother, Soxna Fatima Kubra Al Kuntiyu, was the granddaughter of Sheikh Sidy El Mukhtar Al Kuntiyu, a great holy man who lived in Mauritania. Serigne Mbacke Abdoulaahi spent his early years in Djoloff, and when the Sheikh went to Diourbel in 1912.⁸ He was the "environmentalist" of the Bamba family. He was famous for having established vast gardens in the surroundings of Touba, even though the region was very dry. Serigne Abdoulaahi Mbacke died on January 15, 1960.

Serigne Chouaibou: Educator and Rector: Serigne Chouaibou was indelibly marked by comments when he met his father and spiritual master, Khadimou Rassoul: "I want you to excel in the study of the Qur'an; you must devote yourself to teaching it." This injunction was a sacred trust to which he remained faithful throughout his life. If Serigne Chouaibou's *daara* became famous, a true school of reference in Senegal and beyond, it was because of the personal commitment of its rector.⁹ This renowned teacher indeed developed ways to address problems that were considered insoluble. Combining rigorous practice with theoretical teachings, Serigne Chouaibou was also a successful author. His book on Islamic practices, *Khouratou Ayni*, is one of the best sellers in Senegal.

⁸ Portrait de Serigne Abdoulaahi Mbacké fils de Serigne Touba. <http://www.htcom.sn/portrait-de-serigne-abdoulaahi-mbacke-fils-de-serigne-touba.html>

⁹ Serigne Chouaibou : l'éducateur et le recteur. <http://www.htcom.sn/serigne-chouaibou-l-educateur-et-le-recteur.html>

Serigne Mbacke Mourtala: Pious Muslim warrior: Serigne Mbacke Mourtala is known as the "foreign minister" of the Mourides. As such, he established *dahiras* around the world and spread his father's teachings. He founded and developed the largest private education complex in Senegal, Alazhar, named after the famous Alazhar of Egypt. He died in August 2005 in Morocco and was repatriated to Senegal and buried in Touba.¹⁰

Besides the famous sons of Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba, several brothers are major figures of Mouridism: Maam Mor Diarra, uterine brother of the Cheikh; Maam Thierno Birahim Mbacke of Darou Mouhty, younger brother to whom he entrusted his family and community while he was in exile; Maam Sheikh Anta Darou Salam, the leading Mouride businessman; Serigne Massamba, who copied the Cheikh's writings; and Serigne Afe Mbacke.

Other major figures in Mouride history are the great sheikhs like Serigne Dame Abdourahmane Lo, teacher of Cheikh Bamba's children; Sheikh Adama Gueye, regarded as the first to become Mouride; Maam Sheikh Ibrahim Fall, undoubtedly the most zealous of Bamba's disciples and leader of many faithful of Baay Fall who are the spearheads of all Mouride projects. In tribute to this role, the second caliph gave the name of Sheikh Ibrahim Fall to the Great Minaret of the Great Mosque of Touba, commonly called "Lamp Fall". Sheikh Issa Diene, Serigne Sarr Ibrahim Ndiagne, Serigne Ndiaye Darou Hassane, etc.

Closer to our time other great figures of Mouridism are known for their actions to support Islam, Mouridism, and Senegal. The first of Bamba's grandchildren, *Serigne Sheikh Gaindé Fatma*, oldest son of the first caliph) invested in education by establishing schools (Arabic or French), giving scholarships for university to many students, Mouride or not. He also helped the first Mouride traders in cities like Dakar, Kaolack, Saint-Louis, or even the first emigrants abroad. Friend of heads of state and sovereigns of Arab states, he traveled widely and is known for his open spirit.

The eldest son of Sheikh Bachir Mouhamadou, *Serigne Moustapha Mbacke Bassirou*, is also one of Bamba's grandsons, all of whom had a marked impact on the community through their actions. Considered one of the largest farmers of Senegal, he was also the modernizer of Porokhane village where the Sheikh's mother is buried. He created the foundation "Maam Diaara" and set up a training school for girls in Porokhane with almost 400 boarders who receive Islamic and secular education, vocational training, etc.

Today many Mouride dignitaries support the Mouride and national community, sometimes completely anonymously. This is the case of Serigne Mountakha Bashir, current caliph of the family of Sheikh Bashir and confidant of the current *Khalif général*. The eldest son of the fifth caliph, Serigne Sheikh Saliou, he invested billions in the construction of mosques everywhere in Senegal. Serigne Fallou Abdou Khadr, like his father, is the current imam of the great mosque of Touba and leads very important scientific work on Islamic issues. But also Serigne Hamzatou Mbacke, son of Serigne Souaibou, developed a chain of Qur'anic schools in Touba and its surroundings. Other types of leaders also emerged within the Rawdu Rayahin Mourides including leading authorities on Islamic sciences and general culture. We can mention, without being exhaustive, Serigne Ahmadou Badaoui, Serigne Same Bousso, Dr. Khadim Sylla, Dr Sheikh Gueye, Serigne Sheikhouna Abdou Aziz Mbacke Wadoud, Serigne Mbacke Abdourahmane, Serigne Abdou Aziz Mbacke Majalis, Serigne Moustapha, and Mountakha Diattara, etc.

This picture, as we have indicated, is based on the selfless relationships that the great majority of the Mouride hierarchy has with the caliphate. It is not necessary to be a caliph to count in Mouridism and become "someone" in the community's history.

¹⁰ Sénégal: A côté des cinq khalifes - Ces fils de Serigne Touba qui n'ont pas accédé au khalifat.
<http://fr.allafrica.com/stories/200802270702.html>

WOMEN IN MOURIDISM: A STORY OF PROGRESS BUT MORE EFFORTS ARE NEEDED¹¹

The Mourides are a Muslim community where one of the most emblematic and famous figures is a woman: Mama Diaara Bousso, mother of the founder, Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba. Mame Diaara is the only woman in Senegal, certainly in Africa and perhaps in the world, to have an annual day where she is celebrated by hundreds of thousands of men and women at the "Màgal" of Porokhane.

This woman, who lived only 33 years, whose life was exemplified by her moral and intellectual qualities, will forever be seen in Senegal as a symbol of the virtuous woman and a role model for all generations. Sokhna Mariyam Bousso is thus respected for her exceptional qualities, but also because of the high regard her son had for her and his many marks of respect. He went so far as to ask his son, Sheikh Mouhamadou El Bashir, to settle in Saloum at Porokhane where Mame Diaara lived so that the village would never be deserted and abandoned. Beyond the symbolism that Sokhna Diaara represents, can we find other examples attesting to the positive roles of women in the Mouride community?

The daughters of Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba offer another interesting illustration. Indeed the Cheikh set the example by having them undertake the same religious education as his sons. It is said that many of them learned to write the holy Qur'an from memory. They were thus able to play their full role in Senegalese society, and as religious leaders they were at the forefront of educating generations of girls in Mouridism.

To cite just a few examples, Sokha Mouslimatou, who was one of the first women in Senegal to engage in cereal processing, was involved with her brother the *Khalif général* of the Mourides, Serigne Falliou Mouride, in the affairs of the city affecting women. During visits by President Senghor, for example, she took care of everything related to hospitality. Sokhna Mominatou is one of the few women in Senegal to have founded her own village, "Santhiou Sokhna Moumy". Their sister and the youngest daughter of Khadimou Rassol was the one who initiated and developed one of the world's largest celebrations of the "Night of Destiny" ("Laylatul Khadre"). She also founded her village, called "Darou Wahab". Sokhna Amy Sheikh, who died too young, left to posterity a valuable collection of poems dedicated to her grandmother, Mame Diaara Bousso, *Yaa Jaratullaahi*; an excellent study was done by a young Mouride woman, Professor Sokhna Maguette Sylla, for her doctoral thesis.

More recently, senior Mouride leaders have highlighted the importance to be given to education and the education of girls. The grandson of Sheikh Serigne Moustapha Bassirou, as part of the foundation "Mame Diaara" that he established, founded an Islamic institute in Porokhane exclusively to teach the Qur'an, religious sciences, and vocational training to girls, which bears the name of the holy mother of the Cheikh. Thus the "Mame Daara Diaara" which has had an annual enrollment of nearly 400 students since its creation in 2004, has just now, graduated 113 girls who have mastered the Holy Qur'an and acquired the foundations of Islamic Sciences; 45 have even written the holy Qur'an from memory. Besides that in recent years girls from this institution have won almost all national mixed competitions on mastery of the Qur'an, and they have successfully participated in the international Qur'an competition (Malaysia). This institute has no parallel in Africa, and the students are taken free of charge. It is a typical example of the importance attached to the role of Muslim women in the Mouride community.

Another example is Sokhna Mously daughter of Serigne Moustapha Mbacke Fallilou (Serigne Modou Bousso Dieng), who has worked courageously for many years in private education. She created, with her own funds, an Islamic kindergarten, a primary school, and a Qur'anic boarding school for girls in Touba. Sokhna Mame Awa Deme was among the pioneers in the creation of Qur'anic *daaras* and Franco-Arab schools. Sokhna

¹¹ Excerpted from « Women in Mouridism: A story of Progress, but more efforts are needed » by Cheikh Fatma Mbacke

Mame Faty Mbacke is one of the country's leading agricultural entrepreneurs. Indeed the brave woman president of the GIE. Massalikoul Djinane of Dendèye, stands out for her leadership in agricultural production (cultivation of groundnuts, millet, rice), in livestock, processing cereals in a semi-industrial unit for export. She herself created nearly 60 jobs and hundreds indirectly, mostly for women. The list of leading operators counts very few women but Mame Sokhna Faty is one. Twice the winner of the Head of State's grand prize for the Advancement of Women, in 1997 and 2004, today she has decided to share her experience in a book that will be published soon.

Other women, sadly too few, give lectures on Islam to awake the consciousness of their Senegalese sisters and also abroad. Examples are Sokhna Mama Awa Deme, Sokhna Mariama Diakhaté, Sokhna Neeeye Mbayem, etc. We should also highlight the women who are the most active members of the *dahiras* that represent an essential feature of the Mouride social organization.

These examples show that in the Mouride community, as is the case in many others around the world, women have always had significant positions. This is not to suggest complacency as there are clearly efforts to be made. We should recognize that, for sociological or other reasons, the education of girls is sometimes a problem; very intelligent young girls are often married off at an early age, thus compromising their education. Some religious leaders do not encourage their daughters in Qur'anic and Islamic studies as much as their sons. Many women from religious families are constrained in exercising the role of religious leader. It is difficult for them, for example, to give sermons before female followers. Fortunately many recent initiatives, notably the establishment of Islamic schools, boarding schools, and institutes, should yield encouraging results. Increasing numbers of parents have become aware of the need to keep their daughters in school as long as possible. Today the women of Mbacké Mbacké and others in the Mouride hierarchy have become officials. The first Mbacké Mbacké doctors should emerge soon, including one from the military health academy.

It may be a good thing for the women in these religious families of Touba and elsewhere to be organized intelligently and responsibly in order to advance the cause of girls' education in all religious and scientific fields. This female leadership should also address many other issues that women face in the community, consistent, of course, with Islamic percepts. They will thus avoid the pitfalls that feminist groups, often funded by obscure foreign interests, present as they try by all means to reach the women of Touba and other religious cities, with their propaganda that clearly draws on values from elsewhere, including the West. Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba wrote *Diawabou Sokhna Penda Diop*, a true guide for Muslim women, in response to a request of his aunt, Sokhna Penda Diop, for advice on her responsibilities. He never confined the role of women spiritual guide to women alone, holding that women should give sermons to men as well as women.

NEW CHALLENGES FOR THE MOURIDES

Born in 1883, Mouridism can be considered relatively young, but its dynamism and expansion have astonished all researchers and observers. In close to a century, it has managed to reach nearly 50 percent of Senegal's population. Like any reform movement, it must surmount many challenges, as it becomes a mass movement: training its members and ensuring their solidarity. But it has also faced challenges related to the aristocracy of the local kingdoms of the Tieddo, of religious and jealous conservatives, and especially the legacies of the French colonization. Despite all the obstacles the Mourides have developed in Senegal—and somewhat in some foreign countries such as France, the USA, South Africa, etc.—Mouridism faces new obstacles in confronting the challenges of today and tomorrow.

Challenges of unity and governance

A major challenge facing the Mourides is to remain a unified community led by the *Khalifa général*. The son of Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba and his first grandson signed the pact that has governed the succession to the

caliphate in an orderly and peaceful manner. The same principle continues, whereby the oldest among the sons of Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba is designated as caliph. On the death of Bamba's last son, Sheikh Saliou Mbacke, in 2007, many feared that the succession would become a source of conflict and dispute. So far this has not been the case. But it must be recognized that the debate on the question of whether to continue with this system or consider a new one—based not on age but on the skill and degree of commitment and achievements in favor of Mouridism and Islam, while still limiting the succession between members of 12 families from Cheikh Bamba's sons—is still open in the community. Some have proposed that the caliphate be open to all Mourides. This view, although held by a small minority, as well as other proposals, allows debate on the future succession because for some generations of descendants, it will be very difficult to determine who is the eldest among the contenders. But all agree that at all costs the unity of the family of Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba and all Mouride disciples around a caliph selected according to the system adopted by common agreement among all actors must be preserved. We must recognize that some who have the Mouride mantle, weaken the community by putting materialistic and individualistic interests first because of their personal ambitions.

As Dr. Khadim Sylla said so well, Serigne Touba has built a wall around the Mouridism to the point that critics and other enemies do not know where to start to find breaches and spread disorder. But if from within, community members themselves open gaps, it is clear that the detractors and enemies will find open doors to attack Mouridism and the community, which is its strength. And we must not delude ourselves: politicians will do no favors for the Mourides. If they feel they can succeed with the old technique of divide and rule, they will not hesitate. We also know that most political powers are not happy to see other powers, whether religious or social. As Senghor said: "*Buur da fa fur*" (All power is jealous).¹²

At a practical and pragmatic level, it is only by being united that Mouridism can continue to have significant weight on the national political chessboard. This will require living far better the Qur'anic tradition of the *shura*, which is about dialogue and consultation: as the Qur'an says "consult them about their business..."(V.38/S.42). To maintain Mouride unity in a durable way, the challenge is more inclusive governance. The caliph has always relied on senior dignitaries of the community to carry out his mission, especially to carry out projects like the Great Mosque of Touba, or entrusting the organization of the great *Magal Touba* to a descendant of the Sheikh, as in the case of Serigne Moustapha Bassirou who handled management of Magal throughout the third caliphate. Or as is the case today to appoint a spokesperson for the caliph in the person of Serigne Abdou Bassirou Khadre. More recently there have been efforts to assign specific roles to some figures, for example education management, management of religious issues, management of relationships with the diaspora, etc.

We must recognize that these roles have not always come with clearly defined missions, objectives, and means. Thus the challenge is for Mouridism to better organize its governance by defining a number of functions that transcend one or another caliphates in managing community affairs. Functions such as issues of Islamic procedure, education, culture, the governance of mosques, management of the "Keur Serigne Touba" ["Houses of Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba" (seat of Mouridism in cities or villages)], and management of the Mouride diplomacy (Mouride Diaspora and developing doctrine towards the world). Other important functions that would benefit from better organization are the management of the community's financial resources, where rightly or wrongly, some accuse the immediate entourage of some caliph of handling them poorly sometimes.

¹² Le Mouridisme face aux défis politiques du futur. By Cheikh Fatma Mbacke.

http://www.cheikhfatma.com/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=170:le-mouridisme-face-aux-defis-politiques-du-futur&Itemid=414

Some in the Mouride community call on their followers to involve all stakeholders in the management of Mouridism while preserving the roles of unifier, symbol, and representative of Mouridism in the function of the Khalif. This would have the merit of making the management Mouride business more collegial and make the challenge of gaining access to the caliphate less daunting. All this to avoid the dreaded syndrome of division within Islam after the first four caliphs in Muslim communities, whether large or small.

Political challenges

The Mourides' relationship to Senegalese political power has always been marked by great hesitation in the face of a force that can be mobilized and a concern about religious versus political authority. Another concern surrounds efforts to use their mobilizing capacity whenever a political interest is involved. Most significant is the effort to obtain a "political *ndiguel*" (instructions to vote) in favor of a particular candidate. Since colonial times the support of the Mouride caliph for a candidate has always been considered crucial to win an election because the Mouride electorate is a block that will almost entirely follow the instruction of the Khalif. From Blaise Diagne, the first black MP, to Abdou Diouf through Galandou Diouf, Lamine Gueye, and Senghor, all sought the *ndiguel*. Since the fifth caliph, Serigne Saliou, came to power in 1990, there has been a certain neutrality on the caliph's part. This pushes some politicians to seek support and peripheral voting instructions from some community dignitaries. These dignitaries agreed to "roll" for a particular candidate despite the caliph's neutrality, giving voting instructions for materialistic interests. Some have called them opportunists and gravediggers of the Mourides.

The absence of the *ndiguel* of the Mouride caliph on political affairs for nearly 26 years (in 1988 the caliph gave an instruction to vote for Abdou Diouf as president) has led some analysts to declare that the *ndiguel* has simply ended. In our opinion that judgment comes too swiftly, because everything depends on the context and challenges of the moment. After all, the primary purpose of the Mouride *Khalif général* is to encourage and defend Islamic values; to work for the spiritual and material welfare of the Islamic community in general, and especially the Mourides. From there, the community's guide might be expected to mobilize his followers, whenever Islamic values or the interests of the populations are threatened by politicians or policies they implement. If draft laws sought, for example, things that Islam prohibits or makes it easier to do things forbidden by our religion, we would expect that the caliph, as well as all religious leaders, would issue a strong *ndiguel* against the proposal.

In any event, when the caliph gives a *ndiguel*, it is part of his role because the Qur'an requires him to "enjoin good and forbid evil." This recommendation is reaffirmed by the hadith that teaches that "you are all responsible, and each of you is responsible for his flock." An excerpt from Cheikh Fatma Mbacke:¹³ The eminent historian and professor Mamadou Diouf from Columbia University in New York, US said several years ago that the economic power of the Mourides would one day translate into political power. His analysis is certainly based on serious study and the history of world societies. Clearly the Mouride community is among the leaders in Senegal in numbers and economic power. In contrast, if one tries to argue that the Mourides are a more or less organized group of people, or intend to conquer or to exercise political power, as in Iran with the Ayatollah or more recently in Egypt with the Muslim Brotherhood or in Tunisia, personally I would say NO. In other words, the role of caliph is not that of a political party even though he has more authority and charisma than all the political leaders put together, and the *talibés* outnumber any other political coalition. The fundamental difference is that the *Khalif général* has a spiritual and moral authority but not a temporal power, which is inevitably ephemeral. Put simply, the Mouride community has an undeniable

¹³ Le Mouridisme face aux défis politiques du futur. By Cheikh Fatma Mbacke.

http://www.cheikhfatma.com/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=170:le-mouridisme-face-aux-defis-politiques-du-futur&Itemid=414

political weight; however, from my perspective, it has never been and will never be a political party. For me the vision of Sheikhoul Khadim goes well beyond the effort to secure temporal power.

We should recall what Sheikh Mouhamadou Lamine Diop Dagana told us in his *Irwau Nadim*. When Mame Mor Anta Saly, the Cheikh's father, died, although he was very young, it was to him that the religious leaders and his father's companions appealed because of his knowledge, wisdom, and the confidence that Mame Mor showed to him in going to see the Damel Lat Dior so that he could appoint him to replace his father as special advisor to the king. His famous line and his refusal to turn to any king other than God at the time elicited general astonishment. Thus from a very young age it clear that his vocation was not to conquer temporal power. Let us remember what Lasselves, the colonial administrator, said.

Besides, at present politics, as it is practiced in Senegal, is very often at odds with Islamic values. For example all the Sufi paths reject compromises and betrayals, breaking of promises, ignoring loyalty oaths and commitments, pride, and cults of personality (*nafs*). They recommend humility and modesty. The quest for celebrity is opposed to discretion; invectives and denigration are opposed to courtesy; the tactics of politicians, alliance games, and duplicity are opposed to the sincerity that is a quality expected of every sincere aspirant (*murid Sadiq*), etc. In contrast, I would say it would be quite normal for an individual Mouride through the democratic mechanisms in force in the country, to seek to rule this country politically because they are full Senegalese citizens, not citizens completely apart.

In the same vein, it is perfectly normal that the Mourides, as a group united by thought and belief, seek to establish their influence or to defend their common interests (for example, the preservation of the holy city of Touba). Why would they not lobby? Are they less legitimate than consumer associations, unions, Masons, or financial lobbies whose influence we accept? But the vocation of Mouridism as a doctrine or spiritual path remains basically a universal and humanistic vocation, which is TO SERVE. To serve himself, those close to him, his family, his fellows, and even the entire earth; hence the paramount importance of *khidma*, which is an extraordinary concept that we still need to explain, revisit, and better theorize.

Mouridism should take a leading role in the task of consolidating democracy and good governance, staying true to its letter and its teaching. On the other hand, public people who openly claim Mouridism must know that they are bearers and representatives of their community. That is why it is their duty to be exemplary in discharging their responsibilities. In the future, if they violate these rules –the Islamic rules probity and fairness–it would be good if there were voices to denounce and not to protect them with an unacceptable form of complacency. Moreover it would be a kind of sacrilege because Serigne Touba was heard saying, "my neighbors and community who selected me are protected from everything that generates disgrace." Thus Touba cannot just be a refuge for the dishonest but rather "a bulwark that hinders and diverts the rebel who tries to profane the decency of Islam or the deference owed to this space" as it is written in *Matlabul Fawzayni* (Quest for two Felicities), a poem that Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba composed when he founded the holy city of Touba.

At the international level, the Mourides have remained discreet in the face of crises that have affected the Islamic world. That is true on the Palestinian question and extremist terrorism, even though they have a doctrine of peace and a tradition of peaceful resistance in the face of adversity or oppression. In the future, the Mourides will benefit by having their voice better heard, above all in the Islamic world, and they should try to share their universal values of peace and dialogue.

Anti-Mouride challenges

Since its creation, Bamba's community has always faced anti-Mouridism, sometimes very raw. From the local aristocracy of the *Tieddo* who saw their authority over the people shrinking as people followed Mouride

leaders, to religious figures who are jealous to see that their faithful rally to the Mourides, colonial authorities unhappy to see another resistor emerge after they believed they had finished with all form of resistance, Mouridism was one of the most contested doctrines from its inception. Some even say the hostility against them is the community's "fuel", seen in the meteoric rise from zero percent in 1882 to nearly 50 percent of Senegal's population currently.

Today new challenges of anti-Mouridism stand in the community's path. The old "intellectual" secular and/or Masonic class cannot conceive or accept that a religious leader may have more authority than a politician or an "intellectual". For them any means is fair game to get rid of Mouride power. Even if they perceive that this community is the force that drains the Senegalese economy (agriculture, commerce, transport), this group seeks to neutralize, undermine, and infiltrate the Mouride community to bring it to its knees, not at all in a pragmatic spirit, but for purely ideological reasons. This group is very powerful because it is present among all the levers of political, economic, and media power.

The second anti-Mouride group is, unfortunately, a group that has emerged from Islam, the groups known as "Salafists" who are financed in general by Saudi Arabia to fight against the Sufi Sunni Islam of the Muslim *confréries* of the world.

Saudia Arabia, the country where Islam originated, seeks to be seen as a great world power with its claim to be the leader of 1.5 billion Muslims. It faces today a reality that it does not like: that the Muslims who belong to the Sufi *confréries* do not listen to or obey their spiritual guides. For example the Mourides have no line of authority to any Saudi royal or religious figure. The Saudis do not recognize the authority of the Mouride *Khalif général*.

Well aware that the Sufi brotherhoods represent a challenge, Saudi Arabia decided on a war against them, first by denigrating them, and sometimes declaring them "deviationist" from Islam, also by giving scholarships preferably to members of the ruling families of these *confréries* to divert them from their original doctrine and use them as levers to lead the smear campaign against their own families. Thus, for example, even in Touba and the surrounding villages as Ngabou, *daaras* and mosques are funded and helped, as part of this quiet and long-term anti-Mouride fight in favor of the geopolitics of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabian. The attacks in Timbuktu in northern Mali against Sufi shrines are part of this same manifestation of "Salafis" hostile to Sunni Sufi Islam. Many observers believe that action in Touba is part of the overall plan of the "extremists" against the African *confréries*.

For the Mourides today, the challenge is to confront and ensure an adequate response to the Salafi offensive, including investing more in education by creating better and larger numbers of *daaras*. To date almost all levels of education in the Mouride community are the result of private initiatives. It is time for the caliphate to better organize religious education within Mouridism, in Touba, and other localities (Darou Mouhty, Porokhane, Taif, Ndingy, etc...) from infancy to university education, taking responsibility for sustained financial support. Even on social matters, there is a need for better organization for solidarity by establishing organizations like the Red Cross or the Red Crescent to manage better assistance to the poorest in the Mouride community. Such solidarity among the Mourides is very strong, with religious leaders who play roles in redistributing resources and in the *dahiras*, but at the level of the caliphate a larger scale action along these lines also would serve to respond to the challenge posed by the salafist social action.

In contrast to the salafists, the Mouride hierarchy does not consider the other large Senegalese *confrérie*, the Tidianiya, an adversary or an enemy. The two *confréries* share many Sufi principles and are carrying out the same struggle against extremist salafism. For many years both the colonial power and the new authorities of

independent Senegal have tried constantly to seed opposition and exacerbate rivalry between the two *confréries*, the Mourides and the Tidianes. The old approach was to “divide to rule better.”

Other challenges

Besides these various challenges, the Mourides confront several others, notably education, culture, and communications. In a word, Mouridism must, more than in the past, play the role of motor for Senegal’s economic and social development. The Government, if it were pragmatic, could for example support the religious communities in developing infrastructure, jobs, and social support, and in mobilizing funds, thus easing the burden on the state to finance. For the planned Thies-Touba highway, if the caliph were to call for contributions from the followers (financial, material, and physical, through volunteer labor), the government could substantially reduce the costs of the project.¹⁴ How many similar projects could be done elsewhere in the country?

CONCLUSION

Since its birth, Mouridism has faced numerous challenges and obstacles that have threatened its very existence. It has been able to meet these challenges thanks to its resilience and an extraordinary ability to adapt.

At first essentially a rural community, Mouridism has taken over the cities of Senegal and adapted in this environment by inventing new forms of organization such as the *dahira*. Emigration has also enabled it to develop new mutations in the face of new realities. Its dynamism has allowed it to move from the agricultural sector to all sectors of the national economy, informal trade, wholesale trade, transportation, and the beginning of industrialization.

Through leadership, commitment, and sacrifice by the faithful, Mouridism has taken giant steps in terms of expansion and influence in Senegalese society. In barely a century of existence, it has become one of the largest religious communities in the country and the most influential in religious, cultural, social, and political terms. The Mourides have even adopted, for their benefit, the “new world” that the Internet represents. Mouridism’s peaceful conquest of other countries began as Mouride disciples emigrated, but there is still much work to do in this area: to better share the ideals of peace, hard work, service to God, and all humanity. The adaptability of the Mourides should serve them well as they face new challenges of organization, functioning, development, and relations with others and with their socio-political environment.

(Translated from the French by Katherine Marshall)

¹⁴ La place du religieux dans la reforme des institutions au Sénégal. By Cheikh Fatma Mbacke.

http://www.cheikhfatma.com/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=158:la-place-du-religieux-dans-la-reforme-des-institutions-au-senegal&Itemid=414

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Serigne Afé Niang (Conférencier, document audio) : enseignant-chercheur à Touba

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