



Religion and Economic Activities in the Murids' Islamic Brotherhood of Touba, Senegal.

SVF-3903

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Autumn 2013

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Spring 2013

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To all the Murids of Touba, thank you for your hospitality!

Abstract

This thesis is a reflection about imbrications of religion and economic activities in the Murids' Islamic brotherhood of Senegal. With Visual Anthropology as disciplinary framework, I conducted fieldwork in Senegal with a video camera and, made a 30 minute documentary film from the material I collected in that regard. It addresses the quotidian of a young Murid living in Touba. In the following pages, I reflect upon life situations of several informants I met in Touba, the wholly city of the brotherhood. The discussion about their concrete daily lives will bring me to analyze the brotherhood as a whole for the reader to have a complete picture of it.

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Preface

There exist a significant amount of literatures about Muridism, an Islamic brotherhood founded in 1883 by Sheik Ahmadou Bamba (1853-1927). Most of them are narrowed down on its particular features in their “contemporality”. Few attentions have been given to the historical trajectory of the brotherhood as part of the explanation those features. That approach makes sense when one considers his/her targeted recipients as familiar with the topic.

Here, I touch upon ongoing social, religious and political dynamics in light of historical landmarks. That was the pedagogy used by my informants when teaching me there universe of representation. I found it useful regarding my prior unfamiliarity with the topic. In the following pages, I use a similar approach in consideration of the relevance of history in the construction of the anthropological discourse in general and this type of topic in particular.

I also espouse this approach in consideration of comments and suggestions from teachers and classmates who read and commented on my drafts. This gives me the opportunity to address a warm thank to all the staff and students of Visual Cultural Studies. I would like to address a warm thank to Paul Stoller whose comments helped me a to improve the prose of this thesis.

Special thanks to my project supervisor, Bjørn Arntsen. Thank you for everything you did for me during this two years’ experience in Tromsø. My special thanks go also to the film supervisor Gary Kildea the "filmsopher".

I'm grateful to all the protagonists of this project: Serigne Samba Diarra Thioune and his family, members of the daara Hizbut Tarqiyyah, Lamine N'Diaye, Gallo Thiam, Ahmad and Moustapha Diop, Soumaila Diallo, Mamadou Daouda Konate, Seydou Magassa, the Senegalese Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Thanks to you I came this far.

My gratitude goes also to the Center for Sapmi Studies, the University of Tromsø and through it, the Norwegian state for sponsoring my studies in Visual Cultural studies. Thank you!

Thanks to all the people and institutions who helped me in one way or another to attend this master program.

Introduction

In addition of being the founder of Muridism, Sheik Ahmadou Bamba is also known as one of the most important figures who opposed a pacific, religious and cultural resistance against colonization in Senegal. Called Murids, adherents of Muridism agree with important principles of Islam.

In this paper I essentially reflect upon their association of religion and income generating activities. For economic contribution of each member to the wellbeing of the community, has been established as a religious duty by Sheik Ahmadou Bamba. Therefore, fulfilling it constitutes an important source of motivation for the Murids when they engage themselves in the economic field.

When compared to other brotherhoods in the Muslim world, Muridism presents features that make it particular. Its religious nature and the economic pyramid that emerged from it over the past century is due to the religious and political context it was founded. As a religious minority, murids' early inclination toward income generating activities brought them to be a pillar in the country's economy.

During the 19th century, which was dominated by the *Ceddo*¹ violent aristocratic regime on one hand; and the advent of the French colonialism on the other hand, Bamba proposed an approach of Islam that contained many reforms. *"The pedagogy he developed from 1884, (...) emphasizes work and religious practices (...). Bamba organized his disciples in the daara Tarbiyya or working school and in villages supervised by his early followers. Murid doctrine taught love and submission to one's shaikh², solidarity and hard work for the sake of God."*(Babou 2003: 312).

Beyond his purely religious agenda, the notion of work that Bamba introduced to his spiritual program empowered the newly founded brotherhood both economically and institutionally. His advanced disciples, who joined him in the role of teaching, were sent to different locations of the country to spread Bamba's approach of Islam. Their position as teachers got strengthen thanks to disciples who were exhorted to respect them. *"To completely respect the teacher's right is to honour him, to follow his recommendations without hesitation, and to give him material support."* (Babou 2003, 322). Establishing such a relation between teachers and students paid off

¹ The Ceddo are a warrior tribe

² A Shaikh is to be understood as an Islamic scholar.

politically. It increased the popularity of the brotherhood and the prestige of Bamba against the *Ceddo* and the French colonizer.

Today, the Murids represent more than one third of the Senegalese population (Babou 2003: 211); which is estimated to be 13 million³. Their social organization is structured in the following way. One of the grandsons of the founder is the head of the brotherhood. He is referred to as the Khalif General. He is very influential and capable to engage the entire brotherhood into religious events or major economic investments that benefit the Murid community. Below him in the hierarchy are the dignitaries referred to as “Serignes” or religious guides. Although they are less influential compared to the Khalif General, they nevertheless represent the lifeblood of the brotherhood since they have a direct contact with the third and last category in the hierarchy: the *Talibeys* or disciples. The *Talibeys* naturally represent the majority in the brotherhood and are organized in different types of entities (daaras and dahiras) which are independent from one another. But each entity is led by a Serigne. Therefore, when the Khalif decides to initiate a religious or developmental project which requires fund raising, he will have the support of most, if not all the Serigne and through them, the contribution of the disciples in Senegal and abroad.

From its founding in 1883 up to now, the Murid Brotherhood has expanded exponentially which has brought to its economic and political power. Throughout the years, the Murids became very influential thanks to their own media (TV channels, radios, internet ...) and their dynamism in the social and professional milieus of Senegal. They work in the government bureaucracies, the private sector and various organizations of the civil society.

From the fruit of their incessant labor, they built up the seat of their brotherhood, Touba, which since in inception one hundred years ago has become the second largest town of Senegal. Touba is the holy city of the brotherhood. It is located in the center of Senegal with an estimated population of 335 094⁴ inhabitants and has no direct access to the sea.

One could compare Touba, the holy city of the brotherhood in Senegal, to the Vatican in Rome (Italy). Touba doesn't have an official status of extraterritoriality. In practice however, the Khalif

³ http://www.indexmundi.com/senegal/demographics_profile.html (accessed: 28-04-2013)

⁴ Agence National de la statistique et de la démographie: estimation de la population totale pour les 14 régions du Sénégal de 2008 à 2012.

General' authority has more legitimacy than any other one. Neither the police nor the customs of Senegal are allowed to operate in Touba without his permission.

The locals, who are all Murids with a very few exceptions⁵, engage in commerce and farming essentially. As a notable pilgrimage site, Touba receives many tourists and pilgrims especially during major religious events such as ‘‘Le grand Magal de Touba’’. The last such event (2011) attracted more than three million of participants⁶. Beyond the religiosity of the event, a gathering of more than three millions of people certainly instigates business opportunities notably in the domain of transport, food, telecommunication and various advertisements that go along with it.

The event has also a political relevance although the Khalif General abstains himself from taking part into the Senegalese political debates. He is nevertheless in a position where he can influence substantially the result of a presidential election. Due to that strategic position of his, some Senegalese political leaders often engage themselves into ‘‘seduction exercises’’ by appearing publicly beside him. All the presidents of Senegal, from independence up to now have paid visit to their contemporary Khalif General at least once during their terms.

In other terms, the brotherhood founded by Sheik Ahmadou Bamba, the Sufi master, has gotten more complex than the classic practice of Sufism known so far in the Muslim world. To better understand that complexity, I conducted fieldwork in Senegal mainly in Touba, from April to August 2012. This thesis -which is an outcome of it- is an ethnographic reflection on the lives of several Murids who live in Touba. I also reflect upon the process I went through to collect data and my personal relation with the topic addressed here. I was born and raised in Mali, a country which is more than ninety five percent Muslims for a total population estimated to be 16 millions⁷. I am a Muslim and turned 28 January 2013. Over the past one and half year, I have been living in Norway where I studied Visual cultural Studies at the University of Tromsø.

⁵ None Murids are generally visitors or traders. During my stay I haven't met any permanent resident who was not Murid.

⁶ Etude Monographique Sur l'Impact Socio-économique du Grand Magal de Touba. Sous la Direction de Moubarack LO, Novembre 2011

⁷ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ml.html> (accessed: 28-04-2013)

I will use Weber's work on the protestant ethic and spirit of capitalism as main source of theoretical inspiration. When analyzing informants' life situations I will refer to Bourdieu's notion of capital. They are:

1. Abdou Samat, a Serigne who lives in Touba and has sessions with his disciples on a weekly basis. He doesn't have a professional activity as such, but being the grandson of the founding father represents strong symbolic capital which is enough to receive material supports from his disciples and other Murids as well. Apart from the symbolic, Serigne Abdou Samat belongs to a family which has also an important economic capital. He nevertheless spends most of his time in the supervision of his disciples.

2. Amdy Lo, a 40 year-old man, repairs cell phones in the *Occas* market for a living. Amdy is disciple and member of a daara called Hizbut Tarqiyyah.

3. Samba Diarra Thioune, a 32 year-old man, runs a dental prosthesis workshop in the *Darou Khoudous* market. Samba is also the main character of the ethnographic documentary that goes along with this text. Given that he was named after a Serigne, Samba introduces himself in the film as Serigne though his is a disciple in practice; and does not participate in any daara activity. He nevertheless take part into religious events that take place in the holy city and bring from time to time a material support to his Serigne.

Through these three persons, I will widen the discussion on how the notion of work in the Murids' belief system contributes in making them the most influential religious institution in Senegal. Finally, I will reflect upon how they are now coping with globalization after the experience of colonization from mid-19th to mid-20th

First I will give a brief overview about Islam, Sufism and the context of the foundation of Muridism. Readers who are familiar with Islamic related topic can skip it. However, those who are unfamiliar with it might find it useful in order to understand the topic. I will also present an ethnography of Touba followed by the process I went through to collect data.

I. Islam, Sufism and Muridism

1.1 Overview about Islam

Islam is one of the world largest religions with about one and half billion of faithful⁸. It was founded in the 7th century by Prophet Muhammad. The principal Scripture in Islam is the Quran. It is considered by Muslims as the speech of Allah. Apart from the Quran, Islam gives importance to the tradition of the Prophet referred to as *Sunna*. Together with the Quran, they represent the most important references in Islam. From them derives *Sharia*. More than legislation, *Sharia* is also a moral code that touches all aspects of Muslims' lives (politics, economy, health, education, society, environment...) (Ramadan 2009, 102). The two references define also the worshiping practices notably the five pillars of Islam:

- The *Shahada*. It is the approval of the oneness Allah and Mohammed as his messenger.
- The *Salat* or daily prayers. There are five daily prayers which are mandatory in Islam. The ideal place for their accomplishment is the Mosque for men and home for women; but both of them can accomplish it everywhere. The daily prayers are to be done at specific times of the day which varies from one region to another.
One *Salat* has a special status compared to the rest: it's the second one of Friday. Accomplishment of that *Salat* represents the largest religious gathering of the week in Muslim societies. One could compare it to the Sunday prayer in Catholic Churches.
- The *Zakat*. It can be defined as a solidarity tax of the well off for the poor. It is a religious obligation that has to be done once a year. Although it is primarily intended for the poor, the *Zakat* can be invested in projects of common interest (mosque, Islamic center, hospitals ...).
- The *Siyam*. It is about fasting for a month each year according to the lunar calendar. The month under question is known in Islam as Ramadan.
- The *Hajj* or pilgrimage. Once in their lives, any Muslim who has the physical and material capacity has to do pilgrimage in Mecca.

The majority of Muslims agree with these pillars (Buresi 2007, 7-8). However, divergences between scholars on the interpretation of scriptures have often led to the creation of brotherhoods throughout the world. Sufism is an example of it.

⁸ <http://www.pewforum.org/The-Future-of-the-Global-Muslim-Population.aspx> (accessed May 02-2013)

1.2 Sufism

It is possible to trace back the origin of Sufism as far as the beginning of Islam itself. Etymologically, the term Sufism refers to a wool coats worn by ascetics (Buresi 2007, 40). Sufism was not born as a constituted brotherhood. It was rather a religious practice that emphasizes asceticism, meditation, spirituality, mysticism and invocations in order to reach religious ecstasy. After several centuries, during which it was isolated practices, an attempt to theorize it as a brotherhood began with thinkers such as ' Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (1078-1166) and Al Ghazali (1058-1111).

Although they all aim at religious ecstasy, the specific spiritual practice that should lead to it varies from one Sufi master to another. Those variations have resulted in the development of new "sub brotherhood entities"; but still under the umbrella of Sufism. Qadiriyya, Tijaniyya and Muridism are examples in that regard. The first two are the most rooted brotherhoods in West Africa. Furthermore, it is important to note that Islamization of South Saharan Africa was mainly done by charismatic Sufis who developed brotherhood approaches to supervise the newly converted Muslims. This was the case of Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya particularly in Senegal, and Muridism later.

1.3 Muridism

In his doctoral thesis, "Mouridisme et migration", Khadim Sylla underlined a major crisis that characterized the Senegalese societies the century before Muridism was founded in 1883. The crisis he referred to was at the same time political, religious and social. Hence Bamba initiated the brotherhood as a response to it. Bamba was born in Mbake Kadjoor in the early 1850s in a religious family. He has been initiated to the Qadiriyya brotherhood by his father. He studied Arabic and Islamic theology from scholars in different part of Senegal and Mauritania. After years of studies and reflection about the role of Islam in the Wolof societies, he came to the conclusion that education of the grassroots was the only solution to bring change. (Sylla 1999, 69)

In the same line of thought Sylla notes that Bamba was critical toward the marabouts' approach of teaching Islam. According to him, the marabouts were following a classical scheme of religious education which was no longer appropriate to the context they were living in.

Furthermore, the situation became more complex with the French colonial conquest along with its assimilation policy in the XIXth century.⁹

In his new religious movement, Bamba kept the spirit of asceticism which is an important notion in Sufism, but, he redefined it according to the context he was living in. Rather than a detachment from the temporary world, Bamba presented an approach of asceticism which emphasizes running economic activities.

He organized his disciples in Daara Tarbiyya or working schools where he offered them possibilities to develop skills about a variety of trades. Concomitantly, he submitted them to an intense spiritual training (Babou 2003: 312). Bamba presented the notion of work as a religious duty by referring to one of the hadith of prophet Mohamed which says: *Work as if you were to live eternally and worship your Lord as if you were to die tomorrow*. This hadith suggest a balance combination of work (or income generating activities) and the purely religious activities (prayers, pilgrimage, Koran studies...). One can say that the hadith summarizes the central feature that distinguishes Muridism and other brotherhoods of the Sufi order.

In the context of late 19th century in Senegal, Bamba encouraged his disciples to look for economic resources not only for the above raison. He expected them to bring him a material support called *Haddiya* which has been equally establish as a religious duty. Those *Haddiya* allowed him to open up other daara Tarbiyya and to delegate his advanced disciples for their supervision. Through *Haddiya* and the multiplication of daaras, a step toward and economic expansion and the institutionalization of the brotherhood was made. Moreover, an advanced disciple, Ibrahima Fall started a new movement referred to as *Bayfallism* but still under the umbrella of Muridism. The people belonging to that subgroup, the Bayfalls, are known for their dedication to work physically for their leaders and the rest of the Murids community. In doing so, they exempt themselves from the very spiritual practices (praying, fasting...) of Islam thereby creating controversies in the brotherhood at times.¹⁰

From a broader perspective, the development of Muridism and the increasing popularity of its leader started to become and object of preoccupation for the French colonial authorities.

⁹ Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?oldid=434292400> (accessed June 16th 2013)

¹⁰ The role of the bayfalls is addressed by the main character in the film. Watch it from minutes: 16' 35" to 18' 17"

They feared that Bamba might end up declaring a holy war against them regarding his increasing influence¹¹. They attempted in different ways to prevent the expansion of his movement namely by deporting him to Gabon for seven years (1895-1902) and Mauritania for five years (1903-1907)¹². Rather than being a prejudice for him and his followers, Bamba's departure for Gabon strengthened the sense of unity and solidarity in the brotherhood. Moreover, the anniversary of his departure started to be commemorated every year and has become the greatest religious event of the brotherhood: *The Grand Magal of Touba*¹³.

"... Murid farmers soon became major pillars of the colony's economy as they made a substantial contribution to the production of millet and of peanuts, the single colonial cash crop, in Senegal. By 1912, the French had worked out a policy of accommodation with the Murids, as they understood that the cost of suppressing the organization far outweighed the benefit they could earn by establishing stable and peaceful relationships with Bamba and his disciples. By the end of 1912, the Muridiyya¹⁴ had gained some recognition from the French although its leaders had remained under close surveillance." Babou (2003:312)

When Bamba died in 1927, his son Modou Moustapha Mbacké took over the leadership of the brotherhood as the first Khalif General. He has been the first of the kinship based succession which led to the current Khalif General, Sheik Sidy Mouctar Mbacké, a grandson of Bamba.¹⁵ He runs the Murid community which has a more complex configuration than the early days of its foundation.

There are thousands of daaras and dahiras where disciples learn about Muridism under the supervision of Serignes. However, not all the Murids take part in the daara activities of their Serigne. During my fieldwork, I met many disciples who were simply Murids because they gave allegiance to a Serigne and provide him material support at times. Disciples belonging to that

¹¹ Many religious leaders declared holy wars in that part of West Africa as their influence increased. One of them was El Hadj Omar Tall. See also (Buresi 2007, 13).

¹² <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?oldid=434292400> (accessed, 16th June 2013)

¹³ Apart from the commemoration of Bamba's return from exile, the term Magal is also used by the Murid when commemorating the death of an important dignitary of the brotherhood. Such event is generally organized by the descendant who inherited the legitimacy of the dignitary under question. During the event, the descendant receives visits from his disciples who bring him material and /or financial support (haddyah). The event is also an occasion for many disciples to visit the mausoleum of the past dignitary. See in the film an example of Magal celebration.

¹⁴ Muridiyya is another term for Muridism.

¹⁵ <http://www.toubatoulouse.org/les-khalifs-de-serigne-touba.html> (accessed June 16th 2013)

category are generally looked upon as less dedicated Murids compared to those who spend time next to their Serigne in order to obtain his Baraka (blessing).

This overview about the foundation and development of Muridism is neither exhaustive nor was it meant to be. The objective is to help the reader to better understand the current dynamics in light of historical landmarks about the topic I'm concerned with. It aims also at introducing a reflection about sociological observations that seem to attract religious minorities toward economic activities.

“The national or religious minorities who are in the situation of "dominated" in relation to a group of "dominant" are ordinarily strongly attracted by economic activity because of their exclusion; voluntary or involuntary from influential political positions”. (Weber 1904-1905, 18)

These are the terms of Max Weber as he starts his reflection about the contribution of Protestantism in the development of capitalism. His book, *Protestant ethic and spirit of capitalism*, addresses the way the Protestant culture, precisely, moral parameters have psychologically conditioned the believers (Protestants) for them to become better economic entrepreneurs. That resulted in developing capitalism especially in countries where Protestants were prior religious minorities such as France, Germany and Holland.

Different tendencies have existed under the same umbrella of the Protestant Reform (Calvinism, Methodism, Lutheranism...). However, all these tendencies put an emphasis on asceticism although they do not define it the same manner.

Calvinism, since Weber put an accent on that one, is the branch of Protestantism which offered a remarkable possibility for the development of capitalism. Unlike other protestant theologians, Jean Calvin developed an approach of asceticism which encourages believers to look for economic resources as much as they could. The Calvinist approach of asceticism contradict the one of "orthodox" Catholicism in the sense that it doesn't consider being wealthy as “morally inconvenient”. What it does consider as a moral issue is when the wealthy believer falls into "enjoying life" or "devilish temptations".

Calvinism presented working as the way one could please to God. However, it also established a moral restriction on how the believers should consume the outcome of their labors.

Consequently, Protestants have come to produce much more wealth than what they consume. The exceeding wealth could only go to the Church or reinvested in their enterprises hence the development of capitals.

Weber in his analysis touched upon several characteristic which are found in Muridism.

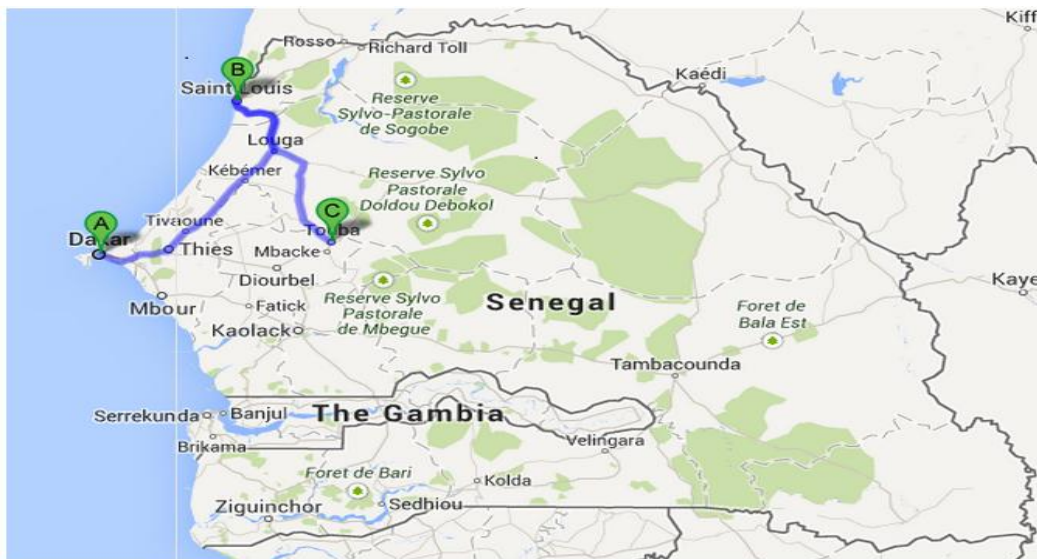
- Both of these religious institutions were born out of existing doctrines that were relatively well established. (Muridism was born out Sufism and Protestantism was born out of Catholicism).
- They both define asceticism differently than the doctrines they detached themselves from.
- They both experienced a disadvantageous power relation in societies they were initiated and had a penchant for economic activities.
- Whereas the work ethic of Protestantism contributed in the development of capitalism, the one of Muridism resulted in building the village that soon became the second town of Senegal.

To summarize, Muridism is an additional example that supports Weber's attempt to relativize the trend which consist of considering economy as the ultimate factor for social change. Religion, as Muridism and Protestantism suggest it, can influence specifically the economic life of a society.

II. Discovering Tuba



Map of West Africa: source <https://maps.google.com/maps?q=senegal&ie=UTF-8&hq=&hnear=0xec172f5b3c5bb71:0x5a46a55099615940,Senegal&ei=T2D-UbD2FIHctAbY34GwBg&sqi=2&ved=0CJEBELYD> (accessed 04-08-2013)



Map of Senegal. Source: <https://maps.google.com/maps?q=senegal&ie=UTF-8&hq=&hnear=0xec172f5b3c5bb71:0x5a46a55099615940,Senegal&ei=T2D-UbD2FIHctAbY34GwBg&sqi=2&ved=0CJEBELYD> (accessed 04-08-2013)

The cities marked with letters A, B and C are places where I conducted research. The letters represent also my itinerary during fieldwork in chronological order. See comments on it in the following chapter.

[It was 10 am when I left the bus station of Saint Louis on a "Seven place" taxi, heading to Touba. Ten minutes' drive was enough to have Saint Louis behind us completely because the bus station is not in the middle of the city but on its periphery. On both side of the road to Touba, a desert landscape, dominated by the yellowness of the sand till the horizons. In the taxi, passengers who were talkative at the bus station started to be quiet. That was understandable because the taxi was quite small for seven persons. As the temperature was rising rapidly, people get tired and nervous after a while.

As far as I was concerned I was luckier than my fellow passengers. I got the sit beside the driver, the most comfortable one. I was looking forward to see finally the "mysterious village" I saw on TV four years ago. We have been riding for more than two hours, each time we arrived to a village, the driver had to slow down which made me wonder: this is Touba maybe ... but where is the Mosque?

In many Muslim majority societies, the mosque is among the most visible building as one enters them because of the minaret. We rode for four hours and each time I bet on a village as being Touba, I got it wrong; wrong until we cross and archway built over the main road. That archway already gave me the feeling that we were entering a particular place. Where else could it be if not Touba?

However, the more we were entering this new area, the more I started to doubt again. On both side of the road, a long row of shops and street vendors. Is it really Touba? Yes it is. The driver did not slow down only this time, he entered the crowded yard of a bus

station and stopped the engine definitely. Welcome to Touba! We all got out of the car and face a busy environment. It was cars, motor cycles and carpets, everywhere. That kind of environment was not unfamiliar to me though. Bus stations in Bamako (my home town in Mali) rhymes with noise, taxi drivers, restaurants managers, street vendors and smugglers too.

At the Touba bus station however, there was a new given as far as I was concerned, I didn't speak the local language (Wolof) and didn't know anyone there. The chef of the Murid student association in Saint Louis gave me a number to call once I arrive in Touba. It was the number of Mustapha.

When I called him, Mustapha asked me to take a taxi and meet him in front of the Grand Mosque; the same Mosque I was looking for on my way to Touba. The taxi I took in that regard brought me back in the long corridor of shops we shift from earlier for the bus station. This time, the end of the corridor was perceivable two kilometers away from it. It was marked by the famous Mosque with its imposing architecture, much more beautiful than what I saw on the TV some years ago. The grand mosque is the heart of Touba and of Muridism. Although Touba is a symbolic place by itself because it has been founded by Sheik Ahamadou Bamba, it wouldn't become at this date the second town of Senegal if the body of Bamba was not kept in a mausoleum inside the Grand Mosque.]

Millions of people visit the mausoleum throughout the year thereby making the Grand Mosque the most visited pilgrimage site in West Africa¹⁶. Those millions of visitors offer business opportunities to the locals who are Murids in their vast majority. The locals live ordinary on trade activities (baking, shop keeping, restaurant, transportation,) and farming. As in other big cities of the country, Touba has also people offering professional services such as doctors, lawyers, bankers...

During important religious events such as the *Grand Magal of Touba*, traders from all over the country join the millions of Murids pilgrims in Touba. The grand Magal is a business opportunity which generate more than 380 million euro every year¹⁷. Beyond the series of religious events taking place in the holy city each year, the daily life of the locals remain characterized by the religious authorities who try in various ways to upkeep the spiritual feature of the city.

Following the line of thought of Sheik Ahamadou Bamba, the current authorities are promoting the Wolof traditional culture as well as Islamic values. For that purpose, they have taken a series of measures such as forbidding sexy dresses for women though they do not impose on them head scarf as in other Muslim countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia. Authorities of Touba forbade also all public gathering which doesn't have an explicit Islamic purpose. Despite the Murids' influence on the political life of Senegal, political gathering are not allowed in Touba. This restriction about public gathering is extended to "music shows" and collective sports¹⁸ (football, basketball, wrestling etc.).

As an outsider, not knowing much about the legitimacy of the Khalif General authority in Touba, I committed a "mistake" during fieldwork which gave me a better understanding of it. On June 17th I shot a religious festival which was attended by hundreds of Murids in the Grand

¹⁶Source: <http://sacredsites.com/africa/senegal/touba.html> (accessed 30th April 2013)

¹⁷ Source: <http://www.hizboudaroukhoudoss.org/?La-Dimension-economique-du-Magal> (accessed 8th January 2013)

¹⁸ From an Islamic perspective, these sports are allowed as long as the objective is to do physical exercises. However, the question becomes more complex with what surrounds the practice of these sports today. When the practice of football for example, opens opportunities for advertising alcohol-which is already forbidden in Islam-then the practice of it becomes questionable. That is to say those worldwide sports are not looked upon as sports simply; the broader context within which they are practiced explains the skepticism of Islamic scholars. As for the murids in Touba, martial arts are one of the rare sports they can practice with very limited risks of crossing Islamic borders.

Mosque. Most of them were visiting the mausoleum of Bamba¹⁹. Soon after, my assistant and I were arrested by the local authorities. I didn't know that despite the shooting permission I was given by the Senegalese ministry of Culture and Tourism, I still had to refer to another authority to shoot a public event in Touba. How wrong was I! My shooting permission, although it was signed by the minister in person, didn't mean much to those who arrested us. My assistant, who was a Wolof, succeeded to convince them about our good intentions to make documentary about Muridism and the greatness of Sheik Ahmadou Bamba. Thus were we released and encouraged to continue what we started. In the meantime, I saw camera men from different TV channels waiting to be given permission to shoot by the same people who arrested us. One of those camera men had on his dress the logo of RTS, which is a national television station; but being from RTS wasn't impressive at all for the local authorities as it was for me.

From a broader perspective, this example was only an expression of a general trend in Touba. The Murid community has a profound respect and consideration toward its leader. The "extraterritoriality" of Touba and the commitment of the locals to serve their leader make Touba appear as a "State in a State". That issue stimulate controversial debates in Senegal which interest the rest of the population especially journalists, politicians and researchers. While the Murids in general praise it, the idea of a "State in a State" makes other religious communities of the country uncomfortable.

Beyond those controversies, the undeniable fact remains that the Murids' belief system and hierarchy has significantly contributed in the development of a particular area of the country whether one consider it as a State or not. Whereas in West Africa, a "top down" approach of development seems dominant, Touba is a counter example in the sense that a religious brotherhood has organized former peasants and brought them to be key actors in the development of their own city.

As mentioned in the chapter *Context of the foundation of Muridism*, working is a central notion in the Murids' belief system and characterizes their daily lives. Discipline at work, solidarity and networking has allowed a great numbers of Murids to be successful economically and contribute

¹⁹ See in the film people queuing for that purpose from minutes 04' 38" to 06' 03"

to the wellbeing of their community. I will elaborate on that when analyzing my empirical material in chapter IV. Before then, I reflect upon the process I went through to collect data.

III. Methodology

According to Davies, *"all researchers are to some degree connected to, or part of, the object of their research. And, depending on the extent and nature of these connections, questions arise as to whether the results of the research are artefacts of the researcher's presence and inevitably influence on the research process. For these reasons, consideration of reflexivity are important (...) reflexivity at its most immediately obvious level refers to the ways in which the product of research are affected by the personnel and process of doing research. These effects are to be found in all phases of the research process from initial selection of topic to the final reporting of results. (2008, 3-4).*

This approach suggests that reflexivity would allow "checking" the scientific credit of an anthropological discourse. From a different angle however, one can conceive reflexivity as part of the anthropological discourse itself. In that approach, the exercise of reflexivity is a plus to the credibility of the anthropological discourse; not an exercise which aims at checking it.

From these two approaches, two different conclusions can be drawn as far as this thesis is concerned. The first approach would suggest, that the steps I followed in this project from the beginning up to the final product are epistemological limits in the discourse I'm presenting here. In the second approach however, it rather represents a relevant ethnographic data by itself; which could serve as basement for the construction of an anthropological discourse. When commenting on the context of my fieldwork below, I touch upon the challenges I faced and how they resulted in increasing my knowledge of my topic. My personal relation with Muridism and the circumstances under which I decided to work on it had repercussions on the course of the fieldwork and the material I obtained.

As mentioned before, I was born and raised in Mali; a country which is more than ninety five of Muslims. I'm 27 years old (2012) and a practicing Muslim. My first time to hear about Muridism was in 2007. I was watching TV when the death of the Khalif General of Muridism was announced. Given that I had never heard about Muridism before, I was right away curious about all the mobilization around the event. I have seen a mosque which I thought might have a particular importance for the brotherhood. The mosque was relatively big with sand and palm trees in the yard. It was crowded with people. Some of them were wearing expensive Wolof *Boubous*; they were surely religious dignitaries. Others, probably politicians, were wearing

western costumes. I assumed they showed up not necessarily because they were saddened by the death of the Khalif General as the rest of the Murids community, but for the sake of being ‘politically correct’. Was I right to have those stereotypes towards men in costumes? The answer is not relevant maybe. What might be of relevance nevertheless is how the society I belong to, shaped my way of evaluating social situations and interpreting images I receive from the media.

The most important message I received about the event-thanks to the media- was that the Murids are a Senegalese important religious community based in Touba. Touba appeared to me as a mysterious village where many charismatic marabouts live and play an important role in the everyday life of the locals. The media stimulated my curiosity about the brotherhood but it didn’t provide me enough answers as for the principles of Muridism and the ethnography of Touba.

What I didn’t know in 2007 was that a series of factors were going to change my life course and conduct me to the answers I expected from the TV coverage and, eventually, correct stereotypes I had about Touba, Muridism, marabouts, politicians in Senegal...

Four years later, I’m enrolled as a master student in Visual Cultural Studies (VCS) at the University of Tromso (Norway). All the students at VCS are required to conduct fieldwork with a video camera. The academic outcome of it is a written thesis and an ethnographic film. After reflecting in terms of interest and achievability, I decided to work on the social representation of Marabouts in Timbuktu, Mali. Mali was the only country I could go for fieldwork due to the terms of my scholarship. Couple of days before my departure (March 27th 2012), a military coup took place in Mali and plunged it in the worst political and military crisis of its history. That forced me to change the geographical location of my fieldwork. I decided, then, to go to Senegal because I expected it to be an easy and ideal country for researchers who aim at working on religious related topics in West Africa. I was, in fact, very interested in such topics.

I had to take of the time allocated for fieldwork to build up a new project which naturally caused me a delay. I arrived in Dakar (capital of Senegal) the 16th of April -a country I never visited before- while trying to develop a project about Muridism along the way. I was planning to spend two weeks in Dakar where I would try to increase my knowledge of the brotherhood (through

reading and befriending eventually some Murids) and look for an assistant for fieldwork; which I planned to do in Touba, the capital of Muridism.

Although I easily found an assistant, Lamine N'Diaye, I had to shorten my stay in Dakar because the energy and resources I was investing to increase my knowledge of the brotherhood were not consequently rewarded. I decided to respond to the invitation of Soumaila Diallo, a friend of mine who was studying at the university Gaston Berger of Saint Louis (Northern Senegal). That offered me better opportunities²⁰ because I met the chef of the local murids' student association. He is the one who proposed me to work with members of the daara Hizbut Tarqiyyah of Touba as protagonists.

In the meantime, Soumaila²¹ informed me that shooting in Senegal requires prior an authorization from the ministry of culture and Tourism. I called the department of cinema in Dakar for an appointment and went to Touba the period in-between to encounter members of Hizbut Tarqiyyah.

After a thirty minute visit of the daara's headquarters, my guide conducted me to the Hizbut Tarqiyyah permanent secretary for communication, Lamine Diouf, for a meeting.

The beginning of our meeting sounded like an interrogation at a police station.

- *What is your name?*
- *My name is Aliou.*
- *Where are you from?*
- *I'm a Malian but I'm studying in Norway!*
- *What's the name of your university?*
- *University of Tromsø, here is my student card.*
- *Thanks... so what brought you here?*
- *I'm here for fieldwork because I'm doing a master in visual cultural studies. This is how the program is called at the university. But concretely it is about visual anthropology. So, that means that I have to write a thesis as well as making a film on the same topic... I*

²⁰ I was living in a student hostel with my friend and many Murid students.

²¹ Soumaila was doing a Master in creative documentary; he knew about the bureaucracies when it comes to filmmaking in Senegal.

want to do that on Muridism ... a friend of mine in Saint Louis suggested me to come to Hizbut Tarqiyyah in order to have relevant information about Muridism.

- *Do you have a synopsis for the film?*
- *Actually, that's the reason I'm here! I have an appointment with the department of Cinema three days from now. I'm supposed to submit to them a project in order to get a permit to shoot. I do had some ideas about what I wanted to shoot but after visiting the headquarter, I changed my mind. But first, I would like to know whether you would be interested that I make a film about your activities. The synopsis won't be a problem. We will find an arrangement that suits both of us.*
- *Indeed, we're very interested... I was thinking that maybe there can be some sort of collaboration between us and the University of Tromsø. As you probably visited it, we have an international center for studies and research about Muridism. We would like to have some more partners abroad. Perhaps you can bridge us with your University...*
- *Why not? We never know...!*

After a relatively long discussion which covered other students they have received in the past, the branches they had in different areas..., we finally agreed that I should send him a draft of the synopsis via email the day after.

When I obtained a place to stay in Touba and a permission to shoot a month later, I informed Lamine Diouf; but it took more than two weeks before we met and work out the starting up of my project. Lamine Diouf was either busy with his own duties toward the daara or struggling to convince characters to adhere my project. Since then, the perspective of the fieldwork has changed because I didn't want him to convince people on my behalf. What I expected from him was to introduce me to protagonists so that I negotiate with them directly. I wanted to avoid working with people without being knowledgeable of their personal motivation or any agreement they might have arranged with Lamine Diouf before they show up in front of my camera.

I was right to have those worries because Lamine Diouf introduced me to two permanent members of the daara (Amilo and Mourtalla) and a semi-permanent member (Amdy). The two permanent members where uncomfortable with the camera and had very limited availabilities. The third one was very cooperative and available every time I asked to shoot him. Consequently, I ended up with one third of the footage needed for the film I described in the synopsis.

When looked from a different angle, the attitude of Lamine Diouf since our first meeting, and those of the two permanent members of the daara are expressions of skepticism vis a vis my project. Before I came to that conclusion, my request appeared -to me at least- very simple and easy to implement. However, Lamine Diouf - who was de facto the supervisor of the project-, had a more complex approach of the same issue. He had many things to take into consideration before making any decision. It took me time to understand his concerns since he never explained it to me. Consequently I often got nervous, disappointed and sometimes pissed off as he often took long before giving me feedbacks regarding the implementation of ‘our project’.

In reality, Lamine Diouf was only the "visible part of an iceberg". Behind him were all the elites of the daara who weighted much more than himself in the decisions he was apparently supposed to make individually as the Permanent Secretary for Communication. Who are those elites? How to understand their skepticism?

To answer these questions, it is important to have some ideas about Hizbut Tarqiyyah's foundation. This organization was founded by a group of students from the University of Dakar who wanted to live their Murid faith collectively in 1975. After five years of existence as a dahira in students' hostels, they opened up a Murid religious and cultural center (daara) in 1980. That center was organizing a variety of activities namely conferences to disseminate Muridism. Thanks to the increasing number of adherents, they have multiplied their branches throughout Senegal and abroad. Since then, one could expect Hizbut Tarqiyyah to be a particular Murid organization. First, it was not created as a daara by a Serigne. It rather became it with the increasing number of members and the importance of economic resources resulting from membership dues and fees. Second, the initiators were all students. That university background allowed Hizbut Tarqiyyah to make a positive difference compared to other daara in terms, scrutiny in their activities, efficiency in implementing income generating activities and dissemination of Muridism.

Thirty eight years later, many of the Hizbut Tarqiyyah founders are now the elites of one of the most important daara of the brotherhood. That goes without saying they gained lots of experiences in associating religious and economic activities. They succeeded to impose themselves as a very dynamic and respected daara in the Murid community.

Thanks to their reputation, Hizbut Tarqyyah attracted many researchers hence the decision to create, as Lamine Diouf mentioned it, an "*International Center for Studies and Research about Muridism*" inside the daara. Beyond researchers, many documentary filmmakers and journalists have attempted to explain various aspect of Muridism through Hizbut Tarqiyyah. Unfortunately some of those documentaries were too harsh toward it.

When I was conducting fieldwork, a documentary titled *le vendeur à la sauvette*²² was still on the headlines everywhere in Touba. The Murid community was offended by that documentary which presented them as a multinational company run by charismatic leaders. Religion appeared in that documentary as an *opium for the grassroots*; an excuse that allowed leaders to get rich on the back of poor people.

That is to say that I started fieldwork in a context which was not favorable to talk about documentary; especially with Hizbut Tarqiyyah which is very conscious about the danger a camera might represent. This explains why Lamine Diouf was to be careful when it comes to choose characters for our film. Those characters where to be good Murids and capable of explaining muridism in a correct way.

After he selected characters with whom I started to work with, every step in the process was minutely monitored by Lamine Diouf. To add more precautions, I was asked many times to write down my questions and send them in advance to Lamine Diouf before having interviews from characters. Those questions were to be processed by the administration of the daara before Lamine Diouf gets back to me. Moreover, having a feedback from Lamine Diouf was not enough. I had to make an appointment with characters while taking into consideration Lamine Diouf's availability to monitor whatever I planned to do with them. If, for some reasons, one of them (Lamine Diouf or the characters) was not available, I would have to make another appointment which could be two weeks away.

On July 6th, I was shooting a religious event as Amdy invited me to do so, when Lamine Diouf came to me in these terms:

- The administration called me about a problem...

²² *Le vendeur à la sauvette*. See part of that documentary on http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x9dzt4_la-multinationale-des-vendeurs-a-la_news#.UX9p8bVTCS0

- Ok..., what is it?
- They want you to give further information about yourself and your project...
- No problem, what kind of information?
- A copy of your passport, of your student card, and of the shooting permission you obtained from the ministry of culture and tourism.

Although I provided that additional information the following day, it took three weeks for us to make any step further. From there, I decided to consider an alternative film project and admit that it takes more than good wills and determination to get adhesion of certain protagonists into a project. In this case, adhesion of characters was delicate because the context was dominated by a crisis of trust consecutive to a negative experience with media. In fact, Hizbut Tarqiyyah's background and experience with the media was such that a skeptical atmosphere was generated when I encounter them with the idea of making a film with them. Goffman in that regards wrote:

"When an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him or to bring into play information about him already possessed. They will be interested in his general socio-economic status, his conception of self, his attitude toward them, his competence, his trustworthiness, etc. Although some of this information seems to be sought almost as an end in itself, there are usually quite practical reasons for acquiring it. Information about the individual helps to define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may expect of him. Informed in these ways, the others will know how best to act in order to call forth a desired response from him."(1959:13)

This thought from Goffman brings me to question my personal background and the channel that lead me to the encounter of Hizbut Tarqiyyah. I think that has been, also, a handicap when I tried to establish a trust relation with them. By the time I left Norway for Senegal, I had never heard about Hizbut Tarqiyyah. I decided to work with them following the suggestion of a murid student I met in Saint Louis. That friend didn't know any of Hizbut Tarqiyyah's members on a personal level, nor was he known by them despite his status of leader of the murid students' association of Saint Louis. Consequently, I went to Hizbut Tarqiyyah without being recommended by any 'credible' person or institution. Moreover, coming from a European university added more to the difficulties to establish a trust relation because a recent

documentary, produced by a European TV channel was very harsh with the Murid brotherhood²³. Regarding all these factors, I was not in a position where I could provide a credible guarantee that their dignity and reputation will be respected in the end product. Thus, I provided documentation about my Malian citizenship and my studentship at the University of Tromsø. However, there was a question which remained unanswered or, at least, not addressed by none of us: what can they actually do after I make a "wrong documentary" about them even though they have a copy of my passport, student card and shooting permit?

Theoretically those documents allow them to call me to the court if I make an irrelevant documentary. When we reverse the perspective however, calling me to the court implies that the irrelevant documentary is already made which was not an option for Hizbut Tarqiyyah. Why would they take that risk given that I had nothing special to offer them? They have enough resources to make a documentary about themselves from their own, and surely legitimate perspective. Why would they take the risk to expose themselves?

Given the difficulties and the delay I was experiencing with Hizbut Tarqiyyah, I started to envisage the possibility to make a film about the daily life of my host: Samba. Why Samba? Soon after I moved to his place, Samba and I became friends. Both of us were interested to know each other more. In two weeks, I was familiar with most of the routines that characterizes his daily life. Samba is generous and like sharing experiences with foreigners.

I also had many things to share with him, but the most important one was the challenge I was facing with Hizbut Tarqiyyah. Each time I entered from field, disappointed because of a missed rendezvous with a character, I discussed it with Samba who often made suggestions for the next steps. His suggestions and availability to listen my difficulties was helpful and encouraged me to keep trying.

Sharing my experience with Samba brought us closer and contributed in establishing a mutual trust relation. It offered Samba an opportunity to know more about my personality and to have better insights on my agenda in Senegal. Although I was more and more disappointed and desperate because of my overall experience in that country, I highly appreciated the time I was spending with Samba and decided to make a video souvenir out of it. That exercise brought me

to perceive Samba as more than a friend, but a character also. I realized that he had potentials to be a good character for an ethnographic film.

First, Samba had a regular income generating activity. Second he had a relation with a dignitary of Muridism. Third his belongingness to the brotherhood determines many things in his daily life namely his professional activities and family life. All these aspects could be visualized because Samba was comfortable in front of the camera; and last but not less important, he trusted me.

Regarding the situation of my project with Hizbut Tarqiyyah, Samba and I finally agreed to do more than a souvenir together. By the end of July (few weeks before I left Senegal) he accepted that I make a "serious" film about him as a backup in case the Hizbut Tarqiyyah project doesn't succeed. That decision was a good one for many reasons:

- First, the film project with Hizbut Tarqiyyah didn't succeed;
- Second, following Samba with a camera allowed me to make unexpected discoveries about Muridism and Samba himself.

Coincidentally, the first time I shot Samba after our agreement, his extended family had joined him in Touba in order to take part into a religious festival; a Magal. Samba introduced me to them and gave me access to the religious festival which I couldn't shot otherwise.

The day after, I went with him to his workshop with a camera for the first time. In order to present him in his real life, Samba thought it would be relevant that he introduces me to friends and acquaintances of him in the market where his workshop is. We didn't plan the way we should do it. Luckily, Samba understood my approach of reality and my quest for authenticity through the discussions we had about Hizbut Tarqiyyah. One could say that he was both a character and a co-director in that sense. He consciously drove me into the market and introduced me to people he relates to on a daily basis: vegetables seller, fish seller, rice seller, neighbors, coworkers etc.

Any of them was warned that Samba and I were coming in the market for shooting, nor did they know the purpose of it. A priori, a man with a camera is most luckily a journalist working for a TV channel, or an educated person who has access to the authorities and capable to transmit to them the message of the grassroots. Therefore, all the people I shot started to express the difficulties they were facing in their daily lives. They were launching calls to the authorities for

them to react to the living expenses. No one asked why I was shooting Samba in the market. They all assumed that being with a camera in the market could have only one purpose: giving the floor to the unprivileged for them to express their preoccupations. Those preoccupations said, they assumed that I would transmit them to the authorities which should do something to make life better. I decided to "play the game" without knowing where it could lead me to. Their reaction inspired me many interrogations which I discussed with Samba. Touba is in practice, a city with an extraterritoriality status. However, no one in the market referred to the Murid authorities as a possible solution to their problems. That brought me to interview Samba about his understanding of the roles of Murids's authorities and the government of Senegal in Touba.²⁴

From a broader perspective, my relation with Samba and the steps I followed in the construction of this discourse are such that two articulations are to be considered as a matter of reflexivity. By discourse, I mean both the text and the film as a scientific production; or at least an attempt. The time I spent with Samba allowed him to have insights about my approach of the "reality" as a student in Visual Cultural Studies. Samba was conscious of aspects of his life that were of relevance for the type documentary I wanted make. Regarding the limited time left for fieldwork and the risk I was running to leave Senegal without enough material to make a film, Samba understood that his full cooperation was necessary for me to come up with a documentary. Therefore, he decided to be more than a passive character but a co-director of the film. We have had several sessions together where we reflected upon the rushes and planned our next shootings. Following his proposals, I shot several social situations which had proven to be relevant for both the text and the final film. One could qualify my approach as "shared anthropology"²⁵ regarding Samba's level of participation into the whole project.

After fieldwork, I went through a series of seminars with classmates and teachers in order to find a narrative which makes intelligible the field notes and the rushes. That post fieldwork exercise was fruitful but challenging. First and foremost, I had a different cultural and social background with my informants. Second, the targeted recipients for the thesis are of a different cultural and social background than my informants and me. Finally, the teachers and classmates who helped

²⁴ Watch the film from minutes 24': 47" to 27': 44".

²⁵ The concept of "shared anthropology" was introduced in ethnographic filmmaking by Jean Rouch. The main idea behind it is to get informants to participate notably in the anthropologist's imagery representation of them. Read Paul Stoller (1992) for further comments on it.

me during seminars to find a narrative are of 10 different nationalities. Most of them are Europeans. That is to say that, the way the film is edited and the thesis structured are exogenous constructions or narratives which aim at "making sense" of the hybrid constructions I made with my main informants during fieldwork. Therefore one might wonder: what is left of the reality after these levels of constructions? This question suggests another one? Can we do anthropology without construction? My answer is no.

3.1 About camera in fieldwork

Introducing a camera in a social science fieldwork is not without epistemological implications. The presence or absence of the camera can make a notable difference on the material the fieldworker obtains. Within the framework of ethnographic fieldwork, informants often react differently to the presence of the camera depending on what is at stake and the trust relation between the fieldworker and his informants. My fieldwork experience could serve as an example in that regard. I have had two radically different reactions to the camera from two types of informants as consequence of the trust relation I established with each prior. Members of Hizbut Tarqiyyah were reluctant to the camera whereas Samba and his relatives were comfortable with it. Both of these reactions enriched my knowledge as fieldworker. The reluctance of Hizbut Tarqiyyah stimulated in me many interrogations and brought me to investigate more on

- The background of the daara,
- Its previous experience with media,
- Their conception of imagery representation,
- The financial resources they invest in communication to the outside world through journals, radio, TV stations and internet²⁶ etc.

By accepting to cooperate on the other hand, Samba opened doors for unexpected discoveries. He was very eager to share how he lives his "murity" on a personal level. That didn't prevent him from taking me to a higher level of variety and richness of the brotherhood; and how he, as an individual, relates to the rest of the community. In doing so, he was very active which required me to adopt an according camera work. That is reflected in the film with only one sequence shot on tripod whereas the rest was handheld camera. The total duration of the film is thirty three minutes. It is articulated around three important aspects of Samba's everyday life. His

²⁶ <http://www.hizboudaroukhoudoss.org/>

professional activities, his family life and his relation to the brotherhood. All these three aspects are interrelated. His professional activity allows him to face the expenses of his family and to provide his Addyah to his Serigne. The film shows also what the celebration of a Magal is about given its importance for Samba and his relatives. That allows me to address some advantages of the film when compared to the text. A film brings the audience closer to the participants of the research. Its content is relatively richer than the written text in the sense that it provides information which might be taken for granted in a written description. *"Film brings people and cultures alive on the screen, capturing the sensation of living the presence, in a way that neither words nor even still photo can. The cumulation of successive film frames evokes the sensation of movement over time quite literally through movement over time. Film language is the language of moving, seeing and hearing. More than any other medium or art form, film uses experience to express experience. (...) With documentary, additionally, the filmmaker enters other people's lives, (...) and then goes all out to resurrect them on the screen. (...) if you're writing a book or an article, you can go home and write it all up afterwards. With film you have to shoot events and activities at the time they occur. If you don't catch them then, they're lost forever.* (Barbash and Taylor 1997, 1-2)

The advantage of a text as a medium is the opportunity it offers for analysis and abstraction from what is relatively better described in a visual material. The writing exercise allows reference to other authors and singular reflection upon their work. From that angle, one can say that both these media have potentials to communicate knowledge. Within the framework of visual anthropology however, one might raise the following question as Sarah Pink did, not without reason. *"... can film and writing be equally anthropological? And how do film and writing communicate anthropological and ethnographic knowledge differently? Some visual anthropologists suggest unsatisfactory dichotomies between ethnographic film and writing: Hastrup (1992) argued writing was potentially reflexive while film was not; Barbash and Taylor (1997) saw written text as concerned with 'intuitive abstractions' and film as 'a quintessentially phenomenological medium' with a 'unique capacity to evoke human experience'. Devereaux (1995) suggested film focuses on experience and the particular, but writing 'takes hold of the abstract, that enemy of experience'; and MacDougall (1995), more usefully, proposed that, where ethnographic writing can subdue the individual and the particular, film cannot. Most such distinctions are problematic: written words have for centuries been used to represent the*

particular and human experience, and abstract ideas can be communicated on film by diagrams, maps and voiceover. Therefore, what is of interest is not so much the essential natures of film and writing, as how anthropologists use these media. It is more appropriate to examine how film and writing have been used to communicate anthropological and ethnographic ideas, the benefits of each, and the relationships they bear to practices and discourses." (2006)

Though I agree with Pink on what is to be examined, I think communicating abstract ideas in a film through diagram for example could be problematic. What is film without art? Film has a history and more importantly: rules that it has developed over the years. That implies that not everything technically doable thanks to our today advanced editing software are "allowed" per se. Moreover there is an audience whose taste and interest for visual representation is to be taken into consideration. A filmmaker who loses the interest of his/her audience is comparable to a writer whose book doesn't interest any reader. What is the point of writing then? My conclusion is that film and text represent different potentials as mentioned above. They should be considered as complementary which, none of the above authors seems to envisage.

This project might serve as an example for that matter. Whereas the film engages viewers in a more emotional and sensorial aspect of the topic, the text allows me a more rational approach of it. In the coming chapter, I will put further accent on that aspect.

IV Generating and circulation of economic resources

Here I reflect upon the configuration of the brotherhood, the mentality that governs disciples in search of economic resources and how the acquired resources circulate within the brotherhood. For that purpose, I will use Serigne Abdou Samat, Amdy and Samba as key entries. I focus on these three persons because of their difference in terms of status and milieu. Thus Samba and Amdy are both disciples but reducing one to the other is self-preventing from discovering different levels of economic contribution and the meaning attached to it. I describe and analyze them separately and use each one as starting point for a wider discussion about the according category. Finally, I will draw a conclusion which brings them all together in a broader perspective since they relatively incarnate different organs of the same body.

4.1 Serigne Abdou Samat

Serigne Abdou Samat is a respected dignitary of the brotherhood. He has hundreds of followers among which Samba's brother: Sadia. Thanks to him, I had access to Serigne Abdou Samat, and discussed with him about the principles of Muridism. On a weekly basis, Serigne Abdou Samat has a gathering with his followers of the neighborhood to whom he teaches the values of Muridism. Those gathering take place in front of his villas and ends up when it is time for the fourth prayer of the day (around 7pm).

According to Serigne Abdou Samat, one becomes a Murid by giving allegiance to a Serigne. In doing so, the disciple acknowledges the Serigne as a guide for the worldly affairs as well as the hereafter. That ‘‘contract’’ implies, that the first is to submit to the second, follow his instructions and bring him a *Haddya*. When considering the context of the foundation of the brotherhood, one can understand the emphasis put on building such a relation between disciples and their Serignes. According to Eva Evers Rosander however, such relation is a general trend which is characteristic to all the Sufi brotherhood in West Africa where the religious leader is perceived as "... *the intermediary in the disciple's search for baraka (blessing) and his striving to inter Paradise after a hard life on earth.*" (1997, 4)

Although this type of mentality exists in other brotherhoods of the Sufi order in West Africa, one can affirm without doubt that it is particularly strong in the contemporary practice of Muridism. The murid is not only prompt to bring a *Haddya* to his Serigne; he would purposely look for economic resources in order to bring more support to his Serigne. The more one honors his

Serigne, the more one gets his *Baraka* and hopefully become successful in this world and the hereafter. Dedicated disciples, after years of religious education can become also Serigne hence entitled to open their own daara and develop similar relation with other disciples. However, new Serignes start up with different levels of legitimacy depending on their eventual affiliation to the lineage of the founder.

Serigne Abdou Samat and other grandsons of the founder are more privileged because of their lineage than the religious competences that make one Serigne. That lineage represent a cultural capital which, according to Bourdieu, is linked ‘*(...) to the person in his biological singularity and is subject to heredity transmission which is always heavily disguised, or even invisible, it defies the old, deep-rooted distinction the Greek jurists made between inherited properties (ta patroa) and acquired properties (epikteta), i.e., those which an individual adds to his heritage. It thus manages to combine the prestige of innate property with the merits of acquisition. Because the social conditions of its transmission and acquisition are more disguised than those of economic capital, it is predisposed to function as symbolic capital, i.e., to be unrecognized as capital and recognize as legitimate competence, as authority exerting and effect of (mis)-recognition, e.g., in the matrimonial market and in all the markets in which economic capital is not fully recognized, whether in matters of culture, with great art collections or great cultural foundations, or in social welfare, with the economy of generosity and the gift. Furthermore, the specifically symbolic logic of distinction additionally secures material and symbolic profits for the possessor of a large cultural capital: any given cultural competence (e.g., being able to read in the world of illiterates) derives a scarcity value from its position in the distribution of cultural capital and yields profits of distinction for its owner. In other words, the share in profits which scarce cultural capital secures in class-divided societies is based in the last analysis, in the fact that all agents do not have the economic and cultural means for prolonging their children's education beyond the minimum necessary for the reproduction of labor-power least valorized at a given moment.* (Szemen and Kaposy 2001, 84)

Ordinary Serigne have to play with other factors if they wish to increase their legitimacy or visibility. For that purpose, some Serignes do not hesitate to engage themselves into politic or to take part into related debates in Senegal. Whether they are affiliated to the lineage of the founder or not, religious dignitaries in general benefit an important consideration from the rest of

the population. That explains the temptation for some of them to convert the acquired legitimacy from religion into a political power. In doing so they influence politics and economic strategies of the government. *"Elections have to a considerable extent been directed by the Sufi leaders' commands to their believers and religious authority is similarly used to help the economic and religious elite make deals with the government. Thus the political establishment and the religious leaders are linked in many close but mostly hidden ways.* (Rosander 1997, 4)

Serigne Modou Kara is probably the best illustration in that regard. Modou Kara is a charismatic Serigne who has thousands of followers in the country and abroad. He managed to organize them into a political party. In 2007, he campaigned for Abdoulaye Wade who became the then president of Senegal.²⁷ In return for the support he received from Modou Kara and other murid's dignitaries, President Wade -who claims also his "muridity"- invested more than 150 million euro in Touba after his election. (The budget of Senegal in 2007 was 1 billion 8 000 000 euro)²⁸

4.2 Amdy Lo, a Talibey in Hizbut Tarqiyyah

Amdy is 40 years old. He has two wives and eleven children. He traveled in several countries in Africa while trying to make a living without a satisfactory result. He finally decided to engage himself into mobile telephone business. In 2001, he started up his own workshop in Touba where he sells and repairs mobile phones. Through that business, Amdy managed to buy a house in Touba where he lives with his family. After his family, his most important priority is his religion, precisely, the brotherhood.

Every day, he starts working at the Occas market place from 8 am to 8 pm. Right after the working time, he goes to the daara Hizbut Tarqiyyah for socio-economic and religious activities. Amdy is a semi-permanent member of the daara. Every day, he attends a meeting with other semi-permanent and permanent members where they follow up activities and projects of the daara. By the time I was conducting fieldwork, Hizbut Tarqiyyah had two main projects. The first was the new TV station it was about to inaugurate. The second was about finalizing a mosque in the neighborhood. For most of its projects, Hizbut Tarqiyyah has members who had a corresponding background education. Moreover, the daara has its own training center about electricity, wood and metal carpentry... The members who benefit from that facility represent

²⁷ <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/LIN10088lecaskcabma0/> (accessed 18 May 2013)

²⁸ Source <http://www.droit-afrique.com/images/textes/Senegal/Senegal%20-%20LF%202007.pdf> (accessed 18th May 2013)

human resources which is utilized in different projects of the daara. They represent also available resources when the Khalif initiates a project for the common good of the brotherhood.

Apart from the meetings, Amdy attends cultural activities of the daara such as the chants of a poem written by Sheik Ahmadou Bamba. His understanding of Sheik Ahmadou Bamba is such that there is no room in his life for vacation. According to him a good Murid is to be fully busy everyday either with religious activities of his daara or his professional activity.

When a request from his daara clashes with his profession, Amdy gives the priority to the first one. In other terms, he would close his workshop at any moment of the day if he is needed in Hizbut Tarqiyyah. His profession allows him to be flexible since he owns his workshop and does not have to report to anyone for closing it. When asked about his expectation exchange of his sacrifices for the brotherhood, Amdy would say: "*I expect the Baraka of Sheik Ahmadou Bamba and his intercession for me in the Day of Judgment.*" Without denying the relevance of this religious motivation, one has to consider also the social benefit of belonging to a daara such as Hizbut Tarqiyyah. This daara is respected; so are its members. Moreover, the daara provides various social supports to his dedicated members.

Hizbut Tarqiyyah is led by a Serigne as any other Daara. He is referred to as the Moral Supervisor. He is assisted by a permanent secretariat which is divided into four compartments: education, communication, administration, Magal organization. Each of the compartments is divided into divisions which are also divided into sections. Hizbut Tarqiyyah counts more than a thousand members in Touba. They are divided into three main categories.

The permanent members. They are those who do not do anything else apart from the daara's activities. They work fulltime for the daara without neither holidays nor salaries. However, they benefit from the daara's solidarity fund when they have a social case such as marriage, naming ceremony, funeral etc.

The semi-permanent members. They are those who share their time between the daara's activities and their own profession. They also work free for the daara and received a support from it when facing social cases. Amdy belongs to this category.

None permanent members. This category takes part in the religious and cultural events organized by the daara. They do not participate in the preparation of them necessarily but represent a backup human resource for the daara. Together with the first two categories, they all pay a regular fee to the daara.

Thanks to the fees, Hizbut Tarqiyyah started up many income generating activities such as agriculture, breeding, gas station, printing house, radio station, hospitals, to name a few. Those activities are enough for the daara to sustain itself economically. However, regarding the meaning attached to the notion of work in Muridism members of Hizbut Tarqiyyah remain determined to still bring their contribution to their daara (be it a haddyah and/or working for it) thereby making it often solicited by the Khalif general.

As the coordinator and highest authority of the brotherhood, the Khalif General relies on the thousands of dahiras²⁹ and daaras such as Hizbut Tarqiyyah to get the resources he needs to run the brotherhood and to develop Touba. Within the same framework, hundreds of dahira from the Diaspora (Africa, Europe, America...) also bring him a significant amount of money every year.

From 1995 to 1998 the yearly contribution of all the dahiras in Spain was 86000 euro. In France, the annual contribution of 20 dahiras was about 438461euro. In Italy 36 dahiras brought 218461euro. In Germany the federation of dahiras brought 23000 euro. During the same period, 20 dahiras in the USA brought 30800 euro.³⁰ These numbers are records from only part of the Diaspora fifteen years ago. It nevertheless allows one to have an idea about its significant input to the wellbeing of the community.

There is no formal contract between the Khalif and the actors supporting him economically. He owes his support to his religious legitimacy or cultural capital as Bourdieu would address it. One could say that his relation to different daaras and dahiras is a reproduction of the Serigne/Talibey relation on a larger scale. Whereas the Serigne uses the haddyah of his talibeys for the common good in his daara and immediate surroundings, the Kahlif General invest the economic support from daaras and dahiras into the wellbeing of the Murid community especially in Touba. An example in that regard is related to water supply in the wholly city. The Khalif General

²⁹ Religious based association.

³⁰ Source: Acte de symposium sur la mouridyah, Université Gaston Berger de Saint Louis du Sénégal.2011

subsidizes potable water from the national supplier thereby making it accessible and free of charge to all the 335 094 inhabitants of Touba. His investment, together with different daaras and dahira (from Senegal and abroad) has brought considerably to the development of Touba. Moreover, the great number of religious activities and the millions of pilgrims visiting the city throughout the year also explains the speed in which Touba is growing in terms of economic activities and population. That development appears more pertinent when one compares it to Saint Louis (North West Senegal). Saint Louis was founded in 1659³¹. During the colonial period, the city was the capital of the French West Africa. Its colonial past and geographical advantage (Access to the sea) makes it attractive for tourists from around the world hence contribute to its development. However, Touba, which was a small settlement one hundred years ago, bypassed Saint-Louis in terms economic activities and population despite its unprivileged geographical position. The particular religious feature of the later explains a lot in its development. Apart from the murid community's effort to develop their city, the government is also investing in Touba as mentioned above. The government of Maky Sall, current president, announced more than a seventy million euro as a support to sanitize the city of Touba.³²

4.3 Samba

There is a last level of economic contribution which was not taken into consideration in the analysis above though it is not less important. During my stay in Touba, I met many individuals who belong to the brotherhood simply because they gave allegiance to a Serigne and bring him a haddya at times. But they don't take part into religious or cultural activities of their daara. Disciples in that category are looked upon as less dedicated murids though a strong feeling of belonging to the brotherhood is present in some of them.

One of them is Samba, a 32 years old man. He is married and has two children. Although he spends more time in Touba given his professional activities, his wife and two children lives in Dakar (the capital of Senegal). Samba has several brothers and sisters. Occasionally they all join him in Touba and celebrate together important religious events.

Samba's workshop is situated within the market of Darou khoudouss, Touba. The place is very crowded of all kind of vendors. Most of them are murids and, as a cultural reality, females.

³¹ Source [http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint-Louis_\(S%C3%A9n%C3%A9gal\)](http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint-Louis_(S%C3%A9n%C3%A9gal)) (accessed 30th May 2013)

³² Source <http://crtmtoubamosquee.com/?p=121> (accessed 16th June 2013)

Samba makes dental prosthesis for a living. He has an average of two deals per day. His most important daily activity is his job. Thanks to his job, he manages to face the expenses of his family and to occasionally provide a material support to his Serigne. However, he does not participate in any religious or economic activities of the daara run by his Serigne. Samba is aware that he might be looked upon as a less dedicated Murid regarding the distance he is observing with his Serigne. But that does not bother him since many people at his age in Touba are having the same attitude vis a vis their Serignes though they do contribute economically to the wellbeing of the rest of community through haddyah and other charity based activities in Touba.

4.3.1 The Friday prayer

Samba works every day from Monday to Sunday. However, due to the respect the locals have for the sacredness of Fridays, all economical activities run slowly. Most of the locals rest on that day if they are not busy with religious practices. Samba, although one cannot say of him a very dedicated Murid, works only during the morning. As many other Murids, he closes his workshop right before the Friday prayer which he attends in "the Grand Mosque of Touba".

The Friday prayers are "classical" in Islam. For many Murids, it is also an occasion to visit mausoleums of great figures of the brotherhood starting by the one of founder. Due to that dual purpose, hundreds of murid from different part of Senegal come to the "Grande Mosque of Touba".

In preparation of the Friday prayer, most murids dress with their traditional *Boubou*. More than an expression of beauty, wearing the traditional *Boubou* has also a symbolic meaning. The dressing code is part of the reformation Bamba brought to the "Senegalese Islam". According to him, the Senegalese could stick to their traditional cloths and still meet the requirements of Islam when it comes to dressing. In that sense, one could say that Bamba was a conservator. His attitude was also a reaction to the French assimilation policy which was taking place in all their colonies. Therefore dedicated Murids would never wear a jean or any other cloths from the West in general.

Samba, however, wear jeans most of the time. In an interview I had with him before a Friday prayer, I asked him why he was not wearing a *Boubou* as he was getting ready to go to the Mosque. He reply that he felt comfortable the way he was³³.

- What does the other Murid think of that?

- It's not a problem, they might think that I don't have a *Boubou* or... that I just don't want to wear it...?

Although Samba doesn't seem to make it of an issue the way people dress is sometime an indicator of their religiosity, which has consequences on their respectability. I experienced it with Hizbut Tarqiyyah and in other social situations in Touba.

In the early days of my project with Hizbut Tarqiyyah, I used to wear jeans and shirt when going to the daara's headquarter. But I soon noticed that I was the only one among the hundreds of members of the daara, dressing in a "European style". All the rest were wearing a particular *Boubou* called *Baylahad*. One of the members explained me that wearing the *Baylahad* was mandatory for each masculine member of Hizbut Tarqiyyah. When I wore also a *Baylahad*, all the members who used to just greet me on their way became suddenly very eager to spent time with me. Thanks to that choice, I received congratulations not only from members of Hizbut Tarqiyyah but from all friends and acquaintances in Touba.

The *Baylahad* is known in Touba as part of the identity of Hizbut Tarqiyyah. Therefore, wearing it suggest a priori that one belong to that respected daara. Given that dedicated murids are the most respected people in Touba, adopting the dressing code of a respected daara allows one to have more respect an esteems from the locals.

From a broader perspective and as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Serigne Abdou Samat, Amdy Lo and Samba incarnate different levels of economic contribution in the brotherhood. They also represent different niveau of religiosity with an according cliché from the rest of the society.

³³ Watch the film from 27' 54" to 28' 20

V. Muridism and globalization

A reflection about Muridism and globalization might help the reader to have a holistic picture of the topic addressed here. In doing so, I will try to take into consideration the colonial past of the brotherhood, the power relation between Touba and the Senegalese state and finally the advent of globalization which is becoming more and more recurrent in the holly city. But first what is globalization?

One can conceive it as *"a stage in international economic interactions. It has gone together with an intensive increase in networking through telecommunications and the large scale use of computers, with the dominance of multinational corporations that deploys investments, production, and other activities relatively freely to desirable corners of the globe. Linked to globalization and given the end of the cold war, there has come an allied emphasis on international governance intended to ease the flow of goods and currencies amongst other form of regulation."* (Freund 2007, 170)

From this approach, "globalization champions" consider Africa as absent from the "networked world". Freund (2007), however, comes up with examples of African cities - among which Touba- that nuance the above conception. From its foundation up to now, Touba always had a complicated relation with both the colonial and post-colonial state. Religious leaders, regardless of the brotherhood they belong to, have the legitimacy that politicians need to govern the country. As for the Murid brotherhood in particular, its discipline and respect of the hierarchy is such that it represents a strong electoral potential. The Murids have an outstanding capacity of volunteering, fundraising and campaigning for politicians when asked by their Serignes.

Aware of that potential, the elites of the brotherhood make two major benefits out of it. On a national level, they influence the government economic policies and brings it to invest more in modernizing Touba. On a local level, the spirit of cultural resistance which dominated to some extent the foundation of the brotherhood remains present in Touba. Several dispositions were taken by the local authorities in that regard³⁴. *"...Mouride influence keeps the state at bay and tries to substitute a religious way of life for a secular order. It is a visible symbol of the eclipse of a political order in which the state would be expected to be the principal bearer of the gospel and the accoutrements of development"* (Freund 2007, 175).

³⁴ Cf chapter Discovering Touba

Despite the will of the local authorities to protect the city from Westernization, Touba is caught up by the influence of the West as Freund noted. His work is in the same line as my experience from fieldwork. He wrote: *"In holy Touba, smoking, drinking and other vices are all banned and there are virtually no non-Muslims resident. Europeans are not supposed to live in much of the city. In theory, such infrastructure as electricity and water are available at no cost; Touba is tax-free (...). In reality, however, the very material reality of a modern city has intruded in all too real a way on the Mouride Jerusalem despite these bans. The very rapid growth of the city has engendered the other leg of its economy, (...) If religious based associations (dahira) are founded sometimes to, for example, provide cemeteries or hospitals for the city, they are very inadequate. In fact, the infrastructure, still not very developed, does require state intervention (telephone lines, water supply, road construction) even though this is difficult for Mourides to take into account in comprehending their city. There have been intense struggles over repayment of bills for services. (...) The decline in recognised employment in Senegal and the burgeoning of the black market has led, even in Touba, to serious levels of crime, which the Islamic regime is unable to control. This includes alcohol, drugs and a trade in arms. Many successful traders bring back a huge array of luxury durable items for their homes in Touba, again tempting criminal elements. Even in areas such as traffic control, the attempt to minimise the presence of the secular state by banning national police has created great problems. Touba lacks the most visible sign of the striking power of a state, an effective police force. Here we have a considerable urban agglomeration which has arisen despite or against the state, in sympathy with the dynamism of globalization to which Senegal's main successful response has been emigration, creating a new kind of social phenomenon. But in Touba the classic problems of a modern city are far from absent. Nonetheless it represents a new kind of city in so far as its growth has been quite autonomous from the colonial and post-colonial economic or administrative logic of the twentieth century. (2007, 175-176)*

When considering globalization more from the angle of cultural homogenization, one can say that "Samba's generation" is evidence of the unsuccessful policy of Touba religious dignitaries when protecting their city from the influence of the outside. The people in the holy city have free access to the media from around the world. Samba himself likes music and has been very much influenced by rap singer's lifestyle he buys and smokes cigarettes in Touba secretly and has performed many concerts outside of the city.

Conclusion

The work of Weber on the protestant ethic is an important contribution to the discussion about religion in social sciences within the context of the 19th century. Based on my fieldwork experience as explained above and the literature I had access to, I think that many of Weber's enunciations are extrapolable. Like Protestantism, the doctrine in Muridism prepared psychologically its members thereby making them better economic entrepreneurs. Working has a religious connotation for the Murid community as exemplified in this thesis by Samba and Amdy. The type of relation between these two disciples and their dignitaries reflects a general trend in the brotherhood which has resulted in building a religious and economic pyramid with a grandson of the founding father on the top.

The religious and cultural resistance spirit that characterized the foundation the brotherhood was such that the elites of the brotherhood had always have a complicated relation with both the colonial and post-colonial state. Today, that relation has reached its highest level of complexity for economic and political reasons. The Murid community is a pillar in the Senegalese economy when considering that they work at every economic milieu of the country and remain determined to empower their brotherhood as a religious institution. I have already mentioned the significant role of the Diaspora in that regard.

On a political level, the growing number of the Murid population and its obedience to dignitaries has made the community an important electoral potential. That potential is being capitalized by the dignitaries thereby bringing the government to invest more in the city of Touba although the national police remains banned.

Thus do I share Weber point of view in the sense that religion can be a strong catalyst for social change. However, the advent of globalization requires a more complex approach of religion and economy regarding their compound imbrications. This imbrications weight significantly in the power relation between religious institutions and established political orders. In a varying degree in different countries of the world, the religious institution is referred to in order to legitimate political regimes.

Though it certainly has different historical trajectory in different countries, the imbrications between religion, economy and politic is recurrent. In many of the "advanced democracies"

where the rhetoric "separation of the church and the state" is common, president still oath on the bible before taking office.

The case study of Muridism is not only interesting considering the advent of globalization which added to the complexity of the issue; it is also relevant regarding the process of glocalization that took place before. Although they agree with most important principles of Islam, the Murid community came up with an understanding of it that seems to espouse their universe of representation. The cultural experience of a society impacts on its understanding of "imported religions", be it Christianity or Islam. *"cultural pluralism is said to inspire religious creativity, and religion, in its turn, becomes the main carrier for cultural pluralism.* (Warner 1996; Smith1998) (Lindquist and Handelman 2011, 42)

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