Introduction

IN 1913, the influential French administrator and specialist of Islam Paul Marty delivered his assessment of the Muridiyya to the colonial administration of Senegal. He wrote: "It [the Muridiyya] subsists today without growing by the sole virtue of the presence and charisma of its founder. But Amadou Bamba is now sixty years old and his death from natural or violent causes could occur any time. . . . It is highly probable that [his] demise will lead to the disintegration of the Murid order."[1]

Marty's statement carried significant weight. Born in the village of Boufarik in the district of Algiers, he had garnered much experience about what the French viewed as "real" Islam, working as a colonial interpreter in his native land of Algeria, in Morocco, and in Tunisia.[2] He arrived in West Africa in 1912 as an expert to fill an important slot as head of the Office of Muslim Affairs in the administration of Governor-General William Ponty. He spoke Arabic, he knew Islam, and over his career he authored numerous articles and books that established the colonial orthodoxy about Islamic beliefs and politics in sub-Saharan Africa. He popularized the concept of "Islam noir," which became central to the orientalist construction of the identities of sub-Saharan Muslims.[3]

Today, some eight decades after Amadu Bamba's death in 1927, the population of Murids in and outside Senegal is estimated at roughly 4 million.[4] The annual pilgrimage (*maggal*) to his tomb in Tuubaa, the holy city of the Murids, attracts hundreds of thousands of people and constitutes one of the largest religious gatherings in the world.[5] In fact, it has recently been featured in the pages of the *New York Times* and on the BBC Web site.[6]

History has clearly proven Marty wrong. But the ability of the Muridiyya to maintain cohesion and continuity across space and time is unusual for this type of organization. *Tariqas* (Muslim mystical orders) are notoriously fissiparous, and they are often prone to fragmentation, especially after the death of the founder.[7] The continuing relevance of the Muridiyya despite the changing economic, political, and social circumstances in Senegal remains intriguing to scholars of Islam.[8] The history and contemporary development of the Muridiyya raise the question of how an organization founded on the values of communality, religious spirituality, and solidarity, primarily associated with "traditional ways of life," was able to adapt and even prosper in the modern era, shaped by individualism, rationalism, and secularity. Murid resilience is even more intriguing because the structural factors that Western scholars believed to have contributed to the emergence of the tariqa (colonization and peanut cultivation) were no longer operative during the order's expansion in more recent times.

In this study, I do not pretend to offer a definitive answer to the questions raised by the atypical trajectory of Murid history. Rather, my intent is to open new avenues for our understanding of the historical dynamics of the Muridiyya by locating the sources of its longevity, at least partly, in the long-range vision of its founder. I aim to provide a view of the tariqa from within, during a critical period of its founding, by asking new questions about the Murids' religiosity and conception of education, by examining their relations with African chiefs and French colonial administrators, and by rendering Murid voices more audible through the exploration of sources hitherto inaccessible to scholars of the organization. I am particularly interested in investigating the persona and role of Amadu Bamba, the founder of the Murid order. It is my contention that his thought, practices, and teachings and the memories, whether real or imagined, of his life are among the principal contributing factors to the cohesion and continuity of the tariqa.

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The literature on the Muridiyya is rich by the standards of African history. By the late 1970s, when the study of Islam in sub-Saharan Africa (outside northern Nigeria) was still in its infancy, substantial works were already devoted to the organization.[9] However, although the scholarship on the Muridiyya has increased considerably, particularly since the mid-1980s, this work has mostly focused on the political and economic dimensions of the organization. Three major trends can be discerned in the literature on the Murids.

Some scholars have concerned themselves with explaining the role of the Muridiyya as an instrument used by the Wolof ethnic group (the majority of the Senegalese population) to adapt to French colonial rule.[10] These same scholars also have strived to demonstrate how, in the postcolonial era, the Murid order continued to perform its political function by helping foster a "social contract" that mitigated the new rulers' lack of legitimacy in the eyes of rural masses and provided stability to the state.[11] Under this contract, the Murid leaders, among other Muslim political brokers, assured the loyalty of the citizens and in return received recognition and material support from the state.

A second trend has concentrated on the economy and particularly on Murid contributions to the expansion of the colonial cash crop of peanuts. Jean Copans gave his book on the Muridiyya the suggestive title *Les marabouts de l'arachide* (Marabouts of Peanuts), before recognizing, in the late 1980s, the "death" of the Murid peanut economy. Other scholars looked at the ways in which the Murid work ethic and values helped rural disciples shift from agriculture to trading and international migration.[12] For these authors, the Muridiyya was an interesting topic of scholarly investigation insofar as it provided the ideological basis and cultural flexibility that allowed Senegal's integration into the world market economy and the adjustment of disciples to varying socioeconomic situations.

The religious dimension of the Muridiyya has attracted some scholarly interest, especially among Senegalese and French specialists of Islam. These scholars have examined some of Amadu Bamba's writings to verify the orthodoxy or heterodoxy of Murid beliefs and the ability of the Muridiyya to adapt Islamic concepts and values to the local cultures.[13]

Despite the relatively abundant body of literature on the Muridiyya, there is a real dearth of historical scholarship on Amadu Bamba and the early formation of the Murid tariqa. The broad outlines of Bamba's life and of the development of the Muridiyya are fairly well known. But the observation made by Donal Cruise O'Brien in the early 1970s that little was known about the thinking, actions, and role of the founder of the Muridiyya is still largely valid.[14] One might add that most of what is known has been reconstructed from colonial sources and focuses on the post-1912 era, which is considered a period of accommodation or intense collaboration between the Muridiyya and the French administration of Senegal.[15]

Scholarly interpretations of the Muridiyya reflect a general trend that, until recently, has marked the literature on religion in general and on religion in the former European colonies in South Asia and Africa in particular. One defining characteristic of this trend is the importance ascribed to economic and political aspirations spurred by colonization as the major causative and

explanatory factors of religious social movements. Referring to the case of Islam in Bengal, Richard Eaton, for example, deplored the tendency among scholars to explain religious change as simply a cultural dimension of political or economic transformation.[16] In an important article on traditional and Christian religious organizations in Africa in the colonial and postcolonial eras, Terence Ranger observed that "all religious movements . . . have been treated as new and as explicable in terms of special pressures and transformations of colonialism."[17]

The same can be said about the scholarship on Muslim social movements. With the exception of a small number of writers, students of Islam in Africa have been fascinated by jihad, resistance, collaboration, and Muslim efforts at state building and have not paid as much attention to the religious thought and motivations of the Muslim leaders and their followers.[18] More often than not, religion has been conceived as a dependent variable subordinated to the perceived political and economic ambitions of the Muslim leadership at particular moments in time. Although students of other religions have recognized the crucial influence of "cultural and psychological tensions" in the emergence of religious movements,[19] most scholars of Islam in colonial Africa continue to emphasize the centrality of political antagonism.

This book offers a different approach. Without neglecting the role of politics and the economy, it emphasizes the cultural and the religious. It proposes an interpretation of the Murid tariqa from the perspective of the Murids. Rather than seeing the Muridiyya as simply a response to the stimuli of external structural factors (colonization, peanut production, the postcolonial state), I view its emergence as part of the internal dynamics of the expansion of Islam in Senegal in the nineteenth century. I underscore the motivations of Amadu Bamba and his earliest followers and stress the centrality of the theme of education in the founding and development of the order. By emphasizing Murid educational practices and values as enduring goals and strategies with far-reaching influence, this study departs from the existing literature even as it seeks to renew and broaden scholarly knowledge of the history and development of the Muridiyya.

Such an approach requires a serious examination of Murid religious beliefs and spirituality. Islam is no longer perceived as a mere interstitial force whose significance is transitory and secondary in the history of the Muridiyya but rather as a central element. Following Louis Brenner, I consider that "the emergence of *turuuq* [plural of *tariqa*] in West Africa . . . was not an accident but the result of conscious decisions by Sufi leaders who saw in them a potential not only for religious change, but also for social and political transformation."[20] Brenner's view, indeed, resonated well with that of Amadu Bamba,

who conceived of the Muridiyya as a major weapon in the *jihad al-akbar* (greater jihad) he waged against the detrimental political and social forces of his time. This greater jihad was the jihad of *nafs* (the ego or carnal soul), which aimed at using *tarbiyya* (the education of the soul) as a tool to instill Islamic values and shield people against the corrupting effects of negative traditional and French influences. In a much-quoted verse, Bamba wrote, "The warrior in the path of God is not who takes his enemies' life, but the one who combats his nafs to achieve spiritual perfection."[21]

UNDERSTANDING ISLAMIC MYSTICISM IN AFRICA: SUFISM, *MARABOUT,* AND *BARAKA*

Sufism

Amadu Bamba's rejection of violence and his espousal of mystical means to confront adversity are not unusual among followers of Sufism or Islamic mysticism. To be sure, Sufi beliefs do not always translate to quietism and pacifism. As shown by Richard Eaton in his study of the Sufis of Bijapur and the examples of the West African Sufi jihadists Uthman dan Fodio and Al-Hajj Umar Tal, Sufism can also lead to militancy.[22] But Sufis have always considered that keeping a safe distance from rulers and politics is the best way to maintain moral and spiritual integrity. It was, in effect, dissatisfaction with the extravagant use of wealth and power by the Ummayad and Abbasid dynasties, in contradiction to the stern and sober rule of the Prophet Muhammad and the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs, that fueled the development of Sufism in the first four centuries of Islam.

Sufism may be defined as a system of thought and a method for understanding and learning to control the nafs. This method is based on teachings and practices developed by generations of Sufi thinkers and practitioners.[23] The Sufi system is shaped by actions and behaviors that aim at freeing the human body from the grip of worldly preoccupations in order to gradually lift the spirit toward the neighborhood of God's kingdom; the ultimate goal is to become a *wali Allah* (friend of God).

Most studies of Sufism deal with philosophical issues and hermeneutics and do not offer an approach that examines the actual development of Sufi organizations. J. S. Trimingham's *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, although somewhat dated, is still the most comprehensive study of the historical development of institutional Sufism.[24] Trimingham distinguished three phases in the development of Sufism as an institution: the *khanaqah* (place for Sufi teaching), *tariqa*, and *taifa* stages.

The first, or khanaqah, stage of Sufism, which spanned the period between the eighth and twelfth centuries, witnessed the flourishing of ideas and an exceptional intellectual creativity and productivity among Sufi thinkers. It was also a period of loose and rather unstructured social organization, in which masters and disciples mingled in an informal setting without formal bonds between them. Sufi thought formed an evolving but undifferentiated body of knowledge.

In the tariqa stage, which started around the thirteenth century and ended in the fifteenth, the Sufi movement became further institutionalized. Disciples or aspirants organized themselves in different mystical orders, or tariqas, each shaped by a specific set of structured spiritual exercises and led by sheikhs linked through saintly lineages, or *silsilas*. These lineages connected Sufi masters belonging to the same school of thought and sharing the same method of training and could be traced back to the ultimate founders. Thus, the silsila of the Qadiriyya order is traced back to its founder, Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (d. 1166); the Shadiliyya order to Abu Hassan al-Shadili (1196–1258); and the Tijaniyya order to Muhammad al-Tijani (1738–1815).

The *wird* and *dhikr* became basic communal practices of Sufi orders. Wirds are excerpts from the Quran and special prayers communicated mystically to the founder of a Sufi order by the Prophet Muhammad. The *dhikr* is the continuous remembrance of God through the recitation of His names (Allah has ninety-nine names, some of which are secret and confer special spiritual power). The *khalwa*, or spiritual retreat, and the *fikr*, or meditation on God's works, are other techniques used by Sufis to purify the spirit and soul.

In the final, or taifa, stage, from the fifteenth century onward, the authority of the sheikh was further emphasized, but its nature was fundamentally transformed. The spiritual power, or *baraka*,[25] of the master now took precedence over his mastery of the Islamic sciences and Sufi mysticism that was central during the two previous stages of khanaqah and tariqa. Moreover, the belief that baraka was hereditary put blood over merit as the principal criterion for the succession of a sheikh. Spiritual and biological genealogies became entangled, giving birth to powerful saintly dynasties that claimed special spiritual status based on descent. The taifa stage inaugurated a shift of Sufism from a mystical movement confined to a selected elite to a devotional movement appealing to the larger populace.[26] Trimingham aptly summed up this transformation when he observed, "If we characterize the first stage [khanaqah] as affecting the individual, as surrender to God, and the second [tariqa] as surrender to a rule, then this stage [taifa] may be described as surrender to a person."[27]

Trimingham's model is useful in understanding the changes that affected the Sufi movement over time, but its artificial tertiary configuration is less help-

ful in grasping the complexity, continuity, and fluidity of Sufi beliefs and prac-
tices. If one had to follow Trimingham's lead, it would appear that the role of
the Sufi master became important only during the tariqa stage that started
around the thirteenth century, whereas already in the ninth century, Sahl
al-Tustari (818–96) was stressing the need to surrender to the sheikh like a ca-
daver to the mortician. In addition, an application of Trimingham's chronol-
ogy to sub-Saharan Africa, where Sufism entered in the sixteenth century,
would suggest that this part of the world only experienced the taifa phase. But
the cult of saints, which is the most salient characteristic of this stage in the
development of Sufism, did not become significant in sub-Saharan Africa
until the eighteenth century.[28] Moreover, most leaders of Sufi orders in sub-
Saharan Africa were also thinkers and sages who did not have the intellectual
credentials of their counterparts in Muslim Spain and the Middle East but
made important contributions to the interpretation and dissemination of Sufi
ideas, like masters of the khanaqah and tariqa stages.[29] This was the case with
the Kunta of Timbuktu, the Moorish Sufi masters, Uthman dan Fodio, and
al-Hajj Umar Tal, who was one of the major theoreticians of the Tijani doc-
trine.[30] More recently, Amadu Bamba and Malick Sy, to refer to the case of
Senegal, are known for their baraka but also for their writings and mystical ori-
entation.[31] It seems to me that in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in the case
of the Muridiyya and Tijaniyya of Senegal, characteristics typical of Triming-
ham's three stages are found simultaneously in Sufi movements. Sufi masters
are at once thinkers, masters, and baraka-laden sheikhs. In fact, in most places
where Sufism exits today, it continues to display elements consistent with the
three stages.

Marabout

In the taifa stage, Trimingham particularly insisted on the role of baraka and
sainthood. His description of the sheikh taifa echoes the ubiquitous marabout
of French orientalist literature. The term *marabout* is a francophone corrup-
tion of the Arabic word *murabit* (from the Arabic words *rabata*, meaning "to
tie," and *ribat*, a border fort and also a Sufi monastery or lodge in North
Africa). This term was used in Algeria to designate a rural holy man.[32] In the
context of Senegal, *marabout* has become the substitute for *waliyu, serigne,
cerno,* and *yaaram,* used in the local Sufi lexicon and languages to refer to
saints and men of religion.

According to French orientalists, the marabout was the key figure in the
development of popular Islam in North and sub-Saharan Africa. Paul Marty
opened the first chapter of his book on Islam in Senegal with this statement:
"The black Muslims of Senegal align themselves, without exception, behind

the banner of marabouts. They do not conceive of Islam outside the affiliation to a Sufi order, or more exactly, without allegiance to a 'serigne' or 'Tierno.'"[33] Closely associated with rural life, the marabout performed important religious and social functions. Superficially educated, he was seen as "human fetish," miracle worker, intercessor, and teacher, often engaged in heterodox magical practices to satisfy the superstitions and spiritual needs of his illiterate clients. Socially, he mediated conflicts and used his prayers and most feared curse to protect his flock from the abuses of rulers.

Vincent Cornell convincingly exposed the political agenda behind the French paradigm of maraboutism. As he observed, French colonial writers (he specifically referred to the work of Alfred Bel in Morocco, but his observations were also valid for most French writers of the colonial era) created an artificial dichotomy between the so-called natural religious syncretism of the Berbers, who were said to be prone to beliefs in miracles, sainthood, and marabouts, and the supposedly "sober, authoritarian, and culturally alien ethos of classical Islam of the Arabs."[34] This scholarship was produced at a time when French colonial officials were most concerned with countering the influence of Islamic reformists in Algeria, and it served well the policy of divide and rule. Ironically, in sub-Saharan Africa, as implied in Marty's statement referred to earlier, it was the "Berbers" who became the uncompromising holders of sober Islamic orthodoxy, whereas their black neighbors to the south inherited the stereotype of syncretism and superstition.

Baraka

When discussing the role of marabouts in the development of Islam in Senegal, scholars especially underscore the importance of the concept of baraka (*barke* or *barka* in local Senegalese parlance). The word *baraka* is found in the Quran but only in its plural form (*barakat*). Its meaning runs the gamut from "divine gift of grace," "blessing," or "beneficent force" to "magic" or "supernatural power." [35] Although people often differ about the meaning of the word, there is a consensus that baraka is a power that emanates from God, which He confers as He wishes but often on uncommonly pious people, on the family of the Prophet Muhammad, and on his words enshrined in the Quran. Although Allah is recognized as the ultimate source and giver of baraka, it is also accepted that there are special circumstances that can single a person out as its recipient. Exceptional learning, piety, and descent from certain families reputed for their integrity and moral qualities are sometimes signs for election. Therefore, unlike the charismatic authority of Weberian sociology, baraka has a history, and the wali Allah may be accorded some agency in the achievement of sainthood.[36] In the Senegalese context, the role of the mother

is particularly important. Amadu Bamba's mother, Maam Jaara Buso, for example, receives much of the credit for her son's election as a saint. She is portrayed in the hagiographic literature as an erudite Muslim woman and an exemplary wife and mother, endowed with much spiritual power.[37] This power continued to be effective even after her death, when she mystically intervened many times to succor and reassure her son, then under French custody. Her tomb in the village of Porokhaan in east-central Senegal is the object of a cult of men and women (but mostly women) whose devotion culminates each year in the only pilgrimage dedicated to a female Muslim saint in Senegal.[38]

Human beings who are blessed with baraka also have the power of transmitting it through their bodily fluids (blood, sweat, saliva), their feelings and speech, their clothes, anything they are in contact with, and even their tombs after they are dead. As Islam and particularly Sufi beliefs expanded, baraka became central in the social construction of holiness, and one of the most visible manifestations of baraka, although not a necessary one, was the ability to work miracles, or *karamas*.[39] But Sufis differentiate between the karamas of the saints and the *Mudjizas* of the prophets. Both are considered miracles, understood as the suspension of the natural order of things through divine intervention, but they are of different natures. The miracles of the prophets are considered necessary to convince the skeptics and doubters of the truth and divine origin of their messages, whereas the karamas of the saints are contingent and meant to confirm the validity of prophecy. In other words, the *wilaaya* (sainthood) of the saints, which is manifested in their ability to perform miracles, proceeds from their role as inheritors of the prophetic mission.[40] Amadu Bamba discussed the relations between sainthood, prophecy, and miracles in his major work, *Massalik Al-Jinan* (Paths to Paradise). He observed that like prophets, saints may also work miracles, for they are successors of the prophets. The saints are proofs of the authenticity and eternal truth of the prophetic message. Prophets are perfect and impeccable, whereas saints are protected and honored by God.[41]

THE QUESTION OF SOURCES: ORAL TRADITION AND HAGIOGRAPHY

Oral Tradition and Murid History

Most Murid writers and bearers of oral traditions strive to make the case for Amadu Bamba's sainthood and closeness to God. They are members of a community of believers for whom God's intervention in human history is a matter of faith. At the same time, these sources are critical in reconstructing a

history of the Muridiyya from within, as I endeavor to do in this book. The use of previously untapped Murid sources in several languages (Arabic, Wolof, and French) and different media (oral, written, and iconographic) has been instrumental in my own work.[42]

Since the publication of Jan Vansina's *Oral Tradition* (in 1965), which dealt both with oral history (the remembered recent past) and oral tradition (orally transmitted history over generations), scholars have produced more extensive guides for the collection and interpretation of oral data. They have recognized the special conditions and limitations of oral testimonies and traditions. But more significantly, beyond the issues of historical truth, objectivity, and authenticity that preoccupied earlier generations, historians have discovered the value of oral testimony as a means of comprehending how Africans saw and understood their lives and places in history.[43]

Murid oral traditions embody the strengths and weaknesses of all oral testimonies. They differ in their nature and quality, and there is a constant readjustment of the oral narratives to smooth conflicts, erase contradictions, and adjust information to later developments and changing power structures within the organization. They have what Jack Goody termed a rationalizing and transforming power.[44] The history of Amadu Bamba and the Muridiyya told by bearers of oral traditions or written by faithful disciples is therefore subject to editing and refashioning; it remains a living history of a cultural hero and guide, whose life and deeds still constitute an inspiration for millions of people.

However, the Murid tariqa is not a homogeneous organization with a linear and conflict-free history in which everybody has agreed about everything, as most of the literature on the Murids would lead us to believe. To be sure, there is a hegemonic and apparently consensual master narrative of the history of the Muridiyya, but alongside this narrative, there are also muted but important dissonant, undercurrent historiographies that have developed in the interstices and fault lines of Murid history. From the tariqa's inception, Amadu Bamba faced the hostility of some members of his family and his fellow Muslim teachers, and the organization he founded was riddled by conflicts between competing factions that struggled to earn his confidence and build their own power bases in hopes of taking control after his death.

The conflicts that marked the early development of the Muridiyya and generated differing historiographies were rooted in a competition for power and authority among agnates within the Mbakke family, as well as rivalries among Murid sheikhs in a later period. Lineages in the Mbakke clan that opposed Amadu Bamba's grandfather were, in retrospect, denied baraka and excluded from the saintly genealogy.[45] However, it was among members of

these agnate branches that I have found the best information on the history of the Mbakke.[46] In effect, for members of these downgraded lineages, documenting their blood relations with Amadu Bamba still constitutes a means to maintain some measure of social prestige. Ironically but not surprisingly, the direct descendants of Bamba did not know much about the history of the family beyond their fathers and grandfathers.[47]

Another fault line that produced contrasting historiographies exists among the different lineages of Murid sheikhs. From the founding of the Muridiyya, there have been tensions between disciples and sheikhs of different cultural backgrounds. Those who originated from historically learned families put much emphasis on knowledge and piety in their allegiance to Amadu Bamba, whereas those who were his blood relatives or from less learned families stressed sainthood and baraka.[48] The types of loyalties to the Muridiyya that these two groups developed were different. Although both honored Amadu Bamba as a saint, the former was more inclined to look critically at the history of the organization, to question the motivations and practices of certain sheikhs and disciples, and to use Islam and Sufi idioms to rationalize Amadu Bamba's life. Most of what I have learned about the conflicts, tensions, and contradictions in the development of the Muridiyya as well as the ethical practices of Amadu Bamba comes from descendants of these sheikhs from learned families.

During the Diourbel era (1912–27), when the Muridiyya was becoming stronger and Amadu Bamba was starting to age, a rift developed in the Murid community between the leaders of two opposing groups, which some bearers of oral traditions called the *penku-penku* (people from the east) and the *ajoor* (people from the precolonial kingdom of Kajoor).[49] The penku-penku were mostly blood relatives of Amadu Bamba and originated from eastern Bawol, the heartland of the Mbakke; the ajoor were the sons of Amadu Bamba whose mothers originated from the kingdom of Kajoor. After Amadu Bamba's death, the latter allied with their maternal uncles from Kajoor and formed a determined resistance to Amadu Bamba's half brothers who were suspected of attempting to take control of the Muridiyya and deny them their inheritance.[50] The history of this rift may be older and more complex than suggested here, but it was in Diourbel that the division started to affect the organization in a visible and important way. The differing narratives stemming from this conflict are more relevant to understanding the dispute sparked by Amadu Bamba's succession, but they are also useful in interpreting local historiographies of the Muridiyya generated by competing lineages of Murid sheikhs.

Murid oral traditions are supplemented by an abundant but understudied written literature in Arabic and Wolofal (the Wolof language written with Arabic script). Some of these documents were contemporaneous with the events

they described; others were transcribed oral histories or biographies composed by disciples or members of Bamba's family. Dating these written documents is the main challenge to the historian. However, they contain clues such as names of places and administrators, outbreaks of epidemics, ecological phenomena, and allusions to historically dated events that can help place the stories in a historical time line. Moreover, many of the writers used the Muslim calendar, and they were able to correlate the events they narrated with their own ages, the ages of their parents, or the ages of the historical actors involved in the stories.

The historical value of these written sources is uneven. Some constitute what Pierre Nora has called the "unwilling witnesses to history" that often convey some of the most reliable information.[51] This is the case, for instance, with Amadu Bamba's correspondence, sermons, and advice to disciples as compiled in the *Majmuha* or collected by some disciples.[52] Bamba's written account of his first arrest and exile and the two known extensive biographies by his son Bachir Mbacké and his disciple Muhammad Lamine Diop are also important historical sources. Other writings, including most of Amadu Bamba's own works, deal with abstract and esoteric religious and spiritual subjects that, at first glance, may seem of not much use to the historian seeking to document historical events. But buried in this sacred literature is precious information that is useful in unearthing what proponents of the Annales school would call an *histoire des mentalités* (history of mentalities or states of mind). Because of their ethical nature, some of Bamba's religious writings reveal as much about his Sufi orientation and beliefs as about his perception of the mores and social practices of his time.[53] His postexile writings are also replete with allusions to his conflict with the French, and they teach us much about his conception of the relations between rulers and clerics. These writings, along with the memory of Bamba's teachings and practices, were instrumental in producing the ethic that helped sustain his movement after his death.

Hagiography

The history of the Muridiyya told by oral traditions or Murid written sources develops at the intersection of hagiography and local historical evidence. The challenges that hagiographic sources present to the historian are well known. They raise questions regarding historicity and the believability and trustworthiness of the informants and writers. Most Muslim hagiographies are oral traditions that, at some point in history, were put in writing by disciples or family members of the saint whose history is told. They were often written centuries after the events they described, with the intention of silencing skeptics and strengthening the brethren's faith and their bonds with the saints' descendants. Hagiographers seek to expose in the open (*zaahir*) the tangibility of saint-

hood by making manifest the hidden (*baatin*) power of their favorite sheikhs through the description of their karamas. Through the life and words of the saint, they aim to revive the sheikhs' mystical doctrines primarily for affective and didactic purposes. Therefore, an author's goal was not to trace the everyday stories of the saint's life as a historical being but to transmit the aspects of the saint's teachings that he deemed useful to the disciples at a specific moment in history.[54] What most mattered to the author was not what really happened but what was exemplary.[55] Hagiography may be seen as an invention or reinvention of the saint's life to respond to the perceived spiritual needs of an epoch. In the words of Edith Wyschogrod, it does not merely exist in history: it is constructed and reconstructed in endless refabulation.[56] Hagiography may, then, tell us more about its audience than about the object of its study.

But in the age of postmodernism and deconstruction, when positivistic approaches have lost their attraction and when the relativity and possible plurality of "historical truth" is increasingly acknowledged, scholars have become more tolerant of nonconventional historical sources such as hagiography. Nonetheless, the difficulty of using hagiographies as historical evidence is still recognized. Trimingham expressed these difficulties when he wrote, "Hagiographia is simply biography designed, and consequently distorted, to serve the cult of the saints. It forms an essential aspect of any study of the orders since these qualities, deeds, and manifestations are real to the believer, but they obscure the historical personality."[57] To the defense of hagiographers, Michel de Certeau observed that it would be unfair to consider hagiography exclusively from the angle of authenticity or empirical value; this would subject one literary genre to the rule of another, historiography.[58] If one agrees with de Certeau, then a question remains: of what use can hagiographic sources be to the historian if he or she does not subject this information to rigorous historical criticism?

It is important first to note that, contrary to Trimingham's statement, not all hagiographies are distorted biographies crafted to serve a saint's cult. There are many hagiographies that refer to saints without any known existing cult and that are therefore less prone to manipulation. Furthermore, as noted by Eric Geoffroy, one should distinguish between hagiography as a literary genre that proposes a first-degree reading of sainthood based on miracles and hagiography as a "science of sainthood" that focuses on expounding doctrinal questions and elaborating on the thinking of a saint founder.[59] Hagiography as a science of sainthood can be a rich source for a history of ideas. Bachir Mbacké's biography of Amadu Bamba, for example, belongs to this last genre and offers an interesting analysis of the development of Bamba's thinking as a Sufi.

Even hagiographies that were designed to serve a cult can be valuable assets to the historian. These saintly biographies do not recount the lives of the

Sufis as if they had lived in a historical vacuum. In effect, unlike the Christian hermit, the Sufi lives in society and is, most of the time, an active participant in cultural, political, and economic transactions in his community. He is involved with rulers and commoners. He intervenes in times of peace, war, outbreak of epidemics, natural disasters, and economic stress. Hagiographers therefore make reference to events, persons, or places that also impact the lives of other historical actors whose stories can be used to check the accuracy of hagiographic sources. Thus, by comparing the time line of the life of the last king of Kajoor produced by royal court historians and French archival sources with the time line of Amadu Bamba provided by hagiographers, I was able to correct some mistakes in the historiography of the Muridiyya and reconstruct a complete chronology of the life of the founder of the Murid tariqa.

Stories of miracles may even prove to be useful sources of information for the historian if, as suggested by Eaton, one ignores questions about the veracity of those miracles and instead concentrates on the intent behind them.[60] Miracles have a purpose, and the type of miracles and the ways in which they are performed can tell us much about historical circumstances. The first miracles attributed to Amadu Bamba, in the early years of the founding of the Muridiyya, were, for the most part, related to knowledge and erudition. The savant Maniaaw Sylla, who was among the most vociferous critics of the Muridiyya, found himself, in the presence of Amadu Bamba, unable to translate and comment on the first verse of the Quran (the *basmala*), something he was used to performing routinely. He acknowledged the superior spiritual power of his nemesis and finally submitted to him. The imam of Mbakke, also a known Murid opponent who insisted on leading Bamba in prayer, forgot key verses of the sura (chapter of the Quran) that he tried to recite and renounced his position. These miracles reflected the struggle for intellectual legitimacy that Amadu Bamba waged in the beginning of his calling and tell us much about the responses he received from the clerical establishment. They differ greatly from those miracles he performed later when confronted by the French colonial administration.[61]

THE QUESTIONS OF METHODOLOGY
THE USE OF MURID INTERNAL SOURCES

Murid Oral and Written Sources

The hagiographic literature used in composing this book shares many similarities with classical Muslim and Christian hagiography, but there are differences, as well. In the tradition of Muslim hagiography, the portrait of

Amadu Bamba painted by Murid hagiographers tends to replicate the life of the Prophet Muhammad. The descriptions of his everyday life, trials, and tribulations reproduce the prophetic experience in Mecca and Medina and fit well with what Annemarie Schimmel has called the "imitatio Muhammadi" model.[62] Murid writers also drew extensively from Sufi eschatology to tell the epic story of the confrontation of their sheikh with the French. Bamba's miraculous deeds as told by hagiographers, such as praying on the sea, taming a hungry lion, fast traveling, or surviving exposure to a raging fire or a firing squad, are also found in the repertoire of the miracles of Sufi masters in South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa.[63]

Despite the similarities, Murid hagiography presents significant particularities. First, Amadu Bamba was a historical personality who was mentioned in many parallel contemporary sources. So one is spared the task of establishing the historicity of his persona, which, according to Father Hippolyte Delehaye's method, constitutes the first step in the study of a saint's life.[64] Second, unlike in traditional Muslim and Christian hagiography, the time elapsed between the occurrence of events and their recording was very short. Amadu Bamba's biography in Arabic by his son Bachir Mbacké, which is the largest hagiographic work on the Muridiyya, was completed in 1932, just five years after Bamba's death.[65] The author was born in 1895 and had a close relationship with the subject of his study, and he was an eyewitness to, or consulted eyewitnesses to, most of the stories he told. Muhammad Lamine Diop, the author of the other well-known Arabic biography of Amadu Bamba, was a close aide to the founder of the Muridiyya, whom he had joined in the first decade of the twentieth century. His book was published in 1963.[66]

The content of these biographies represents another area of difference. The motivations of the writers were not distinct from those of other Muslim authors of saintly biographies. They aimed to demonstrate the superior spiritual and moral qualities of their sheikhs, and they expected godly rewards from their works.[67] But the approach was different. Both mentioned some miracles of Amadu Bamba but did not dwell extensively on this topic as a classical hagiographer would. Bachir Mbacké, for example, noted in the preface of his book that he had decided not to devote a chapter to Bamba's miracles because they were numerous and because other Murid writers had dealt with them.[68] M. L. Diop concluded his work by stating that he had refrained from writing everything he had learned from his fellow disciples because this would have led him to recount extraordinary deeds that would prove false.[69] The two authors instead reported many stories related to the everyday life of Amadu Bamba. Nine of the ten chapters of Diop's book are reconstructions of important episodes of Bamba's life as a historical being: his life from birth to

his father's death, his life after the death of his father, his arrest and exile in Gabon and then Mauritania, and so forth. Although mostly concerned with documenting the spiritual journey of his father, Bachir Mbacké also found it necessary to deal with current historical events. He observed that even though the political history of the precolonial Wolof kingdoms was not particularly relevant to his study, he nevertheless needed to touch on it in order to better explain the different attitudes that Bamba harbored regarding temporal and spiritual power holders.[70]

The time and circumstances in which these biographies were written and the types of audience they targeted explain the orientation taken. Both authors tried to demonstrate the orthodox credentials and sound Islamic bases of Murid doctrine and practices through the life of the saint founder by downplaying controversial miracles. They also wanted to offer a narrative of Bamba's life that would contrast with the historiography produced by French administrators.[71] Moreover, they wished to sway their potential readers among the small literati community of Senegal who belonged to rival Muslim orders and who were most critical of certain Murid religious practices and skeptical of Bamba's claim to sainthood. These works appeared, then, as responses to competing historiographies and offered alternative interpretations of the Muridiyya. Because of these exceptional circumstances, the two hagiographies constitute useful sources for understanding the history of the Muridiyya from a Murid perspective.

Writing a History of the Muridiyya from Within

I developed an interest in the study of the Muridiyya in my third year in the History Department at University Cheikh Anta Diop of Dakar (Senegal), where I was first exposed to scholarship on the history of Islam in West Africa. The reading list on the Murids included works by sociologists, political scientists, and anthropologists. There were some articles and books by specialists of Islam and colonial administrators but nothing by historians. I was struck by the absence of historical works on such an important social, economic, and cultural phenomenon in the past and present of Senegal. I was further struck by the difference between scholarly reconstructions of the history and development of the Muridiyya and the way that the Murids themselves understood and interpreted their history. I decided to devote my master's and diplôme d'étude approfondie (DEA) theses to the Muridiyya in order to bring a historical and internal perspective to the study of the tariqa.[72]

I grew up in Mbakke Bawol, the historical village of the Mbakke family, just 7 kilometers away from Tuubaa, the holy city of the Murids. My father was introduced to Amadu Bamba at a young age and was raised by the latter's

half brother and close aide, Sheikh Anta Mbakke; he also personally knew and frequented most of the leading sheikhs of the Muridiyya. He had a sharp memory and could be considered a historian of the Muridiyya in his own right. Since I was the youngest child in our family, growing up at a time when my father was living a less active life, I was closest to him and benefited the most from his knowledge of the history of the Murid order. Being his traveling companion, I had also benefited from his networks of fellow disciples and friends.

Therefore, when I sat in that class on the history of the Muridiyya in the fall of 1990, I brought with me much background knowledge. It soon struck me that there seemed to be two parallel versions of the history of the Muridiyya. Each of these versions was based on specific premises and sources. The scholarly version, which was, for the most part, produced by social scientists, was built on ideas, perceptions, and evidence primarily influenced by French colonial sources and interpretations; the Murid version was inspired by the abundant but largely unexploited collection of oral reports and written documents generated within the tariqa. One goal of the present work is to bring into conversation these two versions of the history of the Muridiyya by bridging the clearly perceptible gap in Murid literature between precolonial and colonial history, archival and internal Murid sources, and secular and religiously sensitive approaches.

But to initiate this conversation, one must first assess the playing field. The dominant interpretation of the history of the Muridiyya was established by Paul Marty's study of the order in 1913. This interpretation was articulated around three basic assumptions: first, that Bamba was influenced by the precolonial Wolof aristocracy and that the founding of the Muridiyya was an attempt to re-create the old political order destroyed by the French occupation of Senegal; second, that the Muridiyya was merely a response of distraught Wolof farmers to colonization and had no major historical significance; and third, that the driving force behind the founding of the Muridiyya was not Amadu himself, but the social forces that coalesced behind him.[73] Despite its obvious flaws, Marty's interpretation has enjoyed an unusually enduring influence.[74] Some scholars have sought to distance themselves from the Marty paradigm by proposing new interpretations of aspects of the history and development of the Murid tariqa, inspired by Murid sources. Some of those scholars have put an emphasis on religiosity and culture by looking at Murid visual piety and sacred geography.[75] More recently, the ongoing debate between David Robinson and James Searing, both historians of Senegal, has called attention to the critical importance of internal sources in developing alternative perspectives on the history of the Muridiyya.

In his book on Wolof state politics, colonization, and Islam in Senegal, Searing proposed a major revision of Murid history that challenged the conventional historiography of the organization.[76] He criticized students of the Muridiyya for their heavy reliance on French archival sources and interpretations and for their failure to appreciate Murid internal sources. To correct the perceived distortions in the scholarship, Searing relied on Murid written and oral data to reconstruct a Murid-centered history (or history of commemoration), which he opposed to the history of the academy and to that produced by traditional royal court historians. He drew the bulk of his material from Bachir Mbacké's biography of Amadu Bamba and the lineage oral tradition of Daaru Muhti, the stronghold of Amadu Bamba's half brother and companion Ibra Faati, better known as Maam Cerno.

Searing's bold, revisionist stance has come under heavy criticism. Richard Roberts and David Robinson, both noted historians of West Africa, appreciated the great lengths Searing went to in collecting internal sources, and they applauded his attempt to present a Murid-sensitive interpretation.[77] However, they also identified substantial weaknesses in his approach. They faulted Searing for his uncritical use of Murid sources that ignored dissonant voices. Searing was also criticized for generalizing from an analysis based on a very limited body of material collected mainly from a single lineage source. More seriously, the work was suspected of merely substituting a Murid-centered master narrative to the so-called archive-driven master narrative, without an effort at synthesis.[78]

In this debate, both sides recognized the critical importance of internal sources in reinterpreting the history of the Muridiyya. What was in contention was not the scientific validity and usefulness of Murid oral or written sources but rather the appropriate methodology with which to approach these sources. Searing's provocative thesis represented an interesting alternative to the Marty paradigm, but to fulfill its potential, it needed to be backed by a larger, more diverse, and stronger body of evidence. Any attempt at developing a credible alternative to the dominant scholarly interpretation of the Muridiyya would also have to be based on a dialogue between the archival and Murid internal sources.

This book contributes to the debate, but it goes further by proposing, for the first time, a comprehensive reconstruction of the complex internal stories of the Muridiyya. This reconstruction is based on a careful analysis of a variety of sources, mainly Murid oral reports and written documents, that are integrated with substantial archival materials and other data. My connections within the tariqa have been vital in helping reconstruct the internal stories. They have given me access to sources that have until now eluded scholars of

the Muridiyya and Islam in Senegal. Because of my familiarity with these sources and the internal politics of the order, I was able to disentangle the layers of information and to fill some of the gaps and silences by interrogating specific families and lineages. By comparing and contrasting a variety of sources from various provenances and by applying a rigorous internal and external critique to Murid oral reports and written documents, I hope to minimize some of the adverse effects of this material.

However, the critique leveled against Searing clearly highlights the difficulties of dealing with an organization with a living history and whose past is constantly being reinterpreted to adjust to changing circumstances. These difficulties are even greater when one is committed to writing a history of the Muridiyya from within. The advantage of a view from the inside is recognized, since, as Victor Turner observed, the inside view of an alien culture might well make comprehensible many of its seemingly bizarre components and interrelations.[79] But one should also be aware of the drawbacks of the insider's position. In effect, the empathy and open collaboration of informants who feel a bond with the researcher do not come without cost, as the researcher may be subject to manipulations or subconsciously indulge in self-censorship to avoid social sanction or preserve ties with the community.

However, as the Searing debate has shown, outsiders writing about the history of the Muridiyya face equally daunting challenges. The nature of the challenges may be different, but the struggle to untangle and objectively analyze and interpret a large body of written and oral materials produced by faithful disciples in unfamiliar and esoteric religious languages—or by biased colonial administrators—is the same. In reality, any historian writing about his or her own culture or society will, in one way or the other, have to confront the insider's challenge. When scholars write about people whose values they share or cherish, they tend to be less skeptical and suspicious and more willing to listen and convey the stories they are told. But as noted by Paul Ricoeur, "To confess that one is a listener is from the very beginning to break with the project dear to many, and even perhaps all, philosophers [one may add historians]: to begin a discourse without any presuppositions." Yet, as Ricoeur confessed, the presupposition that "Christian speaking is meaningful, that it is worthy of consideration" has been a guiding principle of his work on Christianity.[80] Like Ricoeur, I claim the position of the listener vis-à-vis the Muridiyya. And as Ricoeur might agree, I believe that to adopt the sympathetic attitude of the listener does not necessary disable one's ability to write critically and objectively. In other words, the historian's ability to write a critical history of a people does not hinge on his or her position but rather on his or her capacity to effectively apply the historical method of inquiry and criticism to the sources.