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MURIDIYYA – A COUNTERWEIGHT TO ISLAMIC EXTREMISM

MURIDIYYA – PRZECIWWAGA DLA ISLAMSKIEGO EKSTREMIZMU

Introduction

Islam does not have a good press, it has become a growing source of suspicion and hostility in many societies nowadays. This is partly due to some stereotypes and misunderstandings with the teachings of the faith in the media and partly to the various acts of terrorists, who use the name of Islam to justify their ideology of violence and intolerance. Islam has in Africa a long tradition. Muridiyya is a religious movement founded in the nineteenth century in Senegal by Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba (1850–1927), promoting Islam based on work, prayer and humility. The author attempts to analyze the Muridiyya doctrine and the teachings of its founder as a possible counterweight to threats of extremist Islam.

Literature Review

Muridiyya is a Muslim community in sub-Saharan Africa, founded by Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba Mbacke in Senegal at the end of the 19 century. The brotherhood attracted the attention of the colonial authorities very early, and the first researches on it were the work of Paul Marty¹. The term Muridizm was used for the first time by him, he was precursor in studies on Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba and his movement. He wrote numerous monographs, which attempted to describe Islam in the French West Africa including (*Etudes sur l'islam au Sénégal*²). However, it should be emphasized that those studies were made by a colonial administration expert, who was trying to fulfill the “French civilizing mission”. That is why he treated the Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba movement from the colonial empire’s point of view. As an agent of the colonial administration, Paul Marty had the task of carrying out research on local populations, doctrines, Islamic institutions in Senegal, especially on Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba’s religious doctrine, in order to reveal its possible dangers. According to the colonizers any form of offensive action taken by the natives should be brutally repressed in order to guarantee peace,

¹ Paul Marty (1882–1938), a senior officer (Lieutenant-Colonel), a colonial administrator, an expert interpreter of the Arabic language and a French scholar. He was notably a great specialist in sub-Saharan Islam).

² P. Marty, *Etudes sur l'islam Au Sénégal*, Vol. 2. Editions Ernest Leroux, Paris 1917.

that would permit them do continue their economic activity, the exploitation of goods. Therefore, the Paul Marty's study had to describe in detail the Brotherhood, which was considered by French colonial administration as a threat to peace in the colony of Senegal. So that, Muridizm in Paul Marty's comprehension was only a sum of ideas, focused on the external aspect of the Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba's brotherhood. It was full of assumptions and prejudices, it was only the product of the colonizers glance on Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba's way and reflected the sum of their fears and misconceptions. Many historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and geographers use the term Muridizm, which had a particular signification during the French colonial rule in Senegal. That is why I prefer using the term Muridiyya rather than Muridizm.

Paul Marty's work has opened the door to other researchers. Vincent Monteil³ inaugurated in 1962 the post-independence generation of Murid literature. He will be followed by Mbaye Guèye, *Le Mouridisme dans une dimension historique et géopolitique*⁴. Khadim Mbacke, grandson of the founder of Muridiyya, *Le soufisme et les confréries religieuses au Sénégal*⁵, edited by the Fundamental Institute of Black Africa (IFAN), deals with the political and religious aspect of Muridiyya. After a very detailed presentation of Sufism, he presents the different brotherhoods in Senegal, before focusing on the birth and teaching of Shaykh Amadou Bamba.

Among others studies on Muridiyya there are those conducted by researchers of the former ORSTOM and CEAN⁶. Among the most known studies should be mentioned the work of Momar Coumba Diop, Christian Colon, Jean Copans, Donald Martin Carter, Cheikh Abdoulaye Dieye, Barbara Daly Metcalf⁷. Oumar

³V. Monteil, *Une confrérie musulmane: Les mourides du Sénégal*. Archives de Sociologie des Religions 1962, No. 14.

⁴ M. Guèye, *Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba: Contexte historique et géopolitique*. Revue Action islamique 1987.

⁵ K. Mbacké, *Le soufisme et les confréries religieuses au Sénégal*. IFAN (Institut Fondamentale d'Afrique noire) 1989.

⁶ ORSTOM – Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique Outre-mer, now IRD – Institut pour la Recherche et le Développement; CEAN – Centre d'Etude d'Afrique Noire.

⁷ D.C. O'Brien, *The Mourid of Senegal: The political and Economic Organization of an Islamic Brotherhood*. Editions Clarendon Press, Oxford 1975; J. Copans, *Les marabouts de l'arachide*. Editions Le Sycomore, Paris 1980; C. Coulon, *Le Marabout et le Prince. Islam et Pouvoir au Sénégal*. Editions Pédone, Paris 1981; M.C. Diop, *La confrérie mouride: organisation économique et mode d'implantation urbaine*. Editions Université de Lyon, Lyon 1980; M. C. Diop, *Les affaires mourides à Dakar*. Politique africaine 1981, No. 1, No. 4; M.C. Diop, *Fonctions et activités des dahiras mourides urbains (Sénégal)*. Cahiers d'Etudes africaines 1982, No. 11, pp. 81–83; V. Ebin, *Murid traders on the road: The Transition of a Senegalese Brotherhood from Agriculture to International Trade*. Editions Social Science Research Council, 9 n. d.; B.D. Metcalf (Ed.), *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe*. Berkeley, Editions University of California Press, Los Angeles 1999; D.M. Carter, *State of Grace. Senegalese in Italy and the New Europe Immigration*.

Ba, *Ahmadou Bamba face aux autorités coloniales (1889–1927)*, a collection of documents concerning Ahmadou Bamba gathered and edited on 1982 by Oumar Ba, archivist at the Archives of Senegal. In the first part, like an introduction, the author tried to give answer to the following questions: Who was Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba? What is Muridiyya? He has also attempted to describe the religious order of Ahmadou Bamba, as well, as the French policy towards Ahmadou Bamba from 1886 to 1903. This book contains copies of correspondence between the Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba and the colonial authorities, reports, pictures and other valuable archival documents of that period. Madické Wade, in *Destinée du Mouridisme* (1987), after the introduction, in a chapter “Mouhamadou Bamba seen by others”⁸, analyze in a critical manner the works of previous author on Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba. Then he tried to describe, The Man, his mission, Mouhamadou Bamba, the anti-colonialist, the martyr. Other topics like literature and Murid arts, philosophical aspect, Shaykh Ibrahima Fall, The Mosque and the city of Touba, the Magal and the Murid society, among other, are also present in Wade’s study. Chekh Gueye, *Touba. La capitale des mourides* (2002), based on a geographical approach, the author traces the spatial and social history of the city. The main themes in this book are the modes of construction of a properly urban space, the dynamics of Touba. The capital of Muridiyya, which, in a short period of time, has become the second city of Senegal from the demographic and economic point of view.

1. Jean Pierre Mulago, *Les mourides d’Ahmadou Bamba: un cas de réception de l’islam en terre négro-africaine*⁹, presents the cultural, religious, political and economic emancipation of the Wolof people through Muridiyya as an example for the rest of Africa. According to him it could be a means of developing the African continent.
2. Fatou Sow shows the dimension of the philosophy of work among the Murids in her memoir¹⁰. She defines the nature of the relations between marabouts and *talibés* (disciples) before offering a pertinent analysis of the different forms of work in Muridiyya.
3. Cheikh Anta Babou, has published one of the biggest research on the brotherhood during the last decades, *Fighting the Greater Jihad. Ahmadou*

Editions University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis–London 1997; C.A. Dieye, *Touba, Signes et Symboles*. Editions Deggel, Paris 1997.

⁸ The translation from French and from Polish languages into English are made by the author Bara NDiaye.

⁹ J.P. Mulago, *Les mourides d’Ahmadou Bamba: un cas de réception de l’islam en terre négro-africaine*. Revue Laval théologique et philosophique Paru le 2 juin 2003, No 2, Vol. 61.

¹⁰ F. Sow, *Les logiques de travail chez les Mourides*. Mémoire de D.E.A. d’études Africaines. Option: Anthropologie juridique et politique. Université de Paris I. Panthéon-Sorbonne 1998.

*Bamba and the Founding of the Muridiyya of Senegal, 1853–1913*¹¹, published by Ohio University Press, 2007, translated into French on 2011 as *Le Jihad de l'âme : Ahmadou Bamba et la fondation de la Mouridiyya au Sénégal (1853–1913)*. The Senegalese scholar, delivered in his book an analysis of the foundation and development of Murid order through a biographical study of its founder. He pointed out the western and some Senegalese scholars misunderstandings of Muridiyya. Most of them conceived the Murid order as a parochial and conservative rural organization strongly influenced by Wolof¹² culture. Influenced by Paul Marty's opinion, who claimed that the Muridiyya was nothing but Wolofization of Islam, they believed that the Murid order would not be able to adapt to the transformations ushered in by modernization. Those scholars predicted that the combined effects of urbanization, Western education, and increasing capitalist relations of productions in Senegal will ineluctably lead to a progressive weakening and decline of the Murid organization. However history did not give reason to him, because, over half a century after these predictions were made, the Muridiyya has become the most powerful religious organization in Senegal¹³.

Abdoul Aziz Mbacke, another grandson of Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba in *Jihad for peace (Exploring the Philosophy of Shaykh A. Bamba, the African Muslim Leader of Non-violence)*, tries to study and analyze the thought of the great Senegalese Sufi and its importance in today's world. Among the topics discussed are the ideological, social and historical foundations of Shaykh's non-violence, its differences with that of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, the true conditions of a global peace according to the Shaykh are adoration of God, mutual respect, fight against the materialistic and animal tendencies of man, against the moral and spiritual vacuum of modernity¹⁴.

We should mention, that Mohamed el Bachir Mbacke (1895–1966), called Serigne Bassirou, is considered as the biographer of his father Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba. He is the author of a work called "Minanoul-Bakhil-Khadim" (The Benefits of the Eternal). He was the son of Serigne Touba who was staying the longest by his side. That situation gave to Serigne Bassirou the opportunity to live with Serigne Touba and to transmit to the next generation this treasure that constitutes "Minanoul-Bakhil-Khadim". A great book with two parts; a historical

¹¹ C.A. Babou, *Fighting the Greater Jihad. Amadu Bamba and the Founding of the Muridiyya of Senegal, 1853–1913*. Ohio University Press 2007, trans. into French on 2011 as *Le Jihad de l'âme: Ahmadou Bamba et la fondation de la Mouridiyya au Sénégal (1853–1913)*.

¹² The term Wolof may refer to: the Wolofs, the ethnic group most represented in Senegal; Wolof, the most widely spoken language in Senegal is Wolof. As the mother tongue of more than a third of the population, it is spoken and understood by almost everyone.

¹³ C.A. Babou, *Fighting the Greater Jihad...*, op. cit., pp. 8–13.

¹⁴ A.A. Mbacke, *Jihad for peace (Exploring the Philosophy of Shaykh A. Bamba, the African Muslim Leader of Non-violence)*. Touba 2009.

one, where the biographer traces the Shaykh' life from his birth until his exile in 1895, evoking the origins of his family, his education, his qualities and his intellectual formation, his relations with the contemporary traditional chiefs and the colonial authorities. The second mystical part in which the author tries to follow the spiritual evolution of the Shaykh through the nine stages of the mystical itinerary. After the definition of each stage, Serigne Bassirou engages in a deep analysis of the Shaykh's behavior in order to detect the signs of crossing the next stage by Him. His aim was to demonstrate that his father and master fully assumed the spiritual heritage of the Prophet, and thereby deserved the status of the supreme Holiness. The book remains an extraordinary source of information and allows to discover aspects of the social history of the Murids, as well as their conception of religion and its role in human relations¹⁵.

This literature review is far from being exhaustive, because a very rich scientific literature on Muridiyya exists. Numerous studies and researches focus on Muridiyya's capacity of mobilization, its commitment, its dynamism, its financial autonomy, the values of mutual aid, solidarity, discipline, abnegation to work, tolerance. While some other have favored the education component, others have found the economic or even political character more interesting. In this study, I would like to focus on the pacific character of Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba's doctrine Muridiyyah.

Closing this part, it is necessary to remember, that Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba, the founder of the Murid Brotherhood remains the greatest poet and writer of all times. His written works deal with all the fields of religious sciences, education and panegyrics devoted to The Prophet (PBH)¹⁶. "My miracle is my writings in the service of the Prophet (PBH), and Allah the Master of the nobility has been fruitful to me".

Shaykh A. Bamba's poems show how Muridiyya is full of tolerance and integrates in an organic way all the great virtues of love, forgiveness, grace and spirituality; Virtues capable of leading the human to transcendence and moral perfection like no other philosophy:

May all humankind benefit from me, o Lord!

Make me a source of bliss for all, black and white.

Impart Thy Guidance, thanks to me, to the people of my time and to coming generations.

Always cherish good feelings for all the creatures of God¹⁷.

¹⁵ *Serigne Bassirou, le biographe de Serigne Touba*. Online: <http://www.notices-pdf.com/minanou-l-bakhil-khadim-pdf.html#a0> [13.02.2017].

¹⁶ Online: <http://www.daaraykamil.com/diwan.html> [3.02.2017].

¹⁷ A.A. Mbacke, op. cit., p. 19.

Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba and his mission

Mbacke's family history in the kingdom of Baol began with Maramé Mbacke, the founder of the village Mbacke Baol. He was the first Who brought celebrity and prestige of his clan in wolof territory¹⁸. Thanks to his deep faith he has exercised a strong influence on the religious life, and gained widespread respect. He was a man of high culture and orthodox-minded to the problems of assimilation of Muslim cultural values. He made his village an academic and religious center.



He was the great Grandfather of Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba, who appeared in a village Mbacke in the kingdom of Baol in the center of Senegal in 1850 (we can find in the literature different years of birth: 1851, 1853, 1855).

The single remaining photo of Ahmadu Bamba, likely photographed before 1923. No one owns a copyright and it has come down to us through being

¹⁸ C.A. Babou, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

reproduced in countless photo labs and by photocopying. Online: https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahmadou_Bamba#/media/File:AhmaduBamba.jpg [30.08.2017].

Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba Mbacke's father, known under the name Momar Anta Saly was an outstanding scholar, who taught Qur'an and religious teachings. His mother Mariama Bousso, for her piety and nobility, was given the nickname *Jâratul-LAH* (which means "neighbor of Allah"). Shaykh's parents, very early noticed son's innate tendency to piety, meditation and moral behavior, no tolerancy of entertainment, indecency and sin. Wherever he was, in the course of his studies, people have noted his remarkable spirituality. He was a great connoisseur of the Koran, religious teachings, grammar, rhetoric and others. He remains the most prolific author the world had ever known, many works and studies deals with field of religious teachings, theology, law, education and a huge number of poems dedicated to The Prophet Mohammad (PBH)¹⁹.

His name in Arabic is known as *Aḥmad ibn Muhammad ibn Habīb Allāh*, or *Khadīmu r-Rasūl*, "Servant of the Prophet". In wolof, the most spoken language in Senegal he is called *Sëriñ Tuubaa*, "Holy Man of Touba" or *Borom Tuubaa* (The Owner of Touba).

According to the historians of the brotherhood, the beginning of the fourteenth centenary of the Muslim era (1301 of the hegira), is probably the focal point, the most important date in the hagiography of Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba. His mission began on this date with the directives of The Prophet (PBH), who addressed him in these terms: "Ahmad, give to your disciples a spiritual education and no longer give them a book education" It was the beginning of the rehabilitation of the pact of allegiance (*Bayca*), a condition which had made Islam a respected religion, which was its main strength, but it was unknown to most Muslims of that period, because of the wilting of Islam at that time. That's why Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba had stressed that he had rebuilt the road, which was heading The Prophet, purified it and renewed in its originality, and then turned to all the aspirants (Murids) who wanted to follow him with the call: "Come on, the road is rebuilt". Then, the founder of Muridiyya began a spiritual education of the aspirants (Murids), who

¹⁹ Through the magic of the verb and the mastery with the dexterity of the Arabic language, Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba rose to the supreme rank of the poets of the Prophet who gives him the sobriquet *Khadīmu r-Rasūl* (The Servant of The Prophet). With more than 30,000 verses written in several categories, a record unrivaled by any contemporary even less ancient poets like Hassan ibn Shabbit who marked his era. Among these khassaid (poems) of thanks on the Prophet (PBH): *Nuru Darayni*, *Tayssiroul Assir*, *Moukhadamatoul Khidmat*, and so many others.... God is the first who has given thanks to His Prophet (PBH), has enjoined us to imitate Him in this way: "O believers, give thanks and peace to the Prophet (PBH)", reports the Qur'an. *L'incroyable relation entre Serigne Touba et Shaykh Yusuf an-Nabhani!* 2015. Online: http://www.buzzsenegal.com/Saviezvous/l-rsquo-incroyable-relation-entre-serign_n_11259.html [12.02.2017].

had confided themselves their live and property to him. It was also a spiritual journey, which lasted twelve years, from 1301 H. (1883) to 1313 H. (1895). The itinerary of Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba journey was punctuated by a lot of displacements from one place to another, looking for isolation, for a land where to adore God without constraint, far from the tumults of this world. Neither Mbacke Kajoor (1301 H. / 1883) nor Mbacké Baol 1304 H. (1884) could not fulfill this condition. He founded Dâru Salâm (the abode of Peace) (1305 H. / 1886). But wherever he passed, the innumerable crowds he drained did not alter in any way the intensity of the practices of worship to which he devoted himself. Touba (The Felicity) founded by him in (1306 H. / 1888) was the final stage. A dwelling he obtained as a reward for his ardent faith and his long journey in order to find a place of worship. He said about this place: “God has preserved it”. Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba wrote in one of his poem *Matlabul Fawzeyni*, devoted to Touba, the capital city of Muridiyya:

Make this place a place of piety, science and religion. Let it be a source of elevation. Make this place a place of adoration of Allah the Merciful and the rejection of Satan.

Make this place a place of teaching, meditation and a place of understanding. Make this land a land of riches, a land of safety, a land of merciful, a land of eternal abundance.

Collect in this place any good coming from the East, from the West, from the North, from the South, from the sky, from the earth.

Protect my city from all the ungodly²⁰.

He lived in Touba seven years of intense pious activities in the revivification of all pious practices such as Cult, Reading of the Qur’an, composition of Panegyrics devoted to The Prophet, The Elect (PBH), etc. This journey, a true marathon, would lead to a consecration by his historical meeting with the Prophet (PBH), with whom he signed the pact of the trials in view of the Exile. He had to leave his favorite city Touba, for the reason that his prayers being accepted, nothing bad could happen there. He went to Mbacké Baari a small village in the Djolof kingdom in the year 1312H. / 1895. Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba, *Khadîmu r-Rasûl* (Servant of the Prophet), had a wish to join the companions of the Prophet Mohammad, who fought in Bedr, that meant to achieve “the highest level”. The condition for achieving this level is determined by the sum of suffering that a candidate must survive. “The agreement with God” put him to the necessity of confronting the enemies over more than thirty years.

Aziz Mbacke asserts, that “Thanks to his charismatic virtues and to the spiritual lights his disciples were shining, his reputation soon expanded and crowds

²⁰ C.A. Bamba, *Matlabul fawzeyni* (Looking for success in two worlds), lines 193, 197, 218, 201, 226, 72.

towards his daaras (schools) fast took larger proportions. Such a trend aroused a libelous campaign against Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba, from some native colonial representatives, and provoked strong mistrust to the French colonial power who suspected him of preparing his disciples to Jihad (the so called holy war). This bias was all the most unfair if we consider the nonviolent philosophy of the Shaykh as well as his concept of *Khidma* (Rendering Service to the Prophet) which excluded any violence, even against the vilest creature”²¹.

Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba wrote on this purpose: “I am waging my Jihad through Knowledge and Fearing the Lord”. However, regardless of such kind of concern, the colonial authorities decided to arrest and deport him to Gabon (Central Africa), in September 1895. After eight years of a very trying exile, during which the Shaykh wrote, in loneliness, an impressive number of poems all dedicated to the Lord and His Messenger (PBH), the French decided to let him go back home, in November 1902. But, in fearing his growing charisma over the masses aroused by his success, they exiled him again to Mauritania, afterwards they maintained him in house arrest in Senegal until his death in 1927. However history proved later that colonial strategies of “containment” did not succeed in holding back Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba’s teachings and work from shaping deeply the thoughts and the culture of his nation and of millions of people all around the world²².

All this time he faced exile, harassment, persecution, and strengthened his faith on One God, recognizing only Allah as his Lord and Ruler. Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba led a “holy war against the soul”. Koran and prayer were his only weapons, he did not shed a single drop of blood. He triumphed over their enemies and forgive them.

I have forgiven all my enemies for the Countenance of the Lord who turned them away from me forever, because I feel no resentment against them.

The true warrior in God’s path is not he who kills his enemies, but he who combats his ego (nafs) to achieve spiritual perfection.

Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba founder of Muridiyya, the first Sufi brotherhood derived from black African environment. It has a unique local character. Cheikh Abdoulaye Dièye described this path as follows: “Shaykh inaugurates in this way a new era in the history of Islam and the black man. Indeed, the black population of Senegal have usually travel to Mauritania in search of teachers clergy. But Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba, being the first black spiritual leader, into whom the crowds walked from different parts of the world. He turned the roles. He proved that all

²¹ A.A. Mbacke, *Jihad for peace...*, op. cit.

²² Ibidem, p. 19.

humans have a soul and they overcome each other only by the level of worshipping God”²³.

According to Madicke Wade, the appearance of Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba, the mission he assigned himself and the results he observed, seem to be the proof that even if *Khadīmu r-Rasūl* is not a Prophet. God has sent him to us for our salvation and peace? In any case, no Prophet has ever appeared in the black race which, moreover, was reduced to the rank of sub-race. Isn't Bamba the savior of the black race, the Redeemer? One can doubt, even in his people. But he is very affirmative telling us in his poem *Diawartou* „Never again will God give a man as much as he has given me...”²⁴.

Muridiyya – rehabilitation of Islam

Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba's doctrine, Muridiyya is simple, the main principles on which it is based are work, prayer, and humility. That is what makes Muridiyya being within every human being. The road Muridiyya has three dimensions: mystical emotion, which is the engine of every noble action and all collective activities, individual work for the community and, finally, permanent solidarity under the leadership of a great spiritual leader.

Muridiyya belongs to the Sufi, in which we can distinguish two trends. The first is based on a literal interpretation of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The second, also called mystical, proposes a symbolic or allegorical interpretation of the sacred texts. The latter trend explores the esoteric secret meaning of texts. Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba belongs to this mystical mainstream Sufism²⁵. Cheikh Anta Babou sees Sufism as a rejection of violence and acceptance of mystical ways to cope with adversity. Senegalese historian puts its growth in the first four centuries of Islam, and defines it as a system of thought and way of combating *nafs* (soul of the flesh). This method is based on methods and courses developed by generations of thinkers and practitioners. The Sufism involves a series of actions and attitudes, which are designed to free the body from the grip of our world's fear, allowing the spirit to be gradually closer to the kingdom of God, in order to achieve the ultimate goal: to become a *Wali* (friend) of God²⁶. The French publisher Laurent de Saint Périer sees Sufism as a path of spiritual, mystic realization of Islam power and the quintessential expression of Revelation. It is believed that Sufism is the antithesis of a rigid, strict Salafist interpretation: “There are those who in the name of faith promise hell for their opponents and reserve the best seats for themselves. [...] And there are those for whom Islam is peace and love, those for whom the great jihad

²³ B. NDiaye, *Współczesna Afryka Subsaharyjska. Wybrane zagadnienia*. Olsztyn 2011, p. 137.

²⁴ M. Wade, *Destinée du Mouridisme*. Dakar 1987, p. 58.

²⁵ B. Ndiaye, op. cit., pp. 136–137.

²⁶ C.A. Babou, op. cit., p. 21.

means a struggle of man with himself, to be closer to God, to reach the Truth (*Haqiqa*)²⁷.

Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba is considered as a “renewer” (*mujaddid*) of Islam by his followers. Murids sometimes call their order the “Way of Imitation of the Prophet (PBH)”²⁸.

Education remains one of basic value of Muridiyya. The role of spiritual leaders in the education process is double – professor of religious education and guide, transmitting spiritual knowledge in Wolof language (*xam-xam*). Moreover, The Shaykh, the leader should possess not only the knowledge of Islam, but also something more, what is called *baraka* or *barke* – “a little bit of grace”, which God grants some people. It is connected, according to Alphonse Gouilly, to the “magical power, involving the power of blessing or charisma [...]”. *Baraka* is an important concept, derived from the Prophet Mouhamad (PBH). It allows the Shaykh to be recognized as the guide, the privileged confident of the “Talibe” (disciple), ie. The trustworthy Master (marabout). Parents send their sons to live with the marabout as *talibes*. He gives them not only a conventional education, but these boys receive also Islamic training and are instilled with the doctrine of hard work. The achievement of that spiritual perfection is to provide education held in *daara* (religious schools), based on the principles *Tarbiyya* (moral and spiritual education), especially in Sufi values of perseverance, stoicism, humility and solidarity. Educated and trained in *daara* talibes (disciples Murid) are the biggest producers of peanuts in Senegal²⁹. Another structure *Dahira*, an urban religious institution that functioned as a sort of prayer circle, where disciples living in a same town or neighborhood would meet on a weekly basis to read the Qur’an, chant Ahmadou Bamba’s religious odes, and socialize³⁰.

According to C. A. Babou the principles of the Muridiya are consubstantial to Sufism with the *shaykh taalim*, the *shaykh tarbiyya* and the *shaykh tarqiyya* which respectively instruct, perfect the behavior and lead the disciple to higher stages. The doctrine of the brotherhood can be summed up as follows: the love of the shaykh (*hubb*), the work (*khidma*) and the gift (*hadiyya*)³¹. All these values of the brotherhood were personify by one of the first disciples Shaykh Ibrahim Fall, called *Mame Shaykh Ibra Fall*.

Ibrahim Fall (1856–1930) *Babul Muridina*, “the entrance in Muridiyya” was one of the first of Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba’s disciples and the most famous. Ibra Fall was known for his dedication to God, and considered work as a form of adoration. Ahmadou Bamba finally decided that Ibra Fall should show his

²⁷ L. de Saint Périer, *Soufisme: islam du coeur, coeur de l’islam*. Online: www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/JA2807-2808p060-061.xml0/ [29.08.2017].

²⁸ Muridiyyah. Online: <http://www.worldlibrary.org/articles/muridiyyah> [12.02.2017].

²⁹ B. NDiaye, op. cit., p. 141

³⁰ C.A. Babou, op cit., pp. 8–13.

³¹ Ibidem. p. 86.

dedication to God purely through manual labor. Ibra Fall founded a sub-group of the Muridiyyah brotherhood called the Baye Fall (*Baay Faal*). He not only catalysed the Muridiyya movement, led all the labour work, but he also showed the way in which Shaykh Ahmadou Bambou should be celebrated and his supreme place. By his example, Ibra Fall reshaped the relation between Murid “talibes” (disciples) and their Shaykh, Ahmadou Bamba and played an important role in expanding Muridiyya. He introduced concept of *Dieuf Dieul*, (“you reap what you sow”) and instituted the culture of work among Murids. Shaykh Amadou Bamba, named him “Lamp Fall” (the light of Muridiyya), Ibrahima Fall also earned the title of *Babul Mouridina*, “the entrance in Muridiyya”³².

It is difficult to overestimate Ibra Fall’s contribution to the development and history of Muridiyya. At the highest minaret of the mosque (nearly 90 meters) in Touba, the light that can be seen from a very far distance is called “Lamp Fall”, from Sheikh Ibrahim Fall’s name. This is an important symbol that illuminates now the way of Muridiyya brotherhood, like it was done at the beginning by Sheikh Ibrahim Fall himself. He was so involved in the Muridiyya and dedicated to Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba all his live, his time and energy in accomplishing hard physical labor, filling without hesitation all the recommendations of the founder of the Brotherhood, he lacked time for prayer and other religious practices. For this reason, a significant portion of his followers – “Baay-Fall” – is not willing to fulfill their religious duties. Many of them substitute hard labor and dedication to their Shaykh for the usual Muslim pieties like prayer and fasting.

Then, Ibra Fall remains a central figure in the brotherhood. This new spiritual inspiration and approach, in which Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba invited his people to take an alternative spiritual path. Bamba’s new ethics-centered pedagogy of Islam was based on faith in God’s Unity (*Tawhid*), compliance with The prophet’s (PBH) Tradition (*Sunna*), knowledge (*‘Ilm*), morale education (*Tarbiyya*), worship (*IBada*), community service (*Khidma*), non-violence, cultural identity, attachment to work and self-sufficiency, seeking God’s satisfaction in everything.

Bamba wrote: “My wish is to revitalize the Pure Tradition (*Sunnah*) of The Elected Prophet (PBH)”. “My treasures are the Qur’an, the *Hadiths* and Ethics; but not hoarding money and gold”³³.

The only earthly activity, focusing Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba attention was the construction of the Great Mosque in Touba. According to oral tradition, Ahmadou Bamba, one day in 1925 gathered in Diourbel brotherhood dignitaries and addressed them with these words: “I received an order from the Supreme build a mosque in the holy city of Touba, which will be devoted to God, the Most High and his Prophet (PBH). This building will not be built for my glory or Muridiyya fame, but a tribute to the Most High and his Beloved Envoy. The construction of this mosque is the only action of the earth, that interests me. Then do this

³² Muridiyyah. Online: <http://www.worldlibrary.org/articles/muridiyyah> [12.02.2017].

³³ A.A. Mbacke op. cit.

realization your greatest job, because it is the command of God”³⁴. Its construction was started in 1931 by Shaykh Mouhamadou Moustapha Mbacke, his oldest son, the first Caliph, a symbolic inauguration made the first president of independent Senegal, Leopold Sedar Senghor in 1963, during the caliphate of Shaykh Mouhamadou Falilou Mbacke, the second Caliph.

The inauguration of the Mosque does not mean the end of work, because, as a sign and a symbol, the work on it is intended to be continuous. In this way, Touba has become the place that creates Murids memory and imagination; a place that reflects the economic, social, architectural and cultural successes of the brotherhood. The center of the space, the Great Mosque, is the symbolic center of the Murid community imagination. Touba is the biggest symbol of Ahmadou Bamba’s teaching, the materialization of his ambition, the place where the essence of Islam is carried out: “Din” – religion, “Dawla” – the community, “Dunja” – world.



Great Mosque in Touba during renovation July 2015, photo B. NDiaye

Magal Touba

Touba, the capital city of Muridiyya gathered, every year, during two days, millions of people from the whole world. The ceremony is called Magal, the most important event in the life of the brotherhood, or annual pilgrimage to Touba. It takes place the 18th day of the month of Safar of the lunar calendar, in honor of

³⁴ B. NDiaye, *op. cit.*, pp. 138–139.

the commemoration of the first Ahmadou Bamba's deportation to Gabon on 18 Safar 1313 H. / 21 September 1895. The founder of Muridiyya appealed to everyone to thank God that day which marked the beginning of his suffering and also the fulfillment of all his wishes. In 1921, in Diourbel Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba declared that: "to the benefits that God has given me, my only and sovereign gratitude is not enough, so I invite everyone who enjoys my personal happiness to join me in eternal gratitude to God, on each 18 Safar anniversary...."³⁵. This means that Shaykh Ahmadou also celebrated Magal. Murids initially celebrated it in their homes, that is, throughout Senegal.

Later, the second Caliph Serigne Fallou Mbacké (1888–1968) appealed disciples to come to Touba to celebrate together Magal. From that time until now, every year more and more people from around the world come to Touba to take part in this day of thanksgiving and prayers.

We should underline the fact that Magal is a kind of recognition, which includes good, good reward, gifts and appeasement in this world and in the other. Thus one can also say that recognition is the key to salvation. It was the attitude of Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba who invites everyone to express gratitude to God through the favors visible as invisible that God granted him arising from a long process begun since 18 Safar 1313 H. / 21 September 1895 in Mbacké Baari, a small village in the center of Senegal. He suffered the worst atrocities, trials ranging from deprivation and isolation. In this he remained constant, enduring, courageous, determined and occupied by worshipping God to the point of forgetting trials and humiliations. He has always endeavored to glorify God in renewing His submission and obedience while evoking His benefits. Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba, *Khadīmu r-Rasūl* wrote: "If it was not for humanity (for the sons of Adam) I did not have spent a single night on earth. Do not abuse the fact that I am black to not enjoy my goodness. I am the eternal servant and each generation will have the certainty that I have come for it"³⁶.

Muridiyya disciples spread over the world are deeply convinced on that. When the Murids started to move out of Africa in the 1960s they took with them the education and social values they developed in their heartland of Senegal. They also celebrated the different Magal that marked the religious life of the Murid community. They remained profoundly attached to the positive values of the Muridiyyah, but they also showed a great capacity of adaptation. They absorbed some aspects of the local cultures that suited their economic enterprise and they

³⁵ C.F. Mbacke, *Une analyse historique de la dimension internationale et diplomatique du Magal*. Online: http://www.dakaractu.com/Une-analyse-historique-de-la-dimension-internationale-et-diplomatique-du-Magal_a57351.html [2.05.2016].

³⁶ *Sénégal: Départ en exil de Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba, le Grand Magal de Touba célébré aujourd'hui*, 2015. Online: <http://koaci.com/m/senegal-depart-exil-cheikh-ahmadou-bamba-grand-magal-touba-celebre-aujourd'hui-93706-i.html> [12.02.2017].

even incorporated modern organizational methods and techniques to disseminate the teachings of Sheikh Ahmadu Bamba and strengthen the Muridiyya. Disciples in the Diaspora played a significant role in the founding and expansion of new types of religious organizations. These are the international dahiras, NGOs and foundations such as the Khadim-ur-Rassul Foundation, MICA, Hizbut Tarqiyya, Matlabul Fawzayni and the allwomen dahira Maam Jaara Busso, named after Sheikh A. Bamba's blessed mother. These dahiras adopted modern form of management with board of trustees that included disciples around the world and developed efficacious fundraising strategies. The role of these dahiras and organizations is particularly important on the field of education and the modernization of the city of Touba³⁷. Murid Diaspora is guided by such values as: the cult of work, humility, selflessness, generosity, solidarity, commitment to the community, the fight against corruption and denial of violence. As an example of Murid functioning abroad lets quote the working paper presented by Monika Salzbrunn, Professor for Religions, Migrations and Diaspora Studies at the University of Lausanne (Switzerland): "The local Murid network in Harlem is an actor for social transformation. The real estate within that area has considerably changed since the arrival of the first Senegalese migrants in the 1980ies. Thanks to the visibility of religious practices within public space, the Senegalese Muslims, and particularly the members of the Murid brotherhood, earn emotional and spiritual security, accompanied by administrative and economic security provided by the State and by the borough of Manhattan. The authorities trust the new migrants because of their Muslim ethics that is expressed in almost weberian terms during their lobbying campaign and public events like the annual Murid parade"³⁸.

Thus, I deeply think that peaceful functioning of Muridiyya is an example of an alternative to the twenty-first century threats that brought globalization and rising religious extremism.

Even the British weekly "The Economist", the so called Bible of the neo-liberalism published an article devoted to Murids titled *Faith in the market* on December 19th, 2006, the author concluded: "Little known as they are, the Murids might have a lot to teach the rest of the world – not only about how to respond to globalization, but how to practice religion in a peaceful way"³⁹.

Conclusion

On the basis of this analysis, the present study provides the following conclusions: Muridiyyah has rehabilitated Islam in its originality, because Islam

³⁷ C.A. Babou, op. cit., pp. 8–13.

³⁸ M. Salzbrunn, *Localising Transnationalism: Researching Political and Cultural Events in a Context of Migration*. Paper presented at the conference on "Transnationalisation and Development(s): Towards a North-South Perspective", Center for Interdisciplinary Research, Bielefeld, Germany, May 31 – June 01. 2007.

³⁹ The Economist. Online: <http://www.economist.com/node/8450228> [15.03.2015].

means first of all peace and in this case, the peaceful teachings of its founder Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba should be emphasized. He wrote “O Lord! Lift me to the rank of Renovator of the Path of Islam, out of any hostility and war”⁴⁰.

For Him, the so called holy war means (“Jihad nafs”), a jihad against his own ego against bodily soul. “The true warrior in God’s path is not he who kills his enemies, but he who combats his ego (nafs) to achieve spiritual perfection”⁴¹.

The Muridiyya doctrine remains a counterweight to fundamentalist terror. It contrasts drastically with the militant and violent interpretation of Jihad made nowadays by groups such as Al Qaeda, Boko Haram, ISIS, and others.

Sufism is the main shield against religious radicalism, Senegalese Sufi Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba, the main apostle of non-violent struggle, used a pacific path to make Islam in Senegal an element of social cohesion.

Learnings of the Muridiya founder are based on *Khidma*, which is a service for the people, for God’s sake. It should be emphasized that being in service to others to please God destroys all traces of the desire for power and competition. The desire for power and competition can lead to conflicts. Murids educated by Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba are women and men of peace who seek only God’s approval being on their neighbors service. In order to win the war on fundamentalism by peaceful means, it is certainly important to promote his legacy, spiritual values, non-violence, brotherhood and ethics. True knowledge is a more effective weapon in the fight against intolerance and the excesses and the best remedy against ignorance and obscurantism. Muridiyya can help lay the foundation for peace and tolerance in today’s world, which is marked by deadly conflicts, injustice and endless cycles of violence and reprisals in the name of religion.

The Muridiyya has become a global movement as Murids are now living everywhere in the world. But, as Cheikh anta Babou has stressed, “the globalization of the Muridiyya has not resulted in its dissolution in the so called secular “universal culture” spearheaded by America. Murids remain confident in their ability to reconcile their beliefs and values with the cultures of their host societies around the world”⁴².

Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba’s refusal to submit to the colonial authority, to the local aristocracy or to yield to the Arabo-Mauritanian influence gave Muridiyya its particular character that distinguishes it from any other brotherhood. This particularity has made this community the central link in the political, economic and social spectrum of Senegal. The celebration of the Magal Touba reinforces this status every year and makes the holy city shine on the global geopolitical scene by positioning it as the model of perfect Islam based on peace, tolerance, solidarity, work, prayer and discipline.

⁴⁰ A.A. Mbacke, op. cit., p. 19.

⁴¹ Ibidem.

⁴² C.A. Babou, op. cit., pp. 8–13.

I deeply believe in the universality and timelessness of Ahmadou Bamba's message. The pacifism of the Muridiyya founder and his teachings are a needed model in the Muslim world and this temporal world in general, entangled in a murderous intolerance and mutual exclusion.

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SUMMARY

Islam has no good press, it has become a growing source of suspicion and hostility in many societies today. This is partly due to stereotypes and misunderstandings, partly associated with various terrorist acts who use Islam to justify the ideology of violence and intolerance. This article is an attempt to analyze the muslim brotherhood Muridiyya, which was founded in Senegal at the end of the 19th century. His founder's teachings reject all violence and rely on work, prayer, learning, and humility. The text provides a brief overview of the literature and answers the following questions: Who was Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba? What was his mission? What is Jihad in his understanding? What is sufism? What are the rules and the peaceful message of Muridiyyi ?

STRESZCZENIE

W dzisiejszych czasach w coraz większym stopniu islam staje się źródłem podejrzeń i wrogości, które obserwujemy w wielu społeczeństwach. Wynika to z utrwalonych stereotypów i nieporozumień oraz utożsamiania przedstawicieli tego wyznania z terrorystami, którzy wykorzystują islam, aby usprawiedliwić ideologię przemocy i nietolerancji. Artykuł stanowi próbę analizy odłamu islamu bractwa Muridiyya, który powstał w Senegal pod koniec XIX wieku. Nauczanie jego założyciela odrzucało wszelką przemoc i opierało się na pracy, modlitwie, nauce oraz pokorze. Tekst zawiera krótki przegląd literatury na temat historii bractwa. Celem artykułu jest odpowiedź na następujące pytania: kim był Szejek Ahmadou

Bamba? Na czym polegała jego misja? Co to jest dżihad w jego rozumieniu? Co to jest sufizm? Jakie są zasady Muridiyyi? Jak wyraża się jego przesłanie pokojowe?

Keys words: Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba, Muridiyya, Islam, Jihad, pacifism

Słowa kluczowe: Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba, Muridiyya, islam, dżihad, pacyfizm

