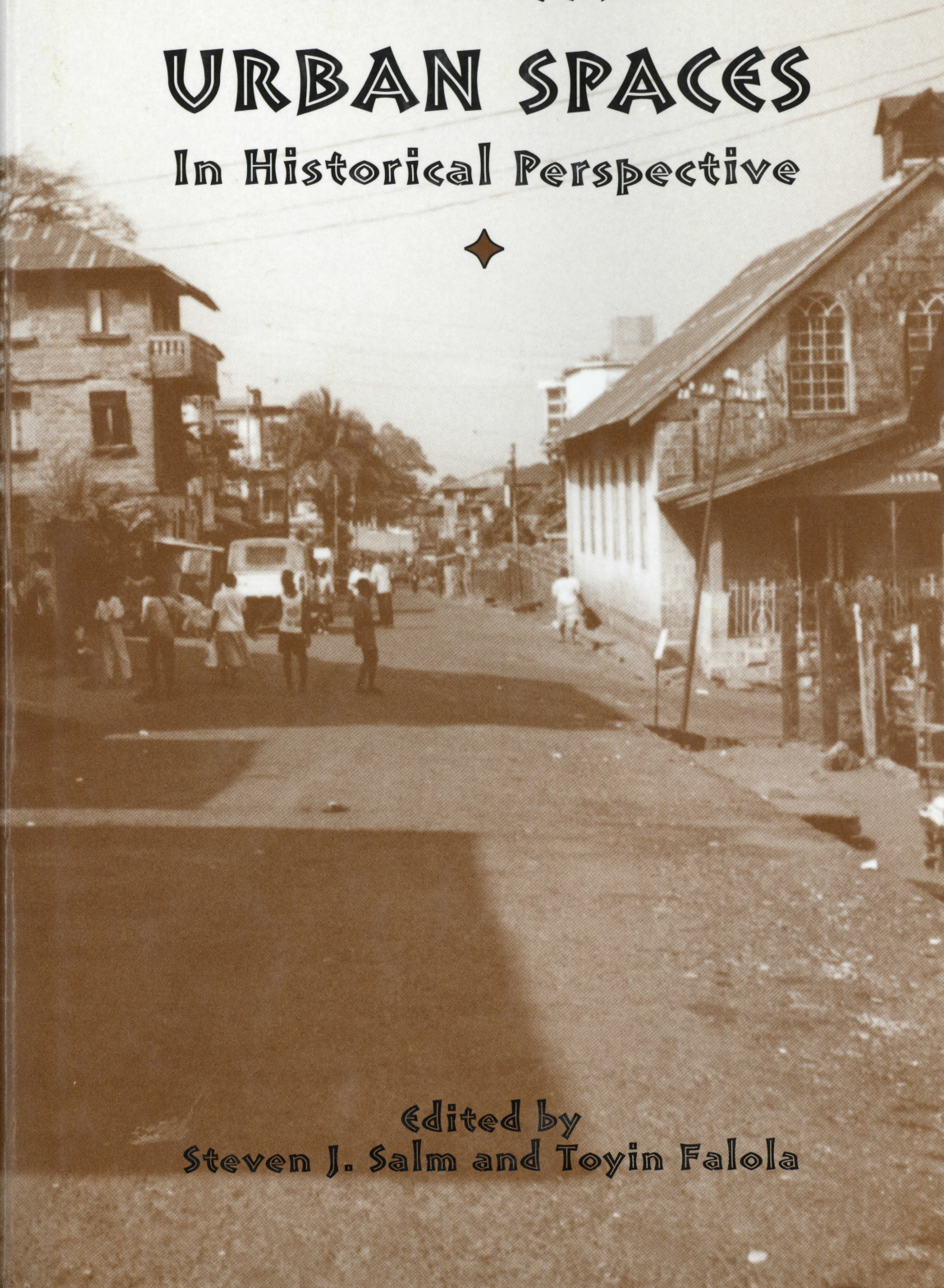


AFRICAN URBAN SPACES

In Historical Perspective



Edited by
Steven J. Salm and Toyin Falola

AFRICAN URBAN SPACES IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Edited by

Steven J. Salm and Toyin Falola

ERIC S. ROSS



UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER PRESS

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CONTENTS

Preface	xi
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Introduction:	
African Urban Spaces: History and Culture	xv
<i>Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch</i>	

Part I. Constructing Built Space

1	Moving East, Facing West: Islam as an Intercultural Mediator in Urban Planning in the Sokoto Empire	3
	<i>Mark Dike DeLancey</i>	
2	Oppressive Impressions, Architectural Expressions: The Poetics of French Colonial (Ad)vantage, Regarding Africa	22
	<i>michael ralph</i>	
3	"Just Build It Modern": Post-Apartheid Spaces on Namibia's Urban Frontier	48
	<i>Fatima Müller-Friedman</i>	

Part II. Racialized and Divided Space

4	Colonial Urbanization and Urban Management in Kenya	73
	<i>Kefa M. Otiso</i>	
5	"Inherently Unhygienic Races": Plague and the Origins of Settler Dominance in Nairobi, 1899–1907	98
	<i>Godwin R. Murunga</i>	

- 6** Urbanization and Afrikaner Class Formation:
The Mine Workers' Union and the Search
for a Cultural Identity 131
Wessel P. Visser
- 7** The Importance of Being Educated: Strategies of an
Urban Petit-Bourgeois Elite, South Africa, 1935–50 164
Corinne Sandwith

Part III. Shifting Space and Transforming Identities

- 8** Where Every Language Is Heard: Atlantic Commerce,
West African and Asian Migrants, and Town Society
in Libreville, ca. 1860–1914 191
Jeremy Rich
- 9** Captured and Steeped in Colonial Dynamics and Legacy:
The Case of Isiolo Town in Kenya 213
Maurice N. Amutabi
- 10** From *Marabout Republics* to *Autonomous Rural*
Communities: Autonomous Muslim Towns in Senegal 243
Eric S. Ross
- 11** *Africanité* and *Urbanité*: The Place of the Urban
in Imaginings of African Identity during the Late
Colonial Period in French West Africa 266
James E. Genova

Part IV. Colonial Legacies and Devitalized Space

- 12** Urban Poverty, Urban Crime, and Crime Control:
The Lagos and Ibadan Cases, 1929–45 291
Laurent Fouchard
- 13** The Fluctuating Fortunes of Anglophone Cameroon
Towns: The Case of Victoria, 1858–1982 320
Thomas Ngomba Ekali

14	Urban Planning and Development in Zimbabwe: A Historical Perspective <i>Douglas T. Feremenga</i>	340
15	Somalia's City of the Jackals: Politics, Economy, and Society in Mogadishu 1991–2003 <i>Omar A. Eno</i>	365
	Notes on the Contributors	381
	Index	385

10

FROM MARABOUT REPUBLICS TO AUTONOMOUS RURAL COMMUNITIES

AUTONOMOUS MUSLIM TOWNS IN SENEGAL

Eric S. Ross

Introduction

The city of Touba, in Senegal, has attracted the attention of researchers for a variety of reasons. Touba is a Muslim holy city, and it is brand new. The city was founded in 1887 by Ahmadou Bamba Mbacké, the Sufi who established the Mouride brotherhood. Its construction was initiated in 1926, and its great mosque was inaugurated only in 1963. It is since that event that Touba has become a large city (Guèye 2002, Ross 1995). In fact, today, with approximately half a million inhabitants, it is Senegal's second largest city, after Dakar. Moreover, the Mouride brotherhood, for which Touba serves as spiritual "capital," is an increasingly global institution, with members and associations throughout West Africa, the Indian Ocean, Europe, and North America; Touba has thus become a global city. Finally, Touba is also an *autonomous* city. Ever since its inception it has remained under the absolute control of the Mouride brotherhood—to the virtual exclusion of the state and of civil administration. It is the Mouride brotherhood which has planned, promoted, and developed Touba, and which has obtained an autonomous legal status for it. Yet Touba is not completely unique; it is the largest and most recent node in a network of

more or less autonomous Muslim towns in Senegal, large and small, and it marks the leading edge of a long and dynamic process of Muslim urban practices in that country. The purpose of this article is to explain how and why a modern Sufi town such as Touba has managed to achieve and maintain a strong measure of administrative autonomy within what is otherwise a unitary nation-state, and to relate this phenomenon to the historical precedent.

This study will explore the phenomenon of autonomous Muslim towns in West African and Senegambian history. It aims to contribute to the current effort of both Anglophone (Anderson & Rathbone 2000) and Francophone (Triaud 2002) scholars to rewrite the history of urbanization in Africa by highlighting the role of Muslim institutions in establishing towns and configuring urban networks. Islam has been a factor of change in West Africa, the Western Sudan, and Senegambia for nearly one thousand years. In that time, the people of these areas have moved from being overwhelmingly rural and religiously traditional to being increasingly urban and majority Muslim. Various Islamic institutions and agents have contributed to this process. Two crucial institutions in particular have created urban networks: the clerical lineages of the early modern period (seventeenth to nineteenth centuries) and the Sufi brotherhoods which emerged in the late nineteenth century and which are among the most important institutions of civil society in Senegal today. Both these institutions have established autonomous towns and created dynamic urban-based religious networks.

Ancien Régime Marabout Republics

A network of Muslim towns first emerged in the Western Sudan in the seventeenth century. These towns were created by clerical lineages. Muslim clerics were virtually the only literate group in Senegambian society at that time. Literacy and religious scholarship distinguished them as a group and determined their social and political functions. For example, they served at royal courts as diplomats and as judges even though the structures of these states were traditional rather than Islamic. They were involved in both local and international trade, where they had privileged access to Muslim traders from many horizons—hence the Dyula/Wangara and Hausa trading diasporas (Hiskett 1984). They also rendered magical service to other segments of the population, and particularly to the warrior caste (*ceddo* in Wolof, *guelwar* in Mandinka) which, though it was often

openly hostile to Islam, none-the-less considered Muslim charms and talismans to be the most efficacious means of protection in warfare. Though Muslims constituted a minority of the population in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, clerics were an important elite group, commanding loyal followings of students and clients and having privileged access to other important social groups: rulers, warriors and traders (Sanneh 1976).

In exchange for services rendered to these groups, clerics were able to negotiate a measure of autonomy for themselves. They obtained land grants from rulers on which they established themselves, their families and their students, where they taught the Islamic sciences, and where they attempted to lead a good Muslim life somewhat separate from the wider "kāfir" societies in which they saw themselves embedded. These establishments served primarily religious functions; they were centers of Islamic education. Students would travel great distances to acquire the religious sciences at the school of a reputed cleric. After their studies, these students might return to their homes as *imāms* or *faqīhs*, or they might set up schools of their own. In either case they were likely to maintain strong links with their alma mater institution, hence the creation over a period of several centuries of integrated networks of Muslim establishments across West Africa. The creation of these autonomous entities was also a response, in part, to the insecurity and exactions brought on by the slave raiding and trading which characterized the period. The reigning insecurity, where states either victimized their neighbors or victimized their own populations, led many communities and segments of society to seek security in new forms of organization, each according to its means and resources. Muslim clerics, who commanded a certain number of key resources, including all-important manpower in the form of student labor, succeeded in setting up strong autonomous communities.

Though most of these clerical establishments were quite small in size and population, on par with neighboring villages, they are identified here as *towns* because, over and above usual subsistence agricultural activities, they served essentially religious functions, and principally an educational one. This "tertiary" or "service sector" activity, and the far-reaching exchanges it fostered, means that the intellectual, political, social and economic standing of these clerical establishments belie what would normally be connoted by the term "village." This is an important argument. Because historically Senegambian architecture has not been "monumental"—as this term was understood by the European aesthetic—and because it has often been more or less ephemeral—through its use of vegetable and mineral construction material—European observers of the

nineteenth and twentieth centuries often failed to comprehend the urban nature of the places they visited. Accounts, even scholarly ones, from the colonial period routinely use the term *village* to designate what are functionally towns. By function here is meant the important social, political, economic and cultural activities which give rise to central places, which distinguish these places hierarchically one from the other, and which distinguish them all from agricultural or pastoral settlements.

A number of clerical towns played important roles in pre-colonial Senegalese history (see figure 1). Pire and Koki were the most famous clerical establishments of this sort. Both were founded in the seventeenth century by clerics who had close relations with the kings of Cayor and, together, they dominated Muslim intellectual life throughout the eighteenth century, as students and teachers from other clerical lineages would travel to these towns to study. Pire, in Saniakhor, attracted many students who later went on to political careers, including Malik Sy, the founder of the Islamic state of Bundu (1699), and Abdoul Kader Kane, who led the clerical revolution in Futa Toro in 1776 (Diouf 1988). Koki, in Ndiambour, was also an active center. It even opened "branch" schools (Koki-Kad, Koki-Dakhar, Koki-Gouy) in the neighboring province of Mbacol (Diop 1987: 72). Koki later became embroiled in the civil wars ignited by the clerical revolution in Futa Toro (1776–1796) and its scholarly reputation suffered as a result (Diop 1981: 229). In 1793 Masamba Diop, *serign* (or "lord") of Koki, was obliged to seek refuge in the Cap-Vert peninsula where he and his sons established a new autonomous town, Ndakarou. Ndakarou remained an independent Muslim polity until the French occupied it in 1857 and started building their own city. . . . Dakar. Likewise, this civil war led to the founding of Mbacké in Baol. In 1796 a cleric named Mame Maramé, who was Ahmadou Bamba Mbacké's great-grandfather, received a land grant in eastern Baol from Amari Ngoné, king of both Cayor and Baol, in exchange for services rendered at court (Diop 1987: 72, Mbacké 1980: 577–78). A century later, Ahmadou Bamba would establish his new Sufi city, called Touba, only eight kilometers north-east of Mbacké, his great-grandfather's original town.

The Muslim towns of pre-colonial Senegambia usually had some form of special autonomous status. They were exempt from taxation, governed independently of the state and were considered inviolable sanctuaries. The founding charter of Pire, for example, clearly stated that the town, with its school, could operate independently so long as it did not "interfere in other affairs" (Diouf 1988), meaning the political affairs of

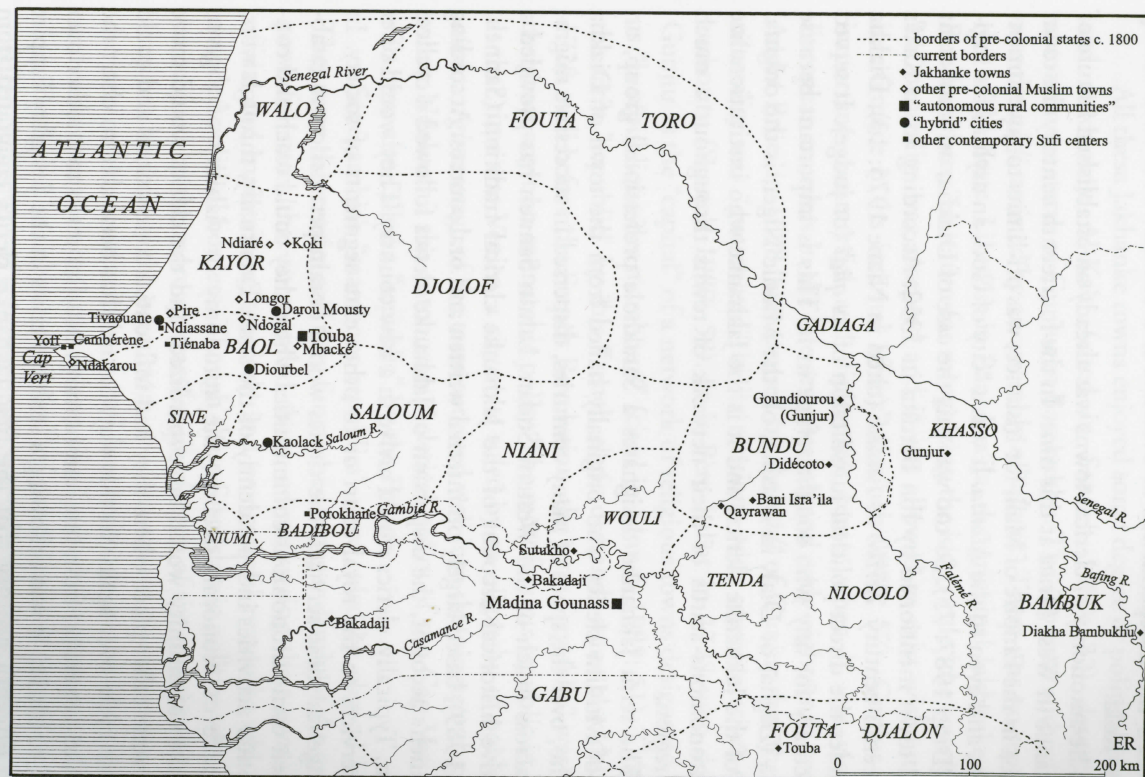


Figure 1. Muslim towns in Senegambia.

Cayor. It remained "inviolable in war" until the French captured the place and burnt it in 1869 (Colvin 1981: 243). Koki, which did interfere in Cayor's politics, suffered as a result, yet, as of 1795, the king of Cayor recognized the independence of Ndakarou, a clerical town with strong links to Koki.

The autonomy of clerical towns was already an established feature of governance in West Africa at this time. In the fourteenth century the town of Diaba in the Empire of Mali, for instance, was off-limits to government officials, and even to the *Mansa*. It was a "city of God, an asylum for fugitives" (Diop 1987: 73). So too was this the case of Diakha, an important clerical town mentioned by Ibn Battûta in 1352. According to Al-Ka'tî's seventeenth century *Tā'rikh al-Fattāsh* (cited in Niane 1975: 13), Diakha was under the direct political jurisdiction of its *qādî* (or judge). It served as sanctuary for any who sought refuge in it. This is important because Diakha (Zâgha, or Dia), in Masina, on the Middle Niger, is the original home of the Jakhanke clerics, and it is the Jakhanke who institutionalize the autonomous status of their network of towns throughout a much wider region.

The term Jakhanke designates a Sarakhole professional group, an order of Muslim clerics who originally hailed from the town of Diakha and who, over the space of many centuries, dispersed in successive migrations across much of the Western Sudan. Lamin Sanneh has provided a definitive historical account of the Jakhanke clerical tradition (Sanneh, 1976, 1989), based largely on internal written and oral sources. According to Sanneh's account, the dispersion of Jakhanke clerics followed a cyclical pattern. Typically, clerics would arrive in a new country. They would offer their services to the royal court or to other elite segments of society. In exchange for these services, the clerics would obtain permission to establish their own autonomous communities where they could teach and conduct other activities independently of the state. Eventually, through wars, civil strife or economic decline, the autonomy or viability of a given Jakhanke community would be jeopardized, and the clerics would move on to some other place where they had influential connections and could start the cycle over again. In this way, Sanneh has been able to chart the Jakhanke dispersion from one autonomous Muslim town to another over several centuries. It was following a series of crisis in the Songhay Empire in the fifteenth century that the first Jakhanke clerics emigrated from Masina to Bambukhu, where they established a new Diakha (Diakha-Bambukhu) and, later, a town called Gunjur (or Goundiourou). In the late seventeenth century, due to civil strife in Bambukhu, Jakhanke clerics

emigrated to the neighboring state of Bundu, then under a clerical regime, where they established the town of Bani Isra'ila. Later still, in 1822 Jakhanke clerics establish a town called Touba, in the clerical state of Futa Jallon (modern Guinea).¹

All these Jakhanke towns enjoyed some degree of political neutrality and autonomy. Al-Ka'tî (cited in Sanneh 1989: 32) describes the autonomous status of Gunjur in Bambukhu. The supreme authority there was the *qâdî*, assisted by an assembly of '*ulamâ*'. There was no representative of the State. Likewise in Bani Isra'ila, the principal Jakhanke town of Bundu, where "in return for recognizing the king's rule [the town's] political neutrality was accepted and it was allowed to exist without secular interference in its internal affairs" (Sanneh 1989: 57). Gunjur was an important commercial and diplomatic center when it was visited by European travelers in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. André Brüe, in 1698, was assured by the *qâdî* of Gunjur that the town's neutrality was "guaranteed" in its relations with representatives of state authority (Sanneh 1989: 59). It is Père Labat in 1728 who described Gunjur as the "capital" of a network of religious towns designated by him as "la république des marabouts" (cited in Sanneh 1989: 51). This use of the term "republic" by this French cleric demands some elucidation. In 1728, well before the French Revolution, the term "republic" was used to designate any non-monarchic polity. The most famous republic in Europe at that time was Venice, a city-state ruled by an oligarchy of nobles. This *ancien régime* usage of the term survived well into the nineteenth century, when Ndakarou, the autonomous clerical polity of the Cap-Vert peninsula, was also called a "republic" by the French.

Senegambia's "marabout republics" were ruled by clerical lineages. They were theocracies and they functioned independently of the great and powerful states that surrounded them, administering their own internal affairs and maintaining scholarly and commercial networks which transcended political borders. Though these first Islamic polities were later to be eclipsed by the more spectacular *jihâd* states of the nineteenth century, they can be seen as the precursors of a subsequent phenomenon, that of the new urban foundations of Sufi brotherhoods in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, places like Touba in contemporary Senegal.

Both the "marabout republics" of pre-colonial Senegambia and the modern Sufi towns of contemporary Senegal share important traits. Both thrived on an agrarian economic basis, exploiting cheap student labor. Until the mid-twentieth century access to labor was the chief constraint on economic expansion in West Africa. To solve this bottleneck, those

who had access to land often resorted to the acquisition of slaves or to the constitution of large extended households. The clerical elite, for its part, could also conscript its student body into agricultural labor. Such student labor was the economic foundation of the pre-colonial clerical towns mentioned above, where students paid their "tuition fees" by toiling in their masters' fields during the agricultural season. With the progressive abolition of slavery during colonial rule, the clerical elite, and more specifically the emerging Islamic brotherhoods, capitalized on their comparative advantage in access to cheap student labor. The Mourides are often cited as the most successful example of such integration into the capitalist world economy (Sy 1969; Cruise O'Brien 1971, 1975), but these labor relations were just as characteristic of the Kounta Qâdiriyyah of Ndiassane, the Sy Tijâniyyah of Tivaouane (Marone 1970) and the Niassene Tijâniyyah of Kaolack (Gray 1988), and there is now a considerable body of literature on this question (Robinson 2000). Pre-colonial Muslim towns and Senegal's modern Sufi cities also share a distinctive spatial configuration which articulates spiritual and social functions through the use of central public squares. This has been the object of a previous publication (Ross 2002). What remains to be determined here is how Senegal's modern Sufi towns, like the pre-colonial marabout republics, have managed to acquire such a strong measure of administrative autonomy within Senegal, a country which in all other respects operates as any other centralized unitary nation-state.

Modern Senegalese Sufi Towns

The cycle of *jihâd*, which marked the entire Sudanic belt in the nineteenth century, did not produce significant urban processes in Senegambia. In Senegambia these *jihâds* were military and political failures. They only contributed to the general crises of pre-colonial societies and states which preceded and accompanied the imposition of colonial rule. Moreover, though the earlier clerical revolutions in Bundu (1698–99), Futa Jallon (1725–47) and Futa Toro (1776–96) had been nominally successful, they failed to produce the type of politically stable regime conducive to urban life. There was no Senegambian equivalent to great Muslim capitals like Sokoto or Hamdalay. It is during the extended process of colonial conquest, initiated in 1854 and completed only in 1890, that a new type of Islamic institution emerged in Senegal, the Sufi brotherhood (*tariqah* in Arabic). It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss the origins of this

institution in the Muslim world, or even its development in Senegal. What is important here is that the old clerical lineages, whose settlements and networks were discussed above, adopted this institution in response to the new social and political conditions. The brotherhoods which now dominate Senegalese religious practice (the Qādiriyyah, the various branches of the Tijāniyyah, the Mourides and the Layenes) were built up in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on the foundation of the old clerical lineages and networks, and part of this process involved the creation of new towns.

These new-style Sufi towns are characterized principally by their religious and educational functions, being centers of Islamic learning. They are also *administrative* centers in the sense that they serve as seats, or "capitals" in current Senegalese vocabulary, for the brotherhoods. Sufi brotherhoods throughout the Muslim world share a similar organizational structure. At the summit of the spiritual hierarchy is a *khalifah*, or Caliph, who is the spiritual head of the order and who represents its founder. In Senegal these Caliphs are always direct male descendents of the Brotherhood's founder. Below the Caliph are the *shaykhs* or *muqaddams*, "elders," who have various responsibilities and are often far more involved in the day-to-day running of affairs than the Caliph—who is usually a very old man absorbed in piety. There may be various levels of *shaykhs* in a more or less explicitly recognized hierarchy. Below these still are the rank-and-file members of the brotherhood, the adherents, or "students" (*taalibe* in Wolof). To this rather standard traditional structure, the Sufi brotherhoods of Senegal have grafted a number of modern administrative organs, mostly borrowed from the civil administrative structures of the nation-state, including sometimes its practice of territorial subdivision, or else modeled on the structures of political parties. Some of these organizations are based on lineage ties while others are associative and contractual in nature. As Senegal's Sufi brotherhoods have developed and grown during the colonial period and since independence, acquiring ever larger interests in a variety of sectors (economic, social and cultural), and as their memberships have become internationalized through emigration, these Sufi "administrations" have developed proportionately. This in turn has greatly stimulated the growth of the cities which serve as Sufi "capitals," cities like Touba, but also Tivaouane, Kaolack, Darou-Mousty, and others.

The creation of a modern, national urban network in Senegal is usually seen as a product of French rule. The French first created a number of coastal factories (the famous "four communes": Saint-Louis, Gorée, Rufisque, and Dakar), and then used railroads to extend the urban

network inland, creating “escapes,” or rail stations, to serve the colonial economy and then to anchor civil administration and services. However, the creation of Senegal’s modern urban network was not so one-sidedly determined by French agency. The Sufi brotherhoods contributed greatly to the process, to the extent that Senegal’s urban network cannot be understood today without taking into account the brotherhoods which helped build it. Many religious activities, including pious visits and pilgrimages, mosque construction, the running of Islamic primary and secondary schools, the marketing of produce from brotherhood-owned agricultural estates, and the provisioning of religious and charitable services, have characterized the growth of Senegal’s towns and cities since the imposition of colonial rule. Moreover, since the late 1980s, Senegal’s urban-based Sufi brotherhoods have emerged as among the most important forces of urbanization and urban development. First, the monetary remittances of disciples living and working abroad, by far the country’s principal source of foreign revenue, are often invested in urban real estate and businesses. While much of this investment is individual and private, some of it is channeled through brotherhood-run charities and agencies (Tall 1994, Guèye 2002: 251). Second, the brotherhoods are also helping channel rural-urban migration, as rural disciples often settle in towns or neighborhoods where their *shaykhs* have established a social network.

The process of erecting modern Sufi cities within the emerging colonial urban network was not linear; no single model was followed. First of all, the established system of clerical land grants seems to have continued to operate until the very end of the old regimes. For instance, in 1885 Samba Laobe Fall granted Bou Kounta the concession of Ndiassane in Saniakhôr. Samba Laobe Fall was the last king of Cayor (he would be killed by the French the following year). The Kounta lineage, affiliated with the Qâdiriyyah of Timbuktu, had already rendered many services to various kings of Cayor. Ndiassane—just outside of present-day Tivaouane—was thus both the last of the old-style clerical establishment and an early example of the new-style Sufi centers. Bou Kounta (1844–1914) was more a businessman than a teacher, and Ndiassane became the center of an agricultural and commercial network of national scope. Even before settling in Ndiassane, Bou Kounta was one of the first clerics to put his students to work cultivating peanuts—the colonial cash crop—on lands under his control. The Qâdirî center of Ndiassane was built next to the new Dakar–Saint-Louis railroad (constructed 1882–1886) which greatly stimulated peanut production in contiguous areas. The railroad allowed Bou Kounta to take full advantage of other

sectors of the new colonial economy as well, namely real estate in the booming colonial port cities of Saint-Louis and Dakar. The construction of the Dakar-Niger line (1906–1923) permitted Bou Kounta and his successors to recruit numerous new students among the mainly Bambara railway workers. In its heyday, in the 1920s, Ndiassane was a thriving religious center, home to an annual pilgrimage and harboring some innovative urban architecture (Diouf 1988: 9, Monteil 1980: 165). Today, however, the place is much quieter. Ndiassane is a small place, indistinguishable in size from neighboring villages, and its Qâdiriyyah Kounta lineage does not seem to have kept pace with developments in Senegal's other brotherhoods.

There are a number of similarly small Sufi centers to be found throughout Senegal: Tiénaba (near Thiès), established by the Seck lineage in 1946, or Fass in Mbacol, where the Toure operate an Islamic school affiliated to the Tijâniyyah of Tivaouane. The Mouride brotherhood in particular, though it created Touba, also maintains a large number of small shrines: places like Darou-Marnane in Mbacol, and the neighboring village of Mbacké-Cayor, or like Porokhane, in the Rip (south of the Saloum river), where Ahmadou Bamba's mother is buried. All of these places, though they are small, are active nodes in national, or even international, religious networks.

Perhaps the best cases of small places with universal pretensions are Yoff-Layène and Cambérène, the religious centers of the Layene brotherhood. This brotherhood is the legacy of Seydina Limamou Laye (1845–1909), born in the fishing village of Yoff on the Cap-Vert peninsula (Laborde 1995). In 1884 Limamou Laye announced to the world that he was the *mahdî* (the messianic leader who many Muslims believe will come at the end of time) and a re-incarnation of the prophet Muhammad (Lo 1972). Neither local leaders in Yoff nor the French authorities in Dakar were prepared to countenance such a troublesome claim, and Limamou Laye was arrested in 1887. Upon his release from prison some months later, after having come to an accommodation with the political authorities, he returned to Yoff and established himself and his followers in a new neighborhood called Yoff-Layène. His son and successor, Seydina Issa Rohou Laye (1876–1949), who is believed by the Layenes to be the reincarnation of the prophet Jesus, was responsible for establishing the brotherhood's second sanctuary, Cambérène, in 1914. Both these establishments are quite small—less than ten hectares each—and both are now completely imbedded in Dakar's sprawling urban fabric. Yet, notwithstanding the pressures of urban growth, they have maintained a measure

of autonomy. Physically, these religious centers have managed to keep the encroaching suburban subdivisions at bay. The leadership of the brotherhood, which has a close relationship with local political and administrative authorities, has been successful in insuring this. On the religious level too, the Layene brotherhood, despite its extremely heterodox foundations, is now an accepted part of Senegalese society.² Yoff-Layène and Cambérène hold a variety of annual festivals, marking holy days in both the Muslim and Christian calendars. Life in these two Sufi centers is lived according to proper Muslim codes; neither alcohol nor tobacco may be consumed there. Yoff-Layène and Cambérène seem to benefit from a kind of *de facto* autonomy, even though they are included within the municipal boundaries of Dakar and Guediawaye respectively. The moral authority of the Layene Caliphs over members of the brotherhood is sufficient to insure this.

Hybrid Cities

Several of Senegal's most important second- and third-rank cities, the seats of its administrative regions and *départements*, effectively serve two masters. As civic administrative seats they harbor the usual state apparatus and civil services: courthouses, police commissariats, national gendarmeries, governor's residences, public high schools, hospitals, etc. Yet, as the "capitals" of Sufi brotherhoods, they also harbor the peculiar religious and administrative structures of these institutions. This is notably the case Tivaouane and Kaolack (two Tijânî centers) and of the Mouride centers of Mbacké, Diourbel and Darou-Mousty. Cheikh Guèye (2002: 117) calls these types of cities "hybrid." Though they have official status and rank within Senegal's urban network as seats of civic administration, their real relevance to the country's urban physiognomy is increasingly dependent upon their religious functions. In other words, as the state continues to "disengage" itself (through structural adjustment policies), and as the surrounding rural peanut economy continues to decline, the Sufi brotherhoods have become the most dynamic actors in these cities, and not least through their connections with international networks.

The Tijâniyyah, originally from North Africa, is probably the largest of Senegal's brotherhoods in terms of numbers of adherents,³ though this brotherhood is effectively subdivided into a number of distinct, and not necessarily cooperative, branches. While in some cases Tijânî initiatives have lead to the creation *ex nihilo* of new religious centers (Fass in Mbacol

and Taïba-Niassène in the Rip for example, and, exceptionally, the city of Madina-Gounass discussed below), for the most part, during the colonial period, this brotherhood aimed at investing the country's emerging network of colonial cities.

The Tijâniyyah of Tivaouane is the largest branch of the brotherhood in terms of number of adherents and the national scale at which it operates. This branch is the legacy of El-Hadj Malik Sy (1855–1922), whose descendants continue to manage its affairs. The main *zâwiyyah* (or Sufi “lodge”) is in Tivaouane. In 1902 El-Hadj Malik Sy chose to establish himself in Tivaouane, right next door to Bou Kounta's Qâdirî town of Ndiassane, because it was one of the booming new *escapes* along the rail line in the heart of Senegal's peanut basin. Malik Sy already had a number of peanut estates, the principal one being at Ndiarndé, which helped finance his urban establishments, and Tivaouane had easy rail communications with both Saint-Louis and Dakar. El-Hadj Malik Sy's Tijâniyyah was an urban (and urbane) brotherhood from the beginning, recruiting its membership from among merchants and the new class of civil-servants created by the colonial regime. By the 1920s it was a national institution, with major *zâwiyyahs* in downtown Saint-Louis and Dakar. It was El-Hadj Malik Sy's son and successor, Khalifa Ababakar Sy (reigned 1922–57), who created an organizational structure capable of administering this network. This structure consisted of local associations, called *dahiras* (Arabic *dâ'irah*, administrative “circle,” “department”), organized at the municipal or even the neighborhood level. *Dahiras* in turn were “federated” at the level of Senegal's administrative districts (or *cercles*, later *départements*). These departmental federations, in turn, delegated a representative to the central “coordination committee” in Tivaouane (Marone 1970: 172). The Tijâniyyah of Tivaouane, an urban-based brotherhood, was thus the first to adopt the civil administrative structure usually characteristic of modern territorial states and state-run agencies.

Despite the modern structure, the Sy family became deeply divided. Divisions arose during the first succession dispute in 1922, and again more acutely during a second succession in 1957. These divisions are reflected in the spatial configuration of Tivaouane itself. El-Hadj Malik Sy's *zâwiyyah* (built in 1907) is overshadowed by the mosque-mausoleum complex of Khalifa Ababakar Sy, built in 1957, which is in turn being overshadowed by the city's great mosque (still under construction today). All three religious edifices stand within 200 meters of each other in a single neighborhood, where most of the senior members of the Sy lineage have built palatial town-houses. During the annual pilgrimage to

Tivaouane, on the occasion of the prophet Muhammad's birthday, pilgrims will congregate around whichever of the edifices they are directly affiliated to. Divisions within the brotherhood are thus quite public. Yet, despite these deep divisions, this brotherhood is still a powerful force in urban Senegal, where most of its members are active, and Tivaouane thrives because of it. Tivaouane (pop. 27,100 in 1988, est. 38,000 in 2003) is the seat of an administrative *département*, but the local peanut economy no longer supports the town. Increasingly, its religious function, as seat of a national brotherhood, is its most dynamic sector.

Similarly urban is the Niassene Tijâniyyah of Kaolack. Set up by El-Hadj Abdoulaye Niass (1845–1922), this branch of the Tijâniyyah was originally established in rural concessions, Niassène in Saloum and Taïba-Niassène in the Rip, where peanut cultivation was introduced. After a period of exile in British-administered Gambia (1901–10), Abdoulaye Niass was persuaded to move back to Senegal, establishing his *zâwiyyah* in Kaolack's Leona neighborhood. Like Tivaouane, Kaolack at the time was an especially dynamic peanut-trading city, with a port on the Saloum river. At first, the Niassene *zâwiyyah* in Kaolack operated in close conjunction with the Tivaouane-based brotherhood. However, in the 1930s Abdoulaye Niass's son El-Hadj Ibrahima Niass (1902–75) began transforming the movement into an international institution (Gray 1988). Ibrahima Niass traveled widely and opened *zâwiyyahs* in many West African countries, and principally in Kano, Nigeria. By the 1950s and 60s El Hadj Ibrahima Niass was a global figure; a great exponent of non-alignment, he met with such world leaders as Gamal Abdel Nasser and Marshall Tito. He had also set up an administrative structure for his international network. It consisted of a "council" of four "chief deputies" overseeing a number of national representatives from West African affiliates as well as those from North Africa (Paden 1973: 116, 123). In addition, there were Arabic, French, and English language secretaries.

Like the Sy of Tivaouane, the Niassene of Kaolack are a divided family. While the senior branch of the family continues to operate Abdoulaye Niass's original *zâwiyyah* in Leona neighborhood, the junior "Ibrahima" lineage has built an entirely new religious neighborhood called Madina-Baye, dominated by a very large great mosque (constructed in 1958). Kaolack (pop. 151,000 in 1988, est. 233,300 in 2003) is a large diverse city. Apart from the two Niassene *zâwiyyahs* just mentioned, many of the city's Tijânîs are affiliated to the Sy branch of Tivaouane, through the local Seck lineage, rather than to either of the Niassene ones. There is also a sizable Mouride presence in the city, based in Ndong neighborhood. Yet

these latter institutions operate at the neighborhood level. It is the Ibrahima Niassene Tijāniyyah of Madina-Baye, now under the authority of Caliph El-Hadj Abdoulaye Ibrahima Niass and his "lieutenant," Cheikh Assane Cissé, which heads an international and global religious network. The religious schools in Madina-Baye receive students from across Africa and from the United States, and one is just as likely to hear Hausa or English being spoken in its streets as Wolof and Arabic.

The Mouride brotherhood is also at the origin of a number of "hybrid" cities. Mbacké (founded ca. 1796, pop. 38,800 in 1988, est. 62,800 in 2003), eight kilometers southwest of Touba, is the ancestral home of the founding lineage. It has a majority Mouride population. Mbacké used to be a "bigger" place than Touba but now functions very much as its annex. Many of its commercial establishments, including banks, have relocated to Touba. Significantly, Mbacké is considered by all to be "outside" Touba's sacred precincts.⁴ It is the seat of an administrative *département* and has government-run schools, as well as bars, clubs and other forms of entertainment proscribed in Touba. Diourbel (pop. 76,500 in 1988, est. 120,500 in 2003) is the administrative capital of Diourbel region, the heartland of the Mouride brotherhood. Ahmadou Bamba spent the last fifteen years of his life under house arrest in Diourbel, and the Mouride presence has marked the city ever since. In 1912, when Ahmadou Bamba was brought there, Diourbel was a thriving railroad *escale* whose agricultural hinterland was being organized around peanut-producing estates created by Mouride *shaykhs*. Today, Diourbel is characterized by a decrepit "West End," consisting of the old colonial *escale* with its dilapidated administrative and commercial buildings, and a thriving "East End," called Keur-Goumak, around the great mosque where many Mouride *shaykhs* reside, operate schools, etc.

Darou-Mousty in some ways represents a reverse trend. Whereas the "hybrid" cities described above started out as colonial creations which Sufi brotherhoods adapted to their needs, Darou-Mousty is a Sufi foundation which has been integrated into the official urban network. This town, 25 kilometers northwest of Touba, was founded in 1912 by Mame Tierno Brahim Mbacké (1863–1943), Ahmadou Bamba's younger brother and one of his closest confidants. Mame Tierno's lineage constitutes an important sub-group within the brotherhood and Darou-Mousty is often called the "second city" of the Mourides. The city (pop. 13,000 in 1988) is incorporated as a municipality, or "urban commune," and is the seat of an administrative *arrondissement*, but it is overwhelmingly Mouride in terms of its morphology. Contrary to the "hybrid" cities of Tivaouane, Kaolack,

Mbacké, or Diourbel, Darou-Mousty is not on a rail line and has no colonial *escale* neighborhood. Rather, the city is organized in typical Mouride fashion around a large central square dominated by a great mosque. The state's civil administrative functions have been grafted onto this Sufi core.

Two Autonomous Sufi Cities

There are currently two Muslim entities in Senegal which benefit from a legally recognized autonomous status: Touba and Madina-Gounass. In Touba's case the special status is based on conditions established during the colonial period, when the French authorities came to an accommodation with the Mouride brotherhood, while the indications are that in the case of Madina-Gounass, special status is more recent.

Touba might be Senegal's second largest agglomeration, but the *capital* of the Mouride brotherhood hardly figures at all on maps of the country. In an apparent paradox, Touba is usually marked as a tiny place, whereas many demographically smaller towns are given greater cartographic representation as seats of regions and *départements*.⁵ The reason for this discrepancy is that Touba is not legally constituted as a city. Rather, since 1976 it has had the status of *communauté rurale autonome*, or "autonomous rural community."

Though Touba's *de jure* autonomous status dates from 1976, in practice, from its creation, it has always been administered by the Mouride brotherhood independently of state structures. The basis of Touba's autonomy, according to the internal sources of Mouride historiography, lies in the city's spiritual distinction. Touba is a holy city because God chose the site. He singled out the spot in the wilderness and then guided Ahmadou Bamba Mbacké there so that the Sufi *shaykh* could establish his community in a sanctified place. Ever since that event, Touba's purity has been energetically maintained by the Mouride brotherhood. Proscribed in the holy city are the consumption of alcohol, tobacco and other "narcotics," the playing of musical instruments, dancing, card-playing and the playing of games of chance, including the sale of national lottery tickets (Coulon 1981: 107). According to Abdoul Ahad Mbacké, third Caliph of the Mourides (reigned 1968–89): "We Mourides live in a compound. Our lives are ruled by the teachings of Ahmadou Bamba, by work and by prayer. Beyond this enclosure we see Satan and all his works" (cited in Coulon 1981: 104). For Mourides, Touba's sanctity is divinely ordained

and divinely sustained. The brotherhood, for its part, vigilantly protects the sanctuary from the corruption of the profane world around it. Injunctions against transgressing the holy city's code of conduct are regularly iterated by various Mouride authority figures, and principally by the Caliph. Moreover, national *gendarmes* reinforce this as they question and search travelers at the major points of entry into the city.

While Mouride authorities may argue that Touba's autonomous status derives from its spiritual status, the origin of this autonomy in modern constitutional law is less easily discernable. In terms of "white man's laws,"⁶ Touba's founding legal document is a lease dated 1928, the year following the death of Ahmadou Bamba. It was a fifty-year lease for 400 hectares around the site of Touba (Sy 1969: 276). The lease was in the name of Mamadou Moustafa Mbacké, Ahmadou Bamba's eldest son and first Caliph of the Mourides (reigned 1927–45), and was issued by the colonial authorities who were then theoretically in legal "possession" of all unsettled land. Two years later, in 1930, the colonial authorities issued a second document certifying Mamadou Moustafa's ownership of the 400 hectares (Guèye 2002: 286). Originally then, Touba had the legal status of a private rural estate leased and then ceded to an individual. By ceding the site directly to the young Caliph, the French authorities had sought to strengthen his hand vis-à-vis his wealthier and more powerful uncle Cheikh Anta Mbacké, who was seeking to take command of the brotherhood. Whatever the case, the arrangement permitted construction of Touba's great mosque to begin. When Mamadou Moustafa died in 1945, the Mouride brotherhood was plunged into a second succession crisis, this time opposing Falilou Mbacké (reigned 1945–68), the founder's second son and choice of the council of family elders, to Cheikh Mbacké, the first Caliph's eldest son. The French were once again instrumental in securing the victory of the new Caliph. The status of Touba was revised from that of personal ownership, which the son of the original landholder would have inherited, to that of collective ownership (Sy 1969: 219). Touba's 400 hectares henceforth would belong collectively and indivisibly to all the descendants of the founder, and would remain under the ultimate authority of the Caliph.

This situation pertained until 1976, at which time the Senegalese government implemented its reform of local territorial administration, which consisted of grouping villages into *rural communities*. A rural community is the smallest unit of territorial administration and, typically, will consist of about a dozen villages. It is managed by an elected Council, which is responsible for local development initiatives, and which

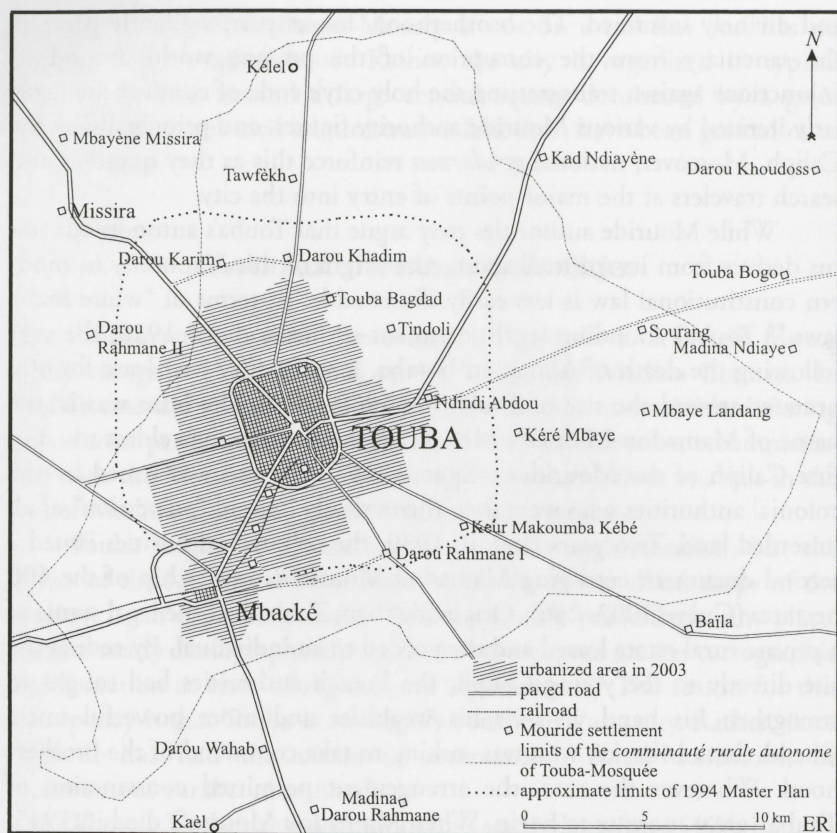


Figure 2. Touba's autonomous zone.

must apply for national and international funding. Touba, with 30,000 inhabitants at the time, and not having the status of a municipality, was integrated into this lowest level of civil administration as an “autonomous” rural community, officially designated as Touba-Mosquée. The state’s recognition of this autonomous religious enclave can be understood in terms of the long-established political accommodation between it and the Mouride brotherhood. This “social contract,” inherited from the colonial period, has been beneficial to both parties and has been described by some as an element of Senegal’s remarkable political stability since independence (Cruise O’Brien 1992).

As shown in figure 2, the autonomous rural community of Touba-Mosquée has an area of 553 square kilometers and a population of many

hundreds of thousands (Guèye 2002: 342). Clearly this is a city in all but name. Its "autonomy" resides in the fact that its elected Council is headed by a President appointed by, and responsible to, the Caliph. Since the late 1970s it has been very successful at obtaining governmental and international funding for major infrastructure, including new roads and streets, water works, telecommunications networks and, most recently, a commercial heliport. The most recent Master Plan for urban development, drawn up by the caliphal administration in 1994, plans for a city of 1,300,000 inhabitants and, significantly, it takes no account of the limits of the "autonomous" zone. For the Mouride brotherhood, the holy city is not subject to such limitations.

Touba is not the only autonomous rural community in Senegal. Madina-Gounass in Fuladu (Upper Casamance) also has this status. This Sufi town is home to a branch of the Tijâniyyah brotherhood. It was founded in 1935 by a *shaykh* named El-Hadj Tierno Mamadou Seydou Baa (1898–1980) (Wane 1974; Magassouba 1985: 50). Like Ahmadou Bamba half a century earlier, this Sufi too was seeking to establish a "pure" community in an isolated place, far from the corrupting influence of French colonial administration. Tierno Seydou Baa was a Toucouleur cleric from Futa Toro (the Senegal river valley), where his branch of the Tijâniyyah still has many affiliates. He and a number of compatriots went to the Fuladu in order to bring its "wayward" Peul inhabitants back to the "Straight Path" of Islam. The term "Sufi" in the case of Madina-Gounass needs to be tempered considerably. Though Tierno Seydou Baa was a Tijâni *shaykh*, his social project had far more in common with Wahhabism than with Sufi spiritual fulfillment. Tierno Seydou Baa set out to establish "pure" Islam through strict application of the *sharî'ah*, the Islamic legal code. For example, all forms of secular entertainment are forbidden in Madina-Gounass, even for children. Corporal punishment, though not capital punishment, is implemented by the city's religious leaders; presence at mosque for all canonical prayers is obligatory for all able-bodied adults, and Madina-Gounass is the only place in Senegal where women are veiled and restricted in their movements in public. Alcohol and tobacco are forbidden in Madina-Gounass, and the brotherhood holds an annual eight-day pilgrimage, or *khalwah*, at a place called Daaka, 9 kilometers outside the city, which women and government officials are barred from attending.⁷

In order to enforce its religious prescriptions, the brotherhood maintained strict independence from colonial institutions, and later from those of independent Senegal. In the early 1970s Madina-Gounass was

administered by the brotherhood through a council of "ministers," called *jaarga* in Pular. There was a Jaarga of Work and Housing, a Jaarga of Agriculture, of Religious Affairs, of Finance and External Affairs, etc. (Wane 1974: 673). The analogy with state structures is explicit. This system began to unravel in 1978, when Madina-Gounass became an "autonomous" rural community with an elected council. Unlike in Touba, the arrival of partisan politics in Madina-Gounass produced violent political conflicts which espoused the underlying ethnic cleavages of the city—that between the Toucouleur religious elite and the majority Peul population. Though they share the same language, i.e., Pular, the Peul and the Toucouleur constitute two different ethnic groups. Madina-Gounass is now a city divided, with a "Toucouleur" mosque and a "Peul" mosque less than 200 m from each other (Guèye 2002: 123).

Yet, like Touba, Madina-Gounass is still a fast-growing city. According to Wane (1974: 672), in the early 1970s already it consisted of 11 neighborhoods spread over 600 hectares (for about 5,000 inhabitants at the time). By 1988, with 17,000 inhabitants, it had doubled in surface area (occupying approximately 1,200 hectares),⁸ not including a number of suburbs and outlying rural establishments.

Contrary to the case of Touba, there is no clear rationale for why Madina-Gounass was accorded autonomous legal status within Senegal. Madina-Gounass is not the "capital" of a national or international network of interests powerful enough to warrant such favor from the state. It remains even today rather isolated from mainstream Senegalese society and politics. Its autonomous status, which has been more problematic for the state (in terms of electoral violence, for example) than that of Touba, may have been conceded as a gesture towards Senegal's large Tijânî population generally. The state would thus not be accused of "caving in" to the special demands of the Mouride lobby; Tijânîs too could have their own autonomous rural community, even though, unlike Touba for Mourides, Madina-Gounass is of little relevance to the majority of the country's Tijânîs.

Conclusion

Whereas Senegambia was not historically one of the most urbanized areas of West Africa, it does have an urban history which transcends the colonial experience. The emergence of states in the Medieval period produced

the first capitals, while the opening of the Atlantic trade routes and the creation of European factories on the coast stimulated trade networks across the entire breadth of the country. Muslim clerics were attracted to these nodes, but tended to set up their own autonomous towns independently of them. This urban network was severely undermined during the period of civil strife, *jihād* and colonial conquest. With the colonial "peace," however, a new urban network was created. This colonial network was one suited to the imperatives of the extraction economy, exemplified by the peanut cash-crop and the railroad network, yet it also served as a basis for civil administration. New Muslim institutions, the Sufi brotherhoods, actively contributed to this urbanization, either by investing the colonial nodes or by creating alternative nodes of their own. Two of these Sufi towns, Touba and Madina-Gounass, were able to negotiate a great measure of autonomy for themselves within the colonial structure, an autonomy which was institutionalized after independence. Many others (Ndiassane, Yoff-Layène, Cambérène, Darou-Mousty) benefit from a kind of *de facto* autonomy in that state agencies and administrative organs do not intervene in their management, or else do so only in close cooperation with the brotherhood authorities.

While the accommodation of autonomous Muslim entities within Senegambia's pre-colonial states may be seen as somehow compatible with the forms of authority which prevailed at that time, the same cannot be said of post-colonial states. A modern secular territorial state such as Senegal is not ordinarily inclined to respect peculiar or particular local conceptions of authority and territoriality, whether these derive from pre-colonial precedents or from self-proclaimed religious imperatives. Yet, it is clear in the case of Touba at least that autonomous status has helped to consolidate new urban processes. It is not that the state is absent from these processes. It is just that it is no longer central to them. If, in the name of globalization and the free market, the state is expected to continue to disengage itself from society and the economy, and if the expectation is that non-state actors (or "civil society") will fill the vacuum, then we have in Touba a paradigmatic example of alternative urbanization. In the globalized world, where the sovereign territorial state is increasingly marginalized as an actor, a new territoriality has emerged, that of an autonomous hub, home to a world-wide network of contractual and lineage affiliations, channeling national and international "information flows" (Castels 1989). To some extent, in a different context, certain "marabout republics" were already operating in this manner in the seventeenth century.

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Notes

1 This is the first occurrence of the toponym "Touba." Other towns called Touba can be found in Mali and Côte d'Ivoire. For the most part, these were all established by Jakhanke clerics in the nineteenth century and they predate Ahmadou Bamba's Senegalese foundation.

2 Senegal is a secular state with a majority Muslim population. Senegalese society is profoundly tolerant, pluralistic, and democratic.

3 Data on Sufi brotherhood affiliation is not gathered officially. Various authors and officials, however, agree that Tijânîs outnumber Mourides.

4 Though the villages on the outskirts of Mbacké are included in the "autonomous rural community" of Touba-Mosquée, Mbacké itself is legally constituted as a municipality, or "urban commune," and functions like any other Senegalese municipality, with an elected mayor, etc.

5 Nor does Touba figure in demographic data on cities in Senegal.

6 During field work I was told more than once by Mouride informants that Touba's status as "autonomous rural community" was *une histoire de toubab*.

7 In Senegal, government officials are invited to attend all public events organized by the Sufi brotherhoods, a practice initiated during French rule. Only in Madina-Gounass is this not the case.

8 Interview with El-Hadj Ahmadou Abdoulaye Diagne, member of the brotherhood and civil engineer in charge of the city's urban plan, Dakar, November 1988.