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John Glover, *Sufism and Jihad in Modern Senegal: The Murid Order*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2007. ix + 236pp. Maps, tables, figures, notes, appendices, bibliography, index, list of titles in the Rochester Studies in African History and the Diaspora, Toyin Falola, Senior Editor. U.S.\$75.00 (hb). ISBN=10: 1-58046-268-5.

Review by Allen Roberts, University of California, Los Angeles.

“Jihad” is one of those alarmist, shouting-“FIRE”-in-a-crowded-theater sorts of words these days, and few terms are more provocative in popular discourse and media. “Jihad” is often misunderstood as restricted in referencerduced to “holy war,” with all the post-9/11 apocalyptic violence and fraught politics so implied, when its more basic sense as “struggle” has a far broader range than this. One can suspect that Tthe eye-catching nature of the word, one suspects, motivates the choice ofits use in this book’s title from the University of Rochester Press., Heven as historian John Glover, however, makes clear that Cheikh Amadu Bamba, the Sufi saint around whom the Murid Order was founded, was an ardent pacifist who declared that the only jihad he would wage would be with the imperfections of his own soul (p. 24 and passim). Indeed, Glover’s presentation of particular histories and historiographies is far more compelling than would be any reductionist search for “jihad” in modern Senegal.

The importance of mystical Islam--that is, Sufism--to Senegal’s last century and a half cannot be overemphasized: The country is unique in Africa for its the striking balance of powers and interests between the central government and the four principal Sufi orders. Of these, the Murids may not be the largest in numbers, for the more middle-class Tijaniyya still claim that characteristic; but it is safe to say that Senegalese political economy and especially its informal sectors and diaspora interests have been impacted by Murids more than by members of other Sufi waysgroups. Scholarly interest in the Murids has been particularly keen as a consequence, and there is a somewhat snide joke among some academics that “too much” attention has been directed toward them, when there are so many less-studied African peoples and places. John Glover’s work illuminates the opposite side of any such argument, in itsoffering proof that a substantial literature reaching across disciplines (and in contemporary Senegal, poetry, novels, films, and visual and performance arts provide necessary perspectives) permits a focus upon specific histories and the social processes that lead to them. In this regard, one might mention that just as his book was published, another excellent historical study of the Murids became available in Cheikh Anta Babou’s *Fighting the Greater Jihad: Amadu Bamba and the Founding of the Muridiyya of Senegal, 1853-1913*. [1] (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007). The “greater jihad” in question is that mentioned above--the perfection of one’s soul; and reading the Glover and Babou books with and against each other for their complementarities would be especially instructive for any scholars contemplating work in contemporary Senegal.

The Murid order is a recent social development, begun through the writings and life lessons of Amadu Bamba (1853-1927). It is also a product of the West African particularities of French colonialism, and the reactions of administrators to Bamba’s astounding charisma. Fearing his creation of a “state within a state,” they sent the saint into exile twice and then held him under house arrest in Senegal until his death (p. 2 and passim). Rather than through insurrection, Bamba resisted French hegemony through detachment and, in the long run, accommodation; and among the consequences of such acts, his

followers feel that if he could persevere despite such ignominious persecution, so can they as they confront the social iniquities and harsh economic realities of contemporary life. Despite the local pertinence of such ideology, however, the Murids remain a “fairly standard” Sufi movement with regard to devotions and other characteristics, rather than “being an overtly local or ‘African’ aberration of a higher religious and mystical tradition” (p. 3).

In this assertion, meant to “recalibrate the relationship between the global and the local aspects of belief and practice” (p. 4) among Murids, Glover takes an important, anti-Orientalist stance (which he explains in detail), allowing him to demonstrate how the particularities of Murid histories and the forces leading to their realization have cross-regional and far wider significance. This is an even more significant feature of the work when one understands that Glover is most directly concerned with the somewhat decentered history of Bamba’s younger brother and chief confidant, Ibrahima Faty M’Backé, known popularly as Maam Cerno or “Grandfatherly Teacher” (p. 2). Even as he seeks to situate Murid pluralistic histories in broader fields of Islamic Studies, then, Glover deconstructs any notion that there is any meta-history of and for the Murids. Indeed, the creative tensions between fractiousness and solidarity characterize Murid life at very local as well as national and international levels: witness the increasingly contentious contemporary politics of Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade, who is a most ardent Murid.

After reviewing scholarship on history and historiography (and especially that of Senegalists such as Christian Coulon, Donal Cruise O’Brien, David Robinson, and his own mentor, James Searing), Glover gets to the grist: a treatise on Maam Cerno and his followers, and their founding of the town and devotional center of Darou Mousty. As he notes, an important feature of Murid teachings is Amadu Bamba’s equating the hard work necessary to feed one’s family with prayer itself, and Glover seeks to balance this sense with an understanding of the “moral economy” instilled in Darou Mousty, where full granaries were interpreted as “a sign of divine approval of the Murid way” (p. 15). In order to understand analyze local understandings of the sort, Glover turns to indigenous oral and written sources of information, often in Wolof (the dominant language of Senegal) or Wolofal (Wolof written in Arabic script) that some might consider insufficiently “historical” for consideration. In this, Cheikh Anta Babou’s book alluded to above is also especially pertinent. For example, the long, epic poem about Maam Cerno by Cheikh Moussa Kâ is among the treasures whose appreciation is necessary to any sense of Murid histories and how Murids conceive of them. Glover’s reliance upon and integration of such work, and his insistence upon the importance of recitations of life histories, are among his most worthy contributions to broader contemporary historical studies.

As just one example, Glover’s discussion of the early relationship between Amadu Bamba and his younger half-brother, later so touchingly known as “Grandfatherly Teacher,” reveals the author’s ability to marshal and interpret many different kinds of data and to make assertions of deep importance. Maam Cerno was born a week after the tragically early demise of Bamba’s mother, a fact understood by Murids as “more than just a coincidence” (and indeed, a common assertion by Muslims the world over is that nothing “happens,” as all is God’s will). Instead, the birth was “the divine answer to Amadu Bamba’s prayers” following his mother’s death (p. 86). Further oral and poetic accounts cement the relationship between the saint and his younger brother as one of especial intimacy. Bamba would be his teacher, and by the age of thirteen Maam Cerno had memorized the Holy Quran; he would go on to become a noted scholar of Islam, and “one of the most influential intellectuals within the Muridiyya” (p. 87). Without pausing to explain what should be but is not always obvious, Glover uses the term “intellectual” as though it were the most ordinary of words with regard to the exceptional accomplishments of Maam Cerno. Anyone with a sense of European and Euro-American racism will know how exclusionary this word has been and is, however; witness the continued disregard of African contributions to Sufism in synoptic works on the subject.

As he walks readers through the complexities of Murid worldview as well as the unwinding of everyday and more significant affairs, Glover reveals the emergence of a very self-consciously fashioned Murid modernity. Here, too, the book contributes to far broader debates about the formation of discrepant modernities in reaction to colonial hegemony; and indeed, the term “discrepant” is especially apposite in the Murid case, for its implication of difference through dialectical disagreement with dominant discourses (in this case, that of French West Africa) suggests that while departing from colonial practices through their own moral economy, Murids nonetheless played the colonizers’ game especially well—and undoubtedly better than French authorities might have expected or have been able to fully grasp at the time.

In short, John Glover’s *Sufism and Jihad in Modern Senegal* is attractive in a number of ways. It’s presentation of how moral and practical economies reinforce each other, its exposition of regional politics as the residents of Darou Mousty have maintained a carefully constructed independence from other devotional and economic centers of Murid and wider Senegalese life, its attention to particularly intense historical moments such as the impact and interpretation of World War I on and in Darou Mousty (pp. 123-135), and its more general expositions of Sufi principles in lived experience over time, make it a worthy contribution to Senegalese and Islamic Studies. Quibbles are just that: Copy editing at the University of Rochester Press has repeatedly betrayed this author and his text in annoying ways, from the grammatical (“herein lays,” p. 5; “comments... was,” p.12) to malapropisms (“more amendable to rule,” p.9; “composed symbolic capital” instead of “comprised,” p.17). And the author might consider hiring one of the many wonderful Senegalese photographers to illustrate his next work in ways that will contribute more than his own snapshots have to this book (e.g., one of Maam Cerno’s mausoleum on p. 154, that is cropped in such a way as to cut off the lower portion of the building’s façade).

NOTE

[1] (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007).

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