Mouridism is a contemporary Sufi religious movement originating in Senegal at the end of the 19th century. Its founder, Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba, was exiled several times as a danger to their enterprise. Initially trained in prayer and in working in the fields of the Senegalese countryside, he and other non-Mouride individuals. During the last 30 years in France, these Mouride merchants have changed. Not only have the spaces and tasks of the Mourides, who considered themselves as the "old Mourides", now we have to unite for an international cause and especially for the children of the children who are their future. For the toolabèl merchants of Marseille, even if they are capable of being here and there at the same time, those who have their families with them are more or less anchored in France, mainly because of their children. The question is one of adapting the Mouride religious system in such a way that the migrants are accepted as much by the Mouride hierarchy as by the mayor of Marseille. The current problem of the migrants is the difficulty in giving sense to their migration, that is, in integrating the global Mouride religious project with their local dynamic, mobile way of living their religion with their local reality. The Mouride religious enterprise The Mouride economic enterprise that was organized in various countries is the point of departure of yet another enterprise—a religious one—which de-localized and reconstituted itself according to the fluidity of migrants and their migratory routes. These Mouride merchants in migration stimulated both the constitution of places of worship abroad and the elaboration of decentralized (i.e., with respect to Touba) rituals. While the central authority of the brotherhood is constantly called upon, the initial initiative came from the migrants themselves and from their need to maintain a bond (spiritual and material) with the holy city of Touba. Today the migrants readily transmit the religious and social knowledge proper to Mouride migrants in Marseille to their children and to the new toolabès.

Evolution of the Marseille-Touba dahir

The Marseille-Touba dahir, found at the centre of the small islet of Bellune, was re-founded by the Senegalese withBobou in the 1980s as the "Dahir Saliem" of Marseille. This dahir was the result of one group of Mouride merchants anxious to have one central place for prayer, a place at which they could also gather to organize debates, meetings, and dhikr sessions. Host passing marabouts, hold the magal, and exchange both material and spiritual goods. The dahir, a simple room in an apartment, was created in the early 1980s. Every Sunday evening the merchant who had initiated the project conferred the management of the dahir, a few generation-conflicts but also because they were too mobile, to the eldest of the Mourides, who considered themselves the most legitimate for the task. During the last 30 years in France, these structures of hosting toolabès (the dahir) have changed. Not only have the spaces been transformed, expanded, and modernized, but their very functions have also evolved. While their services were originally directed towards perpetuating the Mouride religious practices (recitations of the khausaides, zikhr sessions, organization of Mouride events such as the magal festival, receiving sheikhs, etc.), towards social monitoring of the Senegalese in France and towards the possibility of having a place to meet and exchange goods, the dahir today—while maintaining the Mouride territory

Features

The Mouride Dahira between Marseille and Touba

The birth of an economic Mouride territory

The history of Marseille and the Senegalese migrants is a very old one, dating back to the Senegalese infantrymen and sea-men who were generally recruited by maritime companies during World War II. The central quarters of Marseille were where the Mouride Senegalese merchants were to settle in the 1960s and 1970s. Here they joined the black and Arab emigration and, with the recently arrived African labourers, a situation that offered the merchants a base for their commerce. The majority of the Senegalese migrants arriving in Marseille during this period were merchants who alternated between abruption sales and the tourist season and labouring in the textile factories of Marseille during the low season. These merchants, living between a mobile and sedentary existence, comprised the great majority. During the 1980s some of them became wholesale- or immobile merchants, furnishing their more mobile colleagues with merchandise. In this way a network was organized amongst cities in Europe, Africa, and later America and Asia. Within these economic networks, in addition to the common affiliation to the brotherhood, a logic can be deciphered in the circulation, the inter-relational and transactional network, and the relationship between territories, juridical systems, and other non-Mouride individuals.

Notes

1. A dâhil is a Maraboutic agricultural community in which one learns a certain profession. 2. The tools are those at the origin of the Mouride dahir, who have invented the name. 3. In Marseille there is a central dahir, the Marseille-Touba dahir, and other dahir formed in the basin of Marseille. 4. Considered the most important Mouride village (outside of Africa) after Touba. The very fact that this site is a centre indicates a way of expanding and organizing the Mouride territory by conferring a sacred meaning to it. 5. In general, the Mourides prefer to pray amongst themselves at the dahir rather than at the mosque. 6. Dhikr: Dhemask. 7. Magal festival that celebrates an important event in the Mouride brotherhood. The most important magal commemorates the departure into exile of the brotherhood's founder, Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba, and is accompanied annually by a pilgrimage. 8. Khausaides: poems authored by Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba. 9. This article is an extract of a paper given at the ISIM in April 2000.