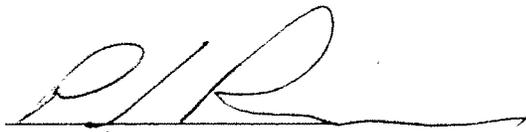MUSLIM BROTHERHOODS, ISLAM, AND THE ENVIRONMENT:

CAN THEIR INTERSECTION RESULT IN CHANGING ECOLOGICAL DISCOURSES IN

SENEGAL?

By

Shaina Shay

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Approved by:

Dr. Paul Robbins

Department of Geography

STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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Abstract

This paper evaluates the capacity for knowledge transmission and the range of influence of Muslim brotherhoods in Senegal. It then evaluates the potential to use the power structures of Muslim brotherhoods and the non-formal education they provide for communities, to influence and change local environmental discourses. The method proposed to create this change is a theoretical narrative founded on the ecological ethics present in both the Quran and the documented sayings and practice of the prophet Muhammad (the *sunnah*). The method I propose to introduce this narrative is to integrate the ecological ethic present in Islam into the curriculum provided in Quranic schools, *daaras,* by the religious teachers, *marabouts. Marabouts* play the dual role as religious figureheads and Islamic teachers who deliver religious education to youth (the majority young boys), called *talibe.* A large number of the students in the *daaras* of Dakar are composed of children sent by rural families to get some form of education. Through a theoretical analysis, a literature review, and an interview, it was determined that there is a possibility, although extremely slim, to use the non-formal religious education system created by Muslim brotherhoods to shape the ecological consciousness of future Senegalese society.

Introduction

      This thesis assesses the potential to use Muslim brotherhoods and the non-formal religious education structures currently present in Senegal to change environmental discourses and effect community change. In order to make the argument that there *is* a possibility to integrate an ecological ethic narrative into *talibe* curriculum based on the environmental principles found in the Quran and *sunnuh*, there are some questions that first need to be explored: Is there a relationship between Islam and the environment found in religious texts and academic theory? What is the structure of Muslim brotherhoods? What is the role of the *marbouts*? How do they access the community? What role does education play in Islam? How does non-formal education impact a community? How does one measure change in a community? What are the challenges to this proposal? And in conclusion, could an endeavor such as this be possible?

      The first section of this paper proves the connection between environmental consciousness and Islam with an academic literature review. The second section elucidates the components and general hierarchal structure of Muslim brotherhoods in Senegal. Because the *marabouts* represent the intersection between private and public spheres of power it was also necessary to determine how they interact with communities, evaluate their part the organizations, assess their political impacts, and examine the role they play in non-formal education in Senegal. After these components are enumerated I move to a theoretical discussion of orientalism and the subtle, residual impacts of colonialism on Western perspectives and academic analyses of occidental problems. In the third section there is an analysis of how

education has been incorporated into Islamic practices and what impacts non-formal education has on community involvement. For the purpose of this paper I have equated increased community involvement to changing environmental discourses because grassroots movements traditionally have demonstrated the largest positive impacts on changing individual behaviors in a community. At the end there is an investigation of successful community based activism in Senegal, which describes obstacles to changing practices, and how they can be overcome.

This thesis question developed from my experiences during the six months I spent studying, traveling, and interning in Senegal and from the reflection period thereafter. One of my favorite times of the day in Dakar was the afternoon call to prayer. After lunchtime, in any part of the city you can hear the *meuzzen* calling to Muslim disciples, indicating it is the time to start ablutions before their ritual communication with God. It is during this time you will see the majority of the male population take time to pay tribute to Allah.

Taxi drivers pull over, step out their traveling offices, lay out their prayer mats, methodically wash their hands and feet and commence their prayer ritual. Over time I realized the importance of cleanliness and purity in the Islamic religion, morals which spill over into many aspects of the Senegalese culture. In fact, there are specific rules for determining purity present in the *shari'a*, Islamic law (Wescoat 1998). This was realization was hard to arrive at in some respects however, because at the moment these are not principles currently being reflected in the every-day treatment of the environment.

Trash disposal and waste management is a huge problem right now in Senegal. There are very limited receptacles and the accepted social practice is to simply dispose of trash immediately on the ground wherever one stands. One day while I watched a man perform his ablutions next to a pile of refuse, plastic, and paper scraps and I was intrigued by this somewhat ironic juxtaposition of these two opposing social practices. Access to proper disposal units is a huge part of the problem; in addition, access of general knowledge about healthy environmental practices, and information about how waste impacts human health in hard to come by for the general population. Recognizing this, I then evaluated what potential mediums and structures already established in the culture could be used to transmit this knowledge. Because Islam is such a large component of Senegalese culture, and religious education is so prolific, I was drawn to the structures of Muslim brotherhoods. It is well known that the brotherhoods harness a significant amount of political power, and it is common practice for *marabout* to instruct their followers on who to vote for in the elections. This validated the power of *marabout* in the community, in my mind, and demonstrates their ability to influence community members.

Muslim brotherhoods and the role of the *Marabout*

The hierarchal inner-structure of the Muslim brotherhood system in Senegal is complex to say the least. In the book <u>Muslim Brotherhoods and Politics in Senegal</u> author Lucy Behrman delves into the intricate history and evolution of Muslim brotherhoods in this region with a historical analysis of their initial arrival, response

to French colonialism, and provides an account of their political function in Senegalese culture. The term 'Muslim brotherhood' refers to the mystical Sufi orders known as *tariqas*. In general, a brotherhood (or *tariqa*) is headed by a *shaykh*, who is assisted by territorial leaders known as *khalifs.* The next power ring is composed of the *muqaddam*, or the delegates and other territorial leaders appointed by the *shaykh*. Under these members fall various other stratifications of Muslim brothers and *marabout*s whose power is determined by their level of religious education and the quality of their relationships within the order. The lower *marabout* are seen traditionally seen as community access points by politicians and spiritual figureheads by community members. They are also the teachers of the Quran and the transmitters of Islamic knowledge. Children (the majority young boys) start participating in Quranic schools, called *daara*, when they begin speaking between the ages of 3 and 4 and continue on with this education for a varying amount of years. There are three different levels of *daara* instruction: the primary level where young children are taught the basic principles of the Quran, the secondary when children memorize large sections of the Quran and occasionally participate in text translation, and higher studies which are reserved for the select few who study under prominent *marabouts* often at prominent Islamic universities.

The values intended to be transmitted in these schools are those integral to being a good Muslim, with emphasis on learning "obedience, respect, and submission" (Andre, 2010). One of the components of this educational process is learning humility, a virtue gained through the process of begging. *Marabouts* are often sent children from poor families to care for without any monetary

compensation. Traditionally, money acquired from begging for alms in small villages was able to provide sustenance for the children, but this religious practice has led to a perverse system of child exploitation in Dakar and other urban areas in Senegal. The *marabouts* monetary ties are present throughout the community.

Because of their function as political gatekeepers to the public, they are constantly receiving 'gifts' from politicians in exchange for influencing the votes of their disciples. Strong political and economic connections are essential for good *marabout* in order to fulfill their duty as a community 'fixer'. Their role in communities has shifted in the eyes of the youth who for the most part no longer view them as spiritual figure heads, but more as an access point to larger social networks that can be used to find work, visas, or mobilize support (Simone 2003). Allegiances are often created and respect is developed through donations or gifts, a practice that begins with the exchange between an individual community member and a local *marabout*, and then continues through the hierarchy where local *marabouts* donate to the *marabouts* above them, who do the same for the *khalifs* who direct the order.

In Senegal there are four major Muslim brotherhoods: the *Tijaniyya*, the *Muridiyya*, the *Qadriyya*, and the *Layenne* (listed in descending order of total followers). The *Qadriyya* order is one of the oldest brotherhoods in West Africa; it was founded by Sidi Muhammad Abd al-Djilani (1079-1166). The *Tijaniyya* brotherhood has had a large impact on Senegalese culture since its creation in approximately 1781 by Ahmed idn Muhammad al-Tijani. Malik Sy became the figurehead for this organization and developed the holy city of Tivaouane as the

symbolic center of this Muslim order. Today it attracts vast numbers of disciples yearly who travel there as a pilgrimage to the holy destination. The *Murid* order is unique because of their emphasis on work and discipline as being one of the highest virtues. Although there are many different sub-groups and factions for each of these Muslims brotherhoods, the *Murids* have some of the most extreme; an example of which are the *Baye-Fall* who are best known for their fanaticism, actively scorning Muslim education, and their disregard for the five daily prayer ritual which is a pillar of traditional Islam. Over time the Muslim brotherhoods grew in importance, becoming an integral part of Senegalese culture. Their impacts are most present in the political domain and, of course, the religious sphere.

Senegal has a unique political atmosphere that requires politicians to incorporate the influence of Muslim brotherhoods into their campaigns. Behram says that "when a politician wishes to improve his own position he will not only try to gain support among his peers in the government and in the UPS (Union Progressive Senegalese), but will also trek to one of the major *marabouts* for help" (Behram 1970). It is easy to recognize the personal favorites of prominent *marabout* in governmental positions. There are many ministers, including the past minister of foreign affairs Doudou Thiam for example, that are linked inextricably to the powerful Murid khalif. The political power of the Muslim brotherhoods is not contested in the modern day but the evolution of their power is a long and complex story.

Historically, the political and social tensions created by French colonization and their early attempts 'civilize' African cultures strengthened the prevalence and

popularity of Muslim brotherhoods. Though *marabouts* were used by the French

powers when they were politically relevant, trust was never shared between French

officials and *marabouts*. French officials were often wary of *marabout* stimulated

rebellions or uprisings of locals around the country.

To quell these fears the French had a program to eliminate, what they

considered to be, primitive Islamic culture through the institution of education. This

meant that religious education provided by *daaras* became a threat to this process.

The French standpoint concerning the nature of Islamic education and the system of

daaras in Senegal is demonstrated in this colonial decree and its provisions that

were as follows:

1)   Administrative authorization was required before a *daara* could be

        opened.

2)   Registration of all existing schools must be approved and recorded.

3)   School inspections were to be completed by the *Chef de Service de*

        l'Enseignment.

4)   There was a prohibition of begging by the students.

5)   *Marabouts* must have adequate funds to support his students without

        exploitation.

6)   The teaching *marabout* must be Senegalese.

7)   Quranic schools were outlawed in animist territories.

8)   Power to refuse approval of Quranic School rested with the Governor.

The overall goal of these provisions was to replace Muslim culture with

French through the introduction of the French education system and the removal of

the primary source of funds for the *marabouts*, alms derived from *talibe*. This caused *marabouts* to discourage their disciple's participation in French educational institutions. There are remnants of this practice still present in some regions of Senegal where parents refuse to send children to school because of negative French associations (Behram 1999).

Christian Coulon argues in his book <u>Le Marabou et le prince: Islam et pouvoir au Senegal,</u> that historically the brotherhoods were used as a political extension of the government used to facilitate communication and inspire legitimacy with the general public. Coulon found that the incidences of independent Muslim political action have also been increasing. However, there are few prominent *marabouts* that can maintain a significant popular following. This number is kept small, in some respects, because of the competition for spiritual supporters. Inter and intra-brotherhood disputes are common; Behrman argues that the brotherhoods are "split by bitter feuds among different *marabout* each of whom is trying to increase his own personal influence and prestige" (Behrman 1970). Not only that, but being a *marabout* is a profitable position that also offers the possibility of upward mobility. The overall success of these power structures is somewhat mysterious, considering their lack of popularity in surrounding countries despite similar economies, cultures, and political structures. One argument is that the personal charisma of the spiritual leaders found in Senegal has been a major contributing factor (Coulon, 1981).

The Environment in Islam

In order to evaluate the primary question of whether the structures of Muslim brotherhoods in Senegal can be used to change environmental discourses, it is first necessary to determine if there is, in fact, any connection between Islam and environmental consciousness. The answer is yes. Many Muslim academics have explored this topic, describing an environmental discourse present in both the Quran and *sunnah* which can best be compared to the theories of deep ecology.

Deep ecology is an environmental philosophy radically different from the traditionally western ecological paradigm; it argues for an eco-centric public attitude as opposed to the current anthropocentrism present in most Western societies. There are two main tenants for deep ecology, first that it is necessary to recognize the interrelatedness of all living beings and ecological systems, and second that humanity would benefit from the process of self-realization and the ability to identify with all forms of nature (Atkisson, 2012).

There are three founding ideas which compose Islam's ecological ethics: *tawhid* (Divine unity), *khilafah* (trusteeship), and *Al-akhir* (the hereafter). The first component, *tawhid* emphasizes a concept of unity similar to the theory of deep ecology. This belief argues that "the universe is governed and regulated by the principles of unity, balance, and harmony" (Saniotos, 2011). Extrapolating from this concept, all things are the product of divine creation and thus are inextricably linked (humanity, nature, and the universe) and governed by the same rules.

Environmental protection based on these ideas becomes a religious duty and responsibility. The term *qadar* represents the idea of a natural balance and proposes that all things have been created in proportion and measure. The implications of this

statement is that nature has the ability to provide for all the needs and wants of living creatures, so any surpluses or shortages of resources are caused by a disruption of this natural balance. Many Muslim academics claim that the cause of this imbalance is the capitalistic view of the environment as merely a means to meet increasing economic ends. The proponents of deep ecology share this sentiment and reject the anthropocentric philosophy that the environment should be used to increase human wealth regardless of the environmental repercussions.

The *khilafah* principle has two main components: universal brotherhood and trusteeship of resources. The concept of universal brotherhood implies that all people and animals are created equal and each creature has the right to access the resources of the land. This is reinforced by the unique Islamic law, *shari'a*, that author James Wescoat refers to as an individual's 'right to thirst.' This law ensures the access to water for all living things, punishable by condemnation if such a basic right is withheld. Under this idea mankind are encouraged to share resources appropriately so that equity is upheld. The element of trusteeship comes from recognizing that all things were created by Allah, and thus should be subordinated to and respected. Nature becomes divine. The third concept of *Al-akhir* incorporates the idea of stewardship into practice. There is a responsibility for people to improve the quality of their environment for the next generation, and there is no inherent right to pollute or degrade environments.

Besides the preceding concepts there is also the principle of 'no injury' in Islam, which can be applied to environmental practices. "According to this principle, Muslims are prohibited from harming others," Umar Chapra contends that

"environmental degradation harms both the present and future generations" and is thus illegal under Islamic doctrine (Akhtar 1996). It is now evident that there is a relationship between the principles of environmental consciousness and Islam, both in the Quran and teachings of Mohammed. There is an overarching theme of personal accountability to Allah, society, and nature for individual actions their repercussions.

Historically, it is possible to see the implementation of some of these principles in Islamic societies. Muslim states would create conservation plots that were illegal to sell to private landowners because they were considered communal property. Wildlife sanctuaries were also formed as sacred places not to be disturbed; a good example is the Haram-al-Sharif in Mecca. Water is one natural element, which has always been a subject of preservation and is directly referred to by the prophet on more than one occasion. The *ayat* (verses or teachings from the Quran) that mention water were used as the foundations of water law in the Middle East. For both economic success and personal survival the limits of natural resources had to be recognized. For example, Mohammed said that each farmer should be allotted an amount of water that doesn't exceed an ankle high depth when distributed on the plot of land. This maintained equal access for all farmers. An office of public inspection was created to monitor the use of these public resources and ensure distributive equity (Saniotos, 2011).

A fourteenth century Muslim philosopher Ibn Taymiyyah recognized the pivotal role of the environment in providing wealth and benefits for a society as a whole. This intimate connection between economic and environmental systems

shaped land use practices in a manner, which modern environmentalists might label as sustainable practices. Three prominent Islamic philosophers who have evaluated the connections between Western and Islamic societies differing views on environmental responsibility are: Fazlun Khalid, Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Tariq Ramadan. Seyyed Nasr explicitly holds the Western technological revolution, which climaxed with the industrial revolution and started during the Renaissance, is accountable for the current environmental crises now prevalent throughout the world. It was during this time that ecological discourse changed from one of harmony with nature to the goal of dominating nature. He argues that the negative environmental impacts caused by this philosophical change are the sources of both spiritual and health crises on a societal scale.

It is unmistakable that there has, and will continue to be, much Islamic pontification on what the role of humanity is in the natural environment. The ecological principles found in the Quran and *sunnah* show that there has been an effort already to apply these theories, and shape society around the harmony of nature. Knowing this, the question arises why most modern day Muslim majority statehoods experiences some of the greatest rates of environmental degradation. One argument is that many of the countries that have adopted Islam are still developing. Some have contended that these countries have to the right to develop unchecked, regardless of negative economic impacts because that was how Western countries first gained their wealth and power. Although this tit-for-tat argument is relevant, it does not include the social costs of environmental destruction. Western countries can get away with this practice because they have the capabilities to

export the majority of their negative environmental externalities. This is not feasible for developing countries, however, whose citizens must bear the brunt of the environmental and health problems created in the name of development.

The next step is to evaluate how these ideals can be used to change existing environmental problems in Islamic societies. There are some examples of this application already. In Indonesia there is a currently a movement to reforest, and 'green Indonesia,' founded on the principles of being a good Muslim who has the responsibility to be active stewards of their environments. To realize the potential for movement such as this in Senegal it is first necessary to understand the environmental history unique to Senegal.

Colonialism and its Impacts on Senegal's Environmental History

Education, access to knowledge, and policy precedents have largely effected environmental policies in Africa. Education also has had a large impact on the development of shared ideas and normative cultural practices. Many of the theories on environmental consciousness and policy currently present in Africa can be linked to colonial paradigms. In the book called "The Lie of the Land: Challenging Received Wisdom on the African Environment," authors Melissa Leach and Robin Mearns evaluate how this historical context has shaped environmental policy in developing countries. This quote by Hoben describes this relationship and introduces the importance of narratives in shaping environmental practice:

> "The environmental policies promoted by colonial regimes and later by donors in Africa rest on historically grounded, culturally constructed paradigms that at once describe a problem and prescribe its solution.

Many of them are rooted in a narrative that tells us how things were in an earlier time when people lived in harmony with nature, how human agency has altered that harmony, and of the calamities that will plague people and nature if dramatic action is not taken soon (Hoben, 1995)."

In the same manner that it is possible to discern residual effects from the French imposed education system, we can also see the impact of colonialism historically, and in current environmental policies. The culturally based perspectives of nature present in traditional beliefs and the actions of the colonial government do not always intersect. The attempt to apply a European model of environmental protection has also reinforced western hegemony, resulting in many problems, including a characterization of African farmers and pastoralists as both the victims and the causes of environmental problems. An example of which is the Western perception of climate change and desertification in the Sahel.

Although the larger issue is climate change, farmers and pastoralists also contribute to the problem with poor land use practices (like flood irrigation and deforestation) that have negative environmental results like soil erosion. Another example of this dual contribution is how "pejorative attitudes and repressive policies towards pastoralists…have been well-served by the view that they cause desertification, or bring about a tragedy of the commons" (Scoones, 1996; Swift, 1996). Thus, the consequences of this dichotomous situation that portrays the farmer (or pastoralist) both villain/victim are social injustices and policies that harm rather than help local economies (as agriculture and pastoralism still represent a large percentage of GDP on average in African countries). These perceptions have also resulted in conflicts and the general resistance of locals to

accept or follow governmental policies intended to improve environmental quality. African farmers, pastoralists, and local stewards of the land cannot be viewed solely as victims of colonial institutions however. It is apparent that the issues regarding environmental policy are complex in Senegal, so much so that international stakeholders also play a role in influencing environmental policies.

Many African governments have come to rely on NGOs and foreign assistance for environmental development project funding. This has essentially exported their control on environmental quality by limiting the power of locals to decide what they need and how to accomplish the task. Because policies are shaped by cultural paradigms, African governments are forced to accepting policies based on western philosophies they may not support and that may not be applicable to their situation. This reduces the effectiveness of initiatives implemented to improve environmental quality. To better understand how this forced culture has been created it is important to evaluate how wisdom is imparted and dispersed within a society.

Narratives are one method used to influence how knowledge moves and what knowledge is shared within a group of people. They are powerful tools that are effective because, in theory, they seamlessly incorporate dominate symbols, ideologies, and real/imagined historical experiences of their intended audience into well-developed arguments (Hoben 1996). The narrative plays are effective in influencing the actions of people because they "are explicitly more programmatic than myths, and have the objective of getting their hearers to believe or do something" (Roe, 1991, 288). Hypothetically, if a narrative of environmental consciousness were integrated into *talibe* teachings by *Marabouts* using the

principles of ecological consciousness present in the Quran, the next generation

would have a foundation of environmental awareness that doesn't come from

western influence.

Theoretical Discussion of Orientalist Discourses

Considering this unique environmental history of Senegal it is necessary to

faites attention of the manner in which this information is delivered as to avoid the

presence of an orientalist watermark that is often present in an analysis of social

problems in non-western countries and the solutions proposed by western

intellectuals. Orientalism in this context refers to the Western creation of the Orient

as the other, and as "a dynamic exchange between individual authors and the large

political concerns shaped by the three great empires-British, French, American"

(Said 1978). In this quote Said blows the whistle on blindly accepting academic

works as accurate representations of world truths.

Because the academic world is constructed on the systematic habitude of

basing new theory off of old ideas, the sharing of misinformed conjectures based on

recycled prejudices has easily reinforced the ever-present representation of non-

western countries as being a geographical symbol of the old, backwards world by

the occident. This tendency can also be seen in the homogenization of the many

countries and cultures on the continent of Africa as being simply 'African'.

Distortions of the orient are common because of practices such as this, in which

scholars systematically provide either over-generalized or myopically specific

depictions of oriental cultural trends. Popular news examples of this are plentiful

with African often being referred to as one location with one generally ubiquitous culture. A hegemonic dominance is created from this identification process. I was able to witness the effects of this on Senegalese culture first hand during conversations I engaged in with people throughout my travels. The concept of identity is complex and cultural allegiances have a great impact on Senegalese identification. While there are many levels of cultural identifiers (Senegalese, Dakarois, Pulaar etc.), I was surprised to learn that some Senegalese people will quickly relinquish personal culture and identify themselves as an African. This is most commonly seen when commemorating general successes of the African continent: examples include a world soccer match won by an African team, or identification with America because of the Obama's African relations. But I also witnessed the effective extension of this practice which creates a general blanket conception of African culture by the Senegalese themselves. In daily life problems and cultural principles are labeled as being inherently African. This self-identification as the other truly the demonstrates the insidious and hegemonic nature of orientalism.

According to Said, Antonio Gramsci divides society into two components, political and civil. Political society consists of state institutions like the military while civil is composed of schools, families, and unions. Power is transmitted throughout these two spheres in different manners; political power is based on dominance while civil uses consent to create change. It is commonly believed that truth should be apolitical in nature to eliminate lingering motives. Thus it is necessary to consider the historical, political, and personal context for the author of

any written work in order to determine its validity as truth. The organic and complex concept of the Orient has proliferated in Western societies because this was not done originally. Perceptions are derived from the content of what is most often associated with a topic. The western representation of the Muslim Arab has become a distorted, violent caricature of the Arab as the Sematic other. This can be attributed to the repetitive associations made between Islam, terrorism, and the antiquated world in the media and academia. By recognizing the temptation to simplify the Muslim community and the Orient this paper attempts to avoid the pitfalls of an orientalist argument.

There is a delicate line between arguing for the imposition of western methods to change a culture, and the goal of this paper, which is to illuminate a narrative already present in the foundations of Islamic culture that could be used to improve environmental and social conditions in Senegal. Harnessing the power and knowledge transmission capabilities of the Islamic non-formal education structures is an attempt to remain in the civil sphere where consent, rather than dominance, shapes societal change.

Informal and formal education in Senegal

To further explore this possibility it is first necessary to investigate the systems in which these narratives are delivered to the public, specifically the institutions of formal and informal education in Senegal. Here are some general statistics on education in Senegal:

Table 1: Socio-economic Indicators: Senegal

Indicator	
Population	10,564,303 (2004)
Education rate (elementary education)	82.5%
Literacy rate	39.3%
Number of students in elementary school	1,444,163 (2005)
Number of students in middle school	311,863 (2005)
Number of students in high school	89,187 (2005)

(Fall 2007)

As shown in table 1, the most commonly attained level of education in Senegal is elementary education. However, the majority of the population contributing to this statistic can be attributed to a new law passed in 2002, which introduced religion into public schools, and allowed children participating in *daaras* to be counted as having an equivalent education to those formal institutions (Mbow 2009). This law has been controversial, as it has the effect of artificially boosting education statistics, which will be used to satisfy Millennium Development Goals. In the other statistics follow the trend that as education level rises, enrollment drastically decreases. The formal education system in Senegal has "several levels and types of schooling: pre-school, elementary school, middle school, high school, technical and vocational training, and higher education (universities and colleges)" (Fall 2007). Each of these categories can have either private or public affiliations. The informal education in Senegal is founded on the tradition of teaching Islamic principles and the Quran to youth in the *daaras* as described earlier in the paper. To

get a better perspective on how education is integrated into Islam we now look at the role of education in Islam from the perspective of Amadu Babma, the founder of the *Muridiyya* brotherhood.

Education from the perspective of a *marabout*

The prominent *marabout* leader, Amadu Bamba, recognized the power of education to change religious beliefs and initiate political and social transformations. For him spiritual education was the "most appropriate means to correct the wrongs in society and to provide people with a protective shield against the perils of the epoch" (Babou 2003). Amadu Bamba was the founder of the *Muridiyya*, now the largest and most influential Muslim brotherhood present in Senegal. In 2003 it was determined that approximately one third of the 10 million Senegalese inhabitants are *Murid*. Bamba developed an educational pedagogy for teaching his form of Sufism that incorporated three types of instruction: exoteric education or *taalim*, esoteric education or *tarbfyy*, and the third level, *tarqiyya*, that is reached only by select and especially gifted disciples. This system was the foundation for the *daara*s now present in Senegal. The first level, *taalim*, involves learning the Quran and Islamic sciences, the second, *tarbfyy* focused on spiritual education, and the third, *tarqiyya* was reserved for those able to elevate their souls beyond the material world and eventually become religious leaders in the community. Similar to the thesis of this paper, the crux of his educational structure rests on the quality and character of the instructing *marabout*. He explains that each of these levels require different types of religious teachers, known also as *sheikhs*, to impart the specific knowledge necessary for each learning step.

The learning *sheikh* specializes on exoteric knowledge through the teachings of the Quran, the Arabic language, and classical and religious sciences. This *sheikh* should possess the ability to communicate well and have significant levels of sagacity and knowledge on the topic of Islam. They have the task of disseminating knowledge throughout the community in addition to being a role model for his students. Bamba argues that it is inadequate teachers, which lead to the degradation of Islamic faith. Pride, hatred, and jealousy are all societal sicknesses that contribute to this denigration of spirituality; each of these immoralities can be cured with education according to Bamba.

The *sheikh* of education has the duty of helping their disciples develop character. This task is accomplished through conquering the *nafs*, or lower self. The *nafs* encompasses the animalistic instincts of each individual and in fact animals themselves retain *nafs* as well (Wescoat 1998). In Sufism it is necessary to first conquer the *nafs* before a relationship with God can be established. Bamba says that these teachers must possess certain qualities in order for them to be effective. First, "he must understand the nature of the soul in its different states" so that he can accurately identify the source of the souls problems and the methods to cure its defects (Babou 2003). The *sheikh* of education must also understand the subtleties of the world and how Islam interacts with them. In order to do this he must be able to evaluate a problem with passion and without prejudices. The *sheikh* of ascension teaches the highest and most revered level of spiritual education, *tarqiyya*. Their duty is to be a living representation of a good Muslim. Their disciples will live with them to learn from their example.

Effects of education on political participation and community activism

It has become increasingly evident that education plays a large role in Islam and is integrate throughout Senegalese culture; now it is necessary to determine if education is an effective medium to create concrete social change. An article written by Michelle T. Kuenzi investigates the effects of non-formal education in Senegal on political participation. Although Kuenzi's main focus is on non-formal education provided by national and international non-governmental educational organizations, for the purposes of this analysis *daaras* have been included in this classification of education since they are now recognized by the Senegalese government as being a viable form of education. Kuenzi also evaluates the impact of non-formal education on civic engagement. Civic engagement is a wide-ranging concept, but it can be broadly defined as an individual's sense of responsibility for issues of public concern. This is the facet of this study that is most relevant to the research question of this paper. Research on the effect of non-formal education present in several Latin American studies have shown that non-formal education increases self-esteem (although in this Latin America the target population participating in non-formal education structure is women) while enhancing a sense of community and the common good (Kuenzi 2006).

The article presents data acquired from a survey of 1484 Senegalese citizens living in villages in the regions of, Diourbel, Kaolack, Louga, St. Louis, and Thies. One study done in northern Senegal of 333 *Pulaar* speakers showed that citizens who had participated in some form of non-formal education (NFE) were "more likely to

engage in behaviors related to community participation and personal empowerment than those without NFE" (Kuenzi, 1997). The indicators used in the study to quantify changes in community involvement were: "(1) cooperating with others to solve a community problem; (2) belonging to a community organization; (3) holding a leadership position within an organization; (4) speaking out at meetings at least occasionally; and (5) getting together with others to raise an issue" (Kuenzi 2006). An analyses of the data show that there is a statistically significant relationship between non-formal education and community participation, community contacting, and personal contacting (all with p≤0.1 significance levels). Community contacting incorporates activities such as contacting a local official about a problem, while personal contacting generalizes to any contact made to public figures.

The first year of non-formal education increases the likelihood of community participation by 4%, the next year by 6%, and at the maximum level of non-formal education recorded, the likelihood increases to 34%. Comparatively one year of formal education increases the likelihood of community participation by less than 1%. Similar trends were found in the analysis of community contacting, though the statistic for personal contacting was not statistically significant.

Effective community activism movements

Now that the connection between non-formal education and increased community activism has been established, the question becomes to what extent community activism has proven effective in Senegal. Remember, for the sake of this

paper, an increase in community involvement is what is being used to represent changing, what I have labeled as, environmental discourses. An article written by Abdou Maliq Simone investigates the effects of improved community involvement by considering the recent forms of social collaboration developing in Pikine, Senegal. Pikine is now considered its own city, but it was created from the urban sprawl coming from the capital of Dakar. The city has limited financial resources and a growing demand for pivotal urban services like sewage and waste management. In this community the *Projet de Ville* is meant to encourage participatory urban governance by connecting small women led activist groups across different economic boundaries and scales. This collaboration has not been easily facilitated. One of the first experiments with neighborhood development began in 1958 in an area of Dakar called Castors. The experiment was considered a relative success because it created solidarity in the neighborhood based on a shared community reality, it provided a single function to a multifunctional community, and it translated community experiences into local power (Simone 2003).

There is a shared reality found in the community of Pikine as well; many of its citizens come from rural areas and often they have already tried to make it in Dakar but were forced out for economic reasons. Despite a shared present experience, cultures and political allegiances vary greatly in the area, as they do in any part of Senegal. The *Lebu* ethnic group originally occupied the land that became known as Pikine, a situation which has caused tensions between the *Lebu* and the urban overflow of people coming in from Dakar. The *Lebu* retain a traditional ethnic counsel, known as the *frey*, that interact with other networks of local leaders and

marabouts. The *frey* have superseded the need for a government structured municipal waste disposal system by working together to remove community waste. This men-only organization, similar to the Muslim brotherhoods, encountered some initial resistance when attempting to manage this task because the handling of refuse is culturally delineated to women. The tensions coming from the very separate spheres of men and women are not always easily fared.

Traditional and political alliances also result in boundaries that segment neighborhoods, create complicated social networks, and make it difficult to form alliances. The *Projet de Ville*, mentioned above, was put in place to traverse these divides and connect local authorities and citizens, a task usually assigned to local *marabouts*. In this case the non-governmental organization known as the Urban Popular Economy Programme of Environmental Action Development in the Third World (ENDA/ECOPOP) has become the lead organization for this project and has provided the information and results of this project. The overall success of this project cannot yet be determined but there are a number of other smaller, grass roots associations making positive impacts on the Pikine community. Youth and women activist groups such as, *groupements de promotion feminine, associations sportives et culturelles de jeunes, associations de parents d'eleve,* and *groupements d'interit economique,* constitute these organizations. One of the youth groups called *Santhiaba,* is self-organized by local children who started several youth sports teams that were then able to procure donated jerseys from Europe. According to Simone the mobilization process for this youth club was similar to methods used by *marabouts* in *daaras*. However, Simone retains a more negative perspective on the

effects that *marabouts* have in a community, going as far as to say that they act more as obstacles to these grass-roots movements rather than institutions that inspire positive change or community activism. They have this effect in large part because they retain so many political investments and must take care to not displease patrons. For example, there are currently some suspicions that the *Murid* brotherhood is involved with the Senegalese drug trade. Clearly the exterior, community relationships that are retained by *marabouts* are just as complex as the inner power relationships of Muslim brotherhoods.

Besides the issues of group stratification and segmentation there are also cultural barriers to overcome. One of these is the common Senegalese belief that "a state of personal 'well-being', if not perfection, already exists for individuals, and it is their responsibility to make their way toward it" (Simone 2003). On the path to this ideal, everyone encounters obstacles and barriers that they must overcome in order to achieve the goal of perfection. However, one must not try too hard to remove the obstacles or you could be judged as trying to hard to change your destiny. These obstacles are usually created from the actions of others. When individuals lack the capability to successfully remove impediments (i.e. people) on their path to personal perfection because of structural inequities, chaos ensues. This cultural perspective has maintained the strict social hierarchy that already exists by directing making people constantly aware and critical of others' actions. People are always watching closely the actions of others and are quick to judge based off of complex social hierarchies and labels. This structure denotes that the well being of the individual is not necessarily contingent on the improvement of social or

environmental conditions for an individual and therefore participation in activities to improve development can be limited (Simone 2003). Simone contends that these cultural beliefs have contributed, in some part, to the slow development, and limited successes of community led activism in Senegal. Another barrier to social activism that I witness while I was living in Dakar is the reluctance of people to address the issues at hand. I attribute this to a cultural belief called *jom*, which can be equated to the English phrase 'to save face.' Individuals are encouraged not to complain and always put on a happy face when confronted with life's hardships. The acceptance that life will be hard is virtuous, but sometimes can lead to complacency with the situation and a lack of motivation. However, I believe the majority of the complacency I saw has been created from structural poverty and not cultural beliefs.

To get a somewhat more positive view on the role of *marabouts* and a first hand account of Senegalese culture, I conducted an interview with Elhadj Ndoye, president of the Forgotten Children non-profit organization. Elhadj Ndoye was born in raised in Senegal and currently works for the National Bank of Arizona as an Assistant Vice President, Banking Center Manager in Tucson, AZ. His organization strives to improve the lives of the *talibe* (specifically in the region of Mbour) who live as street children in Senegal. His organization works directly with *Marabout* leaders to deliver donations of clothes, food, and personal hygiene materials directly to the children in their care. The long term goals of the Forgotten Children include: providing the *talibe* with regular nourishment, develop a daytime shelter, provide showers, health care, vaccinations, recreational activities, and simple skills training.

During the interview we discussed a variety of topics relating to education, *talibes*, and environmental improvements. Ndoye explained, in his own words, the structures of *daaras* and the role of *marabout* in Senegal. He said there are different types of *marabout*. Those who are well established have a large following that regularly provide the *marabout* with donations. These *marabouts* have a large amount of political and social power that can result in their status as a *khalif*. There are other methods through which a man can become a *marabout*. Realistically, Ndoye said, anyone who has memorized the Quran can teach the Islamic way in a *daara*. In some instances, the position of *marabout* is passed down through patriarchal lineage from the father to the oldest son. There are also cases of *talibe* who, once grown establish their own *daara*, thereby repeating the cycle of exploitation in some cases. In the past the practice of begging to develop humility worked because of community involvement.

Nowadays, however, growing urban areas have reduced the sense of community making the alms, which usually sustain the *talibe* harder to come by. *Marabout* struggle to provide food and shelter for the children that they are sent, but this is not an easy task. Because of structural poverty there are some *marabout* that have resorted to exploiting the *talibe* by taking the alms money for themselves. These are the situations that are targeted by the Forgotten Children foundation.

Throughout Ndoye's one-on-one interactions with various *marabouts* in the Mbour region, he has discovered that there is no *marabout* network present. This may be a consequence of competition between local *marabout* and brotherhoods for followers and alms or may simply a result of no networking effort. With the new law

passed in 2002 that elevated *daaras* to the same level of formal education systems in Senegal, we discussed the possibility of *marabout* uniting to lobby for governmental funding for the children that they educate.

Once on the topic of environmental conditions in Senegal, Elhadj Ndoye explained to how he took an environmental education class in school titled "*l'education civil*" when he was growing up. Unfortunately, he says these classes did not focus on issues specific to Senegal, like the severe waste and sewer management problems that are only growing worse today. One of the biggest problems in Senegal is trash. There are very few trash receptacles and garbage trucks are unreliable. He suggested having *talibe* develop a trash recycling and retrieval business.

Ndoye agreed that any effort to utilize the non-formal education provided by *daaras* to change environmental relies on the cooperation of *marabouts* to be successful. When asked if the *marabouts* he communicates with during his work in the Forgotten Children organization have been receptive to new ideas he said yes. The *marabouts* that he works with have the desire to help their communities and improve the lives of the *talibe* in their charge. This implies that there is potential for presenting an ecologically founded narrative to *marabouts* who may then feel inclined to transmit that wisdom to the future generations.

Reasons why this could work:

- By targeting young *talibe*, the next generation will grow up with new ecological ethic. Youth and women involvement in environmental management has been shown to play a critical part in enacting social change.

- The majority of youth affected by the non-formal education system currently present are boys. This is both a positive and negative aspect of this plan. On the one hand, in this patriarchal society where power and decisions are given to men, a new generation of men could use the new ecological philosophies embedded in Islam to enact real change. From the other perspective this is continues the structural disempowerment of women in the society and reinforces the male dominated power of Muslim brotherhoods.
- This narrative is integrated into the culture in Senegal rather than being based off of hegemonic colonial infrastructures.
- *Marabout*, for the most part, want to help their community members and see the their *talibe* disciples become successful.

Obstacles of Implementation:

Though this situation is conceivable there are also plenty of obstacles that make this a feasible only on a small, local scale. Some of these include answering the following questions:

- How would one convince a *marabout* that this is a worthwhile endeavor?
- Would a *marabout* be receptive to these interpretations of Islam?
- Who influences the decision making of a *marabout*?
- Implementation as a westerner would be impossible, so who plays the middleman?
- Is it possible to maneuver the social networks and power structures that dominate the Muslim brotherhood in order to make environmental problems a significant issue?

Research questions for the future

Considering all of the issues associated with this thesis, it is recognized that this paper is only laying the foundation for further investigations on this topic. Some of the questions that have arisen from this analysis that must be answered fully before any implementation of an ecological narrative could be realized are the following:

1. How do *marabouts* choose what to teach?

2. Are there environmental classes still taught in the current education systems?

3. What is the documented state of waste management systems in Senegal?

4. Is there potential to initiate a *talibe* waste collection program similar to that of the *Lebu* group the *frey*? This could be an economic and humility building program.

5. How does one establish contact with a *marabout*?

6. Is there a possibility for *daaras* to receive governmental funding due to the 2008 law which incorporates *daaras* into education statistics? If this non-formal education is being recognized on a federal level as being equivalent to formal education institutions, shouldn't they be able to receive the same kind of funding?

7. Following this, what is the current involvement of the Senegalese government in the formal education sector?

Conclusions and Possibilities

This study has touched on a considerable number of issues in Senegal ranging from education, to religion, to environmental quality, to community involvement and eventually to methods for changing environmental discourses. On a larger scale this thesis has tried to get at the heart of how environmental change happens. I have concluded that, in general, using non-formal education and social institutions already present in communities to transmit new knowledge is the most impactful method to influence and change individual behavior on a large scale. The Occident has yet to recognize the power and influence that non-formal education structures possess in developing countries. They have the potential to create very real, significant change because they evolve with cultures and can easily harness the power of narratives to influence actions.

It was the extensive integration of Islam into Senegalese culture that has made this case study relevant, but not necessarily particular to this one country. Islam has had great influence in politics, education, and community involvement; I have asked why this influence can't extend to positively impacting the environment. One reason this question hasn't already been asked is because of residual orientalist habits that ignore Islam as a modern power. Utilizing the non-formal education provided by Islam to promote environmental awareness and protection utilizes rather than western imposed solutions is more viable because it uses a narrative and cultural norms already present in Senegal to influence citizens individual actions. This is simple in theory, but it has been shown that the relationships existing between *marabout* and their community members are just as complex as the structures of authority and power transmission present in Muslim brotherhoods

making any change a complex process. The impacts of these intricacies on how social change occurs have raised many new questions, as seen above.

Knowing now what we don't know, let's revisit what questions have been answered. First and foremost, is there possibility to use Muslim brotherhoods to enact environmental change? The answer is yes. There is a sufficient connection between Islamic teachings and an ecological ethic to constitute implementing an environmental awareness narrative into *talibe* curriculum. We have found that Muslim brotherhoods contain significant social power and influence as demonstrated in their history and current community role in Senegal.

It has also been determined that the keystones of these organizations are the m*arabouts* because they act as the transmitters of knowledge and resources in a community. They are also the access points to community support for politicians and government institutions. The non-formal education *marabouts* provide for communities is essential to local culture and is a major component of the Islamic religion. Studies have shown that non-formal education increases community activism and increased community activism is one of the best ways to promote actual tangible improvements in living conditions. We can see all of the elements are present to make using these structures to change environmental discourses a possibility, but the plausibility of this happening is slim considering vast and complex social networks and power interactions that rule the hierarchy present in Senegalese Muslim orders.

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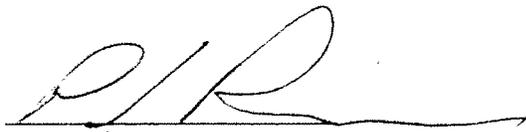
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MUSLIM BROTHERHOODS, ISLAM, AND THE ENVIRONMENT:

CAN THEIR INTERSECTION RESULT IN CHANGING ECOLOGICAL DISCOURSES IN

SENEGAL?

By

Shaina Shay

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Approved by:

Dr. Paul Robbins

Department of Geography

STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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