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Sufi Islamic Discourse in Africa: From the Greatest Jihad to the Establishment of the African Caliphate

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Abstract: In the nineteenth century, African Muslim societies were marked by the emergence of a reformist Sufi Islamic discourse aimed at changing and moving away from traditional Islamic practices. Although this discourse was influenced, to some extent, by external sources of inspiration, it was linked to the local African context. This study demonstrates that the reformist discourse of major Sufi figures such as Sheikh Amadu Bamba in Senegal and Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio in Nigeria reflects a number of common features of Islamic reform in Africa, yet their reform programs were shaped by the conditions of the local context. This research contribution aims to understand the actual role that the discourse of Sufi spirituality played—and still does—in the religious, economic, and political life of Muslim societies in Africa. This study has shown that despite the prevailing belief that Sufi discourse does not tend to politicize as it tries to maintain a safe distance away from matters of politics and governance in order to achieve its message of moral and spiritual purity, it may turn into violent radicalism as embodied by the jihadist Sufi experience in West Africa.

Keywords: Sufism; jihad; Islamic discourse; Muridiyya order; Caliphate; Amadu Bamba; Usman Dan Fodio

1. Introduction

Islam has become, as [Mazrui \(1986\)](#) emphasizes, one of the main components of the triple cultural heritage of Africa. According to this view, contemporary African society is characterized by social elements drawn from three sources: indigenous African traditions, Islamic religious and cultural inputs, and Western secular civilization. Sufism, with its various cultural forms, is usually called African Islam. In fact, the African continent, including the Islamic bloc in the West, has been culturally altered by Sufism and has put its mark on Sufi practices as well. It is this fact that causes some historians to argue that the history of Islam in Africa is primarily the history of Sufism, and that Sufism in Africa differs in doctrine and practice from Sufism elsewhere in the world ([Hannoum 2016](#)).

Muslims always needed to constantly consider matters pertaining to the practice of belief and understanding the religion, and this may agree with two Hadiths narrated from the Prophet Muhammad, in the first of which he says: “The best of generations is my generation, then those who follow them, and then those who follow the latter. After that there will come some people whose witness will go ahead of their oaths, and their oaths will go ahead of their witness,” ([Al-Bukhari n.d.](#)). In another Hadith, the Prophet says: “Allah sends to this *Ummah* a man at the end of every hundred years to renew the matters of its religion for it.” Narrated by Abu Hurayrah ([Abū Dāʿūd n.d.](#)). Imam al-Shafiʿi is usually seen as the reformer of Islam in the second century Anno Hegirae (AH). In any case, since the nineteenth century, Africa witnessed many reform movements that adopted different styles of Islamic discourse, which we will deal with in this study.

The literature on Sufi Islamic discourse, especially in West Africa, can be divided into three categories. Early writings in the colonial period and afterwards were associated with an attempt to connect some traditional beliefs with Sufi practices, which implies a pacifist black

Islam less dangerous than Middle Eastern Islam (Seesemann and Soares 2009; Bravmann 1983; Cruise O'Brien and Coulon 1988). However, the claim of African Islam, which lacks authenticity and intellectual foundation, can be refuted easily. Hunwick and Hunwick and O'Fahey (1994) have asserted the breadth and depth of intellectual production by African Muslim scholars, many of whom were affiliated to Sufi orders. The second category includes works by anthropologists, historians, and specialists in Islamic studies. They attempt to understand Sufism not only as a political force in a local context, but also as a religious force in general. These studies developed a theoretical basis and a functional understanding of researchers in the field of Islamic mysticism, especially in West Africa (Brenner 2000; Robinson 1985). Ware et al. (2018) examined the writings of Usman Dan Fodio, Umar Tal, Amadu Bamba, and Ibrahim Niasse, who, between them, founded the largest Muslim communities in African history. The third, more recent category, focused on the transformations of the Sufi discourse and its role in the struggle against colonialism, then its transformation into radicalism and its demand to achieve the concept of justice (Oros 2019; Jah 1974; Babou 2005; Hill 2014).

This study argues that the Islamic Sufi discourse, like any other discourse, is based on a specific textual and epistemological structure. What the discourse offers are interpretations of Islamic sources, which give it the characteristic of pluralism and diversity. It is often difficult to define precisely specific elements of "Islamic discourse" within a specific socio-cultural and political context and to assess their ability to effectively shape Muslim thought and behavior across time and space. Here comes the role of religious institutions and authorities. There is a reference that defines the ideas, images, rules, terms, and concepts that Muslims rely on when trying to determine the position of Islam on any issue at hand.

This study will rely on the qualitative approach in understanding the nature of the Sufi Islamic discourse and the motives for its renewal on the one hand, and some of its Sufi patterns on the other hand. We have relied on some foundational studies of the pioneers of Islamic mysticism in Africa, especially those written in Arabic, such as the works of Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio. In this context, the study seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What is the nature of Islamic discourse in general, and the motives for its renewal in Africa? (2) What part has the Sufi reformist discourse played in the religious, economic, and political life of Muslim societies in Africa? Therefore, the study is divided into three basic parts, the first of which discusses the concept of Islamic discourse and the motives for its renewal in Africa. The second and third parts focus on studying two types of Sufi discourse, namely, the model of Amadu Bamba in Senegal and the model of Dan Fodio in Nigeria.

It is important to note that the contemporary Salafi jihadism collides with the Sufi discourse as a heterodox interpretation of Islam. Yet, it embraces the legacy of the purification of Sufi brotherhood in the nineteenth century through "Salafizing" its jihadist campaigns (Kassim and Zenn 2017). Salafi jihadists such as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Boko Haram in Nigeria are building on this process of Salafization by expanding its scope to include jihadist Sufi discourse against colonial rule in the nineteenth century. This Sufi legacy, highly respected by many Muslim communities in Africa, helps explain the rise of radical Salafism in many areas of traditional Sufi orders in Africa. To help us understand the reformist pre-colonial legacy of Sufism in Africa and its impact on contemporary jihadist Salafism, the following Table will address the nature of the Islamic discourse and the motives for its renewal in Africa.

2. Islamic Discourse and Motives for Its Renewal

The concept of Islamic discourse, with its epistemological connotations and its ideological dimensions related to its source and its various societal contexts, can be viewed as one of the basic approaches to understanding and studying the traditions of reform and renewal in contemporary Islamic thought (Altuwaijri 2003). In the Qur'anic understanding, the word 'Khitab' [address, discourse, speech] was mentioned three times, including the Almighty's saying: "And We strengthened his kingdom and gave him wisdom and discernment in 'Khitab' [speech]" (Surah Saad: 38:20). The word 'Khitab' here is coupled with wisdom, which ensures brevity by including a lot of meaning into a little word. The two linguistic and Qur'anic concepts converge in emphasizing the sublime significance of

the discourse, considering that “discernment in ‘Khitab’ [speech]” is not done in the best way, unless it is combined with wisdom, as if it is intended to fully and completely clarify the face of truth.

The concept, in general, refers to textual traditions as contained in the Qur’an and Sunnah and presents those in a way that makes them appear convincing and necessary. Accordingly, this discourse can be considered the legacy of the reformist traditions that have managed since the eighteenth century to leave clear imprints in the life of contemporary Muslim societies (Ziadeh 2004). Depending on the local context, Islamic reform may have taken different shapes and patterns. But these patterns have always insisted on the supremacy of the standard textual tradition. Based on this, I argue that the renewal of this Islamic discourse signifies, in fact, an attempt to discover what can take the place of modernity in Western thought, provided that this discovery is from within the Islamic reference (Hassan 2015).

In any case, the diversity of sources and the environment of Islamic discourse has led to the existence of different images and forms of the traditions of reform and renewal in the Islamic world. However, the common denominator has always been, at least for the most part, the affirmation of the supremacy of textual standards and their superiority over the various traditions that shape the lives of Muslims in various fields.

In Africa, this diversity of Islamic discourse reflects the overlap of local and external influences in the interpretation of “Islamic doctrine”. Although the local context represented by the Sufi tradition (African Islam) is important, interaction with other types of Islam cannot be ignored (Westerlund and Rosander 1997). The following discussion illustrates this.

A pattern of religious discourse has spread in Africa that can be called “traditional discourse”, which is related to the personality of the *Mallam* [teacher or the religious scholar] around whom people gather. This *Mallam* exercises moral and religious functions in his community, with his high status that have made him an ethical model to emulate (Souley 2005). The call of this Islamic discourse was almost limited to the general ethical sphere and the manner of performing religious rituals. The *Mallam* always urged people to be humble, moderate, and tolerant, which made his call connect to all social classes. The ruling authority, whether in the colonial or post-independence era, used this traditional Islamic discourse as a means of gaining political legitimacy or achieving stability in moments of social tension. However, the traditional authority of these Islamic references has been challenged either by their internal structure or by external factors. Among the most prominent of these factors was the introduction of Western education and the graduation of new generations, which represented a challenge to the authority and status of traditional *Mallams*. At certain times, the *Mallam’s* children graduate from universities and Islamic schools with an innovative vision that is different, if not contradictory, to the vision of the fathers. However, if we tried to explore the reality of the general climate that accompanied the process of shifting from the current of “traditional” discourse to what could be called the “reformist” or regenerative discourse current in Islamic Africa, we would find the importance of talking about more than one variable, as follows (Kane 2003; Hassan 2015):

- Contemporary Islamic movements and organizations that proposed the renewal discourse have been influenced, both intellectually and organizationally, by two main factors: The first is the emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood, which was founded by Sheikh Hassan Al-Banna in Egypt in 1928. The intellectual heritage of this group, especially the writings of its theoreticians such as Sayed Qutb, constituted a source of inspiration for many individuals and groups who raised the banner of religious reform and talked about an Islamic project for renaissance. The second factor is related to the emergence of the Islamic group, which was founded by Abu Al-A’la Al-Mawdudi in India in 1941. Perhaps the effect of this is evident in the experience of reform movements that took place in East and South Africa, where there are large Asian communities.
- The experience of the stage of decolonization and the achievement of the political kingdom (i.e., independence) advocated by Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana indicates a dwindling and declining importance of the religious variable in Africa in favor of the dominant ideologies of a secular

character. The new African elites adopted intellectual projects to achieve renaissance in their countries based on the concepts of nationalism, socialism, or liberalism.

- With the failure of the scientific propositions that characterized the public political discourse in the post-independence period, Islamic reform visions emerged in the 1970s and important issues were raised that entered the core of the discourse of renewal. Perhaps the controversy that Nigeria witnessed during that period about the nature of the constitution and the status of Islamic law, or the issue of Zanzibar and Nigeria's membership of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, reflects this new trend (Faseke 2019).
- The Iranian revolution in 1979 represented a source of inspiration for many Islamic movements and organizations in Africa that raised a radical discourse calling for the establishment of an independent Islamic state. Perhaps this proves the incorrect claim that Islamic reform movements in Africa rely primarily on Sunni and Salafi references. Africa's experience since the 1980s clearly indicates the influence of the Iranian revolution on many visions and theses, including those based on Sufi references, which called for the adoption of the Iranian model. In this context, we can refer to Iran's tireless attempts to export its intellectual project by providing scholarships for African students to study in Iran and paying attention to issues of cultural exchange.
- The absence of democracy and the spread of corruption in the African reality, including the collapse of the African renaissance model that was based on secular foundations, has led to the emergence of new reform visions in Islamic societies that rely on a religious reference. Perhaps some of the explanations behind the pursuit of political elites in northern Nigeria to impose the application of Islamic law confirm this meaning (Mazrui 2009); that is, religion can be employed politically to provide a source of legitimacy in the event of political failure. However, in most cases it can be said that the Islamic reform movements, with their various intellectual and cognitive diversity, have been linked, as an alternative, to the development failure that Islamic Africa suffered from. This has fueled, faster than its pace, the speed of social transformations and the change of the traditional value system that many African societies are witnessing.
- The stance on the Western "other" and its tireless attempts to impose political, economic, and cultural hegemony over the peoples of the non-Western world posed serious challenges to the discourse of Islamic reform and renewal. This is related to problems related to the inherited view of the West, burdens of mental images, and stereotypes. On the other hand, there was the dialectic of hostility and cooperation, friendship or breaking ties, and clash or dialogue (Bin Saeed 2018). This led to the emergence of a variety of intellectual jurisprudence within the framework of the regenerative Islamic discourse, which offered new horizons for dealing with issues of "Western" modernity, democracy, and concepts of identity and belonging in the African reality. Nevertheless, the logic of hostility to the West, with its colonial history and its dominant presence over other non-Western peoples, and its constant association with Zionism and racism, remained a source of inspiration and revivalism for many political Islam movements with radical discourse in Africa.

A closer study of the main Sufi movements in West Africa, including the Qadiriya, the Tijaniyya, and the Muridiyya, reveals that Sufism has taken many forms over the years. In many African countries, it is still a powerful spiritual, intellectual, and social force. An examination of two eminent Sufi leaders in West Africa follows.

3. The Appeasing Sufi Discourse: Muridism in Senegal as a Model

The traditional Sufi discourse in Senegal has not faced any real challenge since the colonial period, and this may be due to more than one reason (Quinn and Quinn 2003; Mbacke and Hunwick 2005). Firstly, the majority of Muslims in Senegal are loyal to the Sufi orders (Muridiyya, Tijaniyya, and Qadiriya) and show great respect and appreciation for the sheikhs of the orders. Secondly, upon the advent of French colonialism and the adoption of a direct rule pattern, which meant the destruction of the traditional political structure in Senegal, the Sufi orders moved to fill this void by declaring a policy

of alliance or at least appeasement with the colonial authorities. This made these orders benefit by supporting their religious and economic project throughout the colonial era. Third, the post-colonial state in Senegal used the same colonial political alliances in order to achieve its political legitimacy. This trend may support the relative stability that Senegal enjoyed throughout the post-independence period and the lack of military involvement in the political game. This means that Senegal lived in a semi-democratic space, unlike the situation in many other African countries, where religion used to fill the political vacuum under the military regimes. This is the matter, as the Nigerian experience will show, that made Islamic movements and organizations take a political character in the absence or banning of political parties.

Sheikh Ahmed bin Muhammad bin Habibullah, known as Amadu Bamba, or the servant of the Messenger, is the most prominent founder of the Muridiyya order in Senegal (1853–1927 CE i.e., ‘Common Era’), the (Babou 2007). The period in which Sheikh Ahmed bin Bamba’s call appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century is marked by the end of the slave trade and the beginning of the colonial era in Africa. The sheikh adopted peaceful methods in dealing with the colonial administration, as he focused on what he called self-jihad. It is interesting to note that this murid method is spreading in Senegal like wildfire. Members of the political class seek to win the friendship of the sheikhs of the city of Touba, the capital of the *Tariqah* (order), by various means. Let us remember in this context that President Abdullah Wade, upon his election as president of the country, hastened to travel to Touba to receive the blessing of the Grand Marabout there (Babou 2016).

It is noticed that Sheikh Bamba composed many poems and praises of the noble Prophet, which the followers of the order still repeat today. The sheikh presented himself as a servant of the Messenger of God. He also preserved the traditional concept of education that is based on the Qur’an. He used education to link science with movement and work with sincerity. The sheikh also developed the concept of promotion, which is a type of training for students and teachers to contribute to preparing the next generation. Amadu Bamba rejected the jihad of the sword and adopted a new method for achieving societal change. He proposed education as a central tool for changing society. But as Babou (2007, p. 113) asserts, “not all forms of education suited the task. For him, to achieve enduring impact, the seeds of change had to be sown in peoples’ hearts and souls. The type of education he initiated encompassed the body, the mind, and the soul and called for a new pedagogy and teaching techniques that differed from those used in classical Quranic schools, which primarily focused on the transmission of knowledge.”

The Sheikh Bamba established private educational schools, each receiving people of one type, where the means for correcting and reforming that type were available. The sheikh was personally responsible for supervising some of them, and he appointed some of his senior disciples to supervise some of the others (Babou 2003). However, Sheikh Ahmed Bamba did not choose these disciples and teachers without investing them with specific specifications and conditions, so each of them had the conditions of the Sheikh of *Tarbiya*¹, and for the Sheikh of *Tarbiyah* there are three, as follows:

First: Correct knowledge: so that it is based on the Qur’an and Sunnah and is supported by mental issues and conceptual aspects given by valid evidence.

Second: The eloquent tongue: so that it clarifies and explains the intent without presumption.

Third: The sagacious mind: so that it distinguishes the application of knowledge and protects itself from every description that is troubling in terms religion and worldly life; its sign is to stick to fairness when others are right; to stick to truth by adopting the saying, “I do not know” when someone really lacks knowledge; and to stay aloof from suspicious matters, minding one’s words, deeds and beliefs.

As for the Sheikh of *Tarbiyah*, he must meet three conditions:

¹ *Tarbiyah* may be defined as “the ideal approach in developing human nature, both directly through a method of verbal or visual communication, or indirectly through providing a role model, according to a specific curriculum that employs certain means and mechanisms in order to facilitate positive change”.

First: Knowing souls and their outward and inward conditions, what is acquired by them in their perfection and imperfection, and the reasons for the existence of inexistence of either state, on the basis of knowledge and experience, grasping all fundamentals of knowledge and the majority of its branches.

Second: Knowledge of existence and its fluctuations, the rule of Sharia and custom and their application by reliance on textual proofs and experience, eye-witnessing and verification, and discerning the types of people and their characteristics in order to deal with each with what is appropriate for them.

Third: Knowing how to conduct affairs; that is, to place everything in its proper place according to the suitable context without whim or inclination. This cannot be achieved except through sincere *Waraa'*² in one's disposition that results from one's dissatisfaction with oneself, and complete asceticism that arises from a true faith that guides one to abandon everything except Allah, Glory be to Him.

The reform movement carried out by Sheikh Bamba included the social sphere, as it sought to achieve two interrelated matters: *Firstly*, dissolving the class differences that were inherent in Senegalese society at the time, and seeking instead to achieve the principle of equality and social justice. Sheikh Bamba wanted to apply this in practice in the community of his disciples, as he instilled in them the spirit of equality and brotherhood by changing the customary system of work distribution. *Secondly*, inculcating the spirit of love of work, production, and sacrifice for the sake of the public interest; so the sheikh added the element of work, whereby the students used to love work and fatigue in order to benefit others (Quinn and Quinn 2003).

Perhaps the most important characteristic of the intellectual project proposed by Amadu Bamba is the acceptance of the diversity and difference in the audience of addressees and recipients, in the end allowing the formation of a new and stable social order. The Sufi discourse proposed by the Muridiyya focused on the relationship of the *Murid* [disciple] and the Creator. A *Murid* is that person who belongs to Allah. He also stressed the need to follow the heart in all words and deeds and liberate the human soul from the bonds of fear, which means that everyone takes responsibility for his actions. The Sheikh Bamba's students and *Murids* played an important role in spreading his teachings and achieving the goals of his intellectual project. In this context, we may mention Ibra Faal (Babou 2007).³

During the seven years of exile that Sheikh Bamba spent in Gabon, the Muridiyya under the leadership of Sheikh Faal managed to grow dynamically and financially, as the *Murids* established peanut farms and established commercial centers in Dakar and St. Louis. With the death of the founding sheikh in 1927, the order had established its foundations in Senegalese society, so that it became an integral part of the political and social space of Senegal.

In general terms, it can be said through an analysis of the Muridian literature that the Sufi discourse proposed by this order depends on two main pillars (Green 2001). The first is the religious pillar, which revolves around three interconnected components that resemble a circle, in accordance with the teachings of the founding Sheikh: education, work, and charity.

The first responsibility that falls on the shoulders of the *Murid* is to teach himself the Qur'anic sciences so that he may be good at his work. This education represents the base of achievement after that. Without knowledge and awareness, work becomes pointless and worthless. In maturity and adulthood, the *Murid* concentrates all his energy on hard and productive work. Then the *Murid* reaches the final stage, which is complete loyalty to Allah Almighty. Accordingly, it is the religious duty that the individual must work diligently, whether in the service of the marabout through work in peanut farms, or in urban businesses.

² Waraa' is a spiritual state that protects the soul and keeps it away from slipping. It is a position higher than *Taqwa*, where a person avoids doubtful issues and even permissible actions that may lead to sins.

³ Sheikh Ibrahim Fal (1855–1930) was one of the brilliant students of Sheikh Ahmed bin Bamba, who was considered by some scholars as the Minister of Economic Affairs of the Muridian Movement. Sheikh Ibrahim reformulated the nature of the relationship between Muridiyya students and their sheikhs. He also spread the culture of work within the ranks of the order, where many sayings were attributed to him, such as: "You reap what you sow." He also initiated the tradition of collecting money from followers to their sheikhs of the order. Very briefly, Sheikh Fal was able to achieve a balance between values, prayer and work within the Muridian order.

The *Murid* comes to a full-fledged state when he declares his religious commitment to the poor and society. This means that a person's wealth is in the service of society in a way that helps others to learn and start walking on the path of the *Murid*.

As for the second pillar of the *Murid* discourse, it revolves around the concept of economic immunity. Economic independence is one of the basic principles of the *Muridiyya* order, and hard work is one of the commandments of the founding sheikh himself. There is a general awareness within the order that achieving financial independence is a prerequisite for proper worship and love for Allah, His Messenger, and the Holy Qur'an. As is clear from the *Muridiyya* literature, the believer who works and worships Allah is closer to Him than the believer who worships Allah all the time and relies on others to meet his material needs. The former fulfills his own needs and thus his worship becomes free from any external influences on him. As for the second, he relies on others to meet his material needs, which may spoil his worship.

In any case, the traditions of Islamic reform in Senegal go back to the middle of the nineteenth century, especially after the founding of the four communes (Dakar, Saint Louis, Goree, and Rufisque). At that time, human rights and civil organizations were established that demanded the recognition of Islamic values and standards, putting them in the form of laws and codes in general, especially in the area of personal status.

In the early twentieth century, these organizations gained great importance when they demanded the necessity of supervising the pilgrimage missions and calling for an increase in Senegal's share of pilgrims. These endeavors were linked to the establishment of local societies and associations for pilgrims. Indeed, the colonial administration itself helped establish these ties so that more than fifty associations could be counted in Dakar alone in 1936.

However, it is striking that the 1930s also witnessed the emergence of reform movements and organizations that adopted public programs on many issues, especially in the field of Islamic education. Perhaps the most prominent of these associations was the "*Liwaat Taakhi Al-Muslim Al-Salih*" [The Banner of the Good Muslim Brotherhood], which is an Islamic association that aims to "return Islam to its previous era, whether in relation to its form or its essence; in other words, practicing it as it was practiced during the era of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him." Although the influence of these associations was limited to urban areas, they did not completely depart from the cloak of Sufi influences, especially the Tijaniyya.

Whatever the case, some scholars view the establishment of the Muslim Cultural Union in 1953 under the leadership of Sheikh Toure as a major turning point in the movement to renew Islamic discourse in Senegal (Kobo 2012). Sheikh Toure was able to develop a comprehensive reform program that attracted many supporters at home in Senegal, and he also inspired other Islamic reform movements in the neighboring countries, especially Guinea, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso. On the other hand, the reformist discourse of the Cultural Union movement was influenced by the reformist traditions in North Africa, especially the literature of the Algerian Muslim Scholars Association.

It can be said, in summary, that the Islamic discourse of Sheikh Touré's movement was characterized by several features, perhaps the most prominent of which are:

- The call to unify the ranks of Muslims, men, and women, in order to understand Islam correctly;
- Purification of Islam from the heresies and myths that have been attached to it;
- Establishing modern Islamic schools and libraries;
- Directing criticism to the French colonial policies;
- Attacking some Sufi practices, especially the Muridiyya sheikhs who cooperated with the French administration.

Sheikh Touré was born in 1925 to a prestigious Tijani family in the town of Fez Tour. According to the habit of the people of his time, he studied Arabic, learned the Qur'an, the Prophet's biography,

Hadith science, *Kalam*⁴, and jurisprudence at the hands of his uncle Sheikh Hadi Touré. But the strange thing about the Touré family is that it did not practice the true Sufi rituals associated with the strict adherence to the teachings of the marabout, which led some to view it as an outsider or rebel against the general Sufi order (Loimeier 2003).

After completing the basic education stage, Sheikh Touré was sent to St. Louis to complete his learning journey, where he met the most famous scholar of Mauritania at that time, Sheikh Mukhtar Uld Hamidoun, who showed him the writings of Muhammad Abduh and other leaders of the reform movements in the Arab world. However, the important stage in Sheikh Touré's life was when he traveled to Algeria in 1952 as part of a delegation of Senegalese students who were to study at the Bin Bdis Center in Constantine. The sheikh was closely informed of the efforts of the Association of Muslim Scholars of Algeria in the field of reforming Algerian society. This experience had a profound impact on Sheikh Touré's reform movement upon his return to Senegal (Loimeier 2003).

The Sufi reformist discourse, as illustrated by Amadu Bamba and Sheikh Touré, remains a formidable cultural force in Senegalese society. The analysis of Muridiyyah's discourse in the context of the development of Islam in Senegal reveals that Amadu Bamba was a very dynamic agent committed to changing his society. Thus, it is important to look at his thoughts and actions in the light of the ongoing debate about Islamic reform in western Africa since the eighteenth century. Amadu Bamba has adopted Sufism as a way of life to change his dysfunctional society. His response to French colonialism was to search for cultural autonomy. The solution was a significant third way to the traditional Islamic division of the world, Dar al Islam (Land of Islam) and Dar al Harb (Land of War). Senegal became Dar al Murid, located within Dar al Kufr. This Murid space was not in contestation with French colonialism; rather, it endeavored to achieve symbolic and cultural autonomy from the colonial realm (Babou 2007). Unlike many Sufi reformers, Bamba's Dar al Murid focused on the Islamic virtues of nonviolence and political neutrality. Thus, his legacy of nonviolence and desire to keep a safe distance from the political power facilitated the peaceful transition to national independence and democratic stability in Senegal, compared to other countries that have sizeable Muslim and Christian populations.

Idrissa (2019, p. 129) argued that "the independent Senegalese state accepted Sufi power in society, but the new nation had no cultural hegemony." Senegal, as defined in its constitution, is a secular state with a predominantly Muslim population, adopting a democratic system with a remarkably strong civil society. There is often an ambivalent relationship between religious institutions (Muridiyya) and the state. This means that the political elite can use secularism as a political tool for social control of religion. Even so, the Muridiyyah maintained its independence from the state and did not consider itself as a political institution. Thus, religious and political authorities managed to coexist, instead of contesting for space. It is worthy to note that, in order to challenge the hegemony of the state's secularism, the Sufi, and reformist Salafi institutions often form a common front. In turn, this issue greatly enhances the power of the Salafi ideology. However, such convergence between the two parties does not end the doctrinal clash between them. Perhaps this complex situation reveals the nature of the ambivalent contractual relationship between the state and the religious establishment in Senegal. The Muridiyya remains politically aligned with the state but ideologically aligned with the Salafi movement.

All in all, because the Murids resist the state while the Salafists oppose it, their convergence is only tactical, and it is issue centered (ibid). As a result, it is important to study the sociology of political consciousness and analyze the social classes, cultural formations, and power relations in each country/region. Such study allows researchers to understand the evolution of hybrid violence in many African regions.

⁴ It is the discipline comprised of disputation over creedal beliefs with rational proofs.

4. Sufi Jihadist Discourse: The Model of Usman Dan Fodio

Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio was born in Gobir, a Hausaland in northern Nigeria, on December 15, 1754 CE. His father was a jurist in matters of his religion, which contributed to the formation of his son scientifically and intellectually (Waldman 1965; Last 1984; Clarke 1982). Sheikh Usman took the sciences of Qur'an interpretation, Hadith, jurisprudence, grammar, and Usul [fundamentals of religion] at the hands of his father, then by Sheikh Jibril bin Omar Al-Qadisi. It is noted that he began his life by calling in the midst of an environment governed by non-Islamic customs and traditions. After 1795, Dan Fodio's advocacy took a new turn, going beyond the stage of direct individual guidance to address broader political and social issues. Then, in 1804, he declared Islamic jihad with the aim of establishing an Islamic state based on the true teachings of Islam, which was achieved for him two years later when he established the Sokoto Caliphate. Despite his death in 1817, his country prospered at the hands of his successors and he also inspired many Islamic reform movements in West Africa (Hiskett 1994).

It is noticeable that Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio studied classical Islamic texts and writings in the eras of the renaissance of Islamic civilization, which contributed to building an ideal model for what the Muslim community should be (Dallal 1993). In his comparison of the reality that Muslims lived in in his country, he found that the gap was wide between this reality and the desired ideal society. This may be due to two main issues, the first of which is the prevalence of heresy and the incorrect practices of Islam. The second is social injustice. Islam has become, in the general popular belief, mere rituals and practices that are far from the heart of religion. Superstitions and heresies spread, and many Muslims indulged in corrupt and ignorant practices. These practices were not limited to the private sphere, i.e., the life of the individual and family, but extended to include the public sphere; that is, within the framework of transactions and public life (Dallal 1993).

The aim of Sheikh Usman and his followers was nothing but belief in Allah and adherence to religion, and not to plunder under the slogan of jihad. Accordingly, they did not rely on jihad alone to spread Islam, but rather they followed the path of da'wah in most cases and did not resort to jihad by force except when necessary. Therefore, Sheikh Usman wrote to the Hausa kings explaining to them his position so that they would be aware of it, and mentioned to them that he was determined to revive the Prophet Muhammad's Sunnah and put down the satanic heresy, and he ordered them to sincerely worship Allah and to disavow everything that contradicted the Sharia. They did not respond to his call, and his letters did not find good acceptance from the princes; some of them tore the message up, and some of them even threatened the sheikh.

Usman Dan Fodio focused in his method during this stage of the verbal jihad on the use of two important matters: The first was to focus on the issue of women in the Islamic model as one of the pillars of his reformist call. As for the second matter, it was represented in his use of religious poetry and *muwashshahat*⁵ in the popular way known in those countries and loved by heart, and the sheikh was creative in composing a large number of poems and *muwashshahat* with an ethical, scientific, and sophisticated content in local languages.

At that time, Dan Fodio's call to Muslims was to obey the true teachings of Islam and to reject these heresies and myths that were far from Islam. The solution that he proposed to fulfill this call was to establish a new Islamic society consistent with the ideal Islamic model. The Muslim group that Sheikh Usman called for was established in three stages: The first stage was the stage of advocacy and formation, with the aim of not clashing with the ruling state. As for the second, it was a phase of emigration and the establishment of a Muslim community ready for jihad for the sake of Allah. The third stage came as a culmination of these two previous phases, in which jihad and the establishment of the Islamic state took place by force.

⁵ *Muwashshahat* were formed in Andalusia in the 11th and 12th centuries; each was usually divided into five strophes (or stanzas) with four to six lines with a master rhyme at the beginning of the poem and the end of the strophe.

What is really striking about Dan Fodio's thought is that he focused on the social dimension, meaning that he viewed corrupt and incorrect practices as conducive to infidelity, and yet he did not care about the issue of declaring some people disbelievers [*Takfir*]. According to him, belief is not an end in itself. Rather, the goal is the existence of a Muslim who is shaped by this belief.

There is no doubt that this position on the issue of tolerance in dealing with society has given a positive and constructive dimension to the concept of Belief and *Kufr* [unbelief]. He believes that unbelief is shown by actions and not by intentions or what is harbored by hearts. He repeatedly warned against accusing Muslims of unbelief or declaring the entire community as nonbelievers. This is one of the important characteristics that distinguish the reformist thought of Usman Dan Fodio, which distinguishes it from some of the reform movements that emerged after that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which described the society with *Jahiliyyah* [pre-Islamic ignorance] and *Kufr* and called for the need to establish an Islamic state by force.

Dan Fodio was interested in education and gave it great importance in his reform project. This meant that true recognized scholars would be entrusted with the task of reforming the social system and imposing orthodox Islamic behavior. Sheikh Usman criticized scholars who sought to merely gain fame and influence without caring for the teaching of Muslims to the core of the religion. He also criticized scholars who were not interested in studying the Arabic language. Dan Fodio viewed scientific knowledge in terms of its social function, which meant his rejection of the existence of a distinguished elite of religious scholars who did not have a commitment to the issues and concerns of their societies.

The concept of knowledge according to Sheikh Dan Fodio has five main themes that he focused on in his *majalis* [sessions], as his son Muhammad Bello mentioned it in his book *Infakul Maysur* [Spending What Is Available], which are: (1) the principles imposed by the Islamic Sharia, both the outward and inward, of fundamentals and branches; (2) urging to follow the Sunnah; (3) refuting the illusions that spread among the students of knowledge; (4) repelling satanic heresies and bad customs; (5) spreading Sharia sciences and clarifying its polemics. If the stage of verbal jihad that Sheikh Usman started was based on advice and guidance, raising the educational level and the level of general social awareness among Muslims, then it focused on the issue of women and the need to liberate them from the manifestations of injustice and social marginalization that they suffered from. Muslim women participated in the reform movement led by Dan Fodio, and there is no doubt that this Islamic model of women represented a great challenge to the ideas prevailing in African society at the time (Boyd and Last 1985).

Some scholars criticized Sheikh Usman for allowing women to attend the sessions in the same ground with men to receive lectures and learn the teachings of Islam (Bunza 2013). This prompted Sheikh Usman to write a treatise urging to educate women, which he called: "*Kitab Tanbih Al-Ikhwan Ala Jawaz Ittikhaz Al-Majlis li Taalim Al-Niswan*" [A Treatise Alerting the Brethren to the Permissibility of Holding Sessions to Educate Women Their Religion] (printed in Sokoto, without date), in which he defended the right of women to learn about their religion.

It is noticeable that Dan Fodio's stance on Sufism may raise confusion, given that he himself was a Sufi, but he did not present Sufism at all as part of his intellectual project. When he was referring to Sufism, this was in the context of talking about the correct Islamic behavior of the individual, and it has absolutely nothing to do with the intellectual component. Dan Fodio has many writings on Sufism, but he did not criticize it, as is the case, for example, with Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab.⁶

The final stage of Dan Fodio's reform project was the establishment of the Islamic state in order to achieve Islamic idealism (Dallal 1993). The proposed change strategy included a radical political and

⁶ Sheikh Usman was influenced by the writings of Maliki Sufi scholars such as Imam Abu Abd Allah Muhammad ibn al-Hajj, author of the book *The Entrance*, and Sheikh Abu Al-Abbas Ahmad Al-Azraq, author of the book *The Rules of Sufism*. Sheikh Usman often cited the writings of Ibn Arabi not as a matter of criticism but as approval, which contradicts the Wahhabi Salafi approach in this regard.

social program to replace the old regime. The model of the new Islamic state emerged from the first theoretical formulations of the Islamic renaissance.

At the beginning of the Dawah, Dan Fodio was interested in highlighting the importance of education and the interpretation of matters of religion and spiritual education, as he wrote “*Umdat Al-Da’i ila Din Allah*” [A Reference for the Caller to the Religion of Allah,] as well as “*Kitab Al-Usul*” [The Book of Fundamentals]. As for the foundation phase, he devoted it to dealing with dogmatic and theological issues that arose between him and the scholars of the country of Jos, as evidenced by his book “*Miaraj Al-Awam Ila Samaa Ilm Al-Kalam*” [Ascension of the Commoners to the Sky of Ilm Al-Kalam], which he wrote in 1784, then “*Qat’ Al-Khisam Al-Ladhi Yaqa’ Bayna Talabat ‘Ilm Al-Kalam*” [Ending the Conflict among the Students of Kalam]. In 1793, he wrote his most important book at that stage, “*Ihya’ Al-Sunnah wa Ikhlad Al-Bid’ah*” [Reviving the Sunnah and Suppression of Heresy]. Some view this book as a program for reform and building a healthy Islamic community. In his writing of this book, the Shehu made his intentions clear: “Let the critic of this book know that my intention in it is the revival of the Sunna of Muhammad and the destruction of Satanic innovation. My intention is neither to bring shame upon the people nor to engage in finding faults with them” (Fudi 1981, p. 5).

The sheikh did not shy away from his interest in Sufism and the interpretation of the principles of the Qadiriya order as he composed “*Tabsir Al-Ummah Al-Ahmadiyyah fi Bayan Ba’d Manaqib Al-Qadiriyyah*” [Enlightening the Ummah of Prophet Muhammad on some of the Virtues of the Qadiriya] in 1798. However, before the beginning of the jihad phase, Sheikh Usman’s interest in distinguishing between the *Dar al-Harb* [the territory of war] and *Dar Al-Islam* [the territory of Islam] and the preparation for migration began. In 1803, he wrote “*Masa’il Muhimmah Yahtaj ila Ma’rifatiha Ahl Al-Sudan*” [Important Issues that the People of Sudan Need to Know about].

In the above book, five main points were made by Shehu as follows:

1. That the foundation of the religion of Islam is the application of the Sharia law;
2. That it is incumbent upon Muslims to follow an Imam, or a Caliph;
3. That the Hijrah [Immigration] from the land of unbelief to the land of Islam is obligatory;
4. That those who support the unbelievers should be regarded as themselves unbelievers;
5. That the jihad against the unbelievers as well as the apostates is obligatory (Maishanu and Maishanu 1999).

In 1804, he composed the document of the people of Sudan, *Wathiqat Ahl al-Sudan*, stating the prohibition of loyalty to the infidels and the necessity of loyalty to the believers of the *Ummah*. Sheikh Usman says in the document (Kanmi 1987, p. 83):

“My brothers, know that enjoining virtue is a duty unanimously, and that forbidding what is wrong is a duty unanimously; that emigration from the countries of the infidels is a duty unanimously; that loyalty to the believers is required by consensus; recognizing the power of *Amir Al-Mu’minin* [the Ruler of the Believers] is a duty unanimously; obedience to him and all his deputies is an obligation unanimously; jihad is a duty unanimously; appointing rulers over cities and towns is a duty unanimously; appointing judges is a duty unanimously; the judges’ application of the rulings of Sharia is a duty unanimously; and that a country is judged by its ruler: if he is a Muslim, then the country is a country of Islam, and if it is an infidel, then the country is a country of unbelief, and emigration from it is obligatory.”

In 1806, he wrote the most important work of this period, which can be considered the constitution of his state, “*Bayan Wujub Al-Hijrah ala Al-’Ibad wa Bayan Wujub Nasb Al-Imam wa Iqamat Al-Jihad*” [A Statement on the Necessity of Emigration for Worshipers and a Statement on the Necessity to Appoint a Ruler Establish Jihad], through which the mechanisms and concepts of political power according to Usman Dan Fodio could be found.

After most of the country came under his control, Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio divided the provinces between his son Muhammad Bello and his brother Abdullah. During that period, he turned to writing on matters of administration, governance, and the administration of justice, when he composed, in 1809,

“Usul Al-Adl li Wulat Al-Amr wa Ahl Al-Fadl” [Principles of Justice for the Rulers and the People of Virtue]. In 1811 he wrote *“Tabih Al-Ikhwan al Ahwal Ard Al-Sudan”* [Informing the Brethren about the Conditions of the Land of Sudan]. The literature attributed to Sheikh Usman can reach about 131 titles; those attributed to his brother Abdullah comprise 58 titles; those attributed to his son Muhammad Bello and his daughter Asmaa comprise six titles, varying between poetry and prose. There is no doubt that this scientific heritage of the Dan Fodio family represents one of the features of the flourishing of Arab-Islamic culture in western Sudan during the nineteenth century.

It can be said that the Sokoto caliphate presents the ideal that Dan Fodio believed in. In *“Wathiqat Ahl al-Sudan,”* which some considered the manifesto of Islamic jihad in the Hausa country, Sheikh Usman explained the importance of jihad for the establishment of the Islamic state (Bivar 1961). The document refers to three principles that are binding on the Muslim community: enjoining good, forbidding evil, and emigration (fighting) from the land of unbelief, and accordingly the Muslim group had to fight in order to get rid of corruption and injustice and to establish the rules of truth and justice in society. The Sokoto Caliphate had lasted about a hundred years before it was destroyed by Britain in 1903.

In any case, we can identify the most important features of Dan Fodio’s reform project as follows:

- *Discarding Taqlid⁷ and Urging Ijtihad*

Sheikh Usman urged against Taqlid and called for the necessity of Ijtihad and keeping pace with the developments of the times. He says in his book, entitled *“Hisn Al-Afham min Juyush Al-Awham”* [Fortifying Minds from the Armies of Illusions]:

“To give an example of these illusions, someone, who is blinded by envy, would say: ‘The right thing to do is to refrain from the contemporary literature, because the works of the late outstanding scholars are more than enough. They are more knowledgeable than today’s authors.’ This is also false and illusion, according to the consensus of scholars. In fact, every scholar takes into account in his authorship the people of his time and their current issues; he is the reference on this. That is why the authorship of every scholar in his time is more beneficial to the people of that time than the authorship of others.

Among those wrong beliefs is that some of them exclude that Allah may endow insight to latter scholars, unless Allah has already endowed insight to one of their earlier Sheikhs in the field of knowledge. Again, this is false and illusion, according to the consensus of scholars. This is Allah’s choice; the grace of Allah, the Almighty, has never been restricted to specific to times or places; He, the Almighty, is capable of everything. How would someone rule this out? The Almighty said: ‘Say, “Indeed, [all] bounty is in the hand of Allah—He grants it to whom He wills”’ (Al-Imran: 73). He, the Almighty, also said: ‘But Allah selects for His mercy whom He wills, and Allah is the possessor of great bounty’ (Al-Baqarah: 105). Another wrong belief is represented in the thinking that whatever is found in the books of Tafsir [Qur’an interpretation] is true; because it is the interpretation of Allah’s words. Once again, this is false and illusion, according to the consensus of scholars. This is because some ignorant commentators filled their books with falsehoods and with allegations that are not appropriate for the prophets. Therefore, Al-Qadi ‘Iyad said in *Al-Shifaa’*: “Do not pay any attention to what you find in the books of ignorant commentators and historians.”

- *Authenticity of the Sunnah*

Allah, the Almighty, says in Surah Al-Nisaa’, verse 59: “O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day . . . ” The Sunnah, according to Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio, is binding on the entire Ummah. Conversely, the actions of an individual

⁷ A person’s following of other’s words and actions, believing them to be based upon truth, and without having an insight into their legal evidence

from the Ummah is never binding on the Sunnah. That is because the Sunnah is infallible, as much as the giver of Sunnah (i.e., Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him) is infallible. The entirety of the Ummah did not confirm the scholars' infallibility except in the case of their *Ijma'* [consensus] in particular. If they reach an *Ijma'*, this *Ijma'* will be tantamount to legal evidence (Foudi 1985).

Sheikh Usman criticizes those who prefer to follow their sheikhs over adopting the authentic Sunnah, saying about this: "You may come across someone who knows nothing about the Sunnah; they would only follow their sheikh. If you try to guide them to act in conformity with the Sunnah, they would only stick to the sayings of their Sheikh, even though they are clashing with that clear Sunnah.

- *The Need to Correct Some Islamic Concepts*

Sheikh Usman explains how the concept of *Tawakkul* [trust in Allah] was reduced to mere sluggishness; the concept of "Dawah to Allah" has been adulterated to mean nothing but love of leadership; *Ijtihad* has been mistaken for *Ghuluw* [exceeding proper limits], "pardon" for humiliation, "self-esteem" for arrogance, "love" for malice, "prestige" for haughtiness, "humility" for humiliation, "caution" for ill-thought, tenderheartedness for panic, "patience" for cruelty, candidness for foolishness, and "thankfulness" for pride, etc.

Dan Fodio's reformist movement started as an intellectual movement, and he traveled across Hausaland to mobilize people and teach them basic and sound Islamic beliefs. He focused on social justice issues, criticized rulers for imposing heavy taxes, and called for the abolition of all forms of syncretic practices, which he described as pagan behavior. Dan Fodio even went as far as preaching to the erring rulers. The idea of taking up arms in the name of jihad was clearly not initially part of his program, but he was forced to adopt a physically confrontational approach after the persecution of his followers by the Hausa kings who were alarmed by his growing influence in Hausaland⁸.

From the previous review, it becomes clear that the study of reformist traditions of both Amadu Bamba and Usman Dan Fodio suggests that modern violent jihadist groups provide a modern reinterpretation of the Sufi jihadist discourse in the nineteenth century. It was not surprising that Boko Haram claimed that it was following the lead of Usman Dan Fodio, despite the methodological and theological differences between his reformist movement and the hybrid violence practiced by Boko Haram. Nevertheless, an analysis of the Sufi jihadist discourse shows that Dan Fodio used the concepts of *Hijrah* [migration], *Dāral-Kufr* [territory of Infidelity], *Dār al-Islām* [territory of Islam], and *Al-Walā Wa'l-Barā* [loyalty and disavowal] to legitimize his jihad against the Hausa ruler. It is worth noting that the Salafi Jihadists in modern Nigeria also used the same concepts to declare jihad against the secular state (Kassim and Zenn 2017).

5. Conclusions

Amadu Bamba's discourse largely reflects Usman Dan Fodio's jihad in Nigeria. Bamba established the first African Sufi order independent of any Middle Eastern origins. The study of the cases of Bamba and Dan Fodio reveals the influence of the local context, in terms of language and culture, on the reform efforts that each has adopted. In both cases, religious leaderships played a prominent role in the movement to change society due to the public's belief in their noble goals and the belief that they are always right, which brings them closer to the concept of religious infallibility.

In any event, many Muslims in Africa today will not argue over the binding character of the standard textual tradition—the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet—and they will quote liberally

⁸ In the academic study of Islam in Africa, there is a stream that regards Islam as a politico-religious system trying to recreate the heritage of the Muslim city-state of Medina in the first century Hijrah in Africa. This stream is identified by scholars, with the holy jihad tradition. Robinson (1985), for example, describes the Jihad theme in terms of the military and political career of al-Haj Umar Tal, the most famous of all Tijani figures in the nineteenth century Sub Saharan Africa. This study focuses on the Sufi Jihad of Usman Dan Fodio, which represents this category of scholarship.

from these classic texts what they consider authoritative. This applies not only to those who adhere to the Islamic discourse, but also to many of their critics as well. In doing so, they select their own references and read them in light of the demands, concerns, and aspirations of the local context.

Despite the complexity and diversity of Sufi experiences in West Africa, some Western writings in the context of the War on Terror restore the same traditions of early Western writings on Sufism in Africa in terms of the possibility of allying with contemporary Sufi currents to confront violent Islamic extremism. It is clear that such theses repeat, consciously or unconsciously, the same logic of previous colonial policies that sought to integrate representatives of the Sufi orders into different types of indirect rule. These erroneous mental patterns and images of the essence of Sufi discourse in Africa stand as a stumbling block to an understanding of the actual role that Sufi spirituality has played, and still does, in the religious, economic, and political life of Muslim societies in Africa. This study showed that although the Sufi discourse attempts to maintain a safe distance from matters of politics and governance in order to achieve its message of moral and spiritual purity, it may turn into violent radicalism as embodied by the jihadist Sufi experience in West Africa.

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