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Murid religious recompositions from the South of France to Bahia in Brazil

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Abstract: In this article, I propose some reflections on Murid *dahiras* established by Senegalese migrants in the cities of Marseille, located in the south of France, and Salvador, capital of the state of Bahia, in Brazil. I sought to analyze factors involved in daily practices and associated with the experience of recomposition of followers of the same religious community in different sociocultural contexts, with the aim of understanding the possible singularities developed, as well as analyzing how the celebration of the *Magal Touba* takes place in these two locations, the main event held by the brotherhood, in celebration of the departure of the founder *Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba* to exile, with the aim of understanding the dynamics established by the Murid in each space observed.

Keywords: Murid Brotherhood; Recomposition; Religious Migration; Marseille; Bahia.

Recomposiciones religiosas murides desde el sur de Francia hasta Bahía en Brasil

Resumen: En este artículo propongo algunas reflexiones sobre dáiras murides formadas por migrantes senegaleses en las ciudades de Marsella, al sur de Francia, y Salvador, capital del estado de Bahía en Brasil. El objetivo fue analizar los factores implicados en las prácticas cotidianas y asociados a la experiencia de recomposición de los adeptos de una misma comunidad religiosa en contextos socioculturales distintos, con el fin de comprender las posibles singularidades desarrolladas, así como analizar cómo se desarrolla en estas dos localidades la celebración del *Magal Touba*, principal evento celebrado por la cofradía en conmemoración de la partida al exilio del líder fundador Ahmadou Bamba, con el fin de comprender las dinámicas establecidas por los muridíes en cada espacio observado.

Palabras Clave: Cofradía Muridí; Recomposición; Migración Religiosa; Marsella; Bahía.

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Introductory Notes

The Soufi Murid brotherhood is a new form of Muslim religious organization founded by *Cheikh* Ahmadou Bamba Mbacké in Senegal in 1883.

The Murid doctrine is based on a life practice focused on prayer, modesty, discipline, and solidarity, with work being a fundamental category. The brotherhood has a philosophy of work that, in addition to being a means of subsistence, is an essential part of the religious doctrine, one of the teachings of *Cheikh* Ahmadou Bamba, who directed his followers to a perspective of work as a form of devotion. *Cheikh* Ahmadou Bamba (1853-1927) was a pacifist, exiled by the French colonial administration under the accusation of planning a holy war (*jihad*). Despite the persecution, he maintained his position against violence, spreading his message of faith. In 1888, Ahmadou Bamba, the leader of the Murid brotherhood, founded the city of Touba, considered sacred by the Murids, the headquarters of the brotherhood. Since its foundation, the brotherhood has experienced great growth, an achievement that is due, among other factors, to the reputation and charisma of Ahmadou Bamba, and to the miracles performed, understood as overcoming trials that are directly related to the resistance to colonization and a great expression of faith.

Following the migration of followers, Muridism was taken to other continents. Bava (2005) argues for the importance of understanding the religious dynamics involved in this migratory flow, indicating that the Murids did not adopt a proselytizing process with the aim of expanding to other territories; such expansion initially occurred due to the displacement of Murid merchants, who reconstructed their religious practices in their new places of residence. For Diouf (2015), there is a process of adaptation of Murid migrants to the new contexts in the hosting countries, but, at the same time, there is the maintenance of the connection with the religious practices of the brotherhood through the *dahiras*. Diouf (2015) defines them as associations that unite Murid disciples, places that promote meetings and the organization of celebrations and cultural events, reception of religious guides, among other collective organization activities — an environment of mutual support and religious socialization. The *dahira* makes the congregation possible and acts as a link between the current city of residence and Touba, the headquarters of Muridism.

In the *dahiras*, *dhikr* sessions, recitation of the *Khassaides*, prayers, reading of the Quran, mutual support and solidarity actions, and celebrations are held. According to Bava (2005), immigrants access and share spaces and symbols associated with their religious sphere in new migratory settings, seeking to establish mechanisms to maintain and reconfigure their religious practices in different sociocultural contexts, with adaptation being a required factor in the

new migration settings. We are interested in discussing some of the factors that permeate the experience of religious recomposition between *dahiras* in different contexts, France-Brazil, and the components and circumstances involved in each location where the Murid immigrants are inserted. To discuss this issue, I share reflections arising from observations made in Marseille, a city located in the south of France that has a large Murid community established since the 1960s, and Salvador, capital of the state of Bahia in Brazil, which holds the title of the blackest city outside of Africa, with a diverse sociocultural and religious environment, producer of symbols, identities, cultural and religious heritage of African inspiration. There is a small Murid community in this city that was settled in the mid-2010s. This perspective of analysis is significant because, since religion is one of the components of social reality, it is pertinent to understand its relationship with society (Giumbelli and Tavares, 2015). Still according to Giumbelli and Tavares (2015), religions are constituted and sustained in these relationships, in the fields of the realities in which they transit. According to Tavares *et al.* (2018), it is constituted as a provisional terrain, crossed by ambiguities and reconfigurations. In the case of Muridism, as reflected by Bava (2005, p.119): «Il n'y a pas d'un côté un mouridisme pur, traditionnel et de l'autre un mouridisme «bricolé» de la migration mais plutôt une recette religieuse combinant les ingrédients des sociétés locales traversées, combinaisons qui, en retour, transforment le mouridisme actuel.» Such combinations reconfigure identities, spaces of religious sociability, and the ways in which they access and share symbols related to religion in each context.

The studies developed in Marseille by Bava (2000; 2005; 2003) and Diouf (2015) are references that record the design established by this flow for the region. In this text, I revisit Marseille and go through the Murid expansion to other territories, explaining new designs of the arrival of Muridism to the state of Bahia in Brazil.

Murid migration routes in Marseille and Salvador

In Senegal, the migration process was initially driven by merchants, sailors, and *tirailleurs*. Historically, there have been large flows of international emigration, among other factors, due to the periods of drought that hit the country in the late 1960s and early 1970s, with France being one of the main destinations during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s (Lessault and Flahaux, 2013). According to the *Organisation de coopération et de développement économiques* (OECD, 2022), from the 1970s onwards, there was an increase in the migration of family members of Senegalese immigrants already settled, for the purpose

of family unions. France was a pioneer in receiving West Africans, but, from 1990 onwards, there was an increase in the search for other countries in Europe and the United States; such changes were related to policies restricting the entry and stay of foreigners (Robin, 2009). Regarding the current setting, according to the OECD (2022), France is the member country of the organization that receives the most Senegalese immigrants, with around 160,000 living in the country in 2020.

The immigrants take their religion with them to the place they migrate to — where there are followers, there will be a presence of Muridism in a process of reconstruction and preservation of its connection with Touba and the teachings of its spiritual guide. At the same time, there is mobilization of networks of religious solidarity that nourish networks of economic solidarity (Bava, 2005). The city of Marseille has historically welcomed African migrants, with networks formed by *tirailleurs* and sailors. The Murids who migrated to the city in the 1960s found and inserted themselves into these already existing networks (Bava, 2000). According to Bava (2005), the city was located on a route that connected Senegal to Mecca, so, during this journey, there was the possibility of meetings between *Cheikhs* on the move and the *Taalibés* who were already in the city¹. The aforementioned author presents us with the history of the Touba *dahira* in Marseille. In the 1970s, Murid merchants organized an association in the city to promote mutual aid, which was also a place for prayer. The *dahira* was later created to collect and send financial contributions for the development of the city of Touba, to receive and mediate contact with the *marabouts*, as a place to hold meetings and *dhikr* sessions, and to solve material problems, whose members met in an apartment, with changes of address over time. The author discusses how the *dahira* history was permeated by conflicts, negotiations, and the creation of economic networks, an environment in which Serigne Touba's house in the city still figured as a plan for the ideas of some. It is worth noting that Marseille, as well as other locations, was and is regularly visited by *Cheikhs* and the descendants of Ahmadou Bamba (Mbacké-Mbacké). These visits occur within the scope of the *dahira* and, according to Bava (2003), they have had France as their destination since 1980². They enable and enhance access to the *baraka*³ during migration, moments in

1 «Pour faire des ziyaras, pour verser l'hadiyya, mais également pour leur procurer la marchandise qu'ils désiraient rapporter au Sénégal.» (Bava, 2005, p.107).

2 «À partir de 1991, Cheikh Mourtada a commencé à venir à Marseille, jusqu'en 2003, avant l'année de son rappel à Dieu» (Diouf, 2015, p.147).

3 «La baraka, force surnaturelle qui se transmet dans le lignage d'un homme saint» (Bava, 2003, p.5).

which the *Taalibés*, despite being far from Touba, through the presence of the *Cheikhs*, channel the divine blessing that they carry.

In this revisit in 2024, we can affirm that the *dahira* in Marseille still maintains the same rites described by Bava (2005) to date. Currently, the *dahira* is made up of men and women who have a wide range of professions, as well as students, and different generations of Senegalese and children of these migrants born in France mix together. The administration and organization of the *dahira* is conducted through committees whose members share different responsibilities. The *dahira* holds weekly meetings, in which prayers are said, *Khassaides* are sung, *dhikr* sessions are held, celebrations are organized, *adya* are collected, and information is shared. There is daily coexistence and interaction among members, in addition to developing solidarity actions with the Murid community and external communities.

The religious experience of the Murids in Marseille has had its organizational capacity expanded since the creation of the national federation in 2008 and the acquisition of its own headquarters, the Keur Serigne Touba, which was founded on the recommendation of Serigne Mourtada Mbacké. Senegalese people from several locations in France contributed financially to the acquisition of the space. According to Diouf (2015), these spaces are created based on a philosophy of disseminating the teachings of Muridism and, consequently, the principles of Islam. In this sense, it is not just about the acquisition and use of a physical structure by a group, but also about the spiritual and social role of the space. The Keur Serigne Touba can receive a large number of people, whether in daily life or for celebrations. Among the activities it hosts, there is a space for religious education for children, adolescents, and new converts, open to the participation of Muslims, whether Murids or not, and an environment for learning the Quran and religious doctrine. The members who are appointed as teachers are responsible for sharing the knowledge they have acquired and evaluating the learning progress. The study takes place weekly, hours before the start of the meeting times during the *dahira*.

In addition to the activities already mentioned throughout the text, it is worth highlighting that the *dahira* organizes the various *magals* and other celebrations that are part of the Murid calendar, *Darou Khoudoss*, *Gammou*, *Kazu Rajab*, *Darou Salam*, *Magal Porokhane*, *Magal Touba*, which celebrates the date of *Cheikh* Ahmadou Bamba's departure for exile and is the largest event held, among others. When following some of these celebrations in 2024, it was clear how relevant they are as a way of preserving memories and paying tribute to the people who have or have built great representation for the brotherhood.

The brief historical overview and the reflection notes from the current field on Senegalese migration and the Touba *dahira* in Marseille allow us to glimpse the relationships established by the Murids, among Murids, in addition to the initiatives developed by this community over the years in this city. Thus, we can see that, from the 1970s to 2024, there were maintenance, diversification, expansion, and consolidation. From now on, I will seek to analyze the relationships established in another context, and we will focus on the city of Salvador.

It is well known that the cities of Marseille and Salvador are in extremely different continents and realities, from a historical, political, social, economic, religious, populational, and other points of view. The second largest city in France has historically established itself as a route and destination for Senegalese immigrants. Salvador, the first capital of Brazil, on the other hand, is located in the Northeast region of the country, a region that has historically experienced, among other factors, periods of drought, a lack of development policies, and few investments compared to other regions, culminating in the processes of internal displacement, mainly to the South and Southeast regions, considered suitable for insertion into the job market and which also received the majority of international migrants coming to Brazil.

According to Silva (2006), Bahia has not historically attracted large migratory flows, but it has received groups from what he calls «organized migration», promoted by farmers and/or companies during the First Republic (1889-1930), which provided the displacement of certain nationalities groups such as Portuguese, Germans, and mainly Spanish. Silva (2006) explains that the effort to promote a European migration was associated with initiatives that defended the change in the ethnic-racial profile of the Bahia's population, following a project to whiten the Brazilian society⁴. According to data from the *Atlas Migrações Internacionais no Nordeste* [Atlas of International Migrations in the Northeast] (2019), Bahia was the state in the region that received the most international migrants between 2000 and 2017, a total of 36,204 migrants, of which 20,187 were registered in the city of Salvador. According to the *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* [Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics] (IBGE, 2018), Salvador is among the Brazilian cities considered to be a gateway or transit point for migrants and refugees in the country. The data published in the *Atlas* (2019) presents the nationalities existing in the state,

4 «This effort resulted from the vision disseminated by the ideals of modernity and civility then in force throughout Brazil, which associated (among other aspects) the 'level of civilization' of a society with its ethnic condition. This notion (of civilization) translated into the absence or minimization of the presence of inferior races (black, native, and oriental peoples) or degenerates, i.e., mixed-race people of any type, but, above all, those with negroid characteristics» (Silva, 2006, p. 59).

but does not specify them by city. Regarding migrants from African countries, the document cites Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Nigeria, and «Other African countries», without mentioning which other countries these would be. The document does not explicitly present information regarding the presence of Senegalese.

A considerable flow of Senegalese into the Brazilian territory was only established from 2010 onwards. According to the 2023 report by the *Observatório das Migrações Internacionais* [Observatory of International Migrations], OBMigra⁵, from 2013 onwards, Senegalese people began to be among the main nationalities from the Global South that migrated to Brazil. The document indicates that, during this period, some of these migrants chose to apply for refugee status, with migration being predominantly male (Cavalcanti *et al*, 2023). The analysis of the data published in the report allows us to observe the gender profile maintained over the years. Between 2011 and 2022, 551 Senegalese women were registered in the *Sistema de Registro Nacional Migratório* [National Migration Registration System] (SISMIGRA). During the same period, the federal police registered the entry of 8,980 Senegalese men into Brazil. According to Jung (2019), the inflexibility of migration policies in the countries in the Global North and Brazil's overcoming of the impacts of the economic crisis are some of the factors that influenced Senegalese people's desire to migrate to the country.

The Senegalese migration to Bahia is recent, as it is to other states in Brazil. Salvador became a migration route for some Senegalese people who arrived in the state of Bahia in the mid-2000s, with other arrivals starting in 2010. The founding of *dahiras* in Brazil is a recent process, slightly preceding the growth of this migration. The first *dahira* in the country was founded in 2006, in the city of São Paulo, capital of the state of São Paulo, located in the Southeast region of the country. In Salvador, the *dahira* was founded in 2014, called Mafatihoul Bichiri — a group that once had thirty-five members, has around twenty today, as some participants have recently migrated to other countries, such as the United States, Spain, and Canada. The group is made up of men, merchants who work in fixed locations or as street vendors.

Describing the *dahira* in Salvador is like looking at the history of the founding of the *dahira* in Marseille in the 1970s. Both were founded by merchants who began to meet in the homes of the Murid people, also developing commercial interactions. Salvador still has a small community, which does not yet have its

5 *Relatório Anual OBMigra 2023 - OBMigra 10 anos: Pesquisa, Dados e Contribuições para Políticas*. Available at: <https://portaldeimigracao.mj.gov.br/pt/dados/relatorios-a>

own headquarters. Unlike Marseille, where they follow a calendar celebrating all the *Magals* relevant to the brotherhood in Keur Serigne Touba, in Salvador there is a different dynamic. Only some of the celebrations are held, such as *Gamou*, *Kazul Rajab*, *Magal Porokharne*, and are celebrated among some of the group's members or with their families living in Bahia. Currently, only *Magal Touba* is organized as a large-scale celebration with an external audience.

As previously mentioned, as a reflection of the reterritorialization of the brotherhood, there are visits by *Marabouts* and descendants of Ahmadou Bamba to Murid groups in several countries. These visits are extended to Brazil but are generally concentrated in locations that have numerically significant groups. At these times, some of the members of the *dahira* move to these other locations in search of access to the *baraka*. Thus, there is circulation within Brazilian territory in search of this power passed on to the Mbacké-Mbacké.

Mafatihoul Bichiri is the first *dahira* founded in Bahia, from which we mark the arrival of Muridism in Salvador, a city that holds the title of the blackest outside of Africa, the mecca of blackness in Brazil, «a more recent term that has been promoted mainly by black activists and cultural producers from other states in Brazil who consider Bahia the main source of African culture in the country» (Pinho, 2005, p. 42). Salvador has a particular context regarding the religiosity present in the city. Giumbelli (2008) analyzes that, in Brazil, the Candomblé, an Afro-Brazilian religion of African origin, is part of a «public culture», but that this fact is expressed mainly in Bahia, because, in this state, the Candomblé constitutes the «*baianidade*»⁶ [Bahianness], permeating cultural dimensions beyond a so-called religious field. Reinhardt (2020) corroborates the issue by analyzing that Salvador is a reference regarding the African-based culture, linked to the African-inspired religious production, incorporated into the identity of Bahia, approaching Candomblé as an identity reference for black movement activists, highlighting the capacity of this religion to establish itself in the religious and cultural fields.

The Murid *dahira* within this context does not engage in any type of practice that could be considered syncretic. They remain faithful to their doctrine and have sought to establish dialogue with an institution that, within this context, represents proximity to the group in terms of origin, religion, and ethnic-racial composition, whose history is permeated by the presence of Muslim Africans. Based on an interpretation of this proximity, through a relative from Bahia of one of the members, the group developed a dialogue with the *Socie-*

6 «Expression frequently used to define characteristics of the «*modus vivendi*» of the people of Bahia, more specifically, those born in Salvador and the Recôncavo region of Bahia.»

dade Protetora dos Desvalidos [Society for the Protection of the Disadvantaged] (SPD) in 2018 — since then, the institution has provided several forms of support and welcomed *Magal Touba*. The SPD is a civil association, but it was born as a Catholic brotherhood. According to Braga (1987), the devotion to Catholic saints was not established by an initiative of Africans in Brazil, but by an imposition of the Catholic Church. Braga (1987) analyzes that, due to the structure of the slave regime, the enslaved or free black population obligatorily «became Catholic», as this was the official religion, developing a strategy of religious syncretism⁷. In Salvador/Bahia, in 1832, Manuel Victor Serra, a free African who worked as a laborer, founded the *Irmandade de Nossa Senhora da Soledade Amparo dos Desvalidos* [Brotherhood of Our Lady of Solitude, Help of the Disadvantaged], together with eighteen other free Africans. The purpose of founding the brotherhood was to offer religious support and financial assistance to its members and their families, including the purchase of freedom. Despite being Catholic and adhering to confessional aims, the brotherhood allowed followers of other religions to join and had Muslim members. Oliveira (2005) provides a broad historical approach to the presence of Muslims among the founders of the brotherhood, citing Verger (1987), Monteiro (1987), and Reis (1997) as sources. The author states that:

Manuel Vítor Serra, founder of the SPD, was a Malê and had honors as a priest in the Muslim cult. Likewise, Luís Teixeira Gomes and José do Nascimento, also founders of the brotherhood, had honorary titles within the religion. In fact, when the Society was founded, the Council's settlement was established in wings, following one of the precepts of Islam (Oliveira, 2005, p. 157).

After several changes, the old brotherhood became an association in 1851, named *Sociedade Protetora dos Desvalidos*, earning the title of the first black civil association in Brazil. Nowadays, the Murids of Salvador sought to establish dialogues mediated by the historical connection between the institution and Muslim Africans. The Murids crystallized this part of history, and the relationship between both of them is understood as an encounter between past and present. The brotherhood, today's protective society, was founded by Muslim Africans in 1832 and receives Muslim African migrants today.

7 «Faced with the Christian religiosity of the colonizers, based on a Catholicism rooted in the Inquisition and a repudiation of any other religious manifestations, the Africans, in their eagerness to survive, resorted, consciously or unconsciously, to a refined stratagem to circumvent the vigilance of their masters and be able to profess their original cults: religious syncretism» (Romão, 2018, p. 359).

After the migration of the Murid people, religion was taken to Marseille and Salvador, and, in these contexts, it was transformed. It can be summarized that the Touba *dahira* in Marseille and the Mafatihou Bichiri *dahira* in Salvador have the same purpose, follow the same doctrine, but reconstruct their sociability in a unique way. In terms pertinent to Rabelo's analysis (2015), sociability permeates the forms and environments through which individuals establish interactions and develop experiences and relationships with religion. In this sense, the *dahira* constitutes the main space of religious sociability in the migration of the Murid people, through which migrants maintain and establish their daily religious experiences. It is the space that shapes and configures relationships with religion based on transnationalism.

Magal Touba in Marseille and Salvador

Every year on *Safar* 18th, the second month of the Islamic calendar, the Murids celebrate *Magal Touba*, the date of *Cheikh* Ahmadou Bamba's departure for exile in Gabon, which began in 1895, as a result of the persecution of the spiritual guide by French colonists. On *Magal*, there is a large pilgrimage of believers who live in other cities or countries to the city of Touba. As mentioned by Bave and Gueye (2001, p. 416), «plus qu'une com mémoration, il s'agit d'un acte global de captation de la puissance sacrée de la confrérie mouride (la baraka) à travers les visites à ses saints, à ses morts et à ses lieux sacrés». It is also celebrated in several places around the world where there is a presence of Murid migrants. It is a day marked by recitations of the Quran, religious songs, prayers, and the sharing of meals, among other activities.

Le moment le plus important de l'année. «Il est le lieu, l'espace, le moment où l'émotion religieuse atteint son paroxysme et révèle à travers des pratiques culturelles, sociales et spatiales spécifiques les recompositions en jeu au sein de ce mouvement religieux, comme il est aussi un moment de rassemblement, de consolidation des liens, de Ziyara, de réjouissance» (Diouf, 2015, p. 177).

The celebration was chosen as the focus of analysis based on the notes made by Bava and Gueye (2001), which indicate that analyzing celebrations such as the *Magal Touba* allows us to understand how the Murid followers reorganize their religious practices in both material and symbolic aspects. Based on observations made at *Magal Touba* 2023 in Salvador and *Magal Touba* 2024 in Marseille, we sought to analyze the contemporary dynamics associated with the context that permeate this festivity in both locations, making it possible to

understand how sociocultural differences and the Senegalese migration process in each city permeate the Murid celebration.

The *Magal Touba* began to be organized by the *Daïra Touba* in Marseille in advance, preparing for a large celebration, proportional to the size of the Senegalese community established in the city. It is worth noting that some of the members of the *dahira* traveled in advance to spend the *Magal* in Touba, something common given the importance and significance of being in the holy city on this date. Despite this displacement of the faithful, part of the community remains in Marseille for various reasons. Every year, a large number of people are expected to attend the Keur Serigne Touba, requiring an organization that includes everything from raising the financial resources to cover the costs to the activities related to the day of the celebration. Organizational meetings became more frequent in the month leading up to *Magal Touba*, and various committees were formed to share specific responsibilities related to the event. All the details are discussed as the date of *Magal* approaches, with frequent sharing of messages and guidelines about the celebration and the importance and the need for contributions to hold the event. The *Magal Touba* is a day of abundance and sharing of meals. The *Le Bérndé*, a meal distribution based on the principles of Murid solidarity, is planned in advance through meetings held between the women in charge of preparing what will be served throughout the event. The menu and details are discussed and agreed upon, and some preparations are made a few days before the party, due to the diversity of dishes and the large quantities to be prepared.

The celebration was held at Keur Serigne Touba, a building run by the Murid people. In addition to the items and images of *Cheikhs* that already make up the decoration, other elements were included in the ornamentation, such as fabrics, images, and banners about the history of the *Magal Touba* and the founder of the brotherhood. Due to the number of people, the upper part of the building was reserved for men and the ground floor for women. The televisions installed there allowed them to watch what was happening on the upper floor. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner, reading of the Quran, recitation of *Khasads*, *Zikroulah*, lectures, and prayers were held throughout the day according to the established schedule. Speeches were in Wolof, sometimes in French, languages shared by the audience present, while the material written on banners with the history of Ahmadou Bamba and the *Magal* was presented in several languages, including Portuguese, to accommodate potential guests/visitors, allowing them to access the religious message of *Cheikh* Ahmadou Bamba.

In the Marseille's context, the *Magal Touba* is a festival organized by Senegalese Murids and celebrated among Senegalese people. The audience present

was homogeneous, mostly Senegalese people and their families. In addition to those who regularly attend the *dahira*, there are also Murids and followers of other brotherhoods who live in the city or nearby cities and who travel to Marseille to participate in the festivities on this day. Those present generally speak the same language, share the same religion, follow the same dress code and behavior, and share cultural aspects, among others.

The celebration of the *Magal Touba* in Brazil has been a prominent feature in recent studies related to the experiences of Murid migrants in the country. Rossa (2018) addresses the event in Caxias do Sul; as does Gonçalves (2020), who studies Senegalese migration in the same city, and Santos (2021), who analyzes the context from Maceió. The authors discuss the history and centrality of the event, the participation of the Murid in the preparation, and analyze the experience of the *Magal* in each location. The event involves similar rites, with a focus on the dynamics of each context.

Before we go into the reflections on this celebration in Salvador, it is worth briefly reviewing the history of the *Magal Touba* in this city. Although the *dahira* was founded in 2014, we can consider that the *Magal Touba* arrived in these lands a little earlier, as some Senegalese people began to live in the city in the mid-2000s and celebrated the date individually in their homes, with their families established in Bahia. Even in the absence of a *dahira*, the date was remembered and shared with family members or people with whom they had close ties. In 2014, after the founding of the *dahira*, the *Magal Touba* began to be organized in groups and initially celebrated in the homes of Senegalese people, in neighborhoods in the railway suburbs or in neighborhoods in the historic center, but with a limited number of people, such as family members and some guests, with moments of distribution of meals on the streets of the historic center of Salvador.

Starting in 2018, after the *dahira* established contact and connection with the *Sociedade Protetora dos Desvalidos*, the *Magal* began to be celebrated at the SPD headquarters, a two-story house that has housed the institution's headquarters since 1887, located in Pelourinho, the historic center of Salvador, one of the city's main tourist attractions. It is important to note that Salvador has an extensive calendar of popular and religious festivals.⁸ In addition to being a tourist destination and a place of cultural effervescence, Bahians⁹ consider Pelourinho a place for religious practices, whether due to the concentration

8 Feast of Bom Jesus dos Navegantes; Washing of Bonfim; Feast for Saint Barbara; Feast of Saint Lazarus; Feast of Iemanjá; Washing of Itapuã; Feast for Saint Roque and Omolu, etc.

9 Term referring to someone born in Bahia.

of Catholic churches (Church of Our Lady of the Rosary of the Blacks, Church and Convent of Saint Francis, Cathedral Basilica of Salvador, etc.) or the religious festivals that take place in the streets of Pelourinho, such as the festival of Saint Barbara (Iansã) and the surrounding areas, such as the shopping district and the lower city, with the festivals of Our Lady of the Conception of the Beach (Oxum) and the procession of the washing of the Lord of Bonfim (Oxalá). This is the configuration of the neighborhood where the Senegalese people have held the *Magal Touba*.

Some of the Murid members of the *dahira* choose the month of *Safar* to visit their home country and spend the *Magal* in Touba. Those who stay in Salvador organize the festival in advance. They say that when one *Magal Touba* ends, they start organizing the next one. They establish the amounts to be raised among the group and define the responsibilities so that the necessary activities are carried out by the members. Everyone is very involved in organizing the festival. It is the event in which the community is most involved, with a small group that shares the execution of several pertinent activities such as purchasing supplies, preparing meals, decorating the space, serving the people present, preparing to welcome the guests and, at the same time, experiencing the day with the *Zikroulah*, prayers, among others.

The celebration was held at the SPD headquarters, as in previous years. It is important to note that the building is a historic site that belongs to a non-religious civil association, but that preserves the symbols of the presence of religions in its history. The building retains all references to the religions that, whether syncretic or not, constituted the SPD. There are images of Catholic saints, representations of several Candomblé orishas, paintings of orishas, a painting with reference to Islam, with one of the parts of the building named the Muslim path, in addition to other elements that make up the institution's heritage. During the preparation of the *Magal Touba*, the Murid people of Salvador reconfigured this space, adding to the environment the religious symbols they brought from Senegal, images of Ahmadou Bamba and *Cheikh Ibrahim Fall*, fabrics to decorate the space, *Khassades*, the Quran, and the flags of Brazil and Senegal. Faced with the absence of a Keur Serigne Touba, the Senegalese people sought a space that did not constitute their own headquarters, but, due to its founding history, it was legitimized as a space of and for Muslims of African origin, thus attributing a particular meaning to this place.

In Salvador, the *Magal* is celebrated with a predominantly Bahian audience, who are invited in advance or during the day to participate in the festivities. Unlike in Marseille, in Salvador, the *Magal Touba* is organized by the Murids and celebrated among Bahians. The invited audience consists of family mem-

bers, friends, and clients of the Senegalese people, directors and associates of the SPD, academics, local businesspeople, activists from the black movement, representatives of public institutions, politicians, people who are in the area either for tourism or work and who, upon hearing about the celebration, enter the building to learn about it, eat the food served, among others. This diverse audience participates in the event, but they are not Muslims, and do not share the same codes regarding religion, dress, culture, language, among others. The event is dominated by Brazilian Portuguese with a *Soteropolitano*¹⁰ accent, as it is the native language of the majority; Wolof is heard backstage. It is an interesting mix to observe; each Murid maintains a code of conduct associated with religious teachings, but such codes are not expected from the audience. There is no intervention with the audience regarding appropriate clothing or women covering their hair, for example. Guests receive individual portions, while the Murids eat together around a deep bowl, a fact pointed out by some attendees as similar to a «*caruru de sete meninos*»¹¹. The members of the *dahira* report being aware that they live among a diverse community, which follows different practices and philosophies of life. As pointed out by Bava (2005), «*la distance est alors source d'invention religieuse, car de l'interaction naissent des négociations culturelles et des ajustements nécessaires avec la société d'accueil*» (Bava, 2005, p. 167). The focus is on interaction to achieve the goals of the event, to promote reflection, sharing, remembering *Cheikh* Ahmadou Bamba, sharing the story of the spiritual guide with those present, ensuring that people feel truly welcomed, regardless of the borders that exist between Senegalese Murids and Bahians.

Just as in Marseille, there is a program that involves sharing meals such as breakfast and lunch, there is no *Kourel*, but there is the *Zikroulah*, a lecture on the *Magal Toubá* and the story of Ahmadou Bamba. In addition to remembering the deeds and teachings of Ahmadou Bamba, the members of the *dahira* and the SPD evoke the history of the institution, the Muslims of African origin who founded it, compare the forms of organization and resistance, and reinforce, in their speeches, the idea of ancestral ties between the organizations. A reconnection between Africa and Bahia, and, based on this fact, they argue that the headquarters of the institution is also the home of the Senegalese Murids in Salvador, attributing legitimacy to the space. In this sense, as analyzed

10 Characteristic accent in the speech of people born in Salvador.

11 A tribute held on September 26th to the Catholic twin saints Cosmas and Damian and to the Ibejis in Candomblé. Caruru, a dish made from okra, is served to seven boys who eat together with their hands from a bowl; the adults are served after the children.

by Pierre-Yves Trouillet and Maud Lasseur (2016), the places where religious worship takes place are central to the processes of spatial and religious territorialization developed from migratory dynamics. The SPD headquarters is momentarily converted into a religious territory, not simply because it is the space where the celebration takes place, but because of the way in which this space is read and transformed.

By analyzing the nuances of the *Magal Touba* in each location, we can see that the experience of this day consists of a space that promotes the preservation of the memory of *Cheikh* Ahmadou Bamba and his deeds, the circulation of the religious message through mediations mobilized through the event, and the sharing of information about Muridism. In Marseille, the city is consolidating as a destination for Senegalese migration; it is a place where there is a significant Muslim community, Murids, and followers of other brotherhoods. Religious socialization and spaces of sociability, such as the *dahira* Touba in Marseille, are reconfigured in this context, based on a community that shares the same beliefs. Salvador, on the other hand, has a different dynamic for receiving migrants, with a small flow compared to other locations. We can see that they organize an expanded celebration, promoting moments of interaction and fraternization with the people of the receiving location, but, at the same time, they seek to hold it in a space where there is a meaning attributed to its occupation.

Final Considerations

The analysis of the forms and factors that permeate the religious recompositions of the *dahiras* of Marseille, in France, and Salvador, in Brazil, indicates that the dynamics related to Senegalese migration in each city have significant implications for the experiences of the migrants who live in these locations. In Marseille, an older migration, dating back to the 1970s, the Murid community present there has consolidated itself in a robust way, establishing an environment of religious sociability among the migrants through the *dahira*. In contrast, in Salvador, a recent migration, which began in the 2000s, consists of a small number of migrants, in a receiving city that does not yet have a large Muslim community and that has factors related to other religions that make up the local culture. In this context, the Murid people sought adaptations to mediate interactions with the local inhabitants and develop relationships with an institution that marks the historical presence of Muslim Africans in the city and refers to their religiosity. In this way, the religious experiences of Murid migrants are permeated by the ability to configure their dynamics to the scenario found in each location.

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