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“Path(s) of Remembrance: Memory, Pilgrimage, and
Transmission in a Transatlantic Sufi Community”

By

Jaison Carter

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

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of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Mariane Ferme, Chair

Professor Charles Hirschkind

Professor Stefania Pandolfo

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Abstract

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The Mustafawiyya Tariqa is a regional spiritual network that exists for the purpose of assisting Muslim practitioners in heightening their level of devotion and knowledges through Sufism. Though it was founded in 1966 in Senegal, it has since expanded to other locations in West and North Africa, Europe, and North America. In 1994, protégé of the Tariqa’s founder and its most charismatic figure, Shaykh Arona Rashid Faye al-Faqir, relocated from West Africa to the United States to found a satellite community in Moncks Corner, South Carolina. This location, named Masjidul Muhajjirun wal Ansar, serves as a refuge for traveling learners and place of worship in which a community of mostly African-descended Muslims engage in a tradition of remembrance through which techniques of spiritual care and healing are activated. This dissertation analyzes the physical and spiritual trajectories of African-descended Muslims through an ethnographic study of their healing practices, migrations, and exchanges in South Carolina and in Senegal. By attending to manner in which the Mustafawiyya engage in various kinds of embodied religious devotions, forms of indebtedness, and networks within which diasporic solidarities emerge, this project explores the dispensations and transmissions of knowledge to Sufi practitioners across the Atlantic that play a part in shared notions of Black Muslimness.

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Introduction

*Hearken to the reed-flute, how it complains
Lamenting its banishment from its home;
“Ever since they tore me from my osier bed,
My plaintive notes have moved men and women to tears.
I burst my breast, striving to give vent to sighs,
And to express the pangs of my yearning for my home.
He who abides far away from home
Is ever longing for the day [he] shall return.
My wailing is heard in every throng,
In concert with them that rejoice and them that weep.
Each interprets my notes in harmony with his own feelings,
But not one fathoms the secrets of my heart.
My secrets are not alien from my plaintive notes,
Yet they are not manifest to the sensual eye and ear.
Body is not veiled from soul, neither soul from body,
Yet no man hath ever seen a soul.”¹*

The opening lines of Rumi’s *Masnavi* tell us of the yearning for home that occurs as an instrument, designed for melodious song, actually emits somber notes due to the memory of its being snatched away from its point of origin and unwillingly fashioned into a thing whose mere purpose is for the enjoyment of another. Here, we are reminded of the manner in which longing and performance collide in the breast of a displaced thing, and of the way that certain utterances can be misheard by the ears of the listener. All the while, the instrument itself intends something else entirely. Such an ironic tale, as imagined and recounted by one of the world’s most famous poetic voices, is quite similar to the story of rupture and subsequent reconnection as seen amongst Muslims of African descent in the American South and in West Africa who are connected by a singular Sufi tradition.

¹ Rumi, Jalaluddin. “Masnavi Manavi.”

The *Mustafawiyya Tariqa* is a transnational Sufi Order that was initiated in 1966 by the late Cheikh Mustafa Gueye Haydara (d. 1989) in Thiès, Senegal.² Yet, only since 1994 has this specific Sufi network reached westward across the water, bringing American Muslims - many of whom are converts - into the larger network. Currently, the *Mustafawiyya Tariqa* maintains small and moderately-sized collections of students (ranging from 20-150) in a number of spaces that include major American cities such as Philadelphia, Washington, D.C, and Atlanta, as well as members in Senegal, Gambia, Morocco, Mauritania, and in Spain. In the United States, the majority of students who have entered the *Tariqa* and have declared allegiance (*bayah*) to Shaykh Arona Rashid Faye Al-Faqir³ are African-Americans—Shaykh refers to himself, them, and all members of the *Mustafawiyya* as ‘*fuqara*’—who have inserted themselves religiously, culturally, and pedagogically into a West African Sufi tradition which emphasizes religious study

² A bound pamphlet entitled “Zawiya of Moncks Corner” provides a brief biographical account of the *Tariqa*’s founder. Its fourth and fifth page contain a letter composed by Shaykh Arona Faye on May 10, 2000: “Sheikh Moustapha Gueye Haidar^(RA) 1926-1989 is the elder son of the scholar, sheikh and wali of ALLAH, Sheikh Saib, well known as Serigne Samba Gueye^(RA) of Theis, Senegal (West Africa). Sheikh Samba was sheikh of the Tidiani *Tariqa*. However, Sheikh Moustapha received directly from the Messenger of ALLAH^(SWT) in 1966 a *wird* which gave birth to the young *Tariqa* called “*Mustafawiyyu*” [...] The Sheikh wrote more than 100 poems in Arabic. Apparently, his greatest work is *Bahrul Muhit*, a poem of praises of the Messenger^(SAW). He was a friend of ALLAH. He was a descendant of the Prophet^(SAW). His genealogy is available for those who denied any goodness of others. He showed many “*karamats*” (miracles): changing paper to money; serving milk to those around him from an empty glass; growing a date tree now with the seed being his blessed saliva; and telling one what will happen—announcing the death of someone by telling us he saw the soul of so and so leaving this life. All of this by ALLAH’s permission. The life of the Sheikh was amazing; it will be seen as legend. Sheikh Moustapha was the only sheikh in the last quarter of the 20th century without even a car. Humble, modest, and pure, he lived a life similar to the lives of the [Companions] of Rasulullah^(RA). Often I think, that there was never a sheikh like him [...] O Murid, this is a little account of the life of the Sheikhs of the Sheikhs. Sheikhs Moustapha’s life was full of miracles and wonders. Lucky I was to have sat with him, watched him, and listened to him. I gained unlimited knowledge in a very short time period.”

³ “Al-Faqir” is an Arabic word that connotes extreme poverty and dependency on the part of the human being, particularly in contrast to the vastness of provision and wealth that God possesses which He mercifully bestows upon the human being. Conceptually, it is sourced from the Qur’an and is used by Shaykh Arona Faye to express an utter and complete dependence on God. For example, the Qur’an states “...If they are poor, God will provide for them from His bounty: God’s bounty is infinite and He is all knowing” (24:32). Shaykh Faye has taken this as a name to recognize his own dependency, and similarly has named his students/ followers as “the *Fuqara*” (plural of ‘*Faqir*’) to signify their dependence upon God.

and the practice of *dhikr* (remembrance of God).⁴ As in other Sufi traditions, Shaykh Faye has named his community the ‘fuqara’ (a plural form of the Arabic word ‘*faqir*’) which is a term that connotes extreme poverty and dependency on the part of the human being, particularly in contrast to the vastness of provision and wealth that Allah bestows upon the human being.⁵ Shaykh Arona Faye, whose name has been alternatively spelled as “Sheikh Harun” in other writings, is a Senegalese religious leader who relocated to the southeastern region of the United States from West Africa to spread the religion of Islam and expose American Muslims to the rich tradition of spiritual purification and righteousness. At the same time, many of those who are African-American members of this tradition have made it a point to either travel to Senegal themselves to strengthen transatlantic ties with West African compatriots and visit sacred burial sites in the small city of Thiès, or have sent their children to study Qur’an for a number of months or years at the now-defunct Fuqara International Islamic Academy in Dakar, Senegal.⁶

⁴ Page 56 of the pamphlet entitled “Zawiya of Moncks Corner” shares a truncated genealogy and quasi-mission statement of Shaykh Arona Faye. It also defines an understanding and logic of the Tariqa: “The Sheikh Arona Faye is the founder of the Mustafawiyu Branch, called Rashidun in the USA, spiritual leader of the Muslim Community of Moncks Corner, Imam of Masjid Muhajjirun wal Ansars as Sufiyya, and President of the Serigne Samba Gueye Foundation. He is the first grandson of Sheikh Said, well known as Serigne Samba Gueye of Thies, Senegal. He is the first nephew of Sheikh Moustapha, and the first born of the pious and noble Qur’anic teacher, Hadrat Khadija Gueye Haidar^(RA) who is the first born of Sheikh Samba and the older sister of Sheikh Moustapha. He offers this fact, if his mother were a man, she would have been Sheikh Moustapha. This is why she has played a great and non-negligible role in the itinerary of the Sheikh as sister and adviser [...] My mission in America is to propagate Islam by using the method of the noble Sufis around the world. However, I can not talk about myself without mentioning my beloved wife, Aisha Faye. She is a great support and has truly contributed a lot to the success of my mission, by ALLAH’s grace [...] Indeed, Tariqa is only Islam taught by the elite. Tariqa transforms a lion into a sheep. Tariqa transforms a criminal into the best peacemaker. Tariqa softens the heart, purifies the thoughts, and makes visible Siratal Mustaqim. Moreover, it is only teaching from Qur’an and Sunna represented pure to those who are thirsty for purity. To those who want to be the Ahlul Sufa of our time: Islam’s goal is to keep man in his nature. Only Sufism can do this with the method and ways of what is called Tariqa. Sufism is the school of the elite in Islam. Sufism has the best teachers and attracts the purest of mankind thirsty for knowledge and taqwa. The Sufi are those who go the extra mile to seek the pleasure of their LORD [...] O Companions of Sheikh Harun, hold onto the Bihars. It vanquished poverty. It gives willayat (leadership). It shows you righteous dreams. It will help you attain your goals. It will bring you closer to your LORD, then you will, insha ALLAH, see the Messenger of ALLAH^(SAW) in your dreams [...]”

⁵ Conceptually, the name ‘fuqara’ is sourced from the Qur’an and is used by Shaykh Arona Faye to express an utter and complete dependence on God. For example, the Qur’an states “...*If they are poor, God will provide for them from His bounty: God’s bounty is infinite and He is all knowing*” (Qur’an 24:32). Shaykh Faye has taken this as a name to recognize his own dependency in relation to God, and has named his students/ followers in a similar fashion to signify their respective dependence.

⁶ It is perhaps well-known that African-American Muslims have been traveling to Senegal to study the Qur’an at the African-American Islamic Institute in Medina Baye since its inception in 1988. A thorough examination of this institution, founded by Shaykh Hassan Cisse (d. 2008) of the Tariqa Tijaniyya, has yet to be brought to publication.

In spite of the many spaces where Mustafawiyya inhabit, two primary locations inform the research direction of this dissertation - Thiès, Senegal and Moncks Corner, South Carolina - which act as centers of pilgrimage for Mustafawiyya members. The North American center of the Tariqa is located in Moncks Corner, South Carolina, which is a small southern town that has a population of less than 9000 residents and is about 7.5 square miles in size. All religious holidays, celebrations, and significant events amongst the Mustafawiyya in America occur in Moncks Corner and most American members travel there from throughout the eastern US at least once a year. Meanwhile, Thiès is the third largest city in Senegal, lies about 70 kilometers east of Dakar, and has a population of less than 400,000 residents. This city, considered a gateway and transport hub to Dakar and other neighboring cities, is the point of origin and West African center of the Mustafawiyya network. This is also where Shaykh Arona Faye and other prominent leaders in the Tariqa were born. Additionally, the founding leader (Cheikh Mustafa), Faye's mother, and beloved grandfather are all buried there. While Moncks Corner acts as the primary location in which this research was situated, Thiès was the secondary location where research took place.

Dissertation Purpose

At its core, this dissertation is concerned with several questions that fold into each other. Nonetheless, the central foci within have been parsed apart in order to better understand, for example, how mobility impacts religious identities, how diasporas emerge from those mobilities and the expansion of religious networks, how local and regional histories impact memory, how prayer economy operates in the context of a transatlantic religious network, and finally how West African Islamic pedagogies are embodied by African and American Muslims in the American South and beyond. The overarching idea from which these questions are framed are from within the context of 'reversion.' Unlike 'conversion,' which describes a fundamental transitioning from one religious tradition to another or the adoption of beliefs and attitudes that informs devotional practices, 'reversion' connotes the regaining of a religious heritage that was previously forgotten or lost by the religious practitioner or by ancestors. 'Reversion,' therefore, includes the rediscovery of a prior religious worldview or the reclaiming of a tradition imagined to be somehow lost by the adherent. Harold Morales, who has studied reversion in the context of Latino Muslims in the United States, finds that articulations of conversion amongst Latino Muslims as 'return' to be an example of a 'mediated aesthetics' whereby conversion narratives express ideations of self and imagined community more than they map actual instances of regaining lost religious traditions (Morales 2012). Whereas Latino Muslims might situate narratives of return in Islamic Spain, African American Muslims situate their own reversion narratives in West Africa. The scope of my study is not so much to analyze reversion narratives as they occur in the Mustafawiyya network per se, but rather to view the notion of reversion as a lens through which African-American Muslims who are incorporated into the Mustafawiyya network view themselves and their practices. At the same time, such a focus would center perhaps too heavily upon African American Muslims thus overshadowing the role and impact of West African Muslim compatriots in the cultivation of shared religious identities. Studies that have analyzed West African Muslim networks and organizations in the United States have discussed their interactions with African Americans as both fraternal and oppositional (Kane 2011; Abdullah 2010 and 2009; Babou 2002), and this study converses with that scholarship.

A few writings have discussed the Mustafawiyya and Shaykh Arona Faye, but they have been mainly anecdotal in terms of describing personal spiritual experience regarding time spent with the Shaykh.⁷ Shaykha Maryam Kabeer Faye (2009), long-time companion and devoted student of Shaykh Arona Faye, penned a memoir of her personal spiritual journey from Judaism to Sufism that culminated in her sustained exposure to the path of the Mustafawiyya. The *Journey Through Ten Thousand Veils* tracks her own spiritual journey in order to share with others a story of inspiration and discovery. Shaykha Kamila Toby, matriarch of the Mustafawiyya *zawiyah*⁸ in Cordoba, Spain, posted a blog entry in 2014 that discussed her own experience with traveling from Spain to Gambia and Dakar, Senegal in order to visit Shaykh Arona Faye and view a small mosque in Gambia that was built in honor of her late husband, Shaykh Mansur (Escudero) Abdessalam.⁹ Its value, aside from descriptions of her trips to Goreé Island and the holy city of Touba, is in painting an intimate picture of her journey to Thiès to participate in the annual Cheikh Mustafa Day, a celebration of Mustafawiyya Tariqa's founder that includes hours-long singing in remembrance of God, Qur'anic recitation, and lengthy sermons to remind the audience of the importance of righteousness.

Additionally, there has been a journalistic exposé that showcased the Moncks Corner Muslim community in Charleston's *The Post and Courier* newspaper in 2010.¹⁰ Due to the genre of writing, however, it does not rely upon sustained presence to understand the depth and dynamism of the historical and international relationships that exist within and around the Moncks Corner mosque. Nor does it make mention of the complexities of American Muslimness in which race, history, politics, and geography all play a part. The focus of the brief article seemingly centers upon the presence of Sufism in the region as a means to implicitly delineate between Islamists and Sufis. The *Books of Signs Foundation*, a digital space devoted to informing the public about Islam, posted an article in 2011 that showcased Umm Zubaidah Gibbs' experience as a member of Masjidul Muhajjirun wal Ansars.¹¹ It centered its attention on her spiritual journey as an African-American woman who had dealt with race in the past and had found comfort and camaraderie in her community. Although brief, this account of Gibbs' path thus far is the only locatable record of the multiple tensions and solidarities that have emerged in the context of a transatlantic Sufi community. Of course, there are two websites that have been constructed on behalf of the Tariqa itself.¹² Yet, their purpose is to propagate Islam and share a

⁷ There is, however, a passing reference to Shaykh Faye in Marcia Hermansen's contribution to Oxford's *Handbook on American Islam*. See "Islamic Sufi Movements in America: Adaptation and Authenticity." *The Oxford Handbook of American Islam* (2014): 128.

⁸ While the word "*zawiyah*" in Arabic means literally 'corner' or 'nook,' it refers more specifically to a place of retreat and reflection, particularly for those in a Sufi brotherhood. Moreover, there are strong connotations of community and mutual assistance.

⁹ Toby, Kamila. "In Search of Knowledge—Dakar/Gambia." Online Blog Entry. 15 May 2014.

¹⁰ Parker, Adam. "Believers Seek to Turn Faith Into Deeds," *The Post and Courier*. Online. 21 February 2010.

¹¹ "Women finds peace at a southern mosque," Book of Signs Foundation. Online. 13 September 2011.

¹² See "Fuqara International" at <http://www.fuqarainternational.com> and "Tariqa Mustafawiyya: Home of the Fuqara" at <http://www.tariqamustafawiyya.com>

brief record of the Tariqa while providing a survey of some of its members in its various locations.

While there has been multiple works that have sought to uncover the experience and history of African-American Muslims in the United States (McCloud 1995; Dannin 2002; Turner 2003; Rouse & Hoskins 2004; Gomez 2005; Curtis 2006; Karim 2008; Taylor 2017), little to no work has been done to unpack a fuller view of their spiritual experiences, international migrations, and religious solidarities abroad in sustained manner. Furthermore, while Sufi brotherhoods in West African context and in diaspora has been well studied (Cruise O'Brien 1971; Brenner 1984; Launay 1992; Diouf 2000; Stoller 2002; Buggenhagen 2009; Abdullah 2010), little has been formally written in-depth on the manner in which African-American Muslims have increasingly incorporated themselves into Sufi networks.¹³ This study also intervenes in more general terms as well. For too long, Africanists have presumed that Islam was some vital intrusive phenomenon that displaced modes of life and belief that were purportedly 'traditionally African' and thus pushed aside the role of Islam in the everyday lives of the peoples they studied on the continent. As well, Islamic Studies carried the faulty habit of overdetermining Islam as inherently and naturally present in North Africa and the Middle East, while also de-emphasizing West Africa Muslims (and West Africa more broadly) as vitally connected to an 'authentic Islam.' Both currents are fortunately changing direction on this vital misperception. However, this project seeks to push the envelop forward in this regard.

Defining Diaspora

Originally, diaspora was a concept used to understand the unique dispersions of Greek, Jewish, and Armenian people; and has since become vital for understanding the numerous ways in which groups of people that imagine a shared heritage are displaced and then attempt to maintain multiple solidarities in spite of relation to any particular nation-state. Insofar as people were dispersed, residing in one nation while 'belonging' to another, they were understood as being diasporic. Subsequently, diaspora risked taking on (or in) the figure of the immigrant, exile, refugee, former citizens, and other designations for either individuals or collectives whose identity and sense of belonging were 'elsewhere.' Scholars of diaspora studies that dealt with this question found that the terminology must account for the dispersive practices of people, but also for the symbolic meaning of ideological, political, and economic solidarities of their collective imaginaries. Diasporas could not, as some argued, become some conceptual catch-all that was inclusive of all types of emigration; instead, a rigorous approach was required to fully understand specific types of identification, manners of belonging, and particular practices of mobility. As well, the ways in which diasporas (or 'nations') existed in tension with nation-states also became an essential component to describe the qualitative differences between diasporic mobilities and other types of migration.

¹³ For an introductory discussion of African American Muslims in Tijani and Naqshabandi Sufi communities, see McCloud, A. B. (1995). *African American Islam*. Psychology Press. See also Zain Abdullah's (2009) "Sufis on Parade: The Performance of Black, African, and Muslim Identities," *Journal of American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 77, No. 2, 199-237. Abdullah discusses the complexities of blackness from within the Shaykh Amadou Bamba Parade in New York City and relies upon some first-hand accounts of African-Americans Murids who look favorably upon the Senegalese presence. However, his emphasis does not center upon the intricacies of African-American Muslim involvement.

The question of diaspora is conceptually tied to the example of Jewish dispersion upon which the initial theorizing of diaspora is founded, and to the question of 'nation.' In the first issue of the journal *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, both the conceptual trajectory of the journal and the term itself was understood in the following manner: "*Diaspora* must pursue, in texts literary and visual, canonical and vernacular, indeed in all cultural productions and throughout history, the traces of struggles over and contradictions within ideas and practices of collective identity, of homeland and nation. *Diaspora* is concerned with the ways in which nations, real yet imagined communities (Anderson), are fabricated, brought into being, made and unmade, in culture and politics, both on land people call their own and in exile" (Tölölyan 1991). Therefore, we understand that the heuristic value of diaspora as a terminology must not only include the ways that a collection of people *imagine* themselves as part of a nation, but also the *practices* that hold them together in political and cultural solidarity. Despite the reality that historical political forces have resulted in the dispersions of people around the globe, only in recent history has dispersion itself been linked to a particular type of imagining becoming the ground for a distinctive identity, as in the Jewish case, for example.

Diaspora theorists in the late twentieth century confronted the question of *center and periphery*, while considering the cultural logics of diasporic communities by looking closely at entanglements that were tied to tensions between 'nation' and 'nation-state.' Thus, the relation to a common ancestral homeland, and the myth of return, was central to theorizing diaspora. For example, William Safran (1991) argued that 'diaspora' should be formulated according to six criteria that distinguish communities with a common consciousness and particular solidarity from those that find themselves merely beyond the bounds of their homeland. By extending Walker Connor's 1986 definition, Safran identified the Jewish diaspora as an 'ideal type.' Safran's idealized conception included: dispersion from a 'center' and two or more regions of dispersal; maintenance of a collective vision of the homeland; marginalization from the society of residence; notions of an eventual return; maintenance or restoration of the homeland; and a solidarity or shared consciousness around common ethnicity. Establishing these criteria suggested that dispersed communities that did not meet them were somehow illegitimate.

A slightly different approach that emphasized objective and symbolic institutions maintained by diasporic communities provided the basis for understanding the diasporic concept as mainly applicable to such groups (Schnapper & Davis 1999). Thus, a diaspora proper required the presence of institutions that "endeavor to control everyday behavior, such as religious practices, the education of children, the conclusion of marriages within the transnational group, the organization of solidarity, celebrations and specific religious and/or national demonstrations..."; that institutions allow for and maintain 'ethnic capital'; and that these institutions should produce an imaginary of exile in order to maintain the bounds of diaspora and the collective construction of identity. Although they sought to move beyond a purely definitional approach of diaspora (as in Safran's criteria), Dominique Schnapper and Denise Davis posed that the diasporic concept must be able to include new and emerging forms of dispersion while at the same time not being overly inclusive to the point of being emptied of all meaning.

Schnapper and Davis were mainly concerned with epistemological shifts in the diaspora concept and ask the following: "Is it a simple legacy of history, an instrument of political life—in other words, a "prénotion" in the Durkheimian sense, that is, a "product of common experience" whose "main purpose is to adapt our actions to the surrounding world; ... formed by and for experience"...? Or can one use it, rather, as an instrument of rational knowledge, and, if this be the case, under what conditions? Can it be given the necessary rigor that would make it

productive in the development of a historical and sociological analysis? If its application is too broad, does it still yield some understanding” (Schnapper and Davis 1999: 222)? Usages of the term before 1968 referred to a collective historical experience of a people dispersed due to some traumatic event and that year remains a watershed in how scholars have understood ‘diaspora’ conceptually (Tölölyan 1991; Schnapper and Davis 1999). Not only did they retain some particular relation with the host land, but they also held "home" to be sacred. Theorists then welcomed a much broader mode of dispersion after 1968 that included both permanently and temporarily settled migrants. Simply put, the concept referred to an emerging minority population within a larger body politic that viewed itself as a unique collective in a foreign land that maintained cultural and social ties to home.

Nationalism, in both physical notions of boundedness and epistemological focus, also emerged as a tension within diaspora scholarship. Questions surrounding methodology were also concerned with the relationship between state power and the multiple loyalties of transnational subjects -- in particular, whether the weakening of state power automatically had an effect on the integrity of diasporic communities. Schnapper and Davis found that the state is and was not as powerful as previously believed, and that the integrity of diasporic communities, in spite of weakened states, shows just how "weak" they were. William Robinson (1998) also argued against the naturalization of the nation-state in sociological analysis and suggested that both ‘nation’ and ‘state’ become nearly interchangeable in a nation-state paradigm. In this quest for thinking beyond methodological nationalism, a call for an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the ways in which the movement of people and resources across multiple borders emphasized the global unit as the primary mode of analysis. Nina Glick Schiller and Andreas Wimmer (2003) also traced the historical legacy of ‘methodological nationalism’ -- that is, the tendency for social science to normalize the existence of the nation-state. In this “deep-seated” mode of thought, society was equated with the nation-state and bounded political entities (countries) were presumed to naturally form the basis of study. Methodological nationalism emerged in three primary ways: 1) ignorance of importance of nationalism for modern societies, 2) naturalization of the bounded nation-state as a unit of analysis, and 3) territorial limitations of study within a particular nation-state. Wimmer and Schiller’s major theoretical concern warned against both ‘methodological fluidism’ and methodological nationalism. In other words, while we must caution against merely taking the state for granted, we must also be attentive in avoiding theoretical weakness. The authors mentioned above maintained that migrants complicate the automatized relation between people and nation, people and group solidarity, and between people and sovereign power. At the same time, we might also keep in mind that even before the nation-state became the primary model of sovereign political formations, the exodus of Jews from Egypt led by Moses is perhaps the earliest model for diasporic existence.

Diaspora scholarship has attended to theoretical tensions between nation and state by also wrestling with the phenomenon of transnationalism and the identities that emerge from such mobility. Ravindra Jain (2012) understood "trans-nation" to be conceptually fertile by clarifying that the prefix *trans* signified the relations among, rather than between nation-states. Further, the prefix also expressed the ways in which migrants may transcend the borders and boundaries that nation-states ordinarily impose. We are offered here a view of transnationalism that is symptomatic of globalization: although Jain focuses intently on Indian diaspora, this framing is productive because it includes all spaces (nation-states) at varying stages of development. Also, globalization (and by extension, transnationalism) is made possible by communication technologies, economy, and networks - and even these are interconnected.

Of course, much work has been done to understand thoroughly the kinds of entanglement and tensions that African diasporic communities must negotiate due to complex relations with nation-states. While perhaps works on migration have somehow created an impression that diaspora concerns intercontinental migration more than it concerns intra-continental (translocal) mobilities, social scientists have tracked this latter type of movement through looking at how gender impacts mobility (Sudarkasa 1977; Pittin 1984; Gugler & Ludwar-Ene 1995), rural to urban flows in the wake of global forces (Kuper 1965; Akokpari 2004), and internal African migration more broadly (Adepoju 1995). For example, the manner in which Hausa (*zongos*) have migrated across and throughout sub-Saharan African and beyond features prominently in works that discuss intra-continental migration (Skinner 1963; Cohen 1969; Pittin 1984; Pellow 2008). Abner Cohen (1969) recounts the manner in which the Hausa community in southern Nigeria stands out as a diasporic formation because of the way they are culturally and religiously unique from their surrounding Yoruba neighbors. At the same time, he notes that Hausa culture does not remain stable across regions. Like other diasporas, the Hausa in the south economically and politically differ from Hausa in the north. Surely, their cultural identity is composed not mainly from centralized configurations of language and religion, but also from local factors. C. Bawa Yamba's (1995) work on the Hausa in Sudan tells the story of a migrant community that is composed of third, fourth, and fifth generation inhabitants who maintain a life of purposeful liminality - situated between "home" in northern Nigeria and their eventual destination in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The prevailing motivation for this mode of continued life as permanent visitors is that they are continually (and eventually) traveling. That is, while they are "on Hajj," they are also stuck in their locale due to multiple factors by which they are politically and economically embedded in the local environment. As quasi-strangers, the Hausa exist both within the host environment and, at the same time, outside of it.

In an Atlantic context, the history of forced labor, migration, and marginalization has produced a peculiar way of being conscious of two opposing political perspectives. Double-consciousness has been the way in which writers like W.E.B. Dubois (2003 [1903]) and Frantz Fanon (2008 [1952]) described the peculiar feeling of being torn between two worlds. Liminality, we can presume, holds a particular resemblance to the idea of being transnational - or rather, of being in between both worlds - of being simultaneously "here" and "there," and also neither. Scholars like Paul Gilroy (1993) have urged for a definition of diaspora that lifts its connotation out of nationalist or hegemonic, more homegrown, understandings of peoplehood in order to imagine a common political-cultural space that is inclusive of people of African descent on a global scale. His analytic is useful in responding particularly to forms of interstitial blackness which are translocal and transhistorical - that is, cultural, linguistic, and political formations of black ways of being and knowing that lie in between, outside, under and or above the political forms that make up nation-states. In short, his project sought to free 'diaspora' from its more local usages and place it into a global discourse of blackness that was equidistant from the multiple histories and political boundaries of Africanness—albeit from an Atlantic framework.

Emmanuel Akyeampong (2000) documented the genealogy of the African Diaspora as it had been conceived by scholarship primarily in the mid-late twentieth century. He also reviews the various criteria that some have set for distinguishing between diaspora and other forms of mobility and tracked the terminology as it is applied to the dispersion of African peoples around the globe. While sharing the conceptual flexibility of James Clifford, Akyeampong asserts that a diaspora may exhibit various aspects of these criteria at different times, and is concerned largely

with affording theoretical accessibility to the defining of diaspora. While Clifford's emphasis is on 'separation and entanglement' as mentioned earlier, Akyeampong also reminds us that diaspora can be a space in which members imagine not only communities, but reimagine themselves in the process. Joseph Harris's (1982) distinction of diasporic phases (primary, secondary, tertiary, circulatory) becomes key for Akyeampong in examining the various routes of diaspora in an African context. His own work on Ghanaian expatriates provides him with an in-depth perspective into precisely how the nation-state of Ghana's policy economy is impacted by its diaspora elsewhere and becomes crucial to social and political dynamics in the homeland. Similar to Schnapper's focus on diasporic institutions that provide symbolic meaning, Akyeampong suggests that ethnic and religious associations provide a social and economic network that proves to be a key factor in the Ghanaian diaspora.

Paul Zeleza (2005), in line with Gilroy, also pushes away from regional understandings of African diaspora by posing that its conceptual shape not be hinged solely upon the Atlantic experience; and at the same time, diaspora should not be a term that combines all manners of migration. Some diasporas emerge out of dispersals that might not previously be thought of as diasporas, while others dematerialize (or downgrade) into mere dispersals. Zeleza offers quite a compelling definition of diaspora:

"In a broad sense, a diasporic identity implies a form of group consciousness constituted historically through expressive culture, politics, thought and tradition, in which experiential and representational resources are mobilized from the imaginaries of both the old and the new worlds. Diasporas are complex social and cultural communities created out of real and imagined genealogies and geographies of belonging, displacement, and recreation, constructed and conceived at multiple temporal and spatial scales, at different moments and distances from the putative homeland. A diaspora is fashioned as much in the fluid contexts of social experience, differentiation and struggle, and through the transnational circuits of exchange of diasporic resources and repertoires of power, as in the discourses of intellectuals and political elites." (Zeleza 2005: 41-42)

Like other descriptions reviewed above, this definition of diaspora places importance of the role on circulatory networks, relations to power, and constructions of institutionalized community belonging that are both real and imagined.

Diaspora scholars have also attended to the manner in which cyberspace supports the emergence of diasporic networks (Collier 2003; Levine 2004). Victoria Bernal (2006) suggests the internet as the penultimate public sphere due to its democratic access and transnational reach -- in fact, Bernal finds that the internet provides a Habermasian ideal and as the quintessential diasporic medium for Eritreans at home and abroad. She reveals that participation in online forums shape the manner in which Eritreans abroad can include themselves in the state's political shifts. As well, Bernal's work suggests the ways in which ethnic communities discursively construct belonging via technologies that are global by nature. These new formulations of community operate within a larger framework of diaspora and emerge as a sort of "offshore citizenry" or as an "extension of the nation."

As far as the concept of diaspora goes, it should be understood as a vessel through which we can understand not just the *practices*, but also the *representations* of people who consider themselves as part of a larger dispersed nation or collectivity. Accordingly, how people identify with (and within) a shared image and processes of imagination may both be considered tied to

the question of diaspora. It makes sense, therefore, to review how nationalism can provide a different route for fully apprehending the concept of diaspora. Benedict Anderson (2006 [1983]) gives us pause to think about how diasporas, in the sense that they are constructed through imaginative work built upon notions of common experience and historical narrative, effectively articulate as dispersed nations. In his analysis, Anderson argues that nations and nationalism are cultural artifacts that "arouse deep attachments" to an imagined community that is both limited and sovereign. The rise of print capitalism contributes heavily, in Anderson's conception, to a heightened sense of shared sentiment and belonging from which nationalisms emerge. Citizens, in this case, become enveloped within the 'nation' through collective imaginative work. *Imagined communities* (e.g. diasporas) are members of a similar group who may not know each other in reality, but share a bond that is based upon a specific political and or cultural image. In short, this sense of belonging which is founded upon a deep sense of solidarity contributes to a specific conception of who is part of the national community. The *imagined community* is limited (read: bounded) in the sense that the communal bond is not extended to all (whether internal or external to state lines) - no nation imagines itself as 'coterminous' with another and the limited community is sovereign due to certain assumptions of freedom from other imagined communities (Anderson 2006: 7).

Some theorists have focused on the manner in which territoriality shape diasporas, but others have also describe the must also be thought of as 'deterritorialized' (Appadurai 1996; Ferme 2004) in that forms of belonging and relationship with a 'nation' become untethered from the locality of bordered states as these states attempt to reach beyond their borders and impose upon individuals and communities abroad forms of belonging that can have significant impact on everyday life. Therefore, diaspora is not a concept that need be reliant upon space. It is a valid point to assert that transnationalism and diaspora, while in many cases are equated across disciplines, do not necessarily map directly onto each other as there are instances in which transnational movements would not be diasporic, and diasporic communities may not necessarily be transnational (see Blunt 2007).

Rather than think of nations as groups of individuals that collectively come to a particular political understanding, Anderson suggests that it is more productive to think about the nation—for our purposes, *diaspora*—as a body through which wide-ranging access to cultural narratives are shared: "what am I proposing is that nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which - as well as against which - it came into being" (Anderson 2006: 12). Thus, the relations between members and a shared cultural narrative precede the 'fact' of the nation. Nationhood (read: *diaspora*) forms in spite of political pluralities, as long as the cultural artifacts that incorporate bodies into a singular diasporic imaginary remain present.

Focusing specifically on the possibilities of representation that are produced within diasporic identities and imaginaries, Stuart Hall (1990) finds that they are composed simultaneously of both processes of rupture and continuity. In this sense, while some global black identities are informed by historical discontinuity with 'Africa' due to legacies of forced migration and labor, they are also impacted by imaginative processes cultivated by the discursive power of cultural institutions and the perception of shared politics of the body, which allows for coherence among and between individual diasporans. Like diasporas, identities are ever-mobile, possibly always changing. Rather than approach identity from the position that they have some end-point, it is more accurate to think of identity - and thus, diaspora - as a production: "Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an

already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production’, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (Hall 1990: 222). Further: "Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within a discourse of history and culture. Not an essence but a *positioning*" (Hall 1990: 226, original italics). Insofar as identities, specifically cultural identities, are continuously formed and forming through a process of "becoming as well as being" (Hall 1990: 225), they are also partly shaped, in an African diasporic context, by discontinuity and difference. Due to historical and environmental forces, identities alter themselves and are altered into sites of production and representation that embody the multiple forces that bear down on black bodies. These forces set in motion strategies that result in transfigurations that allow for survival and growth in multiple social worlds for a population that has been partly formed by historical dispossession and more contemporary forms of exclusion (see Dubois 1903; Fanon 1952; Gilroy 1993). Thus, diaspora identities, are those that are somewhat different from their corresponding diasporic nodes, shaped concurrently by a shared cultural image as well as by local factors. In the same way, diasporas morph and alter in a such a way where identities become so embedded in multiple frames of reference that their points of origin become undetectable, de-emphasizing the notion of a diasporic center within a larger network.

Continuities and Contours of Black Muslimness

The study of Islam in ‘the West’ seems to have had its beginnings as a political project disguised as a sociological one. Initially prompted in many ways with a fascination with the mid-twentieth century influx of North African and Middle Eastern Muslim migrants to Europe and the United States, the study of Muslims shifted from eastern, rural environments to western, urban ones whereby the study of particular groups displayed an historical, colonial relationship (Marranci 2008). Perhaps unfortunate, the study of Islam in the West has focused largely on the nature of the acculturation of migrants in their hostlands. In many cases, the impetus to understand the daily lives and political identities of Muslims was a veil for measuring the possibility of assimilating foreign bodies, politicized by forms of difference and societal exclusion, into a Western cultural and political landscape. Moreover, this motive is at least partly propelled by long-standing remnants of essentialist understandings of *who Muslims are* with the assumption that their agendas, political views, and desires are at once monolithic and radically different from Western, secular ones (see Said 1978, Lewis 1990, and Huntington 1993). Consequently, it seems as though much of what has been written on Muslims in Europe and North America has been funneled into either political or ethnic studies. Much writing on Islam in the West has understood the contemporary political landscape in a way that renders further Muslims as anti-secular outsiders and irrational warmongers (Bunzl 2005; Werbner 2005; Gottschalk & Greenberg 2008). The events of September 11th, 2001 (“9/11”) stands out as a watershed that marks a heightened surveillance of Muslim bodies and has overdetermined Muslims as foreign similarly to the manner in which older anti-Islam rhetorics have (Abbas 2004; Sheridan 2006).

Much of what has been written about Muslims in the United States has centered its attention squarely upon questions related to representation insofar as national political rhetoric has emphasized Islam as a foreign body, fundamentally counter to state interests and progress. As such, an emphasis has been placed on providing a more comprehensive vision of the American

Muslim ethnoscape, which appears ever more relevant as post-9/11 media imagery has contributed heavily to popular associations of Islam with fundamentalist, violent rhetorics and culturally-dissonant, Middle Eastern migrants (Gottschalk & Greenberg 2008; Byng 2008). There are numerous works that have collectively provided an historical analysis of African-American Muslim life and practices and yet, some early works can be characterized as an exercise in understanding what is particularly *Black* about being a ‘Black Muslim’ (Parenti 1964, Marsh 1984, Lincoln 1994) with seemingly less focus on spirituality.¹⁴

Many African-Americans, disillusioned by the non-violent ethos of the civil rights movement leadership and also profoundly impacted by both the public rectitude and political clarity of Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam (the NOI), transitioned throughout the twentieth century to Islam through multiple roads—orthodox and otherwise. However, the popularity and visibility of the Nation of Islam in the mid-late twentieth century resulted in a lack of emphasis on African-American Muslims who were unaffiliated with the NOI and had been overshadowed by its organizational reach and visibility (see Lincoln 1994, Curtis 2002, R. B. Turner 2003). Accordingly, groups like Dar-ul Islam and the Islamic Party in North America (IPNA), through which the majority of its African-American organizational members converted to Islam beyond the bounds of the NOI and also expressed varied political postures in addition to religious interpretations, remain a footnote in the collective historical memory of who African-American Muslims *were* and *are* (McCloud 1995, Haddad & Smith 2002, Gomez 2005).

Part of the Western social scientific fixation on questions concerning representation has also included the ways in which gender plays a part in the ontological realities of being Muslim. As such, intersections between gender, race, and class have been attended to that, on one hand, complement historical literature that focus overly on the role of men in Muslim organizations and communities and on the other, emphasize veiling practices to determine how and whether women identify as Muslims (Read et al. 2000, Alvi et al. 2003). Works on American Muslims have also taken a more comparative approach by understanding the complicated relationship between African-American Muslim communities in the US, and communities in the US where the larger portion of the constituency originate from outside of the country (Karim 2008). While there are normal assumptions about the possible rifts that may exist between Sunni and Shia Muslims, taking after larger historical and geographical patterns of interaction, less is known, Jamilah Karim argues, about the ways that South Asian, Arab, and African-American Muslims may, and also may not, interact with each other, occupy similar religious space, and share political solidarity. As she notes, there are ways that identity, insofar as identities are always complex and multiple, makes alliances between various communities tricky. Race, class, and gender play a part in how, or whether, intra-religious dialogue takes place. On one hand, there are instances in which questions of race and class disrupt easy assumptions about the supposed

¹⁴ Academic literatures in the mid-twentieth century that discussed Islam in the United States coined the term “Black Muslim” to refer mainly to African-American Muslims largely affiliated with the Nation of Islam. Over the years, this signification elided both Muslims of African descent living in the US who migrated from elsewhere as well as African-American Muslims who were not affiliated with NOI. The primary example is Essien-Udom’s “Black Nationalism: The Rise of the Black Muslims in the USA” (1966) and C. Eric Lincoln’s “The Black Muslims in America” (1994). However, I follow Edward Curtis (and Paul Gilroy) in order to arrest such a term away from its North American presumption into a more diasporic framework of black religious tradition. See Curtis IV, E. E. (2014). *The Call of Bilal: Islam in the African Diaspora*. UNC Press Books.

“Muslim community.” On the other, we are more likely to see an emphasis on unity during instances of increased state surveillance and perceived political oppression. While it is certainly important, and timely, to undo misperceptions about Muslims in America and Europe as inherently violent and always on the verge of unreason (and for Westerners who have converted to Islam to have entered into this space of irrationality), this focus has left many questions undeveloped regarding whether and how American Muslims envision themselves as they travel abroad, how they deal with tensions that emerge in daily life beyond simply from being casted as “other,” and the sorts of intra-religious and interpersonal tensions that exist within and amongst global Muslim communities.

This study, therefore, builds from a prior inquiry into the international and domestic ideological influences that shaped the Islamic Party in North America. In that work, I was primarily interested in how their understandings of self and movement were impacted by their relationships to analogous Islamic political organizations abroad (such as in Egypt and Pakistan). Here, I am concerned primarily with how African-American Muslims and West African Muslim collaborate to expand the lesser known and emerging Mustafawiyya Sufi network. Taking Sufism as a ideational force and theological approach, this study analyzes the manner in which American Muslims are drawn into those networks and produce particular kinds of mobilities and impact modes of identification. As well, this study views Sufism as a technology of physical and metaphysical cultivation through which Muslims of African descent seek healing and spiritual care.

An analysis of how African American Muslims have been impacted by a West African Islamic pedagogy requires perhaps an examination into the manner in which an Islamic pedagogical tradition has played a part in the development of a geographic religious character in West Africa. This includes understanding how modes of learning in the region have historically impacted local actors and movements, and how this phenomenon has led to some significant relation with a broader Muslim world. At the same time, it will be important to discuss how the rise of a clerical class in the region might have directly yielded a general emphasis on charismatic authority that resulted in the culmination of brotherhoods, an apprenticeship system that would support the perpetuation of religious hierarchies, and instances of religious formations regarding modes of healing and sacred medicine that gradually paved the way for the cementing of esoteric “sciences” as a regional approach to learning. Thus, the aim is to discuss a tradition of knowledge-dispensation and expertise that incorporates both scholarship with West African Muslim spirituality into a broader category of pedagogy.

In spite of the central concern here, which would involve outlining crucial trends and elements in identifying a West African nature of knowledge transmission, I find Talal Asad’s insistence on “discursive tradition(s)” (1996) compelling in that we may build upon his prescriptions against finding illusory boundaries that would, for example, imagine ‘West African Islam’ as an iteration that has strayed from some essential version of Islam. That is to say, West Africa should be understood as a part of a broader region in which its peoples and historical movements have been in conversation with those proximal regions. Furthermore, I do not pose a term ‘West African Islam’ in order to draw parameters around some purportedly locatable pure Islam. Rather, I am interested in finding what elements have culminated in the region due to historical trends, political movements, intellectual traditions, and the overall presence of local hermeneutics, with particular interest in how these aspects have resulted in variations from other regional developments. No, West Africa is not a vacuous space that received no vital contact with surrounding locations. Scholars like Ousmane Kane have drawn this out regarding his

intellectual history of West Africa (Kane 2016). And no, we might not be able to build some foolproof argument for an essential character of West African Islam - but certainly, we can locate significant developmental trends regarding the thought processes and pedagogical approaches championed by Muslims in West Africa.

Like anywhere else, the character and shape of Islam (or “Muslimness”) in and among West African states, a region that has been historically referred to as the “Bilad as-Sudan” (Land of the Blacks), is the result of social, cultural, political, and historical developments which played a part in the unfolding of its establishment from the 11th century onward.¹⁵ For example, its major initial introduction into the sub-Saharan environment occurred via trans-Saharan trade routes and the use of state-sponsored Muslim literati who made governance more convenient by virtue of an ability to record and document legal rulings in a cultural background which held orality in high esteem. Some rulers, like the famous Mansa Musa who presided over the Mali empire in the 14th century, were Muslims whose authority reigned over subjects whose religious affiliations were Islamic and non-Islamic in nature. Nonetheless, it is also true that the presence of Muslim religious experts contributed significantly to the spread of Islam throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Over time, Islam spread more pervasively throughout the region as Islamic affiliation carried more social currency and its religious dictates became more ingrained into the social fabric. Such gradual transition resulted in the blending of Islamic and pre-Islamic approaches to building a collectivized understanding of the natural and supernatural. Prior beliefs that held that the presence of spirits in the surrounding natural world needed to be placated and respected remained for some time a vital portion of the religious character of the Muslims who were moving toward a traditional orthodoxy that was eventually sped up by jihadist reform movements in 18th and 19th centuries. This fact need not push us to the conclusion that early Muslims in West Africa were somehow ‘not as Muslim’ as their Arabian or North African counterparts. Rather, we should take this process of regional Islamicization seriously and take into account the cultural strategies that allowed for complex religious formations and multifaceted approaches to healing and care.

West Africa was home to widely esteemed centers of learning that included Timbuktu, Djenne, and Gao (Ngom 2016; Ware 2014; Brenner 2011; Saad 1983). That *qadis* (jurists) who specialized in dispensing legal rulings and *qurra* (reciters) tasked with teaching memorization of the Qur’an (and its complex enunciations) were sought from travelers near and far is not new information. But what about the manner in which other kinds of learning took place? How was medicinal and talismanic knowledge passed forward? Once again, I am concerned with how one can think in more nuanced fashion about the evolution of a pedagogical tradition in the West African Islamic landscape. West Africa’s intellectual history is locatable in the development of *ajami* that used Arabic as a base to give written expression to upwards of twenty-nine different languages in the Sudanic region, its knowledge production industry which included paper trading and bookmaking, and its political economy regarding scholarship (Kane 2016; Ngom 2016). Yet, by investigating the role of esoteric sciences (*tassawuf*), blessings (*barakat*), and locating the presence of secrets (*asrar*) in the everyday, we can better draw parameters around a broader approach to how knowledge(s) were and are dispensed to Muslim learners. By placing weight upon the metaphysical aspects of religious belief (beyond the usages of *fiqh* - Islamic legal

¹⁵ John Voll has preferred the term “Muslimness” as a term he feels is capable of more closely capturing the complex identities, degrees of practice, impacts, and religious adjacencies among Islamic or Muslim peoples that varies greatly across time and space.

rulings), drawn from both ethnographic material and secondary literatures, this analysis illustrates how Islam moves in the lives of Muslims who comprise the West African Sufi tradition.

Of course, such an emphasis does not apply to everyone who resides in the region of interest here. Rudolph Bilal Ware explains that the role of esotericism should not be overdetermined as we seek a fuller understanding of how a broader body of knowledge impacts Muslimness in West Africa. This epistemology also includes its own rationalist tradition that has informed a more classical emphasis that has played a part in various reformist movements in the region (Ware 2014; Sunnah 1997; Hanson 1996; Sulaiman 1986; Willis 1967; Smith 1961); however, what connects the epistemological foundation of Islam in the Bilal as-Sudan is the role of the body. He asserts:

“[w]hile I certainly agree that esotericism played a fundamental role in what I have called a classical approach to knowledge in West Africa, I see the defining characteristic of this paradigm as embodiment, not esotericism. A focus on memorization, personification of knowledge, corporeal practice, mimesis, and service were fundamental to the transmission of the *zahir* (manifest) sciences as much as to the hidden (*batin*). Similarly, rationalism, supposedly the defining characteristic of the new modern ethic of knowledge, was never absent from the classical model. To the contrary—rhetoric, logic, and argument were central to its methods. As long as one had valid chains for the acquisition of basic knowledge, such exercises of reason were highly valorized” (Ware 2014: 205).

This is an important distinction that is required as a means of building a more complete depiction of how and by what means Muslims *know* their faith. Nonetheless, the desire to understand Islam in West Africa beyond its often traditionalist discourse—by combining its intellectual history via jurisprudence and literary scholarship, with the development of an alchemistic tradition—figures prominently here.

Against an ‘Islam Noir’

For too long have social scientists understood Muslimness in West Africa through a lens that characterized practices and manners of belief as binary. Analyzed as a vital split between Islam and its ‘African’ version, Muslim practices were studied as a living spectrum whereby lifestyles were categorized according to their proximity to what was discursively identified as ‘classical Islam.’ At the root of this notion was a common thesis held by both Africanists who studied Islam and Orientalists who situated their studies in Africa. In other words, African Muslims could not merely be identified as ‘Muslims.’ The character of their belief and texture of their rituals necessitated an associational fixation on Islam as a 7th century Arabian religion that was no longer itself as it traveled over ground and across waters into lands elsewhere. At the same time, both realms of scholarship essentialized what could be, and had to be, authentically ‘African.’ To be a Muslim was to somehow cease being an African. And to be authentically African one could not be a ‘real Muslim.’

It was as if the tradition hovered above the ground and its practitioners reach upward in order to attain it, rather than it submerging into and nourishing the very soils in which it was planted. Ladislav Holy states that:

“[i]n addition to the core beliefs and a number of common Islamic symbols, there are numerous ideological and practical accretions present in all Muslim societies which account for the actual diversity of Islam. Muslim societies thus differ not only in their political, economic and social-structural arrangements but also in their ritual practices and religious institutions. Orientalists and anthropologists have for long struggled with the problem of how best to conceptualize and account for the observable diversity of religious belief and practice in various Muslim societies and communities” (1991: 1).

Scholarship that has sought to conceptualize the manner in which Islam is practiced by Muslims, as Holy explains, has often resulted in a binary categorizing that contrasted some essential understanding of a ‘pure Islam’ that was somehow vitally augmented by those who have, in effect, tainted its message. Such bastardization, according to this line of thought, occurred via syncretic practices that had unfortunately strayed from a prior tradition. This manner of dichotomy contrasted ‘urban Islam’ with ‘rural Islam,’ ‘scholarly religion’ with ‘popular religion,’ ‘Great tradition’ with ‘Little traditions,’ and or ‘normative’ religious practices and beliefs with its deviations (Holy 1991).¹⁶ In fact, it is *continuity* that should be stressed even in the face of apparent slight variations of practice that have occurred between more urban spaces and their peripheries (Levtzion 1987). Older colonial scholarship has preferred to see religion of the *ulama* (scholars) as vitally separate from its more rural iterations as expressed through local ‘marabouts,’ when in fact, it is more true that what has appeared to be multiple and variant interpretations of a tradition has actually been the result of ongoing discourses that operated between so-called ‘urban Islam’ and its margins (Levtzion 1987).¹⁷

Bilal Ware rightly asserts that the social scientific study of Islam should be placed at the center of African studies and that Africa should figure more prominently in Islamic studies. Historically, both realms of scholarship have explicitly and implicitly characterized Muslim practices in Africa as heterodox, or rather some iteration of an Islam that saw its origin in 7th century Arabia and thus its traditions were somehow misinterpreted by Africans and impacted by their inclinations toward pagan-like practices and an animist worldview. Such orientalism(s) has informed both African studies and Islamic studies scholarship in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Unfortunately, where appropriation and domestication of Islam could otherwise assist us in apprehending the nature by which Islam is localized wherever it has existed (including the Arabian peninsula), it too often results in a center and periphery relationship which slips all too quickly into essentialism. What Ware offers, however, is an opportunity to understand the

¹⁶ In spite of Ladislav Holy’s explanation that the categorization Islam in local contexts yields some false binary, the thesis that Muslim women’s ritual practices amongst the Berti in Sudan produced a gendered trope whereby its own dichotomy figures prominently. According to Holy, male practices amongst the Berti in Sudan were representative of classical Islamic tradition and female ritual practices exemplified less normative or rural formations of Islamic religious belief. Such distinction unfortunately rehearses classic essentialism that views the African social-religious landscape as inherently female and recipient, and its colonial (or in this case, Islamic) counterpart as male and normative. See Ladislav Holy’s 1991 monograph entitled “Religion and Society in a Muslim Society: The Berti of Sudan.” Cambridge University Press.

¹⁷ For a thorough analysis on the problem of Islam noir, see Rüdiger Seeseman’s *The Divine Flood: Ibrahim Niassa and the Roots of a Twentieth-Century Sufi Revival*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2011.

processes of Qur'anic education as it has traditionally operated and yet currently exists in few places throughout the Muslim world (Ware, 2014: 21-23).

Building a New Language of Continuity

I have contrived some terminologies that would hopefully address the problem of how to reconcile the assertion that there is a unifying notion of one 'Islam' that holds discursive power over Muslim subjects with the reality that there are divergent local circumstances that result in the proliferation of multiple actualities of practice. The way forward in reconciling these variant approaches to analyzing Muslim subjectivities as it occurs between urban and rural spaces is to acknowledge that circuits of exchange have always been apparent. Thus, *continuity*, in the way that Levtzion uses it does not refer only to the connection between what was prior to Islam and after, but rather *continuity* might also refer to the interconnectedness of seemingly disparate locations. It is true that the *text(s)* of classical Islamic tradition play a part in pulling local religious translations in West Africa into a discursive global tradition, but certainly there was, as in all places where Islam has been introduced, a *pre-text* also played a part in the manner in which it was deployed within an already existing epistemological landscape.

“Islam came to West Africa in the seventh century underscoring the ineluctable torque of historical change that would affect age-old traditional concepts. But when it arrived, it confronted very swiftly beliefs in the esoteric which predated it. West African traditionalists viewed the world from a perspective in which the concept and quest for harmonious existence loomed preeminent. If Islam was to take root, then it would have to do so within the rules set by African traditionalists and in a manner commensurate with the dictate of practiced tradition” (Vaughn 1992: 24).

At the same time, as the textual influence of Islam became more pervasive, the totality of internal and external historical developments that have informed the shape and character of Muslim practices and movements in the region is what I call *context*. This *context* subsequently results in the development of the *subtext*, which is the underlying hermeneutical approach that impacts how texts are engaged. Such intertwining of *text* and *subtext* is rooted in an epistemological grounding whereby the use of Qur'anic scripture can act as a source and recipe for spiritual medicinal care that is an example of how Muslims might understand how God's word is capable of effecting physical change in some way. Taking Levtzion's notion of continuity further, I would suggest as well the continuity between *pre-text* and *text*, which results in the culmination of *sub-text*. To be clear, I do not propose that multiple religious formations have resulted in consistent and persistent syncretism; however, I do pose that fundamental understandings of the unseen world (*al-ghaib*) and Abrahamic monotheistic tradition had organically synthesized and suffused itself into the intricacies of a West African Muslim other-worldview. This other-worldview was translated into the 'language' of Islam.

- **Text** - Qur'anic scripture, hadith literature, classical interpretative tradition (*kitab wal sunna* - book and tradition)
- **Pre-text** - physical ground / underlying worldview of how natural law (how the metaphysical and material world operates) / previous conditions (background) in which Islam was introduced and rooted/ domesticated ('*urf* - custom)
- **Context** - totality of internal and external historical developments that have informed the shape and character of Muslim practices and movements/ diachronic unfolding of events and phenomena that contributes to a long dureé view of religio-spiritual character of a region (*tarikh* - history)
- **Subtext** - persistent hermeneutical thrusts that have accompanied an enactment and deployment of religious texts, epistemology grounded in understanding of metaphysical law which impacts interpretation and usage of text (*ma'rifah* - gnosis)

[(pre-text + text) = subtext] (+ context) = **pedagogy** (epistemology)

In his study of Islam amongst the Koko in West Africa, Robert Launay (1992) grounds his analysis of their practices by first dealing with the classic problem of determining whether such analysis makes more sense to frame as an iteration of Islam as a global / globalizing force or, alternatively, as an intensely local phenomenon. Ultimately, Launay pushes us to consider how a “middle ground” might be preferable. Instead of viewing individual, local communities as separate from a single global entity, we might consider how regional discourses might provide a better framework for analysis in this regard. As well, Launay addresses the problem of how to deal with the question of how to understand the introduction of Islam to non-Muslims. Launay says:

“[i]n particular, change over time—the conversion of non-Muslims to Islam, the abandonment by Muslim communities of certain conceptions of Islam in favor of others —is hardly a phenomenon peculiar to Koko. The most obvious way of characterizing such changes in West Africa has been in terms of progressive stages of Islamization. Seen in this light, competing conceptions of Islam, locally as well as regionally, can be identified as representing different stages...At its worst, this kind of developmentalism is easily combined with an explicitly or implicitly racist evolutionary discourse. Islamic civilization is contrasted to the intrinsic savageness of the generic African, who is only capable of assimilating Islam gradually, bit by bit” (Launay 1992: 15-16).

While it may, at first glance, seem obvious to conceive of Muslim conversion in West Africa as *developmental* in nature, it does not actually provide an adequate lens with which to understand individual Muslim conversions, much less processes of religious transition. Secondly, such a framework implies individual conversion as an inauthentic experience or somehow incomplete. Nonetheless, another route to understanding how Muslims in West Africa *know* in their faith is, in my view, entirely necessary.

In short, West African Muslim practices are largely and subtly informed by a confluence of *text* and *subtext* that contributes to how Islam takes shape in that region of the world. Again, this does not preclude the actuality of discursive tradition that weighs upon and informs how knowledge(s) are embodied. Just as Ware has explained the internal logic that bodily vessels must be rendered prone and humble in order to become 'the Book,' it might also be true that the Book - that is, as a source of knowledge - takes the shape and is refracted by its vessel when

animate. In other words, Islam as it exists in and throughout West Africa, like everywhere else (including 7th century Arabia), is not so much a question of ‘revising’ Islam but rather it is a matter of ‘envisioning’ Islam. That is to say that the Muslims who embody and carry out their religious duties are involved in a collective project of deploying their best understanding of the vital message of submission to Divine command.

While it is true that Arabic language and *ajami* have played a crucial role in the textualization of a scholarly culture in Islamic West Africa, I am simultaneously concerned with what I have thus far referred to as a “subtext” that has also operated in conjunction with, and alongside, the circulation of textual knowledge. In other words, my approach in building an argument that highlights the presence of a pedagogy as a means for cultivating Muslim subjects involves understanding the vital interrelatedness of the erudition of texts and practices informed by a hermeneutical engagement with such texts, or rather, how interpretation of text and the Sunna informs and shapes practices. Perhaps one meaningful example regarding the question of Islamic *subtext* in West Africa can be found in when I visited a Qur’an school at the Grande Mosquée of Sacré-Coeur in Dakar. Shaykh Muhammad Saada, *khalifa* (leader) of the Tariqa Mustafawiyya, teaches children of multiple ages the Arabic alphabet in order to begin the process of their Qur’an memorization. However, whereas Arabic letters in other places around the world are taught in a particular sequence (alif, ba, ta, tha), the alphabetic sequence followed in Senegal is what is called the ‘abjad’ sequence (alif, ba, jiim, del) which is ordered according to the oldest sequence of the letters. The question that follows is ‘why are children being taught the abjad Arabic sequence?’ It is the oldest sequence of ordering that shares a similarity with other Semitic alphabets but in addition, letters are ordered in the abjad according to numerical value and makes reading /learning the Qur’an according to the Warsh system easier. As opposed to the Hafs recitation, the Warsh recitation of the Qur’an is a style of reading shared in contexts where Maliki Fiqh is prominent. Teaching Arabic using the abjad sequence also makes relating the *‘ilm al-huruf* (“science of letters”) possible. Thus, it is significant that children in Senegal continue to be taught Arabic through the abjad system. Shaykh Arona Faye, prodigal student of Cheikh Mustafa Gueye (d. 1989) and prominent authority in the Mustafawiyya tradition, acknowledges that the manner in which children are taught Arabic via the abjad “keeps knowledge alive.”¹⁸ His statement implies not only the persistent manner in which a textual engagement with Qur’anic knowledge remains animate but also speaks to the manner in which this approach to learning expresses a continuity with a tradition of learning that reaches backward in time. Teaching children the abjad sequence of Arabic in the wake of Qur’anic memorization maintains the potential for future numerological engagements with scripture.¹⁹ This example, therefore, resonates with the broader concern here regarding the multiple usages of Qur’anic scripture in Sufic contexts.

Hence, understanding the “subtexts” of lived religion requires an interpersonal engagement that can serve as a methodology for apprehending the motivations, drives, and undergirding worldview held by Muslim actors in West Africa and beyond. It is not that Muslims simply read the Qur’an to understand how they should make their ablutions, or what specific

¹⁸ Electronic correspondence, Shaykh Arona Faye, 06 August 2017.

¹⁹ In her note on the Arabic Alphabet and Transcription, Anne Marie Schimmel includes the numeric value of the Arabic letters in addition to their phonetic equivalents in her monograph entitled “Mystical Dimensions of Islam” (Schimmel 1975, xxv-xxvi).

bodily movements are required for the daily prayer. This we know. However, what might be taken for granted are the subtleties of observance that aren't necessarily driven by and understood through legalistic interpretations of text and prophetic narration. While there has been work on the intellectual history of Islamic presence in West Africa (Ngom 2016; Kane 2016; Hanretta 2009; Diagne 2008), there has been less emphasis on the manner in which a scholarly tradition operates in conjunction within vital relation with scriptural power espoused by charismatic authority in the form of a clerical class, many of whom claim a deeper understanding of what the Divine word *does* - beyond what it says and means. That is, there has been focus placed squarely upon how Muslims actually use the Qur'an to effect modes of healing and deploy its power as a means for Divine intervention in their everyday lives (Robinson 2004; Mommersteeg 1988; Bledsoe & Robey 1986; Handloff 1982). However, many studies have not seemed to apprehend these phenomena in the context of a broader pedagogical tradition of embodiment, except for a few (Wright 2015; Ryan 2000). So one must ask: how do such approaches to understanding the *Furqan* (Criterion; alternative name for the Qur'an) as the living word represent an epistemic foundation upon which Muslims in West Africa have engaged in a homegrown hermeneutical tradition?

The classical Qur'an school has operated as a mechanism that has affirmed Islamic identity throughout the West African religious landscape. In other places in the Muslim world western modes of education have impacted the role of the madrassa by dislocating them into spaces that reflected colonial approaches to education whereby they henceforth functioned as merely another set of knowledge(s) gathering to be absorbed into the colonization project. This rupture to the Islamic pedagogical tradition, however, has not completely erased the role of the traditional Qur'an school in much of West Africa. Thus, in the context of colonization, the Qur'an school served as a quasi-anticolonial space where a profound elevation of the Divine Word remained and was continually understood as a set of knowledge over and above that of any human-derived knowledge.

In his dissertation that compared two epistemological foundations that understand the Divine in West African context differently—Tijani Sufism and Ifa Divination—Oludamini Ogunaike reviewed the manner in which gnosis (*ma'rifah*), which is an immediate, experiential knowledge of God, gives us an another direction from which to consider how inward knowledge operates in conjunction with textual knowledge. Gnosis goes where reason (*inayat*) cannot reach. He rightly builds this argument upon the words of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (d. 765 CE) when he said that “[s]urely he alone knows God who knows Him by means of God. Therefore, whoso knows Him not by means of Him knows Him not” (Ogunaike, 2015: 81). Ogunaike contrasts this manner of inward knowledge (*ma'rifah*) with outward knowledge (*'ilm*) - an ‘ordinary’ platform of knowing derived from mastery of texts and concepts - by distinguishing it as something attained by God's leave alone and not by the human ability to intellectually grasp.

It is this way of knowing the Divine not apprehended by means of textual expertise, not reachable by the efforts of the intellect. Reason can perhaps lead one to God, but it cannot give

one God. Further, reason itself cannot and does not produce certainty (*yaqīn*).²⁰ Thus, it is the ‘*subtext*’ that informs how the practitioner embodies text and deploys what the Book commands in a way deemed appropriate not just according to a conceptual knowledge of religion but also driven by gnosis (as related through saints and clerics) in the *Bilad as-Sudan* (Land of the Blacks). On the other hand, I also rely on an analysis of ‘continuity’ to attend to the ongoing discursive relationships that extend between a West African religious landscape and the American South amongst Muslims of African descent. Not only have West African Muslims brought with them particularized religiosities as mediated through Islamic forms of practice into a new social atmosphere, African-American Muslims have taken on such religiosities through the framework of Sufi tradition that originates in Senegal. In so doing, they have reconciled their present religious practices with the imagined religious traditions of their ancestors in order to build a conception of Islamic presence that is construed as continuous and has been reconnected by virtue of their transition “back” to a West African norm of Islam.

Returning to the question of discourse (via Talal Asad), therefore, this dissertation acknowledges that there exists a continuity seen in the interactions of West African Muslims and African-American Muslims—a solidarity emboldened through the practices of *tassawuf* (science of spirituality; common referred to as Sufism) out of which broader politics of “Black Muslimness” endure. The emphasis on esotericism and gnosis as seen through a West African approach to Muslim piety binds itself to the emancipatory ethos which emerges from ‘Black Religion’ (Pinn 2003) that has spanned multiple faith traditions in which Muslims of African descent in the United States are embedded. In order to discuss this connection, this study is situated within a few key conversations had in anthropological studies on religious actors and networks. In particular, I focus on how the body is used as an ‘instrument’ or device for spiritual uplift and through which techniques of protection and liberation are learned. Marcel Mauss (1973) has theorized how there are particular ways that bodies are incorporated into modes of learning regarding physical activities (swimming, walking, etc.) whereby they become the frames upon which certain kinds of mastery are enacted. Bodies, however, can never be considered separate from the environmental conditions in which those bodies are reared. By ‘rearing’ I refer to both the political atmosphere of marginality and violence that black bodies must navigate. ‘Rearing’ also references the modes of learning and expertise gained for the purpose of overcoming tribulation. Pierre Bourdieu (1977) has drawn an influential concept into the sociology of religion—*habitus*—that describes how a person or group (class) is profoundly shaped by the conditions in which that person is reared. Hence, history shapes *habitus* because Bourdieu tells us that our pasts (collective or individual) are always present. Furthermore, engagements with the conditions in which people become reared produce certain ‘dispositions’ that impact how they move, think, behave in the world. However, as Saba Mahmood (2001 and 2011) argues, it is also important to caution against a determinism that would foreclose the question of agency.

²⁰ This is a view, by the way, that is argued by Imam al-Ghazali in his *Munkhid min al-Dalal* (“Rescuer from Error” c. 1100 CE). In this text, al-Ghazali says that the polemical approach of scholastic theology (*kalam*), which places emphasis on proving Divine Truth through reason, does not provide certitude. As such, he finds the approaches of the rationalists, philosophers, and esotericists inadequate. It is the approach of an Islamic mystical approach (e.g. sufism) that provides, for him, a direct experience of God not possible through polemics.

The notion of a broader field of ‘Black Muslimness’ through which to understand the trajectories, solidarities, and spiritual strivings of African-descended Muslims in the Mustafawiyya Tariqa requires an examination of these phenomena through the concept of ‘diaspora.’ As Paul Gilroy has noted a quarter-century prior (1993), the researcher must avoid a too narrow and localized viewpoint of blackness in order to better reveal vital historical and political connections found in more regional contexts. His notion of the ‘Black Atlantic’ has initiated a vital conversation in which numerous scholars have entered in order to shed light on the multiple geographic entanglements that religious adepts pursue. J. Lorand Matory (1999) has rightly raised the point that relations between Africa and its diaspora rest upon a continual ‘dialogue’ that troubles the notion that continental Africa serves as a point of origin stuck in the past. In fact, his emphasis on the religious trajectories of Candomblé practitioners proves as his evidence (Matory 2005). Kamari Clarke’s discussion of Yoruba practitioners similarly argues this trend in her analysis of their international movements and regional orientation (Clarke 2004). My aim is to further the study of Black Atlantic Religion through an examination of Muslim travelers that are enveloped in a transnational Sufi network. In the context of the Mustafawiyya regimen deployed in the United States, I show how Black Muslim bodies become the fields upon which messages of community and liberation are inscribed. Couched in the language of submission, piety and *tarbiyah* (spiritual/ moral training), I discuss how the religion of Islam provides a site of resistance to anti-black racism and force for healing from the psychic trauma of historical black oppression. Therefore, this dissertation draws upon anthropological literature that studies the role, for example, of consciousness (Pandolfo 1997) and the body in the configuration of Muslim piety (Hirschkind 2006; Mahmood 2011).

The *Zawiya* as ethnographic multi-site

I was first introduced to the Moncks Corner Muslim community upon an initial visit in 2008 as I was invited to accompany an older friend who at the time was a student of Shaykh Arona Faye. Our purpose for traveling four hours by car south was to participate in the Eid al-Fitr celebration that was sponsored by the mosque and hosted at a local middle school nearby. Immediately, I was captivated by what I perceived to be mostly American and West African Muslims who were dressed in either elegant West African or Middle-Eastern attire. What set a more lasting impression on me, however, was the sheer hospitality of the community that took seriously its task of hosting guests and they treated us as if we were already favorably acquainted. At the center of the event was an elder West African man of small stature who somehow commanded so much attention from a gymnasium full of people, which seemed to burst with activity. It quickly became apparent that in the middle of the ornately-dressed crowd, one figure directed the evening’s itinerary. Shaykh Arona Faye al-Faqir revealed himself to me as a charismatic and light-hearted figure who graciously offered his guests plates that overflowed with Senegalese cuisine that was complemented by southern comfort foods. His sense of humor provided welcomed breaks from the enthusiastic lectures about the importance of remembering Allah, taking religion seriously, and commemorating the recent passing of Shaykh Mansur Escudero—one of Shaykh Faye’s foremost students in Cordoba, Spain. Even then, I was left with a meaningful impression of this modestly-sized community which had earned itself a reputation for unsurpassed hospitality and a spiritually-enlivening atmosphere. I was fascinated by the African-American Muslims who seemed so profoundly influenced by their West African Muslim

counterparts. An elder, African-American Muslim man who sat proudly in his decorative wheelchair, for example, was affectionately referred to as “Africa” by Shaykh Arona Faye.

From October 2014 to November 2015, I spent the bulk of my time conducting formal fieldwork in Moncks Corner, South Carolina (with short breaks in between to visit family and process field notes). This was followed by regular returns to Moncks Corner to conduct follow-up interviews and continue informal conversations with vital interlocutors to better understand internal dynamics and emerging relationships within the community. During this time period (and after), I also traveled to Senegal for weeks and months at a time to meet with Mustafawiyya members in both Dakar and Thiès, two locations that are vital to the Tariqa and are separated by a distance of about 72 kilometers. Moncks Corner was my primary site of research, while Senegal was my secondary site. I decided that in order to better understand the relations within the Muslim community in Moncks Corner and between its corresponding location(s) in Senegal, it would be advantageous to situate myself amongst the Muslims in South Carolina. This is because I have found that the *zawiyah* operates as a node within a broader transatlantic network where practitioners, materials, and ideas travel back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean. I have understood this web of interactions in the framework of what Ousmane Kane (2011) has called a “transnational spiritual network,” which illustrates and defines the vital operations of transnational identities in each location in a network of hubs that contain some shared, essential religious meaning for its members. His monograph outlined how Senegalese Muslims in Harlem, New York created a sense of religious belonging in the United States away from Senegal. In addition to goods and services that were made available to cater to Senegalese customers in a Sufi brotherhood, a sense of heightened camaraderie developed to mimic and align with the organic religious bonds between practitioners that extended across oceans and over land. In this sense, I was interested in how the *zawiyah* of Moncks Corner functioned in this way. What is vitally different, however, is the fact that most of the Muslims who inhabit the space are African-American converts who have taken Shaykh Arona Faye as their spiritual leader and guide. As well, it should be noted that the *zawiyah*-mosque is located on land where African-Americans labored and were enslaved 160 years prior. I argue that some American-born Muslims have been impacted by a West African Islamic pedagogical tradition that places emphasis on the role of the body as a medium for religious and spiritual training. The processes of *tarbiyah*, through which Muslims of African descent in Moncks Corner access via sufism, provides a strategy for addressing personal and collective cultural trauma caused by the presence and histories of structural discrimination and racial oppression. Participation in sufism, particularly a West African-derived configuration of *tassawuf*, has also culturally impacted African-American *fuqara* as many view themselves as in the process of moving to Senegal or, alternatively, intent on bringing what they can of Senegal to Moncks Corner.

Masjidul Muhajjirun wal Ansar is a site of pilgrimage for the Mustafawiyya members, especially those who live in the United States. For many, Moncks Corner is a second home that they flock to during Muslim holidays (i.e. *Eid-al-Fitr*, *Eid-al-Adha*)²¹ or other large events (*Mawlid an Nabi*). Others, however, have permanently relocated to Moncks Corner in order to

²¹ While *Eid al-Fitr* is a Muslim holiday that commemorates the end of the Holy month of Ramadan in which Muslims abstain from food and drink during the daylight hours, *Eid al-Adha* is a commemoration of Abraham’s Sacrifice that is celebrated at the end of the Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah). Both are holidays that all devout Muslims observe on an annual basis regardless of whether they can actually participate in the pilgrimage.

live in proximity to Shaykh Faye and the Moncks Corner Muslim community. Most who have relocated have either moved from elsewhere in the state, or have come from northern cities like Washington or Philadelphia. Regardless of whether members live in town or commute, large gatherings of Mustafawiyya enliven the mosque to no end as old friends dine and worship together, learn the names of new children, and collectively witness their teacher provide spiritual advice and religious understanding on specific Qur'anic verses and narrations of Prophet Muhammad (*ahadith*).

At the same time, the *zawiyah* is not necessarily always fixed to the building of the Moncks Corner mosque. Practically speaking, those who have moved to Moncks Corner, or have even trekked across the country to visit, have done so due to the presence of Shaykh Arona Faye. Yes, the camaraderie with other mosque-goers is valuable, no doubt, but the crux of why people visit is because most, if not all, are his students. That is, they have given their spiritual allegiance to him (*bayah*) and have agreed to trust their inward development to his regimen and tutelage. Thus, when he travels, his most devoted students often travel with him. Whether locally or internationally, those that love him follow him as he is frequently invited to give lectures, visit sick or needful Muslims, or conduct religious ceremonies that require religious expertise in nearby states. What I pose is a simultaneous and alternative understanding of the term '*zawiyah*' to include not just the physical space, but also the imaginal space in which those seek refuge, seek it at the center of the community—the center is Shaykh Arona Faye, and not necessarily the mosque itself. After all, it is the Shaykh himself who assists in the mobility of his students, whether spiritual, physical or economic. Shaykh Arona Faye has facilitated the founding of the annual Cheikh Mustafa Day, often held at the end of the year in Thiès, Senegal in which a handful of American (and Spanish) Muslims attend as honored guests. During such trips, African-American Muslim guests engage in both visitation to the tomb of the late Cheikh Mustafa Gueye (d. 1989) in Thiès (and sometimes other holy sites around the country) and heritage tourism to the Slave Castle at Goreé Island off the coast of Dakar. These mobilities are essential to understanding the culmination of diasporic religious identities amongst the Mustafawiyya of the United States and beyond.

Research Methodology

Throughout the majority of my time spent in Moncks Corner, South Carolina in order to conduct close and intimate ethnographic research within the *zawiya*, I decided to live at Masjidul Muhajjirun wal Ansar. Ultimately, my decision to do this was prompted by a discovery that there were several men living in the mosque at the time. During evenings (after programming and meals were complete), they would sleep in the main hallway or in the *musallah* (prayer hall). During the day, their suitcases, books, and other personal belongings were stored in the mosque's office. This fact rendered the office practically unusable. My crucial assumption was that living in such constant proximity would allow me consistent and valuable access to some of the more prominent interlocutors. As well, I would come to learn that the men who lived in the mosque did so mostly as a purposeful choice. Some intentionally moved away from gainful employment in northern urban locations to the suburban South in order to be close to their teacher. Some even visited temporarily and slept at the mosque while their families were back home at some different location. Furthermore, visitors who were not necessarily tariqa members sometimes visited the *zawiyah* and were attracted to the space by virtue of Shaykh Faye's reputation for being knowledgeable and treating his guests well. Such guests were housed at nearby motels, but

in some cases they were allowed to stay at the mosque - particularly for stays that were longer than a few days. Nonetheless, I have witnessed the usage of the mosque as a refuge proper. Such a fact betrays the linear assumption that Sufism would necessarily be in decline and would be overshadowed by a religious textualism (e.g. Salafi doctrine/ ideology) that seemed to coincide with urban, industrialized social environments. Ernest Gellner characterized Sufism as a folk religious expression that would appeal more so to the superstitious and non-intellectual practitioner (Gellner 1983). But the fact is that interest in Sufism has persisted (Malik & Hinnells 2006; Cornell 2010) and its emphasis on spiritual transformation has appealed to African American Muslims (McCloud 1995; Hermansen 2000; Abdullah 2010).

As far as research methodology, it was important for me to be able to converse with my participants before, after, and outside of more prominent events (such as *dhikr*, Friday congregational prayers - *jumah*, weekly classes, and other large gatherings) in order to gain a fuller picture of how my research participants viewed themselves and lived their religious lives in light of a West African Islamic pedagogical tradition deployed in the American South. Thus, it was vital that I thoroughly embed myself in the community as an intimate subject as a means of moving beyond simply an external researcher or persistent visitor. Much like these men, I left behind conventions of modern living and adopted a mode of communal existence in order to share chores, watch over the mosque, and provide mutual assistance with minor errands. Of course, I accompanied the group during meals as we were hosted most days at the houses of other *fuqara*. This provided a valuable space and relaxed atmosphere in which to ask questions related to religious views, political opinions, and personal histories.

As one might assume, living in a mosque has its inconveniences. However, what I immediately noticed above all was that such a mode of life in that building had its own sense of time. Practically speaking, the location of the mosque during my fieldwork was a commercial building that was retrofitted to serve the needs of the modestly-sized Muslim community of Moncks Corner. As such, it had no external windows except for one side of the building where the dining hall was located. However, this is not where we normally slept as it was not carpeted and certainly less private. Where we did normally sleep had no windows. As a result, our sense of time was not largely determined by employment. It was not even necessarily determined by a circadian rhythm. It was, however, dependent upon the five daily prayers (*salaah*) and various programming and events held at the mosque.

In certain places throughout this dissertation, it becomes apparent that the practices and performances I analyze were achieved via my direct participation. I relied upon the standard technique of 'participant-observation' in order to more deeply embed myself in the Moncks Corner community. In many instances, I decided it would be better to observe particular practices from a distance. In others, I choose a more intimate engagement with which to better understand how my interlocutors drew meaning from their own inclusion in Sufi modes of training. Moreover, I also reveal that I identify as an African-American Muslim. Due to the fact that I am studying how and why African-American Muslims living in the American South participate in a West African mode of Islamic pedagogy, some would question my ability to remain objective in the midst of my analysis. The notion that I should problematize my own subject-position to lay out clearly the potential weaknesses, inherent solidarities, and scholarly blindspots I carry is the kind of unproductive reflexivity that scholars of color who conduct research in their own communities, or on other people of color, is problematic. While there does exist the possibility of bias, we might spend more time problematizing the many historical examples of how uneven relations of power and privilege generated through supposedly authoritative voices claimed to

produce knowledge about peoples they studied that often resulted in racist conclusions about black and brown bodies while normalizing whiteness. We might more quickly realize that biases, under any circumstances, are unavoidable in practice. Furthermore, I would argue that the principle of scientific objectivity, particularly when studying the behaviors and belief systems of other people, has largely remained a myth and only an ideal. The scientific observer, even if not originating from the community that s/he studies, has gained very little, in my opinion, if not profoundly and meaningfully impacted by the fieldwork experience and by the people who s/he has spent so much energy attempting to become intimate with. This manner of intimacy should be viewed as an aspect that provides texture and understanding to the researcher, rather than be viewed as something which detracts from the intellectual and theoretical depth of a given analysis. The Sufis say that one can spend a lifetime describing what an apple tastes like and achieve very little in providing another with an understanding of how an apple actually tastes. However, by tasting the apple, one gains in an instant an understanding of why apples exist.

As an African-American who has been reared in the United States, I am particularly aware of how structural racism impacts people of color, directly and indirectly. I am more than familiar with how the scenery and presence of historical and present-day violence leaves a residue on the mind, in the heart and on the body. This first-hand knowledge of the impact of cultural trauma has provided me a shortcut to understanding the physical and psychic challenges that my interlocutors navigate. As a Muslim, my years of informal religious study has acquainted me with the vocabulary with which to understand the orientations, eschatological concerns, and manners of belief that drive everyday decision-making on the part of most Muslims and the communities in which they are affiliated. Moreover, my historical studies of Muslims in the United States has informed me of the sensitivities, anxieties, and vision in which they engage. I am, thus, uniquely situated to carry out this study and, furthermore, my collective experiences and points of view have collectively operated to lead me to this point. I am positioned, therefore, to engage in critical inquiry regarding this topic. On the other hand, the fact of my Black Muslimness does not necessarily provide one with an ability to understand all of the motivations of other Black Muslims. African-descended Muslims are not automatons and while the religious tradition of Islam provides a basis for commonality, all people carry a slightly different connection regarding actual belief.

Summary of Chapters

Beyond this introductory chapter, this dissertation is comprised of five chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter, entitled “South Carolina to Senegal (and Back),” examines how two sites of pilgrimage for the fuqara—Moncks Corner, South Carolina and Thiès, Senegal—play a part in the infrastructure of Black Atlantic Sufi network. I show how these sites produce mobility in their ability to operate as spaces of spiritual refuge for visitors on both local and regional contexts by looking at how a local *zawiyah* produces movement in relation to a broader *tariqa*. Mobility—even the idea of migration—is built upon notions of spiritual growth. Moncks Corner is the central site in which access to the Tariqa’s most charismatic living shaykh, Shaykh Arona Faye, has worked for the past two decades teaching and mentoring those on the Path. On the other hand, Thiès is the location where the Tariqa’s founder is buried and travelers visit the town in order to pay homage to his memory. “From Slave to Abdullahi” is the second chapter which examines how Islamic forms of worship in Moncks Corner and the identifications regarding Black Muslimness becomes artifacts of “reversion” in the contemporary American

South. As well, I examine how the processes of learning that took place at the Fuqara International Academy, a Mustafawiyya-affiliated Qur'an school, mark a secondary stage of growth for Black Muslim learners. I show how Qur'anic memorization, religious cultivation, and the singing of Mustafawiyya ballads might be thought of part of broader discourses of Black Muslim identity that include notions of return and repatriation to Africa.

The third chapter is where I show how the body plays a central role in the forms of spiritual care that take place amongst the fuqara and is entitled "Alchemy of the Fuqara." Through the performance of dhikr, the *fuqara* access pathways to healing that address cultural trauma as well as psychic suffering enacted by racism. Dhikr thus functions simultaneously as bodily memory and cultural memory. I show how prayer economy operates in Moncks Corner and beyond in the fourth chapter entitled "The Prayer Economy in a South Carolina Town." By drawing upon an examination of how bodies are used for labor to support the broader mission of the Mustafawiyya, I analyze how the currency of charisma fuels material relationships within the Tariqa as I deploy the term 'prayer economy' to characterize forms of transfer that move beyond the materiality of economic transactions between religious experts and patrons. "Muhajjirun wal Ansar" is the fifth chapter and it tracks how regional solidarities are produced through the emergence of shared Black Muslim identities that are encouraged by the common tutelage in spiritual matters. I therefore return to an examination of pilgrimages while reading them as displays of reversion and diaspora. My central intervention in this regard is to provide an empirical approach that shows exactly how and whether African-American Muslims in Moncks Corner views themselves as part of a broader African diaspora via their inclusion into a West African Sufi tradition.

Chapter 1

South Carolina to Senegal (and Back Again): Muslim Mobilities and Black Atlantic Circularities in the Tariqa Mustafawiyya

“I am assisting in the perpetuation of my father’s practices. Intimate knowledge of the Prophet is my real essence. His oceans are the science of my love. A wonderful thing in the realm of the universe!...Certainly in the declaration that he is my master there are oceans of benefiting aid. He causes the essence to pour forth. His treasures are wondrous... He has oceans of that for which I strive. He has the station of witnessing. I have a place for him in my masjid in the sphere of magnificence and excellence...”²²

“The one who has traveled to 100 countries will be the master of the one who has read 100 books.”²³

Cheikh Mustafa Day 2015 was a commemoration held in the city of Thiés, Senegal on the 19th of January. The purpose of this annual event is to pay a general homage to the founder of the Tariqa Mustafawiyya and is also a specific celebration of his spiritual communion with the Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah whereby he received the *Salaatul Samawiyyah* (Arabic: Heavenly Salutation)—a special prayer that sends salutation on the beloved Prophet of Islam.²⁴ The outdoor event, which commenced around midnight and ended in time for *fajr* (dawn prayer time), was full with singing, lectures, and magnificently-adorned guests all under a white silken tent that was large enough to contain the approximately 600-member audience. Meanwhile, Shaykh Faye, fellow leaders within the Tariqa, family members and descendants of Cheikh Mustafa, and guest speakers sat upon a slightly raised platform in large tufted couches which were situated at the front of the tent. Several singers, both American and Senegalese, occupied a table that was placed to the left of the stage. In addition, an additional group of about ten singers sat in reserved seating in the front row to the left, while several younger singers sat on thin green carpeting in front of the left side of the stage.

I, along with several other American (and Spanish) Muslims, were invited to attend this event and were treated as honored guests, while also being recognized as foreign students of Shaykh Arona Faye al-Faqir. We accompanied Shaykh Faye as part of his special entourage and were placed near the front. As in many Muslim gatherings, seating encouraged gender separation. Two wide columns of white folding chairs were placed whereby men were to sit on

²² Cheikh Mustafa Gueye Haydar. *“Al-Bahrul Muhit”* (The Expanding Ocean). Fuqara International Productions; Moncks Corner, SC USA (English Translation). Lines 3, 13, and 34.

²³ Lecture in Moncks Corner Mosque, Shaykh Arona Faye, 11 March 2015.

²⁴ In English: “O Allah, send blessings upon our master Muhammad, the one precedes all others, the one whose brilliant lights radiate and fill the heavens. May Allah bless him and his family and companions in the amount of every grain of sand and every star in the sky.” Taken from “The Mustafawi Wird,” Printed in Indonesia; March 2007 / Rabi’al-awwal 1428, page 17. This prayer is recited by most fuqara throughout the network after each of the five daily prayers (*salaah*). It is believed that the prayer was given specifically to Cheikh Mustafa Gueye Haydara (1926-1989) as both symbolic gesture that recognizes his station as a man of righteousness and also confirms his status as worthy of being among the *awliyyah* (Arabic: friends of God; connotes piety and proximity).

the right while women sat on the left (except for the first two rows where extra singers who were male were placed). The two columns were cleaved by a green carpeted walkway that led up to the stage.

This scene is one about pilgrimage. And pilgrims, apparently. Here, let us understand pilgrimage in a number of ways. Pilgrimage upward. Pilgrimage inward. Pilgrimage homeward. As well, let us also resist automatized ideations that associate Muslim pilgrimage exclusively with a trip to the holy city of Makkah in Saudi Arabia. It is true that for more than a millennia, Muslims have been engaging in a physical and spiritual migrations toward that sacred place in order to fulfill the call to honor what has come before the Divine force that inspired the Prophet Muhammad to call his countrymen, and humankind, to Islam—the monotheism of his forefather Abraham. However, pilgrimage also can refer to varying ways that Muslims migrate toward other sacralized locations that compel visitors to pay visits to the tombs or ancestral homes of venerated saints (in Arabic: *ziyara*) and to observe rites specific to numerous Sufi traditions. I bring up the question of pilgrimage to the city of Thiès (and other sites of mobility in this transatlantic Sufi network) for the purpose of analyzing the manner in which it serves as location of reception for Sufi travelers (and daydreamers) and how it draws attention to affinities that encourage local and international mobility. While I treat pilgrimage as black Muslim diasporic phenomenon in another chapter that focuses intently on diaspora, here I examine pilgrimage, and Sufi mobilities broadly considered, mainly as a method for analyzing the circulation of bodies, the transmission of knowledge, and the fortification of relationships.

This chapter explores the connection between the cultivation of religious subjectivities and the mobilization among American and Senegambian *fuqara* as it relies upon ethnographic research to highlight those who travel between the USA and Senegal in order to visit sites of pilgrimage considered sacred in the Order, or to study Qur'an and Arabic Language in *daaras*²⁵ (e.g. *madrassas*, Quranic Schools) established by the Order. Additionally, there are those who, for various reasons, desire to travel to Senegal but cannot. Thus, I also attend to everyday discourses of future mobility that play a part in constructions of mobile Muslim identities in order to gather a fuller picture of the impact of travel on American-born and African-born Muslims both in Senegal and the United States. Moreover, this discussion also includes more local forms of mobility that incorporates travel between sites where *fuqara* reside and or gather.

The aim here is to unravel how West African Sufi traditions attract their diasporic counterparts homeward and become incorporated into these networks while also mapping the ways that West African Muslim networks are inhabited and impacted by American-born participants. The core intention of this section is to understand what travel to (and from) Senegal can tell us about Muslim mobilities, their motivations, and the extension of diasporic networks for Muslims of varying African descent in the southern United States and in West Africa. It asks what the local routes of travel and relations built between and amongst two central sites of pilgrimage (one in Moncks Corner, South Carolina and the other in Thiès, Senegal) can tell us

²⁵ This word is a Wolofization of the Arabic word 'dahira' which means 'circle.' In my conversations among Muslims in Senegal, I found that the word is used to refer to school where Qur'an and Arabic are taught. Also, this word refers to local religious/cultural associations predominantly used amongst Murid communities in Europe and the USA where practitioners gather to pray, socialize, and discuss important matters.

about how regional and translocal networks play a part in the development of black religious identities.

To understand how African-American and West African religious identities articulate within a common spiritual network, I have paid close attention to patterns of migration between (and around) the two locations mentioned above and discourses related to travel between Mustafawiyya members. I have also been attentive to the relationships between such practices and the unfolding of black religious identities amongst Mustafawiyya members -- and on what affects that shared modes of practice have on both groups. Thus, how participation in a West African Sufi tradition impacts how social and religious identities form and change as members collectively engage in prayer circles, programming, migration, and in the circulation of religious materials forms the core of this analysis.

Between South Carolina and Senegal

Of course, this story does not begin at the beginning. And certainly, every beginning is actually an ending to some prior story and, meanwhile, is the subsequent unfolding of another. Yet, we must begin somewhere. We might say that the beginning of this story takes place with an initial transatlantic journey. And then set in motion by a reversal of sail. Umm Aisha is a seasoned African-American Muslim woman from South Carolina (originally from Philadelphia) who has been a pillar and partial founder of the Moncks Corner *zawiyah* since its inception more than two decades prior. She was married to Shaykh Arona Faye for about twenty years and together they have built the community into what it is today. Yet, it is not only the mosque that received the hundreds of hungry mouths and hearts who have migrated to, or visited, the small town of Moncks Corner in order to be embraced by the loving arms of the *zawiyah*. Her money was used to partially finance the first mosque and it is her house in which scores of *fuqara* and guests from around the world have been fed, both physically and spiritually. For so many years has Umm Aisha's small, blue house on Tall Spruce Street operated as an informal meeting place and headquarters for the community in Moncks Corner. I cannot exactly remember when I first met Umm Aisha since our acquaintance extends beyond the ignition of this project, but I certainly do remember every single moment sitting in her living room at the feet of Shaykh Arona Faye during my fieldwork.

During a conversation Umm Aisha and I had back in late 2014, she revealed to me that she had some knowledge of Islam prior to meeting her future companion who was a featured speaker at a conference in Paris almost three decades ago in 1990.²⁶ Before meeting Shaykh Faye, she had been a member of the Nation of Islam since about 1970 and was attracted to its Black Nationalist stance. However, she admitted that although she considered herself a believer, she had stopped practicing her faith due to her general disillusionment that was caused by organizational dynamics experienced while a member of the NOI. Nonetheless, Umm Aisha was simply captivated by Shaykh Faye's deep and profound ability to provide a clear and concise understanding of the finer points of Islamic law and praxis. As the story goes, she couldn't help but to approach him and get his contact information in hopes that she could learn more about Islam. After exchanging addresses, they wrote each other back and forth for about two years— she would ask questions about Islam and he would answer them. Umm Aisha would visit her new teacher and future spouse in Sierra Leone where they would soon marry and eventually

²⁶ Interview, Aisha Faye, 17 November 2014.

bring him back to her hometown after going back and forth between West Africa and the United States. She was willing to mortgage her own house in order to assist in financing a mosque and establishing a small, but vibrant Muslim community in South Carolina back in the mid 1990s. The deal was simple: as he would fill the minds and hearts of those who joined their community by either conversion or migration, she would fill their bellies with good southern food that now had an African inflection.

Fast forward twenty years later, and what was primarily a Senegalese Sufi order that initially expanded into nearby West African countries via small collections of students in Mauritania, Mali, Morocco, and Sierra Leone, had now expanded into Europe and North America as well. While it is true that many American-born and African-born Muslims have relocated to Moncks Corner in order to become a permanent part of the Moncks Corner zawiya and to be led by Shaykh Faye, the Shaykh is himself not stationary. Generally speaking, the shaykh is a highly-mobile figure that both is aided by the network in his mobility, and concurrently encourages mobility in his students. It is through the shaykh that the desire for mobility is initiated and then actuated.

True, it would seem to some more prudent to discuss the phenomenon of religious pilgrimages from within a diasporic framework. However, a study of Muslim mobility allows for the understanding of how travelers engage in specific forms of local and regional movement, while a diasporic framework allows for a heightened awareness of the religious identifications and the multiple solidarities produced therein. The task here is to disentangle the one from the other for the sake of understanding not just how mobility and diaspora may work in conjunction, but also how one may persist in spite of the other. Therefore, the discussion of Sufi Muslim migration here will be detached from that of Sufi Muslim diaspora, and is situated firmly in an 'Anthropology of Mobility' (James 1975; Salazar 2012; King and Wood 2013). By locating the manner in which local migrations are indicative of globality and how globality is produced locally (Miller 1995; Laguerre 2003; Meyrowitz 2005), this project builds upon a field within Anthropology that is concerned with how processes of globalization have shifted notions of belonging and citizenship which are impacted by the consequences of economic forces, religion, and or historical displacement, for example (Parreñas 2001; Olwig and Sorensen 2003; Inda, Rosaldo, Hartmann and Lewellyn 2006).

Mobility has been a central theme in scholarship on Islam that has emerged throughout the much of the literature that looks at the configuration of Muslim identities in broader terms (Eickelman & Piscatori 1990; Daly 1996) while examining closely the specific nature of migration in a West African context (Launay 1990 and 1992; Ebin 1995; Yamba 1995). Insofar as mobility serves as a lens to illuminate the complexities of daily life (in and beyond West Africa), many works have focused on Muslim life in West Africa and yet have also studied the extension of local space into lands and environments beyond "home" (Daly 1996; Carter 1997; Stoller 2002 and 2003; Riccio 2004; N'Diaye & N'Diaye 2006; Sinatti 2008; Kane 2011). Furthermore, mobility has been understood as more than just the expansion or crossing of physical boundaries, but also as an emergence of identities which straddle multiple social worlds (Ferme 1994; Geschiere 1997; Abdullah 2009). Within the West Africanist literature, there is a rich segment that focuses particularly on the Muridiyya Tariqa in and beyond Senegal. Keeping in line with larger ideas of movement and diasporization in Africanist Anthropology reviewed above, Muslims in Senegal and beyond its borders have been studied closely. They recount how a Senegalese Murid diaspora emerged as an expansion into Dakar for the countryside, followed by

migration to various African cities, and finally to urban centers in the United States and Europe (Ebin 1995, Babou 2002). Falling in line with broader anthropological themes on Africa that include literacy and politics, writings on Murid network expansion have spanned concerns related to the proliferation of migrants that contribute to the emergence of global neighborhoods abroad such as itinerant trade (Ebin 1995, Diouf 2000), economic and political formations that are facilitated by global circuitry (Cruise O'Brien 1971, Riccio 2004), and the multiple identities that emerge from mobility (Salzbrunn 2004, N'Diaye & N'Diaye 2006, Sinatti 2008, Zain 2009, Kane 2011).

Murid traders beyond Senegal share horizontal ties, where groups of young men (*taalibes*) cooperatively lease living quarters and engage in business opportunities through taking advantage of the mobility that a centralized network affords through local collective of Murids (*daaras*). Victoria Ebin (1995) records that the role of the "Cheikh" (alt: *Shaykh*) in Murid expansion is a key ingredient to the preservation of religious hierarchy and continued arrangement of the Murid "center." They also determine the roles that *taalibes* play in the larger schema and delegate tasks according to ability while also providing another manner of continuity with homeland. Cheikh Anta Babou (2002) also notes the role that the larger network plays in providing economic prowess, social capital, and educational opportunities for Murids. This particularly applies to those in urban settings and he emphasizes the way that Murids collectively organize their economic endeavors and recognize that a cooperative approach leads more deeply toward empowerment. The economic foundation of the Murid economy has beyond groundnut cultivation, however, its pattern of migration also has shifted from rural to urban areas. Moreover, as the general assumption was that the Muridiyya Tariqa was bound to decline outside of the context of French colonization (because it had only initially been understood as an answer to the colonial disruption of Wolof societal dynamics), Babou notes that this organization has betrayed those predictions and it has remained the fastest growing Senegalese Sufi brotherhood in spite of expansion across national boundaries.²⁷

Regarding the study of mobility more generally, there has been a rich and enduring focus on the lens of transnationalism as social scientists have studied how migrants cross state borders and meanwhile live in a such a fashion that has required residence, or at least sustained relocations, in multiple nation-states (Kearney 1995). While some have approached this question by looking at the complicated sites of identity for displaced communities (Csordas 1994; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Maliki 2012), others have studied the multiple meanings of pilgrimage and tourism (Graburn 1983; Badone 2004; Coleman and Eade 2004; Smith 2012). Of most relevance to this study is the manner in which religious traditions have specifically facilitated cross-border migrations and have reframed belonging as iterations of global identities (Chafetz 2002; Csordas 2009; Kane 2011). In fact, many have found that the religious traditions in which migrants and travelers participate have sometimes complicated notions of larger state-based nationalisms (Van der Veer 1994; Ludden 1996; Shaw and Stewart 2003; Silverman 2010). This somewhat recent analytical turn has shifted the study of mobility away from a sole emphasis on global migrations between national boundaries in order to include relocations and sites of postnational, collective

²⁷ Earlier studies on Sufi brotherhoods such as Clifford Geertz's *The Religion of Java* (1960) and J. S. Trimingham's *The Sufi Orders of Islam* (1971) have similarly assumed that Muslim interest in Sufism would decline in the wake of modern life, but this trend has not proven true.

belonging that operate locally as well (Mandaville 2002; Conradson and McKay 2007; Freitag and Von Open 2009).

Therefore, both lenses of transnationalism and translocality are used here in conjunction to describe how Muslims of African descent in the Mustafawiyya Tariqa have shared knowledge and narrative both across and within national boundaries in such a way that formations of collective belonging emerge in spite of location. In order to properly elucidate the multiple emergences of identification that result from historical narratives of black dispossession, secularism, interfaces with state agencies, varying degrees of travel, postnational solidarities, and ethno-religious affinities, dropping one framework of analysis for the other will not suffice. This analysis, therefore, takes a combinatory approach of *regional mobility* in apprehending the politics of socio-spatiality that take place in this Sufi network. I offer that the regional mobilities displayed within the Mustafawiyya network directly map onto shifting and malleable regional (diasporic) identities. Muslims of varying African descent have certainly “created space” for themselves in various locations around the Atlantic at various points in time (Metcalf 1996; Dannin 2002; Abdullah 2010) and proximity between West African Muslim enclaves and adjacent African-American communities have revealed fluid cultural relationships between the two (Stoller 2003; Kane 2011). Consequently, the proliferation of a broader regional (even global) identity in Muslim communities has been a reflection of how African diasporic identities have transcended local and national understandings of self (Gilroy 1993; McCloud 1995; Abdullah 2011). The complex sites of identification in these communities that emerge within larger transnational spiritual networks, for example, allow for heightened mobility and the successful negotiation of multiple social worlds where identities are made and remade (Laguerre 1998; Akyeamong 2000; Kane 2011). Moreover, it is often from within configurations of postnational networks that shared regional identities are intentionally constructed and maintained (Clarke 2004; Konadu-Agyemang et al 2006).

Black Atlantic Religion/ Circularity

While it is true that most of the circulation within the Mustafawiyya network takes place around the Atlantic mostly due to the placement of network nodes (such as in Moncks Corner or Dakar/Thiès), and that the notion of a ‘Black Atlantic’ has provided a rich instrument for understanding emergent diasporic affinities and regional identities, it is also true that the Atlantic itself has provided a means for understanding exactly the *routes* of black religious communities (Gilroy 1993; Matory 2005; Routon 2006; Young 2007; Sarró and Blanes 2009). At the same time, the placement of these nodes is not solely the motive for the specific pathways and routes of mobility that are mapped within the larger network (*tariqa*). It is also the historical legacies of forced migration and enslavement that have initiated intercontinental dispersions of African descendants and resulted in the firm embedding of peoples onto and into the Western side of the Atlantic. In other words, while the recent migrations seen that begin in Senegal and end in South Carolina are mainly motivated by postcolonial migrations and ethno-religious solidarities, the patterns of mobility that begin in South Carolina and end in Senegal can be understood as being simultaneously situated in an historical narrative involving prior transatlantic routes of enslavement and contemporary religious pilgrimage imprinted onto discourses of dispersion and return. However, we should not stop there. It is vital to understand these patterns as emerging, shifting, and responsive to network growths and contractions. In other words, these migrations

and pilgrimages are continuous as they facilitate the circulation of identities and knowledge back and forth across the Atlantic ocean.

Some works that have used the Black Atlantic as a device for better understanding the flows and migrations of peoples and traditions that circulate around it have placed much emphasis on ‘traditional’ African religiosity (as in Matory 2005, Routon 2006). However, Sarró and Blanes (2009) argue that the focus on ‘*trance-nationalism*’ (Routon) has perhaps overstated the presence of traditions like Santeria and Candomblè in the exchange between Luso-America and continental Africa. They depart from this trend by firmly placing African Christianity, particularly in its postcolonial formations (e.g. prophetism), as more central to the discussion of circuitous African tradition around the Atlantic. For my own purposes though, I situate the religion of Islam, particularly in its West African configuration as central to my own usage of the black Atlantic in describing the circuits of exchange and transmission that take place between Muslims of African descent on either side of the ocean. In so doing, both Paul Gilroy’s and J. Lorand Matory’s works are instructive in that they lead us to consider how both African-American practices within a Senegalese Sufi tradition and the Senegalese institutions in which African-Americans participate are reciprocally shifted by their combined presence. In other words, while African American Muslims in Moncks Corner are profoundly transformed by the processes of religious learning transmitted from within a specific West African Islamic pedagogical approach, those processes and Senegalese Muslims themselves are also profoundly impacted by the cultural expectations and spiritual needs of the African-American Muslims in the Tariqa.

Initiation & Migration: Theorizing Sufi Muslim Mobility

As far as solidarities are concerned, there are two primary ways in which we can understand how mobilities are enacted in a Sufi network: that of the *Tariqa* and the *Zawiyah*. *Tariqa* is an Arabic word that connotes a path upon which a spiritual journey takes place—indeed, a tradition whereby initiates regularly deploy particular formulaic prayers (*wird*) and collective spiritual observances that heighten fraternal solidarity and God-consciousness. While the pathway is intended to signify an orientation toward God and emphasis on esoteric sciences, it also can be used to understand how members carry out translocal migrations within a multinodal network. The *tariqa* is a multinodal and regional formulation in which all who are involved partake in the veneration of specific *shuyukh* (masters) and also access similar locations of pilgrimage as they contain shared spiritual significance. Successful tariqas (*turuq*) are necessarily transnational in scope and in many cases, consistent with regard to the observance of formulaic religiosity across nodes. Meanwhile, a *zawiyah* (Arabic: nook, corner) connotes a place of seclusion or protection for the resident and the traveler. Here, *zawiyah* also carries a more localized connotation that can be used to understand the nodal aspects of the translocal and regional Sufi network - the *tariqa*. In short, while *zawiyahs* are the places of refuge that pilgrims migrate to, *tariqas* are the networks that pilgrims circulate *within*.

The *tariqa* itself, in general terms, can be understood as both a spiritual route that requires certain formulae for religious observance, and more specifically, a method of social organization whereby adherents who have aligned themselves to a particular shaykh are included into networked locations of meaning where members and texts circulate. It is initiation into the *tariqa* that compels migration. In fact, the process itself is a migration. And this migration is an internal one where before any physical movement can happen, internal shifts must occur.

Likewise, there are a number of ways that the *zawiyah* of Moncks Corner, like any *zawiyah* perhaps, allows for multiple kinds of mobility. Aside from physical migration, whereby *zawiyahs* are the vital joints that provide for regional migration, there is also spiritual mobility, which actually compels the traveler to embark upon his journey. It is the quest for inward cultivation of the heart, the desire to crush the ego (*taskiyyatul nafs*), that animates the limbs to migrate the initiate toward that which is sought. This is the means whereby the initiate enters onto (or into) the path (*tariqa*) of piety and inward reflection aided by the nodal points that operate as interchanges for destination and departure. This is where the metaphor of an ‘ocean’ given earlier makes sense in describing the fluidity and stability of the *tariqa*. Meanwhile the various *zawiyah* would be ports, which are also vehicles for mobility and concurrent portals for respite—points of suture for oceanic travelers that anchor the larger network while also providing the stable ground for takeoff.

The Transatlantic Tariqa

Studying the *tariqa* as a regional configuration, much like the diaspora concept, requires resisting the tendency to look at Sufi Muslim mobility as simply a process of back and forth movement (Salter 2013). As we seek to capture the nature of Sufi mobilities through looking closer at the *tariqa* and the ways in which spiritual authority reaches across borders and oceans (and time) to its adherents, this allows us to understand these relationships beyond a center-periphery model by which various studies of transnationalism complicated prior notions of returns and homecomings to any singular point of origin (Clifford 1994; Constable 1999; Markowitz and Stefansson 2003). Joann D’alibera’s (2004) analysis of Sierra Leoneans in Washington, D.C., for example, suggests a mode of life that orients away from previous models of migratory relations between home and hostland. Her work analyzes the relationships to multiple network sites around the globe, but also multiple relations between communities that erode ethnic boundaries while signaling a different emergence of transnational existence. While D’alibera uses the term *transnational* throughout her work, she de-emphasizes models of diaspora that assume a center while all other sites are situated peripherally. Moving beyond a focus on orientations away from a home nation, her work suggests a model whereby all sites maintain relations between each other and not just in reference to some center. What is also compelling about D’alibera’s work on this Sierra Leonean community is that it does not rely on the notion of ethnically homogenous space in order to consider how they interface within a pluralistic, urban environment. Examinations of dispersed communities such as those cited above has been quite useful in studying the varying emergences of hybrid solidarity and the multiple allegiances that develop among those living away from ‘home.’ On the contrary, the kind of circulation seen in the mobility practices of Muslims in Moncks Corner showed a preoccupation with the two major sites of pilgrimage mentioned above. In other words, there was a manner in which these sites held persuasive religious power over Tariqa initiates as these locations were emphasized in commonplace discussions during community dinners, in the mosque, and during local travels. Major religious celebrations in the *tariqa*, at least seen from the perspective of those who surround Shaykh Arona Faye, took place in either Moncks Corner or in Thiès. It was during these celebrations that proximal locations where initiates reside were de-emphasized.

Anne Bang (2014), who has studied Sufi networks that expand from Eastern Africa into the Western Indian Ocean, uses the metaphor of “the ripple” to express how esoteric knowledge and spiritual genealogies radiate outward from an epicenter that make the mobilization of Sufi

shaykhs and teachers possible. It is through the horizontalizing, diffusive nature of religious discourses shared across a broad translocal network whereby “the reef” (a collective set of departure points around the Indian Ocean) operates to produce the very artifacts of mobility through which movement is achieved. Thus, Sufi literatures and figures travel throughout the network simultaneously formed from their initial placement in the broader network while also impacting, and impacted by, their points of arrival in nodes elsewhere. I suggest, consequently, that this move away from a center-periphery model might be re-visited and argue that the mode of Sufi Muslim translocalism seen in the case of Moncks Corner and Thiés illustrates precisely the kind of relation that relies upon a center (or two) while other locations where members reside are, in practice, peripheral. This supposition is founded upon the notion that these locations—Moncks Corner and Thiés, Senegal—operate as foci for pilgrimage. In fact, it is necessary to view these sites as both local and as iterations of the broader regional network. That is, that both Moncks Corner and Thiés maintain significant relations with local adherents as well as produce circuitous relations with various other sites (Cordoba, Dakar, Philadelphia, Gambia, etc.) where *fugara* live. In other words, they are both independent *zawiyahs* that operate within a larger *tariqa*. Taking this notion further, we must also recognize that even local nodes possess their own peripheries. It is here that relying solely upon transnationalism as a theoretical frame for inquiry becomes inadequate for understanding mobilities beyond that of the nation-state - or rather, it does not account for domestic migrations nor the regional movements of Sufi Muslim actors that meanwhile operate on the level of the supranational.

Moreover, time spent with the Mustafawiyya has urged me to reconsider an abandoning of the center-periphery model. For example, it could also be argued that as far as a center-periphery model might be used to frame an analysis of the mobilities within this Sufi network, a center cannot be fixed to only a specific node (or two) in the network—the notion of a *center* must also include a person: Shaykh Arona Faye al-Faqir. Much of the movement made and discourses surrounding travel that I witnessed during my fieldwork were contingent upon the presence (or absence) of Shaykh Arona Faye. Based on what I have witnessed in terms of the enthusiasm and performances of religiosity that take place when Shaykh Arona Faye traveled to a location or away from it, all others were rendered peripheral. This would lead us to understand the center of this network as highly mobilized, and at the same time, decoupled from placement—yes, a *detritorialization* facilitated by the shaykh. Moreover, insofar as the shaykh facilitates the circulation of travelers, he also facilitates the circulation of esoteric knowledge around the network via the allocation of spiritual texts and materials composed by Cheikh Mustafa Gueye Haydara. While this kind of mobilization might not apply to all regional spiritual networks, it is indicative of the charisma and central importance placed onto the presence of spiritual authority in Sufi traditions centered upon allegiances to a living shaykh.

I do not suggest that *fugara* operate as clandestine or sovereign non-citizens or that their multiple rootedness does not include a consideration of how state boundaries intervene and, in some cases, impede the crossing of national boundaries.²⁸ Nor do I suggest that the *tariqa* model

²⁸ Note that some have critiqued an overwhelming emphasis on mobilities that do not pay close enough attention to the ways in which people are inhibited from movement. See Jónsson, G. (2008). *Migration aspirations and immobility in a Malian Soninke village* (Vol. 10). International Migration Institute, University of Oxford. Also Werner, C., & Barcus, H. R. (2009). Mobility and immobility in a transnational context: Changing views of migration among the Kazakh diaspora in Mongolia. *Migration Letters*, 6(1), 49.

can be thought as a nation-state itself, but rather, I merely articulate exactly how the *tariqa* allows for certain kinds of inclusion elsewhere (away from ‘home’)—beyond, and in spite of, state borders. Additionally, the kinds of global networking seen in the mobilization of *fuqara* extends beyond what nation-states have typically identified as possible with regard to official citizenship and formal allegiance. The *tariqa*, however, encourages global citizenship proper as initiation requires a heightened globality. In fact, the *tariqa* is a configuration or type of network that allows for specific formations of mobility and encourages a type of belonging that exceeds or supplants that of the modern nation-state—a *prénotion* or even pre-nation.

And yet, there are ways in which these multiple sites of belonging collide. More recently, I’ve sat with Oumar and Hassan Faye, both sons of Shaykh Arona Faye and residents of Dakar, in the living room of the small family apartment in HLM Grand Yoff to assist them with filling out visa applications in order to visit Spain for an upcoming conference sponsored by the Mustafawiyya *zawiyah* in Cordoba in the late summer of 2016. As I sat to witness this process, I could detect the frustration embedded in Hassan’s voice as he assisted his elder brother in completing his form. Past conversations with Hassan had revealed some of the complexities that some *fuqara* confronted when attempting to move about the numerous locations in the network. In recounting this scene, it is necessary to avoid neglecting the manner in which legal categories of citizenship and the power enacted by states can inhibit movement in the midst of this study of Muslim mobility.²⁹ For example, Hassan explained to me the difficulties that result from past interactions with US Embassy workers in Dakar whereby he had been made to feel like his intentions for travel to the United States to visit South Carolina might be less than honorable. His defiant posture in the retelling of these negative interactions revealed to me his distaste for the scrutiny of state actors. More importantly, however, he was willing to endure indignities like this in order to move throughout the multiple sites in the *tariqa* to visit his sister who had relocated to Cordoba, Spain (another *zawiyah*) and to participate in religious programming there. It is in this manner that allegiance to the transatlantic spiritual network confronts with nationality as members must interact with state agencies in order to engage in cross-border travel. At the same time, the visa application process was indicative of the transnational nature of the *tariqa* as an African-American Muslim (myself) sat in Dakar assisting Senegalese men while also phoning their Spanish brother-in-law, Isa Escudero, for assistance - who by the way was engaged in contract electrical work in Indiana at the time with another African American Muslim, Abdur-Noor Kokayi.

Zawiyah as Infrastructure for Translocal Mobility

The *zawiyah* of Moncks Corner, that is—the Muslim community of Moncks Corner, operates as a node within a larger transnational spiritual network whereby teachers, students, guests, and visitors (often coming from other Sufi traditions) and acts as a safe-haven for the traveler. Other Senegalese Sufi traditions utilize different namings for these local corporations of practitioners. Mamaramé Seck (2013) illustrates how *daaras* are local branches where Senegalese Muslims who are part of the Muridiyya tradition create spaces where members can

²⁹ Nina Schiller and Noel Salazar caution against taking mobility as a given without accounting for the ways in which states intervene, or the manner in which migrants must work around the tendencies for legal status to promote stasis. See Glick Schiller, N., & Salazar, N. B. (2013). “Regimes of Mobility Across the Globe.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration studies*, 39(2), 183-200.

share food, study the Qur'an, and participate in general cultural practices such as speak Wolof and eat *ceebu jen* (national dish of Senegal). Cheikh Anta Babou (2012) has argued that *daaras* operate as nodes for education, religious and cultural solidarities, and immigration. His historical analysis of Senegalese enclaves in New York City provides an explanation for the manner in which newer migrants relied upon more experienced comrades to navigate livelihoods in a drastically different hostland environment. Though *daaras* are an emphasis of the Murid tradition, the *zawiyah* is common to generally all Sufi traditions that have expanded beyond their places of origination. Thus, while *zawiyahs* are similar to *daaras*, they are not used as synonyms in this analysis. Both *daaras* and *zawiyahs* are formed for the purpose for both religious and cultural solidarity for those living away from home, and are formed mostly to mobilize exoteric, religious education (*taleem*) and activate esoteric, spiritual education (*tarbiyah*). Both are also translocal in that they encourage regional mobility themselves while being embedded into a larger nodal network. At the same time however, the *zawiyah*, in my usage here, connotes a space that operates as a point of pilgrimage. Whereas *daaras* connote a mode of social organization that also emphasizes an ethnic enclave through which orientations to a centralized homeland are mediated and spiritual authority lies elsewhere, the *zawiyah* here refers to a multi-ethnic network node whereby it operates as its own center that facilitates local migration and its peripherality is contingent upon the presence or absence of the shaykh.

At the same time, the description that I've outlined thus far is perhaps not so simple. Where as the *zawiyah* acts as an infrastructure for mobility, Shaykh Faye acts as a trusted guide and a door to the path. With regard to Moncks Corner, there is a manner in which the reverse is also true. In other words, for many it appears that the *zawiyah* operates also as a door, or at least a means, to access to the Shaykh. Multiple students, like Marjonah Ibraheem who is a third-generation African-American Muslimah and recently married to Shaykh Faye, have specifically relocated to Moncks Corner in order to move closer to the Shaykh. Certainly, she finds importance in the camaraderie provided by the community; however, her central motive for leaving her home in Washington, D.C. was not solely the appeal of the Moncks Corner community, but rather it was the adjacency to her beloved teacher that has compelled her to endure uprooting her family to a small, blue-collar town that has little to none of the economic opportunities and diversity that the average Washingtonian would be used to. Similarly, her own father, whom I had come to affectionately refer to as "Uncle Muqtar," had also left Washington to be in sustained, close proximity to Shaykh Arona Faye. This instance bears a stark example of a kind of "linked mobility" where an initial relocation directly contributes to a successive migration. According to Muqtar Abdullah, he had lived in Washington for the better part of his 68 years and was initially concerned to learn that his beloved daughter had moved away from the nation's capitol to study with a shaykh. Due to his own past experiences with being bamboozled by self-proclaimed and illegitimate charlatans, which he related to me in his Moncks Corner home situated not even a mile from the mosque, he had developed a healthy skepticism and watchful eye. Thus, when he learned about his daughter's decision to move away from Washington, he quickly drove down to South Carolina to inspect what she had done. Being fully used to his daughter visiting his home in Washington on a daily basis, her absence was strongly felt. As Uncle Muqtar related this story to me, we both laughed as he admitted that he initially planned to have "strong words" with whatever false prophet that had lured his beloved Marjonah away from her father and had to convince his circle of friends back home from joining as they had also articulated a willingness for confrontation. Upon his arrival to Moncks Corner, he did not locate the snake charmer that he was looking for. In Shaykh Arona Faye, he found a real

teacher—someone he had been searching for all of his life.³⁰ Unlike the great pretenders that he had a disdain for, Shaykh Faye was knowledgeable, generous, and a masterful leader who was exemplary in his quest to inhabit the path of Prophet Muhammad. This love story between a seeker and guide, between student and teacher, is not unique in Moncks Corner. Many have made a similar physical migration in order to better embark on a spiritual journey toward God. This journey is one that, in the minds and hearts of the Muslims in Moncks Corner, has been, and continues to be, facilitated by their proximity to Shaykh Faye. And just as Shaykh Faye has attracted numerous companions and students, they have grown on him (and through him) as well. By the time Uncle Muqtar shared this love story to me, he had recently closed on the home in which we sat, after having sold his house in Washington. His new abode was a neat and modest bungalow which seemed small enough to easily maintain, but large enough to host community dinners when the need arose. Uncle Muqtar and Marjonah have relocated to Moncks Corner not due to the vibrancy of the community itself, but as a means of sustained access to the spiritual pedagogy and consistent religious guidance provided by Shaykh Arona Faye. While they have made a home for themselves and have established robust relationships with fellow initiates, for them, Shaykh Faye is the *zawiyah*.

The Mosque as a Site of Mobility

The mosque in Moncks Corner was erected for the purpose of both general worship and the specific tutelage of Shaykh Faye's students who are dispersed throughout the eastern seaboard and beyond. This fact becomes quite visible around religious holidays, important meetings, and other celebrations whereby community members travel from as far as Philadelphia, Delaware, and nearby states both north and south.

Shaykh Mikhail Abdullah, originally from South Carolina, has been a student of Shaykh Arona Faye for about two decades now and has matriculated through the ranks in order to be recognized by his teacher as someone worthy of 'spreading the Tariqa.' So beloved and trusted by Shaykh Faye, Mikhail has even been granted the honor of marrying the Shaykh's eldest daughter, Ndey Faye. A number of years ago, he relocated to Dakar in order to be closer to his new wife and assist in the operation of Tariqa activities abroad. However, we cannot assign to Shaykh Mikhail a term such as "ex-patriate." This is because, as an economic strategy, the same professional field that facilitated his move to Dakar is also one that calls for his continual and regular return to the United States. For a few, sometimes several, months as a time, Mikhail's profession as a licensed electrician allows him to travel to the USA in order to seek contractual employment around the country with the aim of returning back "home" to Dakar. As a result of his ability to move between both sides of the Atlantic, on one hand being hosted by and welcomed back into the fold of the Moncks Corner *zawiyah* as a "visiting resident", and on the other hand providing the means and social infrastructure for those who cross the Atlantic to visit Senegal, Mikhail inhabits a particularly important role in the structure of the Tariqa. Consequently, Mikhail serves as our archetypical character whose circuitous movement signals how mobile religious identities are built from cross-border practices. It is through these practices of mobility that specific knowledges of multiple cultural geographies pave the way for the formation of such networks. In other words, not only does Shaykh Mikhail have a mastery of the social, cultural, and religious environment in which the Moncks Corner *zawiyah* is embedded

³⁰ Interview, Muqtar Abdullah, 10 March 2015.

(insofar as he is originally from the area), he also now is more than acquainted with the social and cultural geography that Dakar (and Thiès) requires in order to successfully manage the everyday needs of the American Muslim pilgrim. After all, the kind of mobility that I discuss here does not merely require bodily movement—it also requires the ability to traverse the tapestry of varying social and linguistic worlds.

With regard to the Tariqa (Mustafawiyya) that is the subject of discussion here, a good portion of the men who live within the Moncks Corner community take it upon themselves to engage in the kind of itinerant electrical work that affords them the possibility of finding immediate employment that can be then be halted as the need arises. For example, for the Cheikh Mustafa Day trip in 2016, American Muslim residents of Moncks Corner flew to Senegal with Shaykh Faye in order to participate in the annual celebration, which was held in the city of Thies. Abdu-Noor Kokayi is a young American-born Muslim of mixed African and Puerto-Rican heritage who has been a devoted student of Shaykh Arona Faye for several years. It seems that Kokayi has been a member of the Moncks Corner zawiya since before reaching adulthood. In other words, he had been traveling with his parents and siblings from Durham, North Carolina to intermittently visit Moncks Corner in order to participate in religious celebrations and other special events for years. After high school, Kokayi decided to relocate to the zawiya permanently and has lived with his Shaykh since. Only recently has he engaged in the kind of itinerant employment that other, more seasoned students such as Mikhail Abdullah have relied upon in order to allow for a heightened mobility. Kokayi, like Sulaiman Barr, is at the beginning stages of his electrical career and has articulated that contractual, temporary work is preferable due to the flexibility needed to travel both domestically and internationally.

Kokayi's very first trip to Senegal was in January of 2016. Before that point, he had repeatedly verbalized a quite strong desire to go and experience first-hand being in a majority Muslim country located in sub-Saharan Africa—in this case, Senegal and Gambia. Before his trip, it was only from the living rooms of Senegambian residents (or at the Mosque) of Moncks Corner had he enjoyed delicacies like *bissap* (sorrel-based juice) and *ceebu jen* (rice with fish; national dish of Senegal) and *yassa poulet* (*chicken with onion sauce*). He had to endure the numerous second-hand accounts of recently-returned pilgrims who had collectively fueled his passion and wetted his appetite for his own voyage to what he imagined would be his home in a somewhat distant future. More importantly, however, Kokayi had been able to move beyond that role of *observer* when it comes to the question of translocal Muslim pilgrimage to Thiès—fountainhead of the Tariqa Mustafawiyya. He has been able to *participate* in the Cheikh Mustafa Day celebration. Moreover, he has met and eaten with family members and descendants of Cheikh Mustafa, in addition to offering supplications at the tomb of his beloved Cheikh Mustafa Gueye Haydara. It is the very act of pilgrimage that has further concretized a sense of mobility in a way not possible (arguably) by mere imaginative work.

The Moncks Corner mosque acts a space for local and international pilgrimage whereby students from Senegal, Spain, and multiple locations along the eastern seaboard of the United States participate in religious programming. The major factor that contributes to the allure of this small town in South Carolina is Shaykh Faye. Even though he is not designated as the central leader of entire regional network, he certainly possesses a charisma and expertise that is recognized by all members. Therefore, immediate translocal mobilities are mostly hinged upon the presence of Shaykh Faye. Whenever Shaykh got on the road to spend any time away from the mosque, the vibrancy of mosque activity, that is shared by those who attended the multiple classes and study circles that occurred while Shaykh Faye was in Moncks Corner, where he still

spends the majority of his time, waned considerably. And like the leak of air from a balloon, the brilliance of the mosque's energy quickly escaped whenever Shaykh Faye traveled out of town. In instances where he left Moncks Corner to attend some religious program in Atlanta, Raleigh, or some other location within reasonable driving distance, a relatively small party of mosque members accompanied him to chauffeur, make tea, and support the maintenance of convivial relations with other Muslim communities. This absence generally resulted in the postponement of the weekly classes, usually held on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, in addition to the Friday and Sunday gatherings. Of course, the Friday congregation, required of any mosque occurred regardless and was officiated by either the resident Imam, Shaykh Rasheed Nuruddin, or the assistant Imam, Shaykh Usman. Even still, whenever Shaykh Arona Faye left the country, to visit Senegal for example, his absence was felt even more heavily from the mosque because of the longer time spent away. In my time spent alongside Shaykh Rasheed Watson, devoted student of Shaykh Faye and Moncks Corner resident, I witnessed the manner in which everyday life at the mosque seemed to be haunted by a lingering stillness during the day. Yes, there were a number of chores that included cleaning bathrooms and the kitchen, and the quiet study of Qur'an to keep occupied, but those long days were made longer by a lack of evening activity during the week in the absence of Shaykh Faye.

On the other hand, translocality with regard to the *zawiyah* of Thiés in the context of the Mustafawiyya tariqa seemed to be less contingent on the presence of any one figure. Migrations seemed to occur mainly between the city and the larger Dakar as the extended family members of Cheikh Mustafa extend beyond the center of Thiés into its neighboring city. Outside of the annual Cheikh Mustafa Day event described at the outset of this chapter, which draws members from the multiple locations around the Atlantic, *fugara* migrate to and from Thiés more often to visit family, teach Qur'an, attend to business, or to engage in more regular religious observances. Further, there is no central mosque that is devoted specifically as a space for Mustafawiyya gatherings in Senegal. While a number of elder family members of the tariqa's founder reside in or around Thiés, its current leader (*khalifa*), Shaykh Muhammad Saada, resides in Dakar and teaches Qur'an at a neighborhood mosque of Sacre-Couer Trois. Younger family members, such as Musa Gueye and Shaykh "Mara" Samba Faye, intermittently travel back and forth while staying for days at a time in either city. Musa normally resides in Thiés, while Mara lives in HLM Grand Yoff in Dakar.

AbdouMaliq Simone examines the crossing of local borders as a way to display heightened movement within Africa while analyzing migration and the home-making activities of African communities abroad (2004a, 2004b). Simone illuminates how highly mobile shared identities emerge from the sorts of affiliation and connections to transnational networks that facilitate itinerancy in which a subject's identity, "...although unstable and not thoroughly consolidated, resonates with long and multiple African traditions of locality" (2004a: 120). Although his work, here and in others (2004b), is highly conceptual, it further pushes us to consider how individuals and social institutions (in this case, the *zawiyah*) operate effectively as infrastructures that provide for mobility and economic possibility in spite of apparent societal instabilities by honing in on the role of African Sufi brotherhoods in both Nigeria and Saudi Arabia.

"The *zawiyah* acted as a circumscribed domain of publicity. It became a place where devotees could gather a sense of the wide range of locations and activities in which the tariqa was involved, be stimulated to take on new activities, and conceive and assess individual possibilities in the larger context of what the order was doing" (2004a: 124).

The *zawiyah*, as Simone suggests, inspires in the devotees of the tariqa to view themselves as fully able to participate in a global world and to envision themselves beyond local contexts as a part of a transnational network. At large, Simone urges us to consider how processes of movement (and perhaps visions of movement) provide a way to operate around economic constraints locally produced in either homeland or hostland, and that the sort of improvisational manner that itinerant mobility allows for expands economic possibilities and facilitates proximity to spiritual guidance in Moncks Corner.

Rasheed visits Cheikh Mustafa

The *Cimetière de Keur Mame El-Hadj* of Thiès, Senegal houses a rectangular tomb clad in white and topped with a small green dome in which Cheikh Mustafa rests. The entire cemetery seems to burst at its seams with the graves of mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, uncles and aunties, yet the mausoleum of Cheikh Muhammad Mustafa Gueye Haydara is set near the back of the cemetery. As a result of this, our visit (*ziyara*) to the grave of Cheikh Mustafa involved carefully tracing the graceful, yet thoughtful footsteps of our guide, Musa Gueye, as he led us from the front entrance of the cemetery to the mausoleum.

Upon our arrival, I realized that it would be better for me to perform the customary ablutions before my entry into the cemetery. So, I briskly veered off into a nearby boutique and asked for a canister of water with which I could perform the ablutions. When finished, I rejoined the group who had already embarked beyond the tall black gates that separated the dead from the living. Initially, I could not read the landscape in order to figure out how to reach my group. For it was littered with small bushes, makeshift headstones, and randomly-placed markers for those at rest in their graves. I had to request that one of the others trail backward to assist me in finding my way to the rectangular mausoleum that imposed itself in contrast to the surrounding graves. Knowing that it was considered terrible etiquette and disrespectful to place our feet over the graves, our timid caravan paid close attention to those in front as we tried our best to balance ourselves in between the impossibly narrow walkways that were seemingly invisible to the naked eye. It was clear that only experience provided the visitor with the knowledge of how to navigate one's self to the back of the crowded cemetery. In fact, we were forced to walk along the short walls of some of the graves for lack of adequate space in order to keep going. The optics of the various graves that covered the entirety of the cemetery ground revealed that there were possibly drastic differences in the socioeconomic statuses of those buried. Some graves were surrounded by short, tiled walls, while others seemed to be less ornate bearing simple, makeshift grave markers such as frayed, wooden signs on which the names of the departed were etched. In spite of this, the entire landscape testified to one profound truth - none escapes his last day.

Rasheed Philson discussed with me the manner in which he felt like his trip to Senegal in early 2015 was a long-awaited 'homegoing' process in which he had an opportunity to reconnect with American *fuqara* such as Mikhail Abdullah who he hadn't seen in a long time, and to finally connect with Senegalese *fuqara*. He explained that even though there were some who he was meeting for the first time, there was an uncanny feeling as though they had met before. During an interview conducted after we both returned to the United States, Rasheed compared his experience with having gone to Turkey with his experience in Senegal while also remarking on the qualitative difference between the two regarding how everyday Muslims in the West African

country seemed more devout.³¹ For him, this was indicative of how a higher percentage of Senegalese Muslims being affiliated with some sufi tradition had positively impacted the religious landscape. Furthermore, he explained how hospitality seemed to him more thoroughly stitched into the religious fabric as a result of sufism's presence in Senegal. While this fact may or may not be accurate regarding adherence to sufism in West Africa, I read this impression as meaningful regarding Rasheed's logic for thinking about Senegal in positive light. Additionally, this is part of a broader justification in which he situates himself as having visited the land in which he imagines he may relocate some day in the future.

While sitting in the foyer of the *zawiyah* in Dakar, Rasheed mentioned to me that it was his intention, emboldened by his trip and further convinced by what he witnessed, to send his children to Senegal in order to study the Qur'an. It should be noted here that I read this desire for his children to learn the Qur'an in Senegal as significant not merely because of the religious implications, but also the cultural-diasporic implication embedded within this claim. This idea is built upon the assumption that his children would be tutored by those who are learned within the *Tariqa* who are West African and thus, part of this imagined lost kin to whom he felt connected. Throughout our trip, and especially during car rides between Dakar and Thiès, it was evident that Rasheed had been thoroughly impacted by what he witnessed. Rasheed, whose initial engagement with Islam was through the Nation of Islam after having transitioned away from Christianity, had met Shaykh Faye in 1998. After having been part of Temple No. 12 in North Philadelphia for a while, he studied the life example of Malcolm X more closely and realized that he belonged on another road. Rasheed then transitioned to the Warith Deen Muhammad community and formally took his *shahada* at the age of 17. Upon his move down to South Carolina, he finally met Shaykh Faye and was able to learn more about the religion of Islam through him in a way that he did not prior. Since he made the decision to align himself with the *Mustafawiyya*, Rasheed has kept Shaykh Faye in his heart and travel to West Africa on his mind.

It would not be until 2015 that Rasheed would have the time and funds to see Senegal for himself. During his stay in West Africa, which lasted for about three weeks, he and I visited a number of historically meaningful sites at the suggestion of Shaykh Arona Faye. Since I had experience with navigating the streets of Dakar prior and was able to speak some Wolof, Shaykh Faye encouraged me to escort Rasheed Philson and other African-American guests to visit Gorée Island. During that trip, we were able to access *La Maison des Esclaves* (House of Slaves), which is a historically-significant holding place for captured Africans during the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Of course, Rasheed had some knowledge of the slave trade before traveling to Senegal. However, his engagement with the history up until that point—like most African-Americans—had been mainly from an American experience. While we were inside, it was evident that Rasheed was emotionally impacted by physically seeing the dungeons where men and women and children were held in bondage before being taken away on slave-ships. I watched him walk through the halls and crevices of *La Maison* in a thoughtful silence, and to cross the barrier of the “Door of No Return” where enslaved people were led onto ships. Witnessing he and other African-Americans peer out onto the wide expanse of the Atlantic and trace the steps of imagined ancestors was moving. It was a powerful and sobering moment to witness him experience what I had upon my first trip to Dakar. With his trip to this space, Rasheed was able to visualize more concretely the suffering out of which prayers for return were surely uttered from the lips of stolen people. Rasheed's ‘home-going’ voyage across the

³¹ Interview, Rasheed Philson, 18 February 2015.

Atlantic and then to Gorée Island was an important leg of his journey. His trip to Senegal had now been even more reflective of the idea that he was a vessel through which those prayers would be answered. But his voyage was not finished—Rasheed had yet to visit Cheikh Mustafa.

In order to add the capstone onto his trip, Rasheed needed to travel with Shaykh Faye to the point of origin for the Mustafawiyya tradition. He needed to make *ziyara* (visitation) to the final resting place of the one from whom Shaykh Faye inherited his knowledge. Rasheed's journey did not begin when he boarded his plane to go to Senegal. In fact, his process began almost two decades prior when he first met his teacher in South Carolina. This process, no doubt, was a gradual one whereby Rasheed Philson met Shaykh Faye and other *fuqara* in Moncks Corner. Initially, he was skeptical that someone could be that generous. His street-smarts would not allow him to automatically and completely trust another who seemed too good to be true. Years would pass as Rasheed watched Shaykh Faye closely—he included himself in the activities of the Mustafawiyya, but it was difficult to push himself to take *bayah* (allegiance) with Shaykh Faye. Little by little, the walls he had put up broke down and after a while, he realized that this man was real. His heart softened. He submitted fully to the tutelage and spiritual pedagogy of Shaykh Arona Faye. Rasheed spent years sitting at the feet of his teacher and took the opportunity to grow spiritually and expand his knowledge of Islam. During that time, he watched many of his peers travel with Shaykh Faye to Senegal in order to visit the tomb of Cheikh Mustafa and his many students and relatives. He watched them be able to connect themselves more deeply to a broader multinational and transregional network of *fuqara* across the ocean. In 2015, it was Rasheed's turn. He had prayed for this moment and finally he could afford the trip due to receiving a paycheck he had not anticipated. It was Shaykh Faye all these years that encouraged his mobility toward West Africa and the years-long process of watching and learning had transformed Rasheed into someone who now more fully saw the value in visiting Senegal for himself.³²

Traveling Ode of the Faqir

Another example of how participation in the Tariqa propels movement via the Moncks Corner *zawiyah* is the way in which the notion of mobility is produced through media shared among *fuqara* and increases the desire for travel to other sites in the network. *Am Na Ndam* (“He has victory”) is a tribute song written and performed in Wolof that primarily honors the work of Shaykh Arona Faye al-Faqir, considered by his students to be a penultimate religious scholar and spiritual teacher/ guide. According to his followers, he has inherited his knowledge of attaining righteousness from his late uncle and founder of the Mustafawiyya Sufi Order, Cheikh Mustafa Gueye Haydar (1926-1989). The song was composed in Thiés, Senegal by men loosely-affiliated with the Order and honors the Shaykh's ancestral line while weaving together multiple network

³² Bodies are not the only things that circulate across nodes in the Mustafawiyya network. Sometimes remittances are used to provide a means for bringing hearts closer to home. For example, there are instances in which African-American students of Shaykh Faye make their presence felt in Senegal, in spite of not physically traveling there. During the trip to Senegal with Shaykh Faye back in January of 2015, it was revealed that Uncle Muqtar sent money with his daughter, Marjonah, that would then be entrusted to Shaykh Faye for the purpose of building a well for a Senegalese village in need. While this focus on financial contributions might seem mundane, we might read the routes of such remittances as substitutions for actual travel.

locations in the Mustafawiyya Order such as Senegal, Gambia, Spain, and the USA. While the singers do not travel abroad to praise the mission of Shaykh Arona Faye, the song itself was recorded and shared digitally across the Atlantic where it was made available from the *zawiyah* of Moncks Corner, South Carolina to other locations throughout the network such as Philadelphia, Washington D.C., and to various families located along the eastern seaboard who are affiliated with the Mustafawiyya Order.

*“Bismi ilayy may jog di kañ,
Sangue bi Cheikh Arona Faye,
Seutou Mame Samba, am na ndam,*

Yalla buur sagali gnonam.”

*In the name of Allah, I stand to praise,
the noble Sheikh Arona Faye
The grandson of grandpa Samba, He has
[victory],
May Allah brighten his family and
entourage³³*

Embedded within the lyrics of *Am Na Ndam* is a prayer for Shaykh Arona Faye’s continued success and long life. The song has traveled across water, along roads, and from house to house as its listeners, many who do not speak Wolof, hum its catchy melody and simultaneously allow for the embedded supplication to be uttered through audio speakers - both stationary and mobile. Throughout the song’s journeys, its lyrics tell the story of a Senegalese Muslim man who has crossed the Atlantic in order to guide those who follow him on the journey toward God. I contend that the exchange and transmission of the tribute song is part of a broader discourse of travel that takes place among American and West African Muslims in the Moncks Corner *zawiyah* in conjunction with its peripheral sites on the eastern coast of the United States. The lyrics provide a primary source through which an analysis of how place, religion, and lineage converge through song composed in the Wolof language and meanwhile radiates outward to the entirety of a transatlantic spiritual community.

*“The grandson of Samba Inherited, his grandfather, then he did [what he was] supposed to do
Cheikh Arona has a trophy, his job [is] Islam,
he went as far as Europe and around, to work for the Deen
May Allah give him long life,
if you [do not] believe it go to Europe and America,
he established mosques, he converted many to Islam
O you sing about Cheikh, he is noble, he makes us proud
his ways are of the Prophet, he has Islam and knowledge
O I will sing about you, you have the ways of the Prophet
He let them be drunk in the religion, O Cheikh you are pure gold
O Cheikh Mustafa obtained victory,
the owner of wilayat (spiritual authority, guardianship)
Cheikh Arona Faye working for the Deen, make him travel to just remove their veils of*

³³ Opening lyrics and refrain of “Am Na Ndam”; English translation provided by Shaykh Arona Faye; Wolof transcription provided by Diabel Diom.

darkness

*Cheikh Mustafa is the son of Cheikh Samba, Cheikh Arona is a soldier for the Deen,
He went to Sierra Leone and propagated Islam, He continued,
he went to America, converted people to Islam and they were amazed
He established in Moncks Corner [SC] where he taught Islam
He established a mosque, He trained Imam Rasheed and gave him the tenets
and appointed Cheikh Usman as his assistant
Thanks Umm Aisha, mother of the zawiyah of Moncks Corner
Thanks Soxna Aisha, leading the zawiya of Gambia
Cheikh Arona has a job to call people to Allah's religion..."³⁴*

I first heard this song while sitting in the living room of Umm Aisha's quaint house which is situated in a quiet suburban neighborhood in the sleepy, blue collar town of Moncks Corner - about a 45 minute drive northwest of Charleston. There I sat with other students as we nodded our heads to the catchy melody of a song performed entirely in Wolof, and grinned as we took turns trying our best to catch the lyrical highs and lows as the stereo speakers brought us a bit closer to Senegal. In order to fully capture the significance of *Am Na Ndam*, we must not only consider the lyrical content of the song, but we must also unravel what the song *achieves*. First, it presents transnational possibilities that span both sides of the Atlantic - the song simultaneously introduces specific transnational network nodes in America (Moncks Corner, Columbia, Charleston, Philadelphia, Washington) to listeners in Senegal, and meanwhile familiarizes its American listeners with a Wolof song tradition that acquaints them with the multiple rhythms of Senegalese religious culture. Second, it provides a cartographic survey of places where collections of student-practitioners reside and reinvigorates linkages between network nodes. Also, the song engages in a 'naming' of particular students who have been highlighted as particularly notable for their successful matriculation toward becoming '*shuyukh*' (e.g. considered part of the present and future totality of spiritual authority in the religious network). This means that they have been given the permission to teach (Arabic: *ijaza*) and have been given positions of leadership in their respective locations in the network.

Finally, *Am Na Ndam* traces a 'spiritual genealogy' from grandfather (Shaykh Samba Gueye) to uncle (Cheikh Mustafa Gueye) to first and oldest grandson (Shaykh Arona Faye). While it is important that these men share a bloodline all the way up to the Prophet Muhammad, adding a vital layer of religious legitimacy to their legacy, it is perhaps more significant that the chain of religious knowledge and spiritual power remains unbroken. That is, it is not the blood running through the veins alone that carries power and legitimacy, but rather the totality of the family line that bestows the import of religious authority. In fact, the song almost suggests an erasure of temporal boundaries between those who have passed with those who are living by linking a current generation of students with former generations of teachers (*shuyukh*). By both venerating and familiarizing the absent "Mame Samba" (Grandpa Samba), for example, the song shifts and or places noble ancestors who are named through song into the present.

Aside from the complex alliances across the network in terms of *representations*, we also consider the *practices* that emerge between network members as they engage in the exchange of the song. Therefore, the manner by which the ontology of dispersal - that is, separated from not just home, but more importantly, separated from teacher (Shaykh) - located in *listening practices*

³⁴ Lyrics of "*Am Na Ndam*," English translation provided by Shaykh Arona Faye al-Faqir, February 2015.

in addition to *sharing practices* gives us an interesting point of entry for articulating the diasporic nature of this relationship. It is not so simple that we consider Senegal or South Carolina as some centralized “home” for this diasporic religious community. As a matter of fact, either location operates as a point of orientation for network members due to specific relationships forged from collectivized religious practices and more importantly, both the presence and absence of Shaykh Faye. Indeed, it is through his absence for network members physically placed outside of Moncks Corner, that the ontology of dispersal matters most. It is when students do not have physical access to their beloved teacher that they themselves feel absent - or dispersed. In this way, relationship to a ‘diaspora’ is not predicated upon place, but rather upon the network itself, and highly centered around the Shaykh. Here, we must further consider the center-periphery model that fairly recent diaspora scholarship seems to have left alone. The infrastructure of the network is built upon linkages between people, not terrain. As such, viewing people as the infrastructure yields a more dynamic lens through which we understand how discourses of mobility both shape relationships between people and how they are shaped by the ever-changing relationships between people. In this case, it is partly through the communicative strategy of the song, via its recording, sharing, and listening, that an ontology of dispersal reverberates. Furthermore, as the song and other recordings move about the network, Shaykh Faye’s absence remains present - or rather, he remains both present for some and absent for others, simultaneously centralizing and decentralizing the importance of his absence. It is through this dispensation of the song that expresses the charisma and acclaim of Shaykh Arona Faye while also noting prestigious members of the network. This sharing of prestige, once again, is included into a broader discourse of mobility that serves to heighten the desire to accompany Shaykh Arona Faye in his travels irrespective of location, to visit the tomb of Cheikh Mustafa in Thiès for students located in the United States or Europe, and to visit Moncks Corner for students living in either Europe or West Africa.

Sulaiman and Halima’s Daydream

As implied above, desire precedes movement. After all, it is the heart that animates the limbs. The heart, more than its simple collection of muscle tissues that pump blood throughout the body, is a place in which desire and intention are contained.³⁵ The walls of the Moncks Corner mosque have overheard many African-American Muslims engaged in conversations about the necessity of travel and eventuality of relocating to Senegal in the future. This is due in part to the warmth of reception with which they have been received upon their visits to Dakar and Thiès. As well, Shaykh Faye explicitly encourages his students to travel if they can afford the trip. He reminds his students that: “*The one who has traveled to 100 countries will be the*

³⁵ See Ghazali’s “*Marvels of the Heart.*” The heart as an organ of intention and desire has been theorized and articulated heavily in Islamic tradition. In particular, Imam Al-Ghazali’s descriptions of the heart and its functions are majorly concerned with its inner meanings and abilities to facilitate movement and migration. Ghazali’s project is to discuss the truth/ reality (*haqiqa*) of the heart as well as its characteristics (*awsaf*) and its states (*ahwal*). Ghazali uses the metaphor of a kingdom in which the heart lies at the center (throne, foundation), the governing body, that determines the states of the rest of the kingdom. As opposed to the brain, Ghazali writes that the members of the body are in submission to the heart -- that the heart is the organ that fuels movement, because it is responsible for intention (*niyah*). Therefore, the members of the body do not disobey the heart.

master of the one who has read 100 books."³⁶ On the other hand, there are many who have not had the opportunity to visit the homeland of their revered guide. This fact does not prevent them from extolling the importance of visiting and frequently participate in these kinds of 'daydreams' in spite of actual physical mobility. I do not refer to the discourses of travel and future motility as 'daydreaming' in order to patronize how the Muslims in Moncks Corner, or in Senegal, imagine themselves as a component within a larger constellation of spiritual brethren. Quite the contrary. *Daydreaming* is used here to refer to the manner in which dreaming about Senegal, for African-American Muslims like Sulaiman Barr, for example, is indicative of a black internationalism that is grounded in intention. Furthermore, it connotes the imaginative work that is a vital step in the ongoing development of diaporic identities and one that precedes actual mobility. In other words, I take the myriad discussions of relocation or visitation to Senegal that occur in Moncks Corner as utterly meaningful and exemplifies a simultaneous social-spiritual categorization of both the broader United States (a predominantly non-Muslim country that possesses a complex history of racial and religious persecution) and Senegal (a predominantly Muslim country in West Africa that has made important strides in the way of economic and political development).

The *daydream* here is posed as a counter-narrative to that of dreaming. If *dreaming* refers to a process that occurs subconsciously at night where the imagination may not necessarily be driven by intentional thought-processes or shared openly, I use *daydreaming* to describe the intentional thought-processes that give shape to explicit and implicit desires that are willingly shared with fellow daydreamers - and shaped by travelers. If dreams act as conduits for visions, daydreaming provides a medium for envisioning. This kind of envisioning whets the appetite for placement elsewhere and for new social landscapes. That said, I do not conflate my usage of the term here with the psychoanalytic approach that determines daydreaming as solely interior speech (*monologue intérieur*) driven by fantasizing often unrelated to present circumstances, or as a stream of consciousness composed of distracted thought (see Singer 2014). Because of the kinds of utterances and signifying that occur in the Moncks Corner mosque amidst news of some latest account of Islamophobia, or of police violence enacted upon communities of color, have often been followed by declarations of relocation, or of escape, I argue that these interactions are part of a discursive production couched in identity politics. Some have interpreted the role of dreaming in Muslim communities (Pandolfo 1997; Mittermaier 2010), and there is certainly a rich cache of discourse about dreams in Islamic tradition (Ewing 1990; Bulkeley 2002; Lamoreaux 2002; Green 2003; Al-Bagdadi 2006). *But what of daydreaming?* While such a term may not be used to refer to the discourses of mobility and representation that occur in dispersed communities, there exist literatures that have paved a clear route for us to take these positive, constructive utterances seriously (Singer 1955, 1975, and 2009; Klinger 2009).³⁷

Sulaiman Barr, formerly Donte Barr, and his wife, Halima, are a young African-American Muslim couple who first met while attending Claflin University, a historically-black college in

³⁶ Lecture in Moncks Corner Mosque, Shaykh Arona Faye, 11 March 2015.

³⁷ For a succinct review on the analysis of daydreaming, see McMillan, R., Kaufman, S. B., & Singer, J. L. (2013). "Ode to Positive Constructive Daydreaming." *Frontiers in psychology*, 4, 626. This review casts Jerome Singer as an unsung progenitor of the field that conceived of three major types of daydreaming: positive constructive daydreaming, guilty-dysphoric daydreaming, and poor attention control. It is from this schema that more modern approaches to the study of daydreaming have found that the planning of future takes place.

South Carolina. Only several years ago did they convert to Islam with the assistance of Shaykh Faye. Ever the astute and burgeoning business marketer, independent caterer, retail salesman, and seriously considering becoming a licensed electrician, Sulaiman Barr has his eye on relocating his family to an environment where they will be enveloped in an atmosphere of religiosity and surrounded by West African Muslims. For him, this place is Senegal. It is the land that bore his beloved teacher and the soil in which he desires to plant his feet. During the course of my stay in Moncks Corner and frequently at Sulaiman's house, our many conversations revealed his enthusiasm regarding his plans to move to Senegal. In our candid conversations in his Moncks Corner townhouse, Sulaiman explained that the reason he decided to recently go back to school for a certification as an electrician was to be able to find a line of work that would allow him to feasibly relocate his family to Senegal.³⁸ Like others, he has developed a growing distaste for residence in the United States and frequently relies upon a religious logic that identifies Senegal as his future home. Sulaiman takes Shaykh Mikhail Abdullah, a fellow African-American Muslim from South Carolina, as a role model that helps him to imagine relocating his family to Senegal. Even though, he has not had the opportunity to visit Senegal personally, he remains confident that it would offer him a place to relocate his family to what he believes is a more spiritually-nourishing alternative to the United States:

“I feel as though Senegal has given us a new reality wherein Shaykh Arona and Cheikh Mustafa...from what I've understood of Senegal is that it's a holistic country with a unified ideology, and the people have a way of moving and understanding that is collective. And there's peace and there's camaraderie, real community and a sense of nationalism that isn't indicative of a lack of morality.”³⁹

During an interview in which I asked them to elaborate on why they felt the need to move their family to Senegal, Halima gave a similar explanation that characterized the United States as country that was not politically and spiritually sustainable for them. Furthermore, she noted that it was also due to her direct experience with living alongside Senegalese and Gambian Muslims in Moncks Corner that provided with an overwhelmingly positive impression of Senegal. Their hospitality when she visits their homes and their descriptions of the majority Muslim country in West Africa act, for her, as reinforcement to the positive association already gained from Shaykh Faye. Additionally, Halima added a desire to fit herself in an atmosphere where how she dressed and the pigment of her skin would be more welcome. She offered the following words:

“The Senegalese people that I've encountered have given me an impression of Senegal... because I've eaten with them and talked with them and told me so many great things...I am looking forward to going there one day and definitely considering moving because... the standards of morality in America are changing and the way people here feel about people of African descent...And I want to go to a place most people look like me...and it's okay to be dark...it's okay to be covered...it's okay to be Black and Muslim.”⁴⁰

³⁸ Interview, Sulaiman Barr, 10 April 2015.

³⁹ Interview, Sulaiman Barr, 15 January 2018.

⁴⁰ Interview, Halima Barr, 15 January 2018.

Sulaiman and Halima's 'daydreaming' also involves significant planning. Not only do they claim a desire for relocation, Sulaiman's shift in career trajectory seems to align to this fact. Throughout my recent visit to Moncks Corner in April of 2016, Sulaiman was diligently preparing a recently acquired space in the town's busy commercial section of Highway 52 across the street from the Walmart. The location was going to serve as a hair salon that his wife, Halima, would run. Beyond braiding and weaving for her many clients, the plan was to eventually branch out to offer massage and other beauty services. According to Sulaiman and Halima, they planned to phase out her involvement in the business away from her direct labor as a hairdresser to site management so that their physical presence was not needed. I situate this manner of business and career planning in the desire for relocating to Senegal as an iteration of emerging Muslim identities cultivated by discourses of mobility and actuated by particular kinds of decision-making. True, not all of the Muslims in Moncks Corner will actually relocate to Senegal, but it should be reiterated that the focus of meaning here surrounds the discourses of repatriation and less on the planning.⁴¹

The central focus for this chapter has been to analyze how two sites of pilgrimage within a broader regional Sufi network facilitate both circuitous migrations around the Atlantic as well as discourses of travel for the *fugara*. It is the Mustafawiyya Tariqa that provides an infrastructure that compels migration for Muslims located in the United States and in West Africa, while multiple *zawiyahs*, specifically the two major locations outlined above, within that structure that simultaneously operate as points of reception and departure for local and international migrants. The underlying thesis here is that mobility facilitates, and is also facilitated by, the bidirectional transmission of West African spiritual pedagogies and diasporic linkages founded upon migrations around a Black Atlantic which, in turn, cultivate particular religious identities informed by the diasporic linkages established by such exchanges. These exchanges impact not just travelers but also initiates who, in spite of relative stasis, are impelled to orient themselves toward other locations in the Tariqa. Just as there are initiates who reside in South Carolina and have yet to travel internationally but aspire to do so, there are initiates who reside in Senegal who aspire to do likewise and meanwhile have yet to do so. For some, such aspirations are motivated by spiritual pilgrimage and for others these aspirations are more economically-driven. Nonetheless, the primary medium through which these future travelers will navigate their respective journeys is through the infrastructure provided by the broader network. As there are certainly pilgrims who go to visit their fellow initiates on the other side of the Atlantic, there are those that receive them as guests. Thus, it is in the contact between host and guest that regional solidarities are located and it is this interchange that social and religious identities are formed.

⁴¹ As I discuss more thoroughly in my chapter on Prayer Economy, a significant portion of the Muslim men living in Moncks Corner are directly involved in contractually-based electrical work which de-emphasizes the need for residence in any one particular location as a time. Therefore, their itinerancy is contingent upon the contracts for labor they land either in small groups or individually. This pragmatic approach more importantly allows for sustained residence in Moncks Corner where consistent, lucrative employment is hard to find while it also paves the way for many to join in conversations about repatriation to Senegal while continuing to work in the United States.

Chapter 2

From Slave to Abdullahi: Black Muslim Pedagogy, History, and Memory

.. Abdullaye, a young Mauritanian boy of about 12 years old, was walking home and saw some white men coming toward him. They stopped him to ask him some questions and decided to try to capture him in order to sell him into slavery. He quickly learned of their intentions and retorted that he will not go with him as he was headed back home. In spite of their desire to enslave him, they did not understand that this was the son of a great sage. In spite of his relative youth, by this point he had learned the Qur'an in its entirety and was the recipient of spiritual knowledge that made him more powerful than one might assume. The slavers asserted that he was only a child and warned him to follow them. They seized him and continued on their route with Abdullaye now in tow. As they marched him toward a terrible fate, he picked up some sand and recited a prayer derived from verses of the Qur'an where God spoke of changing hypocrites into apes and pigs. Upon reciting this prayer, he blew into the sand and proceeded to throw it onto his capturers' heads. They immediately transformed into dogs. The unfortunate quartet barked incessantly as they jumped up and down in protest of what Abdullaye had done to them. Pleased with himself, he triumphantly walked back toward his home - but the dogs followed. The strange companions came upon another group of white people, perhaps from Andalusia, and remarked to the small boy about the impressive dogs that accompanied him. "Where did you get these nice, beautiful dogs?" He replied, "Oh, you want them?" "Yes, we will buy them from you." Abdullaye dared not to reveal how he achieved ownership of the dogs. "Give me one dinar for each." This group of foreigners bought the pack of dogs from Abdullaye and he accepted the gold dinars from his customers. The dogs refused to follow the other group of white people because they knew that their fate now rested in Abdullaye's hands. The possibility of their being transformed back into their former selves depended on the young boy they previously tried to enslave. However, the group apprehended their defiant property and Abdullaye went home proud. Upon his arrival, he did not share what happened that day with his father, Shamsudeen, for fear of how he would respond. So he hid his dinars under the pillow where he slept. That evening, the dinars began to make barking noises and Abdullaye's father quickly jumped up. He asked his son, "what is that noise? I hear dogs barking..." Abdullaye replied that he had heard nothing. His confused father laid back down to rest. The dinars barked again and woke up the old sage. This time, the father demanded that Abdullaye get up and explain to him where the noise came from as he suspected that his son was not entirely forthcoming. At this point, Abdullaye could no longer deny what happened. He revealed to his father the coins under his pillow and explained how he got them. Abdullaye opened the carefully wrapped coins and the bewildered pair witnessed the coins barking as if they were dogs. How strange! The old sage warned his son that he needed to throw the money away and to never again do what he did. He reminded Abdullaye that whenever something like that occurs, he demanded the he be informed

immediately. The old sage reminded his son that he cannot hide such things from him as it was he who had earned the power of vision from God...⁴²

Encircled around Shaykh Arona Faye in the dining hall of Masjid Muhajjirun wal-Ansar of Moncks Corner, a dozen or so students listened intently as he recounted this story of resistance and spiritual power back in December of 2014. The tale recounted above is about one of Shaykh Arona Faye's ancestors, Abdullaye and Shamsudeen (both forefathers of Shaykh Mustafa Gueye Haydar), told to him by Shaykh Mustafa Gueye Haydara and describes the measures taken to avoid capture by Spanish slavers in Mauritania. This narration also illustrates the manner in which secretive esoteric knowledge passed down from within Shaykh Faye's lineage provides for spiritual resistances to worldly disempowerment. While the believability of the narration depends partly on the listener, it should be obvious that the act of such a narration by a West African marabout to his family and imparted to a predominantly African-American audience in the American South is particularly meaningful. This scene is but an example of the discourses of spiritual resistance in the face of historical trauma for descendants of people who have varying relationships to the legacy of chattel enslavement in the Muslim community of Moncks Corner. Insofar as the zawiyah of Moncks Corner has been repeatedly articulated as a 'hospital' by Shaykh Arona Faye and his students, I surmise that there are both direct and indirect references to healing contained within this characterization. While it is true that this description should be applied mainly as a declaration of spiritual growth that emerges from the sustained application of religious forms of healing, there are other meanings embedded within such articulations of growth considering the specific location and historical contexts in which these discourses of healing take place.

King Cotton and the Moncks Corner Mosque

It is by driving into Moncks Corner, South Carolina that reveals to the visitor the manner in which the history of enslavement seems to linger as a ghost that cannot be shoved neatly into the pages of school textbooks. This ever-present phantom haunts the many acres of cotton fields and between the dogwood trees that sway in the swift breeze created by automobiles driven along the highways and backroads that lead into and out of town - a presence that the traveler cannot miss. It is a legacy explicated by plaques that dot the town commissioned by the city's historical society and implied by every other street sign that reads 'Plantation Lane', or 'Plantation Road' or some iteration thereof. Therefore, the optics of historical enslavement are inescapable. It should also be mentioned that Moncks Corner is located about 30-40 minutes driving distance from Charleston, a port city through which upwards of sixty percent of all enslaved Africans were forcibly brought into the American South. Omar Ibn Said, a Senegalese Muslim scholar was enslaved and brought into North America through Charleston, and would be enslaved for the remainder of his life (Said 2011). It is this example that provides an excellent metaphor for the discourses that occur in Moncks Corner as members, some who have relocated from northern urban centers, discuss the legacy of enslaved African Muslims in the American South and participate in envisioning themselves 'returning home' to Senegal.

⁴² Adapted from an Interview with Shaykh Arona Faye, 16 December 2014. This story was related to me for the first time, however, a week prior in the mosque amongst other students.

This chapter illustrates how discourses of healing, spaces devoted to learning, and spiritual growth in a transatlantic Sufi Tariqa are couched in social contexts that are historically configured and mediated by interactions between American-born and African-born Muslims in the American South and in Senegal. My analysis centers upon the participation in West African Islamic pedagogies which are understood as routes through which varying forms of historic ruptures among Muslims of African-descent are addressed. Further, it is through this means that specific pasts are remembered and meanings are placed onto processes of Qur’anic memorization and practices of ‘remembrance’ (*dhikr*) of African-American Muslims alongside their Senegalese and Gambian counterparts. It reviews the meanings of the Black American voice as a medium for the transmission of Senegalese Sufi knowledge while unraveling the meaning embedded within discourses of healing and historicizes the construction of learning institutions that serve African and American Muslim children as location for the cultivation of African diasporic Muslim identities.

Collective Memory

This analysis of the practice of West African Sufism in Moncks Corner amongst predominantly African-American Muslims relies heavily on an approach that emphasizes ‘memory,’ not solely as a process of individual cognition, but rather as a social process that contextualizes past events as devices for the expression and transmission of transatlantic identities. Therefore, it views such processes as collectively-shaped in which the individual Muslim of African descent is situated that inform particular kinds of belonging and animate specific religious discourses seen in the Moncks Corner zawiya in South Carolina and beyond. At the same time, it is necessary to grapple with the term, as David Berliner (2005) suggests, because ‘memory’ has been utilized in a multitude of ways in social scientific scholarship for the past few decades. Therefore, it has swiftly become a placeholder in order to refer to processes of continuity and transmission that have become trans-cultural through wide use and meanwhile risks becoming emptied of meaning. I use the framework of ‘memory’ as a lens through which to elaborate upon the collective processes of memorialization that result in specific discourses of liberation embedded within distinct interpretations of sacred text and enacted via participation in Sufi pedagogies and other forms of learning.

The preeminent theorist with regard to social memory is Maurice Halbwachs, student of Emile Durkheim – purveyor of the “total social fact.” Maurice Halbwachs (1992 [1941]) proposed a sociological theory of memory and like Sigmund Freud, argued that the accessing of memory requires an interpersonal dimension of some kind insofar as all memories are produced and reproduced within a social context. In Halbwachs’ conception of how memory operates, the individual can only recall memories in the context of a social environment—“the mind reconstructs its memories under the pressure of society” (Halbwachs 1992 [1941]: 51). The inclusion of the group is not necessary for the validity of the memory, yet it is the discourse between actors from which its particular meanings emerge. In addition to framing memory as a social phenomenon which plays a part in the formation of the self—that is, that individual identities are configured through communication with the other—Halbwachs also argues that an essential step in the making of memories has to do with a reconstruction of the past. In other words, collective memory involves a particular understanding of the past that is discursively built through a collective imaginary. One also can extend this analysis to the work of nation-making

(or, in our case, transregional religious communities), in addition to the development of the individuated self, as Halbwachs' theory paves the way for understanding a kind of historical continuity that is produced and reproduced, which allows for a (collective and individual) perpetuity of identity. Regarding the influence of society on the individual memory, Halbwachs alludes to a compulsory sort of reconstruction which occurs: "Society from time to time obligates people not just to reproduce in thought previous events of their lives, but also to touch them up, to shorten them, or to complete them so that, however convinced we are that our memories are exact, we give them a prestige that reality did not process" (Halbwachs 1992 [1941]: 51). Memory is not an exacting measure of the past, but rather, it is a specific reconstruction of the past that is collectively produced through social interaction through which certain collective politics of mind are transmitted.

This social theory of memory, offered by Maurice Halbwachs, describes how familial and religious belonging become modalities in which memory reinforces a type of social order. Simply put, both familial and religious types of belonging become important spaces in which the individual comes to understand itself as part of a larger social community through which the past is reproduced. Once again, these kinds of belonging contribute to this social order via particular reconstructions of the past. For the argument, this 'familial bond' can otherwise be thought of as the vital bond which connects African-American communities through the fictive formations of kinship forged through long histories of ethnic belonging and racial exclusion. With the familial bond, belonging has to do with the recognition and observance of specific traditions and rules more so than consanguinity. And despite any significant distance, each family member, having grown up in or around the family, reproduces the bond through their individual recollections of a shared past. In fact, it is through the family that the individual gains his understanding of the external world, and more importantly, comes to know himself more intimately thus heightening the familial sense of belonging in instances where the individual becomes separated from the family. Religious (collective) memory, according to Halbwachs, works similarly to the type produced by the family bond in that it constructs the individual through discursive reconstruction of the past within which the individual becomes embedded.

Nations function likewise insofar as they cultivate within each individual a sense of a shared past through either religious or secular observances, traditions, and or specific conceptions of past events. For our purposes, the conceptual category of 'the nation' will be replaced with that of 'the Tariqa' in terms of the discursive power of spiritual authority and persuasive constructions of historical memory shared amongst adherents. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983) lay out a framework for understanding how nation-states (for us, *tariqas*) convey shared histories through 'traditions' that are designed to transmit historical narrative. Traditions in this sense mean a "set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 1). Their project is not directly aimed at producing theory for collective memory, however the arguments are instructive regarding how governing bodies (and by extension, spiritual authority) legitimate themselves through building continuity with the past. In this sense, we should certainly understand 'tradition' as capable of being mapped onto a discourse on collective religious memory, but should pause to consider the implications of this approach to memory. The authors begin by distinguishing tradition from custom to say that

'customs' are merely practices that are habitual and have an actual history of being present among a certain group, whereas 'tradition' is that which is discursively constructed over time specifically for the purpose of imposing a directed understanding of a past into (and onto) the present. The *invention* of tradition is where innovation occurs in which practices become ritualized or routinized to perform a symbolic function. This approach is undergirded by the notion that pasts are built to perform some kind of authority and are ideologically-constituted, which departs from others (Talal Asad, for example) who take the position that traditions are historically-constituted and that the temporal structure on which notions of the historical are founded are achieved through the institution of practices.

Memory, either way, might effectively be described as a social phenomenon that produces an external coercive power onto the individual and, subsequently, the individual is formed through the social. Paul Connerton (1989) also understands memory as a social practice and surmises that how a national body constructs the present is dependent upon how it constructs the past. Extending this theory of social formulation into a more critical relation with history, Connerton asserts that collective memory is built upon the transmission of images that then contribute to social order. "Concerning social memory in particular, we may note that images of the past commonly legitimate a present social order. It is an implicit rule that participants in any social order must presuppose a shared memory" (Connerton 1989: 3). Similar to the familial bond in Halbwachs' analysis, Connerton poses that our recollections of the past are mediated by images that mold a shared connection with that common past. Providing a framework for collective memory conceived more from a statist viewpoint, Connerton discusses the way in which dynastic rule in pre-revolutionary France (and other parts of Europe) was founded upon a notion of historical continuity that united the physical body of the king with the politicized theology of divine rule in which this fusion allowed for a continuum of authority between a former and current monarch (see also Kantorowicz 1957). So it is with persuasive power of genealogical descent produced throughout Sufi traditions out of which wide notions of spiritual authority are communicated and impressed upon adherents.

Connerton's theory of collective memory also departs from Halbwachs as he (Connerton) disentangles social memory from historical reconstruction, in effect, unpacking a discourse on forgetting. He argues that historical reconstruction is not contingent on any alliance with social memory, and that the two can be exclusive by posing that historians can, through their labors, reconstruct history even at the expense of social memory. Moreover, governing authorities can also construct historical narrative to align with a particular political mapping of the past in ways that subvert localized and subaltern knowledge. While he argues on one hand that it is through images that the past is constructed, or 'remembered,' as they might provide a common vision through which the past may be understood, it is *performances* that provide the glue through which collective knowledge of the past is attained. Therefore, ceremonial practices transmit collective vision via performance, which allows the individual to embody a shared envisioning of the past. Essentially, Connerton's major claim moves somewhat beyond Halbwachs in that he poses that commemorative ceremony and bodily practices are the main social activities through which 'societies remember.' Bodily practices provide a pathway beyond two types of memory (personal and cognitive) into a third type – *habit-memory*. This third type has to do with remembering how to perform an action with the body, and has more to do with a kind of muscle memory – an automatized process of embodying the past.

Benedict Anderson (2006) also deals with the question of collective memory, in terms of how histories, and thus identities, are constructed. In his conception of how memory is constructed, the map, the museum, and the census stand out as three state-produced artifacts through which historical narrative is manufactured at a larger scale. Therefore, nations are communities that are imagined (and produced) in these three particular tropes that include their temporal, spatial, and physical makeup. With regard to their temporal makeup, nations become concretized outside of history - that is, a communal narrative that forms the nation is constructed in a way that requires that what is remembered and what is forgotten become deliberate mechanisms for a formulation that provides the model for reality, and not of reality. Here, the instrument of the museum is most telling of this idea. The museum is not to be thought of as a neutral artifact that offers itself as a space for viewing an actual past, it is a "profoundly political" project that provides an "infinite reproducibility" (Anderson 2006: 182) regarding notions of historical truth, familial, political, and cultural belonging (inheritance), and peoplehood. Museums, via their photographic and archaeological objects among others, activate a "necrological census" (Anderson 2006: 180) through which national-political lineages can be traced; and it is through print and perhaps other forms of capitalism that nationhood can be consumed and shared.

Anderson suggests that the map provides perhaps the most useful account of how nations, particularly imperialist ones, fashioned global landscapes via cartographic pursuits that often reflected 'anticipated space' rather than provided a view of 'actual space'. Maps drew boundaries, however anticipatory, not that they would serve some flat, neutral function, but maps delineated between national space and non-national space in a political manner. Hence, maps carved up the world into distinct "tightly bounded territorial units" (Anderson 2006: 175). Also, political-biographical narratives were placed into national memory via historical maps. Finally, with regard to distinguishing and determining the physical makeup of its citizenry, states constructed their national bodies via the instrument of the census, interwoven with the map, to provide a "totalizing classification" (Anderson 2006: 173) where citizens were made and unmade. At the same time, the previous works in this section have stressed the collection of memory primarily by way of institutions and particular structures that have organized the past to shape how histories are constructed and how memory is thus configured collectively. Indeed, many works have illustrated the role of memory in the construction of national identities through ideations of a shared past (Zarecka 1994; Zerubavel 1995; Bal, Crewe, and Spitzer 1999; Nora 1999; Coombes 2003; Hoelcher & Alderman 2004; Zerubavel 2012). We return again to the question of the ideologically-constituted past and are more convinced that, particularly in the case of African-descended communities that attempt to understand themselves anew in the context of historical traumatic experience, not all ideas of nationhood are informed by ideological concerns.

Jan Assmann's (2006) approach is also helpful insofar as his argument builds upon Halbwachs understanding memory as social in order to identify memory as a cultural phenomenon that communicates and interprets historical events, incorporates religious traditions into those interpretations, and coheres social fabric via political allegiances. But what about forms of collective memory that configure beyond the work of institutions? How do corporations of people share narratives of a shared past without the presence of rigidly defined structures that shape thought? Other than state institutions, diasporas also mark relations to historical narratives about homelands (Yamba 1995; Alpers 2000; Clarke 2004; Ho 2006; Kane 2011) and, in some

cases, trauma (Wise 2004; Young 2006; Cho 2008). Anthropological work on memory, particularly within an African and African diasporic context, that gives shape to how we understand the role that it plays in daily life and in the formation of postcolonial subjectivities has, for example, looked at how the legacy of precolonial pasts have been embodied through remembering ancestors (Stoller 1995; Gomez 1998), and through visual and material cultures that both reveal tensions and marks transition into postcolonial space (Coombes 2003).

The central approach to understanding the multiple historical discourses as localized that operate in conjunction with routinized religious performances that are transregional in order to animate spaces of spiritual healing situated in the Moncks Corner zawiyah (and beyond) builds from prior scholarship that has viewed social memory as processual. Harvey Whitehouse, for example, has relied heavily upon a theory that illuminates how certain cognitive processes pave the way for doctrinal and imagistic ‘modes of religiosity’ (Whitehouse 1992, 2000, and 2002; Whitehouse and Laidlaw 2004; Whitehouse and McCauley 2005). Whereas *doctrinal* modes of religiosity allow for routinization and centralization across various contexts and among multiple religious communities via transmission and repetition of sacred text and doctrine, *imagistic* modes of religiosity make localized and immediate formations of arousal and episodic memory (read: individualized, autobiographical) possible. These divergent modalities work in tandem, yet doctrinal modes can yield the sociopolitical features of religious expression, in effect, hardening those features into the anonymity of a broader tradition (orthodoxy), while imagistic modes facilitate greater internal cohesion that can produce exegeses born out of traumatic experience. Although the scholarly approach to memory reviewed here is more cognitive than psychoanalytic, it is nonetheless useful as a point of departure for grappling with how narratives of trauma can yield localized interpretations of healing and liberation found within sacred text in one particular node of a larger transatlantic Sufi order that has been centralized via the circulation of materials and knowledge.⁴³

Trauma, Healing, and Reversion

In the same way that memory has been understood as a construction through which a collective past is imagined and subsequently produces specific identities, we also must consider trauma similarly. Therefore, trauma and its psychological impacts, articulated by Frantz Fanon for example, should be understood within a collective framework (Fanon 2008 [1952]). Some have referred to this notion as ‘cultural trauma’ to shed light upon the ways in which collectives share traumatic experience (Honwana 1999; Zarowsky & Pedersen 2000; Robben & Su’arez-

⁴³ See Whitehouse, H. (2002). Modes of religiosity: Towards a cognitive explanation of the sociopolitical dynamics of religion. *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 14(3/4), 293-315. Whitehouse’s theory does not seem to thoroughly take into account religiosities that are produced within the context of a politically-oppressed population, but his commentary on episodic memory, however, does provide ground for thinking more intently about how collective narratives of displacement of social exclusion can become interpreted through religious performance. His major outlining of episodic memory from within religious modalities includes initiation, possession, or extreme ritual; albeit reductionist, his task is to provide explanation for the cognitive processes that animate religiosity. As mentioned above, I pull this approach into a more psychoanalytic framework by acknowledging that broader narratives of historical trauma, whether explicitly or implicitly-shared, out of which episodic memories emerge and are embedded into the religious landscape of the Moncks Corner zawiyah.

Orozco 2000; Eyerman 2001; Alexander and Eyerman et al. 2004; Nytagodien & Neal 2004; Audergon 2004). Ron Eyerman (2004) provides a quite useful articulation of the dynamic that is produced from a systematized violence that results from racial subjugation:

“As opposed to psychological or physical trauma which involves a wound and the experience of great emotional anguish by an individual, cultural trauma refers to a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people who have achieved some degree of cohesion. In this sense, the trauma need not necessarily be felt by everyone in a group or have been directly experienced by any or all. While it may be necessary to establish some event or occurrence as the significant 'cause', its traumatic meaning must be established and accepted, a process, which requires time, as well as mediation and representation.” (Eyerman 2004: 160)

Trauma is a phenomenon that, despite the lack of actual uniform experience on the part of all individuals within a social environment, is shared insofar as there is some relation of identity to the meaning of the trauma in question. However, for Eyerman, there seems to be some notion of cultural trauma that does not extend to, or moves beyond the realm of the psyche. Cultural trauma, as described here, has to do with a type of loss around which a collective forms a sense of solidarity where memory becomes mobile across and throughout the group, but also travels down time as it is extended intergenerationally – as opposed to the type of constructed memory emphasized via state institutions that is pushed ‘up’ time. Eyerman grounds his theoretical focus regarding collective memory and cultural trauma by discussing the role of the memory of enslavement in the development of African American identity. As he reminds, the history of slavery has, in a number of ways, been the reference point for how African Americans have understood themselves – either by distancing themselves from the history of being formerly enslaved as a group in order to eek out some sense of dignity in an environment that sung the fallacious song of white superiority or by embracing the role of slavery in the formation of Western civilization as a strategy for holding nations accountable for continued black suffering – throughout the late nineteenth century and beyond.

This approach to understanding trauma is anchored to a broader theory of historical trauma that account for health disparities present among populations situated on the lower rung of power relations that result in economic dispossession and racialization. Historical trauma theory is founded upon several distinct assumptions that pose that “(1) mass trauma is deliberately and systematically inflicted upon a target population by a subjugating, dominant population; (2) trauma is not limited to a single catastrophic event, but continues over an extended period of time; (3) traumatic events reverberate throughout the population, creating a universal experience of trauma; and (4) the magnitude of the trauma experience derails the population from its natural, projected historical course resulting in a legacy of physical, psychological, social and economic disparities that persists across generations” (Sotero 2006: 94-95).

Genetic Memory and Trauma

Thus far, we have reviewed the manner in which scholars have conceived of trauma as a collective psychological process, however, it is also important to consider how trauma is experienced through the body. Some have written about historical trauma amongst African-Americans by articulating ‘*Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*’ as a route to understanding the

nature of various health disparities that have resulted from grappling with the psychosocial impacts of such structural violences collectively endured by black people in the United States (Leary and Robinson 2005; Mims and Higginbottom 2005). Specifically, such an approach to the study of trauma theorizes unresolved psychological consequences due to enslavement of African-descended people in the United States that are compounded with their racialization that results in intergenerational transmission of certain health repercussions that include lower self-esteem, violence, and aggression. While this cultural approach to understanding trauma as capable of being inherited or collectively experienced through societal positionalities, multiple kinds of violence, and discourses of historic oppression can have its weaknesses as it relies heavily on qualitative data (Green and Darity 2010), biological approaches to understanding the long-term impacts of race-related stress and the manner in which vestiges of trauma can be located in the body over time are numerous (Meares 1995; Danieli 1998; Kellermann 2001; Franklin, Boyd-Franklin, and Kelly 2006; Murgatroyd et. al 2010).

The cultural and historical trauma that people of African descent have collectively endured in the Western hemisphere from the sixteenth century into the present has no doubt had significant impact on the way in which they have imagined themselves. While much has been written about the various kinds of oppression they have endured, less work has been done in order to understand the survival strategies of black people and processes of cultural maintenance in spite of black suffering than the tomes that have been penned in the way of displaying black people as dysfunctional or pathological (Lemelle and Kelley 1994; Kemayo 2003; Sweet 2004). Not only has the collective memory of African American people allowed for the persistence of African cultural formations in the Western hemisphere, it has also allowed for the re-emergence and reconfiguration of cultural consciousness. Some have shown, however, the persistence of cultural formations which have had their genealogies mapped as hailing from West Africa and have surely been proven the result of continuous inheritance of tradition (Herskovits 1990; Holloway 2005; Joyner 2010). At the same time, it is also necessary to continue recording the manner in which black people have relied upon religious traditions and bodily performances as strategies for healing and resistance (Pinn 2003; Comaroff 2013).

Throughout my time spent in Moncks Corner, there were multiple candid conversations had on the topic of police violence and its impacts on black communities in the United States. The responses that I witnessed ranged from confusion, anger, and sadness. While there were not collectively sustained and in-depth discussions about the nature of protests that were happening in various locations around the country, the community was generally aware of the implications of state-sanctioned violence and the responses seen in the broader public as revealed through mass media outlets. Additionally, Shaykh Faye has led several conversations with community members in terms of asking for their opinions on such matters. In the midst of these interactions, Shaykh Faye instructed respondents to frame their comments in such a way that was relied upon specific *ahadith* and or Qur'anic verses to support their conclusions. While Shaykh Faye confirmed his position that violence in the country would only get worse during one such conversation in the mosque, he founded his prediction upon the history of enslavement and racial violence enacted upon African-American and indigenous peoples while suggesting that the nation would not prosper due to its history of genocide and warmongering. The general solution for such a dilemma was to leave or retreat away from such an environment where Muslims could

endure the ‘Last Days.’⁴⁴ Rather than a literal retreat to any location of seclusion, prescriptions for evading social ills in the zawiya of Moncks Corner were at times rerouted into discourses of repatriation to Senegal (and even nearby Gambia) that marks a broader site of transatlantic identification mobilized by local religious performances.

At the same time, zawiya members such as Yusuf Washington have specifically commented on matters of racial violence and scenes of injustice on his Facebook page whereby he connects to many other members of the broader Tariqa. However, the lens through which he discusses racial violence in the United States is a theologically-based discourse of liberation via repatriation to Senegal. One example of many would be a June 16th post of this year that reads:

*“This is where I want to be and eventually reside. No place is perfect in this imperfect world but this is ideal for me to live a peaceful Muslim way of life. And everyone that has been to this part of Africa loved it. Senegal/Gambia here I come insha'Allah (God Willing).”*⁴⁵

Yusuf was referring specifically to a video that he posted online about Senegal’s peaceful democracy which is heavily impacted by the presence of Sufi brotherhoods. The comment he made about relocation to Senegal was an implicit response to a dissatisfaction with racism and general liberal views expressed in the United States. This is but a glimpse of the discourse of movement that is made possible via the Tariqa which allows African-Americans access to regional sites of belonging, real and imagined, facilitated through network nodes across the Atlantic. Conversations had with Yusuf in the mosque and on the phone reveal that his desire to relocate to Senegal has been encouraged through repeated discussions had with other tariqa members and especially Shaykh Arona Faye. During our most recent conversation, Yusuf revealed that as a native of Moncks Corner, he remembers witnessing KKK marches down Main Street in Moncks Corner perhaps around 1988, when he was about 7 or 8 years old.⁴⁶ He also mentioned that he learned about the difficulties of everyday life for African-Americans in that area in terms of racial segregation and other forms of discrimination through everyday interactions with his family members. While he was sheltered from much of this kind of explicit display of racist thought, it has nonetheless impacted his awareness of what it means to be a man of African descent living in the American South. Indeed, his exposure to the optics of racist thought early in his life and then re-introduced to its vestiges through the experiences of family members was culturally traumatic for Yusuf. Consequently, he believes that his present deployment of spiritual protection and eventual relocation to Senegal will be a meaningfully positive experience.

⁴⁴ During the impromptu address to his students, Shaykh Faye reminded them of the hadith narrated via Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri: Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said, “There will come a time when the best property of a Muslim will be sheep which he will take to the tops of mountains and the places of rainfall so as to flee with his religion from the afflictions.” Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 9, Book 88. Line 210.

⁴⁵ Facebook post, Yusuf Washington, 16 June 2016.

⁴⁶ Interview, Yusuf Washington, 21 August 2016.

Reversive Memory

It may seem as though a term such as ‘*reversive memory*’ risks being redundant insofar as both ‘*reversive*’ and ‘*memory*’ connote some manner of recollection or return. While this may otherwise be accurate, I contrive the term as a manner for articulating the processes of embodiment that follow or accompany discourses of historical recollection through which specific Black Muslim identities are shaped. While ‘*memory*’ here identifies particular ideational processes for constructing the past via discourse, ‘*reversion*’ connotes an embodying of a prior self enacted via participation in specific forms of memorization and spiritual transformation (Nieuwkerk 2006; Sanni 2012; Beckley-Roberts 2016). In other words, I view the multiple iterations of African-American Muslim bodily practice informed by West African pedagogical approaches to religious observance and spiritual knowledge as its own kind of ‘*reversion*’ (a specific manner of remembering), all the while against the backdrop of histories of transatlantic dispersions and partially motivated by narratives of lost identities in the Moncks Corner mosque. Therefore, the voyages of African-American Muslims from the United States to Senegal, for either spiritually-motivated visitation (in Arabic: *ziyara*) or religious learning, are understood as processes of reconnection that are constructed by such discourses in which they participate and mobilized through the placement of network nodes on either side of the Atlantic.

Mosque as Site of Reversive Memory

The Moncks Corner mosque was originally located closer to downtown, first on Carolina Avenue in a residential area not far from the ‘center’ of town, and then later on 304 East Main Street, which is adjacent to the town’s banking section. However, the mosque was moved away due to a rental dispute with its landlord from whom the building was being leased and is currently situated on land that was formerly a slave plantation. Gippy Plantation is set aside Old Highway 52, which is a two-lane road that it shares with the Mosque. Most of the land that comprised Gippy Plantation has been partitioned into mostly residential properties. Yet, in spite of its shrinking, fencing and signage impose themselves quite thoroughly in line of sight from Mosque property. In my talks with some of the men at the Mosque, they frequently would bring up approximated histories regarding enslavement of African-descended people in that very place. While they held varying degrees of acquaintance with the local history of enslavement, it was quite apparent that the memory of enslavement - and the subsequent identification as descendants of enslaved Africans - lives on in the minds of the African-American Muslims with whom I spoke. In other words, the trauma of enslavement (perhaps hardened by national discourses around institutionalized racism and police violence) is something that indeed has an afterlife (Hartman & Sexton 1997) and presents itself in unexpected ways. Umm Aisha, for example, recounted to me that she used to know a white woman who lived on Old Highway 52 and that during a gathering at her house, the woman decided to invite Umm Aisha to view photographs that would reveal images of laboring black people:

“...I know that part of town used to be a plantation because I used to know a lady who lived on that road and I used to go to her plantation because she worked at the health department as a volunteer... and she would invite the mid-wives to her place and so we’d go on her property. So one day while the other mid-wives, which were all-white, were out walking the grounds, she said ‘come here’ and she took me to a room and she opened up

a drawer and there was nothing but pictures of black people working in the rice fields. And she said ‘I know you’d appreciate this’ and I just thought about how much of our history is in their hands that we never even got to see.”⁴⁷

Umm Aisha’s recollection of this moment marks the manner in which the history of black dispossession is emblematic of the broader South. During our conversation, she described her feelings about coming southward from Philadelphia as a child. Her mother, who was from Walterboro, South Carolina used to bring them down every summer. Umm Aisha took note that Washington D.C. operated as a line where once they arrived in the city, her family would be required to move to the back as they changed busses to come further south in the 1950s. This memory of being instantly thrown at the bottom of a racial caste every year in order to visit family stuck out in Umm Aisha’s mind as she thought about the historical legacy of South in both antebellum and postbellum contexts.

In my time spent with Abdur-Rasheed Watson, one of Shaykh Faye’s more advanced African-American disciples also originally from Philadelphia, he frequently shared with me that he sometimes imagined how enslaved Africans were marched up and down Old Highway 52. Whenever we drove either away from or toward the mosque in order to visit the cleaners nearby, or to purchase supplies from the local Walmart, he never hesitated to audibly ponder the anguish that the unfortunate souls must have had to endure in that very same space a little more than 150 years prior. In fact, during one of the slower days while living at the mosque in Moncks Corner, Abdur-Rasheed and I visited the nearby history museum in town. The Berkeley County Heritage Museum, located in the town’s Old Canal Santee Park, traces its role as a southern location in American history. We had both visited that location prior, although it had been a few years since I had last walked into that exhibit. Abdur-Rasheed, noting their use of terms such as ‘planters’ as opposed to ‘slaveholders’ and the central focus on white landowners instead of the enslaved people who actually did the planting and harvesting, indicated his awareness of the creeping and subtle difference regarding narrative that most contemporary historians share about a difficult past.

What has been outlined thus far marks a subtle dissonance between how the past was presented by the town of Moncks Corner and how it was remembered by its residents, particularly its Muslim community which is composed mainly of African-descended people. Further, the physically imposing Gippy Plantation that is situated near the Moncks Corner mosque highlights a geographic erasure of access to historical memory as significant portions of it are converted to suburban housing - land historically devoted to forced labor in which black hands tilled the soil to be later whitewashed by the momentum of economic development and spaces devoted to celebration and leisure. Additionally, there also is the question of the black fencing that bars immediate entry. It is made quite obvious that Gippy Plantation, from its signage to its security measures, is private property. For past owners, the plantation was and is a source of wealth, and for others, a signpost of economic and bodily dispossession. Even still, further up Old Highway 52 is what historical signage indicates as Lewisfield Plantation and the nearby Berkeley Country Club located on Exeter Plantation Road. These locations were historically places constructed for the purpose of black labor and afterward was reconstructed as space for white leisure. Therefore, it is ironic and meaningful that a mosque filled with Muslims

⁴⁷ Interview, Aisha Faye, 17 November 2014.

of African descent devoted to spiritual empowerment would be placed on land where enslaved Africans (some of which were likely Muslim) years ago were disempowered.

Meanwhile, the county's willful mis-recollection and reconstructive forgetting of historical narrative away from the complicity of racial and economic oppression via enslavement toward a focus on the agricultural pursuit of white wealth is couched in the language of *heritage*. The Berkeley County Heritage Museum's exhibits presently reveal little to no historical knowledge about the enslaved populations whose imprisonment and forced labor took place within its boundaries. This notion, I argue, can be situated in broader politics of strategic forgetting in the wake of postbellum articulations of 'Southern Pride' where the chance sighting of confederate flags are highly likely. Similarly, it should also be noted that such a fact operates in conjunction with the invisibility of the religious identities of enslaved Africans facilitated by the antebellum legal categorizations that transformed people into property (Beydoun 2014). I place this process of forgetting as opposite to the strategies of remembrance that have taken place amongst African-American Muslims in, or around, the Mosque during my stay. One example, would be the multiple conversations that involve somewhat happenstance pondering on the religious lives of the enslaved Africans in the region. Shaykh Faye has repeatedly discussed the way in which an old Qur'an had been discovered in the region. Additionally, upon the recent publication of a book, entitled "*Bilali Muhammad: The Muslim Jurisprudist in Antebellum Georgia*," the relationship between religious expertise and Islam among the enslaved was discussed in the Moncks Corner Mosque during a visit by one of Shaykh Faye's older students.⁴⁸

Through discussions of enslavement in the wake of the strategic forgetting on the part of the town of Moncks Corner (and Berkeley County), I argue that these remembrances are a strategy for vital spiritual and historical reconnections for African and African-American Muslims whereby identities are cultivated via West African Muslim pedagogies that are accompanied by such strategies of historical remembrance. The Moncks Corner Mosque also provides a medium for the strategic cultivation of broader transatlantic Muslim identities through the conversion of physical space that coincides with an emphasis on spiritual care. Considering the discourses of esoteric vision communicated via Shaykh Faye that are accompanied by explanations of economic motivation for moving the site of the Mosque to its current location, it is debatable whether the specific move was a matter of spiritual foresight. Yet, the location of the community in Moncks Corner is certainly considered meaningful in terms of its placement in the American South - a region where the supplications of African Muslim ancestors is believed by mosque members to have taken place. This notion becomes especially salient as Shaykh Faye has repeatedly referred to enslaved African Muslims in the American South as his 'ancestors' and has identified an imagined linkage between his own Senegalese forefathers, some of which may have been forcibly relocated to the antebellum United States, and African-Americans, some of which may be related to those forcibly removed from the African continent centuries ago. It should be understood that discussion of actual genealogies in these articulations of historical descent are not emphasized and might certainly complicate the emergence of these spiritual solidarities. Yet, connections forged between African-American Muslims and West African Muslims are discursively produced through approximate histories and realized via the larger transatlantic spiritual network of the Mustafawiyya Tariqa. Moreover, when histories of transatlantic enslavement are considered on this side of the Atlantic, they overwhelmingly emphasize those

⁴⁸ See Al-Ahari, Muhammad Abdullah, and Bilali Muhammad. 2012. *Bilali Muhammad: Muslim Jurisprudist in Antebellum Georgia*. Magribine Press.

who were taken and shipped across the ocean into a new world. While this is somewhat understandable, it is essential to take into account this history does not merely involve a vital rupture between people and the lands from which they were torn; transatlantic enslavement also has meant a vital rupture between people and the family members from which they were stolen (see Diouf 2003). Therefore, it is vital to understand religious reversion as a process of reconnection to both land and people.

Reversion as Strategy for Healing?

Nonetheless, Masjid Muhajjirun wal Ansar offers a site in which articulations of spiritual care are merged with black Muslim identity politics that produce collective discourses shared across the community, which I argue operate as a broader strategy for addressing historical trauma amongst African-American Muslims in Moncks Corner. Reversion, in the sense that I use it here, moves beyond the act of conversion and beyond some temporary recollective act. Rather, it includes the initial point of religious conversion and subsequent transition into a memorial West African tradition in which the Sufi adherent perceives that they have regained something lost or previously inaccessible, as well as the ongoing processes and rituals that continually constitute the memorialization of the adherent inclusion into that tradition. Reversion is a continual state of being and constant experience.

During a Sunday gathering at the Moncks Corner mosque, Shaykh Arona Faye instructed one of his students, Abdur-Noor, to read aloud an English translation of Surah 18:28 in the Qur'an: "*And withhold yourself with those who call on their Lord morning and evening desiring His goodwill, and let not your eyes pass from them, desiring the beauties of this world's life; and do not follow him whose heart We have made unmindful to Our remembrance, and he follows his low desires and his case is one in which due bounds are exceeded.*" It is this verse that Shaykh Faye uses to remind his students of the importance of God's remembrance in general, and that there is a particular benefit in reciting those *qasidas* that Shaykh Mustafa has penned as they are also prayers. Having stood up after the evening prayer to address the crowd while all others were sitting, Shaykh Faye reminded his students that Surah-tul-Nasr (110th chapter of the Qur'an) was revealed last among the entire revelation and that part of its purpose was to announce the coming death of Prophet Muhammad two and a half months after its arrival. According to Shaykh Faye, it also beckons the Muslims to the remembrance of God (via *dhikr*) as he argued that the revelation of this chapter substantiates the science of *tassawuf* (Islamic esotericism; sufism). What is notable about this impromptu lecture given by Shaykh Faye is that he took the opportunity to deny the notion that what was practiced in the Moncks Corner mosque is some kind of 'African pseudo-Islam'—and exclaimed that Islam was accepted in Africa before it pervaded the Arab world. He followed those comments by recounting that the first migration of the nascent Muslim community in 7th century Makkah (*Hijra*) was to Abyssinia in Ethiopia, before that of Madinah. Having exclaimed that "your blackness is beautiful!" he rhetorically challenged his listeners to "show me another short, black, ugly, [non-English speaking] man who converted 1422 people to Islam and I will be his student! Why would I take knowledge from someone who does not know? I was born in the *Deen* (religion), work for the *Deen*..."⁴⁹ This is

⁴⁹ Public Lecture, Shaykh Arona Faye, 13 July 2015.

but one example of a larger dialogue that takes place in the mosque that responds to orientalist assumptions that wed Islam to an Arab identity.

With such comments, Shaykh Faye re-centers Muslims of African descent in a broader Islamic world. At the same time, the impression that all African-American Muslims are affiliated, either presently or historically, with the Nation of Islam has also been addressed during gatherings at the mosque in Moncks Corner. During a Saturday gathering after the evening prayer, Shaykh Faye jokingly commented that the Arabs that visit their mosque from time to time arrive with certain assumptions about what knowledge exists there - he said that “they think we are the Nation of Islam!”⁵⁰ He continued to say repeatedly that it is important to know how to properly give an introduction to a Friday lecture before the congregational prayer in Arabic (*jumah*) - “This is not temple #5!” he exclaimed. With this comment, Shaykh Faye warns his audience of the import of mastering Arabic to the extent that each member is able to recite the requisite formulae when giving a sermon (*khutbah*) to a Muslim audience. His exhortations not only emphasize a theological distancing from that of the Nation of Islam, they also provide a commentary on how orientalist constructions of Islam distance orthodox Muslims of African-descent away from a larger, ‘authentic’ Muslim body. Shaykh Faye words suggest a larger misunderstanding and misperception about the nature and theological orientation of African-American Muslims. His comments also signal the manner in which a post-9/11 national political atmosphere, rife with Islamophobia, elides the presence of Muslims of African descent (American or otherwise) as they are largely ignored and made invisible through media constructions that fundamentally shape public perceptions about who Muslims in America are. Thus, his calls for the Moncks Corner community to maintain a remembrance of God is wedded to a sociopolitical awareness that emphasizes a positive, black transatlantic Muslim identity. This positive construction of ‘black Muslimness’ extends beyond the Shaykh, of course, and is also emphasized by his students. In this way, God-consciousness, and ensuing calls for remembrance of God, are implanted with a remembrance of self—that is, a positive identity of black Muslimness is discursively imprinted onto a broader religious discourse that occurs in Moncks Corner zawayah.

Islam as Liberation Theology

Shaykh Abdullah Nunn, an African-American Muslim who spends his time between Charlotte, North Carolina and the Moncks Corner zawayah, gave an address to the entire Moncks Corner mosque before the Friday congregational prayer (*Jumah*) where he posed that a strategy for avoiding ‘enslavement’ to mankind was through ‘enslaving’ one’s self to God.⁵¹ During his address, he outlined the difference between chattel enslavement versus being a servant (slave: *abd-*) of God and stressed that his African-American listeners should avoid having reservations with using the word “slave” when describing one’s relationship of servitude to God. In Arabic, this naming—*abdullahi* (servant of God)—connotes a submissive posture whereby the Muslim lives life in a religiously devout manner and is commonly used throughout the Muslim world as an indication of righteousness. However, it is interesting and meaningful that the speaker in this

⁵⁰ Public Lecture, Shaykh Arona Faye, 26 April 2015.

⁵¹ Public Lecture (Friday Sermon), Shaykh Abdullah Nunn, 11 April 2015.

case would juxtapose these two ideas in a way that would resonate particularly with African-American Muslims who possess a traumatic historical relationship to the notion of enslavement, and yet adorning one's self with the noble title of "*abdullahi*" renders one spiritually unable, in this frame of mind, to be enslaved by any man, ideology, thing that is not Allah. In this way, the theological foundation of Muslim servitude is framed as a device for liberation.

Many have written on the manner in which religious institutions have historically provided routes to, and have been profoundly informed by, political awareness amongst African-Americans. Even still, there has been rich analysis on the role of those institutions as vehicles for direct mobilization against various kinds of oppression. African-American churches, for example, have provided space for voter registration, general political education, and have acted as meeting sites for logistical operations throughout the Civil Rights Movement (Cone 1969; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990; Chong 1991; Harris 1994). It has been posed that religiosity has facilitated greater racial identification and group consciousness amongst African-Americans in this context (Dawson *et. al* 1990; Wilcox and Gomez 1990; Ellison 1993).

These concerns have been consistent among scholars who have studied African-American Muslim institutions as well (Metcalf 1996; Leonard 2003; Turner 2003; Jamal 2005). Edward Curtis (2002), in particular, argues that the universalist message of Islam has been historically rendered into a particularist utilization via emphases on social and economic justice by African-American Muslims. The core of his thesis offers that the utilization of Islam on the part of African-Americans must be understood as an historical process, not necessarily fixed as an historical object, that has played a part in how they have viewed themselves and built communities. Insofar as racial difference has been nominal in the formation of African-American cultural identities, it follows that the specific practice of Islam would be deeply informed by an emphasis on undoing various forms of dispossession that has plagued black life. Thus, homegrown African-American Muslim institutions such as the Moorish Science Temple, the Nation of Islam, and others have all historically been grounded in a black cultural orthodoxy (in spite of religious heterodoxy) that has combined notions of piety to dismantling the effects of systemic discrimination (Curtis 2002; Dabashi 2008). In spite of the fact that these various institutions have all dealt with 'central tenets' differently, their commonality with regard to the question of black existentialism is grounded in such a consciousness.

Sherman Jackson (2005) offers that a major reason for the popularity of Islam amongst African-Americans in the twentieth century and beyond must be understood through the lens of "Black Religion." Insofar as the broader theological orientation for African-American Muslims was deeply informed and impacted by an ontological blackness, Black Religion provided a means for African-American Muslims to identify within the realm of a discourse that was neither tied to a theology dictated by Eurocentrism while also not sheerly formed from a religious authority that hailed from elsewhere. Jackson is careful to note that 'Black Religion' and 'African-American Religion' are not synonymous.

"...Black Religion would be more properly understood as a subset of the aggregate of black religious expression in America. By capitalizing this designation, my aim is not to connote Black Religion's universality or even its preeminence. It is simply to underscore its distinctiveness as a religious orientation among Blackamericans. In sum, Black

Religion is but one, albeit by far the most hegemonic, of several religious orientations among Blackamericans” (Jackson 2005: 29).

Further, Jackson explicitly outlines how Black Religion is a cultural-political template in which any religious tradition would have to fit. As a result, the religious tradition, whether southern Christianity or Islam in northern urban centers, any tradition would be appropriated to serve the social and political needs of the black community in question.

“Black religion has no theology and no orthodoxy; it has no institutionalized ecclesiastical order and no public or private liturgy. It has no foundation documents or scriptures, like the Baghavad Ghita of the Bible, and no founding figures, like Buddha or Zoroaster. The God of Black Religion is neither specifically Jesus, Yaweh, nor Allah but an abstract category into which any and all of these can be fit, the “God of our weary years,” the “God of our silent tears.” In a real sense, Black Religion might be profitably thought of as the ‘deism’ or ‘natural religion’ of Blackamericans, a spontaneous folk orientation at once grounded in belief in a supernatural power outside of human history yet uniquely focused on that power’s manifesting itself in the form of interventions into the crucible of American race relations” (Jackson 2005: 31).

Instead, *Black Islam* - that is, Islam as practiced and shaped from within a longstanding trajectory of black liberation in response to collective historically-embedded trauma - has been the result of an appropriation of religious doctrine and practice, out of which emerged the proto-Islamic African-American movements of the twentieth century. The idea here is not necessarily to equate the practice of Islam amongst African-American Sufis in the American South with these prior religious inventions. Nor is it to show that the manner of practice is a matter of religious appropriation on the part of the American Mustafawiyya. In fact, I assert that the shape of practice and manner of pedagogical approach seen amongst African-American Muslims in Moncks Corner falls strictly within a decidedly West African iteration of Sufism, and further interpreted as squarely within the bounds of the prophetic tradition within Islam (*sunna*). However, there are similarities in the discourses of liberation that are rooted in broader black experience where concerns about race relations are voiced alongside anxieties grown from increasing Islamophobic rhetorics. While Jackson places this framework onto more innovative expressions of Islam (“Black *Islamiyin*”), this understanding of perspective also informs “Black Sunni Muslims” as well. This includes African-American Muslims who have participated in the Darul Islam movement, Salafism, American Society of Muslims (formerly led by Warith D. Muhammad), Jama’at al-Tabligh, Sufism, and those not affiliated with any particular movement or organization (Jackson 2005). The Naqshabandi and Tijani Sufi traditions have certainly seen more African-American participation due to the expansive nature of both tariqas, and there is certainly a contingent amongst those who exhibit characteristics of black religious expression (Jackson 2005; McCloud 1995). The African-American Muslims in the Mustafawiyya Tariqa, as I have shown, operate likewise in terms of not only identifying structures of racial and religious oppression, but also in the manner of spiritual care that takes place in the Moncks Corner zawayah.

Zawiyah as “Hospital” (Like a Dead Man’s Body)

Thus, discussions of spiritual care and healing that take place in the Muslim community of Moncks Corner are imbued with such concerns of freedom from societal oppression and individual degeneracy. Time spent within the community via close attention to public lectures, candid conversations, and even dark humor expressed in the mosque, in homes, and while traveling has revealed this. The Moncks Corner zawiyah has been consistently described as a ‘hospital’ in order to provide a language that encapsulates a central purpose of spiritual cultivation in which discourses of the heart and *nafs* (Arabic: lower desires / ego) are shared between teacher and student. To be clear, the metaphor of ‘the hospital’ as identified by Shaykh Arona Faye registers on two levels: this image works primarily for us to give shape to the manner in which the zawiyah houses those who suffer from both harmful character traits and the cultural trauma produced through a collectively imagined past that is substantiated by actual historical reality, while also referring to the strategies of spiritual care that are designated for the tariqa members and those who make the effort to visit the zawiyah. It is the central thesis here that this characterization of the hospital attends to psychic vestiges of historical trauma as well as physical health concerns. It is important to recall that the very purpose of the Tariqa is to facilitate a specific spiritual relationship between student and teacher, whether near or far (temporally or geographically), whereby it is recognized that the shaykh (present or absent) has mastered righteousness. The task of the shaykh is to impart this path of transformation toward righteousness and piety to the *murid* (student) via formulaic prayer, repetitive utterance (*dhikr*), and religious study. The central motivation for this endeavor is to enhance one’s relationship with Allah. Interestingly enough, Shaykh Faye has repeatedly described this relationship between the seeker and the guide in terms of the ideal etiquette displayed between the two whereby the teacher is like a physician while the student would be the person in need of care.

On a number of different occasions where Shaykh Faye gave a lecture about the necessity of being serious about one’s spiritual growth, he provided his audience with many interesting analogies that urged the seriousness of being able to surrender to the authority/ will/ expertise of the shaykh. One analogy expressed by the Shaykh in the home of his niece, Muhminatu, was to liken the seeker to a cup which, if too arrogant to lower itself to receive water from a pitcher which possesses that which the cup needs or wants, would not benefit at all from what the pitcher has to offer - in this case, the cup is the student (*murid*), the pitcher is the shaykh, and the water is knowledge.⁵² As his students watched attentively, Shaykh Faye held up these two items to illustrate the impossibility of pouring water into a cup that is placed too high as he explained. Another analogy he used to illustrate the proper etiquette of the murid, which I’ve heard him offer previously when discussing this topic, was that the murid must be “like a dead man’s body” in order to be willing to have one’s heart adjusted or to even submit one’s body to the shaykh in terms of offering a kind deferent service (*khidma*) that will assist the seeker in cultivating a bodily knowledge, ridding him of ignorant behavior and destructive desires, rendering him into a

⁵² Private lecture, Shaykh Arona Faye, 19 March 2015.

vessel capable of carrying what the Shaykh's ancestors have passed down from generation to generation.⁵³

This emphasis on bodily obedience and surrender is reminiscent of a prophetic narration (*hadith*) that stresses the possibility of reaching a station of full submission to God (*Abdullahi*) whereby the lips become the lips through which God speaks, the eye becomes the eye through which God sees, and the ears become the ears through which God hears.⁵⁴ In this way, Shaykh Faye exhorts his students to being willing to lower themselves - or rather, be willing to recognize their lowly state in relation to what their guide has to offer. The 'dead man' in this case would be the student that has agreed to relent his will to that of the shaykh who will be his master as a means of learning submission to God. This description implies a pliability and vital trust on the part of the student.

As far as the task of healing, the shaykh is responsible for providing his charge with remedies for various kinds of physical and spiritual maladies. This is done through either providing the means for the seeker to care for himself or, in many cases, the shaykh will tend to the malady of the student on his behalf. This kind of spiritual medicine can be said to possess these two general approaches: self-care and distant healing (Syed 2003). 'Spiritual Medicine' can refer to either providing a spiritual cure for diseases caused by spiritual or psychological or physical defects, or it can refer to the cultivation of higher ethics via tutelage. This is where we might return to Shaykh Abdullah's Friday sermon where he opined a spiritual reinterpretation of the slave identity away from its postbellum historical reality for African-Americans toward that of a spiritual posture that inhibits victimization. Through rendering one's self a 'dead body' in front of the possessor of spiritual expertise, the *fugara* can expel the vestiges of 'social death' (Patterson 1982) that his ancestors endured while enslaved.

⁵³ This analogy of the dead body is also reviewed by Arthur Bueller who describes the manner in which the sufi initiate submits to the shaykh just as the dead body submits to the will of the "corpsewasher." He attributes this mode of spiritual devotion, which acts as a manner of submission to God vis-a-vis submission to the shaykh, to a shifting notion of spiritual authority in the culmination of sufism as a mode of organized Islamic spirituality accompanied by spiritual genealogies and continuous chains of transmission as devices for legitimation. Buehler relates that this particular analogy was first articulated by Sahl bin Abdullah at-Tustari (d. 896). See page 2 of Buehler, A. F. (1998). *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet. The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Sufi Shaykh*. University of South Carolina Press.

⁵⁴ A rather well-known hadith expresses this notion: Abu Hurayrah said that the Messenger of Allah (*Sallallahu a'laihi wa sallam*) said: "Allah, the Almighty said, 'Whoever has mutual animosity with a friend (*wali*) of Mine, I declare war upon him. My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more beloved to Me than the religious duties that I have imposed upon him; and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I would love him. **And when I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his leg with which he walks.** Were he to ask of Me, I would surely give him; and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant it to him.'" [Bukhari – Kitab Ar-Raqai'iq ("Book on Heart Softeners"), Hadith Qudsi 6502], emphasis mine.

Learning the Qur'an and the Restructuring of West African Muslim Pedagogies

The Fuqara International Academy was established in the Maristes section of Dakar in Senegal for the purpose of teaching the Qur'an to Muslim youth. In Senegal and neighboring regions throughout sub-Saharan Africa, it is considered common, if not standard, to require children to learn how to read and recite the Qur'an as it was revealed to Prophet Muhammad^(saws) more than fourteen centuries prior. In some cases, the children who attend institutions devoted to Qur'anic instruction actually live at their schools full-time. These schools are responsible for providing room and board for the children, of course supported by the tuition or remittances that their parents offer in exchange for their children's religious education. At these schools, children also receive additional instruction with regard to elementary legal rulings regarding common practices (*fiqh*), even if for the purpose of carrying out more regular religious observances such as the ritual prayer (*salaat*), ablution (*wudu*), and the requirements for fasting (*sawm*).

As Rudolph Ware (2014) explains, one of the emphases seen in West African Qur'anic schools that is perhaps unique throughout the Muslim world regarding religious instruction is an explicit focus on rendering of the heart into a vessel worthy of the Qur'an by ensuring that students are humbled before endeavoring to memorize the book. This rendering occurs through a technique of disciplining the body, that can involve hitting or striking in extreme cases, to ultimately produce in the student a hyper-vigilance with regard to recitation of scripture, or, as in some traditional schools in Senegal, disciplining can also be partly achieved through commanding students to beg in city streets to discourage arrogance and pride - the begging in which *taalibes* are encouraged to engage is also a fundraising strategy for their school. This strategy of breaking the ego (and fundraising) is viewed in many cases as entirely necessary and is a strategy of learning that precedes memorization of the Qur'an. Therefore, learning the Qur'an is recognized as intentionally and purposefully difficult so that it imprints itself into the learner more deeply. In other words, the Qur'an does not solely enter and reside in the mind via cognition; it also becomes remembered in the heart as an emotive process forged through adversity.⁵⁵ Throughout the time that its doors were open for instruction, the Fuqara International Academy was sponsored and run by the Mustafawiyya Tariqa. The building itself was a rather large, white building that had several balconies. Mikhail Abdullah, son-in-law to Shaykh Arona Faye, explained to me that the school sought to be a model for Qur'anic learning in the region insofar as it served scores of both Senegalese and African-American children where both a physician and barber were employed in order to ensure that the children were well-groomed and healthy.⁵⁶ Not only were the children offered Qur'anic instruction, but they also were tutored in mathematics and language arts in addition to other languages such as Spanish, French, and Arabic. In this way, the pedagogical approach displayed in the Fuqara International Academy strayed from a more traditional style of instruction that is compartmentalized to focus solely on

⁵⁵ An-Numan bin Bashir: "I heard Allah's Apostle saying, 'There is a piece of flesh in the body if it becomes good (reformed) the whole body becomes good but if it gets spoilt the whole body gets spoilt and that is the heart.'" From Sahih Buhkari, Hadith Collection (Belief), number 50. There is certainly a precedent in the Islamic tradition that places emphasis on cultivation of the heart insofar as it is viewed as an organ of perception. This emphasis is pronounced in Sufic traditions that view transformation of the heart as vital to spiritual growth. This, it can be argued, is a major portion of the science of *tassawuf*.

⁵⁶ Interview, Shaykh Mikhail Abdullah: 28 August 2016.

the elements of religion and Qur’anic memorization. At first glance, this difference appears trivial, yet I offer that the operation of this school in which a modern approach is devised that provides holistic instruction for its students is an example of a larger trend seen within the tariqa. Not only was the Academy a diasporic space of globality for its Muslim children, it also served as a conduit for a type of reversion for its African-American participants insofar as the modalities of Qur’anic learning and its specific etiquettes emanated from a markedly Senegalese spiritual orientation and cultural space. Meanwhile, this orientation was also modernized in the Fuqara International Academy to simultaneously move Qur’anic instruction in Senegal away from its problematic design and appeal to the academic and cultural needs of American students.

Muhammad Abdul-Lateef recounts this his study of Qur’an at the Fuqara International Academy in Dakar, Senegal was prompted by his being a part of the Mustafawiyya ever since he was young.⁵⁷ Lateef first met Shaykh Faye in 2003 when he was only 15 years old—he was 28 at the time of our interview. He explained that he was born Muslim but became part of the Tariqa after his father sent him to learn the Qur’an in Senegal by way of the Shaykh. Lateef stayed in Senegal from 2003 until 2006 and he feels as though there were significant benefits to his practice that had a profound impact on his ability to be more attentive to his religious obligations. In fact, he opined that had he not gone to Senegal at that young age, he feared that he may have made certain choices that would have been harmful. Since leaving the school, Lateef has married Coumba Gueye, a relative of Cheikh Mustafa, who resides in Thiès while he works in the United States as an electrician in order to save money for his eventual relocation to Senegal. It was evident that his inclusion in the Tariqa by virtue of spending a significant amount of time studying in Senegal as well as spending time with Shaykh Arona Faye has pushed Lateef to develop a heightened attentiveness regarding remembrance of God. Lateef’s attentiveness to his religion is indicative of his being transformed by the spiritual pedagogy espoused by the Mustafawiyya training regimen.

Once again, the deployment of the term ‘reversion’ here is less about religious conversion amongst African-American Muslims. After all, many of the fuqara of Moncks Corner like Abdul-Lateef have been Muslim since birth, or even born into the Tariqa. What I am suggesting, through the usage of the term, is the perceived transfer of African-American Muslims toward West African configurations of spiritual practice via Islam. Through the tutelage of Shaykh Arona Faye and engagement in processes of traditional religious training in Senegal, Muslims in the United States reroute themselves culturally and religiously. Shaykh Mikhail Abdullah explains that he spent an initial eight months at the Fuqara school himself in Dakar, which would contribute to his religious training and inward transformation. This would mark what might be called a ‘secondary stage’ in his religious transformation and cultural expansion. Therefore, the ‘primary stage’ of his transformation would be the time period he spent in Moncks Corner in spiritual intimacy with Shaykh Arona Faye. Sitting at the feet of a West African religious expert gave Mikhail the opportunity to assemble a strong foundation upon which he would continue to build himself upward.

Mikhail Abdullah recounts that part of what drew him to relocate in 1996 from nearby Charleston to the Moncks Corner zawiyah was the manner in which dhikr was emphasized as a

⁵⁷ Interview, Muhammad Abdul-Lateef: 29 May 2017.

regular practice. He was already a practicing Muslim when he met Shaykh Arona Faye, but as a former musician and music producer, Mikhail found in this West African Sufic approach to Muslim life a means for drawing nearer to God that somehow felt more substantial than what he had been able to access prior. Furthermore, his reality as an African-American Muslim living in the American South made his inculcation into a Senegalese religious rhythm much more apparent as he soon after began traveling to Senegal for religious celebrations with his spiritual guide and future father-in-law. Mikhail explained that he noticed within himself a “softening” process whereby, even in spite of knowing about various kinds of racial disempowerment suffered by people of color in the United States, he began to feel sorry for those that oppressed others. This psychological transition that involved a broadening of his identification informed largely by local politics of black Muslimness toward a diasporic realization of black Muslimness coincided with a spiritual transition that urged him to finally relocate to Senegal. Mikhail soon saw residence in the United States as pointless and not befitting of a person who wished to live their life according to a vastly different rhythm. Mikhail’s transition is emblematic of how the cultivation of black Muslim subjects in Moncks Corner and in Senegal take shape in such a way that is informed by West African approaches to knowledge transmission and at the same time vastly impacted through the historical memory of legacies of racial difference and ensuing structures of oppression. For African-American Muslims like Shaykh Mikhail Abdullah and the larger Moncks Corner zawiyah, remembrance is the means by which a specific kind of healing from cultural trauma is possible.

In summary, it is important to remember that the West African Islamic tradition is the point of origin for the practice of Islam in the United States in general (Ware 2014; Gomez 2005; Diouf 1998), and should be considered of as a point of departure when thinking about the long historical development of African-American Muslim communities. In this portion of the dissertation where I focus on memory, I have argued that there is vital (re)connection between modalities of spiritual cultivation among Mustafawiyya Tariqa members in South Carolina and Senegal, and the multiple frames of remembrance that have taken place on both sides of the Atlantic. Specifically, as African-American Muslims have participated in learning processes from within a West African Islamic pedagogical tradition, their inclusion in such efforts as seen in both Moncks Corner and Mariste (Dakar) has profoundly impacted these approaches. On one hand, while the ballads composed by Shaykh Mustafa Gueye have been transmitted by his esteemed disciple, Shaykh Arona Faye, to African-American Muslims in the United States, those who have been the recipients of these compositions have also taken part in the digital recording of the ballads onto compact disc and on the internet to be shared throughout the transatlantic network. Those recordings are indicative of a vital collaboration between West African composer and African-American vocalizations, animated by a diasporic exchange. An esoteric expertise, mastered in Senegal and seasoned by an African-American inflection, takes its shape through an *articulation* (see Stuart Hall, or Brent Hayes Edwards) made possible by meeting of the two nodal points of Africanity out of which new things are born. And on the other hand, the emergence of a school in Senegal erected for the purpose of Quranic memorization for African-American and Senegalese Muslim children, operated by both Senegalese teachers and African-American parent-instructors, provides another kind of remembrance made possible through diasporic collaboration. Once again, these collaborations result in inventions that are the combining of West African learning traditions with African-American cultural inflections. Both examples provide evidence for the presence of *reversive memory* whereby African-American

Muslims perceive themselves as returning to a mode of religion that was held by imagined forefathers through the adoption of a specific West African Islamic tradition. And just as with the former example, this newfound approach to Quranic memorization is another *articulation* facilitated by the purposeful juncture of two diasporic components that yields a new invention.

Both formations of remembrance examined in this chapter are artifacts of reversion in the Mustafawiyya Tariqa - that is, the maintenance of cultural re-formation via techniques of healing and spiritual care that are imprinted with discourses of (historical) remembrance. Just as approaches to spiritual growth and religious pedagogy have been brought over to the United States from Senegal, the black American experience has been shared locally, expressed explicitly throughout the Moncks Corner mosque and then carried across the water into Senegal. Surely, the creation of Masjidul Muhajjirun wal Ansars in Moncks Corner and the creation of the Fuqara International Academy in Dakar are neither solely African-American nor Senegalese. These religious institutions are, to reiterate, the consequence of a globally-oriented West African Sufi tradition and the infrastructural components of a transregional Sufi network. It is through the techniques of spiritual care and discourses of healing framed from within an ethos of 'Black Religion' that encourage continued patronage of these sites for reversive memory.

Chapter 3

Alchemy of the Fuqara: Dhikr and the Black Muslim Body

“*Dhikru-llāh* or remembrance of Allah, is any practice that is intended to bring the memory of Allah back to the recollection of the rememberer, or the *dhākir*. The remembrance of Allah is therefore assumed to be about something that the *dhākir* already knew, but has forgotten. It only stands to reason that you remember what you already knew, not something you have never known.”⁵⁸

“The dhikr tradition sees remembrance as a Qur’anic-validated means of meditation on past verities and on the transcendent being of God, a base upon which Sufism built a structure for probing higher consciousness, engaging with spiritual forces and ultimately coming into a personal encounter with God. This is too heavy a superstructure for our word *remember*. The word dhikr, then, cannot be so translated, for it is far more organic and dynamic in meaning; it introduces the adept instantaneously to a powerful conduit that is rooted in an ontological understanding of reality, including both the cosmic and microcosmic dimensions. Hence for Sufism in general, to remember is to know and comprehend in an absolutely foundational manner” (Waugh 2005: 18).

Mikhail Abdullah, Yusuf Washington, and Yasin Abdul-Quddus are African-American Muslims from South Carolina and are integral members of the zawiyah / mosque of Moncks Corner. They are devoted students of Shaykh Arona Faye who is a trusted and charismatic spiritual guide of the Mustafawiyya Sufi Order in the United States. What they also have in common is that they had been heavily immersed in the music industry in a secular context prior to becoming students of Shaykh Faye and have since made the decision to engage themselves in a West African Sufi training regimen that places emphasis on bodily discipline and inward mindfulness through *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah). In order to achieve this manner of growth, they use their bodies as vehicles for mobilizing spiritual transformation to produce a consistent sense of attentiveness in remembering God. However, the performance of remembering via worship includes a reconnection to ancestors and an imagined homeland that is deployed through reciting the Mustafawiyya odes in a space that has been purposefully devoted for spiritual care. It is through the guidance of their teacher, Shaykh Faye, that African-American *fuqara* transform their lives for the better by subjecting their bodies to daily Muslim devotions and arduous Sufi observances. Moreover, the majority of the training in which Muslims like Mikhail, Yusuf, and Yasin have undergone has occurred at the zawiyah in which they envision themselves as engaging in a West African-derived formation of Islamic piety.

This chapter centers upon a Sufi Muslim community that is composed primarily of African-descended Muslims who practice their religion in and around the mosque which is situated on land that was formerly a slave plantation. Relying on Mikhail, Yusuf, and Yasin as emblematic, it also discusses how black diasporic Muslim identities are shaped through the bodily performances within the framework of a West African Islamic pedagogy which, in turn, is impacted and enlivened by its African-American initiates. At the core of this analysis lies the preoccupation with understanding precisely the manner by which particular Muslim subjectivities are cultivated within the bounds of a specific practice of spiritual cultivation. That

⁵⁸ Imam Fode Drame. *Illuminated Remembrance of God*. Tasleem Publications: Vancouver, Canada. 2017.

cultivation is informed in this case, I argue, through the medium of *tarbiyah*—of which the religious poetry of Cheikh Mustafa Gueye is a part—and the call to actualize a return to the *fitra* (original state of humanity inclined toward God-consciousness and cleansed of negative or harmful experiences). Remembrance of Allah involves, and is contingent upon, an intimate knowledge of one’s inner self that is achieved through attending to cleansing the body and spirit. In other words, through a process of locating an identity through which African-American fuqara (traumatized by the forces of history and locational rupture) reconnect themselves to a West African Sufi tradition of inward spiritual mastery and bodily discipline that allows them to be cleansed of that trauma and move closer to a path of transcendence.

Dhikr within the Mustafawiyya Order serves as an avenue upon which transatlantic solidarities are configured in the small, blue-collar town of Moncks Corner and beyond. We should note that these performances take place in the *zawiyah* of Moncks Corner which is situated on Old 52 Highway adjacent to Gippy Plantation—land where enslaved Africans were forced to labor before the American Civil War. The fact that Muslims, many of whom are descended from enslaved Africans and some of which are believed to have been Muslim, are reciting the *qasidas* of a Senegalese spiritual master to activate healing and protection from harm is significant.⁵⁹ In order to discuss the cultivation of religious selves among Muslims of African descent in that space, I analyze the embodiment of knowledge in two major ways: I illustrate how African-descended Muslims use their bodies to perform and internalize specific knowledges that result in the emergence of those diasporic identities (Connerton 1989; Kugle 2011; Ware 2014) and I explore how those bodily performances play a part in the forging and maintenance of transatlantic religious relationships (Lovejoy 1997; Holsey 2004; Clarke 2004; Matory 2005; Griffith & Savage 2006; Cohen & Van Hear 2008; Garbin 2013). In order to interrogate how remembrance is activated through bodily dispositions and performances, this analysis highlights how and by what means a long-established West African Sufic tradition of moral-ethical training is deployed to address the needs of African-American Muslims in the United States. I offer, therefore, that these remembrances are a strategy for vital spiritual and historical reconnections for African and African-American Muslims that are grounded in affective diasporic relationships between the American South and coastal Senegal - a discursively imagined homeland as it emerges in the Moncks Corner Mosque (Yamba 1995; Alpers 2000; Clarke 2004; Ho 2006; Kane 2011).

What these fuqara have in common is their shared prior relationship with musical performance and production in a more formal setting. This fact is important because of their prior embeddedness in the musical field. Hence, their respective reversions to Islam impacted their relationships to music. Instead of entertainment and economics, their musicality now served as a route to healing and mindfulness regarding spirituality. Paul Gilroy (1994) has argued how performance through Hiphop and Rap music provide evidence for an ‘ethno-poetics’ of freedom

⁵⁹ It should be noted that there is a distinction between *dhikr* (remembrance) and *qasida* (ode): while *dhikr* are public or private observances that involve the repetitive chanting of one or more of the 99 names of Allah (*asma al-husna*) for example or religiously-inflected phrasings, *qasa’iid* (Arabic plural of *qasida*) are religious poems or odes usually composed by spiritual masters (*shuyukh* or *murshidun*) for the purpose of praising Allah and Prophet Muhammad^(saws), and performed by disciples (*amrad*: plural of *murid*) as a means of drawing closer to Allah by often incorporating some kind of supplication. Nonetheless, both forms of praise act as devices for spiritual growth and transformation, and can vary in their formulaic quality depending on region or the Sufi tradition in which they are conceived.

found in other, older black vernacular musics that, as we look closer, applies to the way in which American fuqara—with the permission of Shaykh Faye—adapt West African Sufi odes to an African-American sociopolitical context. Fuqara in Monks Corner have carried West African Islamic religious poetry into the poetics of a Black American musical tradition. By performing the poetic supplications of Cheikh Mustafa Gueye Haydar, the Tariqa’s founder, believers in the Monks Corner mosque access a tradition from which Black transatlantic Muslim identities are fashioned and mobilized. Of course, these identities are built from participating in other activities such as consumption of material, attending to lectures provided by Shaykh Arona Faye, and travel to the Senegambian region of West Africa. However, I focus here on how those identities relate to the performance of Cheikh Mustafa’s qasidas (odes) in that space.

On Alchemy

In describing how West African religiosities are embodied by Muslims of African descent in the American South, it is important to briefly note that I use the term ‘alchemy’ - a popular term among Sufi groups - to not only refer to programmatic, scientific transformation of objects that carries with it connotations of spiritual growth and expansion, but to also highlight the very nature of the relationship between African-American students and West African Sufi tradition of spiritual care.⁶⁰ Therefore, I deploy this term to suggest the transformative relationship that emerges as African-American Muslims, in particular, learn to dissolve their egos (*tazkiyyat-ul-nafs*), seeking to move beyond the residues of racial trauma and attain a higher sense of Islamic piety. Moreover, this process of transformation includes, according to the ethnographic research conducted by this writer, the cultivation of African diasporic religious identities via the application of secretive prayers, devotional performances in concert and in solitude, and journeys taken to pay homage to their *shuyukh* (Arabic plural of *shaykh*) in an imagined spiritual homeland. If alchemy is the transformation of matter, the goal of the transformation I describe here is a matter of transforming hearts. This transformation is achieved, however, through disciplining the body.

The path of inward transformation—of alchemy—occurs through training the physical body toward mindfulness, which is provided through the recitation of *dhikr* and through acts of attentive listening. Therefore, an emphasis on embodiment is the key to understanding processes of *knowing* in (and beyond) West African Islamic context. One of the routes to understanding how Islam as a lived practice has operated, according to Rudolph Ware, is a study of classical religious training, which has placed emphasis on internalization of scriptural ethos that preaches humility and dissolution of the ego. Qur’an students in West African context, for example, must first undergo a process of conditioning whereby their bodies are rendered into vessels worthy of carrying the Divine words. “Human ‘bodies of knowledge’ are made, not born. Islamic learning is brought into the world through concrete practices of corporal discipline, corporeal knowledge transmission, and deeds of embodied agents. Knowledge of Islam does not abide in texts; it lives in people” (Ware, 2014: 9). Such emphasis on the embodiment of knowledge - in other words,

⁶⁰ Literature on Sufism and works by notable Sufi masters are replete with references to alchemy. For example, See ‘*The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan: The Alchemy of Happiness*’ or Waley’s ‘*Sufism: Alchemy of the Heart*.’ In fact, Shaykha Maryam Kabeer Faye, devoted companion of Shaykh Arona Faye, has penned a memoir of her own spiritual journey that is entitled ‘*Journey Through Ten Thousand Veils: The Alchemy of Transformation on the Sufi Path*.’

the *performance of knowing* - is similarly exemplified in the Mustafawiyya tradition. In order to be considered knowledgeable, one must embody piety and display righteous behavior. The attentiveness to Islamically ethical behavior and the mindfulness towards etiquette (*adab*) with regard to interpersonal relationships and worship are assumed to be a primary step in the pathway to knowing. Just as in Ware's characterization of West African religiosity as a backdrop to Qur'anic memorization that places an emphasis on embodying the principles one memorizes through upright behavior, Muslims in Moncks Corner are expected to embody, or perform, the knowledge that Shaykh Arona Faye gives them. The name 'fuqara' is another example of how understandings of self are part of the broader spiritual pedagogy of the Mustafawiyya tradition. Furthermore, it should also be noted, as revealed through this ethnography and implied through the words of Ware quoted above, that the mode of training that takes place in the Moncks Corner context is an interpersonal exercise. Following the mode of West African spiritual pedagogy, the Mustafa tradition similarly necessitates an inseparability between knowledge and action.⁶¹ This is because the mode of spiritual training analyzed in this chapter involves rectifying behavior and requires a corporeal modeling of piety learned from both the living and the dead.

Mikhail goes to Moncks Corner

Mikhail Abdullah was attending an Art Institute in Atlanta in 1996 where he was pursuing his music career and was the owner of an independent record label. Engaged in a life of public performance and entertainment, he had yet to become acquainted with the life of devotion that Sufism had to offer. He was already a practicing Muslim and had agreed to accompany his father-in-law from a prior marriage in visiting the Moncks Corner mosque for the Eid Al-Adha⁶² that year. It was there that Mikhail contrasted the robust camaraderie and lively atmosphere evinced by the Moncks Corner community (at Masjid Muhajjirun wal Ansar) with the dullness of his home mosque back in Charleston, South Carolina. In fact, it was while visiting the zawiyah of Moncks Corner that day that Mikhail first experienced dhikr. After the Eid festivities ended, Shaykh Faye sat down with some of his followers and led the group in singing the qasidas of Cheikh Mustafa Gueye.

"...that evening they sat down in the zawiyah...we actually had a place that was designed just for worshipping God outside of the obligatory worship that we do inside the mosque, where we do dhikr and the different sciences of dhikr. I didn't understand any of that. I had never even heard of dhikr before then. Well, that night, [Shaykh] pulled out a big red book and he began to dhikr. And everyone at that time was just going over refrains. So we

⁶¹ At the same time, the name *fuqara* (the impoverished) is a name extended to the entirety of a community who, in the context of Sufi tradition and in spite of residence in the blue-collar town of Moncks Corner where regular employment can be difficult, actively choose residence there with the aim of renouncing the world. That is, the love of wealth is considered despicable and demonstrative of a wretched heart. This act of adopting terminology that idealizes willful asceticism, therefore, illustrates the manner in which the Mustafawiyya under the direction of Shaykh Arona Faye are encouraged to view economic difficulties as purposeful. Abstaining from overt displays of wealth where possible, regular fasting, and the consistent performance of dhikr are treated as methods of religious instruction that produce mindful and submissive Muslim bodies.

⁶² Muslim holiday that commemorates Abraham's sacrifice.

would go over refrains. He would read the qasida and we would do the refrain. That was the icing on the cake for me because I was a musician and I was at a crossroads. And this sounded more and more like music, but it was music for God. At that point, I told him that I'm moving to Moncks Corner..."⁶³

While generalized *dhikr* can be rather randomly done, the Mustafawiyya circles in which the qasidas of Cheikh Mustafa are performed tended to be well-ordered. During the many instances in which I participated in singing the Mustafawiyya qasidas at the zawiyah of Moncks Corner, I had always witnessed such collective performances enacted in a ritualized manner and they were always led by Shaykh Arona Faye. The proper way to formally initiate a *dhikr* session, according to Shaykh Faye, was to always recite the first chapter of the Qur'an (*Suratul-Fatihah*), and then recite "*laa ilaha illa Allah*" 100 times before uttering the words of Cheikh Mustafa. While in the circle, the intent was to use the body to activate mindfulness (and remembrance). Those in the circle needed to ensure that their bodies were ritually clean and that their clothing was tidy. In line with the social norm of Islamic religious space, men sat in circles separately from the women in attendance as they were encircled adjacently. We were always expected to maintain a dignified posture while seated - we danced with our hearts, rather than our bodies.⁶⁴ It is not that voices were simply utilized to match rhythms and achieve a collective melody, participants also tended to sway back and forth as if the upper body was relied upon as a metronome in order to keep pace with the group. In my experience, this melodic rocking while seated seemed to occur naturally and was less a predetermined act, but rather the result of witnessing other bodies in motion and following their method. In fact, rocking my upper body during my performance seemed to naturally force me to keep the established rhythm—even when I hadn't committed an adequate portion of the qasida to memory to avoid making noticeable mistakes.

Spiritual mastery in this regard relies upon a gestural vocabulary in which certain articulations of desire for proximity to God and physical, communicative memorializations are codified with religious meaning. This point is echoed in Earle Waugh's study of mystical chanters in Morocco whereby he reveals that *dhikr* necessitates movement of the adept's body.

"Without doubt, then, Sufism has enshrined gesture communication as fundamental to its ritual expression; all *dhikr* sessions, even of the most judicious and restricted kind, are accompanied by head or body movement. In religious ritual generally, the gesture carries considerable weight[...] in Sufi movement we encounter a structure of movement that united body, mind, and self in a more fundamental manner[...]" (Waugh 2005: 33).

⁶³ Interview with Mikhail Abdullah: August 28, 2016.

⁶⁴ In *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet*, Arthur Buehler described the manner in which postures of sobriety during moments of intensive spiritual reflection can also reflect an advanced spiritual maturity, as opposed to the presumption of ecstatic bodily movement and dance that so often mark *sufi dhikr*: "Typically, the exhibition of mystical intoxication had been considered evidence of an advanced adept on the Path. Junayd's (d. 297/910) well-known answer to the intoxicated enthusiasm of an-Nuri (d. 295/908), who chastised Junayd's sitting calmly while the *sufis* performed their whirling dance, was "You see the mountains—you think them firm, yet they move like the clouds" (Buehler 1998: 92).

Here, we must understand inward change of the *fuqara* and bodily gestures to be mutually constitutive in the quest to alchemize the self. Regarding the embodiment of West African Islamic training and the programmatic disciplining of Muslim bodies in the American South, I find that Rudolph Ware's notion of *incorporation* helpful in order to describe how performance and rituals work to embed a specific manner of knowing (and by extension, remembrance) onto and into the body.⁶⁵ Therefore, as Muslims of African descent in Moncks Corner use their voices to utter the words of Cheikh Mustafa Gueye and their bodies to perform his poetry in concert with other Mustafawiyya Muslims, they enjoin in a process of incorporating into (and onto) themselves a West African Sufi technology of discipline and self-care.

In the moment that Mikhail first experienced *dhikr*, he decided that he would actually relocate to Moncks Corner in order to be a part of the community and take on Shaykh Faye as his teacher. The performative nature of *dhikr*, introduced through a West African tradition, is what animated Mikhail's choice to pursue a life of such dedication to spiritual expansion. It was this moment that marked the beginning of Mikhail's path to personal transformation, which occurred in the context of a broader collective effort on the part of fellow *fuqara* to improve themselves. His initiation into a life of intensified Islamic devotion also marked the beginning of a profound connection to a tradition of corporeal pedagogy mediated through West African Sufism and a re-connection to the worship and strategies of spiritual care of imagined ancestors.

Yasin's Unveiling

I first met Yasin in Moncks Corner at an Eid Al-Fitr⁶⁶ program that was sponsored by the Tariqa and held at a local elementary school in the fall of 2008. Like Mikhail, Yasin actively made the choice to halt his music career and has reserved his singing talents only for performing the Mustafawiyya qasidas. Yasin dutifully honors his teachers, past and present, by bringing life to the qasidas that Cheikh Mustafa wrote so many years ago. He, like other *fuqara*, relies upon the odes to provide him with a pathway for inward transformation. Beyond this however, Yasin has also used musical equipment to record his performance of Cheikh Mustafa's qasidas accompanied by light instrumentation onto compact discs and digital formats that are sold and nationally circulated among students and locally to visitors of the mosque in Moncks Corner. In practice, whether performed at the mosque or in front of West African Muslim guests at programs in other spaces, Yasin intentionally uses his body to simultaneously pull him closer to Allah and to the legacy of this West African Sufi tradition of remembrance. By using his voice to bend and animate the words of Cheikh Mustafa, Yasin's performance, in concert with other singers (expert or not), takes ownership of a curative that he inherited through his teacher. Yasin's appropriation of the Mustafawiyya odes, with permission from Shaykh Faye, is representative of an embodiment on the part of African-American *fuqara* that cannot be ignored. This embodiment is a personalization in which healing supplications are specifically applied as a

⁶⁵ In the concluding chapter of his text on Islamic Education and Embodied Knowledge in West Africa, Rudolph Ware discusses how "incorporation" provides a language that brings to bear two ways in which knowledge becomes inculcated into the body through techniques of discipline as well as how forms of knowledge become embodied through practices of sharing and collective study (see page 239 of Ware's *The Walking Qur'an*).

⁶⁶ Muslim holiday that celebrates the ending of the holy month of Ramadan.

balm for a collectively-embedded and personally-experienced trauma procured by virtue of black life in the American South.

When the project of spiritual refinement amongst a Sufi community full of Black Muslims (African-American and West African) is placed against the backdrop of lived realities of race in the American South, an unraveling of the multiple motivations for recitation of odes such as “Ode of the Unveiler” in concert become more obvious. Like Saba Mahmood’s approach to the study of religious practices, I find more use in analyzing ritual performance as it emerges among the fuqara as occurring above the level of the subconscious, regardless of whether the politics of Black Muslimness are explicit or implicit. In Arabic, the fuqara sing Cheikh Mustafa Gueye’s words:

“Allah unveils, unveiling with light. As You are the Unveiler, remove my veil. Allah shows us kindness, being eternally gracious. As You are the Kind One, grant my duas (supplications) with your generosity. Allah grants us aid, extending His help openly. You are the Helper, help with my remedy. Allah preserves, protecting everything. You are the Protector, protect my physical being. Allah draws near, bringing about benefit. You are the causative factor, bring wealth toward me. Allah imparts knowledge, bringing about understanding. You are the Granter of understanding; let me comprehend my meeting [with You]. Allah gives expansion, extending His benefits. You are the One with open hands, expand my contentment. Allah deals with His creation, applying the truth. Since You are the cause [of all things] bring about Your gifts to me. Allah heals imperceptibly, restoring to health. Since You are the Healer, cure my debility.”⁶⁷

The ode above places emphasis on the revelation of that which is hidden from the supplicant. As these lines suggest, the participant is utilizing a spiritual formula that provides a means for praising Allah while simultaneously engaging in a rhythmic prayer for divine healing. Due to the fact that those singing this qasida are predominantly African-American Muslims, many of which have some intimate knowledge of how the realities of racial oppression has impacted themselves and fellow community members, this prayer for “unveiling” merges itself quite interestingly with perhaps one of the most pre-eminent scholarly works on race in the United States. In 1903, philosopher-sociologist W.E.B. Dubois penned perhaps the most eloquent and primary work on the lived experience of race-based oppression in which he describes the two-fold manner that African-Americans are forced to view themselves.⁶⁸ In his work, he uses the metaphor of the *veil* to capture the peculiar experience of invisibility and racial otherness in one’s purported national home. That is, he describes the manner in which the very souls of black folks are seemingly torn asunder as they are entangled in a constant binary of national belonging and political estrangement from the project that is the United States. The turn of the twentieth century proved to be a challenging time for black people, at the time referred to as ‘Negroes,’ who carried a ‘double-consciousness’ of simultaneously being categorized as racially other and just recently having been politically recognized as American citizens barely four decades prior.

⁶⁷ Cheikh Mustafa Gueye Haydar. “Ode of the Unveiler.” (also entitled: *Maqam-ul Latif ul-Mustafa*) English Translation. Lines 1-9.

⁶⁸ Dubois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folks*. Oxford University Press (2008 [1903]).

Dubois's metaphor of the *veil* still remains quite relevant - a point not lost on Black Muslims presently living in the American South. Therefore, as they sit in a mosque adjacent to a former slave plantation approximately 30 minutes driving distance from one of the primary historical ports where the country received its human chattel—Charleston—as well as a location in which de jure segregation was entrenched for a century following emancipation, the calls for 'unveiling' must be understood as a call for healing and inward growth that cannot be so easily disentangled from the psychic trauma of the race-experience.

Unveiling requires alchemizing the black Muslim body from one mired and held in place through social forces into a highly mobile, diasporic journeyman. The performance of these formulae for protection and healing allow for African-American Muslims to share in the maintenance of spiritual legacies that have traveled across the Atlantic from Senegal. Insofar as it is argued that a significant portion of enslaved Africans that were brought across the waters during the Transatlantic Slave Trade were Muslims (Diouf 2013; Gomez 2005), it is not hard to imagine that African-American revert Muslims in Moncks Corner might view themselves as 'regaining' or 'rediscovering' the possible spiritual practices of imagined Muslim ancestors. In response to being asked about how his own identity has been formed and shaped by his participation in a West African Muslim tradition, namely the Mustafawiyya Tariqa, Yasin explains that his own understanding of self with regard to his religiosity became firmly rooted in the idea that, like Shaykh Faye's lineage, his own ancestors may have hailed from a tradition whereby the presence of spiritual expertise and devotion to the mastery of self might have well included numerous generations that preceded the transatlantic enslavement of his foremothers and forefathers. For Yasin, this provides a route through which the ideational force of an imagined heritage informed by historical possibility (and subsequently rooted in the practice of remembrance activated by the writings of Cheikh Mustafa Gueye) adheres him to broader diasporic network that is imprinted onto a spiritual genealogy. Reflecting upon his meeting Shaykh Faye in 2006, Yasin recalls that:

..being a young African-American and Muslim in the South, it was hard to find (or hard for me to find at that time) a lot of African-American teachers that were really scholars and greatly learned..I also didn't really have a lot of knowledge on people of who were outside of America like other African countries who were scholars. And when I met [Shaykh Faye] - you know he's an Alim [very knowledgable] and he's rooted in that...you know his whole family, generation after generation after generation after generation... they were all scholars, so it definitely helped me to know that my roots, or our roots, our ancestry surely came from, or could have come from, people who were rooted in the religion, it gave me better self awareness, self awareness to see where I could go in the future, you know?...my understanding of where it was that we come from. And from what I've learned, many of the [enslaved] Africans [who were brought here] were Muslim, and that's something that we aren't really taught...so being with the Shaykh helped me realize that.⁶⁹

Yasin Abdul-Quddus's transformation into an African-American Muslim devotee within the Mustafawiyya tradition mirrors his transition away from worldly music that began about twelve years prior and was followed by a thorough inculcation into the pedagogical approach to

⁶⁹ Interview with Yasin Abdul-Quddus: October 4, 2015.

inward growth as understood by his Shaykh. Once again, this mobilization of identity does not involve tracing actual genealogies through time and space. Rather, it is a process that encourages the diasporized disciple to locate himself in a tradition that spans continents and centuries by engaging the body into an appropriation of an already established spiritual network that affixes present students to past teachers through Shaykh Faye. Like the sankofa bird, the African-American faqir looks backward in order to progress forward.

Therefore, Mikhail and Yasin's performances in concert with other African-American and West African fuqara not only yields the continuation of a West African Sufi tradition on the other side of the ocean, it also marks a diasporic shift animated by the performance itself. For those who are aware of the genre of Senegalese Sufic performance, one notices a significant difference in cadence between more traditionally performed qasidas in Senegalese countryside and those sung by the African-American practitioners in the American South. For example, Yasin's R&B-inflected approach to voicing the words of Cheikh Mustafa differs considerably in pitch and tone from singers in Thiès where the above ode was originally conceived. This detail, when viewed in light of place and history, is significant as we consider the way in which religious texts in diaspora become impacted and altered, not via the material itself, but rather takes shape differently in performance. It is the body which speaks differently because bodies are rooted in time and space. Even though texts may transcend both of these factors, it is the body through which the text becomes animate and undoubtedly imprinted by its vessel. Black Muslims in diaspora may share a religious tradition that spans multiple continents, but this fact does not escape the cultural subtleties that varying local histories and memory produce as that tradition is worn and brought to life.

At the same time, it is not that the body shapes the texts only. While the performance of the qasidas of Cheikh Mustafa imprint the text and shape how these texts are enlivened, the texts also impact the body. They, according to the belief of the fuqara, open a pathway for transforming hearts. As Earl Waugh notes in his study of Sufi music in Morocco:

The munshid (Shaykh) is a Sufi master...a master of "power" music. He does not understand his words as *just his words*. They come from a transcendent dimension, he believes, in that their origin is not in him, and the power to sing them is not from him. His goal is to be a part of a process of transformation. The words he chants are something more than mere words. The notion here is very much akin to the Hindu concept that the priests chant the words because the words have the power. Only through this power dimension can the munshid have proper access to the imaginal dimension of the performance. The text is regarded as having its own power and potential (Waugh 2005: 41).

Black Muslim Cultural Production

Mustafawiyya Muslims participate in dhikr as a means of remembering Allah while simultaneously engaging a process of spiritual healing (alchemy) and in the Moncks Corner zawiya. The actual books from which fuqara read—if they had not memorized the qasidas—provide the Arabic lettering, as well as a transliteration and translation in English for the benefit of comprehending the words but, they are always performed in Arabic. While my task here is to unpack performances of West African-composed qasidas and analyze their impact on Black Muslim bodies in the American South, I also note that fuqara engage in the production and

recording of those qasidas onto CD format for the sake of individual observances. The performances I outline in this chapter are part of a larger production that maps onto the political realities of Black Muslimness. These productions utilize the same sound-recording technologies normally used for contemporary, secular music and even though not engaged in the performative aspect, fuqara like Yusuf Washington are relied upon to help translate the religious poetry of Cheikh Mustafa into a contemporary, BlackAmerican context. Yusuf recalled to me that he was first exposed to Islam in 2010 when a client visited his studio to record some Islamic Hiphop songs and was intrigued about its religious message. After taking his shahada that same year, Yasin Abdul-Quddus also solicited Yusuf's services a while later to make some recordings as well. It was through Yasin that Yusuf really began taking his new spiritual path more seriously as they began to attend the mosque together. His exposure to Shaykh Faye's lectures affected his outlook on how music can negatively impact the heart and reconsidered his current participation in local South Carolinian night life. Before that point, he had been immersed in the local music scene and attended parties at clubs to network with artists to fuel his music production business.

...Eventually after going to the mosque and talking to the Shaykh and listening to his lectures, that really affected my heart. So I just got attached to going to the mosque in Moncks Corner [...] he started talking to me about how music wasn't really a good thing for Muslims because of how it affects your heart. And I was deep into going out and going to these different club things and being around live bands and I was actually producing like five groups [...] but I ended up leaving that lifestyle alone because of just listening to the different lectures regarding music and lectures regarding being in places that serve alcohol in bars and that different type of stuff. So I eventually left [...] The thing that keeps me grounded is that the Shaykh just teaches you the foundations of Islam and keeps you grounded in that. And then you have a good understanding of Islam from that perspective you can mesh with everything that's going on around you, you can deal with the racism, you can deal with all the crazy political things that's going on, you can deal with just about anything if you have a great understanding of the [religion] even on a lower level. Because you know that anything outside of the [religion] is misguidance. So you can understand why this person is racist, you can understand why the government is the way government is, you can understand why people who don't have the [religion]... you can understand their actions and their thinking. So you have to just adjust to that and be tolerant. You have to try to mesh in that, but at the same time when you mesh in it you don't have to become it. You can be patient with it and try to change it, and if you can't change it then you can just ask Allah to help you and ask Allah to change the people.⁷⁰

Yusuf's words of tolerance and mindfulness as he recalled his own story of spiritual transition are significant. His move toward a heightened attentiveness to inward change changed his relationship to music. Music, according to Yusuf's words that were guided by his intimate tutelage with Shaykh Faye, invites a lack of mindfulness and provides entry to an environment that is deleterious to the heart. What he now recorded, therefore, cannot be simply be referred to as music—it is remembrance set to the melody of a heart that yearns for Allah. These words were shared with me only two years after the very visible protests against police violence in Ferguson and other cities had been set in motion. As well, the 2015 racially-motivated murder of church

⁷⁰ Interview with Yusuf Washington: August 21, 2016

congregants in Charleston had no doubt brought the realities and race and violence closer to home for fuqara in Monks Corner. Yusuf's prescription for 'meshing' with the difficulties of being a Black Muslim in the wake of structural racism and an Islamophobic political atmosphere hinges upon a caution to resist being enmeshed with an environment that makes remembrance difficult. Yusuf's outlook is made possible by the spiritual training and knowledge gained from within the context of Mustafawiyya training regimen applied by Shaykh Arona Faye. Yusuf's participation in the production of Cheikh Mustafa's balladry marks how fuqara in Moncks Corner engage in a cultural production whereby West African odes are used to address the psychospiritual needs of Black Muslims in the United States. While Yasin uses his body to give voice and inflection to the lyrical supplications composed by Cheikh Mustafa, Yusuf uses his technical expertise via his own bodily knowledge to sonically blend his production with Yasin's performance. I read this collaborative production as a translational act through which qasidas written in West African Islamic environment are rerouted and applied in a Black American Muslim political context.

Expanding the Ocean

Whereas social scientific literatures and religious studies have both found the body to be central to understanding how religious subjects extract meaning from faith traditions and how it shapes their experiences, I take this approach further in order to bring to bear how black Muslim practitioners engage in specific rituals in order to perform remembrances of the past and activate healing. By analyzing exactly how African-American *fuqara* mobilize a West African Sufi tradition for the purpose of addressing the past and present, I interrogate a conception of diaspora that has automatically included African-Americans into a larger global African diasporic body. As Edward Curtis (2014) asserts, a rigorous study of the religious dimensions of African diaspora is vital to extend our collective understanding of the diasporic concept. Much like scholars who have studied how African-descended people have included themselves into diasporic networks via religion (Clarke 2004; Matory 2005; Griffith & Savage 2006; Garbin 2013), the purpose of this discussion is a grounding of this inclusion via analysis of religious observances that have animated black religious identities. The motive here, then, is to analyze how and by what means Muslims of African descent living in Moncks Corner and beyond engage a West African Islamic pedagogical tradition that coheres the politics of black Muslimness in American context and diasporic subjectivities.

Thinking back upon witnessing Black Muslim performances throughout my time spent conducting ethnographic research in Moncks Corner, what I find most compelling is the combining of African-American voice and West African tradition. The way in which American Muslims (predominantly African-American) in the southern United States perform communal invocations and participate in religious instruction, consume and circulate artifacts such as religious texts, recorded sermons and poetry signals a relationship between communal religious practices and the construction of social identities. What most interests me here is the multiple ways that "remembrance" operates. Dhikr is both at once a form of bodily practice (a corporeal form of memory) used as a device for religious instruction and a form of social memory amongst and between two distinct groups of diasporic Africans that possess variant relationships to the American South. The repetitive nature of dhikr and qasidas work to embed the various spiritual formulae for praise and supplication into the memory and consciousness of the practitioner. It is not a requirement that the performer have achieved a heightened piety per se - it is believed that

the performance of the composition itself is at once a pious act and paves the way for the development of piety (or at least a heightened sense of awareness toward piety), whether through training the body and spirit to bend to the rhythm of righteousness or through the willingness to be supervised and corrected by Shaykh Arona Faye directly. Such performances are done mostly in congregation as the fuqara collaboratively engage in spiritual care and thus, remembrance - in both senses - is largely intersubjective (Ware 2014; Beliso De-Jesus 2015; Jouili 2015; Covington-Ward 2016) insofar as the engagement in dhikr performance overwhelmingly relies upon a deep relation amongst the fuqara.

Following others who have studied religious practices of Muslims, the inroad for understanding strategies of bodily care amongst Muslims in Moncks Corner and what Rudolph Ware calls an “embodied knowledge” is via analysis of participation in dhikr circles, and other religious performances. In other words, approaches to knowledge-gathering and religious study are dramatically shaped by a tradition of embodiment whereby certain corporeal practices (Qur’an memorization, mimesis, repetitive phrasings, ritual prayer, travel for scholarship, and even domestic chores) cultivate postures of piety. It has been a common practice that the entire community is invited to gather weekly (generally Fridays or Saturdays) after Maghrib prayer to sing the *qasidas* composed by Cheikh Mustafa so many years ago.

Performances of the Mustafawiyya odes by African-American Muslims are not mere mimicry. This notion is also founded upon the principle of ownership and appropriation that results from full immersion into a West African Islamic pedagogical approach to spiritual growth and healing. Such an approach to understanding the meanings these practices carry for their observants requires a variant route to understanding the impact of Muslim conversion. African-American Muslims who have converted (reverted) to Islam in Moncks Corner, or elsewhere and then have found their place in the Moncks Corner community, are profoundly shaped by (and from within) the Mustafawiyya tradition in terms of how they view their own spiritual growth as Muslims. Concurrently, their presence and active participation in this pathway further embeds this West African tradition into the local political and historical atmosphere that is South Carolina (and the broader United States).

The Moncks Corner fuqara, as most Muslims, utilize dhikr as a means of maintaining a heightened awareness and mindfulness of Allah. This can include the meditative repetition of phrases such as “*laa ilaha illa Allah*” (there is no deity except God), done in quiet solitude or in collaboration with others, and is performed to elicit a general piety. However, the weekly collective performance of Mustafawiyya odes (*qasidas*) are done in order to achieve more than this. The odes written by Cheikh Mustafa were composed for the purpose of providing the student with a heightened spiritual vocabulary with which to praise Allah and His Prophet, beg for forgiveness, and ask for mercy, protection, and sustenance. Indeed, such performances are done with the intent of raising the station (*maqam*) of the performer as well and stands as its own kind of formalized dhikr, insofar as one is in the act of remembering Allah.

In his analysis of Hajji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki’s Sufi training manual, entitled *Zia al-Qulub*—“The Brilliance of Hearts,” Scott Kugle described the manner in which ritual action is a meaningful and transformational exercise whereby the body provides a field upon which its training and disciplining provide a means for achieving sainthood.⁷¹ However, beyond rote action, the repetitive nature of Sufi training is done for the purpose of producing inward and

⁷¹ Kugle, Scott A., 2003. “The Heart of Ritual is the Body: Anatomy of an Islamic Devotional Manual of the Nineteenth Century.” *Journal of Ritual Studies*, pp. 42-60.

outward transformation. That is, the task is to change the body into a pious thing through the consistent and intentional observance of a particular ritual act. Echoing Talal Asad's notion of ritual as *apt performance* (Asad 1993) away from the late nineteenth century position in which anthropologists of religion viewed ritual as rote and merely symbolic, Kugle likened the Sufi practitioner to a musical artist who, through the constant performative act, achieves some heightened level of mastery:

“The ritual practitioner is like a musician or other artist who bears years of repetitive and exacting physical training in the hopes that these actions can be transformative when shared with others (with others who will not interpret them but rather participate with the actor to complete the action as a collective experience). The important difference is that, while an artist works in media in the visual field and a musician works with instruments in the aural field, a ritual practitioner works upon his own subjective being-within-the-body in the symbolic field” (Kugle 2003: 44).

Kugle's viewpoint is to understand ritual as a display of an agentive body at work. By extending Marcel Mauss's insights on habitus, Kugle leads us to reflect upon the nature of a collective bodily habitus in which multiple actors collectively perform ritual with the intention of effecting some mutual impact upon one another thus sharing in the experience of the performance. While the performance of a Sufi ritual can lead one to the conclusion that there is intent and purpose embedded within the ritual itself, repetitive or not, it does not automatically follow that we should find meaning within the act of performance. In fact, it is not merely the act itself that produces change. Without intention and an orientation toward being changed, words are but words and gestures are only gestures.

Saba Mahmood also provides a glimpse into the manner in which the body acts as a medium for certain kinds of moral-ethical training in her analysis of the Women's Mosque Movement in Egypt. The women in Mahmood's study push us to think beyond Bourdieu's *habitus* theory (in particular, an emphasis on unconscious mimicry) insofar as the ritualized expressions of piety she analyzes are built from decisive moves toward a cultivation of the inward and outward self that, as she argues, operates above the level of the subconscious. While her project troubles the assumption that to succumb to the innermost desires must necessarily require a betrayal of conventional religiosity (behavior constrained by custom and social rules), Mahmood's analysis of routine and the body are quite useful as we understand collective bodily instruction as a technology of spiritual cultivation and corporeal empowerment. Furthermore, Mahmood also draws upon an Aristotelian approach of the ethical body to better conceptualize the labor that performance achieves in the cultivation of pious subjectivity. Rather than suppose that movements of the body emerge from inward piety, “action does not issue forth from natural feelings but *creates* them” (Mahmood 2005: 157). In her examination of veiling as described through the words of her interlocutors, she explains that one at first feels uncomfortable wearing the veil, but soon learns to feel naked without it. “[I]t is through repeated *bodily* acts that one trains one's memory, desire, and intellect to behave according to established standards on conduct” (2005: 157). This process of training the inward disposition through a training of the body is, to reiterate an earlier point, mutually constitutive - they form one another. As the body becomes more apt and routinized in its performance of a pious behavior, the disposition becomes aligned with the bodily act. As the disposition becomes more inclined toward that particular mode of conduct, the body then is more exacting in its performance of pious conduct. This

analysis of dhikr performance in the Moncks Corner zawiya (*Masjidul Muhajjirun wal Ansar*), therefore, draws upon the foundation of ethical cultivation via embodiment proposed and articulated by Mahmood and meanwhile, like others (Eisenlohr 2006; Jouili 2015), extends it through a diasporic lens.

During weekly gatherings at the zawiya, Shaykh Faye usually took the opportunity to ‘unfold knowledge’ about the particular qasida we just finished performing as we prepared to transition to the next one. He consistently provided those that surrounded him with an intimate awareness of the finer benefits of reciting specific lyrics with the intention that they would practice the qasidas in order to master them. After all, mastery of the material was not in simply committing it to memory, but rather embedded in gaining a deeper knowledge of its spiritual advantages by embodying a love of the Prophet and strengthening *taqwa* (consciousness/mindfulness of Allah). At the same time, however, I argue that the aspects of spiritual cultivation encouraged by the Mustafawiyya training regimen are combined with prescriptions for healing racial trauma through the performance of the Mustafawiyya odes. As Kugle reveals, dhikr in Sufic context exists as a measure to produce bodily transformation. The *Zia al-Qulub*, for example, contains instructions for how to not only perform Islamic rituals - it also communicates the proper frame of mind that the performer should have when performing such rituals.⁷²

Imdadullah and Cheikh Mustafa’s texts do have in common the more subtle project of warding off oppression. Imdadullah’s *Zia al-Qulub* was deployed as a spiritual training regimen against the backdrop of British colonization in Northern India (Kugle 2003). As such, its usage served as a resistance to religious repression and a source of spiritual power for colonial subjects whose bodies had been dispossessed by agents of colonization and technologies of domination. This fact provides a striking analog to the environment in which Cheikh Mustafa Gueye’s ode, entitled *al-Bahrul Muhit (The Expanding Ocean)*, was conceived. At the time of composing the ode in the late 1960s, Senegal was a land that had recently achieved its independence from colonization in 1959 and was still grappling with impact of French policies that favored secular modernization while it imposed a Eurocentric approach to (disembodied) education upon West

⁷² While Kugle does tell us that Imdadullah’s *Zia al-Qulub* does explain itself to future readers, Mustafawiyya texts do no such thing because this would depart from the Mustafawiyya tradition. Knowledge transmission via text is not viewed as an acceptable route to alchemizing the body. The Mustafawiyya approach to reforming the ‘spiritual body’ requires (and aspires to remain) a truly intercorporeal regimen in which the Sufi aspirant must rely on the presence of the Shaykh, in this case Shaykh Arona Faye, to learn how to embody righteousness. Just as traditional Qur’anic schooling places its force via memorization (in the body) before comprehension (in the mind) and in the presence of a teacher, attaining spiritual guidance (*tarbiyah*) is not a mental process. Cultivating the heart is a matter of rectifying the body, and this is more effectively learned through witnessing other changed-bodies in action. Without the presence of Shaykh Arona Faye, or someone who has sufficiently learned the subtleties of Cheikh Mustafa’s supplicatory odes, accessing the finer benefits of reciting his qasidas would be impossible. This is because, whether individually or in concert with other supplicants, the reciters would not know deeply the worth they contain without tutelage from a master. Due to Shaykh Arona Faye’s insistence that one cannot truly learn from books, one gets the sense that his teacher’s texts were never meant to speak for themselves. They were written with the intent that there should be some living exemplar present to embody the path to God and instruct followers in their respective journeys. Consequently, aside from quite brief introductory statements (added by Shaykh Faye), physical copies of Cheikh Mustafa’s odes are comprised of mainly lyrical content.

African Muslims.⁷³ Cheikh Mustafa’s religious poetry, on the other hand, was meant to combat this trend by inscribing spiritual efficacy into the hearts and onto the bodies of those he led. Performance of the *Bahrul Muhit* was therefore, in that context, simultaneously an act of Islamic piety and resistance to colonial shifts toward secularization—in spite of Senegal’s fairly recent independence. Taking the notion of a collective bodily habitus (as in Kugle’s theorization) further and extending it into the context of the present-day American South where the legacy of political and economic repression of black people is pronounced, African-American Muslims collectively find solace and healing in Cheikh Mustafa’s qasidas.

By reciting the ode, the Monck Corner fuqara send praises and salutations upon the Prophet Muhammad(*saws*) and use a formulaic approach to utter a comprehensive supplication for health, protection, wealth, and continued spiritual growth. Through elevating Muhammad(*saws*), the supplicants hope to elevate themselves. The alternative title of the ode, which is comprised of 288 verses, is “*Leave Me With My Love of the Prophet*” and begins by thoroughly praising his attributes. Its opening page includes the Qur’anic recommendation for Muslims to continually send blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad(*saws*) for their own sake: “Indeed, Allah sends His Blessings on the Prophet and also His Angels too ask Allah to bless him. Oh you who believe! Send your Salat on him and salute him with peace” (Qur’an 33:56 - as it appears in *Bahrul Muhit*). This Qur’anic verse shares the first page with the special prayer of Mustafawiyya, the *Salaatul Samawiyyah*, placed below.⁷⁴ The poetic framing of the entire *Bahrul Muhit*, drenched in ecstatic applause, hinges upon the following refrain which was repeatedly sung in concert before every verse:

“Ahmaduna Mahmada Nabiiyuna Tabiibunaa Mughiihunaa shafii’una shamsul huda fil ‘Aalami.” (Arabic Transliteration)

“Our Ahmad, Our Mahmud, Our Prophet and our Doctor, Our Helper and Our Intercessor. The Sun of Guidance in the realm of the Universe.” (English Translation)⁷⁵

Even still, the lyrics of the celebratory ode provided a specific language that allows them to pray for protection from external harms and internal shortcomings. In addition to praying for physical healing, the verses seem to request alleviation from oppressive forces described as “enemies.”

⁷³ Rudolph Ware (2014) juxtaposes the French system of education in colonial West Africa with that of the traditional Islamic approach to learning. While the French system places emphasis on the mental faculties in such a way that Ware characterizes it as a ‘disembodied’ approach, traditional Qur’anic schooling places importance on the spiritual integrity of the body in which knowledge is placed. See Ware’s *The Walking Qur’an*, (University of North Carolina Press).

⁷⁴ Translated into English, the Prophetic salutation of the Mustafawiyya reads: “Oh Allah send blessings upon our Master Muhammad, the one who precedes all others, the one whose brilliant light radiates and fills the heavens. May Allah bless him and his Family and companions in the amount of every grain of sand and every star in the sky.”

⁷⁵ Cheikh Mustafa Gueye Haydara. Excerpts from “*Al-Bahrul Muhit (The Expanding Ocean)*” Translated and printed in the USA by Shaykh Arona Faye al-Faqir. Zawiyah of Moncks Corner.

“14. He is made up from true essence. He is the letters (of the alphabet) manifested and made clear. He has been given everlasting expansiveness from the Grantor of protection in the wombs[...] 16. Our Ahmad obliterates enemies with the sword of destruction. His army prevails with earnest effort and its might is powerful[...] 27. The sword of (divine) protection guarded him. His soldiers were the people of the heavens. [Jibril] (a.s.) with sagacity, advanced (to his aid) along with the angels. 28. He is the sword of guidance. His soldiers faced the enemy straight on and were the people of vehemence. They kept the enemies and their harm from him. They had the rank of the people of outstanding nature[...] 33. Our Ahmad is the obliterator of sadness and the intercessor for our sins, He nurtures us, eliminating our faults. His cure is by the pen[...] 50. The sword of the most praiseworthy Prophet has driven away the envious. He drove away the enmity of the transgressor with his unalterable subjugation[...] 59. Leave me with the love of the Prophet, it is the cure for my illness and he is the welcomed medicine for what ails the perspective ones. 60. Leave me with the love of the Prophet as it is the cure for what ails the body, that is because he is the Prophet and the remover of painful defects. 61. Leave me with the love of the Prophet. It's lights have made me noble. They have elevated the stature of my genealogy and endowed me with dirhams[...] 67. He removes grief from the heart and fills it with the light of certainty. He is the one from whose noble hand we seek to be helped[...]” (*Bahrul Muhit*, selected verses)

In addition to the *Bahrul Muhit*, Cheikh Mustafa Gueye composed another qasida entitled “The Cloak of Protection and the Soldiers of Divine Care.”⁷⁶ It differs from the former insofar as it more directly provides the fuqara with a supplication for protection.⁷⁷ In this sense, protection from the lower self and the repelling of enemies are the central foci of this ode as Moncks Corner Muslims rely on it to ensure their bodily security as well.

“12. And I will never fear my enemies as You are my protection from all of creation. 13. With the cutting sword of Your name on my breath, I am protected from every type of enemy. 14. Repel evil and treachery from me by Your great soldiers of divine care[...] 23. Repel anyone who wants to harm my physical body by Your sword which is broad in its scope[...] 50. O you who can work paper with your knowledge [transforming and transferring it], put it into action at the French mint” (*The Cloak of Protection and the Soldiers of Divine Care*, selected verses).

⁷⁶ Cheikh Mustafa Gueye Haydara. Excerpts from “The Cloak of Protection & Soldiers of Divine Care.” Translated and printed in the USA by Shaykh Arona Faye al-Faqir. Zawiyah of Moncks Corner. August 2014.

⁷⁷ The introductory page of “The Cloak of Protection and the Soldiers of Divine Care” briefly discusses its author and intent: “This qasidah was written Cheikh Muhammad Mustafa Gueye Haydar, who was the son of Shaykh Sahib Gueye, may Allah Ta’ala be pleased with both of them. With this qasidah he beseeches Allah to draw towards him all forms of goodness. He titled it “The Cloak of Protection and the Soldiers of Divine Care.” He said that it would be exactly as title suggests, in the open and in secret, for those who recite it morning and evening for the sake of Allah and with the intention of attracting all goodness and blessings repelling harm.”

We should consider that Mustafawiyya odes were written with the intent of also providing a regimen for future students not yet present and unknown in the time of their composition. Thus, supplication for intimate knowledge (*irfan*) and protection would apply to recently-decolonized Senegal as well as the present-day United States. My own experience with participating in the dhikr circle reciting the qasidas of Cheikh Mustafa while living at the zawiya of Moncks Corner afforded me the opportunity to view these performances as part of a broader process of alchemy. In all of the instances in which I participated in the circle, dhikr participants were always instructed or guided directly by Shaykh Faye in terms of how to engage in the recitation of dhikr, or the performance of the qasidas, with the aim of providing a systematic and practiced methodology for spiritual care.

West African Sufism & the Black Body

I do not highlight the role of Black Muslim bodies in the process of sharing and transmitting knowledge simply because the fuqara I discuss here are “Black” and “Muslim.” I read this particular quality of recipient bodies as significant due to the linkages between present Black Muslim learners in the American South with supposed ancestors that are believed to have been present in and around South Carolina in a time period when those who now inhabit the Moncks Corner mosque would have been rendered chattel property and therefore unapproved religious gatherings and at-will travel would be impossible a century and a half ago. Such realities are quite apparent as we consider the significance of the Moncks Corner mosque’s role as a space for worship, spiritual healing, and the dispensation of knowledge. Therefore, the act of Islamic formulations of supplication and remembrance in that space inheres a simultaneous politics of blackness and Muslimness, which is grounded in a broader transatlantic region.

As observed in Moncks Corner, the performance of Islamic rituals are fused with the sociopolitical realities of blackness insofar as the politics of Black Muslimness includes what one does with the body, what one puts on the body, and where one places one’s body. Edward Curtis (2002, 2006) discusses how the black Muslim body, although in the context of the Nation of Islam, became a symbol for racial uplift in the mid-twentieth century. He explains that Elijah Muhammad instructed his followers to leave behind their white idols, observe Muslim religious practices, and follow specific dietary guidelines. Such messages were expressed in congregations at temples, in large convention spaces, and via media publications like the *Muhammad Speaks* newspaper. Black Muslim members of the NOI were expected to align their bodies within a black middle-class representational scheme in order to sever the perception of themselves from what was identified as politically and religiously unsophisticated. Consequently, ritualization emerged as vital demarcation of disciplined, black Muslim bodies that would be protected from racial and economic dispossession. Diet, dress, and patterns of consumption were therefore determinants of religiosity and loyalty to the cause of collective racial uplift:

“Whatever the case, the ritual activities of NOI leaders and members occurred within multiple social contexts, including urban black working-class culture, black politics, North American Islam, and, most obviously, the culture of a separatist movement headed by a prophetic authority. Ritualization became an arena in which NOI leaders and members subverted, resisted, accepted, and accommodated various elements of these cultures...These new African American Islamic rituals focused on the reformation of the

black body, which was depicted as a main battleground for the souls of black folk” (Curtis 2002: 169).

Through attentiveness to ritual, and loyal alignment to the religious-political ethos of the Nation of Islam, members could access a broader discourse of liberation. A discourse of reforming the black body animated messages that warned about consuming a “slave diet” and avoiding Christianity due to its purported emasculation of black men and religious exploitation of black people in general (Curtis 2006; Muhammad 1967). In sum, Islam was used as a field in which the black body was reshaped into an Islamized black body. The performance of Islamic rituals was an embodiment of an ethics of liberation and social protest in which even middle-class Christian values were appropriated and transmitted to black Muslim followers:

“In the case of the NOI, working-class African Americans created a religious culture that, like the black working-class youth culture of the postwar era, identified the black body as a locus of social protest. But rather than negating traditional black Christian middle-class ideals, members appropriated them within a new Islamic matrix...Put in terms of a simple semiotic exercise: the body was a sign. NOI members separated the signifier - the civilizing of the body - from what was normally signified - a capitulation to the values, norms, and beliefs of the middle class. The old signifier now pointed toward a new signified: the Islamized black body. Islam, then, provided an essential element of this ethical complex because it was used to rename old strategies for black uplift and to differentiate them from other behaviors and other movements. Islam played a vital role in providing a new religious framework for the creation of an African American religious protest movement that adopted certain elements and simultaneously rejected the control of the dominant culture in which the movement existed. To change one’s life through participating in these activities was yet another way in which one practiced Islam in the NOI” (Curtis 2006: 129-130).

Those Muslims who reside in Moncks Corner have articulated a heightened awareness of their placement (both spatially and socially) as black people living in the American South during more formal interviews as well as within more relaxed conversations in which current events were discussed. Throughout my research, national discourses surrounding the fact of racial violence and police brutality made their way into the homes of community members. During community dinners held at various houses of the Moncks Corner Muslims, discussions about the latest occurrences of violence seemed to repeatedly explode onto the table cloth as Shaykh Faye, and those that surrounded him, identified the United States as a place that would eventually worsen with regard to its social-political difficulties. Dhikr, therefore, has provided them with a strategy of self-care and healing that has the potential to undo both the pronounced and subtle effects of race-based trauma.

In recounting his own experience with the Mustafawiyya dhikr, Shaykh Mikhail highlights how in spite of being intimately aware of racial oppression, his being naturally drawn to the qasidas of Cheikh Mustafa provided him with a pathway toward shifting his outlook to find empowerment through spiritual cultivation. By choosing to address himself rather than the behaviors and attitudes of others, placing inward transformation over and above undoing racially-motivated discrimination, Mikhail takes an alternative approach to uplift.

“As an African-American, [dhikr] was something...that I could put in the place of music, because the people that I had been around and the lifestyle that I was living, scripture was not what guided their life—it was music. The music and the lyrics was the scripture of the African-Americans that I was around. So...I guess that the [equivalent] to that would be the Qur’an, but outside of the Qur’an, something that I can walk around with and contemplate on was that dhikr...that ‘laa ilaha illa Allah’...and knowing what it meant...and keep saying it over and over again, if affected me in a way where when the things that would make my parents upset or make the people that I was around upset, dealing with police brutality or the way the police was dealing with the African-Americans inside the environments that I came from, it kind of softened my heart in a way where I started to understand that those were problems that they were dealing with within them selves...and the dhikr actually uplifted me in a way where I felt sorry for them even though they were attempting to oppress me...”⁷⁸

As a result of his participation in the Moncks Corner zawiyah, performance of the Mustafawiyya qasidas seem to have alleviated the more acute impacts of racism for Mikhail. He uses his body to perform the protective and curative odes of Cheikh Mustafa but, through this act he acknowledges that power does not lie within or around oppressive forces. True power, in fact, lies with Allah. It through using the body to recite these odes that one acknowledges this truth that empowers the believer. This re-placement of power becomes evident as one sits to listen to the impromptu lectures of Shaykh Faye. Dhikr, the remembrance of Allah, is a lived practice that Mikhail takes seriously as a part of his spiritual regimen. This includes both recitation of the Mustafawiyya qasidas, in which corporeal movement is a part, and in connecting to a perceived lost religious tradition in which Islamic practice is thought of as reconnection with African Muslim ancestors as well as a present-day West African Muslim tradition of healing. Through collective recitation of the Mustafawiyya qasidas, African-American Muslims in Moncks Corner like Mikhail access a tradition of spiritual cultivation and call upon the curative power of prophetic salutation in order to surpass trauma. As Jamaal Abdul-Salaam, another one of the *fugara* who has followed Shaykh Faye in the path of the Mustafawiyya for about two decades, notes:

“We must look at the unique position and humble beginnings of African-American people in this country. It was one based on oppression, degradation...and our culture, our language...it has been extracted in a foreign culture and language...that causes a lot of polarity and dissonance, a confusion within the human being. The human being must first rid himself of all these foreign dynamics...purify himself to come back to a base which he can imbue himself, invest himself with virtue. Dhikr can be a tool and a means of achieving that. Dhikr, in Islam, is to repeat or to invoke certain names of God...if the heart is crying out for virtue, in this dhikr we forget our frail and deficient existence, and we remember the most perfect source of existence. It should and can, and virtually will if done correctly with presence of heart, cause the invoker to rise above his own limited human frailty of existence and realize the true essence of the endless possibilities of their own selves which is the heart...the qasidas of Cheikh Mustafa are designed...for the transformation of the human being from a lowly piece of clay to rise above...and to achieve the state that Allah intended...the qasidas are designed to imbue and invest in

⁷⁸ Interview with Mikhail Abdullah: August 28, 2016

*man Godly and saintly, virtuous qualities...what Cheikh Mustafa has effectively done, thought the grace of God, has given man a prescription to cure all his ills..."*⁷⁹

In my witnessing of Mustafawiyya performances in the mosque, I noted that the qasidas were lauded by Shaykh Arona Faye and imparted to his students as capable of transforming for the better those who consistently recited them. For the purposes of this study, an analysis of how listening practices configure ethical grounds upon which listeners use their bodies as receptacles for the consumption of moral guidance is quite similar to how I want to draw a parallel with how Moncks Corner Muslims enact a bodily discourse in two-fold manner. On one hand, there is the way in which they perform the religious poetry of Cheikh Mustafa Gueye in concert to enliven the knowledge he offers by using their voices. The animating of a West African Sufi tradition through the medium of Black American Muslim voices in collaboration with West African ones marks a specific mode of ethical and moralizing performance that brings one closer to the other - or rather, *incorporates* one in the other. On the other hand, we see that inclusion of the witness (as in listening), impacted by the articulation of dhikr performance as an ethical behavior (discourses often initiated by Shaykh Arona Faye), provides an opportunity for even the novice to participate in observances that lead to the embodying of historical religious memory on both sides of the Atlantic. Such gestures, as described in Charles Hirschkind's framework, produce an affective power that leads to a cleansing, or vital transformation, of the heart in which the trauma of persistent racial hierarchy is addressed through consistent practice.⁸⁰ And it is via this process of alchemizing bodies, through performative discourses, that envelops Black American Muslims within an interconnected social world—a broader Atlantic intersubjectivity that operates across time and space.

From the standpoint of an esoteric logic, holy words contain power because they build an access-way to the All-Powerful. Words conjure realities that can be transformative and for the *fuqara*, this truth rings as evident through their own transformations and the transformation of others. As I have shown, the *fuqara* of Moncks Corner use their bodies as receptacles for knowledge transmission to perform piety while the impacts of racism and historically-embedded trauma are addressed. Not only are Muslim bodies alchemized in relation to other bodies, they are altered in relation to the space in which corporeally-transformative religious practices take place. Masjidul Muhajjirun wal Ansars houses the *zawiyah*, which represents the reorientation of a physical space on which black bodies were historically disembodied (or rendered as *only* bodies) into a refuge for black Muslim selves that desire healing and care. It is in this space that dhikr simultaneously operates as a spiritual technology of remembering Allah and for remembering the past. In one sense, the *fuqara* use the qasidas of Cheikh Mustafa to engage their selves in a process of bodily cultivation and in another, in a project of psychic healing and liberation. Accessing the past through a West African Islamic pedagogical tradition, moreover, provides the African-American *fuqara* with an historical connection to imagined Muslim ancestors.

⁷⁹ Interview with Jamal Abdul-Salaam: January 14, 2018.

⁸⁰ See Charles Hirschkind's *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*. Columbia University Press (2006). Hirschkind's study of cassette-sermon listeners in Egypt is quite instructive of the power of moralizing discourses that have the capacity to shape individual and collective ethical behavior.

Sufi odes in the context of the Mustafawiyya regimen provides for its African-American participants a spiritual technology with which they utilize as a means to transform themselves into more disciplined and mindful Muslims who are meanwhile empowered to envision themselves as having been cleansed of race-based trauma. In so doing, the Muslims living in Moncks Corner simultaneously envelop themselves in the vision for spiritual expansion that Cheikh Mustafa Gueye held as he composed his qasidas many decades prior in Senegal. The performance of Cheikh Mustafa's qasidas on the part of these particular American fuqara mark a desire for such growth; however, this willful engagement of the Black Muslim body into a West African Sufi program of spiritual disciplining is more than some mere religious observance. Certainly, the yearning for spiritual mastery and the rectification of the lower ego is a central motivation for the performance of remembering. Yet, against the backdrop of the political realities of navigating Black Muslimness in the American South, I read the structure and participation of Black adherents in this context as indicative of the desire to protect the self from both spiritual decay and others kinds of cultural harm - corporeal and psychological. I have followed the current of social theory that resists the Cartesian mind-body dualism by considering how bodies are used as vessels for learning on the part of Black Muslim actors in Moncks Corner as they work to master their religion and liberate themselves from the tensions that are a result of life in the United States. As well, collective ritual performance provides for an intersubjective experience of healing and mindfulness of the body in which performance is the result of a textual transmission from West Africa to the American South. Thus, such performances become infused with a politics of Black Muslimness whereby the diasporic collaborations—the animation of West African Sufi technologies via collective Black Muslim performance—present in such a way that they provide routes for inward transformation and bodily discipline. On a practical level, the knowledge of how to pray for protection, funds for travel, and spiritual expansion via specific religious formulae is embodied as a West African religious approach to alchemizing the self.

Chapter 4

The Prayer Economy in a South Carolina Town

“Charitable men and women who make a good loan to God will have it doubled and have a generous reward.” (Qur’an 57:18)

“A man came to the Prophet and asked, “O Allah's Apostle! Which charity is the most superior in reward?” He replied, “The charity which you practice while you are healthy, niggardly and afraid of poverty and wish to become wealthy. Do not delay it to the time of approaching death and then say, ‘Give so much to such and such, and so much to such and such.’ And it has already belonged to such and such (as it is too late).” [Narrated by Abu Huraira in Sahih Bukhari—Volume 2, Book 24, Number 500]

There is a well-known parable about a community that suffered from drought for three or so consecutive years. Driven to a point of utter desperation, the amir of the village called for the people to assemble in a nearby field in order to collectively pray for rain. Carefully arranged in rows, the members of the village prepared themselves as they ensured that they had all they needed to commence the prayer. All of a sudden, a little boy came running as he was late and wanted to join the rest of the villagers. He was carrying an open umbrella and his attempt to fit into the last row caused a commotion. As everyone turned around to find out what was happening, they were struck with a realization that although they had all assembled to pray for rain that perhaps they had not arrived with a firm belief that their prayers would be answered because none of them had truly prepared themselves for rain. For if this small boy had enough faith to bring an umbrella and hold it open over his head while firmly convinced that God would answer, they wondered to themselves whether their own faith was lacking. This story is one that reminds people how faith drives decision-making in Islamic contexts. The *fuyara* in Moncks Corner make similar decisions with their resources as they devote their funds and labor to the mission of the Mustafawiyya while believing that their sacrifices will yield tangible ends.

This chapter analyzes the manner in which various material, spiritual, and symbolic exchanges between Shaykh Arona Faye al-Faqir and his community members take place in and around the mosque of Moncks Corner, South Carolina. I argue that these exchanges produce and reflect multiple kinds of religious development and spiritual cultivation that occur among social actors in the Tariqa Mustafawiyya. While there are long-distance interchanges that also take place that fall within the frame of study in this chapter, the setting for this specific analysis centers on the zawiyah of Moncks Corner. Therefore, this analysis centers upon the multi-layered and dynamic practices of gift-giving, the dispensation of supplicatory instruments and general spiritual care in the Mustafawiyya tradition. Time spent at the zawiyah of Moncks Corner, and in Senegal, has allowed me to track the ways in which Black Muslim affiliates and devotees in the Mustafawiyya tradition individually and collectively engage in a relationship of *indebtedness* with Shaykh Arona Faye. This relational structure should be understood as beyond merely economic. It is not necessarily the case that students solely benefit from his tutelage economically, or that the Shaykh only benefits economically from their presence. Although I use the term *indebtedness* to illustrate feelings of obligation and duty as a result of gifts, blessings, and prayers that are given to his students, the relationship between teacher and student should be thought as bidirectional and exceed the realm of transactions. That is, there is a mutuality at work wherein the aim of all involved is closeness to Allah. Of course, it is true that all spiritual leaders

will come across followers or admirers who are less than faithful and that their pronouncements of duty and obligation are only conjectural. The Muslims that I highlight in this chapter, however, considered themselves to be serious and astute followers of Shaykh Faye. Furthermore, they certainly considered themselves indebted to the entirety of shuyukh who, with their own labors, mastered their religion, paved the way to God and have invited those who are willing to follow in their footsteps.

When asked about their specific relationship to Shaykh Faye, various students responded similarly in mentioning that they felt particularly indebted to him. During interviews, my interlocutors identified Shaykh Faye as more than deserving of the funds they've contributed to his numerous projects in the past. I have witnessed that he seemed to devote all of the money that he received from students to assisting less fortunate community members in secret, or found some way to quickly transfer funds offered by students to some charitable cause. At the same time, devoted students of Shaykh Faye passionately believe that, since he is a religious specialist who has mastered the path of the Mustafawiyya, he is equipped to pray to Allah on their behalf. For this service, they were certainly willing to compensate him according to their financial capability. Consider the words of these fuqara of the Moncks Corner zawiyah:

Jamal Abdul-Salaam

"I had already been Muslim twenty years [when I met Shaykh in 1999], but Shaykh clarified what I had, he fine-tuned it. He allowed me to see the target and brought the target close... You read Islamic books and everything is really, really theoretical. I saw the theory and practice become one and it became clear, abundantly clear...like I said, he clarified it..."⁸¹

Rabia Berhane Faye

"I think we are all indebted to him. Why? I mean that Allah has used him as an instrument to give us these things, these gifts. It kind of saddens me because I feel like we haven't repaid him what he's due. But we are definitely indebted to Shaykh—the tools that he's given us, the knowledge he's shared with us, helping to change our very nature, transforming us...For the rest of my life and beyond I'll be indebted to him...if Allah allows, I'll serve him for the rest of my life to make his mission succeed."⁸²

Sulaiman Barr

"It's kind of hard to be a part of the community and not feel indebted to [Shaykh Faye]. He's the first brick. You can't not value that first brick. I talk with my wife about our financial standing and what we want to provide the community because of what it does provide...and we do have a rather large family of six [people]...Our goal is to come up with a large lump sum...to show that we are active members of this community."⁸³

⁸¹ Interview with Jamal Abdul-Salaam: January 14, 2018.

⁸² Interview with Rabia Faye: January 15, 2018.

⁸³ Interview with Sulaiman Barr: January 15, 2018.

Halima Barr

“I definitely feel an urge to give to my Shaykh because of all he does and all he offers... and the beautiful thing he’s built. Alhamdulillah. I feel the miracles and blessings come right back [when I give]..I get so much more than what I put into it. When I give to my Shaykh and he prays for me and my family, it works. I’m not going to call it magic, but if I ask him to pray for something specifically and I’ve given him money behind it, it works...And I feel it’s okay to just shower him with money. It’s beautiful. He’s a friend of Allah and I can see that. It’s apparent. From this first day I met him, I knew that there was something about this man. Alhamdulillah. Every dime I get, I wish I could give to him.”⁸⁴

The Moncks Corner *fuqara* with whom I spoke all agreed, in one form or another, that they owed Shaykh Faye immensely for what he had done for them individually as well as collectively. Such indebtedness is also embedded in the notion of intercession, which is the shared Islamic belief that charismatic or spiritually-powerful actors can ask for forgiveness from Allah or entry into heaven on behalf of others. Intercession is not necessarily a belief, or practice, that originates with Islam. Even still, Mustafawiyya devotees rely upon their shuyukh (past and present) to teach them how to seek intercession from, and using the name of, the Prophet Muhammad(*saws*). In the Mustafawiyya ode, entitled “*O Allah! Answer all of our Prayers, O Allah!*,” supplicants speak in the voice of Cheikh Mustafa who implores Allah to answer his prayers by using the alternate namesake of the Prophet Muhammad(*saws*), Mustafa (after which Cheikh Mustafa Gueye is named).

1. O my Lord, by Mustafa, answer my prayers; with Your pardon which will set us free, O Allah! O Allah!
2. You have the power to grant us a vessel that will take us to the Rauda [Prophet’s burial grounds] of Al-Mustafa, O Allah! O Allah!
3. Answer our prayers by “kaf” and “nun;” You are the opener of the door to Mustafa, O Allah! O Allah!
4. Answer me regarding the things which I bear in mind; Mustafa is also my namesake. Let Mustafa and his family intercede, O Allah!⁸⁵

By collapsing the name of the Prophet with that of their absent, yet beloved Cheikh Mustafa, devotees who sing this qasida identify his needs and desires as their own. With this act, they pose themselves as he did at the time of composing this ode while, through Shaykh Arona Faye, he instructs future supplicants to remember Allah and seek a higher plane of spiritual consciousness.

⁸⁴ Interview with Halima Barr: January 15, 2018.

⁸⁵ Cheikh Mustafa Gueye Haydar, “O Allah! Answer All of our Prayers, O Allah!;” published by Shaykh Harun Al-Faqir of the Zawiyah of the Fuqara, Moncks Corner SC. As in other qasidas published by the Moncks Corner zawiyah, the opening page is marked with Al-Fatiha (first chapter of the Qur’an) as if to remind the supplicant that it should be recited before the qasida. After the seven oft-repeated Qur’anic verses, the second page reads: “This qasida (ode) was written by Cheikh Mustafa Haydar, son of Cheikh Sahib Haydar, son of Ali Haydar, son of Abdullah Haydar, son of Chamsuddin Haydar. May Allah have mercy on them all.”

For this reason, Mustafawiyya devotees view themselves as indebted to their spiritual tutors due to their prior and current work in showing them the way to Allah.

Defining Prayer Economy

Before delving further into the various kinds of exchanges as it relates to spiritual, symbolic, and material relationships in and beyond the Moncks Corner zawiyah, it is necessary to provide a definition of prayer economy. While there are existing analyses of prayer economy implicitly provided through looking at the gift-giving practices among Sufi adherents and the prestige garnered from lavish incentives for various kinds of spiritual care, this chapter broadens its conception of prayer economy to include how various forms of labor and service make spiritual intimacy between teacher and students possible. It does, meanwhile, build on prior literatures that have studied prayer economy as a subject of analysis by placing emphasis on the way in which power and authority figure into the interpersonal relationships displayed amongst members of Masjidul Muhajjirun wal Ansar, the mosque in Moncks Corner.

At the same time, this examination of the continued emergence of such relationships moves beyond such focus on direct material exchanges by studying the manner by which certain kinds of work are sought that allow for sustained presence in Moncks Corner for transplants who hail from other locations. For example, the proximity that students not originally from the Moncks Corner region is, in many cases, directly made possible by participation in itinerant, contractual labor. Moncks Corner is primarily a blue-collar town where regular and gainful employment can be difficult and, consequently, many of the male members of the zawiyah choose to engage in contractual labor for which they must work in other locations around the country in order to funnel monies back to their respective households. For many of the households who are part of the Moncks Corner zawiyah, there is at least one member (generally the male head of household) who engages in the kind of electrical work that requires travel to locations, ironically, often far away from the zawiyah. These relocations are temporary, with longer contracts sometimes cut short by the at-will resignations of the Muslim men who have left town in order to make money for their families and or provide financial support for the Mosque. I also examine the multiple kinds of shared labor in which both men and women personally attend to the Shaykh's needs, attend to guests, clean the mosque, and prepare elaborate dishes for visitors and other mosque-members. These kinds of labor are interpreted as motivated by the gratitude / indebtedness that are generally felt throughout the Tariqa for the quite visible labor of Shaykh Faye.

At the core of the relationship that allows for the patronage of the teacher via the disciple is the import of religious authority. This notion has been studied by scholars of Islam in Africa by framing the allure of religious authority as "charisma" or "charismatic authority" - a notion taken from Max Weber's insights on religious authority (1968). Those who have studied this phenomenon agree that what facilitates the exchanges (seen and unseen) between teacher and disciple is the power imbued from within the 'miracle-working founder' (Cruise O'Brien 1988) who is often posthumously recognized as a saint. This sainthood, especially when connected to a series of successive teachers and shuyukh, provides the spiritual legitimacy upon which charisma is built. Around this, the institution of the spiritual network/ Sufi Order (*tariqa*) is constructed and expands from the emergence of a "routinized charisma."

As Donal Cruise O'Brien reviews in his introductory chapter in the edited volume, "*Charisma and Brotherhood in African Islam*," he questions whether Weber's position that an

environment of crisis is a prerequisite for the development of the social organization around which charisma is legitimated is universally applicable.⁸⁶ For example, if this were the case, then the jihads of Shaykh Usman dan Fodio (alt: Uthman b. Fudi) in response to the emerging slave trade and religious syncretization that threatened the integrity of an orthodox Islam in West Africa provide a backdrop to the emergence of commercial agricultural pursuits that accompanied the rise of charismatic authority figures in the region (e.g. the groundnut enterprise among the Muridiyya of Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba (d. 1927)). On the other hand, it is perhaps more likely that the success of any significant religious enterprise necessitates an economic venture which would consider the practicalities of sustaining any sizable social organization or religious movement. Just as yearning hearts require knowledge, hungry bellies require food. While the notion of ‘crisis’ as requisite to the rise of charismatic leadership is perhaps debatable, the argument is compelling in considering the example of the Mustafawiyya in South Carolina. Yet, again, it is more likely that the development of the electrical trade (via contractual labor) among the Mustafawiyya is an economic strategy that is the result of residence in a region with little to offer in the way of lucrative employment. Of course, the internal spiritual discourse produced from within the zawiyah characterizes discipleship as the recognition of some spiritual deficiency in the devotee (i.e. some personal crisis) that has guided him to his teacher, but this certainly is not how Max Weber articulated the allure of charismatic authority. On the other hand, the development of a proper ‘prayer economy’ requires participants who can be of benefit to each other. In order for the symbiosis that occurs in such a relationship to be possible, those living in Moncks Corner must be able to take advantage of what Shaykh Faye has to offer. Moreover, in order for the aspirant to be able to participate in the industry of spiritual power—to purchase prayers—to assist in the purchase and upkeep of the mosque, s/he must be able to afford it via some means of regular or sustained employment.

In the same volume, Murray Last (1988) discusses the historical emergence of charismatic force in Northern Nigeria (Kano) as an alternative strategy of power-broking that compelled ordinary actors and leaders alike to seek success through patronizing the medicinal and spiritual efficacies of religious masters who had the ability to assist in preventing military defeat. In nineteenth-century Kano and prior, medicines manufactured by Muslim scholars were utilized by kings to ensure their ability to retain physical and mystical power over their enemies. Thus, ‘*charismatic power*,’ is understood in this context as a “force of personality in contrast to the force of arms” or, in other words, mystical power was dispensed through various forms of patronage and was utilized as a different form of coercion—another form of weaponry that was

⁸⁶ Donal Cruise O’Brien also notes ‘racial confrontation’ to be a considerable factor in the allure of charismatic leadership and the emergence of the tariqa as a local configuration of popular Islam in Africa, particularly among those who were made vulnerable within racial hierarchies created by colonial intrusions (whether European or Arab). While the Muridiyya of Senegal and the Hamallists of Sudan emerged from within a French colonial context, the Qadiriyya of Tanganyika distinguished itself from the Swahili and the coastal Arabs. See “*Charisma and Brotherhood in African Islam*” (1988), page 21. This notion provides an interesting point in considering the discourses of self-determination and cooperative economics among African-American Muslims in a West African Tariqa (*Mustafawiyya*), all housed in a mosque situated in an environment profoundly impacted by histories of racial confrontation. At the same time, the process of financing the mosque without seeking to rely on South Asian or Middle-Eastern financiers provides interesting commentary on contentions between Muslim communities in the United States.

used in conjunction with violence (Last 1988: 186). ‘Prayer economy’ in Kano, as it was introduced through Last, developed alongside the Nigerian oil boom of the 1970s as African political leaders sought to have Muslim scholars pray for their continued success on their behalf. This direct funding of Qur’anic expertise led to the addition of traditional Qur’anic students who also sought their own monetary compensation in exchange for the labor of surrogate supplication financed by affluent patrons. While Last does not appear to explicitly deploy ‘prayer economy’ as a term to include the purchase of medicines and healing from Sufi experts, it is implied throughout the broader discussion of services rendered in-kind, either for the dispensation of blessings (*barakat*), miracles (*karamat*), or for access to the mystical power that the Shaykh possesses and utilizes on behalf of the patron.

Benjamin Soares (2005) discusses how histories of colonization and spiritual authority intersect in Niuro (Mali) in order to shed light on the manner in which ‘Islamic esoteric sciences’ are employed to navigate Niuro social landscape. In Soares’ account, these sciences include “petitionary prayers and blessings, instruction or guidance in alms-giving, geomancy, mystical retreat, decision-making via divine inspiration, the confection of written texts..., astrology and medicine” (Soares 2005: 127). Ultimately, Soares’ project is to outline how power and authority shift throughout Niuro’s colonial and postcolonial periods as charisma tended to centralize upon particular figures in the religious landscape. This centralization of power gave rise and led to the emergence of saintly lineages. In a chapter centered squarely on prayer economy, Benjamin Soares defines the term by placing emphasis on processes of commodification and frames prayer economy as a phenomenon that vastly shifts relations between saints and followers:

“The prayer economy is, in effect, an economy of religious practice in which people give gifts to certain religious leaders on a large scale in exchange for prayers and blessings. I argue that certain processes of commodification - the exchange of blessings and prayers for commodities, the proliferation of personal and impersonal Islamic religious commodities - have proliferated and intensified around such religious leaders in the postcolonial period. Such processes of commodification have helped to transform the relations between religious leaders and followers. In fact, they have facilitated the personalization of religious authority in certain Muslim religious leaders with reputations as saints, to whom many ordinary and elite persons have turned for [succor]. That is, religious authority has come to be centered on a few individuals rather than institutions like the Sufi orders with which they have historically been associated” (Soares 2005: 153).

Inside of this framing of the power relationships between spiritual leaders and their followers, Soares draws upon Weber’s notion of the ‘routinisation’ of charismatic authority to examine how saints in the modern period command prestige (Weber 1978). It is lineage that provides this command to saintly power. As I witnessed during my time spent around Shaykh Faye in South Carolina and in Senegal, his own prestige is intimately tied to his lineage.

Additionally, Soares’ framing of prayer economy, and the efficacy of mystical power, hinges upon secrecy. The fact of the secret (*siru*, *sirr*) is what adds validity to the medicine or prayer of the charismatic shaykh. Surely, there is value contained in the lack of knowledge that others possess about the processual nature of the proper construction of amulets and talismans. Furthermore, he argues that a prayer economy is dependent upon an environment where ‘esoteric sciences’ inform the relations of exchange between Muslim actors (Soares 2005). Only the expert

may know what and how certain Qur'anic verses get placed into the signet ring, for example. For this reason (among others), the Shaykh maintains a charismatic allure that followers and admirers view as knowledge of the unseen. Esoteric sciences and secret knowledge, in the context of the Mustafawiyya, operate as fields within which American students are drawn into a West African paradigm of Islamic piety.

In a dissertation that historicizes the presence of 'secret sciences' amongst Muslims in West Africa, Rupert Vaughn argues that the role of talismans and amulets are aspects of a broader tradition of engagement with Qur'anic scripture that highlights the perception of its spiritual power. "The talisman may be viewed as the slate upon which may be found expressions of the various forms of esoteric approach. Amulets provide a means by which good fortune, beneficence and protection may be garnered to the individual by means of siphoning, using and controlling [magical forces]" (Vaughn 1992: 45). Vaughn situates such emphasis on the use of amulets among the Mande who called amulets '*sebenev*' which meant "writing" in their language. This shows an association between scripture, or the act of writing scripture, and the physical product that results from the crafting of protective talismans. Further, he adds that "[t]he various forms of divination, magic and practices of an esoteric nature were all merely gateways through which an appreciation of al-asrar [secrets] could be gained" (Vaughn 1992:46). It is in secrets that the Divine power of the unseen (*al-ghaib*) operates. Shuyukh in West Africa have been a source where adherents and seekers of spiritual care turn to have their needs met as they are perceived to be the inheritors and possessors of the secrets that God gives. This confidence in mastery of the unseen is the basis upon which the Mustafawiyya are willing to compensate their own Shaykh Faye who has inherited his knowledge from Cheikh Mustafa. Moreover, the mastery of Cheikh Mustafa is accessible through the tutelage of Shaykh Faye and through the *qasidas* penned by Cheikh Mustafa himself.

While Cheikh Mustafa is no longer physically present to display his own expertise, his writings reflect the way in which he was more than acquainted with the esoteric sciences. In a special ode (*qasida*) written by Cheikh Mustafa Gueye Haydar, his composition illustrates a firm recognition of the power of the unseen. By appealing to Allah to grant him (and his students) the power to mold and impact the material world by way of that which is veiled from humankind, he seeks protection and success:

"1.By the truth of the secret of the opening chapter of the Book (Qur'an), give us all of our desires without any torment[...] 4. Give us the blessings of the noble descendants of the Prophet (saw) as well as their helpers (Al-Ansar), openly & in secret[...] 7. Grant us the sun of Irfan (intimate knowledge) & let the full moon of Your Nur (light) be our (inner) proof[...] 19. Grant us, in secret, the ease that comes with the subservience of Jinn & men[...] 31. Eliminate the harm of witchcraft, secretly & openly, from all places around us[...] 35. Make a way for us to Al-Mustafa (saw), openly & in secret, O Custodian[...] 40. Remove the veils from our eyes & grant us the honor of being capable of providing comprehensive explanations. 41. Let our beloved ones & brethren testify for us, Ya Rabbana, in secret,with clear evidence. 42. Answer our prayers, O Owner! O Pure One! By the power of "Kun" (be) & "Yakun" (it is), O Bestower of benefit to the souls! [...] 53. Grant us, O Possessor of power, to give things form, the gift of the ability to transform & change things from one to another[...] 55. Remove the veils of every sirr (secret) for us, Ya Rabbi, by the secret of the innermost secret[...] 58. Always be there for

us extending Your helping hand, in secret & in the open, O Grantor of aid[...] 66. Cover our faults for us, Ya Rabbana, & grant us gifts from the unseen[...]"⁸⁷

Cheikh Mustafa, in composing this qasida, clearly relies upon both the spiritual power of a living text and the subtextual force of a broader West African Islamic tradition in order to pray for money, the ability to effect immediate material change, and for Divine assistance and protection in all matters.⁸⁸ That the composition displays not only intimate knowledge of an otherworldly realm but also draws on Qur'anic speech to build a forceful supplication is significant. The prayer is built from gnosis (*ma'rifah*), and not merely recall of Qur'anic text. It is from texts like this, in addition to the explanations of Shaykh Faye, that Mustafawiyya feel confident in the esoteric mastery of their Tariqa's founder.

Fisibilillah: For the Sake of God

Marcel Mauss (1954) tells us that gift-giving between actors in a given environment serves as a method for social organization that reveals hierarchical relationships. His seminal analysis of the *kula* ring amongst Polynesians in the early twentieth century displays how the circulation of 'gifts' given between friends and colleagues actually mirrors the relationships within neighboring locations. Thus, a gift given represents a newly-established obligation that remains open until the gift of equal value and meaning is offered in return. This does not mean necessarily that gift-giving is rendered into a process of meeting obligations, but rather, it serves as a strategy for the maintenance of close relations between peers (or between *pir* and *murid*) and even family members. The gift is not some simple possession to be offered and received - it is an artifact of power insofar as it is imbued with meaning. The very gesture of giving compels reciprocity. Additionally, the gift symbolizes the moral fiber of the giver. On the other hand, Mauss's analysis of the potlatch ceremony amongst Native Americans reveals how hierarchies of charisma are established and reinforced. It was through this observance of unequal gift-giving that was symbolic of the unequal social relations among men as they competed to 'out-give' competitors. This was done with the aim of increasing one's social standing because the ability to give was directly proportional to prestige garnered by the display of giving. The main difference, in the case of the *fuqara*, seemed to be that people who gave were actively discouraged from trying to seek acclaim.

⁸⁷ Gueye Haydara, Cheikh Mustafa. Excerpts from "The Cloak of Protection & Soldiers of Divine Care." Translated and printed in the USA by Shaykh Arona Faye al-Faqir. Zawiyah of Moncks Corner. August 2014.

⁸⁸ The opening page of the printed qasida of Cheikh Mustafa Gueye displays the opening chapter of the Qur'an (*Al-Fatihah*) and is followed by the Mustafawiyya prayer that praises the Prophet Muhammad (*as-Salaat-ul Samawiyyah*). Below these two items is a brief explanation of the entire ballad: "This qasidah was written by Cheikh Muhammad Mustafa Gueye Haydar, who was the son of Cheikh Sahib Gueye, may Allah Ta'ala be pleased with both of them. With this qasidah he [beseeches] Allah (swt) to draw toward him all forms of goodness. He titled it "The Cloak of Protection & the Soldiers of Divine Care." He said that it would be exactly as [its] title suggests, in the open & in secret, for those who recite it morning & evening for the sake of Allah (swt) and with the intention of attracting all goodness and blessings repelling harm."

While I do not have any large claims to make about primitive societies, I do draw parallels regarding the giving of gifts (*hadaya*) in relation to the idea of *baraka* (blessing) in Islamic tradition. This principle is dynamic insofar as gift-giving amongst Muslim actors can lead to the increase of one's *baraka* and or can be indicative of the *baraka* one possesses. It should be noted that even as we discuss the gift one gives to a teacher or spiritual guide, this dispensation of funds, material, or some artifact is much different than charity (*sadaqah*) or the wealth tax (*zakat*). Gifts dispensed from student to teacher are done so freely and are not so much motivated by scripturally-based derived understandings of piety. Offerings of time, material, and energy that are given by disciples to their beloved teacher are motivated by love and devotion cultivated through gratitude forged by the time Shaykh Faye has spent teaching and counseling his students.

Spiritual Relation between Shaykh and Murid

It is quite easy for Western, rationalist sensibilities to produce a heightened skepticism regarding the question of why Muslim followers would trade currency and or commodities for the prayers and blessings (*barakat*) of a prominent shaykh. Yet, this relationship, which from a secularist perspective might understandably be perceived as exploitative, or at least, not so steeped in the mutuality that such transactional relationships between patron and provider might otherwise claim, should be analyzed from within a framework that can properly situate how Muslim actors view and interact with spiritual authority. Certainly, there has been much written within Anthropology regarding gift-exchange and the manner in which certain forms of gift-giving operate as routes for the strengthening of social relationships (Appadurai 1988; Carrier 1991; Humphrey & Jones 1992). It should be noted that writings that have dealt with notion of prayer economy emphasize the transactional nature of exchanges between Shaykh and *faqir*. Following such analyses, time spent within the Moncks Corner *zawiyah* has urged me to reconsider how these exchanges resemble gift-giving practices that serve to fortify community bonds and the spiritual kinship relations between teacher and student. Ousmane Kane (2011) discusses the manner in which a transnational spiritual network provides the infrastructure for which charismatic West African shuyukh travel to Western states from Senegal and back again. There are differences, according to Kane, between tangible benefits and intangible rewards for both patrons and the shuyukh that they patronize for their services. I offer that it is the intangible rewards that are perceived as more valuable—or rather, beyond the level of value insofar as the perceived benefit is immeasurable—by participants in a prayer economy. Thus, a student who is a dutiful follower of Shaykh Faye that pays for some secret prayer (*siru*) or offers to pay for an item that Shaykh Faye owned (a red wallet, small bottle of oil, his car, etc.) should be understood as a transaction that operates beyond the level of mere purchase, or as more than some mutual exchange between equivalent parties. It is important to note that it is also necessary to investigate and offer up for analysis the multiple meanings that such transactions carry in hopes to more fully understand how meaning is contrived from the possession and exchange of materials among initiates and between Muslims on the path of spiritual development.

While sitting in the dining hall of Masjidul Muhajjirun wal Ansars in Moncks Corner, Shaykh Arona Faye explained to me that a red notebook that he had in his possession was going to be a part of a compilation of secretive knowledge pertaining to numbers and astrological signs

that he intended to bestow to one of most trusted students.⁸⁹ According to Shaykh Faye, a student purchased this knowledge from him for a price of 5000 dollars and it was also explained to me that there would be only three students to whom the knowledge would be sold. The book, which he was still in the process of being copied by hand on behalf of his student, was a simple red journal that would eventually be one of three books which would discuss and explain numerology and its inner workings. The knowledge would be used for determining the inherent personality traits of people according to their date of birth and other factors, from which the knowledge-bearer could assist others who might consult him for advice on healing maladies, determine compatibility with a potential spouse, and prescribe prayers for specific needs.

Those within listening-distance of a bard who devotes his time to singing the praises of Allah and His Prophet(*saws*) offer to reward him with small generosityes do so because they recognize that the bard provides benefit to his audience. Renumeration is, in most cases, voluntary and given at the discretion of the giver. Likewise, a student who pays her or his Shaykh for specific formulaic prayers that are used for one's increase in health, income, or knowledge, in most cases, does so because the student understands that her or his income that touches the hand of the shaykh is blessed. Thus, there is no properly mutual exchange in currency for service between the shaykh and his student. Shaykh Faye carries out this labor, and asks for renumeration from his students, not so much for income it seems, but rather, in order to provide a sustainable means of redistributing monies toward less-fortunate people within his care. Monies garnered always seemed to be dispensed and redistributed on behalf of those in need within the Moncks Corner community first and then outward. At the same time, though, such visible gestures surely adds to his prestige, especially when in a location where economic conditions are difficult - in Senegal and in Moncks Corner (USA). Shaykh Faye's reputation for giving is known throughout Moncks Corner, and even more so, in Senegal. Upon our visit to Dakar and Thiès for the Cheikh Mustafa Day Celebration in January 2015, Rasheed Philson, Luqman, and I were given a small apartment in HLM Grand Yoff to share. The three-bedroom condo was a five-minute walk from Ndey Faye's small house nearby where Shaykh Faye lodged. It was not long until the neighboring community learned that he was in town. As a result, many visitors began to patiently sit in the front room while waiting to meet with Shaykh Faye about a week into our visit. During our drives between Dakar and Thiès, Shaykh Faye revealed to the small group of men that most of the those who have visited the house in order to see him were there to ask for money. Shaykh Faye has explained that he loves to give, and that such adoration for generosity is couched firmly in the prophetic tradition.

Halfway into our stay in Senegal, Shaykh Faye openly admitted that he'd given away all the money that he'd brought. He subsequently requested that we each visit an ATM and do our best to give him what we could so that he would be able to continue assisting those who visited him. The logic engrained in such a request was that since we were monetarily privileged, we had a duty to distribute as much alms as we could to those who were in need. While such a transaction involved providing money to the Shaykh to support his dispensation of alms to his visitors (thus adding to his already heightened prestige), it should be recognized that those *fuyara* who willingly give of their money and time to serve the Shaykh do so with the understanding that such service will result in spiritual benefit. Such provision is part and parcel of the training of the *faqir* on the path of inward refinement. As the *faqir* provides funding for the Shaykh, the Shaykh will also count that *faqir* as among the foremost and convicted of his

⁸⁹ Interview, Shaykh Arona Faye, 28 November 2016.

students. At the same time, it should be obvious that the *faqir* wants to be viewed as progressive by his/ her teacher. The one who digs into his/her own pocket for the sake of others knows that such an activity provides its own reward because charity for the Muslim is a source of benefit unseen. Not only is the *faqir* being provided for, when one views this exchange as spiritually beneficial for the dispenser of alms, it is also a means of pedagogy whereby the *faqir* witnesses the care with which Shaykh dispenses alms to those in need. In this way, he models a reliance on the otherworldly and, as well, a deemphasis on the import of material wealth. Secondly, the Shaykh continues to instruct his students with regard to the better etiquettes of a true believer. Thus, we must understand and analyze such exchanges of funds and service as willing modes of learning in addition to the benefits provided to religious authority.

Benjamin Soares (2005) tells us that the prestige gained by prominent saints and shuyukh leads to the tangibility of rewards enjoyed by such actors in the way of material possessions. Yet, what I have witnessed is that such prestige, especially when carried within a developing economy, seems to be a self-reinforcing problem. The more prestige a shaykh has, the more frequently he will be visited by those who are in need of material assistance. And the more material assistance one provides, the greater his prestige will be. During the group's stay in Senegal for the 2015 Cheikh Mustafa Day celebration, Shaykh Faye made it a point to explain to our group as we were witnessing the difficulty he faced with keeping up with such requests for assistance, that too often people cannot distinguish between generosity and wealth. He quietly explained that many of those that he helps assume that he is wealthy because he gives so much.

At the same time, this does not mean that Shaykh Faye does not engage in strictly transactional exchanges when clients come to him for special requests to treat ailments that Western medicine cannot rectify. On one occasion as a relatively small group of his students were gathered at his house for dinner, Shaykh Faye recounted an instance in which he was hired by a South-Asian (or Arab) Muslim family to rid their house of a *jinn* (spirit) that had taken up residence in their house and possessed one of the women in the household. He mentioned that the family had solicited the services of another shaykh who could not manage to fix their problem. That shaykh then, knowing about Shaykh Faye's spiritual prowess, contacted him to step in and help the family. These external transactions that occur do not seem to take place in order to strengthen spiritual bonds between Muslim actors. They more so take place based on the reputation and prestige of the Shaykh, and less so on an intent to maintain some sustained spiritual cultivation of the client. From time spent within the *zawiyah* of Moncks Corner and witnessing the multiple exchanges that took place, I have concluded that transactions that did not place an emphasis on long-term care and spiritual pedagogy mostly occurred with clients who were not among the *fuqara* of Moncks Corner.

The more devoted students of Shaykh Faye—those who could be properly referred to as 'disciples' (as opposed to followers, admirers, or mere community members)—tended to purchase the more expensive items that involve more labor from their teacher. These items are also understood as investments, particularly by those students who have been awarded a 'mantle' or cloak that marks them inside the community as having met certain criteria that includes memorizing at least the last thirtieth portion of the Qur'an (*juz amma*), forty or more hadiths, and the ninety-nine names of God ('*asma al husna*'), in addition to a continued path of growth. Additionally, being given a mantle is usually a process that is done in front of the community during some gathering, and it is witnessed that this recipient both has the confidence of carrying on the aims of the Tariqa while also marking them as a figure deserving of heightened respect by the Moncks Corner community. Abdur-Rasheed Watson is one of these figures who has met the

Shaykh's criteria for teaching others and has been awarded with a mantle. Figures like Abdur-Rasheed Watson are driven to engage in the attainment of more advanced and intricate knowledge from Shaykh Arona Faye due to their desire to carry on his legacy in more formalized manner. 'Mystical apprenticeship,' a term I borrow from a study on female spiritual authority in Senegal (Hill 2010), describes the relationship of heightened spiritual intimacy between more advanced *fuqara* and Shaykh Faye that revolves around the dispensation of knowledge.

While at the mosque's office where we kept most of our belongings, Abdur-Rasheed quietly showed me a special item in which Qur'anic inscriptions had been affixed to its front and back.⁹⁰ He revealed to me that he bought it from Shaykh Faye shortly before, and began to explain why he decided to pay so much money for the item. The protective nature of the item—which I will not name—was echoed by Shaykh Faye's explanation when he brought it up later amongst a small group of *fuqara* that afternoon during lunch at Umm Aisha's house. After our prayers, when everyone had settled and made themselves comfortable in a loose circle in the living room floor, Shaykh instructed Abdur-Rasheed on exactly how and when to utilize the item. While Shaykh Faye took care to teach those of us present the importance of spiritual protection, I also got the sense that there was more information that was shared privately with Abdur-Rasheed regarding his usage of the item. What Shaykh Faye did share with the group was that the item was essentially fashioned as a protective device and designed to bring wealth and health to the possessor and his family—it was an investment that one makes and can be inherited to loved ones. On a related note, Shaykh Faye carefully explained to me that there is an internal logic in fashioning such protective devices that outlines exactly how many can be made by him outside of his country. In case of war, he explained, between the countries in which he made protective items for his students and his own country (Senegal), he wanted to ensure that his countrymen always had the advantage.

Khidma: Labor and Making Muslims in Moncks Corner

In seeking to move beyond Benjamin Soares' description of prayer economy, I would add that, at least from what I've understood from this research, that the commodification of prayers and blessings shifts more than the relationship between teacher and student. There are specific ways in which the labor of students, and the ensuing performance of discipleship, acts as a commodity that operates in tandem to likewise alter and enliven relationships in the *zawiyah*. Further, the internal logics surrounding such performances of labor are situated in discourses of personal spiritual transformation. At the same time, performances with regard to tea production, food preparation, or even salutations, mirror subtle social politics embedded in and around the community.

The American Modou: Itinerancy as Spiritual Strategy

During my time spent living at the Masjidul Muhajjirun wal Ansars in Moncks Corner, I had the opportunity to closely observe many "high" moments that occurred at the mosque (Friday congregational prayer, weekly evening classes, Saturday evening dhikr, Sunday

⁹⁰ Interview, Abdur-Rasheed Watson, 13 December 2014; The nature of the item will not be named here in order to keep the confidence and integrity of the item intact. There was not an explicit request to keep it private, but I am sure my interlocutors would prefer that the item or its process not be revealed so openly.

afternoon classes, etc.). Of course, during programs and planned events where there were more bodies in the mosque, the halls were full with laughter and the warm embrace of brotherhood and sisterhood. In these moments, a large portion of the *fuqara* men and women attended the mosque to learn about their religion and share food; however, I also had an opportunity to observe more quiet, intimate moments when there was little activity. Making a living in Moncks Corner can be difficult, so many decide to invest themselves in pursuing the electrical trade and opt to engage in contractual labor. In small groups, or individually, men within the community who were able and experienced applied for jobs in other locations. Some jobs involved installing electrical wiring, or overseeing some project if the applicant was a licensed electrician. Most of these jobs required the men who accepted them to leave town for months at a time in order to earn money to send back to their households in Moncks Corner. It was this strategy of intermittent absences that made their general presence in Moncks Corner, and proximity to the zawiya, possible. Of course, many *fuqara* also did not have to leave to earn their living. Those who worked in town often started their own businesses: Imam Rasheed Nurridin owns and runs a used car lot, his brother, Ishmael, recently opened a seafood restaurant and halal meat store, Muhminatou and Penda Sanno both run an African hair-braiding salon, Halima and Sulaiman also recently opened another hair salon in town. Some *fuqara* work in nearby retail stores and some work odd-jobs to get by. While many who are part of the community are originally from the area, many others have specifically relocated to Moncks Corner from other locations, leaving potentially-lucrative opportunities, in order to sit at the feet of Shaykh Arona Faye on a permanent basis. In order to sustain themselves, *fuqara* have resorted to itinerancy as a strategy for spiritual growth. Thus, contractual electrical work within the community serves this purpose.

The preference for practical itinerancy and mobility over settlement seen amongst the *fuqara* is a mode of life that simultaneously betrays the assumption of an orientation toward urban environments and material advancement. Many Muslims in Moncks Corner have actively chosen to resist the allure of modern distractions and the infrastructural conveniences of city life. Read as purposeful and pragmatic, the collective decision to have continual and sustained access to the zawiya of Moncks Corner is driven by the desire to grow inwardly by sacrificing material gain. Magnus Marsden (2009) has shown how Muslim mobilities in northern Pakistan are more than just a matter of shifts from village to urban modes, or allowing for discourses of modernity to take a matter-of-fact placement in his analysis. His examination of these purposeful itinerancies offers an opportunity to view how young Muslim men, for example, vacate their urban lifestyles for the respite that the life of the guest (or student) has to offer. In particular, his approach is useful due to the manner by which his ethnography betrays an automatic reading of Muslim travel as cosmopolitanism in favor of being driven and shaped by locally-embedded identities.

As well, there are men who willingly lived in the mosque (*Muhajjirun wal Ansar*) on a more than part-time basis and are charged with daily maintenance of the property. Due to their continual presence, these men were frequently on-call to travel with Shaykh Arona Faye to accompany him on trips to nearby religious programming where he (and his entourage) were received as guests of honor. In this way, the Muslim men who lived in the mosque enjoyed a continuous access to Shaykh Faye as they were present for every morning prayer and evening prayer, and had ready access to the multiple classes held per week at the mosque. Thus, itinerancy and, for some at least, material dependency were interpreted as methods for knowledge-gathering and spiritual cultivation among devotees in the Moncks Corner zawiya. Moreover, many of the more devoted adherents within the zawiya used their bodies as

‘currency’ in this prayer economy. That is, the service they provided in the form of tea preparation or dictating Qur’anic verse for students and clients, whether temporary or sustained, was but another form of labor whereby participation contributed to the raising of funds and dispensation of knowledge throughout the network and beyond.⁹¹ Of course, it is not that these particular gentlemen were seen as somehow more righteous or pure than members who lived in town and could support themselves and their families through regular employment or other means. In fact, the opposite is probably more accurate. At times, some of the men who had habitually been in residence at the mosque for some significant time were lightly chided by Shaykh Arona Faye as he encouraged those who were single to get married and for those who seemed incapable of supporting themselves to work more regularly.

This detail should not, however, encourage us to view these men as simply listless and or indolent. I argue that at least some of the men with whom I lived labored intensely, although the manner in which they labored might not at first glance appear to be the case. The *fuqara* who lived in the mosque did so for numerous reasons—some were rebuilding their lives after incarceration, some were rebounding from failed marriages, some were preparing to relocate abroad to Senegal and chose to use their residence in the mosque as an anchor, and some were mere visitors. That is, they all worked hard in my view and in different ways.

Shaykh Faye and the debt

Using the framework of *indebtedness* to describe the relationships among the fuqara of Moncks Corner, whether economic or labor-based, provides a manner for thinking beyond the ‘prayer economy.’ Benjamin Soares’ framing of prayer economy offers less for thinking about the possible relations that extend beyond the community in which a prayer economy might function. Then again, this is not his project. I do not propose an abandoning of the understudied phenomena but, rather, I build upon the very foundations of what Soares has articulated through a consideration of how the transfer of gifts, blessings, and debts between Muslim actors—especially in a single Sufi tradition—are the result of prior transfers of blessings. That is, the blessings (*baraka*) and knowledge (*ilm*) that circulates in the zawiyah of Moncks Corner does not originate in Monck Corner. It has a genealogy and an ancestry, like Shaykh Faye, and is most immediately attributed to Cheikh Mustafa Gueye, founder and establisher of the Mustafawiyya tradition. While Soares does articulate the manner in which prestige and charisma are built upon connections to personalities of import, prophetic genealogy, and spiritual expertise, his framing

⁹¹ Interview, Shaykh Arona Faye, 26 November 2016: Each North American student, regardless of location is expected to contribute to the upkeep of the Moncks Corner mosque in order to pay for monthly maintenance and general programming. As a result of an inability to secure enough funding to purchase the land on which Masjidul Muhajjirun wal Ansars is currently located at 1317 Old Highway 52, Shaykh Arona Faye has decided that the community should vacate the premises and relocate itself to another property up the road. Some several months after my fieldwork ended, the community was in the process of retrofitting a former doctor’s office in order to house the new mosque. According to a description of the building, there would be a few classrooms on the lower level, as well as the prayer-room (*musullah*), while there will also be some rooms rented to community members on the upper level. One of the rooms was set aside to house an Egyptian woman who needs housing. Apparently, she will teach Qur’an and offer Arabic classes in exchange for her stay at the mosque.

perhaps does not entirely unravel the manner in which charismatic religious specialists (e.g. *shuyukh*) become indebted to others. While the conception of prayer economy, as revealed through Soares, places emphasis on the hierarchy and charisma of “free-floating sanctifiers” (153), the usage of prayer economy utilized here focuses on how relationality between Shaykh Faye and his students operates from within the context of a formalized Sufi tradition. Not only does he feel indebted to God for bestowing upon him the honor of conducting the mission to spread the religion of Islam, one might also say that he is indebted, in a way, to his students whose spiritual needs provide him the ability to dispense the knowledge transferred and entrusted to him via righteous ancestors. If knowledge is the lost property of the believer, then Shaykh Arona Faye has a duty to dispense that knowledge as best as he can and as widely as he can. One manner in which the Shaykh labors intensely is within realm of the secretive and, like those before him, he does so on behalf of his students. It is not so that the fuqara surround their Shaykh in order to serve his needs only—he also lives to serve their needs. Therefore, his engagement of secret sciences is embedded within a broader field of spiritual labor conducted for the benefit of his community.

Umm Aisha helps birth the Moncks Corner Zawiyah

In spite of the fact that during more formalized interviews my interlocutors seemed to all articulate a desire to financially compensate Shaykh directly or somehow contribute funds to his mission, I have witnessed the manner in which most, if not all, students actively attend to Shaykh Faye’s needs and directives in his presence by sharing his emphasis on the importance of caring for others. For example, it is a fact that the women of the Moncks Corner zawiyah have collectively cared for the hundreds, if not thousands, of Muslims who have visited the community and have been doing so for the past twenty years. More importantly, however, there is the sustained commitment on the part of the women to collaboratively feed the community every single week after the Friday congregational prayer. In addition, exceptional women like Umm Aisha have even devoted their houses to receiving students to be fed in intimate company with Shaykh Faye almost nightly. Almost throughout the entirety of my fieldwork, Umm Aisha’s modest-sized house on Tall Spruce Street operated as an evening meeting place for the men who lived at the mosque, in addition to a select few, who were honored with cold juices, hot southern comfort foods, cakes and assorted deserts. Such reception was an example of unparalleled southern hospitality as an average of ten hungry bellies sat in an intimate circle around a table cloth that was carefully placed on the living room floor. While Shaykh Faye taught those of us present by relating hadith and morally-infused anecdotes to make his teachings more relatable, Umm Aisha labored intensely to ensure that we all were taken care of. Her efforts indirectly taught us the importance of dedication and consistent care for others. Her name “Umm Aisha” in this regard has been well-earned insofar as her mothering of the entirety of the community has been constantly recognized publicly by Shaykh Arona Faye. He acknowledges all that she has done for the community—and the Tariqa—due to her willingness to devote her own property as well as her physical labor to support the presence of the Mustafawiyya movement in the United States.

The maintenance of a prophetic tradition (sunna) through caring for guests that is mediated by simultaneous West African values and BlackAmerican southern hospitality might also be interpreted as a act of resistance to Western social norms that emphasize individualism and anti-Muslim sentiment. Carolyn Rouse and Janet Hoskins (2004) describe how African-American

Muslim women in southern California use their bodies as sites of resistance to American cultural and social norms that read the shedding of clothing to be a marker of freedom. More importantly, they find that these women negotiate multiple overlapping networks on an individual, as well as collective level, through the preparation and dispensing of food. Keeping in line with the question of resistance that they bring up in their work, they discuss the manner by which African-American Muslim women articulate complexities of race, gender, class, and faith. Not only do they participate in community space as wives and mothers, they serve a vital function as creators and sustainers of collective identity in racial, historical, and religious contexts. Rouse & Hoskins assert that:

...through food, female converts articulate their relationship to a number of ideological domains including race, class, gender, nation, and Islam. As a signifying practice associated with issues of race, authenticity, and group membership including citizenship; food preparation and exchange are vital communicative processes. Women who are generous with food and who understand the dietary requirements of the community, have extensive social networks and are credited with having a greater understanding of the faith. It is through food that women gain membership into various overlapping social networks, and it is through these social networks that women developed organized systems of exchange. Without these exchange networks, many of the women would not have sufficient income to pay rent...The quality and preparation of food is about faith, ideology, community, and securing resources. Embodied in the production and eating of food is the performance of an agency owned not so much by individuals, but by a community intent on authorizing new social configurations (2004b: 228).

Like others (McCloud 1995, Curtis 2006), Rouse and Hoskins inform us that the politics of consumption in African-American Muslim communities carries a historical genealogy that draws from the Nation of Islam's ideology of the body where the adoption of alternative nutrition underlined a posture of resistance that separated African-American Muslim identities primarily in urban centers of the northern United States from despised ideations of blackness in the postbellum South.

But then again, care was the focus of Umm Aisha's professional career as well. She had relocated to South Carolina from up north in 1973 after receiving her license as a registered nurse. As the only black registered nurse who worked at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston, Umm Aisha developed an expertise in laboring on behalf of others. Her days in the Nation of Islam also emphasized this focus on care and she was encouraged to pursue midwifery as well once she had the opportunity to take classes at MUSC-Charleston. Upon achieving the certificate, she was then the only black registered midwife in South Carolina. By the time she and Shaykh Faye were ready to initiate the Mustafawiyya mission in the United States, Umm Aisha had been well-positioned to care for a community of Muslims by using her house as a *zawiyah*—indeed, what Shaykh Faye has repeatedly described as a 'hospital.'

During an interview in her house, Umm Aisha explained that at the time of her decision to marry Shaykh Faye she had been a woman who had her own finances due to her career as a registered nurse/midwife and did not require the monetary support of a man. Therefore, she fully supported the notion that Shaykh Faye's main job was to propagate Islam. After being married for about two years, Shaykh Faye finally was able to relocate to Moncks Corner in 1994. Initially, he taught American Muslims the specificities of Islamic creed and practice at a

predominantly African-American mosque in Charleston that took its leadership and spiritual direction from the late Warith-ud-Deen Muhammad (d. 2008). After the eruption of some “ideological differences,” Shaykh Faye and Umm Aisha decided that it was time to open a mosque closer to home in Moncks Corner. After all, there were a few Muslims who lived in town such as Umm Zubaidah Gibbs and her two sons. So faithful was Umm Aisha to the idea that Islam should have a foothold in her town that she was willing to mortgage her own house to pay for a building on Carolina Avenue, which would become the first iteration of Masjidul Muhajjirun wal Ansar and the main zawiya:

“...I had prayed for a Muslim husband and I met [Shaykh Faye]...I know that his job was to propagate Islam and I felt that, I knew I had a good job and I had finances and I felt like, you know, when I met him I said ‘I can do that, I can assist him in propagating Islam’...so that’s where I started off as far as the idea of being married to a Muslim man...”⁹²

She has since retired from this practice, and the responsibility of hospitality has been entrusted to women such as Ndey Faye, eldest daughter of Shaykh Faye, who has relocated with Mikhail to Moncks Corner from Dakar. However, Shaykh Faye readily acknowledges that without the efforts of Umm Aisha, Masjidul Muhajjirun wal Ansars and the Muslim community of Moncks Corner would not be the bastion of light that members and visitors believe it to be. Their collaborative effort to provide care for a growing community is emblematic of the kind of mutual indebtedness shared between a former husband and wife, teacher and student. Surely, Shaykh Faye has dispensed much to Umm Aisha. And she to him. Their cooperative labor has facilitated not only the growth of a Sufi community; their labor has also propelled them to grow as Muslims who live righteously and observe the traditions of Prophet Muhammad(saws).

The *fuyara* of Moncks Corner take seriously the notion that they are indebted to Shaykh Faye insofar as he has worked tirelessly to teach them Islam and show them an illuminated pathway to God. However, this sense of indebtedness is not imposed by the Shaykh himself. Feelings of obligation, it seems, are entirely self-imposed and reinforced by witnessing others serve Shaykh Faye or provide funds for the mission of spreading the Mustafawiyya. Hence, the *fuyara* pay their debt to Shaykh Faye through maintaining self-discipline and following his guidance regarding private and public matters. In order to pay him back, they also use their hard-earned money and labor to support the mission of the Mustafawiyya. They understand that by helping Shaykh Faye, they help themselves. The path of the *faqir* is one that is preoccupied with letting go of material objects and piling up good deeds. It places emphasis on building spiritual expertise and inward refinement. They rely on their teacher to show them the way.

At the same time, Shaykh Faye is indebted to both his ancestors and his community. His grandfather and mother have bestowed upon him a legacy of learning, while his uncle, Cheikh Mustafa, has shown him an illuminated pathway upon which to lead others to God. Moreover, he has repeatedly exclaimed to the Moncks Corner community that it was surely indebted to Umm Aisha for her own selflessness insofar as she had given so much for the sake of seeing the community grow. During our interview, I remarked to Umm Aisha that the role she played in founding the *zawiyah* of Moncks Corner reminded me of the story of Hagar in the Arabian desert. Due to her faith, she was instrumental in not only financing the mosque in which the

⁹² Interview, Aisha Faye, 17 November 2014.

community would be sheltered, but she also was vital in feeding the community. Like Shaykh Faye, she was fully enveloped in the task of teaching others through provision. She was a vessel through which kindness and generosity were dispensed amongst the *fuqara* in Moncks Corner and beyond. As Shaykh Faye actively taught his students the basics of their religion and the route to a finer sense of spirituality, Umm Aisha modeled for others what the basics of religious etiquette and a finer spirituality looks like in motion.

Chapter 5

Muhajjirun wal Ansar: Pilgrimage as Reversion and Diaspora

“Those who believe, and adopt exile, and fight for the Faith, in the cause of Allah as well as those who give (them) asylum and aid,- these are (all) in very truth the Believers: for them is the forgiveness of sins and a provision most generous. And those who accept Faith subsequently, and adopt exile, and fight for the Faith in your company,- they are of you.”

— Qur’an, Sura 8 (Al-Anfal), ayat 74-75

“The vanguard (of Islam)- the first of those who forsook (their homes) and of those who gave them aid, and (also) those who follow them in (all) good deeds,- well-pleased is Allah with them, as are they with Him: for them hath He prepared gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein for ever: that is the supreme felicity.”

— Qur’an, Sura 9 (At-Tawba), ayat 100

The beginning of the Islamic calendar marks perhaps the most important dispersal in the memory of the *Pax Islamica*. Due to his followers being relatively small in number and thus politically vulnerable, Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah was forced to lead a growing community of Muslims away from the city of Makkah to Yathrib in 7th century Arabia. Upon their arrival, they were received by the region's inhabitants who awaited his presence and would look upon him as an arbiter. This event is significant because it marked a dramatic shift in the perception of the Muslims as a group bound by faith and by circumstance. One could argue that once they left their home as a group, this abandoning of their communal place of origin initiated a congealing of a group identity that became entrenched via religious persecution and subsequent dispersal. Further, a shared remembrance of homeland resulted in a longing to return and initiated the existential feeling of being 'elsewhere.' The naming of this group of political and religious refugees as the *Muhajjirun* (migrants) inheres a feeling of displacement, particularly in the face of religious oppression.

It is this context of being displaced that in the second year of Hijra the very direction of the *salaah*, daily ritual prayer and one of the major pillars of the faith, was changed from Jerusalem as its orientation to that of Makkah—the birthplace of Islam.⁹³ This shift is more than a simple change in the direction of prayer. This very act is symbolic in that it represents a profound redirection of heritage as beyond that of a tradition derived from an Abrahamic

⁹³ The Qur’an. Oxford University Press, 2011. pages 16-17 (Surah 2:142-144): “Foolish people will say, ‘What has turned them away from the prayer direction they used to face?’ Say ‘East and West belong to God. He guides whoever He will to the right way.’ We have made you [believers] into a just community, so that you may bear witness [to the truth] before others and so that the Messenger may bear witness [to it] before you. We only made the direction the one you used to face [Prophet] in order to distinguish those who follow the Messenger from those who turn on their heels: that test was hard, except for those God has guided. God would never let your faith go to waste [believers], for God is most compassionate and most merciful towards people. Many a time We have seen you [Prophet] turn your face toward Heaven, so we are turning you toward a prayer direction that pleases you. Turn your face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque: wherever you [believers] may be, turn your face to it. Those who were given the Scripture know with certainty that this is the Truth from their Lord: God is not unaware of what they do.”

monotheism. It is representative of a political will to be recognized as a legitimate faith tradition that has its own claims to that heritage—as one that emanates from the house that Abraham built with his son, Isma'il (Ishmael). Islam was asserted in this sense, not as a pastiche taken from its neighbors, but rather a complete way of life that lays claim that its very form and dictates were the result of direct revelation from the Divine. Once more, Muslims believe that it was Allah that issued this command due to knowing the inner desire of Prophet Muhammad to face his home in longing.

Those that embarked on this journey are referred to as "Muhajjirun" (pilgrims who migrate away from corruption) while those inhabitants of the city of refuge, which would become known as Madinah, were the "Ansar" (assistants to the victorious). It is in the context of Muslim dispersal that an initial Muslim group identity solidified and it is context of mutual reliance that the religion of Islam flourished and matured. No doubt, it is with this legacy in mind that Shaykh Arona Faye al-Faqir decided to name the mosque of Moncks Corner 'Masjidul Muhajjirun wal Ansar.' And like the archetypical Muslim companions that traveled with Prophet Muhammad in the quest to build community described above, the collection of students and admirers who have relocated, or visit, to accompany and be spiritually guided by Shaykh Arona Faye Al-Faqir seek a similar refuge in the zawiyah of Moncks Corner, South Carolina. This is also evident in visits to Senegal by the African-American Muslims who are a part of the Mustafawiyya Tariqa. If we can apply the metaphor here: Moncks Corner is Madinah, while Thiès (for the tariqa) is its counterpart Makkah. Pilgrimages to Senegal from Moncks Corner achieved within the network of the Mustafawiyya Tariqa are, I argue, reflective of inward transition of Black Muslim identities that map directly on the mobilization of Black Muslim bodies across the Atlantic. As fuqara make their way to West Africa to conduct spiritually-motivated visits (*ziyara*), they also engage in cultural tourism and the trip becomes a 'root-seeking' exercise.

What I discuss here is a matter of *diaspora*, whereby a group of people collectively envision themselves to be dispersed from some ancestral home, whether real or imagined (not fictional), and aligned through a solidarity built upon ideas of return while negotiating multiple attachments to both homeland and residence. It is the act and discourse of pilgrimage that, I argue, cultivates (black) Muslim diasporic subjects in this context. On one hand, as Senegalese Muslims have transitioned to the United States and specifically moved to the Moncks Corner zawiyah to be in proximity to Shaykh Faye, they have engaged in multiple forms of home-making activities that include the import of goods such as perishables and various textiles from home, the use of Wolof when speaking amongst each other, and even relying upon technologies like "Viber" or "WhatsApp" to keep up with family and friends back home. On the other hand, African-American Muslims have engaged themselves in a West African Islamic pedagogy through which they access a kind of religiosity that is richly-infused with Senegambian cultural cues. Many have intermarried with their Senegalese counterparts and have taken on Senegalese Muslim etiquettes, have travelled or in some cases, moved to Senegal, and have consistently participated in discourses of future repatriation to Senegal that have played a part in how these American Muslims have imagined themselves as a part of a larger dispersed community. At the same time, however, religion itself also provides an affective power that shapes the African Muslim diasporic subject. As Edward Curtis (2014) has argued, the site of religion remains an opportunity to be further studied by scholars of Islam, particularly those whose work intersects with the field of African-American Studies, in terms of exactly how African-American Muslims have specifically utilized the religion of Islam as a pathway for mobility and as a site of identity.

Reversion and Black Muslim Identity

An overwhelming collection of literature has pushed the field to recognize that diasporas have as much to do with identity and imagination as they do with actual dispersal - perhaps even more so (Harney 1996; Oguibe 2001; Williams 2003; Benesch and Fabre 2004; Sun 2005; Irele 2005; Rai and Reeves 2008). However, there exists an opportunity to further illuminate how inclusion into religious networks have deepened and complicated black religious identities of African-American Muslims in particular. As Edward Curtis (2014) asserts, a rigorous study of the religious dimensions of African diaspora is vital to extend our collective understanding of the diasporic concept. Much like scholars who have studied how African-descended people have included themselves into diasporic networks via religion (Clarke 2004; Matory 2005; Griffith & Savage 2006; Garbin 2013), the purpose of this discussion is a grounding of this inclusion by way of specific translocal activities, discourses of mobility, and the cultivation of black Muslim diasporic identities via religious observances that have animated pilgrimage. Moreover, as many have argued, it is necessary to distinguish diasporas from mere dispersals (Butler 2001). The motive, then, is to analyze how the transAtlantic mobilities of Muslims of African descent living in the United States or in Senegal affect the emergence of specific cross-border solidarities and diasporic subjectivities in the context of a religious network. In fact, the very notion of “reversion” - that is, an alteration of the term ‘conversion’ often used in Muslim communities that signifies a return to an original spiritual nature of the human being—also popular in African-American Muslim communities (Nieuwkerk 2006; Roy 2004)—provides an interesting vocabulary that might be used to describe the intersections between shifts in religious belief and diasporic identities.

Concerning this notion of ‘reversion,’ renewed and re-packaged here as a vocabulary of (Black Muslim) diaspora (a religious lens applied to the notion of ‘return’), we also should not take for granted that African-American Muslims identify in such a way that assumes a positive relationship between themselves and West African ancestry. Historically, this relationship has not been automatic (Curtis 2006; Abdullah 2009). Religious movements which introduced thousands of African Americans to Islam (either directly or indirectly) in the early twentieth century such as the Ahmadiyya Movement, an Islamic-oriented denomination that hails from India and initiated by Mirza Ghulam Ahmed, and Noble Drew Ali’s Moorish Science Temple, for example, both emphasized an “Asiatic” identity for African-Americans in the early and mid-twentieth century. While this characterization did not overtly disparage the reality of sub-Saharan African descent for black people in the United States, it seemed on its face to de-emphasize sub-Saharan African ancestry in favor of associating African-American Muslims as kin to North African and Middle Eastern traditions. While some have found corollaries between the Ahmadiyya Movement and Garveyism and that an early introduction to Islam revealed black contributions to the religion in such a way discouraged in the American Christian tradition (Bayoumi 2001), the argument has been made that African-American Muslims found themselves affixed to a conception of self built from orientalist imaginings that wed Muslims with typified ‘Asiatic’ peoples (Deutsch 2001; Curtis 2002). More directly however, it was Noble Drew Ali (formerly Timothy Drew) who disassociated the term “Negro” from African-Americans in favor of the “Moor” in 1913 - almost signifying an ancestry situated away from sub-Saharan Africa. His insistence on finding ancestral linkages for African-Americans to a larger “Asiatic” race occurred primarily through not only black orientalist discourses, but also via the silk robes and red fezzes worn by the Moors and

styles of dress popularized by an adjacent ‘unchurched’ contingent of African-Americans housed within Freemasons and Prince Hall Lodges (Deutsch 2001; Dannin 2002). At the same time though, this gesture in naming and aesthetic on the part of Noble Drew Ali and the Moorish Science Temple might also be understood as a reinterpretation (and appropriation) of black Africanness, rather than a complete disavowal.

Not only was a de-emphasis of African ancestry present in early African-American Muslim aesthetic, but this also occurred via foodways. The (re)introduction to Islam for African-Americans also occurred, in part, via the Nation of Islam whose dietary restrictions sought a marked distance between the societal ridicule heaped upon formerly enslaved African-descended people and a growing community identity that hinged upon a black religious conservatism (Muhammad 1973). While the majority of African-American Muslims may not have found their religion via the NOI,⁹⁴ the organization retains an important presence in the African-American Muslim narrative. *Muhammad Speaks* newspapers, for example, warned African-American Muslim converts about avoiding the ‘slave diet’ whereby items such as lima beans, cornbread, and cabbage were to be avoided vehemently (McCloud 1995; Rouse 2004; Curtis 2006). It is not that these foods were less nutritious, but rather, they were identified as connected to a legacy of enslavement. Like the Moorish Science Temple, the Nation of Islam reimagined that African-Americans hailed from an “Asiatic race” and sought not to define themselves using terms such as “Negro” (Deutsch 2001). This politics of representation provided a canvas on which NOI members sought to repaint themselves against the vision of a formerly enslaved, dispossessed, and racialized population (see Edward Curtis 2002). Their definition of self was one that ran counter to the stereotype of black people as dysfunctional, oversexed, violent, and undisciplined. Further, the construction of an “Asiatic” identity also ran counter to that of whites who were identified as “devils.” To be fair though, in spite of my argument here, it must be noted that these movements utilized positive orientalist discourses for cultural empowerment (Deutsch 2001) and even saw the importance of black nationalism (Curtis 2007) politically intertwined with a third-world internationalism (Marable and Aidi 2009; Daulatzai 2012) as a route to the universal brotherhood offered by the religion of Islam. It was in this complicated politics of identification and representation that at once de-emphasized sub-Saharan blackness and simultaneously hinged upon a re-centering of self that was affixed to an imagined formation of blackness whose origin was located in the East.

The late twentieth century witnessed the rapid growth of a neo-traditionalism amongst African-American Muslims in the northeastern United States (Jackson 2005). As many swung into the fundamentalist grip of Salafism, funded by Arab sponsors and meanwhile disillusioned with the heterodox leanings of homegrown Islamic movements, African-American Muslims became enamored by a culturally Arabized essentializing of the tradition (*Sunna*) of Prophet Muhammad (Elmasry 2010). Once again, this manner of black orientalism also elided the presence of sub-Saharan Africa from the corpus of a recognized global tradition. Furthermore, insofar as Islam in West Africa is largely informed by an emphasis on esoteric knowledge, the practices of West African Sufis, localized and rooted in traditions inherited by scholars and

⁹⁴ Robert Dannin in *Black Pilgrimage to Islam* (2002) argues against the prevailing assumption that the major portal for Islamic conversion for African-Americans occurred via the Nation of Islam. While the role and influence of the Nation of Islam has been paramount for African American Muslims in terms of the cultural and social landscape of a black political discourse, the NOI’s responsibility for African American religious conversion to Islam has been perhaps overdetermined.

religious specialists, it is argued by neo-traditionalists that these practices are not bound firmly within the prophetic tradition.

On the other hand, African-American Muslims also have a history of positive relations with West African Sufism, and thus marks a positive association with sub-Saharan ancestry. While there is a dearth of work on African-American Sufism specifically, scholars have pointed to the ways in which increased migration on the part of West African Muslims after 1965 and their multiple approaches to religious observance has had profound influence on African-American Muslim practices and identities (Babou 2002; Kane 2011). Certainly, much has been written on the emergence of Senegalese migrants in the United States by specifically analyzing the ways that the transnational networks of Sufi brotherhoods have paved the way for increased wealth and mobility for West African adherents (Cruise O'Brien 1971; Brenner 1984; Launay 1990; Ebin 1995; Diouf 2000; Buggenhagen 2001; Babou 2002; Stoller 2002; Salzbrunn 2004; Kane 2011). And while there has been some analysis on the interactions between African-Americans and West African Muslims (Stoller 2003; Abdullah 2010; Kane 2011), to date there has been no in-depth analysis of the inclusion of African-Americans into West African Sufi networks.

It should also be noted that the publication of the life-stories of Omar ibn Said, Prince Abdur-Rahman, Yarrow Mamout, and other slave narratives in which personal accounts of enslaved people reveal their identities as enslaved African Muslims who were forcibly migrated to the United States has also confirmed for African-American Muslims their inclusion into the fold of Islam as part of a larger historical narrative of return to an "original" religion of one's ancestors.⁹⁵ Similarly, the emergence of academic literatures that have emphasized the presence of Muslims among enslaved Africans in the Americas has made this notion even more apparent (see Austin 1997, Diouf 1998, Gomez 2005). Indeed, studies that have analyzed the religious lives of the enslaved have drawn attention to a lasting and sustained presence of Islam within African-America since before the inception of the United States.⁹⁶

However, throughout the rise of twentieth century Muslim movements and subsequent, in many cases simultaneous, shifts into more orthodox forms of Muslim observance, African-Americans have creatively imagined themselves as profoundly connected to the figure of Bilal Ibn Rabah, the Ethiopian who was formerly enslaved and became the first *muezzin* (caller to

⁹⁵ See Omar Ibn Said's (2011). *A Muslim American Slave: The Life of Omar Ibn Said*. Univ of Wisconsin Press; Terry Alford's (1977) *Prince Among Slaves*. Oxford University Press, USA; and Allan Austin's (1984) *African Muslims in antebellum America: A sourcebook* (Vol. 5). Taylor & Francis. While Black Muslim organizations in the United States such as the Moorish Science Temple and Nation of Islam emphasized the religion as the 'original religion' for African-Americans, this articulation operated differently (as explained above) from more recent constructions of selfhood amongst and within African-American Muslim communities. For more on the NOI's articulation of Islam as an 'original religion' for African-Americans, see Elijah Muhammad's (1973) *Message to the Blackman in America*. Secretarius Mempo Publications.

⁹⁶ I have had multiple discussions about the presence of Islam amongst enslaved Africans in informal discussions had with Muslims of African descent, however, there are scholars who have discussed the impact of black historical narratives on African-American Muslim identities. For example, see Edward Curtis' "African-American Islamization reconsidered: Black history narratives and Muslim identity". *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 73(3) (2005), 659-684.

prayer) in the first generation of Muslims over fourteen centuries ago. Along with black diasporic communities around the globe (Curtis 2014), African-American Muslims, then and now, found in Bilal a role model for elegant and dignified blackness at the point of origin in the story of Prophet Muhammad and his revered companions. It is this first generation of Muslims that is seen as the pinnacle of diplomatic cooperation and devout practice guided by the Prophet Muhammad. Bilal, reportedly loved dearly by the Prophet, is an undeniable portion of this first generation. Thus, the community of the late Warith-Deen Muhammad, son of Elijah Muhammad and inheritor of leadership of the Nation of Islam as his father passed in 1975, recast themselves as ‘Bilalians’ away from the nomenclature of the ‘Black Muslim’ (Mamiya 1982). Not only did this shift in name mark the transition toward orthodox Sunni Islam, it also was an iteration of the larger wave of Ethiopianism (black nationalism) that is thematic in the broader historical narrative of black theological postures that have informed African-American Muslim identities from the early twentieth century into the present (Lincoln 1994; Mazrui 2004; Curtis 2005).

For example, there have been quite a few times in which Malcolm X’s sense of self had transformed (Haley 1992) throughout his brief lifespan. Rooted firmly in an acute awareness of the social-political realities of lived blackness, Malcolm spent his early years as an American rebel. Upon leaving prison, his identity was impacted profoundly by his fairly rapid inclusion into the Nation of Islam, an organization in which he became fully embedded. During his Nation of Islam phase, Malcolm’s identity shifted toward an iteration of blackness (or, *black Muslimness*) that was reconstructed cosmologically within the myths of the “Lost-Found Tribes of Shabazz.” It was at this point that his political identity was centered upon a hardened black nationalism. After his separation from the NOI in 1964, Malcolm traveled to Makkah to go on the Hajj and experienced a spiritual awakening. Elizabeth Mazucci (2008) asserts that during and after his Hajj, Malcolm X’s identity shift did not occur solely along theological lines - she argues that his identity shift was also political. Mazucci reminds us that his repeated travels to recently decolonized African countries had a profound effect on Malcolm’s political maturation. His early identity while serving as minister within the Nation of Islam, like other African-American heterodox movements, was deeply shaped by the adoption of an ‘Asiatic’ black identity that articulated its origin away from Africa toward Asia. Later, as Malcolm disassociated himself with the NOI, his identity shifted yet again toward a more Pan-African (pro-Black) one where he sought solidarity with both African-Americans and continental Africans. Here, “migration” takes on a considerably different meaning as his understanding of self transformed into one that had a African diasporic orientation which coincided with the broadening of his politics. After all, Malcolm’s founding of the Organization of African-American Unity (OAAU) in 1965 was modeled after the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Malcolm X’s fairly rapid political maturation involved a global consideration of political and social freedom away from a domestic one that emerged from his solidarity with the broader African diaspora and was catalyzed by international travel - set in motion by his pilgrimage.

Transition to Islam for African-Americans, I argue, has often implied a sustained relationship with African ancestry—whether real or imagined. Black Muslim identities have in many cases relied upon, and have been built on top of, some meaningful relationship with West Africa. This tendency has been especially true of African-American Muslims who have resisted understanding proper Muslimness from within an Arab cultural framework. Insofar as Islamic conversions become coupled with narratives of return, this manner of transition has been popularly described as “reversion” in which there exists a religious psychology that claims that every human being is born Muslim and possibly lose their relationship to the faith depending on

environment. Conversion, therefore, results in the Muslim relocating the self in Islam. Yet narratives of return seen amongst African-American Muslims in particular suggest that the vocabulary of “reversion” also entails a relational character—whether subtle or explicit—with the historicity of West African Muslim presence in the antebellum United States.

Pilgrimage as a Black (Muslim) Diasporic Phenomenon

Much work has been done to track and interpret the meanings of pilgrimage in terms that has understood this particular kind of movement as diasporic insofar it has provided a vehicle for the construction and maintenance of ‘home-going’ discourses (Graburn 1983, Skrbiš 2007, Kelner 2010). These processes of identity formation for African-Americans in particular have included heritage tourism to sites such as Ghana and Senegal (Ebron 1999, Holsey 2004). As Edward Bruner argued in his foundational 1996 article, one of the major motives for African American tourism to Africa involved visits to historic sites such as Elmina Castle on the Ghanaian Coast and La Maison des Esclaves in Gorée Island of Senegal has been a preoccupation with root-seeking. Looking beyond tourism as ‘superficial’ and ‘temporary’ forms of travel, Bruner contends that this kind of diasporic mobility that results in pilgrimages to historic sites, in this case—the Elmina slave castle in Ghana, must be read as a meaning-making process that allows diasporic communities to assemble routes backward to an imagined homeland. This process necessitates, in the minds of African-American tourists, a commemorative observance and participation in the embodiment of the enslavement narrative by tracking the path backward. By gazing upon the “Door of No Return” as they envision possible ancestors shuffled through dungeons and onto slave ships, this portal becomes infused with meaning that emboldens the relationship between a dispersed population and an imagined home - a location for return. Therein, he finds, diasporans often must confront complex notions of belonging that collide with local understandings of selfhood, history, and ownership. Also there lies a specific difference between the tourism to these historic sites, nineteenth-century migration efforts, and twentieth-century repatriation movements such as Garveyism (Tillet 2009, Reed 2014). As Salamishah Tillet explains, the overwhelming motive for this kind of travel which began in the 1970s and rose in popularity in the 1990s is the desire to reconcile the formation of African Diasporic identities formed partly through the history of forced migration and enslavement with a past mis-recognized in public American historical discourse.

Of course, scholars have also looked at how the act of travel (especially pilgrimage) is often wrapped in meaning and has informed the development of Muslim diasporas too (Eickelman and Piscatori 1990, Mandaville 2003; Ho 2006; Timothy and Olsen 2006; Moghissi 2007). Mariane Ferme (1994) introduces us to the figure of “Al-Hajji Airplane” in order to show the way in which modernity and mobility play a part in the construction of diasporic identity. Her analysis tells the story of an elder, devout Muslim man who experiences the many accoutrements of modern life in the context of moving from his village in rural Sierra Leone to the cosmopolitan city of Makkah in Saudi Arabia. His experience of flying in an airplane for the first time and being served by white women amaze Al-Hajji as he is confronted by radically different social relations much different from his own social world, which is haunted by the ghost of colonialism while also somehow insulated from the machinery of modern travel. The act of travel in this case, as in others, is productive of a much different self-image as his understanding of the world is immediately broadened. Before the pilgrimage, Al-Hajji Airplane's identity as a Sierra Leonian Muslim was certainly more pronounced by more local inflections of Islam, than

by the global, transhistorical understanding of orthopraxy; however, after his voyage, he experienced a radical shift as he could afterward more concretely imagine himself as part of global Muslim community (*ummah*). Generally speaking, the act of the pilgrimage (*hajj*) in Islam is more than the movement of the body from one place to another. It signifies a physical shift both away from one place of existence and toward another after which one lives differently. According to Islamic tradition, the act of pilgrimage connotes a type of symbolic death during which the traveller literally wears the Muslim funeral garb (*ihrām*) in which he will be buried at the time of his eventual passing on to the afterlife. This is a movement where the individual who returns is spiritually different - renewed with the signification of “Al-Hajj.” Insofar as he is somehow no longer the person he was prior to pilgrimage, the home to which he returns and his relation to it is also altered. Ideally, one would attempt to maintain the identity of a pilgrim as long as possible to reinforce the notion that this present existence is temporary. Thus, the nicknaming of “Al-Hajji Airplane” signifies this attachment of identity to a particular worldliness gained through movement - even if only done once. Ferme further relays this notion as she alludes how Al-Hajji Airplane’s community was altered by the presence of a heightened orthodox Islam which pushed long-standing female initiation practices into spaces of secrecy. She recounts that particular details within local cultural rites that marked female community members’ induction into adulthood were rewritten as ‘unIslamic’ and could therefore be erased or simply changed to fit more congruently with orthodox Islamic practices.

I do not seek to equate the entire global Muslim *Ummah* with a *diaspora*. Clearly, diaspora is something entirely different. On the other hand, this confrontation between a local cultural milieu that surely has its social currency among villagers and a global religious orthodoxy mirrors the way in which a diasporic identity emerges simultaneously unfinished and continuously developing. Although the primary act of pilgrimage that immediately comes to mind regarding Muslims is the annual pilgrimage to Makkah which is observed by those who are able, this study looks at pilgrimage of a different order whereby Sufi Muslims migrate to specific locations that are imbued with meaning and become sites around which ethno-religious identities emerge. Johara Berraine (2015) has shown how spiritual tourism from within the context of a Sufi tradition provides a mode of belonging for West African Tidjanis who travel to Fez in order to commemorate the 18th century Tidjaniyya founder, Shaykh Ahmad al-Tidjani. He finds that the *zawiyah* in Fez operates as ‘pole’ for a larger Senegalese / Tidjani diaspora so that whether they reside in Senegal or Europe, they can participate in the construction and maintenance of a larger imagined community.

I have observed how African and African-American Muslims in the Mustafawiyya Tariqa are incorporated into networks of pilgrimage that are centered in two primary locations: Moncks Corner in South Carolina and Thiès in Senegal. These locations operate differently in the Tariqa. The main pull toward Moncks Corner for students from around the Atlantic is Shaykh Arona Faye. Visits to the community are motivated by the desire for proximity to their teacher. On the other hand, visits to Thiès are motivated by a different order of pilgrimage. In Islamic tradition, practitioners visit the shrines and tombs of venerated saints (*ziyara*, Arabic: spiritually-motivated visit to the tomb or shrine of a saint) to access perceived blessings and pay homage to the recognized spiritual authority in a given tradition. For African-American Muslims, I argue that these visits are coupled with the desire to experience a kind of heritage tourism that work along lines of ancestry—both genealogical and spiritual. Of course, as outlined in the Mobility chapter of this dissertation, this story begins with Umm Aisha Faye’s travel from South Carolina to West

Africa to meet Shaykh Arona Faye, followed by their wedding, and set in motion by Shaykh Faye's move from the continent to the United States in 1994.

The Mosque in Moncks Corner

The mosque in Moncks Corner, South Carolina is named “*Masjidul Muhajjirun wal-Ansar*,” which translates roughly into “place of prostration (mosque) for migrants and their assistants/ helpers.” This naming certainly references the story of Prophet Muhammad and his community's transition from Makkah to Madinah as a means of escaping religious persecution. It is there that the young religion first pushed its roots into the soil and held a political stability from which vital relationships were established with nearby communities in 7th century Arabia. At the same time, however, this name must also be understood as an apt signifier of the vital relationship between local South Carolinian Muslims of African descent and their West African brethren and sistren who have migrated to the region. It is a name that describes the mutuality of economics and of cultural exchange held between two components of a single community. *Muhajjirun*, in this case, refers to the migrant who has traveled in order to seek refuge within the *zawiyah* of the Moncks Corner Muslim community - that is, the West African members of the Tariqa. Initially, the Mosque in Moncks Corner was located on Carolina Avenue in a residential section in downtown. Shaykh Faye and Umm Aisha pooled their money to purchase a two-story house on a half-acre lot on Carolina Avenue that would serve the Muslim community that they also set out to build. Years later, the community had outgrown the building and they would sell the property—a decision that Shaykh Faye expressed regret about in hindsight—to move the Mosque into a rented commercial space on Main Street. Community dinners, religious gatherings and weddings would take place on Main Street until the rent was raised to an unacceptable amount, which forced them to relocate once again into a commercial building on Old Highway 52 further away from downtown.

While the majority of Muslims who live in Moncks Corner are South Carolina natives, there is a good portion of the community that has specifically relocated to this small town, from larger urban centers (or from across the Atlantic), in order to take advantage of the intimacy that students can share with their beloved teacher. This is related to another Arabic word, *Hijra*, that refers to a process of migration, specifically toward a location of refuge. Thus, *muhajjirun* (in the context of this study) are those that migrate for the purpose of seeking refuge in the *zawiyah* of Moncks Corner and seek nearness to God, guided by the tutelage of Shaykh Faye. As such, the *zawiyah* operates as a proper site of pilgrimage for the *fuqara*. Some frequently visit from other places during special times of their year, while others relocate to Moncks Corner with their families to become part of the community and have continual access to Shaykh Faye. Like the city of Madinah in 7th century Arabia, Moncks Corner functions as a practical space for communal care and consistent, directed religious study. The *zawiyah* also offers a refuge from the trials and distractions of urban life. In addition, every Friday for the past twenty years, the community has hosted potlucks whereby each family contributes to a larger cache of food designated to feed community members and guests alike. As a result, more traditional African dishes are combined with American foods to provide an substantial collection of foods to satiate the traveler's appetite. It is Shaykh Arona Faye who encourages his students to observe this tradition of taking care of the guest for no less than three days, footing the bill for lodging at nearby motels while they are invited to eat dinner at various houses throughout their stay. Every Friday and Sunday, the entire community eats at the Moncks Corner mosque potlucks as friends

and family share food and tickle children who roam freely to be hugged by numerous aunties and uncles. Shaykh Faye most often goes a step further to provide transportation for those who reach out to him and express their desire to visit. I have personally witnessed him ensure that his guests are given pocket money as they board their trains and or buses to return home, paid for of course by Shaykh Faye and the Moncks Corner community.

Thiès, Senegal

The second site of pilgrimage for the American Muslims whose central orientation is the zawiya of Moncks Corner is located in the city of Thiès in Senegal, West Africa. Thiès is the birth home of Shaykh Faye and the location of the Tariqa's beginnings. It is the location of the Cheikh Mustafa Gueye Haydara's house as well as his gravesite, which is shared with Shaykh Faye's grandfather, Shaykh Samba Gueye, and Faye's beloved mother, Umm Khadijatou. The cemetery in which the tomb of Shaykh Faye's family is placed is quite crowded with the graves of community members, fathers, mothers, uncles, both heavily groomed sites and those that have seemingly fallen into disrepair. Unlike the other graves, the tomb of Cheikh Mustafa Gueye is clad in white tile with green trim, set back from the street and situated near the middle of the cemetery. Over the years, Shaykh Faye has taken many African-American students to visit his home city in order to meet his family, pay homage to the memory of Cheikh Mustafa through visiting his home and tomb, and connect with the other side of the Mustafawiyya Tariqa. It is through this act of pilgrimage that the African-American students get to move beyond the space of imagination into a physical embodiment of a West African religious experience that plays a part in the further cultivation of diasporic identities.

At the same time, travel to Senegal is not only motivated by the desire to visit the tomb of Cheikh Mustafa. For African Americans Muslims in particular, a visit to Senegal also necessitates taking time out to visit tourist locations such as *Le Monument de la Renaissance Africaine* and *La Maison des Esclaves* on Gorée Island.⁹⁷ It is Shaykh Faye that highly encourages his African-American students who visit Senegal for the first time to visit *La Maison des Esclaves*, and has certainly taken his students himself for visits to the historic site during time spent in Dakar in past years. Back home, he has repeatedly suggested to his African-American students to consider relocating to Senegal due to ease of living in a predominantly Muslim country that would welcome the children of its stolen family members. In the midst of the spiritual tourism to Thiès, heritage tourism is merged into the purpose of the larger trip in such a way that religious pilgrimage and discourses of African ancestry are combined. In this manner, both religious and cultural institutions work in tandem to cultivate black Muslim diasporic identities.

Notions of "home" abound when speaking to some of the those in Moncks Corner who have visited Senegal with Shaykh Arona Faye. In essence, the nature of conversations had with students were of leaving home to "go home." In speaking to students like Abdur-Rasheed Watson, he has frequently shared his memories of having visited Senegal and Gambia for the

⁹⁷ While historians have debated the actual historical significance of *La Maison des Esclaves* as a portal for the exportation of enslaved Africans (Curtin 1969; Ndiaye 1990; Austen 2001), the site itself with its famous "Door of No Return" remains a significant destination for heritage tourism and location for remembrance for African-Americans and other diasporic Africans (Davis 1997; Ebron 1999; Hartman 2002).

first time, staying for about three months back in 2008. Our numerous conversations while sitting in the mosque during down time or running errands around Moncks Corner have revealed that as he traveled to the home of his teacher, he quickly became quite *comfortable in his skin* venturing out to wander the streets even early on during his trip. Abdur-Rasheed's most cherished recollections, however, seem to be of traveling to Thiès in Senegal to visit the grave and ancestral house of Cheikh Mustafa Gueye Haydar (d. 1989), founder of the Tariqa Mustafawiyya. It is here that his ideation of African descent was impacted heavily via travel and became more cemented as he was able to move beyond the space of imagination. Abdur-Rasheed confessed that he felt out of place in the United States and yearned to return to the Senegambia, as he imagines himself able to live there permanently. Thus, not only has the region, for Abdur-Rasheed, operated as a location that he views as a "home" due to his identification as a man of African descent living in the diaspora, his particular relationship to Senegal is one that is mediated via Shaykh Arona Faye.

At the same time, it is not solely the movement of the body that produces or cultivates black Muslim diasporic identities. Many African-American students who reside in Moncks Corner have never traveled to West Africa, and yet frequently speak of a strong desire to go. Students like "Dawud New York" and Sulaiman Barr have not yet had the opportunity to travel with Shaykh Faye to Senegal, but certainly yearn to do so. Over the years, they have watched others leave to visit Senegal and return with numerous anecdotes and favorable descriptions about delicious food, beautiful scenery, and the spiritual power that resides in a region where Islam is rooted so deeply into the hearts of people and into the very soil upon which those people tread. Furthermore, recordings of the Cheikh Mustafa Day program and other events held in Senegal during those trips were sometimes screened in the cafeteria of the mosque as people ate. This footage included scenes of their African-American Muslim family members sitting in a large audience amongst their Senegalese hosts as lectures are given in Wolof. From afar, they witnessed the vast sea of colorful garments specifically tailored for each attendant. For American-born students who intend to travel and even imagine relocating permanently to West Africa, these shared notions of a "home elsewhere" stand in stark contrast to what is perceived as an increasingly hostile environment in the United States where the light of Islam seems much more dim in the minds of these Muslims. To be clear, it is not so much about actuality, but more about the cultivation of perception mediated by discourses of travel and desire cultivated between travelers and future travelers. In this religious discourse, the United States is depicted as a place of racial and religious oppression, and an environment where the life of a devout Muslim of African descent is more difficult, while Senegal is imagined as a space where one's ability to live a devout and austere life is less challenging. This is not to say Senegal or Gambia is cast as a direct opposite to the effect of being seen as a kind of paradise; however, there is a discursive power that becomes embedded in the minds of the students living in South Carolina as Shaykh Faye, and others, discuss how attractive Senegal appears for Muslims living in the United States, particularly for those that are of African descent. More importantly, however, are the ways in which Senegal operates as a site of pilgrimage whereby the multiple discourses of transition "homeward" cultivate a heightened sense of being dispersed, and African-American Muslims become embedded within a diasporic community.

In January of 2015, I accompanied Shaykh Arona Faye and his contingent of African-American students to visit the city of Thiès in Senegal. After a roughly two-hour drive from Dakar, we stopped at a few houses of Shaykh Faye's relatives to rest and be fed by our hosts. These visits seemed to be motivated by the cultural politics of decorum and etiquette of a revered

family member who has been away for much too long. Our intent was to visit the gravesite of Cheikh Mustafa, Shaykh Faye's late uncle and initiator of the Tariqa. Our other primary reason for the trip was to meet with a local real estate broker who agreed to show us the land that Shaykh Mikhail Abdullah, African-American ex-patriate and son-in-law of Shaykh Arona Faye, purchased on behalf of his teacher. As we rode out to the site, it became apparent that this parcel of land was situated on the outskirts of Thiès. The surrounding landscape was sparse, littered with small and large shrubs, and had yet to have electricity and sewer services routed out to the site. The only markers that hinted at the prospect of present and future owners were several large, white sticks that were flagged and numbered. These markers were placed in rows that would suggest both the relative size of the plots and gave a general idea of where streets and alleyways would be placed. It was revealed to me during the drive toward the city that this land was to be sectioned off into smaller pieces (roughly 150 square meters in size) with the hope that his American students who wished to relocate to Senegal could build modest housing. Shaykh Arona Faye explained that he planned to name this community "Moncks Corner" in honor of the town in which he worked tirelessly for the past two decades. At the time, the only trace that this location was a site for future development were flagged, white pegs that peaked from the ground roughly several meters apart. They were scattered in such a fashion that made it apparent that each peg possibly marked property lines where a future neighborhood would be built. It remains to be seen what will actually become of this land, but the gesture with regard to naming of place in Thiès after an important location where Shaykh Faye has spent more than two decades working is meaningful. Moreover, it brings the two locations within a shared tradition into further dialogue.

As far as the question of diaspora is concerned, we must also consider the manner in which religious pilgrimages are mobilized and offers the possibility of diasporic identity via analysis of the Shaykh himself. Insofar as Shaykh Arona Faye operates as a conduit for such travel, I argue that it is the relationship with the Shaykh that propels students from Senegal to visit Moncks Corner and students from Moncks Corner to visit Senegal. Moreover, it is to visit the Shaykh and reconnect with a broader transatlantic community of *fuqara* that inspires local travel to the mosque of Moncks Corner, South Carolina. During our trip to Senegal back in January of 2015 for the Cheikh Mustafa Day celebration in Thiès, I shared a small three-bedroom apartment with two other African-American Muslim men: Luqman, son-in-law to Shaykh Faye and part-time resident of Moncks Corner, and Rasheed Philson, another student of Shaykh Faye who resides in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. During a telephone interview I had with Rasheed after having returned to the USA from Senegal, he described the experience of meeting Mikhail Abdullah at the airport with Shaykh Faye as a "family reunion." He recounted that he had not seen Mikhail for several years, and that to see him living in Dakar with his family gave him inspiration to consider relocating with his family there in the future. However, I got the sense from our conversation that his usage of the term "family reunion" was to signify a familial reconnection extended beyond his feeling attached to Mikhail by virtue of sharing a cultural background of African-American heritage in addition to the fact of being a student of Shaykh Faye. The overwhelming impression I was given as we discussed his experience in Senegal was that he was both reconnecting with a fellow student of Shaykh Faye, and also reconnecting with family members he had yet to meet. Having anticipated a trip such as this without the ability to afford the trip until that year, Rasheed also articulated his experience during our conversation as a 'home-going' trip. As I accompanied him to Gorée Island, it was with this frame of mind that he entered *La Maison des Esclaves* in order to view the dungeons and shackles that were used to

imprison captured African Muslims before being forcibly migrated to their enslavement. It was this experience, in addition to praying in mosques filled with African Muslims and being welcomed into the houses of fellow *fuqara* to share meals, that made his ‘pilgrimage home’ more powerful in the maintenance of his diasporic identity.

While it is more difficult to analyze travel from Senegal to Moncks Corner due to a lack of economic resources for many who desire to make the trip and the difficulty of gaining a visa for visit to the USA, there are those who have made the trip. There are students who travel to Moncks Corner for short-term visits motivated by particular events held at the Mosque (to commemorate the Prophet Muhammad for example) or to move closer to family members who reside in Moncks Corner. In the former example, Imam Drammeh, prominent religious leader in Gambia and student of Shaykh Arona Faye and Serigne Bara, a popular Mouride singer in Senegal, have both had trips to Moncks Corner sponsored by Shaykh Faye and the Moncks Corner zawiyah. Their visit to the zawiyah was on the occasion of a celebration of Prophet Muhammad’s birth and served as an opportunity to connect with *fuqara* on the other side of the Atlantic. More importantly, however, this served as an opportunity to spend time with someone whom they consider a master specialist in the esoteric sciences.

Fuqara who live in the vicinity, who have yet to make the trip across the Atlantic, witness these pilgrimages back and forth while taking note of the manner in which Senegal registers as a space for travel homeward. These associations of home, on the part of African-American *fuqara* (in the context of the Mustafawiyya tradition at least), are placed upon both the imagined Senegambian religious landscape as well as the West African Muslim actors who mediate positive notions of their homeland to their compatriots in the United States. Jamaal Abdul-Salaam, an African-American Muslim who has studied with and followed Shaykh Faye for about two decades or more, has never had the opportunity to travel to Senegal. The possibility of his international travel has been hampered in the past due to persistent economic difficulties or other personal challenges. However, his desire to travel and eventually relocate to Senegal or Gambia has remained constant due to his overwhelmingly positive association with West African deployment of Sufism.

“..I’ve met Muslims from all over the world, but the West African Muslim has a unique spirituality. I don’t know if it’s because they are black or if it’s because Sufism has permeated the Islamic culture...but I think it’s a combination of both, because when I’m with the West African Muslims even when I’m traveling and I’m in Philadelphia or New York or Maryland...I feel a sense of home...and I see the enactment of the Sunna as living, viable force. And I have not experienced that with no other people in the Islamic world, no other people...and I attribute that to the fact that tassawuf is being implemented correctly because you can feel the heart of the people...you feel that they are family.”⁹⁸

Jamaal’s words are telling of the impact and importance that personal relationships held between African-Americans and West Africans have on the configuring and maintenance of diasporic solidarities. Here, ‘home’ is not necessarily identified as a geographic space for Jamaal, but rather it is located within the people which he has come into contact with. Furthermore, it is not a coincidence that his sense of home is placed within a West African tradition of *tassawuf*.

⁹⁸ Interview with Jamal Abdul-Salaam: January 14, 2018.

For Jamaal, this imagined sense of home is not built from mobilities. Instead, his notions of homewardness orient from within and are determined by the interpersonal relationships he has founded with West African *fuqara* with whom he has had direct and sustained experience. Home, he tells us, is not in places or landscapes. It is found in the warmth of an invitation to dine with fellow seekers on the path to spiritual expansion and to bask in the shared love of human excellence.

*Inheriting the Salaatul Samawiyah*⁹⁹

Thus far, I have situated the manner by which African-American and Senegalese members of the Mustafawiyya Tariqa identify in the mobilization of bodies oriented toward two sites of pilgrimage. I have shown how processes of identification are grounded in such diasporic mobilities. In terms of further building the case for how local and international solidarities are framed from within the concept of diaspora, it is also necessary to unpack the manner in which religious genealogies, discourses of ancestry, and the transmission of esoteric knowledge reinforce such affinities.

I might otherwise rely upon an analysis of kinship to describe the interpersonal relations built within and among *fuqara*, but such an analytical lens, while certainly applicable in some sense, might muddy the quest to better understand the modes of spiritual authority and knowledge transmission that are a function of these relationships. In other words, although the term ‘kinship’ alone does not merely refer to consanguinity in anthropological studies, it does not automatically illuminate how the spiritual linkages between adherents in religious traditions work (Dizon 2011; Englund 2011). It does not yield a better description of how these relationships are formed and what they *actually do*—of how knowledge and authority is transmitted and dispensed throughout a transnational network to children, to students, to its migrants, to its seekers. Consequently, I have thus far relied upon the concept of diaspora in order to characterize (or categorize) the relation between teacher and student, and the cross-cultural and regional linkages forged between and among students. While there is a rich and enduring presence of the social scientific deployment of kinship analysis as a theoretical framework to understand certain relations between individual or groups of people in a given setting or through time, the term alone does not seem to move us toward the distinct texture and dynamism of the highly-mobile relationships shared throughout the translocal Sufi network highlighted here. This is partly the reason that kinship has been supplanted largely by concepts of transnationalism and diaspora (Carsten 2004; Herzfeld 2007). Besides, Jane Carsten (2004) explains that earlier generations of anthropologists too often saw in kinship a means of delineating between civilized and less-civilized peoples—a system around which ‘cultures’ were tightly-wound only later to be unravelled by realizations of global migrations, exceptions, and fresher conceptual devices. In providing a reflection on the knowledge production offered via anthropologies of kinship, Michael Herzfeld also contends that due to former emphases on structuralism and antiquated interpretations, “kinship carried the dead weight of outmoded assumptions” (2007: 315). On the other hand, Herzfeld acknowledges that “global hierarchies of

⁹⁹ In English: “O Allah, send blessings upon our master Muhammad, the one precedes all others, the one whose brilliant lights radiate and fill the heavens. May Allah bless him and his family and companions in the amount of every grain of sand and every star in the sky.” Taken from “The Mustafawi Wird,” Printed in Indonesia; March 2007 / Rabi’al-awwal 1428, page 17.

value” set in motion by colonization and the necessity to better understand the multiple locations of affinity for postcolonial actors are the fields within which analyses of kinship relations possibly retains its relevance. Similarly, Carlsen finds it wiser not to throw the baby out with the bathwater.

Where a kinship analysis can be instructive is to think through how affinities founded upon religious observances and discourses of ancestry actualized in the transmission of esoteric knowledge and the production of ‘cultural intimacy’ (to borrow Herzfeld’s language) between teacher and student (or, between *shaykh* and *murid/taalibe*) might be framed as ‘fictive’ (pseudo) and religiously-based formations of kinship. In any translocal religious network where social relations are built upon claims of ‘brotherhood’ or ‘sisterhood’ whereby sanguine or marital relations may (or may not) be absent requires an examination of how the intimacies contained within resonate. Secondly, articulations of ‘going home’ and ‘family reunions’ as outlined above that are relied upon by my informants to capture an ontology of diasporic connectedness can hardly be ignored. Since the mid-twentieth century, social scientists have used fictive kinship—a subfield of kinship studies—to describe the mutability of familial and extra-familial relations crafted from religious ritual and close friendship ties between actors who rely upon the variability of their interpersonal affinities to amass social capital in a given environment. Many have observed the manner by which African-Americans have historically negotiated the difficulties of urban life, expanded the bounds of parentage where necessary, and survived challenging socioeconomic conditions through fictive kinship alliances (Stack 1974; Chatters, Taylor, and Jayakody 1994; Chase-Lansdale, Lindsay, Brooks-Gunn and Zamsky 1994; Johnson 1999; Dominguez and Watkins 2003). These reliances upon fictive kin have also been used for increasing social capital and international mobilities within African-descended migrant communities (Ho 1993; Ebaugh and Curry 2000; Foner 2012).

It then follows to tackle how discourses of ancestry—locatable from within this category of fictive kinship—have arguably paved the way for outward migration for African-Americans and have provided a site where varying communities of African descent (e.g. continental Africans and diasporic Africans) have fused and sought alliances. Most recently, scholarship on genealogical testing has displayed the manner in which African-Americans seek a diasporic reconciliation that would place their approximate points of origin somewhere firmly on the African continent as claims of ‘genetic ancestry’ are possibly confirmed through modern technologies (Nelson 2008; Zerubavel 2012). Surely, this desire to map the genealogical linkages made improbable by the rupture of the transAtlantic slave trade is situated in the desire of dispersed Africans to reconnect to lost ancestors by space and time and history. The willingness to interpret one’s roots derived from the imprecise probabilities of such genetic testing services on the part of African-Americans is patched by the creative alliances placed within an imagined kinship and also partly due to widely accepted genetic essentialism (Brodwin 2002). In other words, it is in this case that forms of blackness (or ‘African-ness’), performed and packaged in response to a number of sociopolitical factors (Jackson 2005; Fordham 2010), are emboldened and made richer by the reading of one’s mitochondrial DNA are already firmly rooted in prior ideations of biological forbears. Paul Brodwin (2002) rightly highlights the manner in which genetic testing opens a set of questions that surely has political ramifications as people find genetic connections in unexpected places or devise ancestral claims that from which new ethnic boundaries will be forged. However, for African-American and West African Muslims in Moncks Corner, such science-based approaches to root-seeking are remarkably less apparent. Claims to African ancestry remain otherwise built from power dynamics of racial difference, phenotypic

presumptions of blackness, and the social constructions of a perceived shared historical past (and present) that figures prominently in postbellum South Carolina. It is these grounds of shared Black Muslimness upon which diasporic solidarities are partially cemented and meanwhile reinforced by participation in West African-derived spiritual practices.

More prominent than claims of direct or approximate ancestry is the vocabulary of familial relations (brother, sister, auntie, uncle, *Umm*, *akhi*, etc.) derived from a shared religious tradition that buttresses diasporic affinity in Moncks Corner. This manner of fraternity between African-American and Senegambia Muslims in the Tariqa that is founded upon shared routes (roots?) to righteousness falls within what is referred to as ‘spiritual kinship.’

“Spiritual kinship can be defined as that sub-class of...pseudo-kinship that comprises social relations described (or named, or invoked) using the discourse of ordinary kinship terminology, but grounded in a religious (metaphysical) ideology, which is quasi-independent of biological ideology, and therefore supports a quasi-independent set of social institutions. This is not to say that biological and ordinary kinship do not come to bear upon spiritual kinship relations, but that spiritual kinship possesses a degree of independence the fictive kinds lack...” (Frishkopf 2003: 6).

While the notion of spiritual kinship is not intended as a cross-cultural catch-all for every religious solidarity, it seems quite applicable for usage here. Specifically, Michael Frishkopf’s portrayal of spiritual kinship answers the question of what happens when a religious community ‘globalizes’—that is, as both its geographic and social bounds are expanded to the point of possible dissolution. His framing of the social relations within this type of solidarity also acknowledges the difficulties of temporal and spatial proximities that are threatened by such expansions that are supported by an emphasis on metaphysical aspects (dreams, visions, etc.) and communication technologies. Of Frishkopf’s reflection on the potential impacts of globalization on spiritual kin relationships, the most useful for this analysis is his answer to the question of how this manner of fictive kinship is maintained and renewed in the absence of physical proximity, acculturation in new ethnic and linguistic contexts, separation from a homeland, and the legitimation of newly founded lineages. As physical and social mobilities carry the potential to threaten the continuity of spiritual kinships, Frishkopf offers that it is the heightened allure of sacred sites (tombs, shrines, points of origin, etc.) that extend the ‘scope’ and ‘reach’ of the relationship to a homeland. Furthermore, for these kinships to remain continuous as they are stretched away from their points of origin by global migration, they must adapt via the establishment of new lineages (Prebish 2007, Qureshi 2007).

In particular, the bringing together of students to Shaykh Arona Faye through weddings provides the most concrete example of solidarities founded upon spiritual kinship alliances. In my first interview with Shaykh Arona Faye in November of 2014, he explained that the reason why he chose to come to Moncks Corner in South Carolina is for two major reasons, which area actually both related to the question of ancestry. First and foremost, Shaykh Arona Faye was married at the time to an African-American Muslim woman, Aisha Faye (“Umm Aisha”), whose main place of residence was the town of Moncks Corner. Although she is originally from Philadelphia, her career as a midwife in the South and her ownership of a small house in blue-collar South Carolina called them to establish a community where the ground was fertile. Thus, it was the marital relationship between a Senegalese guide and African-American traveler that initiated this diasporic reconnection. Secondly, Shaykh Arona Faye explains that he recognizes

that it was his ancestors who were taken from his homeland, displaced, and enslaved in the American South. It is certainly significant for him that these ancestors were Muslim.

In instances where there has been intermarriage between American and West African *fuqara*, I argue that it is the prior relations built from spiritual kinship alliances that then inform the development of kinship via matrimony. The basis for this claim is that fact that the majority of marriages that have taken place amongst American Muslims and West Africans living in Moncks Corner (or in some cases, living abroad) are an attempt to solidify and harden solidarities between *shaykh* and *murid*—to expand the reach of the homeland and establish new lineages in new ethnic contexts. For example, I described the relationship between Mikhail Abdullah and Ndey Faye, the eldest daughter of Shaykh Arona Faye earlier in this chapter. It is not hard to imagine, as Shaykh Faye has candidly shared amongst his flock, that Mikhail was not the only American student who sought her hand in marriage. It is the marriage between an African-American disciple and the daughter of a revered spiritual master that has resulted in the birth of four children. Ishmael Nurridin, African-American student of Shaykh Faye and elder brother of Imam Rasheed Nurridin, is betrothed to Bilqis, the niece of Shaykh Faye. Recently, Abdur Rasheed Watson took a trip to Senegal in early 2016 and married Diarra Diagne, a Senegalese woman who is the daughter to one of Shaykh Faye’s uncles in Thiès. Yusuf Washington has been married to Ndeye Marie, younger sister of Ndey Faye. Abdur-Nur Koyaki has been married to a niece of Shaykh Faye as well. These marriages, and several others in the Tariqa, between African-American male students and West African female family members have all been facilitated in some way by Shaykh Faye. The children born from these unions either already have or will fuse the multiple locations and lineages in such a way that will continue to persist even after both disciple and teacher have passed.

However, declaring these alliances along the lines of kinship does not solve the problem of distinguishing the relations between and among *fuqara*, and relations between Muslims in general, who often use familial terms (brother, sister, etc.) to refer to each other. It is necessary to rely upon a terminology that describes the nature and intent of relationships found amongst the *fuqara*. Another site of solidarity, therefore, is the manner in which knowledge transmission takes place which draws students squarely into the fold of the Tariqa. To use a term that is related to the question of lineage, it seems appropriate to describe that which is passed down inside these alliances, even filial and familial emergences, as “*inheritances*,” specifically “*diasporic inheritances*” so that the manner by which African-American Muslims marry their Senegalese counterparts (to access a kind of lineage actuated by marriage and not solely devotional practice), or whereby students engage in certain kinds of cultural mimesis—that is, specific practices of the body—that seek to recognize spiritual authority as such, might be framed in such a way that can adequately capture the multiple access points into a West African Sufi tradition.

Furthermore, I use the term “*inheritances*” in order describe the manner in which *fuqara inherit* forms of knowledge, both secretive and more public, from their spiritual guide—their Shaykh. As explained to his students on a regular basis, Shaykh Arona Faye notes that the knowledge he possesses is not attainable through books. In fact, the knowledge he possesses cannot be found, or even gained, easily. It is through the arduous work of reflection and time spent in solitude (*khalwa*) that his ancestors have collectively amassed a wealth of esoteric knowledge that has accumulated across many generations. Almost a millennia of formulae for healing particular ailments, special prayers for protection and wealth, numerological sciences and secrets derived from Qu’ranic passages have all been passed down to Shaykh Faye—and, by extension, to his students. Not only do they *inherit* practical knowledge for understanding

religious matters and secretive knowledge for attending to more sensitive needs, but they also gain access to a network of similarly spiritually-inclined compatriots. Thus, the path of transmission marks the manner in which knowledge of “the journey to God” has been inherited from grandfather (Cheikh Samba Gueye)¹⁰⁰ to founder of the tariqa (Cheikh Mustafa Gueye) to eldest nephew (Shaykh Arona Faye)—and subsequently to his students. To clarify, this chain of transmission of esoteric knowledge must be understood as an iteration of spiritual kinship, an *inheritance*, because even though the passage from grandfather to grandson occurs biologically, the transmission from teacher to student occurs beyond the bounds of biological or religious-based kinship.

It was during our second interview that Shaykh Faye recounted his prophetic lineage to me, which he read from a page of a large journal back in December of 2014. At the time, his main office was located in the back of Umm Aisha’s quaint house on Tall Spruce Street in Moncks Corner, South Carolina. I remember staring down at the page of meticulously handwritten Arabic as we sat in his wood-paneled office surrounded by several large wooden bookcases that bore the weight of numerous books on Islam, Qur’ans and hadith collections, videotapes of past lectures, and newspapers. The page contained the names of his ancestors that included Shaykh Abdul-Qadir Jilani (1078-1166), 12th century founder of the Qadiriyya Sufi Order, and Fatima al-Zahra (604-632), the daughter of Prophet Muhammad. As in other Sufi traditions, the ability of a shaykh to trace one’s lineage to Prophet Muhammad (in Arabic, *silsila*), both genetically and spiritually, is paramount to his perceived legitimacy—and by extension, the whole of a tariqa (Nakanishi 2007; Vogel 2012; Yavuz 2013; Bonate 2015). The same is true for Shaykh Arona Faye and the Mustafawiyya. While this genealogical relationship to Prophet Muhammad stands out as important, as far as discourses of legitimacy and spiritual authority are concerned, Shaykh Arona Faye more often has mentioned spiritual relationship to the Prophet and his pedagogical relationship to his late uncle and founder of the Tariqa, Cheikh Mustafa Gueye Haydara. According to Shaykh Faye, his uncle was visited by Prophet Muhammad and given a special prayer, *Salaatul Samawiyyah* (Arabic: ‘Heavenly Salutation’ - to the Prophet), and this gave him permission and confirmation to begin his own path (*tariqa*). It is under Cheikh Mustafa that Shaykh Faye received his direct training and thus his own acclaim and validity is based upon this relationship. Thus, it is the *spiritual* relationship that extends from Prophet Muhammad to Cheikh Mustafa to Shaykh Arona Faye that is emphasized and in this manner, inheritance addresses the question of continuity by providing a lens for discussing the transmission of formulaic prayer and incantations that de-emphasize lines of genealogical descent, thus expanding the possibility of spiritual kinships in new social contexts. As *fuqara*—in this case, African American Muslims for example—take the *wird* of the Shaykh and pledge a spiritual allegiance to him (in Arabic, *bayah*), they become incorporated into a specific pathway (*tariqa*) which includes access to the religious guidance and spiritual genealogy built into the transnational network. As explained by Jamal Abdus-Salaam, an elder African-American student of Shaykh Faye who resides in Columbia, South Carolina when not spending considerable time at the Moncks Corner mosque, the daily recitation of the *wird* activates a *spiritual connection*

¹⁰⁰ Elsewhere, I have illustrated that praise-singers in Senegal revere the ancestral line of Shaykh Arona Faye, while referring to his renowned grandfather as “Mame Samba” (Grandfather Samba), an honorific title that marks not only the paths of spiritual authority, but also demonstrates a spiritual kinship between admirers and teacher. See Carter, Y. (2015). “Traveling Ode of the Faqir.” *CrossCurrents*, 65(4), 410-421.

between the student and his master, and at the same time, the Shaykh acts as an access point to the Prophet Muhammad.¹⁰¹

Simultaneously, however, the notion of spiritual kinship is instructive regarding the question of West African Sufi lineage and relationships built regarding the cultivation of black Muslim diasporic subjects. In my reflections upon first hearing Shaykh Faye describe this manner of inheritance, that experience pushed me to think about how the path upon which the Muslims with which I had prayed next to and spoken with, tread in order to seek proximity—not just with God, but with their teacher and with each other. This was evident in both the supplications offered as well as in the laughs shared, hugs given, and even in the preparation and consumption of food. What is described by the fuqara is the sweetness of fraternity and sorority felt in the presence of Moncks Corner zawiya. This relationship between seeker and guide is one that necessitates either sustained access, or, if impossible, frequent visits in order to maintain a sense of being guided.

“The quintessence of Sufi doctrine comes from the Prophet, but, as there is no esoterism without a certain inspiration, the doctrine is continually manifested afresh by the mouth of masters. Oral teaching is moreover superior, since it is direct and ‘personal,’ to what can be gleaned from writings. Writings play only a secondary part as a preparation, a complement, or an aid to memory and for this reason the historical continuity of Sufi teaching sometimes eludes the researches of scholars” (Burckhardt 2006).

This notion is certainly evident in the unwritten, deeply-woven affinities between continental African Muslims and diasporic African Muslims witnessed in both Moncks Corner and in Senegal. In my initial impression of the community, it became obvious that there was a sweeping adoration with Shaykh Faye on the part of the people that surround him, almost cult-like, and yet upon closer inspection, it became clear that the adoration (or fascination) was not with the vessel, but rather with what the vessel contains—and *what it yields*. Also, the appeal of a spiritual guide whose engagement with the finer points of Islam that extends beyond a strictly textual approach increases the social-human aspect of the tradition. In fact, one can delve deeper and become more intimate in his path toward God when one holds hands with a man who knows the way.

The Muslims in the Mustafawiyya Tariqa who either travel locally or internationally to these sites of pilgrimage, Moncks Corner in South Carolina or Thiès in Senegal, or have even participated in discourses of mobility, share in vital linkages that build the webs of interaction in a broader black Muslim diasporic network. Analyzing diasporic mobility from the lens of pilgrimage does not necessarily encourage a wholesale substantiation of *centers* and *peripheries*. After all, as shown here, these multiple sites of pilgrimage work in tandem to reinforce a larger network of circulatory communication and migration among Senegalese and African-American Muslims across a multi-nodal network. Likewise, analyzing diasporic identity from the lens of reversion does not solely place emphasis on religious converts. While there are many Muslims in the network who were not born Muslim, there are many who were. I argue that it is the historical narrative embedded in the landscape of genealogical discourse of religious return from which the representation and production of black Muslim diasporic identities emerge. Where the notion of reversion does place emphasis is on the affect placed onto confabulations of ancestry and spiritual kinship situated in inherited prayers and esoteric knowledge transmission between and

¹⁰¹ Interview, Jamal Abdus-Salaam, 19 November, 2014.

among Shaykh Arona Faye and his students. To reiterate, *reversion* is not a term deployed to describe processes of conversion. After all, many of the African-American Muslims (and especially the West African Muslims) who comprise the zawiyahs of Moncks Corner and Thiès were born into the faith, or at least were already Muslim when they became a part of the Mustafawiyya. *Reversion*, instead, is a vocabulary that implies an orientation toward an understanding of one's spiritual self that has been rediscovered or remembered. Pilgrimage across the Atlantic toward Senegal for the fuqara is an artifact of that remembrance that makes diasporic solidarities seen in the Mustafawiyya Tariqa possible.

Conclusion

This dissertation has been a voyage in which I have tracked the spiritual and physical trajectories of African-descended Muslims who rely upon *tassawuf* as a means of addressing personal shortcomings and the subtle, yet impactful vestiges of cultural trauma. That this occurs through the medium of a specified regimen of religious training which emerges out of a West-African Islamic pedagogy that emphasizes the liberation of the body through the cleansing of the heart is significant. The Mustafawiyya Tariqa was originally conceived as a means of bringing people closer to God and further away from their current embattled selves. I have shown that the emphasis on gnosis necessitates a malleability of the adherent insofar as the goal of the faqir is annihilation (*fana'*) of the self. However, before the faqir can achieve annihilation, he must first take inventory of what ails him. The faqir must undergo a process of eradicating the ego (*taskiyyatul nafs*). In the case of the African-American Muslim, it seems that one must deal with the manner in which he has been profoundly impacted by racialization and structural discrimination that leave their indelible mark on the human psyche. In order to truly appreciate the One who created all of humanity, the faqir must first view himself as a human in terms not colored or bound by ideologies of difference. In fact, the Tariqa is informed by the old adage: to know God, one must first know himself.

A practical strategy for achieving this kind of inward knowledge is to travel to spaces where intensive training is more readily available, which is why the first chapter of this study deals with the question of mobility. After introducing the field upon which I discuss the continuities of being simultaneously 'Black' and 'Muslim,' I begin the dissertation by examining the local and transatlantic journeys that the fuqara take in order to learn directly from their spiritual guide, Shaykh Arona Faye, and to pay homage to Cheikh Muhammad Mustafa Gueye Haydara (d. 1989). It is through participating in an annual celebration of the Tariqa's founder that African-American Muslims connect themselves more deeply to a tradition in which they seek to renew themselves. Participating in the event allows them to literally move closer to an adopted cultural and religious heritage (reversion) found in Senegal as they move further away from the impact of being amongst a religious and racialized minority in the United States. I comment in the first chapter on how such transition in identity and perspective are mobilized via the architecture of the Mustafawiyya tradition—the zawiya and the tariqa. Therefore, I also include how desire and discourses of travel mobilize certain possibilities regarding transatlantic solidarity. While the zawiya provides an anchor and ignition for local mobility, the tariqa provides a broader network in which regional (transatlantic) travel are aided by the existence of numerous points of entry and exit.

I turn backward, after discussing mobility in transatlantic context, to examine how the geography and history of Moncks Corner, characterizing it as a smaller portion of the broader America South and United States, provide a backdrop that historically contributes to the psychic damage that African-Americans endure of which Muslims must also navigate. The second chapter begins by finding its reader privy to the meanings embedded in the recitation of a story about one of Shaykh Faye's ancestors who evaded enslavement via power derived from scripture. The message that they are given is that freedom and liberation are very much dependent upon one's knowledge of the Qur'an—and that one's knowledge of the Qur'an is dependent upon one's relationship with one who can provide that knowledge. This story was shared in Moncks Corner amongst the descendants of enslaved Africans in a mosque that was situated on land that historically served as a slave plantation. This fact of geography is

remembered differently by the people and institutions who occupy that part of the American South. For Muslims of African descent, its history meant labor and dispossession. For institutions nearby, that history was one of economic power and privilege—a fact echoed by the nearby county museum. The mosque in Moncks Corner, then, becomes a refuge in which to combat an institutional recollection that makes historical trauma for African-Americans less visible. I also trace a few personal histories of fuqara who have sought to memorize the Qur'an at a now-defunct Mustafawiyya institution in Dakar, Senegal. I map the memorization of Qur'an on the part of African-American Muslims in West Africa onto a discussion of African-American historical memory out of which new conceptions of self and environment emerge. Thus, it is the usage of Islam, West African Sufism in particular, that provides a pathway for messages of liberation and psychic healing.

The third chapter takes its lead from the second. I continue on from a discussion of the impetus for mobilizing Black Muslim bodies via travel that is animated by the forces of history and geography by analyzing how the fuqara engage in mobilizing inward change through the regimented sufi practice of dhikr. Here, I focus intently on how and why my interlocutors recite the qasidas (odes) of Cheikh Mustafa. I pay particular attention to the role and usage of the body as a tool for the application for what is perceived as spiritual medicine and a means of bodily protection. Not only do bodies move across the water to seek change, I describe how bodies can be moved while sitting still. Thus, I analyze what I conceive in this framing as a different order of remembrance that is animated by, and conjoined with, historical remembrance. The project of the fuqara is ideally to transition themselves from being impacted, consciously or subconsciously, by the presence of a difficult past toward psychic and spiritual liberation by continually remembering God through dhikr. They then seek to be transformed—alchemized—into healthier, more content versions of themselves through a mobility of the heart.

Mutual gratitude and the ensuing forms of exchange that result is the focus of the fourth chapter. I draw on the notion of prayer economy, while expanding its conceptual reach, to situate remittances and client-patron relationships within a broader shared sense of indebtedness. This mutuality of gratitude includes not only the manner in which students feel obligated to care for Shaykh Faye and support the mission of the Mustafawiyya with their resources and energies, it also includes the manner in which Shaykh Arona Faye becomes indebted to the numerous students and supporters of his mission. The fact is that not only has he aided others in their quest for spiritual growth and material support, he has been aided in his private quest for spiritual arrival. For as much as he gives, there must be willing recipients in that exchange. Further, students feel indebted to Shaykh Faye while he also feels indebted to those who gave him so much. He has gained the ability to give in such a manner by virtue of the training and hard labor of his ancestors and teachers on his behalf. By conceiving of a broader framework of indebtedness through which to analyze exchange in a transatlantic Sufi network, I include the various kinds of labor and laboring on behalf of the Tariqa often unseen (or undetected) by guests who visit the zawiyah.

The final chapter returns to the question of movement. However, instead of focusing on physical migration alone, I shed light on discourses regarding travel and identity through a framework of diaspora. By understanding movement beyond mere travel, I think about the role that pilgrimages made to visit either Moncks Corner or Thiès and meanings embedded within such voyages serve. By deploying the term 'reversion,' traditionally used in the African-American Muslim lexicon to describe Islamic conversion as a process of return, I map the migrations and related practices (physical and cultural) of fuqara to either site as artifacts of

reversion. Insofar as the imaginal homeland for African-American Muslims is discursively placed in Sub-Saharan Africa, travel to Senegal becomes simultaneously an act of spiritual migration and cultural tourism. I describe how fuqara who visit from Moncks Corner, or desire to visit and have yet to do so, find meaning in their participation in heritage tourism, visiting Goreé Island for example, as they embark on their quest to visit the grave of Cheikh Mustafa. That is, I analyze fuqara who both have and have not actually traveled to Senegal and find that they similarly imagine themselves as deeply connected to the West African Muslim landscape. This occurs by virtue of discussions had in Moncks Corner upon the return of travelers as well as West African peers who reside in Moncks Corner or visit from Senegal. I read the access and dispensation of esoteric knowledge and diasporic conceptions of self as ‘inheritances’ through which Muslims of African descent connect themselves as a kind of ‘reversion.’ I de-emphasize the concept’s connotations of religious conversion to make way for a deeper understanding of the religious routes and transitions that are made in African diasporic context. By extending the term ‘reversion’ beyond its conversionary connotations, I make way for thinking about the transition into a West African Islamic pedagogical tradition as an ongoing practice that involves undergoing constant training and the application of higher virtues. Hence, reversion, as I argue through this dissertation, is not merely conversion and more than a testimony of faith.

At the outset of this journey, I hoped to address several important questions that I carried while learning more about this community: upon what grounds do African-American Muslims find meaning from within a West African Sufi tradition? How do history and place play a part in the emergence of a Sufi institution, a *zawiyah*, in the United States? What resonances do stories of spiritual efficacy in the face of potential enslavement or colonization and notions of shared African heritage carry for Muslims who were born on different sides of the ‘Black Atlantic?’ What approaches to spiritual care do people of African descent rely upon to address their collective and individual emotional and cultural trauma?

What connects these multiple framings of West African Sufi training is an ethnography from within a *zawiyah* located in the American South that tracks the outward flows and multiple solidarities with African-descended Muslims throughout a broader Sufi network. It tells a story that begins from an initial meeting of an African-American Muslimah and a Senegalese religious specialist who marry, travel from West Africa to the United States, and pool their resources to birth the *zawiyah* of Moncks Corner—Masjidul Muhajjirun wal Ansar. The modestly-sized mosque that resulted from their communal labor would become a refuge for Muslims who sought a medicine not found in books and unattainable through ordinary means. By being introduced to a tradition conceived specifically to liberate the hearts of human beings that is applied for the sake of those situated at the bottom of a racial caste, the children of a people who were stolen from their homeland found their way to salvation. This dissertation shares a story set in motion by a commitment to service and spiritual devotion.

One of the primary interventions that this study of a transatlantic religious community sought to make has been to disentangle the concept of diaspora from that of mobility. I have treated both as separate frameworks through which to analyze migration—physical and otherwise. In so doing, I have built upon prior diaspora scholarship to conceive of how traditions and perceptions of self are bestowed onto religious actors. Furthermore, I have drawn upon mobility literature through which I have shed light on the importance of the *zawiyah* and broader *tariqa* as infrastructural components of diasporic mobility and identity. As well, the manner in which the body is utilized as a vessel upon which black religious identities are shaped within a transatlantic social space via the transmission of a West African Sufi pedagogy has been another

focus of this project. This examination has intervened in another crucial manner. Scholarship that has discussed the phenomena of Sufism, or the deployment of Islamic esotericism and the traditions that have resulted, focus largely on traditions that have emanated mainly from North African and South Asian contexts. There has been, in addition, focus on Sufism in Sub-Saharan context. However, little to no ethnography has been achieved in the way of revealing the nature of American Muslim—much less African-American Muslim—participation in such traditions.

Therefore, my study has several implications for the Anthropology of Islam. It brings the subfield into conversation with Black Atlantic Studies. While the subfield is currently still dealing with the problem of an overemphasis on Islam in the Arab world, I offer a view into the manner in which Islam has been deployed among the faithful in order to provide new ground for questions of religion, history, and race in Western context. Similarly, Black Atlantic Studies has witnessed many works that studied the religions of Candomblé and Santería, for example, but there has been less understanding of how Islam provides a framework upon which to understand concepts like diaspora and memory. This study also, like others, collides the Anthropology of Islam with Africana Studies but intervenes further insofar as it endeavors to pull an ethnographic account of African-American Muslim spiritual practices into the fore. As well, by pulling African Diaspora Studies into conversation with a study of Muslim life and trajectories, I hopefully contribute to an accumulation of knowledge about how Islam is utilized by humanity as a plane upon which to act out and rearrange notions of freedom, liberty, and power.

I have, therefore, named my dissertation “Path(s) of Remembrance” in order to describe how human beings, in this case African-descended Muslims, journey upon multiple roads to remember the past and their selves. In one sense, people engage in specific practices with which to commemorate notable historical events or figures thus contributing to a heightened sense of camaraderie, brotherhood, sisterhood, nationhood, or community. Heritage tourism and migrations to Africa, for example, as seen amongst the *fuqara*—as well as African-Americans in general, are a path whereby people of African descent remember that from which their ancestors were torn. Migration across the Atlantic Ocean is motivated by the desire to reconnect to a tradition lost and ruptured by the forces of history. In another sense, an Islamic conception of human essence understands that people share an instinctive disposition (*fitra*) that is naturally inclined toward monotheism. This instinctive disposition over time becomes dulled or encrusted with selfishness, lower desires, egotistical inclinations that darken the heart away from the submission (*islam*) to Divine command as revealed via prophets. Moreover, navigating the trauma beset by deep histories of racial violence and chattel enslavement has a likewise ability to darken the heart. After all, the internalizing of inferiority, highly likely in an environment mired by racial hierarchy, inhibits humanistic potential. *Dhikr* is therefore the principle, the practice, the path of return to that instinctive disposition. It is a road which *fuqara* take to remember who they truly are.

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