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**Preaching to the Converted:  
Charismatic Leaders, Performances and Electronic Media  
in Contemporary Islamic Communities**

**Kimberley Davis**

**A Thesis**

**in**

**The Department**

**of**

**Cultural Anthropology**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts (Social and Cultural Anthropology) at  
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## ABSTRACT

### Preaching to the Converted: Charismatic Leaders, Performances and Electronic Media In Contemporary Islamic Communities

Kimberley Davis

In the early 1990s multi-party elections were held in Mali for the first time replacing the decades- old dictatorship of Moussa Troare. The result was a dramatic shift in Malian society including: the opening of the economy, a proliferation of religious expression, and the development of an independent and private media. This shift, I believe, has resulted in the popularization of charismatic religious leaders through their appropriation of electronic media, to which the authorities have responded. This thesis explores this phenomenon in Mali through the religious performances of one such Islamic leader, Cheikh Cherif Ousmane Madani Haidara.

Like other Islamic charismatic leaders, Haidara's performances are disseminated through electronic media, including radio, audio-and videocassettes, and television. Using these media, along with the force of his message among certain groups within Mali, Haidara has been able to wield extensive amounts of educational, economic, material and spiritual power. In response to Haidara's impact, the secular government *and* the religious authorities in Mali have become increasingly involved in the leader's activities and his following, including censorship of the organization through which he operates, *Ancar Dine*.

Much of the effort to restrain leaders like Haidara occurs through the state's support and regulation of *AMUPI* (*Association malienne pour l'unité et le progrès de l'Islam*), the lead Islamic association in the country. Ultimately, control of these activities is meant to weaken the strength of *Ancar Dine* and Haidara's audience; however, these restrictions have only encouraged the proliferation of other media forms (i.e. audiocassettes) and the leader's prominence. New media have enabled leaders to spread their message and increase and diversify their followings. Specifically, audio-and videocassettes have allowed devotees to follow the leaders from a distance. Whereas the leaders may reside in an urban area, for example using alternative electronic media, their messages may be spread far and wide, to remote areas of the country and beyond, throughout the region and across the globe.

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***“In Islam the noble Prophet advised that if there are few as three persons going on a journey, they should appoint one as their leader”***

**(Abdul Wahid Hamid 1989:114)**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introductory Discussion

*It is Friday, just before noon and the city is preparing for its most important prayer period and khutbah <sermon> of the week. Ibrahim Coulibaly rushes to complete the work at his shop; the shop will be closed for the rest of the afternoon. Ibrahim is scheduled to attend the khutbah and then the weekly assembly of his Islamic association. The call to prayer bellows over the loud speakers. The holy Arabic phrase "Allahu Akbar", <God is most great> resonates far and wide across the city. A stereo sound effect is created by the echoes of many mosques.<sup>1</sup> As market vendors pack away their merchandise or cover their tables and shop owners lock the large metal doors to their stores. Crowds fill the street. Traffic builds. People stream towards the temple, frantically sweeping in the direction towards Allah. More than any other day of the week, Friday sees more individuals dressed in religious clothing: an article that marks his or her religiosity, a scarf or cap. Hurriedly, young and old, men and women stream towards the mosque. The young devotees, prayer mats on shoulder, clasp their prayer beads and sometimes their cassette players. The streets are congested. Near the temple, the police barricade the streets. Partitions divide the newly formed sacred zone from the profane. Cars are forbidden to enter these areas. The crowds, then, swarm into the middle of the road. It is important to move in the proper direction of the pedestrians, otherwise the sheer force can easily override an opposing current. Anxiously, the devout Muslims move quickly, as the prayer time is nearing. They hope to find a place for their prayer mat in the mosque and, if they are lucky, a view of their preferred Imam. They are aware that in the event of lateness, they will be forced to conduct their prayer on the streets surrounding the mosque. Each week, the overflow of the mosque creates a massive periphery around the mosque. The sermon attendees are not the only faithful Muslims apparent at this site of worship. It is the day where those individuals less fortunate than others plant themselves at the doorways of the mosque, men in their respective entrance and women in theirs, hoping for a handout. They hold plastic pails or bowls hoping the contributions made will be in their favour. As each devotee arrives, there is a clinking sound and the individuals littering the stairs fill their bowls with generous donations. Almsgiving is an important part of Islam; it is one of the tenets of the five pillars of Islam. There are also the young boys carrying their pails, walking towards the mosque. These are the children of the Qur'anic schools. They have been sent to confront the masses to collect money for their Masters and their schools. This is a part of their training. The objective is to provide the young, poor students with*

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<sup>1</sup> Otherwise known as *Masjid* in Arabic. It is the temple used for public worship by Muslims.



*food, shelter and religious education. They too surround the grounds of the mosque, collecting donations from passers-by. The time has arrived, though. There is silence; the prayer is about to begin. From a distance, it is possible to see a colourful sea of prayer mats covering the clay ground. In unison, the men on one side, the women on the other bow to the ground and utter the holy term <Bismillaah> «In the name of God ». The tidal wave of bodies and the grace in the movements reflects the dedication of these Muslims. At the same moment, the regular programmes of the radio stations are paused; an Arabic prayer, using the most up to date cassettes, all sounding the prayer itself and to follow a sermon of a distinguished Muslim cleric that follow. The radio stations' regular programmes are paused and the prayer is aired, breaking the silence.*

This is a familiar scenario for most Muslims living in the urban centres of Mali, West Africa. A country of just over 11 million people<sup>2</sup>, Mali has a Muslim population of approximately 90 percent. While Islam first arrived in large parts of North (then West) Africa shortly after the prophet's death in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the religion was not introduced specifically to Mali (to Djenne, Timbuktu, and across the North) until the eleventh century (Imperato 1996; Clark 1999).

During the ninth century, Islamicized Berber and Tuareg merchants began to carry the religion into West Africa by means of the trans-Saharan trade routes connected to the *Maghrib*. From trading towns on the northern edge of the Sahara, Muslims would carry goods as well as new ideas and practices to the cultures in the Savannah lying nearly one thousand miles to the south, resulting in a slow but steady conversion of many of those with whom they had personal contact. There are several reasons that explain why these original conversions took place in West Africa, in general - some cultural, some economic, and some political – however, according to religious historian Peter Clark, a complex interrelation of these factors over the centuries assisted the spread of Islam eventually to places like Mali (Clark 1982: 261).

As in the Middle East, Islam in Mali in its early centuries brought fame and prestige offering converts a new vision of life. And while early Islam was highly synchronised with beliefs already present in the northern part of Mali, 'Muslims', then, became present across "many different social roles" eventually occupying diverse positions such as merchants, religious clerics, healers, diviners, scholars, and rulers, even (Brenner 2000: 3). Over time, cities such as Timbuktu, Gao and Kano became international centers of Islamic learning and religious leadership.

For hundreds of years, scholars from as far away as Baghdad and Cordoba travelled to West African mosques to study theology and mysticism such that, during the time of the Mali Empire (the 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries), Timbuktu became an important centre of learning. "[A] city that had grown around its mosques," by the 15<sup>th</sup> century Timbuktu became "the world's capital of Islam," with great Islamic institutes including schools cultivating over 25,000 young scholars from throughout the greater Muslim world (Baxter 2002a). The educative effects of teaching Islamic ritual in these schools was crucial in the further spread of Islam and by the late fifteenth century a mid-sized conversion of the population outside the North had taken place (Clark 1988: 261)<sup>3</sup>.

Invading Moroccans, however, exiled or executed the Timbuktu scholars as their influence had begun to represent a political threat to the North Africans. The Moors, then, dispersed most of Timbuktu's libraries of books and manuscripts. And while Moroccan military and political influence never extended beyond a short stretch of the Niger in the areas of Gao and Timbuktu, Northern Mali would never again regain its

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<sup>2</sup> In July 2000, the world fact book estimated Mali's population at 11, 008,518 (July 2000 world fact book)

<sup>3</sup> See Peter Clark for an extensive study of the chronological developments of Islam in West Africa from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Clark 1982).

prominence for Muslim scholarship. Eventually, political ties between Morocco and the descendants of the Moroccan invaders lapsed and in 1737 the Moroccans were finally defeated by the Tuareg, who seized control of the Niger Bend.

Equally brutally, then, between 1690-1890, a series of events took place that further transformed the West African religious landscape. Militant reformers such as the Fulani and the followers of Hajj Omar engaged in wars that greatly extended the area over which Islam held sway. A series of *jihads* led by Islamic leaders quickened the pace of Islamization in the nineteenth century (Brenner 2000). Usumanu dan Fodio (1809), for example, founded the Sokoto caliphate, which was eventually integrated under British rule into Nigeria. As well, during this time new trade routes in gold and slaves were established toward the coast where Europeans were establishing their outposts, eventually bringing the religion to the coast, and the Europeans inland.

Education, conflict, trade, and commerce thus contributed to conversion of Islam such that by the late nineteenth century, upon the arrival of the French in Mali, Islam was firmly, if not completely, established. While not all ethnic groups converted to Islam simultaneously (Callaway & Creevey 1994: 72), and while even a majority of the population, the *Bamana*, had resisted Islamization, during the French colonial era a final mass conversion occurred (Harmon 1988). Without discounting earlier conversions, according to Brenner, “the most rapid advances of Islam occurred during the colonial period, despite and perhaps because of the fact that French policy was explicitly and often aggressively anti-Islamic” (Brenner 2000:1).

For much of the twentieth century, Mali was incorporated into French West Africa, a federation that lasted from 1895 to 1959. During the 1930s, a movement in opposition to imperial growth called the Sunni (known as the *Wahabiya* by French

administrators) was brought to Mali, popularised by students returning from *Al Azhar University* in Cairo (Imperato 1996; Also see Jean-Loup Amselle 1987). According to Brenner:

“there was certainly an anti-French element in the movement, especially among the young scholars who became the pioneers of an educational initiative to provide Islamic schooling in competition with the French-language colonial indoctrination which they felt was transmitted in the colonial schools” (Brenner 1993: 61).

Islam, then, became important to the growth of Malian nationalism in opposition to certain traits of European culture, namely language and religion.

During the three decades after Mali's independence from France, the material presence of Islam became more and more evident gaining converts by new groups of leaders to a growing number of mosques. Religious leadership, then, responsible for the conversion of individuals into the Islamic religion, has also been on the rise, as Islam continues to spread rapidly in Sub-Saharan West Africa.

There is the significant historical past of Islamic leadership in the continent. Historically, in the sub-Saharan region, there have been some very important religious characters responsible for spreading Islam. Their power was recognised at an early stage (Clark 1999: 150).

Two major figures that demonstrate this power in West Africa: *Elhadj* Omar Tall, member of the *Tijaniya* brotherhood, the largest Sufi group in the region (Ibid.: 153), and Hamallah Mohammed al-Tishiti (see Clark 1999). Omar Tall was the leader of a *jihād* in Guinea and Senegal in the mid-1800s, and, later, became responsible for spreading the *Tijaniya* Brotherhood to Mali. *Hamallism*, born after the First World War of 1914-18, became the popular movement of Cheikh Hamallah, a mystic detached from the physical things of this earth, gathering followers denouncing colonial persecution.

Under the French Vichy regime, Hamallah was deported to *Camp de Vals-les-bains*. These *tariqas* (brotherhoods) exist in Mali even today, bringing back traditions into Islam. It is important to acknowledge these religious figures as they were apparent not only in shaping the religious history of Mali, but reflects their existence, especially charismatics, is not new in the region<sup>4</sup>.

Earlier in Mali's history, there were significant charismatic leaders who broke through barriers, geographical and cultural, and whose claims met with a positive response from a wide range of people. Importantly, these included both leaders of brotherhoods and wandering *Mallams* (healers).

According to Clark, "the end of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the growth of legitimated commerce and the eruption of long standing tensions resulted in Muslim reform movements led by charismatic religious leaders" (Clark 1999: 153). This tradition continues in Mali today. And while there is a large diversity amongst Muslims, groups are ultimately divided in terms of leaders and their ideologies (Rubin 1990).

In Mali, the majority of Islam practiced follows the *Malikite* rite, based on the school founded by Malik Ibn Anas (710-795) from Medina. He emphasised that the *Hadith* alone should guide all Muslims. This has become the predominant school of tradition throughout the country (Matar 1999: 84). Another tradition, the *Wahabites* (otherwise known as the Sunni group), also exist but are a fairly recent group to arrive in Mali. According to Salif Toure, a *medersa* director, "to date, people do not have a lot of knowledge of *Wahabism* because it's a new phenomenon here in Mali" (Salif Toure;

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<sup>4</sup> See Le Temps des Marabouts (1997) for an extensive overview of charismatic figures and Islamic leadership in the region.

March 12; Segou, Mali; personal communication). Nonetheless, numerous studies have been conducted about the *Wahabites* in Mali and West Africa<sup>5</sup>.

In Mali, while no reliable statistics on religious affiliation exist, most informed observers, according to Brenner, suspect that “the proportion of Muslims is continually rising and that Islamization is continuing to make significant headway in rural areas” (Brenner 2000: 1). Latest figures suggest 85-90% of the population is Muslim. As the proportion of Muslims rises, there is consequently an increase in the Muslim communities. There are two main intentions for these communities: 1) To establish the system of Islam (*the Diin*) for the service of God, according to the provisions in the *Shari'ah*<sup>6</sup>, which includes caring for the needy in society; 2) To protect the interests of believers.

## **1.2 Economic & Political Conditions in Mali**

Being among the poorest countries in the world, located in the world's poorest continent, Mali has faced numerous challenges over the past decades including: political upheaval, inflation, unemployment, rapid urbanization, geographical positioning, inadequate transportation infrastructure, and severe drought. Eighty percent of the population resides in rural areas. Most of these people are engaged in agriculture and fishing, where the major agricultural product is cotton (Worldfact Book: 1998)<sup>7</sup>. Since, there is a lack of technology for processing cotton for the textile industry, though, the profit potential for refined product is minimised as natural cotton gets exported. As well,

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<sup>5</sup> See for example Kaba (1974) for an overview of the *Wahhabiyya* in French West Africa.

<sup>6</sup> *Shar'iah* is the law of Islam, based upon the *Qur'an*, the *Sunna*, parallel traditions and work of Muslim scholars in the two first centuries of Islam.

<sup>7</sup> Even industrial activity is concentrated on processing farm commodities.

since China, arrived in the international market, Mali's contribution to the raw cotton market has declined considerably. Import industries in Mali include small-scale local consumer goods production and food processing, construction, phosphate and gold mining. Another major contributor to Mali's economy, which is in decline, is the exportation of livestock. There has been decline overall in pastoral areas with increasing desertification (Drisdelle 1997).

Unfortunately, Mali's soil is of poor quality with only 2% of the land being arable (Myers, Robert, Dawn Bastian and Andrea Stamm, eds. 1998). Seasonal floods and droughts have also plagued Mali. The country's infrastructure was unable to cope with these natural disasters, though, and as a result, when disaster occurs (as in the major drought of 1984) devastation strikes. Both of these have contributed to increasing urbanisation.

The creation of new industry coupled with the inefficient education system in rural areas has further increased this phenomenon. Individuals, especially youth, seek employment in the cities (Drisdelle 1997). As a result, the cities are overcrowded. Bamako, the capital, for example, houses over one million people.

The infrastructures in the cities have become inadequate for supporting their growing populations and population growth has now outpaced productive resources (Ibid.). As a result of the high unemployment rates there is growing homelessness and worsening conditions of health (Ibid.).

In the 1960s, Mali sought to address worsening conditions by concentrating on economic growth, with the help of financial aid from both Western nations and the Soviet Bloc.

In the 1980s, Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP) were implemented, reducing state involvement in industry by selling off its holdings. The policies eventually became economically favourable to a minority but unfavourable to a large majority of the population (Ousmane Oumarou Sidibe and Gerard Kestar eds. 1994: 7).

Since this decentralization in the 1980s, employment in former state industry has declined, the job market has become fiercely competitive; unemployment has risen, particularly for youth, especially young men (Brenner in Pearl T. Robinson, Catherine Newbury and Mamadou Diouf (eds.) forthcoming: 1).

With decentralisation there has been a wide spread fear of job loss (EIU country report 2000). Consequently, in towns, villages, urban areas, men, women, students and youth are and have been creating organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGO's) to contribute to community projects, furthering the process of decentralisation. The principle aims of these organisations are to ensure that reforms will give more power to locally elected groups or representatives. In recent years, the number of NGOs has increased drastically. There are currently 600 registered NGOs in the country (Crossroads). Many of them were produced "to create work for young urban graduates, with no development experience, who before the cutbacks in government spending would have found automatic employment in the civil service" (Ibid: 29).

Today, Mali's aid donors include France, the African Development Bank, European Union (EIU country report 2000), and USA. All of who provide for food security, health issues, reforming financial administration, improvements to urban



infrastructure and education. Since independence, Mali has suffered from a chronic debt syndrome, evidently, limiting economic growth<sup>8</sup>.

The development of schools is often correlated to the level of economic development in a country. After independence, education reform was considered high priority for the government (See Bane 1994). Despite the high priority of education reform in the past decades, numerous aims and projects of the government remain unmet. This is still a point of contention for Malian student and parents. In attempting to alleviate an economic and social crisis over the years, one of the government's domestic priorities has been education, yet, Mali continues to have one of the lowest school enrolment figures in the world (Myers, Robert, Dawn Bastain & Andrea Stamm eds. 1998). In 1994, 30% of children in Mali were in school at a cost of 20% of the national budget (50% of that education budget was allocated to secondary and higher education and scholarships) (Brenner (forthcoming): 17). In 1996, the government granted 4.3 million CFA (\$7678.57 US) for student scholarships and 20.1million CFA (\$35892.86US) for school supplies (Europa Year Book 1999). In 1998, 23.9% of the expenditure was provided for education (Ibid.). In the economic budget for 2000, the government allocated the largest denomination to education 34 billion CFA (\$60,714,286.00 US).

In 1995, UNESCO estimated a 69% illiteracy rate for Mali (Europa 1999). The literacy rate has increased considerably in the past several years. It is now estimated at 32%, where as 7 years ago it was 19% (Time Magazine 1998: 23-24).

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<sup>8</sup> Recently, the World Bank announced that it would provide debt relief of \$225 million US to Mali as part of its heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) debt relief initiative.

Today, more and more, Islamic states and Muslim majority countries attempting to alleviate some of this distress are contributing to the construction of mosques, clinics, Arabic or Islamic educational institutes and granting scholarships (Callaway & Creevey 1994).

Since decolonization in Mali, the political scene has also been riddled with uncertainties and devastating results. In 1968, there was a *coup d'etat* led by the military strongman Moussa Traore; the dictatorship remained until the early 1990s.

In 1991, mass discontent resulted another military coup this one led by Colonel Sekon Toure and the establishment of a transitional government. In 1991, for the first time, multi-party elections were held in Mali. Alpha Oumar Konare was elected president, where he remains at present. Konare remains in power. However, he announced that he would retire in 2002, with the intention not to run for a third term (EIU country report 2000). Mali's first round of elections were held on April 28, 2002 yet a second round of elections were conducted two weeks later because of declared fraud. On May 12, 2002, General Amadou Toumani Toure, otherwise known as ATT was chosen as the candidate for the presidential elections. He is well known in Mali for having led the country through a military coup ten years ago. Today, ATT has a major task ahead of him, considering the current economic and political conditions of Mali.

Prior to these recent elections, though, secular political democracy has stayed weak and risks being a mere illusion for much of the population. Mali still remains one of the poorest countries in the world being a leader in several categories: infant mortality rates, maternal rates, fertility rates and illiteracy rates (Drisdelle 1997: 5).

### **1.3 Research Problem**

It is evident, since the fall of the single party state and the 'opening' of democracy, the Malian socio-political situation has become very complex (Ousmane Oumarou Sidibe and Gerard Kestar eds. 1994: 69). The new government has shifted Malian society by opening the economy, as well as tolerating a proliferation of expression (including religious) and the development of an independent and private media<sup>9</sup>. This shift, I believe, has directly resulted in the popularisation of new charismatic religious leaders through their appropriation of the new electronic media. The religious figures I am referring to comprise of a number of actors, such as Imams, spiritual guides, preachers and Muslim clerics. While a leader is engaged in numerous activities, his main public activity that I will address is the delivery of his sermons. In this context they will be considered performances. Sermons are religious expressions, inspired by religious knowledge, stemming from the *Hadith*<sup>10</sup> and *Qur'an*<sup>11</sup>, the two divine texts of Islam.

Since the proliferation of religious expression, charismatic religious leaders have appropriated media (particularly electronic). These have been used to enhance their popularity and increase the size of their following. The use of media has even shifted these rituals from sacred spaces to other domains, creating new social spaces to circulate religious knowledge, as an example, from a temple to an Islamic association. The sermons are often today performed at mosques, during services, and *medersas* (Islamic

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<sup>9</sup> The Malian constitution, now, states that freedom of the press is guaranteed (Europa Year Book 1999).

<sup>10</sup> The *Hadith* is also commonly spelled *Hadis* and *Hadeeth*. It is the reports on the sayings and traditions of Prophet Muhammed or what he witnessed and approved. The *Hadith* is considered the explanation, interpretation and example of the Prophet for teachings of the *Quran*.

<sup>11</sup> The holy book was revealed unto Muhammad (s.a.w) from Allah through angel Gabriel (Jibril) for a period of 23 years. The *Qur'an* is composed of 114 *Surah* (chapters).

schools),<sup>12</sup> during activities and meetings of associations with members who form a contained following of the leaders. The goals of associations are generally to spread Islam, unify Muslims and to promote teachings of Islam. New media have enabled leaders to spread their messages and increase and diversify their followings. Specifically, audio and videocassettes have allowed devotees to follow the leaders from a distance. Whereas the leaders may reside in urban areas, for example using alternative electronic media, their messages may be spread far and wide, to remote areas of the country and beyond, throughout the region and across the globe.

This thesis intends to primarily address these charismatic leaders as performers. While leaders are engaged in numerous activities, the central activity that I will focus my study on is the leader's religious expression, otherwise known as his performance. Where performance refers to the specific events of sermons, for example the public speeches, *Qur'an* recitations and weekly sermons of leaders, performances contain expressions for religious and social behaviour. They are *Qur'anic* recitations or interpretations, addressing current issues, like the behaviour of women in Islam, poverty, and health issues.

This thesis attempts to incorporate the dimensions of both Islamic leaders and electronically mediated performance in Mali, by examining and analysing the importance of a new political context that has facilitated this phenomenon in two Malian cities, Segou and Bamako.

As a case study, this thesis explores this phenomenon in Mali through the religious performances of one such Islamic leader, Cherif Ousmane Madani Haidara.

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<sup>12</sup> They are Franco-Arabic schools (LeBlanc 1999). These Islamic schools are known in Malian French as *medersas* and in Arabic as *madrasah*.

Like other Islamic charismatic leaders, Haidara's performances are disseminated through electronic media, including radio, audio-and videocassettes, and television. Leaders such as Haidara have effectively used the media to create an image and spread their messages, expanding and diversifying his audience and follow-ship.

Using this new electronic media, along with the force of his message among certain groups in Mali, Haidara has been able to wield extensive amounts of economic, spiritual, material and educational power. In response to Haidara's impact, the secular government and the religious authorities in Mali have become increasingly involved in the leader's activities and his following, including censorship of the organization through which he operates, *Ancar Dine*.

Mali is a secular state with a Muslim majority of 85-90%. Much of the effort to restrain leaders like Haidara occurs through the state's support and regulation of *AMUPI* (*association malienne pour l'unité et le progrès d'Islam*), the lead Islamic association in the country, and *Radio Islamique*, the sole Islamic radio station in Mali. Ultimately, control of these activities is meant to weaken the strength of *Ancar Dine* and Haidara's audience; however, these restrictions have only encouraged the proliferation of other media forms (for example audiocassettes and videocassettes) and the leader's prominence.

The tools of censorship and control, developed during the Traore period, are continuing support of *AMUPI* and *Radio Islamique*. The advantage of such an endeavour, during the regime, was that it would ultimately control religious activities and divisions. Today, while still controlling certain activities, the government tolerates different and abundant religious brotherhoods and associations probably because it weakens their political strength and alliance.

In light of the contemporary geo-political situation with its focus on the Muslim world, this thesis attempts to address a phenomenon that exists in Mali, regionally and perhaps, more broadly, even globally. In this thesis, by examining charisma, performance, and media, I have attempted to identify the research tactics for generally understanding certain phenomena of Islamic leadership and the following. Using this tactic, if applied to specific contexts, this project could potentially be applicable to a wider study.

Understanding Islamic charismatic leaders and the contexts in which they flourish potentially clarifies often misleading and inaccurate allegations about Islamic leadership, associative structures, and Islam in general. Mohammed Traore, an Islamic head of association and preacher stated, “people often research our association and roles, especially those of a different religious orientation. We are, then, often misunderstood and misrepresented” (Mohammed Traore; February 4; Bamako, Mali; personal communication).

It is important to realise that the leaders examined in this study play a role in both shaping the Islamic landscape in this community and networking with a more global Islamic community. They interface with the Islamic society at large. It is essential to understand the leaders' networks and their relationship with the local government. In doing so, this sheds light on the funding, censoring and controlling of leadership activities, and further, illuminates contexts under which charisma can flourish. Islamic leaders, in essence, can ultimately wield an extensive amount of economic, spiritual, material, and educational power.

Although the context of this research focuses primarily on Mali, it is impossible to not make reference to other larger global influential factors. This is not an exceptional

case of apparent social conditions and the emergence of new religious Islamic leaders, in a specific context. This study can hardly be discussed as an isolated set of cultural, religious, economic and political circumstances, in which the power, esteem, authority and religious capabilities are extensive in the Islamic periphery. Therefore, this research highlights the globalizing impact on Malian leadership.

My research intent was to determine the role of charismatic leaders and their mediated performances. This thesis should contribute to a lack of literature that addresses issues of how, rather than why religious activities are practised.

Furthermore, as one mass media specialist of Sub-Saharan Africa reports, few works have been produced about the “day-to-day or lived reality of the mass media in Sub-Saharan Africa”, especially in the field of international mass communications (Bourgault 1995: xii). I hope to contribute to help fill this void by presenting work that concerns the peoples’ experiences of electronic media in Mali, media that has been appropriated by both preachers and their followers.

Overall, this research was undertaken in Mali for several reasons: 1) enduring a political and economic crisis; 2) its Islamic heritage; 3) its status as a secular government with a majority Islamic population; 4) Its tradition, like much of West Africa as an oral society where 69% of the population is considered illiterate even by official statistics. With electronic broadcast media already popular through Mali’s rich music life, the country has a strong tradition of oral communication; 5) and finally, its relatively liberal context that permits new freedoms of speech, religious practice, associations and new charismatic leaders.

#### **1.4 Theoretical Framework**

In order to explore these questions regarding charismatic religious performance and its consequences, I have used three general analytical frameworks and/or concepts that are thread throughout this thesis. These tools will address the notions of charisma, performance, and electronic media. These three aspects of the thesis are intrinsically linked.

Max Weber (1968), influenced by Nietzsche, the German philosopher, was interested in the existence and distribution of charisma in society. He provides theories regarding charisma that are invaluable for understanding charismatic leadership and the how charismatic appeal is produced. Weber's use of the notion of charisma accounts for three essential elements. Firstly, not every individual is able to appropriate a 'charismatic' leadership role; it is only possible among exceptional individuals. As a result, 'charisma' creates status stratification. Secondly, charisma is not hereditary; it is primarily produced and sustained by the membership and followship loyalty. In effect, charisma is dependent on a set of social relationships, both of authority and legitimacy. The final aspect of charisma, proposed by Weber was that charismatic authority often arises during periods of social unrest and change. He believes that charisma was a useful tactic for social change, as charismatic individuals are the driving forces behind social groups and collectives (See Weber 1968; and Kohut 1971).

Another essential aspect of the leaders is that of performance. There is the strong correlation between performance and charisma. Oakes writes about the inspirational power of the preacher, in such that they appear to be "on stage" the entire time, in their presence. These leaders are "natural actors" (Oakes 1997). In this thesis, I have chosen to emphasize the actual *display* of the leaders, that is to say, the performance of charisma, more so than the *cause* (see Oakes 1997). Like Weber described about



charismatic leaders, performances too require an audience. Ultimately, it is the audience that is partially responsible for the identity and popularity of a leader.

The second framework, as inspired by Karin Barber (1999), recognises that both the leader and audience play significant roles in the construction of the performance. This has led to investigating how the two social actors (followers and leaders) construct a notion of performance. This type of performative framework accounts for five assumptions. They are as follows: 1) the presence of an audience and how a performer engages or does not engage their audience 2) the reciprocal relationship of the performer and audience (Barber 1999; Crain & Hughes-Freeland 1998) 3) the agency of the performer and the audience (James 1997; Mc Laughlin 1997) 4) an experience of a format and/or the verbalization of event 5) an opportunity for the emergence of social change (See Barber 1999; Freeland-Hughes & Crain 1998; Tayob 1999).

According to William Beeman, performance is seen as an essential aspect of human communicative capacity that cannot be completely understood without a full appreciation of the roles of language and other semiotic behaviour in human life. Performance is seen as pervading virtually all institutions of public expressive behavior (Beeman 2002: 1).

Lastly, with the appropriation of electronic media, religious clerics remain the privileged agents of knowledge and their performances serve to diffuse Islam throughout Mali and beyond; but a transformation has occurred in the mode and scope of communication, contributing to the wide spread reputations of certain Islamic leaders. Mass mediatization has triggered a transformation in the realms of charisma and performance, both diversifying the leader's following and spreading his message.

The media provides a unique mode of communication for the Islamic religion. With its oral recitations, performances are notably compatible with audio and visual electronic media, but particularly for their oral content. The phenomenon of Islamic leaders and electronically mediated performances is logical in an environment that permits new freedoms of speech, religious practice, associations, and new leaders. Authors that have been valuable to this element of the thesis include Louise Bourgault (1995) for her extensive research of electronic media in Africa; David Aberbach's (1996) material about the relationship between charisma and the media; Eickelman and Anderson's collection (1999) focusing on the Islam and the media (see also Starrett 1999).

### **1.5 Context & Method of Research**

For this thesis, I conducted fieldwork (2001) in two large urban areas of Mali, Bamako, the capital and Segou. Both cities are well developed in terms of Islamic institutions and activities; they accommodate numerous religious communities and institutions, including *medersas* (religious schools), religious centres, mosques, and Islamic associations. Many of the *grands Marabouts* (religious consultants and holy persons), for example including Talle, Soso, Thiam, Toure and Haidara, come from Segou<sup>13</sup>.

A majority of the media production, at least the national production, takes place in Bamako. The leaders often reside in Bamako, however their following may live in other areas, such as Segou. By utilising the two field sites I was able to determine the

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<sup>13</sup> See Robinson, David & Jean-Louis Triaud eds. 1997. Le temps des Marabouts: Itinéraires et stratégies islamiques en Afrique occidentale française v. 1880-1960.

role of media between the two cities. As well, my work in Bamako required an examination of the national elements of the study, including Islamic associations, issues and activities.

I had established Segou as one of my field sites for numerous other reasons. It is smaller than the capital, but still an urban centre; therefore, it is easier to encounter informants in a short duration of fieldwork and a more manageable working environment for conducting a more in-depth study. Segou is also a large centrally located region of Mali, one of eight regions in the country. It is the capital of agriculture. The major city in the region is also entitled Segou. The population of Segou region is 150,000 inhabitants; the majority of the inhabitants are from rural backgrounds. Segou city is recognized as Mali's second city, comprised of 90,000 people (Myers, Robert, Dawn Bastian & Andrea Stamm eds. 1998). The city is located 240 km north east of Bamako. I have linked the two cities, Bamako and Segou through the case study that I present in this thesis, about *Ancar Dine*.

For this study, I used both qualitative and quantitative methods of research: structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, surveys, questionnaires and participant observation<sup>14</sup>.

My original method for identifying popular religious figures was to locate the market kiosks, and boutiques of cassette vendors in Segou and Bamako, and interview the vendors about cassette circulation and popular leaders. By doing this, I gathered

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<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that there has been a heavy weight allotted to the discursive representation as a methodology for this study. This is partial information opposed to perhaps more repetitive observational representations that are made possible by extended periods of fieldwork. I have represented the viewpoints of leaders in many instances where extensive observational practices were impossible. However, the case study should compensate slightly for this heavy reliance on unilateral information.

names of popular religious leaders, analysed the circulation of electronic media and I collected cassettes of religious music, sermons, and conferences.

Another method for obtaining the background material for this project was to conduct a regional survey of religious media in Segou and a case study in Bamako of the only Islamic broadcast network in the country. This research activity determined the role and relationship between the stations and the preachers, and showed to what extent the popular medium of radio was appropriated for religious expression.

At the stations, I interviewed radio directors, preachers, and programmers. In doing so, I obtained information about the radio station's history, Islamic preachers, religious programming, expected audiences, censorship, and modalities of financing.

I conducted a very brief survey of the following settings: Islamic institutions, *medersas*, Islamic associations, leadership consultation areas and mosques. Within these social spaces, I attempted to identify the places in which religious figures are the central activity or focus. These were ideal locales for networking with leaders and their following.

Most of the popular leaders are often affiliated with a *medersa*. They can be professors, directors, or founders. I received tours of eight *medersas*, in Bamako and Segou. As well, I conducted interviews with directors and professors about curriculum, content, and school structures.

The leaders are also involved in Islamic associations. Often they are founders, presidents, or preachers. In the context of a *FCAR (Le Fonds Quebecois de la Recherche)* funded research project, for Doctor Marie-Nathalie LeBlanc, I conducted a survey of the national and regional (specifically Segou) Islamic associations in Mali. Initially, I constructed a list of associations including minimal data: the date of the

foundation, the history of creation, founding members, headquarters, financing, membership, and objectives. Later, I interviewed a member of the head office of the different associations, using standard interview questions. This provided further information about the aforementioned data.

In Mali, there are a lot of religious leaders. Initially, during my search for “popular” religious leaders, I was discouraged by the amount of names that I had received (approximately 30). It is evident that there will be a discrepancy in deciphering “the most popular leaders”; the notion of popularity is dependent on the individual evaluating the issue. The data collected, based on my networks, determined which leaders to pursue. The popularity of religious charismatic leaders in general was merited by an eloquence of speech; knowledge; preaching styles; personality; sermon content; and media production or availability.

Religious leaders usually reside in large urban areas. I constructed lists of popular leaders in Mali. I collected general data about the most prevalent and reputable leaders in Segou and Bamako<sup>15</sup>. After I had gathered my list of all the names of the popular leaders, I constructed profiles of approximately fifteen religious leaders, based on interviews with these figures. In doing so, I collected data about their leadership roles, titles, acquisition of knowledge, association affiliation, use of media and leadership activities. I also researched the leaders performances: I attended live performances and collected sermons (for example, electronic media: audio and videocassettes) and constructed a list of sermon topics. I gathered information about the

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<sup>15</sup> During my fieldwork, many of the leaders were busy and it was difficult to spend time with them. It was just prior to several leaders preparing for the pilgrimage to Mecca. The popular leaders that were not participating on the pilgrimage, for that year, were occupied by helping disciples. If they were unavailable, they would introduce me to other people within their network.

main themes of the sermons. As a result, I identified the controversial and popular subjects of leaders<sup>16</sup>.

Subsequently, I observed at several leaders work environments or homes to determine their interaction and behaviour toward their following. These domains were like consulting places- leaders are accustomed to receiving disciples, followers, and members in them. This data was also used to estimate membership size.

I conducted a case study of Cherif Ousmane Madani Haidara and his association, *Ancar Dine*, one of the most renowned and controversial figures in the country. Haidara facilitated this research by granting access to his personal life and the members of his association. The case study of Haidara enabled an in-depth examination of the research problem.

I constructed a biography of Haidara by conducting interviews and informal discussions with family members, and leaders and members of *Ancar Dine*-national in Bamako. I also collected a narration of Haidara's life history. This history revealed his personal experiences with social institutions, exercise of personal choice to social change, and an understanding about how to become a preacher. Later, I conducted participant observation with Haidara and his following, during their activities, especially the live sermons, in Bamako.

I collected *mediated* sermons, both audio and videocassettes, constructing a list of sermon topics. I further collected products related to the leader's image, including buttons, photos, stickers, clothing, fabric, and calendars.

For the subsequent months of fieldwork, I worked very closely with Haidara's following in Segou. It was easier to work with one particular branch of the association,

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<sup>16</sup> To date, I have not completed an extensive discourse analysis of the sermons.

to determine activities, relationships with the leader and performance attendance. I performed structured observation and participation in activities, such as movie nights, meetings assemblies, conferences, sermons, baptisms, and Friday prayers, during the fieldwork duration.

I also conducted focus groups (of approximately two or three individuals during a session), a questionnaire and interviews with members and administration to determine his/her motivation for following the leader and/or joining his association and ways in which he/she follows the leader. In addition, in both Segou and Bamako, I solicited public responses, from other leaders, associations and non-members about *Ancar Dine* and Haidara.

## **1.6 Content of Thesis**

In the chapter, Religious Leaders & Performers, I introduce the idea of religious leaders as performers. The chapter begins with an historical positioning of performers in Mali and the West African region. This precedes a discussion about the phenomenon of charisma and the conceptual and empirical correlation between charisma and performance. Subsequently, I discuss Islamic leadership, providing a profile of religious leaders in Mali, including the names, ages, birth place, place of residence, leadership titles and roles, religious training, association affiliations and media appropriation. To complete this chapter I offer a discussion about the relationship between leaders, their institutional settings, and the role of the authorities in regards to intervention and censorship of leadership activities.

The chapter entitled, Audiences and Performances: Understanding Charisma, presents a theoretical discussion about the relationship between the audience and the

performance. I later extensively explore the religious leaders' performances. It is essential to follow this section with a general discussion about the audience and the experience of performances. The final section of this chapter prepares the reader for the following chapter, acknowledging the differences between live versus *mediated* versions of performances.

The next chapter focuses on Islam's use of electronic media. Here, I offer a theoretical discussion about media in general. This follows with a description about media components, including religious media funding; media censorship; the production, distribution, circulation and consumption of audio and videocassettes; radio (as well as a case study of a religious radio station) and television. This chapter concludes with a section about the use of electronic media by performers and the audience.

Chapter five provides a case study based on the life and work of Cherif Ousmane Madani Haidara, a charismatic Islamic leader, and *Ancar Dine*, his association. The chapter begins with a religious trajectory of the leader and a description about Haidara's performance and charisma. The history, institutional organization and funding of the international association, *Ancar Dine* is reviewed.

Chapter six offers a case study of *Ancar Dine*'s branch in Segou. The objective of this chapter is to show both an in-depth study of the association and the dynamics between a leader and his following, from a distance, with the use of electronic media. I provide data about the membership, audience, and activities of *Ancar Dine*-Segou, as well as, a discussion about consuming Haidara in Segou. The final section of this thesis presents an analysis and conclusion of the case studies about Haidara and *Ancar Dine*.



## 2.0 RELIGIOUS LEADERS & PERFORMERS

This chapter is a fundamental pillar for the thesis in that many concepts are introduced and clarified to provide the reader with notions that are used throughout the entire thesis. Beginning in section one, I offer a theoretical discussion about the notion of performer and its history in Mali and the West African region. Following this, there is a discussion about religious leaders as performers. This chapter, then, will present the various notions of charisma apparent in the literature. I will show the ways in which performance and charisma are conceptually and empirically connected. This will allow for an exploration of Islamic leadership, examining both titles and roles, the relationship between the leaders and the role of authorities in Islamic leadership activities-censorship and intervention.

### 2.1 Theoretical Discussion: Notion of Performer

The concept of performers is not a new phenomenon in West Africa, namely in Mali. There has been a long history of performances of story telling; praise-singing; and general oral production. The older empires in West Africa had sophisticated social, political and military structures, including a *nyamankala* (in Banamanan language) or, the casting system. It is an historical Mande system of social stratification divided into groups that are professionally specialized. *Nyamankalaw*<sup>17</sup> are situated between nobles (*horonw*) and slaves (*djɔnw*). One category is that of the *griot* in French or *djeli* in Bamanan (LeBlanc 1998: 33). Historically, *djeliw* were the guardians of oral, local history. They are mainly associated with the craft of praise singing, also known for their

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<sup>17</sup> In the Banmanan language the plural form corresponds to the sound “ou” in French that has been transcribed into “w”.

skill as musicians, bards and dancers (LeBlanc 1998: 15; see also, Hale 1997; Schulz 1998; Mc Laughlin 1997).<sup>18</sup>

The *public-praisers* spoke for the nobles; they were well versed in the history of nobles. It was an inherited position in society. The societies with *public-praisers* had a history of family names, whereas, for other African cultures this custom was unknown and imposed either during slavery or colonization. Louise Bourgault likens their positions to the troubadours of the European Middle Ages (Bourgault 1995: 86).

Fiona Mc Laughlin argues that past literature about the caste system in West Africa centers around the relatively low status of the *djeliw*, this is difficult to grapple with considering the "apparent power they wielded" (Mc Laughlin 1997: 561). McLaughlin emphasizes the social power of *djeliw*, following the work of Bonnie Wright, noting them as adaptable and dynamic agents within their own societies (Ibid.; see Wright).

According to Drisdelle, Mali is considered the *djeli* capital of the continent (Drisdelle 1997). Thus the country infers a strong sense of performer. Praise singing is very popular. Through world beat type music-however, there are other types of local systems that are based on genealogical and historical knowledge of *djeliw*-not just in the music domain-also in "local historians," who specialize in local history.

Bourgault describes performers in an historical African context. She writes:

"Bards, storytellers and village historians used stories to recount the genealogies of people, to tell of their histories and their struggles, to recount stories of gods, and to impart moral lessons" (Bourgault 1995: 8).

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<sup>18</sup> In addressing the topic of *djeliw*, it is mainly to acknowledge the historical existence of performers. However it is important to address that the subject of *djeliw* has an extensive amount of literature available.

It is apparent that the role of the performers was to entertain as much as to communicate information. According to Mamadou Diawara, “entertaining the audience was and still is one of the essential domains of the professional reciters” (Diawara 1994: 45).

Today, *djeliw* sing about political and social situations in Mali and worldwide. The content is generally based on humanitarian issues, for example, hunger, poverty and power. Marie-Nathalie LeBlanc writes in contemporary Bouake, they serve, in public gatherings and other instances of social interactions, as agents of communication (LeBlanc 1998: 15). Today singing praises are performed for anyone, that is to say, not exclusively nobles (Drisdelle 1996). Most social functions require and rely on the presence of a *djeli*.

To name just one of the many performers who has dominated the stage in Mali for many decades includes Mali’s Banzoumana Sissoko, otherwise known as the Great Banzoumana of Mali, or the Old Lion (Diawara 1994). Today, internationally recognized *djeliw* from Mali, include the singers Ami Koita, and Habib Koita.

According to Louise Bourgault, “these bards have cultivated their skill in oral delivery to a high degree” (Bourgault 1995: 86). In understanding the volume of oral production; the historical concept of performers; and “the legacy of oral tradition” (Bourgault 1995)<sup>19</sup> in Mali, sheds light unto the contemporary religious figures as performers in Mali. This discussion establishes the historical root of the centrality and popularity of oral performances, in the case studied about religious sermons<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Once again, it is important to note that, in Mali, the popularization of oral performance may be attributed to the strength of an oral tradition, like much of West Africa. As well, Mali is an oral society where 69% of the population is considered illiterate even by official statistics. Finally, today, where performance is popular due to Mali’s rich music life, it has proliferated in a country with a strong tradition of oral communication.

<sup>20</sup> Refer to both Launay and LeBlanc’s work that have argued for a shift in religious performance away from the *djeli* style towards a standardized TV-announcer style (Launay 1997; LeBlanc 1998).

## 2.2 Religious Figures as Performers

In this thesis, one of the central activities of a religious preacher that I will focus on is his religious expression, otherwise known as his performance. The leader's performance has been referred to as "extending [his] reach" (Eickelman and Anderson 1999: 11). By "extending [his] reach", religious leaders are responsible for conducting the *da'wah*. This refers to the preaching of Islamic teachings both non-Muslims and primarily Muslims. Here "*da'wah* takes the form of reminding, clarifying and elucidating the teachings of Islam" (Hamid 1989: 135).

What I am referring to by religious figure is not just an emphasis or understanding of religious power, authority and leadership, though, it is the power and charisma that is enacted or expressed in rituals or performances. In this study, charismatic religious figures will be recognized as performers<sup>21</sup>.

In Mali, charismatic figures comprise of a number of actors and appropriate a plethora of titles in various languages, including Arabic, Banmanan<sup>22</sup> and French. These titles comprise of various social categories and religious positions that are tied to varying forms of leadership. They are the most common titles used in Mali within the religious communities. It is important to note, though that there are formal definitions of each one of these titles, however whether deserved or how they are issued is questionable. This is an issue that will be reckoned with as the chapter develops. The general titles appropriated by leaders are as follows: *marabout*, *khatib*, *Imam*, *Cheikh*, *Cherif*,

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<sup>21</sup> It is important to note, though, that not everybody who is a skillful performer is necessarily charismatic. Often, successful leaders do not equate to charismatic, as it will be described by the theoretical concepts.

<sup>22</sup> Banmanan is the national vernacular language in post-colonial Mali.

*Hadj/Hadja/Ladji. Ulema, Qadi, chef spiritual/guide spiritual, preachers, medersa directeur, mollah, moudjahid and Muslim Clerics.*

### ***“Marabout”<sup>23</sup>***

The *Marabout* are religious consultants and holy persons. They emerge from North Africa. *Marabout* were teachers who were venerated locally and believed to be touched by divine grace, or *baraka*. A dynasty of Muslims that originated in Andalusia and Morocco, called the *Al morvedes*. This was an Arabic term that was later translated into *marabout*. The term is used widely in West Africa. Today they are healers, sometimes, using potions and talisman, for example the *Gri gri*. The *marabout* are frequently called upon to resolve disputes for individuals, such as problems related to health, marriage and divorce. Usually, they are paid for their services. They practice *maraboutage*—“The Magico-religious practice based on the use of verses of the *Qur'an* and the different names of God” (LeBlanc 1999). It is a hereditary position that is traced from father to son. However it is essential to note that *marabouts* also have developed, through the connection with French colonization, a negative connotation as sorcerers (see 1997. Le temps des Marabouts: itinéraires et stratégies islamiques en Afrique occidentale française v. 1880-1960).

### ***Khatib***

(Ar.) This term means preacher, orator and speaker, usually referring to a “government paid preacher” (Eickelman & Anderson eds. 1999:202).

### ***Imam/Imaam***

(Ar.) In general, an Islamic leader who is a recognized authority on Islamic theology and law. It is an honourable title, with spiritual power. Imams are respected as one of the highest positions in the Islamic order. An Imam is an individual with extensive knowledge about the *Qur'an* and Islam. Imams are responsible for leading the prayer and conducting the sermons. Every mosque has an Imam and the term is used to designate the prayer leader of the Islamic community in a particular locale.

He may also be called an *Amir*, or a *Caliph*.

### ***Cheikh***

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<sup>23</sup> See (1997) Le temps des marabouts: itinéraires et stratégies islamiques en Afrique occidentale française v. 1880-1960, ed. Robinson & Triaud, 1997. This book contains numerous chapters about Muslim *marabouts*).

(Ar.) This term literally means chief. He is the political/religious representative or leader of the group or community. His religious knowledge is usually the same as Imam.

### ***Cherif***

(Ar.) *Cherif* is again an honourable title. These individuals are the aristocracy of Islam. This is the most powerful title in the Islamic order. There are very few people that carry this title or are perceived as a *Cherif*. All of those with the title *Cherif* are considered descendents of Ali & Fatima.

### ***Hadj/Hadja/Ldji***

(Ar.) This is a title for an individual that has experienced the pilgrimage to Mecca. "Pilgrimage to Mecca was yet another practice recognized in mosque leadership (Tayob 1999: 31) "The Pilgrimage may have gained prominence as a means by which knowledge was acquired" (Ibid.).

### ***Ulema/ulama***

(Ar.) This word was derived from the Arabic verb *alama* (to know). *Ulema* are the Islamic judges or mediators. They are the learned knowledgeable people of Islam. *Ulema* is plural for the word *Alim*. This term indicates Islamic men of learning. They are scholars of Islamic law (skilled in interpreting and elaborating on the *shaira* (Islamic law). The Islamic scholars vary depending on one of the four schools of law that they are involved with. They are religious advisors to the government. They have arbitrary power and the ability to introduce certain *Fatwa*-religious ruling, advice or decree (Eickelman & Anderson eds. 1999:202)

### ***Qadi***

(Ar.) Another term used for an Islamic judge (Eickelman & Anderson eds. 1999:201). The Islamic judge presides over the *shar'iah* (Islamic law) court. The plural form of this word is *qudah*.

### ***Chef Spiritual/Guide Spiritual***

(Fr) A term for spiritual chief or guide.

### ***Preacher***

(Fr) An individual who performs sermons or religious speeches. They have mainly audience power.

### ***Medersa directeur***

These individuals are directors at the *medersa*, otherwise known as a Franco-Arabic school.

***Mollah***

(Ar.) A *shiite* Muslim cleric. A Muslim religious teacher and sage. This term is used as a title of respect.

***Mujahid*<sup>24</sup>**

(Ar.) A Muslim holy servant, fighter or warrior.

The presentation of the aforementioned terms was intended to clarify the ambiguity of the concept of religious leader. The significance of providing the definitions was not so much to analytically explore the terms, but to provide the reader with a working definition of the various titles. The titles are leadership terminology apparent in Mali. They are loaded with semantic value and indicate differences between self-assertion and assertion by others (the leader's follow-ship). The credibility of various leaders, and consequently, who determines the titles of the individuals seems to be debatable. It is very possible that the leaders appropriate more than one title. Identifying the different religious leaders' titles introduces uncertain ideas about their social acceptance and status, revealing information about how these men are represented, perceived, awarded status and popularized

Charles Lindholm writes about charisma in the Middle East and South Asia. He claims that "the message of Islam is overtly opposed to all forms of spiritual elitism;" and especially, "Sunni Islam [which] is resolutely anti-authoritarian and denies all claims to special virtuoso religious status" (Lindholm 1999: 209). Interestingly though, "Islam has provided a warm home for many charismatics who claim to be unified with

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<sup>24</sup> This term is also spelled as *Moudhjahid*.

God” (Lindholm 1999: 210). As the argument develops in this thesis, I will be able to support my beliefs about the compatibility of Islam with charismatic leaders in the West African context.

Lindholm argues (1999) that “partly the appearance and persistence of charismatic leaders in Islam is due to theological and pragmatic difficulties in implementing the Muslim vision of a complete and encompassing divine order that could be read in the holy text and enacted on earth” (Lindholm 1999: 210). The leaders become a voice of the holy texts. It will become evident in constructing a portrait of religious leaders in Mali that the performances are intrinsically linked to religious knowledge. The performers then, in this light, are key figures in mediating knowledge. Yet, the religiosity of the leaders is not to be reduced exclusively to performance.

### **2.3 The Phenomenon of Charisma**

“Charisma, the magnetic ability of some people to inspire and lead other” (Oakes 1997: 25). The word charisma manifested from the Greek word *charizesthai*, meaning favour or gift of divine origin. The term charisma originated from the name *charis*, the Greek goddess who depicted grace, beauty, purity and altruism. A person who possesses such qualities is now known as charismatic (Ibid.).

The phenomenon of charisma is very complex. It has been explored as a concept in numerous disciplines: sociology (Weber 1968; Kohut 1971), psychology,<sup>25</sup> political

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<sup>25</sup> Often the studies using a psychological perspective of charismatic leaders depict his/her personality traits. These traits, stemming from western academics are grounded and interpreted, using philosophies from their respective contexts. Translating these particular theories to African and further Islamic contexts pose numerous problems to this study. Furthermore, both Max Weber (1968) and Kohut (1964) determined that by exclusively using a psycho-analytical perspective of charisma, it was impossible to differentiate charismatics and non-charismatics.



science, religion<sup>26</sup> (Aberbach 1996; Lindholm 1998; Werbner & Basu 1998), media studies (Aberbach 1996), and anthropology<sup>27</sup>.

Following the work of Len Oakes, on the experience of charisma from a leader and disciple perspective, I will choose to focus on the experiences of charismatic leadership<sup>28</sup>. Nonetheless, it is important to recognize that the various disciplines have conducted extensive research on charisma. In combining various disciplines to the study of charisma, an analysis is thorough; and despite a specific individual's unique charismatic qualities, studies become transferable to varying contexts.

What does it mean to be charismatic or to have charisma? Max Weber defined charisma as "a certain quality of an individual's personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional power" (Weber 1968: 241-242). Oakes characterizes charisma as "a revolutionary spiritual power" (Oakes 1997: 28). Leaders may be very ordinary individuals, who for one reason or another become the objects of charismatic construction by groups (Wallis 1982).

In discussing charisma, I am referring to the type that has been defined by Max Weber (1964) as "Pure Charisma." This includes an ecstatic experience between the

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<sup>26</sup> See Lindholm (1996) for an interesting discourse about the compatibility and contradictions between charisma and Islamic egalitarianism.

<sup>27</sup> There is limited literature about charisma from an anthropological perspective (see Lindholm 1990 & 1999; see Werbner and Basu eds. 1999 for studies about "embodiments of Sufi charismatic authority and organization" (17) in contemporary Middle East and North Africa. Oakes studied the motives for following such leaders (Oakes 1997). He developed a theory about the nature of charismatic religious leaders and their movements.

<sup>28</sup> Very few works have focused on the "culture of charismatic leaders" or religious leaders as a group (Oakes 1997: 1). There are biographies about individual charismatic leaders (see Aberbach) Biographies of several renowned charismatic leaders, such as Ghandi, Hitler, and Charlie Chaplin (Aberbach 1996).

leader and followers, when their eyes meet, hearts stop and minds merge. Oakes argues that it is important not to dismiss the idea of “the magic of the leader as merely a figment of the followers’ imaginations. ....nor should we reduce it to something mundane. It does exist and it can be explained” (Oakes 1997: 2).

The phenomenon of charisma is further explained by the descriptive terminology that other charisma researchers have appropriated: “magnetic” (Willner 1984); “glow” (Walter 1985); “streaming-charisma” (La Barre 1980). Other terms that are common in describing charismatic experiences include: mesmerize, recruits, devotees, worshipped, enchanted, and charismatic’s spell. This terminology is interesting in describing the action’s surrounding a charismatic leader. Aberbach refers to this terminology as “the language of religion” (Aberbach 1996: 80).

Oakes argues that these religious figures “seem to express it [his vision] in all he does. Even the way the leader moves and talks is subtly different from others” (Oakes 1997: 17). There is often a magical quality to charisma, a fascinating effect from the leader’s presence (Oakes 1997: 20).

## **2.4 The Correlation between Charisma and Performance**

According to David Aberbach, “all great charismatics are gifted entertainers. They have the power to uplift and inspire” (Aberbach, 1996: xii). Oakes writes about the inspirational power of the preacher, in such that they appear to be “on stage” the entire time, in their presence. These leaders are “natural actors” (Oakes 1997).

In this thesis, I have chosen to emphasize the actual *display* of the leaders, that is to say, the performance of charisma, rather than the *cause*. Thereby understanding that it is at this level of performance that the connection with the *djeli* is significant, especially

in terms of the role *djeliw* in funerals and other religious rituals. In fact, an important task of the charismatic figure is the construction of charismatic rituals (Oakes 1997). Aberbach identifies one meaning of charismatic “appeal” as a powerful aesthetic attraction to the public (Aberbach 1996: xi). I would argue, following Aberbach, that this “powerful aesthetic attraction” is in essence a major facet of the leader’s performance. That is that the charismatic leader has an unusually strong personal allure or appeal.

The following illustrates a performance conducted by an aspiring young religious preacher in Mali:

*We were in a science lecture hall. The room was large and I was concerned about the acoustics for the sermon recording. I sheepishly walked to the front of the room and handed my taper recorder to a young administrative member. This was the protocol. He had taken the initiative of becoming the DJ for recording the sermons that I attended. Forty-five minutes later, it was inevitable that he would proudly reverse the cassette for me. Prior to the performance, I confirmed accordance with the performer. Ould Saleck was a young preacher, a guest speaker for the association. He was a law student in Bamako. He began by writing the topic of his sermon on the chalkboard, “L’Islam, paix et soumission” <Islam, Peace and Submission>. Periodically throughout the sermon he pointed to his written words on the chalkboard and further used the board as a teaching device. He spoke in Arabic, reading from the Qur’an. He was a very entertaining speaker to the 35 people in the audience. His oratory skills, evidently inherited from his scholastic training-allowed him to pause, pose a question, respond and continue. He later performed in French. Slowly reiterating his firm beliefs about sexuality, and alcohol. “To stay a good young Muslim everyday you are confronted with options,” he said. Your actions are a question of choice,” he lectured. “You can take or leave things, it is up to you.....but you pay for the consequences.” This admired speaker intrigued most of the audience. They addressed him with respect and obediently took notes of his knowledgeable words. He appeared to charm the audience. This was evident by the young girls who shyly giggled in reference to his witty words.*

*Considering we had been sitting there close to four hours, I was amazed at the audience's level of deep concentration. The unventilated room seemed to be cooling down as the sun set (LIEEMA; Segou; March 15; Sermon observation).*

Compounded by a charismatic appeal, the leaders become a voice of the holy texts. It will become evident in constructing a portrait of religious leaders in Mali that the performance, a predominant activity that they are involved in, is linked to religious knowledge. These individuals, then, are key figures in mediating knowledge.

## **2.5 Islamic Leadership**

Conducting the sermons and informing the public are very time-consuming activities. It appears the various activities that the leaders are involved with are very demanding.

Although this study will focus on the performance activities of the leaders, it is important to describe the other activities that they participate in, as it provides a general framing of a leader's life. It is probable that the other activities in some way contribute to their performances-be it directly or indirectly.

The titles that leaders hold merit certain responsibilities. It is not just the actions of leader and his performances that are important, it is also his public image and the way in which he is represented and perceived. This is important to recognize as it constructs or at least maintains his status and subsequently, his position of authority.

Before exploring further, I will present a brief description of the leaders<sup>29</sup>. This general depiction will provide a preliminary understanding about religious leadership in

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<sup>29</sup> In several cases, I have disguised the identity of the leaders and their followers. The social networks in the region are strong and thus anonymity protects the voices of the speaker.

Mali. A summary of various leaders studied in Mali is presented in Table 1 (refer to page Appendix B; p. 202). This information portrays a selected amount of the most prominent leaders in urban Mali. It reflects the issues that provide a general portrait of a leader, the table content includes: leadership titles; religious training; place of birth; place of residence; acquisition of authority; activities and/or affiliation with an Islamic association; establishment of Islamic institutes; and the use of electronic media.

Many of the prominent religious leaders reside in the urban areas. This is logical- indeed, recognizing both Islamization and urbanisation. In the urban areas, then, leaders have more access to Islamic institutes (mosques, *medersas*, and associations); technological facilities; and larger populations, thus larger live audiences.

Acquisition of official positions and social roles can be either earned or inherited.

According to Islamic researcher Adulkader Tayob:

“A leader becomes a leader when he or she conforms, more or less, to the pattern or discourse established. Both historical context and religious values produce recognizable ideal types for prospective leaders and communities” (Tayob 1999: 12).

In Mali, based on leaders that I encountered they had undergone religious training abroad, generally in the Middle East or an Islamic state<sup>30</sup>. Worldwide, the Islamic university system has contributed to the great cultural developments of Islam. The universities were founded as institutions of religious learning, where high religious figures were trained. According to Louis Brenner (2000),

“Those who continue their studies to an advanced level gain exceptional competence in Islamic knowledge and moreover often speak Arabic

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<sup>30</sup> In the event that a leader has not undergone schooling in the Middle East, North Africa or an Islamic State, as an alternative or often a compliment to their training, it is most likely that they attended a *medersa*.

fluently, both of which are highly valued and respected aspects of Muslim society” (Brenner 2000: 305).

Attending a university in the Middle East or an Islamic state appeared to be the protocol for the most renowned leaders. As a result, all of them were proficient in Arabic, based on their religious training. This language skill is essential for performance; but furthermore, it allows for communication with a wider Muslim community. These individuals are the country’s means of maintaining relationships with the wider Muslim community. Again, another powerful credit of the leaders. Following their studies in a foreign country, they pursue Islamic endeavors in Mali, such as creating an Islamic institution like an association or *medersa*. This is often encouraged and sponsored by their scholastic host country. This further broadens the scope for the *Umma* (the Islamic community). Often, there is reinforced funding from Arab countries to poorer Muslim countries, such as Mali, under the pretext of “Islamic solidarity” (Sanakoua 1991: 128), for example Libya donated 60 million CFA<sup>31</sup> to finance 3 *medersas* and 2 million CFA<sup>32</sup> for a mosque in Mali. Public and private aid is given by NGOs or by Arabic personalities for promoting Islam in Mali (Ibid.).

As I have discussed the religious knowledge of the leaders is generally learned abroad or alternatively in a *medersa* or *Qur’anic* school<sup>33</sup>. Once again, this depends on the student’s resources. In the mid 1980, it was estimated that there were 1653 *Qur’anic* schools in Mali<sup>34</sup>. These schools are governed by 2, 349 teachers, attended by 50, 709 students, 37, 061 of whom are boys and 13, 648 are girls (Sanakoua 1985: 361). The average amount of students per *Qur’anic* school is 30.6 (Ibid.: 361). There are more

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<sup>31</sup> This figure converts to \$10, 740 US, based on exchange rates in 2001.

<sup>32</sup> This figure converts to \$3,580 US, based on exchange rates in 2001.

<sup>33</sup> See Brenner 2000 for an extensive examination of Islamic schooling and its development in Mali.

*Qur'anic* schools than *medersas* (1653 against 288), yet there are more students in the *medersas*, 62, 203 to 50, 709 (Sanankoua 1991: 365). In total, the *medersas* contain one quarter of Mali's children in primary school (Brenner 1993: 67).

“In Mali, attendance at *Qur'anic* schools was widespread throughout the country long before colonial control was finally established and has endured and expanded to the present day” (Callaway & Creevey 1994: 72).

*Qur'anic* schools are differentiated from the European education system by their religious character and moral. Despite the importance of the *Qur'anic* schooling system as part of the educational structure, Western education is considered more valid for the state-run enterprises and current economy (Ibid.) Until quite recently, the pattern beginning during the colonial period has remained a legacy, “in most African nations, the possession of a British, French, or American university degree, almost guaranteed access to a well paid position in the civil service” (Bourgault 1995: 27). According to LeBlanc, “since colonization and independence, education has occupied a prominent place on the road to social prestige and legitimization of personal socio-political status in Côte d'Ivoire, as elsewhere in other African countries” (LeBlanc 1999: 493).

On the contrary, in the *medersas* “religious studies were being taught alongside secular subjects in accordance with the same pedagogical principles employed in the state schools” (Brenner 2000: 5). Since the mid-1980s, UNESCO and Mali have been forced to recognize that Islamic schooling and Arabic literacy are significant features of education in the country; as a result, *medersa*<sup>35</sup> schooling has been included in the

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<sup>34</sup> In Mali, specifically in Bamako the *Qur'anic* schools are in decline (Sanankoua 1985: 363).

<sup>35</sup> *Qur'anic* schools have not been formally recognized (Brenner 2000). Under the Moussa Traore regime, the *medersas* were recognized by the state and UNESCO. The *medersas* are now teaching 60,000 primary school children (Brenner 2000: 15).

national curriculum. *Qur'anic* schools include similar Islamic content to the *medersas*. They are older than the *medersas*, which is a fairly new phenomenon (Sanankoua 1991). The *Qur'anic* schools are situated in the Mosques, where as the *medersas* are a separate institution from the mosques. In the *Qur'anic* schools, the goal for the students is the formal recitation of the *Qur'an* with no mistakes; the schoolmaster judges this process. The students usually spend an average of 7-15 years at the *Qur'anic* Schools (Sanankoua 1991: 365), unlike the *medersas* where one reads in Arabic by the third year and acquires quicker success (accomplishment of scholastic goals). *Medersas* also require the teaching of other disciplines such as science and math. It is more expensive for the students in the *medersas*, yet there appears to be a wider possibility in terms of employment prospects, therefore the financial investment in the *medersa* is attractive. Majority of the *medersas* are *Wahabites* and are often financed by Arab countries (Sanankoua 1985: 365). Muslim countries have donated generous amounts of money for the construction of Islamic educational institutes (Callaway & Creevey 1994: 75). However the funding received by several oil-rich Arabic countries usually supports the *medresas*, not the *Qur'anic* schools. In the *Qur'anic* schools, often, the students are recruited at a very young age, prior to public school registration age. The majority of the students' families come from modest homes (Sanankoua 1985: 365). There is no government financial support.

Today, the *medersas* are generally well equipped with qualified teachers in the country, however notebooks and supplies present another issue (Professor Khady Drame; January 29; Bamako; personal communication).



For the leaders, the religious knowledge and language skills that are acquired at Islamic schools will usually be applied to their performances (for example sermons and *Qur'an* recitations). However, According to Louis Brenner (2002),

“Islamic knowledge can be legitimately acquired only through personal transmission from persons who are qualified and have been authorized, to transmit it; similarly and significantly, ‘spiritual’ knowledge can be transmitted from deceased holy persons or even through dreams and visions of the prophet” (Brenner: 7).

This was illustrated by a popular Islamic leader named Cheikh Ibrahim Khalil. Cheikh Khalik is the religious chief of the group *Pieds Nus* (Bare feet). He did not receive formal religious training, but was educated in a *Lycée* (French school system). He had a vision that changed his life. His vision inspired him to reform the religion and to preach the *Shari'ah* to his people. At the age of twenty-eight, he began preaching in mosques and founded the association/movement the *Pieds Nus* (*Pied Nus* Administration; February 24, 2001; Segou, Mali; personal communication).

The actual preaching skills are often taught in other facilities too. I was informed that there is no standard methodology. There are certain institutions, such as Islamic associations that facilitate and nurture the acquisition of performance skills. Many of the young aspiring figures acquire performance skills by following the paths of great leaders, *maitres*, uncles, fathers or Imams from a local mosque. The observation of a mentor allows the apprentice to learn preaching techniques and to determine style preferences observation.

In addition, many of the young aspiring preachers that I have met had learned preaching skills at the *medersa*. I spoke with a young aspiring leader from the *Institut Saada Oumar Toure pour les Etudes Islamique et la Formation Professionnelle*. He had tried to create an association. He said, “it was too difficult to solicit and organize

committed members at this stage in his career” (student; March 12; Segou, Mali; Personal Communication). So, he eventually closed the association and now he conducts sermons in various neighborhoods.

The administrators at an Islamic association in Segou mentioned that they hold activities that prepare young preachers to become leaders. They teach methods about <how to conduct sermons> (President Moussa Traore; *Association de la solidarite Islamique*; March 17; Segou, Mali; Personal Communication). The activities at associations, such as *Association de la solidarite Islamique* also allow amateurs to practice their preaching and performance skills. Furthermore, the associations provide an actual platform for the amateur preachers to practice.

The following illustrates a regular activity at a youth Islamic association:

*“Salam Alikoum” the president of LIEEMA, a youth association announced. The audience responds Alikoum Salam’. He began to describe the program for the day..... “inch allah” he affirmed after each subject. Two men arrived, wearing boubou <West African style robe> and foulours <scarf>. They too, greet the audience Salam.....I asked the young women sitting next to me “are they preachers?” “yes”.....hmmm I wondered, they look very young. “Students?” “yes,” she whispered. They shook hands with the administrative sitting at the panel in the front. We performed the benedictions with preacher number one. He began his sermon. He was very animated, flailing his arms in all directions to strengthen his words. The audience watched, listened and nodded. He posed rhetorical questions-the audience assumed its position to respond. The preacher looked over at his comrades and smiled. It was a success. His animation had aroused real pleasure in the crowd. They rotated preachers. An audience member at the front had fallen asleep. Preacher number two discussed “the greatness of God”. Two young men in the back of the audience were whispering. One of the preachers tapped a pencil on the podium to interrupt them. The preachers certainly were passionate as they spoke (Source: March 18, Segou; Sermon Observation).*

As I have shown, there is not a standardized pedagogy for preaching skill acquisition.

Nor is there an actual rites of passage to attain leadership status. Hayssane Youssouf

Traore, president of *Club de la literature et de la culture Arab au Mali* claimed, “there is

no specific or assigned role of leaders. He added, “there are no prescribed roles for leaders because each leader is different and his interpretation and knowledge of Islam varies” (Hayssane Youssouf Traore; Bamako; January 23; personal communication). As a result of these differences, the experiences of each leader vary in terms of aspiring to a powerful leadership position. Accounting for the complexity in defining a leader and his titles, I resolved to examine the leader’s involvement in religious activities.

Frequently, leaders are affiliated with Islamic associations. They may be coordinators, presidents, preachers or founders. In Mali, the registration of the first Islamic association was in 1980. Following this date, only three other associations emerged within a decade. In the beginning of 1991-1992, association development accelerated. For the most part, associations were constructed after 1991, because of the political context. In the fall of the political regime, religion and its expression flourished (Hayssane Youssouf Traore; January 23; Bamako, Mali; personal communication). As well, “the first official act by the *Comite de Transition pour le Salut du Peuple*” (CTSP), charged with managing the transition to democratic institutions, was to decree freedom of association” (Brenner 2000: 294).

Today, anybody is legally eligible to create an Islamic association; basically it requires an interest of a minimum of three people. A preacher mentioned that “there are a lot of associations and preachers, some are badly organized, for example they do not announce meetings properly. If there are only one or two people involved, there is very little motivation. After a while, the association will diminish” (LIEEMA Administration-Segou Division; Segou, Mali; March 13; personal communication).

Official registration of associations is a bureaucratic process. It requires 1) each association to produce a copy of the by-laws 2) To define its objectives, and 3) to

provide a name of the founders and administration (Brenner 2000). This information is filed at the Minister of Interior, in Bamako.

Associations reflect the further networks and links that are created from with other Islamic regions. Oil rich countries, such as Libya, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar mainly fund the Islamic associations. Most of the associations claim to be NGOs. This maybe viewed as an economic strategy for increasing funding and legitimizing the member's activities. A common criticism is that associations are built in order to earn money; they satisfy a selected few who do not work very much. To declare the status of an NGO, the associations become more accessible to the wider population and needless to say economically viable though.

The associations have Islamic goals and conduct activities that are shaped by the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* [the two divine texts of Islam] (Brenner 2000). In general, the roles of the associations are to help practice the religion and to create a vehicle for circulating Islam (Hayssane Youssouf Traore; January 23; Bamako, Mali; personal communication). Associations contribute to retaining an Islamic culture. In essence, it is an assembly of people that is crated to defend their ideas (*LIEEMA* association meeting; Segou, Mali; March 13; personal communication). According to Louis Brenner, "such organizations provide the means for persons who share social and political objectives to join together and speak and/or act as a Muslim interest group in the public domain" (Brenner 2000: 295). Associations are arenas for ideologies, themes and philosophies to manifest. Marie-Nathalie LeBlanc writes, "they simply are social spaces in which reference of collective identities are likely to emerge, to be produced and to be adopted" (Leblanc 1998: 32).

Islamic associations provide social arenas for performing, teaching and consulting for the leaders. The associations truly facilitate the leader's activities, for example, Mohammed Traore, the Vice president of an Islamic association for youth was a preacher who often conducted sermons on the radio and national television. Currently, he continues to preach on the radio for one hour per week and thirty-five minutes per week on television. If he has a religious content or an idea for a program he pays to disperse it (Vice President of *AMJM*-Mohammed Traore; February 4; Bamako; personal communication). Mohammed Traore's position and roles are very common among religious leaders in Mali.

Leaders are also religious consultants, thereby providing religious knowledge to the devout. Leaders generally pray and perform sermons to resolve issues like health, marriage, and divorce. The leader's consulting space is often in his home, a mosque, and/or an association facility. As consultants, leaders are accustomed to receiving disciples, followers, and members. The following is an illustration of a consultation environment of a religious leader:

*I went to the Mosque de Vendredi in Segou. I asked a man if he could direct me to the dwelling of the Famille Talle, a renowned religious family in the region. Along the road, I confirmed the man's direction. Everybody knew of the house. I arrived at the entryway and was introduced to S. Talle, the eldest brother Talle. He led me into a room, there were two men departing, an elderly man and on middle aged. He gestured for me to sit down. It looked like a consultation room: There were prayer mats, a large clock, a large armchair and smaller uncomfortable chairs for guests. There were stacks of books on the floor and two large bookcases along the wall. The rest of the room was empty. This setting became very familiar to me in Mali-it was what I deciphered as a typical consulting area for a leader (House of the Talle family; February 11; Segou; personal communication).*

Often leaders are affiliated with a *medersa* or *Qur'anic* school. These institutes are settings in which religious knowledge and doctrines are learned. Most leaders are Arabic teachers, directors, founders, preachers or committee members of a *medersa*<sup>36</sup>.

According to Brenner (2000),

“The founders of *medersas* in Mali were educational entrepreneurs, both in their experimentation with new forms of pedagogy and in the financial engagement that they undertook in order to bring their ambitions to fruition” (Brenner 2000: 228).

The *medersa* is an ideal arena for information dissemination and forming a religious community. Once again, the leader's involvement reflects the potential financing available from the networks of the wider Arabic/Muslim world.

Most of the leaders conduct tours. They preach in various locations around the country or the continent. This activity is significant in that it is a means for attracting a larger following, for disseminating sermons and self-promotion in distant places.

There is a great diversity in the idea of what comprises a leader. Leadership roles and the activities are often interchangeable. As illustrated in Table 1. (in Appendix B; p. 202), leaders often hold more than one honorary title. As a result, they often bear enormous responsibilities.

## **2.6 The Relationship between the Leaders**

In understanding the relationship between the leaders, it will further emphasize the importance of social and institutional networks in the religious community and daily life in Mali. It will reveal information about issues of unity, alliances and cohesion. On the contrary, elements that are used to differentiate the leaders reflect divisions and

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<sup>36</sup> See Brenner (2000) for an extensive study of the founderrectors and teachers of *medersas* in Mali.

competition and further show the importance allotted to the leader's popularity and the size of his following.

When I discussed the relationship among various leaders with an Islamic association administrator, he announced "that with all sincerity it important not to criticize and discredit others". He added, "This is a facet of Islam. It is possible, as an intellectual, to have advanced reflection, yet not to criticize" (February 2001; Bamako, Mali; personal communication).

Also there are differences due to the leader's character and personality. According to Mohammed Traore, the Vice President of *AMJM (Association Malienne des Jeunes Musulmans)* & preacher, "Some leaders are too violent or aggressive" (Mohammed Traore; February 4; Bamako; Personal Communication).

According to a religious leader in Segou, "The conflict between leaders exists. The control for power is seen as very dangerous in Islam" (March 2001; Segou, Mali; personal communication). Another leader commented, "These conflicts among Muslims are obstacles that hinder the progress of Islam in this country. The power of these leaders can be very dangerous" (February 2001; Segou, Mali).

Hayssane Youssaouf Traore, the president of *Club de la literature et de la culture Arab du Mali* informed me, that there are conflicts between leaders, because there are conflicts between origins and concepts of Islam. There are different branches of leaders, yet they all speak in order to express their ideas and to be understood by the population (Hayssane Youssouf Traore; January 23; Bamako, Mali; personal communication).

Often, it is the leaders' ideas that diverge. "It is not the *Qur'an* that creates different sects, rather it is the leaders". As a result, the leader's interpretation of Islamic

knowledge and writings are varied (Hayssane Youssouf Traore; January 23; Bamako, Mali; personal communication).

There are many groups and their sermons result in conflicting with opposing groups. One young preacher argued, "it is too difficult to please everybody, there is no uniformity. I can go the mosque and pray as a group, but I do not preach in certain areas because of the competition" (March 2001; Segou, Mali; personal communication).

Quite often I was told that the difference between popular leaders was the brotherhoods. Mohammed Traore, a preacher and Vice-president *AMJM*, a large Islamic association stated, "that each group may follow a master or leader, thus there are variations in religious practices" (Mohammed Traore; February 4; Bamako, Mali; personal communication).

According to leader Aboubocar Thiam, "There are a lot of different associations and leaders but they are branches of the same tree" (Abobuocar Thiam; February 25; Segou; personal communication). He continues, "the problem with a lot of the associations or brotherhoods is that one should not separate Muslims. They should be kept together (Ibid.). Following this line of thought, the General Secretary of an Islamic unity association- *AMUPI*, whose interest would obviously deny competition between the leaders said, "there is really no competition between the leaders" (Imam Khady Drame; Bamako; January 29; Personal communication).

In general, though, in Mali I observed that religious groups are ultimately divided in terms of leaders, institutions and ideologies (see Rubin 1990). Despite the competition and alliances between groups and their leaders, one consistent component about leaders was the way in which the devout relate to the leaders in general. There was an evident respect granted to the leaders who held certain titles or who had acquired a



certain status level. Often, this is the case with individuals that hold honorary Islamic titles. If we view these characters as having the great responsibility of disseminating religious knowledge among disciples, devotees and practitioners, this position warrants a degree of respect. Being in the presence of one of these leaders gave me a privileged status. If the leaders were well known, they were constantly praised by the following. This was illustrated to me one day during an excursion with one of the leaders:

*I was waiting in the parking lot outside of the Grande Mosque with one of the most renowned, well-respected leaders in Mali. We were walking towards the taxi stand, when we were surrounded by some of the following of this leader. The leader reacted as if this was a normal occurrence, as though it was formality. He was greeted with such admiration; they shook his hand, bade their salutations, uttered numerous praises, and bowing slightly they would disappear. This sight was intriguing, but it certainly was not an isolated event. As we approached the taxi, the driver appeared. The leader quickly instructed him to our destination. The driver obediently responded to the orders. Often, the leaders seemed to utter a few words and their wishes were their command (January 29, 2001; Bamako, Mali).*

## **2.7 Leaders and Institutional Settings**

In theory, there are approximately three large, formal Islamic institutions that govern the leaders and their activities. These governing bodies/institutions include *ulema* (the Islamic judges or mediators), certain Islamic associations, such as *Ligue Malienne des Immams et Erudits pour la solidaritie Islamique* <Malian League of Imams and Scholars for Islamic Solidarity>, and the *AMUPI* (*Association Malienne pour l'unite et le progress d'Islam*). These are organized bodies and institutions that manage the aforementioned types of leader's conflicts. According to Cheikh elhadj Oyoubou Sougoule, the chief of the *ulema*, "these institutions react reasonably and attempt to

work with one another” (February 1; Cheikh elhadj Oyouba Sougoule; Bamako; personal communication). In varying degrees these organizations are affiliated with the government in Mali.

Firstly, the *ulema* are mediators if there is a religious conflict zone. Sougoule said, “often there are conflicts between different leaders, he then loses patience. In principle there should be no conflicts. If a preacher sways from the proper discipline of Islam, he intervenes (February 1; Cheikh elhadj Oyouba Sougoule; Bamako; personal communication)<sup>37</sup>.

The *ulema* are specialists in religious knowledge (Starrett 1998). It is a body of individuals who control the religion and have a pertinent part in Islam in Mali: it intervenes in the creation of factions; it is responsible for the unity of various religious figures and leaders; and it is the mediator of politics between the president and the leaders. Sougoule, the head of the *ulema* claimed, “We are judges. Our organization is a part of Islam- “an association of sorts” (February 1; Cheikh elhadj Oyouba Sougoule; Bamako; personal communication). In Mali, the *ulema* is comprised of numerous members of *AMUPI*, the Islamic association affiliated with the government. Oumani Traore, the minister of Interior oversees the *ulema*, however the head of the *ulema* hinted that nobody censors them. He often lectures the president in private discussions when the ruling party is not acting in accordance to Islam. He believes that he is the one that entices a sense of spirituality in the government’s actions. Ultimately, as head of the *ulema*, Sougoule has indirect political power in the country or at least is able to work

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<sup>37</sup> The interview conducted with Sougoule was translated from Sarikole into French by Imam el hadj Khady Drame.

in collaboration with the government (February 1; *Cheikh elhadj* Oyouba Sougoule; Bamako; personal communication).

The second important type of institution that plays a large role in governing the activities of the leaders are selected Islamic associations, for example *Ligue Malienne des Imams et Erudits pour la solidarite Islamique*. It was officially registered on July 21, 1994 as the 38<sup>th</sup> Islamic association in Mali. The headquarters of the association is located in Bamako, but there are also district committees and their respective administration. The role of the association is to consolidate the different leaders and to prevent the divergence of leadership in the regions and in the religious landscape of Mali. To a certain degree, associations like this, authorize, legitimize and create generic standards for the religious leadership conditions.

Lastly, *AMUPI* is a national association that was formed in the early 1980s, under the dictatorship of Moussa Traore. It is the first Islamic association to be registered at the *Minister d'Interieur*. Moussa Traore first requested and encouraged the creation of this association. The objective was to coordinate all Muslims and to govern Muslim activities under a religious jurisdiction, however censored by the government.

Today the goal is to unite the different brotherhoods and divisions of Islam, for example the *Sunnis* and *Shiites*. Mali consists of many origins, religious traditions and religious families. The creation of the association was for the Muslims to live together in harmony and to be represented equally. Their goal is to unify and teach Islam.

Imam Khady Drame, the General Secretary of the national division of *AMUPI* claimed, "different religions can live together.....we have a tradition of tolerance here in Mali." He continues, "as a Muslim you are obliged to respect the association." *AMUPI* attempts to consolidate religious variations and differences (Imam Khady

Drame; January 26; Bamako; personal communication). Theoretically, the members of the association include all Muslims living in Mali. The association thus considers all Muslims members. Whether all Muslims consider themselves members of the association is debatable. It would depend on an individual's alliance with *AMUPI*.

During the association's creation period, in the 1980s, it received subvention from Libya and Saudi Arabia. Today, *AMUPI* receives funding from the government. It continues to work in conjunction with the government. It also occasionally receives donations from community members. Unlike the other Islamic associations in Mali, there are no membership fees (Imam Khady Drame-General Secretary of *AMUPI*; January 25; Bamako; personal communication).

*AMUPI* is found all over Mali. There are branches throughout Bamako. In each large city in the country there is an *AMUPI* division: Kaye, Sikasso, Timbuctoo, Segou and Mopti; all of which originated at the same time. The headquarters in Bamako communicates regularly with the divisions via telephone.

In Segou, for example, the most reputable religious families were responsible for initiating its branch<sup>38</sup>. These branch initiators included: Saad Toure, Adi Dibou Soso, Oumar Dialo, Sador Talle, Aboubocar Thiam, and Mousiour Djira. The administration of *AMUPI*-Segou consists of owners of various schools, preachers, and various Islamic religious leaders (General Secretary of *AMUPI*-Segou Omar Dialo; February 25; Segou, Mali; personal communication). The organization is comprised of the following divisions: a city section, village subsection and village committees

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<sup>38</sup> Such families came to be from a long history of hereditary positions and responsibilities, such as Imams, and *medersa* directors within the religious community. See Robinson & Triaud eds. (1997) Le temps des Marabouts that provides in-depth studies about the religious and historical lineage in the region.

According to the General Secretary of the *AMUPI*-Segou branch, frequently the association hosts activities, such as conferences and council meetings. The activities are conducted at irregular times (Secretary General-*AMUPI*-Segou; Omar Dialo; February 25; Segou; personal communication).

All official Islamic associations are younger than the *AMUPI*. The association is inextricably linked to the *ulema*, yet not the same body. The objective of the two bodies is to work simultaneously in reprimanding and disengaging movements that sway from the norm. The relationship between the two entities is close: they share the same goals; the headquarters are located in the same building complex in Bamako; numerous administration members of both frequently have interchangeable roles; and they are mediators in conflict. If there is a conflict, the *ulema* determine who to inform and contact, and then allocates *AMUPI* members to intervene. This procedure occurs because of the organizational structures of these institutes. *AMUPI* has wide coverage across the country, due to the different branches. Both entities work in alliance with the government counseling on religious components, or political policies that are contradictory to Islamic doctrines.

## **2.8 The Role of the Authorities: Intervention and Censorship**

According to a director of a renowned *medersa* in Segou, “The government is contrary to Islam. The secularism of the government is opposed to Muslims. The government body is comprised of real practitioners of the religion and others who are not” (*medersa* director; March 12; Segou; personal communication). These comments were quite common in and amongst the religious leadership in Mali. According to Brenner (2000),

“As we have seen, during the transition to democracy some Muslims accused secularists in positions of authority of not being good Muslims, or of not being Muslims at all because they did not endorse the project of the Islamic state.” (Brenner 2000: 300).

Sometimes the government opposes the views of the leaders and Islamic associations, primarily because the government is secular. Mali’s government is considered secular by a majority of the population and also presents itself as such.

It is logical that the greater amount of leaders that exist in the country, the weaker an individual leader’s authority becomes. In what appears to be a competitive market of leaders, the increase of actors in recent years has had what sort of affect on their power? Eickelman and Anderson argue, that “the proliferation of actors asserting a public role leads to a fragmentation of authority and it increases the numbers of persons involved in creating and sustaining a religious-civil public sphere (Eickelman and Anderson 1999: 14).

The government is responsible for the security of the population therefore it will attempt to limit the amount of religious conflicts among the religious leaders and brotherhoods. The government often makes agreements with the religious community. By agreements, I am referring to negotiations with *AMUPI*, the government established national Muslim association. For example, they will agree to particular shut-downs or prohibition of illicit activities like bars with prostitution, in the capital.

The government appears to be very nervous about large religious uprisings, in fear of extreme or radical religious thought. Repeatedly in Mali, I was told a story that emphasized the government’s contemporary direct role in religious activities. There was a misunderstanding between a movement’s members and a judge. The group in questioning was called the *Pied-Nus*. They mainly live in the region of Segou. They are

anti-capitalists, anti-consumerism, and are renowned for critiquing the Western world. Their spiritual inspiration is the Prophet Jesus. This adoration for the Prophet is expressed in the image of the members; they imitate Jesus. Following a heated dispute, the group's members were jailed. Other members complained to the judge. Another violent dispute took place and the judge was killed. Ten followers of the leader were jailed in Segou and ten in Bamako and a few were sentenced to death. Those imprisoned are still waiting on death row, including the leader and two members. The leader was held responsible for his members' actions. This incident reflects the intervention role that the government plays in religious leader's activities (*Pied Nus* members; February 24; Segou, Mali; personal communication). The extent of government intervention and censorship of religious activities, then, is very interesting in a so-called context of "democracy".

Generally the intervention tactics of the government are indirect, unless the activities or performances of a leader are considered radical or dangerous to the population. These indirect methods, whereby the government will conduct negotiations with *AMUPI*, *Ulema*, and selected Islamic institutes, such as *Ligue Malienne des Imams et Erudits pour la solidaritie Islamique*, help to intervene and censor religious leadership. I would be inclined to say that the old established religious leadership in the country, such as *AMUPI* mediates between the two entities, the government and newer religious leaders. *AMUPI* may attempt to pacify the unrest and discontent of the new leaders. One approach is to explain to them that the "public demonstration would just feed the enemies of Islam" (Baxter 2002a: 50).

Yet, it is important to note that the government does not necessarily intervene in the emergence of new brotherhoods or Islamic groups. They are unable to critique these

movements, in the name of the country's democratic policies. Muslims comprise of a majority of the population. The government cannot afford to offend Muslims (Schulz 2001).

In the early 1990s, after the shift in the government regime, the government did not take as much notice of the preachers' discourse (*medersa* director; March 12; Segou; personal communication). The government's indifference to the existence of religious leaders, until the leaders engage in radical religious activities or opposition to the political party appears to be a political strategy.

Due to the government's religious position in Mali, leaders and their associations have a responsibility to contribute to retaining an Islamic culture. Muslims seem to be very concerned about the role of Islam in the elections and in general the future of the religion in the country. This was apparent during a conference of Islamic associations about the "Role of Muslims in Society and Politics-in reference to the 2002 national elections". The conference was held, on March 11, 2001, interestingly one-year prior to the elections, at a renowned Islamic institute in Segou. The event was hosted by Ahmed Madani Saad Toure, the current director of the institute. The attendees included active Islamic associations or institute members. The conference consisted of a video screening of a conference, held in Bamako, addressing the same topic<sup>39</sup>. Discussions were held after the film and the subjects that were raised, included "religiously unmotivated youth" and "the unpopularity of religion among youth"(March 11; Segou, Mali; conference).

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<sup>39</sup> There were two other conferences, of a similar nature, that were held prior to the 2002 elections. In total, three conferences were coordinated in an eight-month period.



Considering that the government often opposes the views of the leaders and Islamic associations- primarily because of its religious stance- associations have an important role in contributing and retaining an Islamic culture.

Certain religious leaders, especially those associated with *AMUPI*-the aforementioned government affiliated Islamic association, have the authority to legitimately criticize the government. It is one of the few means of contesting the government in a seemingly socially accepted manner. Cheikh Elhadj Oyouba Sougoule, the head of the *ulema* mentioned that he “often has the role of commenting on the actions of the president” (February 1; Bamako, Mali; personal communication). Despite the weakening of power among certain leaders in Mali, due to the amount of leaders that exist, there was still a great amount of respect awarded to the religious leaders.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has introduced several concepts that are essential for a study of Islamic leadership in general and more specifically, in Mali. The leader’s sermon activities or religious expression is not a new phenomenon in this region. I have discussed that, often, charismatic leaders are gifted performers. In this thesis, I have chosen to emphasize the actual *display* of the leaders, that is to say, the performance of charisma, more so than, the *cause*. Thereby understanding that it is at this level of performance that the connection to the region’s historical tradition of performers is significant. As the thesis develops, the intrinsic link between charisma and performance will be evident. And the notion of charisma, as put forth by Weber (1968) will also be clear. Weber proposed that charisma is dependent upon a set of social relationships. These relationships address both authority and legitimacy. Furthermore, very

importantly, the leaders rely on the loyalty and indeed devotion of the other members of society. The following chapter will explore the issue that performances of the Islamic leaders also require audiences; it is ultimately the audience that is partially responsible for constructing the identity and popularity of a leader.

### **3.0 AUDIENCES & PERFORMANCES: UNDERSTANDING CHARISMA**

The intent of this chapter is to analyse the relationship between the religious leader's performance and his audience, providing a further understanding of charisma. I will attempt to show the advantages of acknowledging performance in a study of charisma. The chapter begins with a theoretical discussion about the relationship between the audience and the performance. In addition, I examine the religious leaders' performances. There is a general discussion about the audience and the experience of performances. Finally, this chapter explores the differences between live versus *mediated* versions of performances, preparing the reader for charisma's introduction to the mass media.

#### **3.1 Performance and Audience Theory**

The study of performance has undergone many transformations over the years. Traditionally, simplistic dualism was used in reception studies as communication models. They tended to separate performance and audience into different entities. Fortunately, "the gap between broadcast production and audiences has narrowed in recent years, but it remains significant" (Eickelman 1999: 34).

There are generally five facets that are affiliated with performance theory: 1) the presence of an audience and furthermore, how the performer engages or does not engage with the audience 2) the reciprocal relationship of the performer and audience (Barber 1997; Crain & Hughes-Freeland 1998) the agency of the performer and the audience (Arnoldi 1996; Launay 1997; James 1997; Mc Laughlin 1997) 4) an experience of a format and/ or the verbalization of event (Schieffelin 1993; Tayob 1999) 5) an opportunity for the emergence of social change (See Barber 1999; Freeland-Hughes & Crain 1998; Tayob 1999).

Within the context of visual anthropology, the role of the viewer is usually a neglected field (Hafsteinsson 1996: 1). The cultural agency of the viewer in audience research was introduced in the context of postmodern thought. This period focused on the activity and creativity of the audience. In my thesis, my analysis will account for the phenomenon of production and reception as Karen Barber writes “as moments in a cycle rather than two poles at opposite ends” (Barber 1999: 8). The boundaries of production and reception are blurred, that is to say that the act of one potentially constructs the other. These relationships construct an interpretive frame within the performance (Arnoldi 1996a). In viewing performance from this perspective, there is the allowance for audiences to be deemed as agents and the performances to be seen as flexible, to ultimately incorporate new meaning and commentaries throughout time (Arnoldi 1996).

Following several contemporary authors, I will view the role of the audience as active social agents that are able to produce local effects and responses (Crain & Hughes-Freeland 1998; Launay 1997; Arnoldi 1996). It is important to note, though, that sometimes the impact goes beyond the local. This perspective of audiences will contribute to determining how the audience unites based on performances, or how a

collective social behavior may be influenced. In this light, the agency of the audience is quintessential for social action.

In order to understand leaders, it is important to examine the relationship between a leader and his followers, as reflected through his performances. Following the work of Karin Barber, I argue that performances constitute audiences and vice versa (Barber 1997). For example, in most cases in Mali, during the leader's performance, there is a counterpart to the sermon. Usually it is another Imam or preacher. Indeed, this is how an actual dialogue is created in front of the audience. The counterpart (other Imam or preacher), who I will refer to as preacher B, will respond to the speech of preacher A (the principle leader) after each of his statements or ideas. Often, preacher A will pose the question "isn't it so?" or "is it not?" In Mali, there were standard responses, in both Bamana and Arabic, that I observed during performances, such as *nam/namu, awo, aye* <no, yes, no>. Some of the Bamana responses are also often seen in the *djeli* performances. The responses to the preacher's expression appeared to overlap the last couple words of his statement, as if the speech is predetermined. Interestingly, this reflects similar conduct to everyday speech patterns.

Consumption of performance and production, then, become one in the same (Barber 1997). That is to say that production is actually reception. Barber claims, "that the act of reception is an act of production" (Barber 1997: 10/12). This is illustrated in the two-way relationship between the Shi'i religious authority (*marja'*) and follower. "Ambitious *ayatollahs* adjust their *fatwas* to accommodate popular opinion, just as reformist *ayatollahs* often have to give in to the wishes of their followers" (Eickelman and Staretz 1999: 13). In essence the audience, reception and follow-ship play a very important role in the performances for the leaders.

The correlation between performance and charisma is evident here. Based on the work of Max Weber, charisma is not simply the display of the leader's divine gifts. His following is as much a source of his power as are "his personal talents, for without them [the following] he is nothing" (Weber 1968: 241-242). Although charisma is acknowledged as profound gifts of a character, Max Weber (1964) expanded this theory to include the importance of participation from the others, be it the audience, following, or devotees. Charisma is created and sustained by the loyalty and devotion of the other members of society. In saying that, it is important to recognize charisma to be based on sets of social relationships.

The individuals such as the audience, following or devotees, then, are "the consuming public" (Starrett 1999). The charismatic performances can be viewed as creating in a sense a "public" sphere. The public is not necessarily "the mass or anonymous, but defined by mutual participation-indeed, by performance" (Eickelman & Anderson 1999:16).

This addresses the theme of the audience's experience. An issue of equal weighting is that the audience "constitute themselves as members of a collectivity.....a powerful active organizing principle in people's experience" (Barber 1997: 7/12). Schieffelin (1993) analyzes how ritual arouses the audience's feelings during performances. Each individual in a performance has a specific role in which he/she conveys meaning to the audience. These events then have to be "interpreted by understanding how they evoked the audience's feelings, if they were to make adequate sense at all" (Schieffelin 1993: 270)<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> See Tayob for a further examination of the communication process of religious performances, using a symbolic interpretative perspective. He concludes, "that a ritual speech has an immediate social and

All audiences are not the same; specific African audiences have distinctive, conventional modes and style of making meaning, just as performers and speakers have (Barber 1997). Reception draws together different groups of people from different social categories; simultaneously, it transcends social divisions. According to Deborah James, researcher of class, performers and audiences of *Kiba* in South Africa, understanding the violation of categories through performances and audiences “broadens the field within which new identities can emerge and new communities can imagine themselves” (James 1997: 3). Evidently, there is diversity among audience and variations in the styles of constructing meaning, just as there are variations in performances (Barber 1997).

In analyzing performance and reception of diverse social categories, new identities emerge and new communities imagine themselves (James 1997: 3). James describes the “imagined communities” as breaking social categories through performance and audience reception. Consumption or reception of religious material culture or expression may be conceptualized differently from that of economics, work status or religious belonging. There is the possibility of constructing new identities (James 1997: 2). That is to say, discussing, watching, and interacting during performances can build communities. There is a collective participation as audiences determine codes of behavior for religious practice from the received messages.

The construction of identities is important to address. New social behavior expresses new kinds of prestige; “new grounds upon which social hierarchies can be established” (Marshall-Fratini 1998: 294). Following the work of Mary Jo Arnoldi (1996), the meaning and identities produced during performances are not a formal

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psychological impact, which would seem to obviate the importance of searching for a deeper religious significance” (Tayob 1999).

interpretation of objective form, rather the maintaining of the actors is linked to numerous variables, such as ethnicity, age and social relations and some that are external to the actual performance<sup>41</sup>.

In exploring the symbolism of sermons and mosques and Imams, it sheds light unto the role that this has played in the construction of a local and broader Muslim identity (see Tayob 1999). Within the study of Islamic performance, much has been written about the potential of the sermon as an instrument, using rhetoric and “its role as a central component of Islamic ritual through the citation of the Koran” (Tayob 1999: 15). According to Tayob, a majority of sermon literature focuses on the “social effects of the sermon in relation to modernization, the legitimacy of the state and Islamization” (Ibid.). Tayob analyzes religious symbols and institutions by understanding the symbolic role of the Friday sermons [Islamic performances]. It will be evident in the following chapter that this is especially emphasized with the use of electronic media. Dorothea Schulz claims that, in Mali, “there is a new publicly manifested Muslim identity in a new public sphere due to an increase of new media (Schulz 2001).

### **3.2 Performances**

At this point of departure, it is important to explain an actual performance. The performances that I am referring to are expressions of religious and social behaviour. These expressions are inspired by religious knowledge (from the *Hadith* and *Qur'an*) and the *shari'ah* (Islamic law) of the Muslim clerics.

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<sup>41</sup> The intent of Arnoldi's paper is to show how identity can be constructed in contexts identified as entertainment. She reveals information about the construction of gender. Ethnicity, age and social relations are ideologies in the study of puppet performances (Arnoldi 1996).

The performances can be deemed as institutions of socialization. Following the work of Geert Mommersteeg, who described *Qur'anic* schools as an institution of socialization; I view the leader's performance in the same light. They are able to provide similar formation (Mommersteeg 1991: 46). This was illustrated to me during attendance of a sermon in Segou, Mali:

*It was a hot afternoon and I arrived late to the afternoon Sermon of LIEEMA, a youth association, after having transportation difficulties. The activities continued despite my indiscreet entrance into the large classroom at the Lycee. There were already approximately 27 people in the room all youth ranging from about 17 to 22 years old, men and women, when I arrived. 3 young men dressed in boubous <robes commonly worn in West Africa> and Muslim caps sat at a table in the front of the room, constructed as a podium like panel of contestants. It was as though they were preparing themselves for a competitive performance of religious knowledge. One man began by reading from the Qur'an-a French translated version. The audience watched and listened; those obedient onlookers took notes. Another man began from where the former left off. This time, he was reading from his notes and quoting surah<sup>42</sup> numbers. They continued to discuss Muslims and the creation of Islam, and God and creation. While one panel member recited the Qur'an, the others flipped through their personal editions or notes. It was evident that they were amateurs. It was interesting to compare the blossoming performers with those of their developed counterpart. The young man's adamant words echoed, "jeunesse....." <youth, the belief in God's existence will show you the way>. One of the council members asked whether everybody in the audience understood Bamana, they all nodded. The next speaker was much livelier. His sermon was aesthetically more intriguing. He used a specific rhetoric and plenty of hand gestures. He used a style that I had observed before, launching into his rhetorical questions to the audience..... "n'est pas?" This style was very similar to that of the griots. Despite the question's objective, a woman called out a response in Bamana.....the audience roared with laughter. Thirty minutes later, the young preacher stopped talking. Those with notebooks closed them and put them in their school bags.*

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42 Surah refers to each chapter in the *Qur'an*. The *Qur'an* is composed of 114 Surah.



*Everybody rose. I was instructed that it was the time for the prayer. (Source: February 21; Lycee Kabril, Segou, Mali; Sermon Observation).*

There is a socialization element of the performances. That is to say that often the audience or membership is socialized, by attending the sermons. As demonstrated, the content, style, setting and participants provided an exemplary depiction of an institution for socialization. Furthermore, the moment an audience member did not obey a code of conduct this was immediately brought to attention.

The role of preaching is to explain the religion and proper behaviour to individuals. Religious leaders are responsible for instructing issues, such as <how to perform the prayer> and <an explanation of the Qur'an>. Launay states that the performer of the sermons is not deciphered by the nature of the message in his sermon, rather, his eloquence, and his knowledge (Launay 1997: 5). According to Marie-Nathalie LeBlanc, based on research in Cote d'Ivoire "rituals, especially sermons are very much about the display of formal knowledge of the Arabic language and religious, rather than, about the theatricality of performances and the style of delivery, as used to be the case" (LeBlanc 1999: 497). The display of formal knowledge appeared essential during sermons.

A sermon has been defined by Tayob as "a recitation of the *Qur'an* on Fridays, otherwise known as the *Friday Khutbah*, through which revelation in Islam is extended and renewed" (Tayob 1999: 2). The actual contexts of sermon delivery in Mali, to name just a few, are at the mosque on Fridays, Islamic holidays, schools, Islamic associations, meetings, and conferences.

According to Tayob's experiences in South Africa, "during sermons, preachers literally re-cited the Koran by producing, in form and performance, their own

compositions” (Ibid: 18). In essence, the sermon is also an act of creativity (Ibid.: 19). The strong importance of the performance is allotted to the recitation of the *Qur'an*. According to Tayob, it is the aural and oral dimensions of sermons that are often addressed by researchers (Tayob 1999: 17). During Tayob’s study, he learned that “the sermon had responsibility to disseminate and formulate the discourses of the mosques and the Imams through the powerful notion of re-citation; it provides a vehicle for determining how a particular social practice was articulated”(Tayob 1999: 20).

The ambience of the performed texts was equally important for understanding the charisma of the leader, including his energy, expression and mannerism. There is a very visual element to watching a talented charismatic leader conduct a performance; it is an element that is difficult to convey in words.

Performance styles are very different. The success of the sermon often depends on the performance qualities, whether dramatic or comedic (Launay 1997: 9). The clerics are responsible for entertaining the audience (Ibid.: 5). Using the theatrical performance perspective of ritual analysis, performances are viewed as a cultural theater, which is a useful analytical technique for understanding the style of the performer (Stoller 1995).

Oakes believes that charismatic’s rhetoric skills can be phenomenal (Oakes 1997: 14). According to one religious performer in Mali “the most important characteristic of a preacher is to be convincing. You convince people to come into Islam and once they arrive, you must be convincing for them to understand the religion and to stay” (Segou, Mali; March 2001; personal communication)<sup>43</sup>. This was demonstrated

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<sup>43</sup> It is also important to add the feature of proselytizing, as this is a prominent feature of the religion.

during a performance conducted by a prominent, young religious preacher in Segou, Mali:

*We were in a living room of the Cheikh Dougoune's compound, with several chairs and couches- an archetypal setting for a consulting room. There was a strong odor of incense burning; the smoke was wafting in from the adjacent room. I was anxious to interact with this particular leader, who was young-31 years old and Syrian trained. I had heard that he had remarkably gained a lot of popularity in recent years. After a period of waiting, a young man, wearing an impeccable white boubou, made the grand entrance. "Salamalekum" he bellowed. He was adorned in a turban and an orange scarf draped over the stark white robe. Dougoune was carrying his religious texts in one hand and clasped a wooden staff in the other. He sat down. After a long discussion about his faith, he conducted a prayer. He slowly began his sermon. "Allah u Akbar" <God is the greatest> "Bismillah Allah Akbar"- Bismillah <god is mercy>. As the performance developed, his gestures became more animated. His arms flailed around, as his voice became louder and louder and his tone became fierce. He was passionate as he attempted to convince the audience. He bellowed phrases about heaven and hell. He appeared to enter a trance-like-state. His voice grew stronger and tears swelled in his eyes. He began to sob. In-between sobs and breaths he continued to enrapture his audience. One hour later, he emerged from his esoteric state. He composed himself by softening his tone of voice and limiting his body movements. This whirlwind of events ceased at the same pace in which it had escalated. In its natural flow, the magic dissipated. His performance had ended and a question-period had begun, as his devotees pried for further knowledge (Cheikh Ahmed Dogoune; February 26; Segou, Mali; Sermon observation).*

A performance, such as Cheikh Dougoune's described above, prompts the question: Are all religious leaders charismatic? According to Aberbach, "the idea of charisma has been trivialized. 'Pseudo-charisma' is often stimulated artificially, through the use of propaganda techniques and opinion poll to create the illusion of charismatic leadership"

(Aberbach 1996: 75)<sup>44</sup>. He believes that the terms “charismatic” or/and “charisma” are often, mere rhetoric-that are interchangeable with “popular” or “attractive” (Ibid). The latter two adjectives are merely descriptive terms meaning accepted, approved and pleasing, therefore, often, problematic replacements for “charismatic” or/and “charisma”.

Some leaders appear to have more performative qualities than others; not all performances are necessarily entertaining. Often performances appear to be information sessions, with a focus on conducting knowledge.

Although performers may possess knowledge, they are often weak at conveying it. During performances, the audience regularly appeared to doze-off. Often, if the audience is silent, they may not appear attentive to the performance. Evidently, in these cases, it highlighted that the notion of charisma is also socially and culturally constructed in its interpretation.

It is difficult to decipher a generic performance style, as each leader has a unique command of preaching techniques. There are several techniques for performing that can enrapture the audience and simultaneously reflect the leader’s knowledge, yet these skills depend on the individual. Based on several sermon observations in Mali, the preachers tended to stare into the distance, almost as though they emerge into another zone. In doing this, visually it appears as though the performer is addressing the audience as a whole. As stated above, it is important that the leader understands or reads his audience when performing. Imam Dougone used the metaphor of a mirror in discussing preaching styles. “You must pretend the audience is a mirror. The audience reflects back the image of yourself and in the end, you must live with yourself and the

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<sup>44</sup> See Legeese for a further discussion about ‘pseudo charisma’ versus authenticity

perception that others have of you” (Cheikh Dougone; Segou, Mali; February 26; personal communication).

Kohut argued that there is a narcissistic element to charisma (Kohut 1977). The narcissistic element to charisma is often displayed in the performance of the leader. Performance, then, entails, “this ‘mirroring’ process in which a strong figure sees others as part of his *self*, while the others see themselves in him” (Oakes 1997: 32). If this is the case with charisma, how does the “mirroring” process affect the leader’s performance? According to Cheikh Dougoune, “sermons should be performed in a correct and polite manner. This requires that you do not insult others. This is what the *Qur’an* and Prophet say. You should remain respectful in front of others; there should be no provoking or shocking” (Segou, Mali; February 26, 2001; personal communication).

There are several techniques for performing that can enrapture the audience and simultaneously reflect the leader’s knowledge; yet these skills depend on the individual. Ong notes that knowledge “memorized by bards who specialized in the storage and transmission of information used heavily rhythmic patterns, repetitions and antitheses, alliterations, assonances, and a host of formulaic expressions as the tools of their trade” (Ong in Bourgault 1995: 8). According to Bourgault, an African communication’s expert, “knowledge and wisdom were said to reside in those persons able to transmit information with artistic flourish through accepted stylistic conventions” (Bourgault 1995: 8).

Generally, music is deemed as unnecessary during the performances. Preacher Khady Drame stressed, “there is no need for music, it is just an artificial accompaniment” (January 26; Bamako; Personal Communication). In some cases music is used during the sermons, yet it is rare and dependent on the preacher. In Mali

there appeared to be two leaders who regularly used music in their performances, Haidara<sup>45</sup> and Racine Sall.

The performances are usually conducted in *banamanan*. They are also adjusted to enhance clarity and comprehension for the audience. The prayers however should be in Arabic, the sacred language of Islam, sophisticated and riddled with subtitles and poetry. According to Mommersteeg, “For Muslims, Arabic is the language of God, the sacred language of the *Qur'an*. *Le Saint Livre* contains the speeches of Allah, his discourse-one that was dictated by the Angel Jibril to the Prophet Mohammed” (Mommersteeg 1991: 46). When performing a sermon, it is possible to read and then translate the text. A large importance is placed on the meaning and esoteric power of words (Ibid: 47)<sup>46</sup>.

This concept becomes interesting when an audience is not proficient in Arabic. With such an importance that is placed on the leader’s religiously, oral legacy, what happens in a country where the national language is not Arabic? An individual or an audience member, then, is at the mercy of the leader’s performance and interpretation of the *Qur'an*. Even those individuals with training from the *Qur'anic* schools are not equipped to dismiss a religious leader. “They are not necessarily taught how to read a text; they are only taught how to recite” (Mommersteeg 1991: 60). This further fuels the power of religious leaders. According to Gregory Starrett, in Egypt, “(.....) the very message of religious education is that the values of Islam are accessible to the ordinary educated believer without the continual mediation of religious expert knowledge” (Starrett 1998). This however takes on another dimension in an area like Mali, where not

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<sup>45</sup> Haidara’s use of music will be discussed in greater detail during the case study of Haidara and his association.

<sup>46</sup> See Ong’s theory that combines psychology, anthropology and linguistics “that in oral societies the word also had great power because it made things come into being.....” (Ong 1982: 7).

many of the population members speak the holy language. Once again, we see that the leaders are in a privileged position in that the audience is at the mercy of these individuals for gaining the religious knowledge that is sought after. Performances are so important, yet in a country where the national language is not Arabic, individuals rely on the leader's expertise and/or interpretation of the *Qur'an*. This makes the audience slightly vulnerable and to a certain degree, elevates the leader's status. However, as young people more and more are learning Arabic in the *medersa* school system, this status may shift in time.

The audience constructs meaning of the sermons as they listen and/or watch the charismatic leaders. Once again, this is intriguing considering the common language barriers that may occur between the leader's Arabic knowledge and the audience's lack thereof. Thus, analyzing the reception experience of the leader's performance was essential.

According to Ahmed Madani Saad Toure, a preacher in Mali, "the first and foremost element of preaching is to have a fixed opinion, but to remain objective" (Ahmed Madani Saad Toure; Segou, Mali; March 12; personal communication).

When I inquired about basic sermon topics, the responses were quite vague. Nonetheless, I attended numerous performances to receive general ideas about sermon topics. It appeared that the sermon content, *Qur'an* recitations and interpretations widely differed, depending on the performer. One young preacher admitted that his most favorable topics are about "the practice of Islam; the role of a Muslim; creation and God; heaven, hell and paradise; living daily with your neighbors, family, or wife" (Imam Dougone; Segou; February 26; personal communication).

The following is a collection of different contemporary sermon topics, based on the attendance of several performances in Bamako and Segou, Mali. Generally, sermon content or discussions from leaders include: health issues, violence, divorce, marriage, poverty, and the “pillars of Islam”<sup>47</sup>. During visits with the *Sunni brotherhood*, they focused on “the confession of the way”; “salvation”; and the “behaviour of women in Islam”. The members, followers and their leaders reported, “to understand the reality of Islam you must be Muslim” (meeting; March 17; Segou; Personal communication). To understand what is discussed, one must convert. In essence, the issues that are discussed always stem from the *Hadith* and the *Qur'an*. During sermons, extracts from the holy texts are read.

There seems to be a range of topics that are used with different audiences. This would appear logical in that the audience contributes to the construction of the performance. Thus, the topics would most likely refer to the concerns and interests of both the audience and leaders. Topics for *LIEEMA (La Ligue Islamique des Eleves et Etudiants du Mali)*, a large Islamic youth association were determined by the administration of the association. A preacher and administrator of the association, stated, that they choose what they see as “subjects of the day” and “the popular issues of the moment”. These types of issues included: “*Qu'est-ce que l'Islam?*” <What is Islam?>; “an explanation of God;” “God and creation;” “defining a good young Muslim;” “how a young Muslim prays;” “youth and modernity”, “the evolution of modernity and modernism”; “Islam and unity”; “taboos”; “women’s rights in Mali”; and, “the

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<sup>47</sup> The religion rests on five precepts: 1) witness-*Shahadah*, the essence of Islam is submission to God and Mohammed is his messenger. 2) Prayer-*Salat*, Muslims must pray five times a day 3) Almsgiving-*Zakat* 4) Fasting-*Sawm*, this refers to a fast that occurs during *Ramadan* 5) Pilgrimage-*Hajj*, referring to the pilgrimage to Mecca.



greatness of God” (*LIEEMA* administration; Segou, Mali; March 13; personal communication). Ould Saleck, a youth preacher from the association said, “important issues are polygamy, youth, technology, modernity vs. tradition” (Ould Saleck; General Secretary of *LIEEMA*; March 16; Segou; Personal Communication).

According to Tayob, “the sermon is deeper than its message and more penetrating than its effects” (Tayob 1999:1). Meaning is derived from the interrelationships between the leaders and following. As I have already mentioned, the messages in the performance are multiply interpreted. Thus, the producers do not have absolute control over the meanings. This is demonstrated in Tayob’s research results in South African Islamic communities. He argued that, “the Islamic sermon has become a useful instrument in socio-political praxis” (Ibid.). He concludes that,

“the sermon seemed to provide at once an audience, a symbolic place, and a malleable message, a combination that leaders, reformers and visionaries could not resist” (Ibid.).

Once again, having this capacity, the impressionable nature of the leader’s sermon is revealed.

At this point of departure, it is important to address where the leader’s activities occur. Often, the performances and activities of religious leaders are not always conducted in a “sacred space” (Launay 1997: 5). Leaders frequently perform their sermons in parks, outdoor stages, *medersas*, mosques, associations, or in a private home (which is often in the context of an association).

As I have discussed in this thesis, most of the renowned leaders are usually somehow affiliated with a *medersa*; they are professors, directors or founders, which further explains the leaders’ relationship to knowledge. Therefore, the sermons are regularly performed in a school setting (see LeBlanc 1999: 497). According to LeBlanc,

often the schools host celebrations for *Al El-Kabir*, *Ramadan*, the end of term, and student associations (LeBlanc 1999: 491).

These social structures are the social arenas or spaces where there will be the largest audience present. It is evident that the use of media has further shifted these rituals from sacred spaces to other domains; this includes the use of television, radio, audiocassettes and videocassettes. This shift will be evident in the following chapter about media. I argue that shifting the analysis to recognize use, rather than place becomes essential to the practice of performance. Place becomes less contextually important as the use of media is introduced (Eickelman & Anderson 1999).

### **3.3 General Audience Discussion**

It is difficult to construct profiles about contained followings. The following of religious leaders was not necessarily exclusive to specific audiences. There were certain leaders that had a greater appeal to certain audiences; nonetheless, the audiences contained varied members. Social categories were important to note in my study in Mali, however extremely complex.

Bourgault discusses her response about audience analysis among African broadcasters (1995). She writes: "I have often been surprised by the limited degree to which media and reception professionals identify with the calling" (Bourgault 1995: 63-64).

Preachers have difficulty in determining audience ratings. Their primary technique of determining their audience is to examine the way information is received. They also seek public opinion about their performances, by conducting informal focus groups or soliciting commentary from friends and relatives. As Schieffelin stated, once

again, “the performances need to be interpreted by understanding how they evoked the audience’s feelings, if they were to make adequate sense at all” (Schieffelin 1993: 70). Ahmed Madani Saad Toure, a *medersa* director and former Islamic association president in Mali suggested that “as a preacher, you have to be open to everybody; you must respect the people” (Ahmed Madani Saad Toure; Segou, Mali; March 12; personal communication). Most of the leaders I spoke with mentioned that understanding or reading the audience when performing is very important.

It is difficult to determine audience composition. According to Hughes-Freeland, “While it is relatively simple to document audience responses ethnographically, we can conclude it is rather more difficult to generalize from these” (Hughes-Freeland 1998: 59). Consequently, this section provides general data about audiences; a more detailed analysis of the audience of leaders is provided in the case study of this thesis.

Mali is a country consisting of multiple-ethnicity: approximately 12 different large cultural groups (Drisdelle 1997). The main ethnic groups are the Mande (Bambara, Malinke, Sarakole, the Peul, Voltaic, Songhai the Fulani, the Dogon, the Bobo and Bozo, and the Tuareg and Moor. In viewing both the audiences and performances, it appeared that a very important social variable was an allegiance to the leader. Perhaps, in concentrating on this social variable, the social differences, such as ethnicity, and economic categories were dismissed or irrelevant. Considering that there are different types of leaders, for example, young, old, *wahabite*, *marabouts* these individuals are popular and compatible with varying audiences - young, old, women, and men.

The producers are largely concerned about a large constituency. I believe that the audience is often guiding the performance. As I have discussed, these social venues allow an agency for participants and provide the leaders with a platform.

Current analysis of performance reveals that the “diversity of public” present, during an event, needs to be acknowledged (Hughes-Freeland and Crain 1998: 3). The shift in addressing identity focuses on doing rather than being. Identity is seen as interactive, and dependent upon activities (Freeland-Hughes & Crain 1998). Freeland-Hughes and Crain’s approach accounts for the construction of identity within a context-while simultaneously examining “the transformations of these identities as they are negotiated, affirmed or contested over the course of time” (Ibid: 7). In this approach agency is then easily accounted for.

### **3. 4 The Experience of Performance**

The Friday sermon is generally the most significant weekly religious practice/performance for the Muslims in Mali. How do the audiences follow religious leaders? Habitually, to follow a leader and his performances: people tend to listen to the radio, and cassettes; watch television; join a particular Islamic association; attend sermons at a local mosque; for students in the Islamic school system, as mentioned, it is possible to attend the religious debates and performances at a *medersa*. There are no limitations to whom or what religious leaders an individual can watch or listen to. It is common for individuals to listen to the sermons of several different leaders or follow different leaders. As mentioned, there are numerous religious leaders in Mali therefore it is not unusual for the public to listen to religious expression of numerous leaders. There is not a uniform experience of following a leader; there are evidently variations in religious experiences.

A young taxi driver in Mali mentioned, “It is important to follow a leader, but it is not obligatory to abide by what he says” (Bamako; January 24; personal

communication). Apparently, the advantage of following a leader and not necessarily joining his association is that you can challenge and discuss the content of the leader's sermons.

In essence, a preacher usually performs the prayers, sermons, *Qur'an* recitations and debates, either live, at his home, a public space, in a mosque, or using electronic media, including the radio, television and audio and videocassettes. Thus the medium here becomes of utmost importance, rather than, the message.

### **3.5 Live Versus Mediated Versions of Performance**

Anthropologists Felicia Hughes-Freeland and Mary Crain pose the question in Recasting Ritual: Performance, Media and Identity, "How might anthropological analysis of ritual practice respond to the diversification of performance and audience from live to mediated contexts" (1999: 1)? The authors argue that recent works present connections, rather than, contrasts, between those of media and live performances (Hughes-Freeland & Crain). Hughes-Freeland cautions certain views of live versus media performances.

There is an error in thinking of live performances as authentic in an absolute way: there may be factors which inflict the style of performance from an interactive one at a more aesthetically conscious one. And in a studio situation, performers may attend more closely to the perfection of the art, freed from the participation of the audience (Hughes-Freeland 1998: 58).

Alternatively, just as media representations are imagined as virtual, so conversely does authenticity become an illusion (Ibid). Authenticity here is not the issue; it is just another reality of performance.

In recording studios of radio stations, for example, how does the audience participate? Ultimately is the performer “freed from the participation of the audience”? I argue that the audience still plays a role in the production of the performance, despite their physical absence. This role is played out in the consumption choices, determining popularity, standards and expectations of leaders. Thus the perspective of the audience’s agency in performance is transferable to a mediated context.

Freeland-Hughes addresses an interesting idea of the “anthropologist who was tending to impute greater authenticity to a live performance with an audience than one in a studio performed for the cameras” (Ibid: 56). In her study about mediated versus live performances, her informants “rejected the clear-cut distinction between live and broadcast” (Ibid: 57). Following this train of thought, I intend to focus on the mediated versions of performance as an extension of the event, entailing and requiring different levels of performance, rather than, an alternate form of performance.

The role of media in the subject of performance is very interesting. As I have discussed, the performances are generally live, whether they are received electronically or not. If they are conducted in a recording studio or radio station- they are live performances, however, there may not be a live studio audience. This issue addresses certain questions about the affect that this has on the way leaders perform, especially with the emphasis that I have placed on audience agency. Although the audience may not be present, for example in the circumstances of a studio recording, I believe they still play an active role in the performance. They are responsible for the interpretation and discussions. They are reliant on the leader for clarification. In most cases, the audiocassettes of sermons are listened to and then clarified by a preacher. The individual seeking clarification can visit the preacher live or often ask questions, for example on a

radio show that has a call-in component. At most of the radio stations in Mali, there are radio shows that include a call-in discussion. This requires an exchange between a preacher and guest(s).

Mediated versions of performances raise other issues of reception, requiring a shift in sensory faculties in the experience of live or audio and visual cassettes. If the preacher is performing for a live audience, there is an immediate response from the audience, whereas the media often entails a delayed reaction from the audience. If the performer is recording a cassette, although there may be a counterpart to the performance, by an accompanying preacher, there is not an immediate audience reaction or dialogue. The real audience's participation will occur in the evaluation of the cassette.

As discussed there are different types of religious performers. Some of the performers may or may not appropriate the media. Media then, "is not just a simulation of ritual, but rather an extrapolation of an aspect of behaviour which forms part of ritual events" (Hughes-Freeland 1998: 57). It presents the study of religious leader's performances with a new issue of recognizing the dislocation and relocation of mediated performances in different contexts. With the use of media, the leader's performance is decontextualized and subsequently, reused.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

In understanding charisma, the interconnectedness between the performance and audience becomes important. Charisma is not just a trait that encourages a leader's commitment, cause, and vision; it also demands performance abilities. Charisma requires a performative role played by a leader that is jointly constructed by followers. I have attempted to show the significance of recognizing performance in a study of

Islamic charismatic leaders. As the media is introduced into this phenomenon, the leader is able to extend his reach, diversifying and increasing his following.

The following chapter will examine the dissemination of these performances through electronic media, including radio, audio-and videocassettes, and television. It will show that the proliferation of media in Mali, due to the recent (1990s) political shift, has facilitated the leader's use of *mediated* performances. The media, which is effectively used by the leaders, potentially creates an image and spreads his messages, expanding and diversifying his audience and follow-ship. Using this new electronic media, along with the force of the leader's message, often the leader can wield extensive amounts of economic, spiritual, material and educational power. Despite Mali's democratisation process, the secular government and the religious authorities in Mali often become involved in the leader's activities and his following, including media censorship.

## **4.0 ISLAM'S USE OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Media technologies are an interesting prospect in Africa, full of exciting possibilities for religious communication. Along with other media technologies, broadcast media is a growing phenomenon in Africa. In the proliferation of media tools, used for religious broadcasting, are the performances ultimately comparable to the "mediated" performances? Who is consuming the performances? Is it the same audience reception and follow-ship of the leaders, as that of the live performances? Is it easier to listen to a cassette or the radio, rather than attend a sermon at the mosque? Is it more



convenient for people who are immobile or too busy to consume electronic performances, than attend a live performance? What makes religious media popular, especially audiocassettes and the radio?

This chapter will explore these questions of mediated performances<sup>48</sup>. I will provide a discussion about media funding and censorship; an examination of audiocassettes and videocassettes, including the circulation, distribution and consumption; the reception and use of television and radio; a case study of a selected radio station; and the use of media by religious leaders and the experience of media reception by the audience. For the study in Mali, I chose to focus on four electronic media: television, radio, audio and videocassettes<sup>49</sup>. This decision was based primarily on usage, popularity and availability in the country. However, it is important to recognize the existence of the Internet as a powerful disseminating tool for leaders, although none of the leaders, in Mali, confessed to using the Internet for religious information dissemination yet. I believe that certain leaders will appropriate this medium as the communication infrastructure develops over time<sup>50</sup>.

## **4.2 Theoretical Discussion: General Media**

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<sup>48</sup> In this chapter, I acknowledge that the data centers on production and distribution, more than consumption. I realize this is potentially problematic for the thesis in that I have tried to show the balance and equality in both the leader/performer and the following/audience. I will state that there are several reasons for an imbalance in the thesis and my research material: Firstly, both access to information in the field and the short fieldwork duration and finally, there is the difficulty associated with researching the audience. I believe to present a qualitative study about audience requires a great amount of time and research specificity. I have discussed in the previous chapter that audience studies are both limited and complicated. An interesting project for the future, however, would be to conduct a qualitative study on the consumption and reception of religious media in Mali or the region of West Africa.

<sup>49</sup> In this thesis, I have presented material specifically about broadcast media; print media, though, is also a strong medium, often used in Islamic contexts.

<sup>50</sup> For a discussion about Internet and Islam see Eickelman & Anderson, eds. 1999.

For the past several decades, the relationship between mass media and cultures has often been researched in communications, literary studies and sociology, yet little research has been incorporated into anthropology. It is currently a growing interest in the discipline (Spitulnik 1993: 293). Anthropology can contribute to the analysis of television [and media] in society, especially because, in the past, studies have tended to generalize or been too particular (Freeland-Hughes 1997: 64).

Early mass media studies focused on the effects that media had on behaviour and attitudes (Khan 1991: 291). Emerging in the 1960s, Marshall McLuhan became a pioneer of communication studies. He regarded electronic technologies as extensions of human consciousness and concluded, “that the medium is the message” In this, it was thought that these technologies played a role in structuring human relations and shaping political and social environments (McLuhan 1964). Following this trend, in the early 1990s, media studies turned the focus towards “the long-term process of change in the structure of cognitions, perceptions and opinions” (Khan 1991: 291).

Today qualitative methods are used in media analysis. Mass media studies no longer recognize just the electronic media of distribution; radio and television; it has included artifacts, experiences, practices, and processes (Spitulnik 1993: 293). These latter elements are of equal importance. Faye Ginsburg claims that the focus of people’s activities around media is important in the research process (Ginsburg 1994). Current approaches to new media suggest a renewed awareness of the “social organizations of communication and the contexts in which different media operate” (Eickelman & Anderson 1999: vii). Furthermore an understanding of the emergence of new forms of public spaces, other than conventional broadcast media is required. Wilton Martinez proposes that the “viewer’s construction” is indeed a complex co-construction of the

viewer in an inter-dialogue between media texts and historical and cultural contexts (Martinez 1993: Hafsteinsson & Crawford eds.).

Bourgault argues that mass media in sub-Saharan Africa has been affected by the “precolonial legacy of oral tradition”. To a certain extent the specialized verbal artist’s narration has been used in Mali to promote national unity, public health and new agricultural methods (Conateh 1974; Bourgault 1995). The idea of media as a political tool has also been considered. For example, since the beginning of colonization, the leaders of Francophone African countries have been conscious about the power of radio as a political instrument (Bourgault 1995: 72; see also Diawara 1994). During the post-independence era in Africa, there was awareness about the important role that radio played in consolidating new nations. This enticed several countries to launch ambitious plans using electronic media, such as distributing cheap radio-sets to the population. Also, several countries in West Africa, including Mali, organized radio clubs to host political discussions (Bourgault 1995: 73).

Media provides a unique mode of communication for the Islamic religion. With its oral recitations, performances are notably compatible with audio and visual electronic media. Both audio and visual dissemination therefore, is a convenient tool for leaders because it is complimentary with the nature of sermons and the history of oral traditions within the religion. This idea will be evident as I discuss specific examples. However, there is the issue of determining a compatible medium within a particular context<sup>51</sup>.

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<sup>51</sup> It is important to acknowledge the context, not only for recognizing the medium compatibility, but also for other variables that impact media studies. A general argument about the interconnection between new Muslim movements and the use of broadcast media must account for the context. Media impacts each environment very differently, because of the various experiences of colonization, language use, educational policies, communication policies, and political landscapes. The use of media will have different effects in contexts, such as the Middle East, West Africa, etc. A general media discussion is

Recent definitions about religious media claim that religious broadcasting portrays the values and belief of a religious group (Gunter & Viney 1994). The intent of such broadcasting has been described as a means to entertain, inform, persuade or evangelize (Ibid.). Authors Barrie Gunter and Rachael Viney claim four distinct roles for religious broadcasting: educational<sup>52</sup>, member solicitation and/or conversion/proselytizing; promotion of a greater understanding; and raising moral and social issues (Ibid: 120-112)<sup>53</sup>. It is important to note, in this thesis, education's role of media is evident and essential in the Islamic religion considering the emphasis that has been placed on the Islam and Islamic leader's affiliation with religious knowledge, education and teaching.

Generally, for Islam, in the media industry, it is said that morals and ethics determine and influence the production, content and distribution of radio and television programming in the Muslim world (Melton, Lucas & Stone 1997: xvi). In areas that are dominated by Islam, extensive religious broadcasts are held on Islamic holidays. Different electronic media, such as the "radio, presents verses of the *Qur'an*; announces the Islamic calls to prayer;" and other religious expressions (Bourgault 1995: 89).

Often, the religious media is presented in the Arabic language. This is important to consider in analyzing Islamic media, as many people listen to Arabic programming, despite their lack of comprehension in the language (see Launay 1997). Ultimately, as I

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interesting, however the reader needs to be cautioned that specific contexts also need to be accounted for. Throughout the thesis, though, I make reference to media issues to specific areas.

<sup>52</sup> See Launay 1997 for a discussion about education in sermons and tapes. For an extensive discussion about the media's role in Islamic education see Gregory Starrett 1997 & 1999; See also Eickelman and Anderson eds. 1999).

<sup>53</sup> It is important to note that these classifications are based on research conducted in the United Kingdom- therefore there is a danger in assuming an exact translatability into an African context. Possible differences may include contexts with different political circumstances and communication policies.

have discussed in Chapter 2 (Religious Leaders & Performers), the leaders are required to interpret the sermons for the population. Alternatively, individuals consume the Arabic media as a symbolic or ceremonial act, rather than, focusing on the meaning. Using the Arabic language, then, becomes a means of communication and dispersing messages with the wider, more global Islamic community. Furthermore, it is also a way to assert Islamic knowledge.

In Cote d'Ivoire, for example, religious electronic media, specifically cassettes, are one of the vehicles for creating a "national and indeed regional Muslim community" (Launay 1997: 8), including Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso (Ibid.). The circulation of religious "cassettes constitute one-hardly the only vehicle for creating a national and indeed regional Muslim culture" (Ibid: 8)<sup>54</sup>. And this is so, not solely for its rhetorical style; also the historical lineage of practitioners in this region.

In Mali, the multi-party elections that were held in the 1990s replaced the old dictatorship of Moussa Traore. I have mentioned that through this democratization process there were dramatic shifts that occurred in Malian society: the opening of the economy, toleration of religious expression and the development of an independent and private media. These shifts have resulted in the propagation of Muslim leaders through their appropriation of electronic media.

#### **4.3 Funding: Religious Media**

In Mali, principally, the funding for media is not systematic. The state radio and television is state-sponsored. Organizations, international NGOs and governmental agencies, such as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and United

States International Development (USID) often finance programmes, or offer production material for private stations. There are also stations that exist based primarily on communal participation. Finally, there are broadcastings that are funded by politicians.

Religious media funding also comes from a wide variety of sources. As discussed in early chapters, the most prominent religious leaders often study abroad. This reality not only reveals the location of networks that the leaders establish, but provides insight into the potential financial support received from these networks. Therefore, not only are broadcasts linked to foreign networks, they are also funding sources as well. Moreover, by having a foreign media connection, this further impacts the creation of a wider Muslim community. The donations are often granted permission by the government, using the pretext of an Islamic NGO.

Here it is necessary to emphasize the Islamic association's role on funding of religious media. The Islamic associations are also large sponsors of religious broadcasts. Often, members of an association pay for programming through association fees. The associations that rent airtime from a network provide this form of funding. The same type of funding applies to a leader who is sponsored by his sympathizers. According to Bourgault, a number of religious organizations provide the programming fees to African stations (Bourgault 1995: 89).

In regards to state-sponsorship, interestingly, it funds the only, exclusively religious station in the country, *Radio Islamique*. This fact will be explored in greater detail as the chapter progresses. Evidently, this funding strategy can be seen as a government control mechanism.

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<sup>54</sup> For an extensive discussion about the new media's role on the creation of Islamic values see Starrett 1999 in Eickelman & Anderson eds. 1999; see also Eickelman & Anderson eds. 1999.

However, the country's "democratic" context has certainly allowed more funds to be overtly spent on religious private and independent media, whereas during the Moussa Traore regime, there were tighter constraints on the money that was spent on media.

#### **4.4 Media Censorship**

Before the early 1990s, Ziegler and Asante (1992) recorded that all governments in the West African region were centrally controlled. Several of which were military dictatorships with weak media systems. According to African media specialists, Ziegler and Asante, "the fact that in most African countries the broadcasting operation is highly centralized means that provincial or district initiatives are virtually impossible" (Ibid: 60). Times have changed.

Accounting for media infrastructures in the region, studies require recognition of "the new political geography of communications"(Eickelman 1999: 38), as described by Eickelman. Despite an element of control, in the use of electronic media there are still censorship aspects that become a great feat for authorities (Eickelman 1999 in Eickelman and Anderson eds. 1999)<sup>55</sup>.

As a result, the production and circulation of religious information, through mass media such as magazines, books and cassettes, has reached a point beyond which it cannot be centrally controlled, either by the state or by religious authorities" (Starrett 1998). "Small-Media" new technologies, including portable video cameras and

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<sup>55</sup> See Eickelman (1999) for a discussion about social and technological developments that have contributed to difficulties in authority and control in the Middle East. See also Robert Launay's research about Islam and electronic media in Cote d'Ivoire, he suggests that the producers do not necessarily have total control over the content of the media because messages are multiply interpreted (Launay 1997).

recorders, and low power, television and radio services have and continue to transform the sub-Saharan African media scene in numerous ways (Bourgault 1995: xiv). According to Bourgault, “there are efforts underway to create electronic media outlets which will compete with government-operated media systems” (Ibid.) and there is a process engaged towards the privatization of media in some countries, for example Cote d’Ivoire. As a result, the preoccupation by ruling blocs of many nation states is “their inability to regulate the inflow of transnational message which have been smuggled across borders or penetrated airwaves” (Hughes- Freeland & Craine 1998: 4).

In Mali, since the fall of the Moussa Traore’s political regime in 1991, the modalities of expression of religion have flourished. This phenomenon has certainly embraced the proliferation of media in Mali. Since Mali’s democratization process in the 1990s, there has been a growth of mass media communications. By 1991,

the transitional government which succeeded Traore’s dictatorship was the first in the region to recognize the right to a free audio and visual press. In 1992, there was a law authorizing private broadcasting radio and television (Bourgault 1995: 102).

Thus a “total liberalization of the press” emerged (Myers 1997: 97). Consequently, because of the “democratization” process in Mali, there was a proliferation and appropriation of media beginning in 1992, by religious performers. According to Mary Myers, a communication specialist, of Mali, stated, “A relatively lively environment for democratic change appears to have quickened the pace of pluralism in the radio [and television] sector [and cassette industry]” (Ibid.). She continues, “Arguably, pluralisms of radio airwaves has aided progress toward free expression in Mali (...) and has no doubt contributed significantly to the promotion of democracy” (Ibid.: 102).



Despite, the greater flexibility in the media infrastructure of Mali, the country's communication policies are not uniform. There are varying regulations for each district in both the state-run and private broadcasting networks. This, as a result, allows for more variation of media, yet perhaps it has created a more stringent system because of the small coverage that the authorities are responsible for.

This decentralization is due to the country's vastness-1.2 million square kilometers (Ibid: 97), as well as the limited technology available to a very poor population. Consequently, there is an inequality in electronic media distribution. Logically, the more developed the area, for example urban areas, the more sophisticated the media structures, with appropriate antennas and cables, are. The capital, Bamako and surrounding areas of the country have the most advanced broadcasting system. A large percentage of broadcast media is disseminated from Bamako. Nonetheless, in the past decade, the emergence of local radio with more movement towards decentralization has been apparent.

Although the government in Mali intervenes or censors certain religious activities and the dissemination of religious expression via radio and television, other media such as cassettes are difficult to control. As I will soon demonstrate, a religious leader certainly has an opportunity for expression whether he is restricted from mainstream broadcast or not; it would be a feat simply to track the circulation of "alternative media" like audio and videocassettes. This will be evident in a discussion about cassettes in Mali.

Myers suggests that "in Mali, one could argue that the free press is not yet sufficiently well entrenched to be immune from the occasional government-decreed shut-downs" (Ibid.: 103). Although a certain degree of protection is provided by the new

trade-union *URTEL (Union des Radios et Televisions Libres)*, [generally speaking] no radio station [or broadcaster] feels sufficiently secure to be able to resist state pressure” (Ibid.).

Religious media is further screened, because in theory, every religious television and radio program is the product of the *Ulema* office. The Minister of Information created the *Ulema* office during the Period of Colonel Yusuf Traore. It has functioned since 1975, and is directed by Habiballay Sylla, a French professor, who is fluent in Arabic (Sanakoua 1991: 139).

The office of *Ulema* is responsible for several tasks in the dissemination of religious broadcasting: language translations; content verification; representation of the minister of information in Islamic associations; contacting the religious clerics for show preparation; and overall controlling, judging and censoring all the *Ulema* of the country. Once again, we see how the government is indirectly implicated in censorship. All the radio programs are products of journalists, who are state employees or the exterior collaborators of radio, nonetheless Malian (Ibid.).

As well, the producers at *Radio Islamique*, this includes the administrative members of *AMUPI*, often file complaints with the government regarding the contemporary content of television or radio programs. This occurs frequently during the airing of “scandalous” and “provocative” soap operas.

Another mild censoring source for programming is the organization or individual that actually funds the broadcast endeavour. Here the risk of editorial involvement from the funding source is inevitable.

#### **4.5 Consuming Communications: The Production, Distribution, Circulation, and Consumption of Audiocassettes**

In Mali, the shift in the political regime has only facilitated the religious cassette phenomenon even further by openly allowing the production, distribution, circulation and consumption of this medium. It appears that the cassette market has exploded as a result of preaching authorization. Because cassettes reveal the identity of the speaker, unlike the written word that can remain anonymous (Eickelman 1999: 36), they are most likely more readily available and visible, than, prior to this period. Cassettes have been used for decades in Mali. Before 1992, cassettes were the only way to circulate the leader's message. With "discriminating" censorship on mainstream broadcasting, religious leaders have begun to use cassettes with increasing vigor.

The cassette culture is a big industry in Mali, not exclusively religious material, but also a thriving music industry. The following section reviews details about the logistics of the cassette culture in Mali. Issues that will be addressed include: How are cassettes produced? How are cassettes sold? Who sells them? What is the content of cassettes? How the cassettes are perceived by leaders and by their religious followship?

In a sense, the use of sermon cassettes by a religious leader is like the production, distribution and circulation of his performance. Cassettes appeared to be used as, both an entertainment and an educational tool, basically a tool for disseminating religious knowledge. Dale Eickelman (1999) notes, that, audiocassettes are often a "vehicle for religious debate" (Eickelman 1999: 36). According to Eickelman and Anderson, in the 1970s in Iran, the audiocassettes of the Ayatollah Khomeini and many others were dispersed throughout the country (Eickelman & Anderson 1999: 3).

The wonder of cassettes is not only that the distributor has a large territory to cover, if desired, the cassettes can be circulated far and wide. There are no boundaries for circulation. This is an ideal activity for religious leaders who are trying to enhance their popularity and diversify and/or increase the size of their following. According to Eickelman, the sermons of Lebanon's Shaykh Husayn Fadlallah and Egypt's Shaykh 'Abd al-Hamid Kishk are available throughout the Middle-East and wherever Arabic-speaking Muslims are found in Europe and America" (Eickelman 1999: 36). Once again, this medium is shown to follow migration patterns of religious networks, associations and followers. In Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon and other countries within West Africa, cassettes of an influential charismatic Malian leader can be found.

According to Eickelman and Anderson (1999) "cassette tapes are ubiquitous in the Middle East, and most countries acknowledge their significance by conducting rigorous inspections at frontier, where they are subject to special scrutiny" (Eickelman & Anderson 1999: 9). Preachers or producers of cassettes "utilize accessible, affordable technologies and vernacular languages to get messages across the border and past official and self-appointed guardians" (Eickelman & Anderson 1999: 9). Furthermore, "No group, organization, class or category of persons has much direct control over what will be taped and especially over what will be sold in the market place" (Launay 1997: 8).

Cassettes are produced in numerous ways. There is not an official system that regulates the cassette circulation, such as patents. Often the leaders, themselves, do not even have control over the production and distribution of the cassettes. Market and store vendors will copy cassettes while a customer waits. Often, the vendor will place a personalized stamp on the cassette cover. This conveniently allows the customer to later

contact the supplier to purchase a copy or another performance by the same leader. Cassettes are also borrowed from a friend or a contact. If the person has access to a cassette recorder, the cassette is copied. Another means for the production of cassettes is by radio stations. They will produce cassettes of religious programming by copying a recorded performance and then selling it to the public. Or alternatively, radio stations will record a live performance of a preacher at the station and then sell it to the public. To date, it is unclear whether cassettes are studio recorded and produced exclusively for cassette purposes.

In Mali, during each sermon it is common to see numerous cassette recorders. Thus there is the production of "amateur cassettes" (Eickelman and Anderson 1999: 7). Members of an association or any audience member of a performance can potentially create an industry by selling cassettes of performances. There are also individuals that tour with certain religious leaders and produce cassettes of each live performance.

Sales of cassettes will occur at any of the aforementioned locations where there is cassette production. In the large markets of the cities, it is easy to locate the religious cassette vendors. It is inevitable that market employees will direct a consumer in the right direction to locate religious cassettes.

*One day, I had located a vendor in the Grand Marche in Bamako. His name was Ami. He was a young Malian. I sifted through his large box of cassettes. I was given a briefing about the different leaders. My experience with Ami was not an isolated event. With most kiosks and cassette dealers in Bamako and Segou, the vendors had knowledge about the most popular, sought after preacher. Ami frequently receives cassettes from his distributors, once a new one is recorded or aired. The cassettes are usually sent to him by one of the most popular suppliers in Bamako.*

One of the main suppliers of audiocassettes to the street and market vendors of Bamako is a man named Bani Konate. He has a head office in Bamako and supplies to a majority of the vendors. Usually suppliers like Konate are responsible for touring with the leaders and recording their performances. Otherwise a supplier may have strong links with religious networks and receive cassettes from other locations.

Members of associations have created industries by selling cassettes of performances. During a preacher's sermon, at a mosque, *medersa* or Islamic association activity, there are often numerous audience members copying the sermon, with cassette recorders, to distribute, sell or re-listen to the sermon.

There are also shops that sell cassettes, radios and cassette players, rather than market stalls. Alternatively, there are young male street vendors who sell the cassettes. These individuals circulate the streets, carrying a roped box filled with cassettes.

Often people arrive at the radio stations to buy cassettes. *Radio Balanzan* in Segou, for example would direct its listeners to the appropriate vendor or preacher (Director of *Radio Balanzan*; Segou, Mali; March 16; Personal communication). The radio station's involvement with cassettes is a growing practice. "Listening clubs" have augmented this idea. They are a fairly recent phenomenon in Mali. The distribution of blank cassettes and recorders are sent to remote regions of the country. The aim is to encourage individuals to create their own programs, which will be later aired in the stations (Myers 1997: 101). This idea is popular in community radio stations. However, religious leaders and their distant following could potentially use this system in the future.

Cassette sales are a relatively lucrative business for vendors. It is important to note though, as Launay discovered during his research in the city of Khorogo, in Côte

d'Ivoire, "sermons of the *Koko* clerics were not, in fact a commercial commodity; people taped the sermons for their own benefit rather than for sale" (See Launay 1997). The same phenomenon applies in Mali. It is important to realize that sermons were not exclusively produced for sales, however they were still included in the vast pool of manufactured cassettes, whether there is a monetary transaction or not. As cassettes are not necessarily officially regulated, proceeds for the cassettes go to the vendors. Thus, the performer may not financially profit from the sales, with the exception of studio-recorded cassettes or a vendor, specifically hired by a preacher. Nonetheless, certainly the sales circulate the name and identity of the performer. It is difficult to determine how many cassettes a vendor such as Ami sold per day. He could affirm that the volume of sales increased during religious holidays, such as *Ramadan*.

The religious cassettes include: recordings of sermons, tours, recitations, conferences or association meetings. Cassettes are sold in two formats: 1) professional/original versions-studio recorded, with a picture of the leader on the casing; 2) "amateur cassette", where the cover shows handwritten details of the leader and his performance location (See illustration 1. in Appendix; p. 196). The actual cassettes that are available in the markets include standard features: the date of the sermon, the place of the performance and the stamp or logo of the vendor or distributor. For the sympathizers, this is a useful tactic for the collection of various cassettes. It conveniently allows the customer to later contact the supplier to purchase a copy or another sermon by the same leader.

Cassettes are sold for approximately 1000CFA and up (\$1.79-2.50 US each). The prices vary according to the production and the popularity of the religious preacher.

Many of the cassettes are in Bamana (to be circulated among Bamana speakers), Arabic or French. Translated cassettes are produced for individuals who are not proficient in these languages.

Overall, the use of cassettes allows for greater flexibility by the producer, distributor, and consumer. Cassettes can be produced and reproduced at a very small scale and low cost (Launay 1997). Cassettes are inexpensive to purchase and produce. They are easy to reproduce, and to smuggle. Cassettes are recorded and then resold in the markets. "Radio broadcasts the new songs [or latest sermon], while tape recorders record and repeat them" (Diawara 1994: 44). According to Hughes-Freeland, "the performance is recorded, and will be seen [or heard] repeatedly" (Hughes-Freeland 1998: 57).

It is difficult to identify cassette consumers. Even after conducting long periods of participant observation with market vendors, it is a feat to discern a generic customer or even customer patterns. The consumers were varied, ranging from elderly to youth, men and women. As mentioned, the vendors affirmed that sales of cassettes certainly increased during religious holidays. People tend to listen to the cassettes at their houses with friends or alone. There are different reception environments, both sacred and non-sacred spaces such as, homes, automobiles, mosques, associations and other meeting places<sup>56</sup>. Individuals listen to the cassettes on long-distance bus trips, in cars and at work. Cassettes also do not restrict the time of individuals like attending a sermon evening.



#### **4.6 Consuming Communications: Production, Distribution, Circulation, and Consumption of Videocassettes**

In Mali, there are many similarities between the phenomenon of audio and visual cassettes. The resemblances include the general content, circulation, and reception environments of cassettes. Although the use of videocassettes in the religious sphere is less developed than audiocassettes, it is still important to discuss this phenomenon, as the video market is a growing phenomenon in Africa and other areas in the Islamic world. Religious video circulation, in general, appears to be a rapidly growing phenomenon worldwide<sup>57</sup>.

Video players are useful educational, promotional and political tools, like that of audiocassette machines. However, due to the expense of video players, their accessibility is limited compared to audiocassette players<sup>58</sup>. Video use is linked to the accessibility of the videocassette recorder (VCR) and a television set for viewing. Thus, as I will discuss in the section about television, television reception is limited to a minority of the population. It remains a commodity for the elite.

Video reception is used mainly as a collective activity. This is most likely due to the individual's inaccessibility to machines. VCRs, when used, can provide a viewing for a large audience. It is rare in Mali to see one person watching television or a film alone.

This section accounts for two main factors: videocassette reception and the distribution. The few uses of video that occurred during my fieldwork greatly reflected

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<sup>56</sup> See Eickelman (1999) for a further discussion about environments for media reception.

<sup>57</sup> See Khan (1991) for a study on Pakistan arguing, that, "Video-media has gradually gained a pervasive reach" (Khan 1991: 296).

<sup>58</sup> The price of varies depending on the model and features.

experiences, processes and practices of religious electronic media and its advantages for religious leaders. The reception and distribution of videocassettes were apparent on various occasions. Each of these events emphasizes the different uses of video as a tool for the dissemination of religious knowledge.

There are two main types of cassettes available for religious viewing. Firstly, there are manufactured films with religious content, for example "Malcolm X". Secondly, there are "amateur cassettes". The "amateur cassettes" are either locally produced material or circulated through an Islamic network like the audiocassettes. It is important to note, though, that the distinction between the two types of cassettes does not really have an emic significance.

The cassettes can be bought at the street or market vendors. Not all vendors stocked videocassettes; some were exclusive for audio. In Mali, mainly the distributors and vendors resided in Bamako. However, in Segou-through networks it was possible to purchase a copy of cassettes from somebody's private collection. According to Olatunde Lawuyi, based on research in Nigeria, consumers can pick and choose among a variety of goods. They can construct relationships with the marketers; depending on what emphasis they place on cost, quality and quantity of goods (Lawuyi 1997). According to Diawara, "A new profession, open to all, that of a dealer is a locally produced [audio and video] cassettes, has thus come into being" (Diawara 1994: 44). Lawauyi argues that the vocation of selling videos is growing, even if it is not successful yet as a moneymaking enterprise<sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>59</sup> See Lawauyi (1997) for a discussion about the growth of video consumption; circulation and marketing in Nigeria.

Occasionally, an activity at Islamic associations was video screening. On one occasion, at an Islamic youth association the film *Malcolm X* was screened (LIEEMA activity; March 1; Segou, Mali; personal communication). The association members watch movies when videocassettes are available. However, videocassettes that are considered appropriate for a religious context are not that common.

Cassettes of foreign preachers can be circulated in various contexts. Once again, the videocassettes contribute to the creation of a wider Islamic community. Today, videocassettes of the anti-regime preachers and demonstrations are circulated around the countries in the Arabian Peninsula (Eickelman & Anderson 1999: 3). In Mali, for example videocassettes of the renowned preacher, Cherif Ousmane Madani Haidara are distributed to other countries in West Africa (Haidara will be discussed further in Chapter five).

The preacher's tours or live performances are often recorded and then sold to the followship. "With the VCR, a cassette tape can be played over and over again as a reinforcement to learning" (Ziegler & Asante 1992: 71). The advantage of the VCR can aid retention and also serve as a convenient tool for educating people in local and distant regions of the nation (Ibid.) or worldwide.

Moreover, the filming technique of local production videos or "amateur cassettes" further highlights the importance of the audience and leader dynamic. Simultaneously, the audiences watching the "amateur cassettes" have a full viewing of the performers and the audiences during the performance. The screen produces a double vision-one frame of the audience and the other of the performer. For the viewer of the cassette, this type of analysis provides a "layered performance". He/she is able to view the audience of the live performance and the performer. Thus, the performance is a

visual replica of the original. During a screening with members of an Islamic association, on one of these films, we watched the crowd in the video rousing the performers. The video was screened in Segou, however featured the preacher's tour of Mauomlound in June 2000. The audience could watch the behaviour of the crowds in the stadium.

As I discussed in Chapter two of the thesis, another use of video is to promote political discussions during conferences. This was demonstrated one afternoon in Segou. All the Islamic associations in the region were invited to attend an organized video screening of the national assembly of Islamic associations. The video that was screened was a recording of the second, recently large conference, in Bamako about "the role of Islam in the upcoming elections" and "Islam's future in the country's political arena". (See Chapter two for further details of the conference. There were "4000 devout Muslims" (Baxter 2002a) at the national assembly in Bamako. It was very well organized in a large hall. The speakers were religious clerics who stood on a stage, using several microphones to speak to the attendees.

In Segou, the screening was held at an Islamic Institute. The audience of the screening was a variety of regional Islamic association members. It was obvious that there were representatives of several associations, because of the various logos, and branding on veils and clothing of the audience. The men and women were separated, so there were two large classrooms that were converted into screening rooms for the afternoon. During the video, the audience concentrated on the speakers' lecture in Bambara. At the end of the screening, there was a discussion about Islam and the upcoming elections. The video prompted a discussion and debate about the elections and Muslim's participation.

Due to the use of this medium, the attendees of the video screening, in Segou, were able to view the important affairs of the national assembly. The event was not the only time in which the video was screened. On a separate occasion, the video was shown, during a media activity at another Islamic association (Dramane Sougoune; March 14; Segou, Mali; personal communication). Evidently, several copies of the cassette were being circulated around the city.

These events played significant roles in both informing the audience and creating links between the different Islamic communities. They depicted the use of media tools in the religious sphere. Again, this reflected the usefulness of media devices for disseminating information to different locales.

#### **4.7 Consuming Communications: Radio**

Radio is viewed as the most popular communication form in the continent. Zielger & Asante argue that there are four main explanations for this: 1) relative inexpensiveness of the medium 2) the high level of illiteracy 3) the high incidence of multi-language states, and 4) the low personnel requirement for operation (Ziegler & Asante 1992: 55). In fact, the most costly elements of radio operation are equipment and personnel (Ibid).

Radio is a growing phenomenon in Mali; indeed, since the democratization process in the 1990s, there has been a prolific influx of mass media communications. Currently, radio is the most effective communication medium for disseminating information in, both cities and rural areas of Mali. Despite Mali's continuous economic struggles, radios are widely accessible, affordable and often the sole means of information transmission available to the population.

As I have mentioned, the country's historical tradition of oral communication lends itself to the success of this media tool. According to Sanakoua, there is a strong belief about what is said on the radio (Sanakoua 1991: 13). Also, Mali's renowned and expanding music scene augments the popularity of radio.

The earliest radio broadcasts in the region occurred in Ghana in 1935 (Ziegler & Asante: 64). Radio stations of the Republic of Mali (formerly known as *Soudan Francais*) were inaugurated in 1962 and exercised shortly after (Sanakoua 1991: 131). Over the years, radio has aided a nation building process. "Radio was the mouthpiece of a cultural policy deliberately geared to the valorization of the historical heritage" (Diawara 1994: 42). In the 1970s, it was reported that Mali "had one of the most powerful radio transmitters in Africa" (Ziegler & Asante 1992: 60). Today, Nigeria, Kenya and Zimbabwe have reportedly very powerful transmitters (Ibid).

Nonetheless, radio remains an extremely reliable dissemination and reception medium of electronic media. Audio dissemination is a convenient tool, because it is complimentary with the nature of sermons and the history of oral traditions in Africa.

In Mali, since the new government regime, FM stations have flourished. In 1994, 20 private radio stations had been created (Diawara 1994: 41). By 1997, private radio stations numbered 60 (Myers 1997: 95)<sup>60</sup>. Today, approximately a decade since the change in government, there are approximately one hundred and eight FM radio stations in the country (Broadcast Journalist; Bamako Oumar Maiga; October 2001; personal communication). Only one of those stations is of a purely Islamic religious nature<sup>61</sup>. The

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<sup>60</sup> In general the radio stations in Mali are FM (Myers 1997: 97).

<sup>61</sup> During this study, there were two Christian stations, located in Bamako: *Radio Espoir*, a Catholic station and *Mara Boubou*, a protestant station.

station is entitled *Radio Islamique*. It is a state-sponsored station that is owned by the Islamic association *AMUPI*.

Due to the aforementioned jurisdiction about communications, radio stations have limited geographical coverage (Myers 1997: 97). The maximum span of airwaves reaches approximately 150kms. According to Myers, “decentralization is a particularly significant feature of Mali’s radio broadcasting system” (Ibid). Again, the vastness of the country lends itself to a decentralization of radio broadcasting. Today, there are both national and private stations in the country. In urban areas, logically, radio dissemination and access to this medium is more developed. This will be evident in reviewing radio profiles of stations in Segou.

Indeed, radio is very popular in Mali. It is an electronic gadget that is readily available and relatively affordable. The average cost of radios is 3500CFA (\$6.27 US). This figure varies depending on the model and brand name of the electronic gadget. In 1997, the use of over 570,000 radios was recorded. In Mali, there are 25.40 persons per radio (World Fact Book 2001).

According to Mohammed Traore, who frequently performs on the radio and television stated, “not everybody has a television, but the radio is very busy” (Mohammed Traore; February 4; Bamako, Mali; personal communication). In Mali, radio is used in the whole country<sup>62</sup>. For example, “individuals in remote areas can buy transistor radios and listen to programs from the capital (Ziegler & Asante 1992: 56). “It is not uncommon to see a lone person walking down a remote rural road with a hoe and a transistor radio, both instruments of survival” (Ibid). It is common to see people,

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<sup>62</sup> In the past, the possession of radios was exclusively for men (Drisdelle 1996: 28). Today, Women have started acquiring radios (Ibid.).

especially young men walking around carrying their portable radios or radio-cassette players. As they walk along, the media apparatus is pressed close to their ear, they listen and continue to stroll down the street.

These portable media devices are available at the markets or from vendors roaming the streets with a large duffel bag, filled with radios. These merchants circulate restaurants and other public spaces.

With the exception of *Radio Islamique*, the state-sponsored and *AMUPI* network, a majority of the radio stations that host religious programming are private. Therefore, funding is often unpredictable. The “equipment and operation costs figure in the length of on-air time, so does programming capacity. Without money, a station cannot operate either technically or programmatically” (Ziegler & Asante 1992: 57).

For religious programming, the radio stations often receive money from advertising or contracts of religious associations or leaders. The standard rate for airtime rental is 5,000 CFA/hour<sup>63</sup>. Occasionally, programs are funded by foreign networks. In this case, often the radio stations are reluctant to reveal the source of this funding, especially in the event of foreign Islamic networks<sup>64</sup>.

There were no religious programs or messages for the Muslim community until 1974. In 1975, Islamic programming was integrated into the regular radio infrastructure of Mali (Sanakoua 1991). In 1983, radio was the only form of electronic media used by Muslims<sup>65</sup>. Sanakoua’s research regarding Malian Islamic radio indicates that in 1974 there were a dozen religious-related programmes. Some of these shows are still aired,

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<sup>63</sup> This approximate conversion for this figure is \$8.95 US, based on exchange rates in 2001.

<sup>64</sup> Today, as there are more and more stringent monitoring tactics of international money movements, this might ultimately affect the money supplied by foreign countries. In the future, it may prove to be more difficult for donators to remain anonymous in monetary transactions (See Richard Dowden 2002: 46).



while others have been discontinued (Ibid: 134). The following are titles of the most predominant programmes, both aired and discontinued: *Connaissance de l'Islam* <Knowledge of Islam>, *Les Regles de l'Islam* <The Rules of Islam>, *L'Islam et la vie* <Islam and Life>, *L'Islam et la societe* <Islam and Society> (Ibid.: 133-34). The special shows available on the radio are aired during Islamic holidays, such as *Ramadan*. These show include: *Recontre avec les ulama* <Meeting with Ulamas>, *Special Ramadan* <Ramadan Special>, *Special Fete Ramadan. Special Tabaski. Special Maulud. Special Lailat al-qadr. Special pelerinage* <Pilgrimage Special> (Ibid.: 134-137). Every Thursday at 9:00 p.m. on the national radio there is a programme called *L'islam et la societe* <Islam and Society> (January 2002; Broadcast journalist Oumar Maiga; Bamako; personal communication). During the month of *Ramadan* or other Islamic holidays, the amount of religious programmes increases.

It is evident that the increase of religious programming in general is directly correlated to the change in government and the proliferation of media and religious dissemination. Overall, there is a religious segment in each private radio station. Mohammed Diko, a radio station director stated, "the reason for the religious programming is out of necessity". He explained, "that without religious programming the private radio stations would have low ratings and there would be a disregard for the station" (February 1; Bamako, Mali; personal communication).

Today, it is difficult to discern the amount of religious shows available, because they are not publicly advertised nor standardized. Further factors for the unknown information are the variations in district jurisdiction and the privatization of media

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<sup>65</sup> It is most likely that cassettes immediately followed the introduction of radios. However they probably remained underground.

networks. Certainly, the content of the shows are censored, however they are not necessarily regulated. In Mali, there are over twenty preachers who air regularly (2002; Broadcast journalist Oumar Maiga; Bamako; personal communication).

Regular religious programming generally includes the presentation of sermons, recitations, and debates. However, another type of religious programming, that appears to be growing in popularity, is the “conference programme” or “phone-in show”. This new phenomenon is particularly interesting because it is interactive between the performer and audience. This type of programme was demonstrated at *Radio Libre* in Segou. This show was aired once a week. The audience is required to call the station and ask questions to the host who is a renowned Islamic personality. Occasionally guest preachers are invited to the show.

Overall, “phone-in” or “conference” shows are ideal for regarding the relationship between a leader and his following. They also increase the immediate participation of the audience in the sermon or performance. However, on the downside of this phenomenon, poor telecommunications in distant areas prohibits wide-spread participation (see also, Myers 1997: 100). Thus this phenomenon is exclusive to areas with fairly well developed radio services and telecommunication systems.

As I have mentioned, associations and preachers rent airtime from the radio stations. The rental costs an average of 5000CFA/hour (\$8.95US). This is illustrated at one of the private radio networks in Mali. The network hosts a religious show called “*Mutualite Islamique*”. An association under the same name initiated this show. The members of the association fund the show. According to a Malian broadcast journalist, “it is difficult to believe that the show is funded exclusively by the association” (non-

member; Bamako; October Date; personal communication). It is aired from Monday to Thursday at 4:00pm to 9:00pm, and Fridays and Saturday from 7:00am to 2:00pm.

Usually, if the performance of the preacher or the association is not live, the association or preacher will provide the radio station with sermon cassettes. The radio, in collaboration with the client (the association or preacher) determines which cassettes are played. Occasionally, the radio directors will shop for cassettes from the vendors. Alternatively, cassettes are sent to the stations by friends or networks, and aired voluntarily. The cassettes are then played during the religious programme schedule. The popularity of a religious personality determines what is played on the radio. Often, there is a supervisor at the station who will decide if the cassette is too political or controversial. Lamine Konate, a director of a radio station in Mali stated,

We do not necessarily control or censor cassettes or content, unless sermons are too violent or critical. In the event of a preacher's extremism, we will then inform him to relax a little bit. Generally, we trust that what is being said is good, because it stems from the *Qur'an* (March 12; Segou, Mali; Lamine Konate; personal communication).

This type of monitoring process, as described by Lamine, is conducted in fear of government shut downs. Even within a democratic environment, stations risk the possibility of censorship.

Directors and programmers must have a basic understanding of the religion, partially for programme selection, authorization and monitoring. They are also responsible for inviting religious guests to the programmes and for determining the programming and demands of the audience. Prior to airing sermons on the radio, usually, in the absence of the preacher, the announcer is responsible for greeting the public. He states the date of the sermon, and announces the theme of the sermon (March 12; Lamine Konate; Segou,

Mali; personal communication). Furthermore, announcements of religious parties and events are often disseminated on the radio.

It is also common for the technician or host of the religious shows to have had a religious education or training. This was illustrated by Mohammed Kone, a preacher and programmer at one of the radio stations in Segou. He had been technically trained at the radio station. Kone was responsible for airing the cassettes and directing the studio during the religious programs. He had worked there for only two months. He considers preaching his career. His ambition is to continue preaching on the radio, not in a mosque, (March 16; Segou, Mali; Personal communication). Some stations have preachers, who have regular positions. These individuals play a major role in determining religious programming for the station.

Not only is technical training conducted on the premise of radio stations, it is also encouraged at selected *medersas*. Abdoul Azizz Yatlabaro, a *medersa* director mentioned that students acquire preaching skills using electronic media. This school had an extracurricular activity for the students, entitled *Scolaire Radio*. Basically the activity was a simulated radio station for the students<sup>66</sup>. Normally, the students rotate roles for preaching. They would practice preaching skills and oratory rhetoric at the station. This training was initiation into the milieu of religious preaching or informal apprenticeship for working at *Radio Islamique* or on the religious segments of other radio stations (Abdoul Azizz Yatlabaro; January 29; Bamako, Mali; personal communication).

#### **4.8 *Radio Islamique*: A Case Study of a Religious Radio Station<sup>67</sup>**

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<sup>66</sup> In 2001, during the time of my visit, the activity was temporarily cancelled due to a new semester schedule.

<sup>67</sup> Interviewee: Director, Imams

*Radio Islamique* has been chosen as a case study because of its position in the Islamic sphere and media infrastructure of the country, and its affiliation with powerful Islamic bodies and the government. *Radio Islamique* broadcasts directly to Bamako and a surrounding 50km radius. *Radio Islamique*, FM 107.4 is, to date, the only strictly religious radio station that exists in Mali. The large motto above the entrance of the station reads: “*la voix du Coran et du Hadith*” <the voice of the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith*>. It is situated next to the *Grande Mosque* in Bamako, and adjoining the office of the Mosque directors.

*Radio Islamique* was created in 1994, by three administrative members of *AMUPI*: Elhadj Modi Sylla, the vice-president; Imam elhadj Khady Drame, general secretary; and Mr. Konate, administrative secretary. These station founders traveled to various Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, in search of financing. In the airport of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, they met Abraham Sherif, an Arabic speaking businessman from Timbuktu. He granted the men with 49 million CFA<sup>68</sup>, for the creation of the station. The president of the country at the time, Moussa Traore agreed to the proposition of the new station. He financially supported it, by donating 500,000CFA<sup>69</sup> and authorizing the importation of technological equipment into the country.

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Date: January 21, 2001-March 8, 2001.

Interview: Permanent secretary-January 24, 2001

Interview: Imam el hadj Khady Drame-January 25, 2001

Interview: Oyouba Sougoule-February 1, 2001

Interview: Mohammed Diko- February 1, 2001

Location: Radio station, Bamako

<sup>68</sup> The conversion for this figure, based on exchange rates in 2001 is approximately \$87,500 US.

<sup>69</sup> The conversion for this figure, based on exchange rates in 2001 is approximately \$ 892. 86 US.

*Radio Islamique* continues to be funded by the government. It receives monthly donations. Other funding for the station comes from various sources. Sympathizers of the station or *AMUPI* donate funds. The station also produces audiocassettes to sell and distribute all over the country. Often, individuals arrive at the station to purchase cassettes to distribute across the country or in other regions. Visitors from other countries, for example France or Cote d'Ivoire also purchase the cassettes to bring home with them. The cassettes are sold for a price of 1000CFA each<sup>70</sup>. Imam *elhadj* Khady Drame stated, that, "foreigners and people come from all over the country, to the station, to buy and copy cassettes of our sermons" (January 25; Bamako, Mali; personal communication).

The authorities welcomed *Radio Islamique*, which was created under the previous government regime, in the same way in which *AMUPI* was supported. Primarily the station was able to monopolize the religious media dissemination. With the government's authorization and financial support, the government justifiably monitored the station. As I have argued in this thesis, *AMUPI*, the owner's of *Radio Islamique* collaborate with the government to maintain tolerable relations between the secular government and the national umbrella Islamic association. Together the two parties monitor and minimize radical Islamic performances. This institution, in a sense, is a partially, state-funded religious body that disseminates legitimate state Islamic performances.

*Radio Islamique* does not believe in presenting propaganda to the population. Their goal is to "promote Islam," "to diffuse the religion, so that is comprehensible and

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<sup>70</sup> This figure converts to \$1.79 US, based on exchange rates in 2001.

accessible to everybody” and “to teach individuals how to practice Islam” (Mohammed Diko; February 1; Bamako, Mali; personal communication).

Everyday there is a preacher in the studio. The employed religious leaders, considered religious experts, are the broadcasters at the radio station. The programming is mainly in Banamanan, with the exception of both a Sarakoli and a French programme, once a week. There are seven permanent Imams who work at the radio station. They are as follows: Mohammed Diko, station director; Thiam, programme director; Cheikh Elhadj Oyouba Sougoule, head of the *ulema*; Imam elhadj Khady Drame, general secretary of *AMUPI* (see Table 1 in Appendix B; p.201), Imam Ismael Drame, standard station preacher and *medersa* professor (see Table 1 in Appendix B; p.201); Abouboucar Camara, a preacher at *AMEP*, Islamic association and a standard position at the station; and Bassidi Haidara, a standard station preacher. These renowned religious leaders work at the radio station regularly. The station also invites guest speakers.

Each day, the station airs six hours of prayer, and six hours of sermons. The programmes air, either live performances by the aforementioned preachers or selected cassettes by the preachers.

Once a month, the station conducts a “phone-in” show. Apparently, this show is very popular. According to Mohammed Diko, the station director, “the phone lines are very busy” (February 1; Bamako, Mali; personal communication). This type of show is useful because it provides the station with information and statistics about its audience.

According to Diko, today, because of democracy there is less censorship of the radio content (February 1; Bamako, Mali; personal communication). However, despite the pleasant relationship between the government and *AMUPI*, the Minister of the

Interior still sends delegates to reprimand the station if the content is too “heated” or the support for the *shari’ah* is too forceful (Ibid).

The promotion of the radio station is word of mouth through networks and associative links, a common technique for African information dissemination. The station does not believe in promoting the station by paid advertising.

The station is limited to radio, except for a small amount of television<sup>71</sup>. It has a television set at the station that it is used for recording news from other countries. With the recordings, it retrieves content for radio shows. The news is either reported orally or incorporated into the sermons.

*Radio Islamique’s* goal is to eventually create a whole multi-media structure, a complete infrastructure of radio, newspaper and television. This service would be complicated, because of limited regional studios across Mali and the legal restrictions. Yet, with enough support the whole infrastructure would be possible to implement, the same way in which all the branches of *AMUPI* function efficiently.

#### **4.9 Radio stations in Segou**

In what follows is a description of the three radio stations located in Segou. Once again, Segou was chosen as a field site because of the size of the city. The amount of radio stations in this urban area was more manageable compared to the capital, Bamako, which hosts a majority of the radio stations in the country. As a result, uniform data was collected and a thorough study completed.

This survey represents the radio stations that are situated in one urban area of the country. The radio profiles that are depicted in table 2 (in Appendix B; p. 203), describe



the radio station titles, the date of creation, radio ownership, religious programming, funding, and affiliations with an association or preacher.

As illustrated in table 2 (in Appendix B; p. 203), the radio stations in Segou were implemented during the regime of President Konare, after 1992. All the stations are private and receive general operational funds from various sources. Each one hosts Islamic programmes and are affiliated with either an Islamic preacher and/or association.

#### **4.10 Consuming Communications: Television**

The history of religious television is another story. In sub-Saharan Africa, television first appeared in Nigeria in 1959 (Ziegler & Asante 1992: 64). Mali did not create television services until 1983 (Bourgault 1995: 104)<sup>72</sup>.

Televisions are expensive. "As a status technology, television has a wide appeal among African elites" (Ziegler & Asante 1992: 56). The medium of television in Mali, including the majority of sub-Saharan Africa, appears to be an elite and an urban phenomenon (Bourgault 1995). Not everybody has access to a television. As a result, the audiences are smaller than radio. However, television appears to be on the rise, like most other electronic media in Africa. In 1994, there were 14,000 television receivers; in 1995- 20,000; and in 1996 the figure doubled to 40,000 (Europa 1999 from UNESCO Statistical Yearbook; UN, Statistical Yearbook).

In Mali, although television is very much limited to the districts of Bamako and Segou; it still has a large impact on these areas (Sanakoua 1991: 140). Television relies on a durable electrical infrastructure, something that Mali does not have evenly across

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<sup>71</sup> They have very limited services for television production, due to constraints on media coverage.

the country. Electricity in Mali is often unpredictable, thus, television tends to be an unreliable disseminating tool. Several individuals mentioned that in Bamako, "Mali has constant power failures, particularly on Fridays".

According to Ziegler and Asante, "television is an expensive medium which many governments support through collecting license fees from subscribers to the service" (Ziegler & Asante 1992: 57). Television distribution in Mali includes 7620.22 persons per TV. (Ibid: 166). This figure is significantly low in relation to radio distribution.

There are religious television shows in Mali. Although the exact current data about religious programming is unavailable, Sanakoua (1991) provides information about religious programming from an earlier date. However, it is important to note that the mass media context has changed. Religious television does not appear to be that popular. The most popular programme in both Segou and Bamako was a programme called "*Sublime Mensonge*," a Brazilian soap opera, dubbed in French. The show airs every evening at 7pm. Another big hit was "*Les tops etoiles*," a regular television programme that presents music video clippings of the latest recording artists, and musicians. This show was interesting because it would often air the latest popular *djeliw*. This programme was very popular with the youth. According to Mohammed Diko, the director of *Radio Islamique*, "Television in general, especially the occidental shows, such as soap operas, have poor morals" (February 1; Bamako; Mohammed Diko; personal communication).

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<sup>72</sup> The current amount of television stations is unknown at this time.

The gap between the radio and television audience of religious programming is immense. The focus of this study was primarily on radio religious programmes, rather than television, due to popularity and availability of programmes.

The first Muslim programme aired three months after the introduction of television in Mali (Sanakoua 1991: 137). By the early 1990s there were two religious shows: "*Les regles de l'Islam*" <The Rules of Islam>, "*L'Islam et la societe*" <Islam and Society> (Sanakoua 1991: 138). Similar to the radio, the religious television programming increases during religious holidays, for example *Id al-Kabir* and *Ramadan*. The "special shows" on television are considered the most important religious broadcasts, for example: *Special pelerinage* (Pilgrimage Special). There is also a religious serial called *Muhammad Rasul Allah* (Ibid.)<sup>73</sup>. Today, the primary religious television show airs every Thursday night at 9:00pm, in Bamako. It is a religious programme called "*Rencontre avec les oulemas*". According to Mohammed Diko, the director of *Radio Islamique*, "religious television in Mali is not very rich" (February 1; Bamako, Mali; personal communication).

For the time being, television dissemination does not appear to be as useful and influential for religious leaders as other media. Not only are the audiences smaller, the production expenses are quite high. Recording studios are limited to Bamako and television dissemination is also limited to urban areas. However, with the introduction and popularization of videocassettes the dissemination of television has a wider distribution range.

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<sup>73</sup> See Sanakoua 1991 for a detailed description of religious programmes.

As well, in recognizing Islam's prohibition against icons is it possible that visual images on a television screen equates to forbidden icons? Perhaps religious television production, for religious leaders, is not that complimentary to Islam.

Finally, it is possible that the primary audience of religious programming is not necessarily members of the elite, thus, referring to the individuals that have access to televisions. This is an issue that will be explored further in the case study of this thesis.

#### **4.11 Consuming Communications: The Performers and Audience's Experience Electronic Media**

The following section will address two main issues: 1) how and where audiences experience the media of religious performance; and 2) the way in which leaders appropriate electronic media.

As I have discussed in chapter 3, it is difficult to determine the exact audience of performance, this applies to media reception as well. Generally, the media networks are challenged in providing profiles about their audiences. They do not have the technical facilitates to rate their audiences. The media employees who estimate general audience categories conclude with varying responses. For example, Bissili Lassana Sacko, a technician at a radio station told me "that the audience of the religious programming is mainly adults, not youth. This social category includes 25-45 year old men and women. Youth tend to prefer listening to sports and music" (February 11; Segou, Mali; personal communication). Lamine Konote, a station director, indicated that he had attempted audience research. He believed that youth, mainly men, often listen to the religious radio while they are working. He added that young women are not interested in religious media. Generally, youth love music. Other popular shows include French programmes,

health and education". As demonstrated, the responses to audience reception are not uniform and subject to individual interpretation.

According to Eickelman (1999), there are few studies that include audience response to Middle Eastern media. Bourgault also argues that studies about media reception in sub-Saharan Africa are limited (Bourgault 1995). I would be discrediting the stations and the listeners, if I were to present a hypothesis about audience categories of media reception. A more detailed analysis of media reception is presented in the case study of this thesis.

Broadcast networks do not have the same technological devices that are available in the West, for monitoring audiences. Yet, the local stations in Mali used their own methods. They usually conduct micro-surveys and focus groups by talking to people on the street or through networks soliciting feedback. Consumption of cassettes also indicates the leader's popularity to the networks. However, people recording and borrowing "amateur cassettes," further complicates the validity of this exercise.

The experience of mediated religious performance is simply equated to receiving religious knowledge via electronic media. In various social spaces people consume electronic media by listening, watching, using, and purchasing various media. Usually, location of residence and social class are strong variables in determining these factors. Whether or not people consume a form of media is usually dependent on the availability of technologies and standard of electrical efficiency.

In Mali, the contemporary situation of mediated performances allows for the consumer, whether this is the follower, audience, or viewer, with a plethora of performers and mediums to choose from. Mouloye Coulibaly, a young Malian media consumer commented,

"I prefer to listen to the radio and watch the television of religious leaders, rather than, attend live performances at the mosque. Often, there are debates or discussions with family and friends surrounding the content of programmes or the various performers (January 22; Mouloye Coulibaly; Bamako; Mali; Personal Communication).

Eickelman and Anderson, (1999) discuss new forms of media, combined with new contributors to the religious and political debates. They write that it:

"fosters an awareness on the part of all actors of the diverse ways in which Islam and Islamic values can be created and feeds into new senses of a public space that is discursive, performative, and participative, and not confined to formal institutions recognized by state authorities" (Eickelman & Anderson eds. 1999: 2).

This emphasizes the agency of the media consumer or audience. Ruth Marshall-Fratini adds that the role of religious media is not just useful as an instrument for circulating messages but also, what she describes as "central to the imagined for the community" (Marshall-Fratini 1998). In the awareness of contemporary flows of communication, Eickelman and Anderson advise that the "boundaries are no longer primarily territorial, although these still count, but much more complex and cross-cutting" (Eickelman & Anderson 1999: 6). Media has "multiplied the possibilities for creating communities and networks among them, dissolving prior barriers of space and distance and opening new grounds for interaction and mutual recognition" (Ibid: 3).

The use of electronic media is commonly used in institutions linked to religious leaders, including mosques, *medersas* and Islamic associations. Most Islamic associations use media, for example associations will usually participate in activities of listening to audiocassettes or watching videocassettes. The mosques and *medersas* also occasionally use the recorded performance in the absence of the Imam or preacher.

Electronic media can also be consumed and used in private spheres and "non sacred spaces". This issue requires identifying environments for listening to sermons via

the radio or cassette players. Often this occurs on long-distance bus trips, cars, at work, and homes. As an example, in Mali, one evening at a restaurant, I passed an open door to the kitchen. There were three young men preparing food, while listening to a cassette of a Malian Islamic preacher.

Another “informal space” for media use, especially for youth, is the *grin* (Brenner forthcoming). The *grin* has been defined as a social institution, by Louis Brenner. It emerged, in urban Mali, in recent decades (Ibid. 3). It has been described as a place for “Africans to recreate the associational life of the village, of which the age group was seen as the prominent example” (Ibid. 5). An area for symbolic political activity, they consist of approximately six-eight people, most often youth, majority of who are unemployed college graduates (some are gender divided). Their meetings take place in the proximity of their home or at an individual’s workplace. Drinking tea, playing cards, listening to the radio and cassette players and discussing life are the primary activities of the *grin* (Ibid, see also Drisdelle 1997). However, it is important to add that the media consumed in the *grins* is not exclusively religious.

Cassettes and other electronic media allow the freedom of movement for ideas and meanings, people are able to use them when they are working, or relaxing, at various chosen times of day or night. An individual’s schedule then for religious practice is not at the mercy of scheduled broadcasts or performance (Launay 1997).

As I have mentioned throughout this thesis, the size of the audience can indicate the popularity of a leader at a live performance. However, this does not account for the leader’s use of media. Aberbach argues, “that the modern, media especially film and radio, have enormously expanded the possibilities and the meaning of charisma. No

sooner is a medium invented then it is used as a vehicle for charisma”(Aberbach 1996: 75).

Although Aberbach’s view is creditable, because he emphasizes the usefulness of electronic media for charismatic leadership, I would argue that not all leaders hastily appropriate the media. There are other factors that need to be accounted for, such as the availability of electronic media and the occasional leader’s aversion towards the use of electronic media. Table 1. (in Appendix B; pp 202) indicates the leaders who appropriate the media. Several leaders interviewed, mentioned, they do not use the media, because they prefer a live audience or media is incompatible with their doctrines, for example anti-technology.

The production of cassettes and/or television shows and/or [radio programs] often “privileges” various groups, individuals, and Muslim clerics (see Launay 1997). Eickelman and Anderson state that, “Issues such as who gets on national television and publishes mass-circulation books and newspapers and who gets confined to the small media contribute to the shaping of a new public sphere” (Eickelman and Anderson 1999: 14). These variables are due to the political and religious landscape of the country. Obviously, Imams who preach on *Radio Islamique* are usually acceptable and often ignored by the authorities, as the station is state-sponsored. On the contrary, Haidara, a controversial religious preacher is restricted to private and independent media and alternative media, such as cassettes. The leader’s preference and use of media will be even more evident in the case study presented in the following chapter.

The leader’s use of media is not exclusively dependent on issues of censorship, access, and media monopolies. In the event of the religious performances and the use of media, there does not appear to be a hierarchical attainment of radio and television,



contrary to the other forms of Malian performance. According to Diawara, “the career of the ideal artist is no longer measured by anything more than the speed with which he passes from being recorded on an ordinary tape, to recordings in radio studios and finally to television” (Diawara 1994: 46).

It is difficult to determine whether for most leaders there is a conscious choice or a conscious strive for an abundance of media broadcasting and cassette sales. It seems logical that this strive is also dependent upon the demands of the leader’s audience. The *Pieds Nus*, a large religious organization and movement in Mali illustrates this. Imam Cheikh Ibrahim Khalil, the leader of the *Pied Nus* has chosen not to use media. His strong message to his following is resistance towards technology. Individuals that are attracted to his messages share the same ideologies. Therefore, it would be unproductive, if not counterproductive, to disseminate his sermons via the media.

If religious leaders appropriate the media, the tone of the programming must be modulated to the audience. Once again, it is evident that media choices depend on the leader and audience’s socio-economic and political context and the audience’s agency.

#### **4.12 Conclusion**

“Mediated Islam” (Starrett 1997: 157), as coined by Gregory Starrett can extend religious performances to far away distances. If the reach of the performances is extended, does this change the actual performance? This new technological element for religious leaders enhances their popularity and identity. It also diversifies and increases and the size of their following. The creation of the following and the expansion and growth of popularity is facilitated by the use of electronic media. With the use of new media technologies, as I will discuss in the following chapter, the performances become

“more participatory,” (Eickelman and Anderson 1999) in that, they include a wider audience. They are more accessible to the population and an allowance for people from a distance to join the performance. Although the leader’s performances may be restricted to certain media or endure media surveillance by the authorities, according to Eickelman and Anderson, “viewpoints suppressed in one medium almost inevitably find an outlet in others” (Eickelman & Anderson 1999: 5). This will be clear in the following chapter about a case study of Cherif Ousmane Madani Haidara, a religious preacher.

Not only is the proliferation of media in Mali contributing to the expansion and spread of religious performance, it is also a tool for accelerating the pace of acquiring preaching techniques. Diawara writes, that, for professional reciters “with the emergence of tape-recording people who want to learn no longer have to resort to the long procedure laid down by the experts” (Diawara 1994: 45). During one sermon, performed by a young aspiring preacher, a graduate law student, he asked if he could have a copy of the cassette that I recorded of him. He stated that it would help him to improve his oratory skills (Ould Saleck; March 16; Segou, Mali; Personal communication). Once again, the advantage of using electronic media is evident, not solely in the event of performance and reception, further in acquisition of preaching skills. It is unquestionable that the use of media has been a beneficial tool in disseminating religious knowledge for Islamic leaders.

The spread of electronic media is a fairly new phenomenon for religious leaders for sermon activities and religious expression. For the leader, using new electronic media enables him to spread his message and increase and diversify his following. The media that is used for religious performances/sermons also enhances the leader’s popularity and identity. It may also attract new converts to an association. This will be

demonstrated in the following chapter. There are virtually no boundaries for the circulation of “alternative media”, including audiocassettes and videocassettes. The cassettes provide a quicker and more flexible way for the leader to maintain contact with a larger following, both locally and globally. The Arabic language cassettes, for example, are especially useful wherever there are Arabic-speaking Muslims across the globe and likewise, the Bamana cassettes circulate among Bamana speaker. The mode and scope of communication has shifted contributing to the wide spread reputations of certain Islamic leaders.

Although the government in Mali intervenes in certain religious activities and censors the dissemination of religious expression via radio and television, other media such as cassettes slip through the cracks of the system. It appears that the cassette market has exploded as a result of preaching authorization. In Mali, the shift in the political context has only facilitated the religious cassette phenomenon even further by openly allowing the production, distribution, circulation, and consumption of this medium.

## **5.0 CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP: A CASE STUDY OF CHERIF OUSMANE MADANI HAIDARA**

This case study presents the life of an exemplary Charismatic Islamic leader. I will attempt to illustrate the three major themes that have already been discussed in this thesis, including charismatic leadership, religious performance and the use of electronic media. I believe that the leader portrayed in this case study effectively demonstrates these themes and their relationship.

This chapter illustrates the logistics of this particular leader’s performance, encompassing issues of where, why and how he conducts his performance. It describes

his overall followship, including both audience and association membership. It reflects the use of different electronic media that have been discussed in the previous chapter. And finally, explains the role of this particular character in the religious and political landscape of Mali.

## 5.1 Introduction

*I followed Mami Collibali, the president of the women's section of Ancar Dine international to the mosque area designated for women. We removed our flip-flops and fought our way to the front through the crowds of women waiting for the sermon to begin. We sat down and greeted our neighbors, who I had met a few minutes earlier in the compound. The floor was covered in colorful plastic prayer mats. The women were all conservatively draped in cotton fabric. They sat on their knees, holding their prayer beads. I spotted a few cassette players prepared to record the sermon. A marabout arrived and began his sermon in Bamana. The women whispered and talked throughout his performance. A few women were circulating the room with a little basket in hope of collecting donations. Most women, ready to contribute to the cause, either reached forward for their change purses or already held the allotted money in their hands. Impressively, the baskets were overflowing with money. Periodically, one of the collectors would unload her heavy offerings to the president. It was midday and the heat was striking. Considering the temperature and the crowds of people, I was not comfortable in all my layers of clothing. Towards the end of the marabout's sermon, I saw Haidara appear. He was carrying a wooden staff. He walked from the back of his house, past the women's quarters of the mosque, along the side of the complex towards the side entrance of the men's quarters. He was accompanied by a large procession. He appeared like a king. He walked very quickly, leading the convoy through two different rooms, filled with hundreds and hundreds of onlookers. People were singing and praising "Haidara" as they passed by..... "Haidara". They tried to reach out and touch him, however they were fended-off by the guards. They entered the large mosque area for the men. In the front area there were mainly older men, yet majority of the room was filled with young men of 20-30 years of age. Haidara was elevated on a platform. Two bodyguards surrounded him. The audience was so large it was impressive. There was a loud speaker that blared Haidara's sermon, in Bamana and his Arabic prayer. The women silenced each other and began to concentrate. I watched them nod in agreement. Haidara read, using his mesmerizing voice, in Arabic from the Qur'an and then conducted his performance in Bamana for*

*approximately thirty minutes. He spoke about maraboutage. He criticized the elements of this practice that were contrary to the ethics in Islam, for example, "those Marabouts that pretend to be holy men in order to make money". He criticized, "Marabouts who think they can control the destinies of others, because God is the only one who can really do this". Occasionally somebody from the crowd would call out "Haidara." It appeared that a dialogue takes place in the performances. The audience is as much a part of the performance as the performer. Haidara's voice was so clear. The way he pronounced his words was impressive. He enraptured his audience, with his deep and alluring voice. At the end of the sermon, the audience was yelling, "Haidara". A few individuals in the crowd attempted to hush those around them. There was chanting and praising by Haidara's large audience of approximately one thousand people. Later, a marabout arrived and joined Haidara on the platform, he started talking, addressing him. Haidara responded "Nam" <yes>. Haidara sat quietly, staring at his feet and twisting his prayer beads. Eventually, a benediction was held. The president instructed me to tap my forehead. In unison, all the women rose to commence the prayer. I could vaguely see the top of the men's heads over the segregating border. The prayer ended and the president made a speech to all of us and more money was collected. The women prepared to exit and Mama Coulibaly said, "follow me, we have to go to see Haidara". I was so confused. Why were we rushing? People eagerly confronted us, as they shook our hands. I was urgently rushed to the exit of the mosque, where we quickly retrieved our strategically placed flip-flops and scurried our way through the crowds. We battled towards the front. Due to her privileged position in Ancar Dine, Mami Coulibaly was able to do this. She yanked on my arm to follow. I couldn't understand her urgency. Excitedly she announced, "Haidara, Haidara". There at the entrance of the house I saw Haidara. I had never witnessed a performance like this; it was spectacular. There stood Haidara on a little platform, bodyguards and his personal assistant surrounded him. Another young man stood beside him; he who was responsible for holding a large colorful parasol used to shade Haidara from the rays of the sun. People started to sing, "Haidara, oh Haidara". The atmosphere was like a music concert, rather than, a religious sermon. I was soon whisked away, back to the women's quarters, where I was separated from the action.*

An extraordinary individual with an impressive size following, Haidara proves to be a charismatic Islamic leader, with limited boundaries. In analysing this religious figure, it is important to recognize that Haidara is not representative of other leaders; he is an anomaly in and among the large pool of Malian leaders. As we will see, to a certain

degree, his leadership activities seem to be standard practices of other leaders. However, some of his activities and performative skills are unique. As it will be further described in this chapter, there is a strong opposition towards this figure. Thus, it is important to review and interpret this case study with these issues in mind. In Mali, I concluded that most Muslims I spoke with were able to provide a commentary about one leader or another. Each individual had a preference for a certain leader. One leader in particular that seemed to arouse the greatest response was Cherif Ousmane Madani Haidara<sup>74</sup>.

One of the objectives for working with this religious leader was to determine how individuals follow a leader and the leader's perception of his leadership and association. In working closely with one specific leader, the experiences and activities surrounding him were revealed. For these reasons, speculations about the popularity of charismatic leadership in Islam, especially in certain environmental contexts, were possible.

To best describe this religious leader, it is essential to review the ways in which I experienced both his surroundings and his leadership. The methodology used to follow this religious charismatic leader was to work with him in and from two different locales. Firstly, I observed his residence and work area in Bankoni, a residential area of Bamako. Secondly, I researched his audience/association members and his image and reputation, from Segou, the second-largest city center in Mali. Segou was an ideal location because Haidara's association branch is a significant size and furthermore, it is the region in which Haidara originated from.

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<sup>74</sup> Haidara is a successful religious leader from Mali, however not the only charismatic figure. In the following two chapters, I have presented variables that indicate his unique practices. As I have chosen him as the one leader for a case study, it is impossible for me to legitimately compare him to the other

I participated in the activities of *Ancar-Dine* Segou. Because Haidara's membership numbers over 80,000 individuals, a case study in Segou allowed for a manageable sample of his devotees and thus produced qualitative data about this leader. I also documented information and collected audio and videocassettes. This latter method strongly emphasized the media tools used to facilitate the followship of a leader from a distance. This was further made possible by acknowledging Haidara's place of residence in Bamako and examining the electronic media used by his following in Segou. In the following chapter the data specifically about Segou will be presented as a case study.

During my fieldwork, I was asked, "Why do you follow Haidara?" or I was told, "Haidara is not the only personality here". These comments were examples of the masses that are adverse to Haidara. In discussing leadership, performance and electronic media, Haidara proved to be an ideal candidate. He and his following appropriate the media to its fullest capacity. Therefore, the availability of his audio and videocassettes far exceeds the other leaders. His cassettes are found in other countries in the region, for example in Cameroon and Cote d'Ivoire. He is very popular, with a large following. His association's branches are present throughout the country; therefore the role of media plays an important role in maintaining relations with his followship and spreading his charismatic messages.

Out of the few leaders that I anticipated contacting, I resolved that it was essential to meet Haidara. Not only was he one of most renowned leaders throughout the country, his association-*Ancar Dine* had also built a strong reputation.

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leaders. However, to view Haidara's attributes in relation to other renowned leaders in Mali, refer to Table. 1 (on page 40).

Haidara was one of the easiest leaders to locate because of the circulation of products with his name and address on them, such as cassette covers, fabrics, buttons, calendars, clocks and stickers. These products displayed the coordinates of Bankoni, Haidara's place of residence. This is initially how I was able to contact him. The stickers were pasted on the windshields of taxis and buses and the frames of bicycles and wheelchairs.

*During an introductory phone conversation, Haidara reluctantly stated he would be available tomorrow afternoon. I asked for the directions to his residence. He responded that, "taxi drivers will definitely know where I live." The following day I journeyed to Bankoni. The taxi driver knew that Haidara lived in Bankoni. We later arrived in the bustling residential area. We traveled over the poorly maintained roads and periodically stopped to ask for further directions. The neighbors pointed to the incline of a windy road. As we turned towards the house, I could see a large structure in the distance. There was a noticeable satellite dish perched on the rooftop. It was remarkable, considering the contrast to the surrounding houses. As the taxi pulled-up to the house, the driver said, "he is not there." He explained that Haidara had recently received a gift of a new Mercedes-Benz, from a wealthy sympathizer. "The Mercedes is not parked outside," he announced. We disembarked and questioned the few young men loitering outside. They said, "Haidara is out for the afternoon; you could try calling him back later this evening or tomorrow". The following day, once again, I set out in a taxi. This time accompanied by Mouloye, my field assistant, in attempts to meet this inaccessible leader. Once again, the driver knew the location of the house. Upon arrival, a young man greeted us in Bamana. Haidara's popularity was evident, when we were told to wait alongside a large entourage. There were people that had come from various regions of Mali and other parts of West Africa. This indicated the popularity of Haidara. One hour later, one of Haidara's assistants appeared and led me to the main building. I entered a medium-size room. It was where Haidara held his meetings; spoke with visitors; and met followers or members of his association. The room was an archetypal space for consultation. There was a row of chairs along the wall, opposite there was a large sofa and at the head of the room there was a large armchair for Haidara. Positioned against the wall, behind his chair, was a wall-unit filled with books and videocassettes. On the adjoining wall there was a large calendar, with a picture of Haidara and his family members and a clock, with a large photo of him. The adjoining room was adorned with modern amenities: a large entertainment unit-several videocassettes of Haidara's sermons, a television set, a VCR and a computer. Haidara*



*entered the room and greeted us with a handshake. He was a tall, handsome man, dressed in well-tailored Boubou<robe> and a fougoula<scarf>. He carried his prayer beads in his right hand and slowly rolled each bead with his thumb and forefinger (Bankoni, Mali; February 9 2001).*

## **5.2 Haidara: Religious Trajectory**

Haidara was born in Segou, Mali in 1960. He came from a rural *marabout* family (Schulz 2001). This relays that he was raised in a religiously inspired family. He attended the renowned *medersa*, *Institut Saada Oumar Toure pour les Etudes Islamiques et la formation*<sup>75</sup>, in Segou, until the *sixieme annee*<sup>76</sup>. He later transferred to a *lycée* in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. He was unsuccessful in completing his schooling in Côte d'Ivoire. At that point, he returned to Mali where he began his preaching career at the age of seventeen.

Unlike the majority of the other religious leaders in Mali, apart from his *medersa* training, Haidara did not receive extensive formal religious training in an Islamic state. He professes to be a self-taught charismatic leader. During his time spent in Côte d'Ivoire, he attended the sermons of the late Abdoul Azziz, known, by the Muslim community, as a great preacher. Haidara learned various sermon techniques and oratory skills from him. A religious scholar, Mamadou Hachim Sow mentioned that Muslims in Mali, who are familiar with Azziz compare Haidara to him. Haidara practiced these oratory skills with great vigor to compensate for his lack of formal Islamic training (Mamadou Hachim Sow; February 19; Segou, Mali; personal communication). He is

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<sup>75</sup> Saad Toure died in Segou four years prior to this study. Toure's son has replaced his father's position as director of the renowned *medersa*.

<sup>76</sup> This refers to the French school system. This grade is equivalent to grade six of primary school in the North American system.

gifted with the craft of oratory art. It is one of the elements that have become this figure's claim to fame. This notion will be explored later in this chapter.

In 1984, during the dictatorship led by Moussa Traore, Haidara, in his early twenties created an association/movement, entitled *Ancar Dine*. This period restricted most religious expression; therefore, the association's creation was a guise for protecting his religious performances. Haidara's sermons and preaching prevailed and avoided the enforced and strict censorship at the time.

He considers himself a "*prédicateur*" <preacher>. His primary roles as a religious leader are to preach and to guide the association, *Ancar Dine*. He facilitates and directs individuals through Islam and provides the public with an acceptable social code of conduct. Haidara emphasized that this is very important for youth because they are the future of the religion (Haidara; February 4; Bamako, Mali; personal communication).

Haidara is an extremely active religious leader. Daily, until 4pm, Haidara consults with his following, sympathizers and association members, who visit Bankoni. He provides advice and lectures to his following, for example he prepares them for the pilgrimage to Mecca. Regularly, when he is in town, he performs live sermons in the mosque at Bankoni and in various regions of the country and continent, including Congo, Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and the United States. When Haidara is absent, during his tours (preaching in various cities in the region), there are substitute preachers that conduct the Friday performances. However, in his absence I observed notable changes in Bankoni's large complex. There were fewer people hanging around the compound and attending the Friday sermon.

During Haidara's tours, he visits the various branches of *Ancar Dine* throughout the continent. The tours are organized by members who spend a lot of time and money

preparing these benefits. Members from the branches host the visits of the renowned preacher. The dissemination of his performances is then, both live and electronic on radio and television.

### **5.3 Haidara: Examples of Performance & Charisma**

Haidara is an extremely charismatic religious leader. He is passionate about his doctrines; and naturally when he speaks he is convincing. He uses an argumentative style of a politician. During his sermons he poses questions and provides the audience with answers. He is known to emulate storytellers (Schulz 2001). Apparently, Haidara has copied the preaching and discourse techniques of Abdoul Azziz, the renowned Islamic preacher from Côte d'Ivoire (Mamadou Sow; February 19; Segou, Mali; personal communication).

He has mastered an oratory art. According to several Haidara supporters, one of his notable characteristics of oratory skills is that he personalizes his speech and is empathetic with his audience (March 2001; Segou, Mali; personal communication). Often, I was told that during his sermons it appears that he is talking directly to you. It is further emphasised he is skilled with his actual word selection.

He conducts his performances and occasionally the prayers in both Bamana and Arabic. This is a unique approach to *Qur'an* recitations, yet considered sacrilegious by the other religious leaders. Most of the other leaders conduct their prayers in Arabic. One of his followers mentioned, "By conducting the prayer in both Arabic and Bamana the ritual is given greater meaning to those of us, who do not understand Arabic" (non-member; March 10; Bamako, Mali; personal communication).

Haidara is also one of the few religious leaders that use music during performances<sup>77</sup>. He has musicians that accompany his performances and when his cassettes are played in areas other than Bankoni, there are local musicians that perform his theme songs. "It is only a form of religious music", stated one of his *Ancar Dine* singers (member & singer of *Ancar Dine*; March 2; Segou, Mali; personal communication). His singers compose songs about "the greatness" of the leader and "*le bon chemin*" that they experience by following their leader. They sing in both Bamana and Arabic. Often, in the evenings in Segou, it is possible to hear the bellowing of the Haidara's theme song in the distance. This is a sure sign that there is an *Ancar Dine* activity taking place somewhere in the city.

Based on listening to the performances of Haidara, both live and mediated, he covered numerous topics: behavior of women; relationship of a woman with her husband and society; homosexuality; discos and nightclubs; the role of praying; women's clothing; proper behavior of Muslims; marriage issues and the importance of the *hidjab* <the veil>. According to his audience, generally, his favorite topic to discuss is behavior.

He is also keen on addressing controversial subjects that arouse a reaction from the religious community. He is renowned for critiquing the government and bureaucracy. He also challenges those individuals that he believes are ignorant about Islam (Haidara; Bankoni, Mali; February 5; personal communication). It is my belief that by instigating debates and attracting attention, these are tactics for further promoting his popularity.

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<sup>77</sup> The religious performer Racine Sall also uses music during his performances.

One critic commented, that, “Haidara has created a show, a type of theatre” (non-member; February 19; Segou; personal communication). His sermons are not like other religious ceremonies, but rather, a dramatic type of performance. A theatrical quality of performance is strong characteristic generally attributed to charismatic figures. The critic later compared Haidara’s performance style to Shakespeare or *Molière* (non-member; February 19; Segou; personal communication). Here the work of Tayob asserts that:

“In a snapshot analysis, the Friday sermon could be deciphered in the power of the work and the mosque, the charisma of the individual preachers, the commitment of the worshipers and the significance of order and regulation in the world around the mosque (leader’s compound)” (Tayob 1999:viii).

The following is a sample of such a performance in the context of Mali:

*The singers began their usual theme song for Haidara. He arrives. He is wearing a very elegant outfit: a white boubou, trimmed with silver embroidery. Each performance seems to present a similar beginning. Initially, there is Haidara’s entry on to the stage, platform or podium. It is usually an elevated area. Haidara waits for the cheering and singing to fade before he begins his introduction. The audience is so large that he needs a loud speaker to communicate with the crowd. He is very serious on the stage. He is seated on high-back chair, very regal –looking, in front of three microphones. This evening, he is wearing his glasses. He is wearing a red and white Arabic printed scarf draped around his head. In one hand he is twirling his prayer beads. His gold watch slips down his arms as he looks at it and then reaches for the microphone. There are young men circulating the audiences, they are wearing red banners with large white writing “Security”. There is also another type of guard: young men dressed in blue uniforms and red berets. The audience members periodically smile at one of Haidara’s comments. Occasionally they clap. If the audience continues to clap it prevents Haidara from speaking. He pauses and then, after a moment of silence, he proceeds. A few audience members clasp colorful plastic fly swatters, methodically flapping them back and fourth. The women are adorned in brightly coloured fabrics. They are all veiled. A few of the hidjab (veils) are decorated with a large portrait of Haidara. The men are dressed in boubous, T-shirts or sports-wear. A few of the men are wearing Haidara imprinted hats and t-shirts. A couple of individuals have badges of Haidara’s picture pinned to their shirts. If the crowd gets too rowdy the*

*guards immediately tame them. At this particular performance, there is the presence of presidents from various regions of Africa: Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire. All of these men are seated at a panel, to the side of the stage. For this particular occasion there was a large banner, stating Cherif Ousmane Haidara, posted above the stage. I could see his wives in the front of the audience they too were elevated from the rest of the women, positioned on chairs. As I watched the crowd, I could occasionally see young men in the crowd, holding a large portrait or painting of Haidara. Another man had his arm out-stretched with a tape player; he was recording the sermon. Occasionally audience members glanced over at one another and exchanged looks of satisfaction. The audience appears not to be restless, people shift positions, however the performance is very long, approximately two hours and the audience's patience is impressive. Many people are seated very still, with hands tightly clasped, resting on their laps, as they intently watch and listen. Haidara rhetorically asks questions. His mannerism, from the offset appears aggressive and authoritative, not to mention, very convincing. A woman walks by with a cooler, filled with water, perched on her head. A few large plastic cups of water begin to circulate around the audience. Another man puts a CFA bill in the kitty-a circulating basket of donations. At the end of his sermon, Haidara conducts a prayer. He rises and the four men surrounding him accompany him. The music echoes throughout the field. The theme song begins to play. He is swaying back and fourth to the music. Somebody cries-out "Haidara". This is a very different occurrence from the other leaders. The crowd has stood up. They raise their arms, snapping fingers and clapping hands. Others call-out "Haidara". Haidara's boubou is swaying back and fourth. Eventually, he raises his arms in the air and gestures the audience, this seems to symbolize-the end. Everybody is reseated. An announcement is made and then the excited crowd begins to exit the area. A few people were waving fabric-selling Haidara paraphernalia (Segou, Mali; January 2001).*

What has been described here is an illustrative portrait of Haidara's performance, his charisma, and his following. Haidara is worshipped by his following in such a manner that he wields great amounts of educational, religious, and financial power amongst his large following. This power will be reflected in the following sections. This seems ironic in a religious environment where there is not a hierarchy or a clergy.

In Islam, in the eyes of God, all Muslims are equal. Lindholm argues that Muhammed was not represented in the *Qur'an* as "God's companion" neither as

"supernaturally gifted" (Lindholm). Yet, Haidara's followers claim, "that Haidara has been sent by God" (*Ancar Dine* Members; February 18; Segou, Mali; personal communication). Furthermore, the Islamic associations of leaders are all organized in a hierarchal structure. Often I was told that, "in the associations, you must respect the hierarchy" (*Ancar* administration; February 9; Bankoni, Mali; personal communication).

"With a simple, direct speaking style and given to homilies and folksy oversimplification, the leader may be seen by some as common" (Oakes 1999: 20). This seemed to be a strong, appealing feature to Haidara. Numerous followers commented that, "he simplifies the religion". Thus, he presents a comprehensible version of the religious doctrines. By speaking Bamana, his sermons and prayers are understood by a broad audience, unlike other leaders who often conduct theirs in Arabic. According to Dorothea Schulz, certainly eloquent preaching style and well-tuned oratory skills make him very popular (Schulz 2001).

As a result, his preaching talents, as described are unquestionably compatible with broadcast electronic media. Audio dissemination, in particular, is a convenient tool for Haidara because it is complimentary with the nature of sermons and the history of oral traditions within the religion. Here we see charisma in action; and his popularity is further assisted by electronic media. In Mali, Haidara is one of the most active users of the media. His performance style and preaching techniques are easily recorded electronically or transferable to electronic media. This technological element to religious performances further helps to create and promote his identity. It also diversifies and increases the size of his following.

#### **5.4 Organization: The History of *Ancar Dine***

Not only is Haidara a preacher, he is also the founder, as are many other religious leaders, *Ancar Dine Al Islamia*, otherwise known as *MAD (Mouvement Ancar Din)*. It is an NGO (Non-governmental organization) that was founded by the inspiration “*de son excellence*” <of his excellence> Cheikh Cherif Ousmane Madani Haidara, “*grand predicateur*” and international *Imam de la mosquee de Bankoni*, Bamako in Mali (“*Ancar Dine Al Islamia*”, brochure: 2001).

*Ancar Dine* is a “spiritual and moral revival movement for the way of Muslims” (Ibid). *Ancar Dine* derives its name from the first community of Muslims and followers of Islam that were established in *Medina*, formerly known as *Yathrib*. Thus, the name alludes to the original participants and members of the Islamic religion (Ibid.). The term *Ancar* is plural for *Nacur*, literally meaning to provide assistance. Therefore *Ancar Dine* refers to the ones who offer assistance to help the religion.

The objectives of the association are to spread Islam; to teach and inform the population about Islam; to unify Muslims; to promote the teachings of Islam; to build religious, educational, social and cultural infrastructures for the well-being of the community; and to contribute to helping the poor, needy, and victims of natural disaster and war (Administration; Segou; February 15; personal communication)<sup>78</sup>.

### **5.5 *Ancar Dine* Institutional Organization**

*Ancar Dine* is an institution that revolves around the leader. It is difficult to separate one from the other. This will be evident in discussing the structure and activities

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<sup>78</sup> See also (“*Ancar Dine Al Islamia*”, brochure: 2001).



of the association, and especially in examining the Segou branch of the association in the next chapter.

Discussions about the association were often diverted to the topic of Haidara. Hachim Mamadou Sow, an Islamic scholar in Segou, remarked, "Haidara truly is the centre of his association" (non-member of *Ancar Dine* -Hachim Mamadou Sow; February 19; Segou, Mali; personal communication). The headquarters of the association is located in Bankoni, Bamako in Mali. The facilities at this location include Haidara's residence and consultation area, a large mosque, in which Haidara is the Imam, and a *medersa*. Bankoni is an enormous complex, owned by Haidara.

*Ancar Dine*, the leader-centered association is a large international organization that stems all across Mali, Congo, Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, and the United States. The branches of *Ancar Dine* are created when there is enough popular support in an area for Haidara and/or the association. The new association is formed and the hierarchical structure is built and thus, the community expands. However, each branch is strongly linked with the fundamental division in Bankoni and the spiritual guide, Haidara. This relationship, I believe is made possible by the appropriation of electronic media by sympathizers and members, as well as Haidara's tours and visits to the various branches and regions across Africa.

The institutional structure is comprised of an international congress (CI) *Le Maouloud*; the international spiritual guide (Cheikh Cherif Ousmane Madani Haidara); The conference of directors (COD); National Representatives (RN). The national plan is that *Ancar Dine* is directed by the autonomous national representative and two large representative bodies: central and base. The central organ of *MAD* includes: the congress, the National convention (CN), the executive committee (CE), the control

committee (CC), and the Spiritual guide (GS). The base representative includes: the federations, the sections and the sub-sections (S/S) ("*Reglement Interieur*" 2001: 3-41).

None of the administrative positions in *Ancar Dine* are financially remunerated. Work is performed on a voluntary basis. This also includes the administration for each associative branch. In reference to Weber (1948), followers of charismatic leaders often live in communistic relationship with their leaders on means provided as voluntary gifts. Obviously the increasing popularity of this association offers individuals a certain sense of prestige. Zachery, the General Secretary of the *Ancar Dine* branch in Segou, told me "that we are serving God by doing this kind of work. We are re-compensated by God for contributing physically and financially or being a member of association" (February 18; Segou, Mali; personal communication).

There are several preachers who conduct local performances in the association. These individuals are part of the administration of the organization. Haidara, their spiritual leader, trains them. Every two years, there is a training session for the most prominent preachers from all the branches. This training course is held in Bankoni, Bamako, and instructed by Haidara. The accommodations for attendees are in Bankoni as well. During the course the trainees learn new preaching techniques and content. (General Secretary of *Ancar-Segou*; Segou, Mali; February 18; personal communication).

The latest survey conducted in 1999, by Haidara and *Ancar Dine's* head office indicated that there are approximately 80,000 members worldwide. The membership of *Ancar Dine* will be discussed in extensive detail in the following chapter (a case study of *Ancar Dine-Segou*), so as to avoid generalizations. However, this section will provide a general profile of *Ancar Dine's* eligible members. The association's criteria for members are that "individuals are engaged in the service of Islam and that individuals

pledge allegiance and faith to Islam and *Ancar Dine*". Article 46, in the association's civil code, states "that each member has the right to vote; to solidarity; to critique; to promote; and to teach" ("*Reglement Interieur*" 2001: 13-14). The status from member to non-member occurs based on resignation, death, or exclusion.

There are certain merits for joining *Ancar Dine*. A few of the advantages include financial merits and the construction of networks. According to a young member of *Ancar Dine*, "As a member of one of the branches of *Ancar Dine*, you are considered a member of *Ancar Dine* everywhere" (*Ancar* member; February 13; Segou, Mali; personal communication). There are several benefits to this status. Bankoni hosts members and foreigners from all over the country and worldwide. Often, in exchange for food and shelter, the individuals conduct manual labour at Bankoni. However, as the story of Haidara and his following unfold, the other benefits and motivations in becoming *Ancars* will be apparent.

Another system that *Ancar Dine* has, to support the circulation of *Ancar Dine* member's internationally, is a membership card. (Refer to illustration 2. in Appendix A; 197). Last year, the administration, from the head office of *Ancar Dine*, decided that the cards needed to be renewed each year. The photo identification entitles cardholders to transportation, food, and shelter privileges in Bankoni. The presentation of the card is proof of membership. It is a legitimate piece of identity for entering the complex and using the facilities. This system provides an automatic security system for the compound, because frequently, intruders threaten the leader and the complex. As a result of this system, there is a large amount of people, who regularly lodge at Bankoni, who protect Haidara, his family, his residence and his association facilities. Furthermore,

the card allows for the members to visit and receive the same benefits in other *Ancar Dine*- branch locations, this includes other regions and countries.

## **5.6 Organization Funding**

The members liberally give donations to the organization. This is not because Haidara or the branch presidents request it of the members, rather, because of certain ideologies that the members believe. According to certain administrative members, “everything you buy on earth you are giving to heaven, when you donate to *Ancar Dine*, you are giving to heaven” (Administration-Segou; February 18; Segou, Mali; personal communication). Haidara also receives donations for his personal belongings, for example, one of his supporters paid for the cost of building a second floor for Haidara’s home.

Another example of Haidara’s donations occurred during my fieldwork. In the location of one of association branches, the members were in the midst of building a house for Haidara and his family. The house was to be used periodically by Haidara and his family during their visits to this region of the country. The association members have financed the land purchase and construction costs. During several association meetings, the construction of the house was listed on the meeting agendas.

There are also enormous amounts of people that follow Haidara, however they are not necessarily members of the association. Thus, he has further potential to earn great amounts of money from other sources. A non-member, sympathizer had recently donated a new Mercedes Benz to the leader. The sympathizer, who preferred to remain anonymous claimed, “Haidara is spreading the religion by traveling long distances,

therefore he needs a good vehicle to keep him safe” (non-member; Mali; March 15; personal communication).

Haidara claimed that at Bankoni there are no membership fees per se. However, 500 CFA<sup>79</sup> per month is collected and appreciated from members if they are financially capable. Moreover, offerings are gathered during Haidara’s performances. And finally, the membership cards provide a further income for the association and leader.

Another income generating activity that the association participates in is the production of calendars. All proceeds go to Haidara and *Ancar Dine* (see illustration 3. in the Appendix A; p. 198). Haidara or association members distribute this product to kiosks or homes of members. The calendar is a portrait of Haidara with his family, four wives and fourteen children. Above the photos, there is a slogan that reads: “*Guide spirituel des Ancar*” and “*6 promises of Allah*”. And finally, positioned next to the *Ancar* symbol, in bold print, it is noted: “*Le chemin est la*”.

Haidara denied any other sources of funding. A Muslim informant in Mali was convinced that Haidara’s funding was coming from elsewhere (non-member; February 10; Bamako, Mali; personal communication). I viewed several photographs of Haidara visiting countries in the Arabic world with foreign Islamic leaders. These contacts are certainly collaborators of Haidara’s entrepreneurial endeavours. I suspect that Haidara’s funding sources are from his well-established contacts in the Middle East, as are several other Islamic leaders and associations in Mali.

I believe that Haidara’s secrecy of funding sources was interesting in itself. Why was the leader so secretive about the origin of his funding? The concealment of funds was even encoded in *Ancar Dine*’s constitution. Article 40 of *Ancar Dine*’s legislation,

declares, that, “the representatives of *Ancar Dine* are obliged that the acquirement, nature, value, amount and origin of all donations and legacy, to the Control Committee, is marked in confidentiality” (“*Reglement Interieur*” 2001: 12). Perhaps, certain governments threaten or attempt to monitor local or overseas individuals, who provide funding.

### **5.7 Consuming Haidara**

A remarkable feature that differentiates Haidara from other charismatic leaders, in Mali, is the dissemination and abundance of products related to the leader’s image and messages. These products, with the exception of audio and videocassettes are primarily featuring Haidara. Throughout Mali, it is common to see the circulation of cassettes, stickers, photographs and other sorts of Haidara paraphernalia. In Mali, Haidara appears to be the leader with the most available merchandise on the market.

The marketing possibilities and small business ventures of these products are innovative and limitless. There are stores and market kiosks that exclusively supply the audiocassettes and videocassettes of Haidara performing sermons or lectures. There are numerous vendors around Mali, who sell cassettes, pins, stickers, clocks, fabric, photos, badges and cassettes of Haidara (see illustration 4-5. in Appendix A; pp. 199-200, for a copy of various material culture). A majority of the vendors are young men. They are independent workers, and keep the small fortune from the merchandise sales. The merchandise is distributed at the freewill of the people.

Stemming from these sorts of primary industries of *Ancar Dine* or Haidara products are the services that are offered. For example, in Segou, there was a local tailor

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<sup>79</sup> This figure is \$0.89 US per month, based on the exchange rate in 2001.

producing garments of clothing with Haidara's logo and photograph, printed on the fabric. The stylish veils, T-shirts and sarongs would be sold to a large clientele of Haidara sympathizers and *Ancar Dine* members and worn during his performances or during daily activities. Again, the tailor would earn the profit from his sales.

Another illustration of these popular micro-industries occurred in a downtown shop in Segou. Yaya Traore, a young male member of *Ancar Dine* owns a boutique of electronics. Posted above the entranceway is a sign indicating "*cassettes de preche*". He has a large selection of radios and cassette players. He also sells audiocassettes. There are shelves filled with rows upon rows of cassettes featuring Haidara, labelled by the performance's location and date. 98% of his stock is cassettes of Haidara. The cassettes are sermons performed all over Mali and other parts of West Africa. Refer to photograph 1. in Appendix C; p. 209.

Yaya only had a very small selection of one other leader. His allegiance to Haidara was evident. When I questioned him about his leader, he responded, "He is a good Muslim and speaks the truth" (Yaya Traore; Segou; personal communication; February 11). In the large markets of Bamako, I visited two other large kiosks, both of them sold electronic media, exclusively of Haidara. The kiosk owners worked full-time as market vendors, unlike others who often sold cassettes as secondary income or part-time employment. Both vendors were members of *Ancar Dine*. They worked closely with Haidara, accompanying him to performances, to record his latest sermon. They had a large array of video and audiocassettes. Audiocassettes consisted of sermons, both studio recorded and "amateur cassettes", recorded by the audience. The videocassettes were "amateur movies" of sermons, tours, and conferences. The booths were also furnished with several cassette players. These appliances were tools for the vendors,

enabling them to rerecord an audiocassette of one of Haidara's performances, upon request. One of the vendors stocked other products, such as clocks and calendars with Haidara's portrait.

In Segou, there is a kiosk of another vendor, who sells exclusively Haidara merchandise: cassettes and calendars. Refer to photograph 2. in Appendix C; p. 210. Next to the kiosk was a straw-thatched roof structure, where *Ancar Dine* members and Haidara sympathizers would lye around, everyday, listening to the sermon cassettes. To the side of this lounging area, there is a large colourful painting on a metal door of a shop. The painting is a portrait of Haidara. Refer to photograph 3. in Appendix C; p. 211.

Outside of the complex in Bankoni, several young men prepare small tables, selling Haidara merchandise, after his performances. Their customers are the performance attendees, who purchase the various items of Haidara, such as pins, photographs, and badges. Once again, these vendors are self-employed and are able to keep the proceeds of their sales. Refer to photograph 4-6 in Appendix C; pp. 212-214.

Most of the merchants claimed that their consumers were both members and non-members of *Ancar Dine*. They similarly gave vague portraits of their consumers: young and old, men and women (Market vendor; Bamako; March 20; Personal Communication). One vendor in Segou mentioned he sold approximately 2-3 cassettes of Haidara per day (*Ancar Dine* member; Segou, Mali; February 9; personal communication).

Haidara and his following did not view this type of merchandise as a marketing strategy for their popularity. According to Haidara, he does not consciously promote himself or his association (Haidara; Bankoni, Mali; February 5; personal



communication). He *appeared* modest about the spread and demand of his image. Although these products are not considered promotional, indeed the sales, circulation and distribution of material cultural are advantageous for the leader and his association.

A leader's success is not his sole responsibility. Often, it is his devotees who create his popularity and expand his following by circulating merchandise, including cassettes, stickers, posters and calendars. And, there is a large demand for his image, in a seemingly insatiable market. The new political context in Mali has provided an opening of the economy and certain freedoms of religious expression. As a result, this has certainly permitted and prompted sales of articles of clothing, posters, stickers and cassettes.

The merchandise is circulated at the freewill of individuals in an informal economy. There is not an official system that regulates the product circulation, such as patents. Often, Haidara, himself, does not even have control over the distribution and circulation of the merchandise. Furthermore, the government is unable to monitor these goods.

Not only is the financial remuneration of these products immense for Haidara's followers and members, indeed the product's compatibility with charismatic appeal is evident. These mini-industries or indirect activities of *Ancar Dine* members seemed to certainly be to Haidara's advantage. The various uses of the material culture draw attention to the identity of the association and leader. As a result, this potentially increases the amount of new converts, the audience and the consumer size. These products are invariably responsible for enhancing the charismatic appeal of Haidara. Interestingly, what led me to this leader in the first place was a sticker pasted on the dashboard of a taxi.

## 5.8 Haidara: His Impact on the Population

Haidara's sermons, status, and conduct have prompted a strong reaction from the population. The public responses that Haidara receives range from an unconditional adoration that has been partially illustrated, by the size of his following, to lethal hatred. Haidara has endured numerous attempted acts of violence against him, such as attempted assassinations. *Marabout* enemies have threatened to kill him. There is a belief by Haidara and his followers that if he is touched by certain *Marabout* he could die, thus as noted, he is highly protected in his surroundings.

The following discussion is a composition of the perceptions of Haidara, based on numerous opinions and critiques about him<sup>80</sup>. This reconstructed dialogue should provide a general representation of the two main competitors revolving around Haidara in Mali.

*"Mali is full of preachers, I do not understand why Haidara, why?  
He knows more than the other preachers do and he is a good Muslim.  
What makes him a good Muslim?  
He does not hide anything. He is honest and frank.  
I like him because he is not fat like some of the others.  
What does size have to do with it? A lot, basically indicating he isn't  
bourgeois or lazy.  
He is certainly trying to be bourgeois, the association is for his own  
fortress or if you will, his medieval castle  
Haidara is collecting riches under the pretext of donations, therefore  
justifying his actions. He criticizes the rich, yet look at the way he lives  
like a King and at the same time his parents are not eating properly  
I would have to say he is more logical than the other leaders.  
Do you really think so? I don't think it's very logical when a person  
wants to earn lots of money and at the same time they critique rich  
people.*

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<sup>80</sup> Each comment is an actual citation derived from numerous discussions with participants in Mali. It is a mode of communication inspired by the main voices of supporters and adversaries.

*Well nobody is perfect. He speaks the rules of religion; all he says is in the Qur'an from God.*

*What he says may well be in the Qur'an, but he conducts the prayer in both bamana and Arabic. Do you realize that is heretical? When a person does that it desecrates the language of our religion.*

*Nonetheless, people believe still he has religious knowledge.*

*Well, they only think that because his audience is uneducated, therefore they do not question what he says. They take his information for granted.*

*Personally, I think he's heroic.....umm, and courageous.*

*Why would you say that?*

*Because he is a guide, not a typical one, he's the correspondent for God. He is in the service of God. He is divine inspiration, sent by God.*

*Yes, Haidara was sent to people by God as a guide to show the way of "la verite" <the truth>.*

*I heard that he follows a movement from Pakistan. He is copying the movement, yet he has just changed the name.*

*Nothing he says or does is that original then.*

*I would disagree; you have to hand it to him his style has confidence. I have never heard anybody speak with such a loud voice.*

*Is this how he clarifies religious knowledge for people?*

*Yes, and in doing so, he really simplifies the religion for his audience.*

*He brings me out of the shade of ignorance. He gives sermons for putting people on the right path of the Muslim religion. This would mean that he is a very good preacher, no?*

*Are you asking whether he is a good preacher in general or in Mali?*

*No, I know he is popular, everybody knows Haidara around the world. He is a big international preacher.*

*It is funny, he found lots of people to follow him and then he said he is the prophet.*

*Haidara plays with terms. He is pretending to be a descendent of Ali and Fatima, by adopting a shitté term. Also, he uses the title Cherif, literally meaning dignity. It is uncommon to encounter leaders who use such an honorable term. Haidara is the only leader in Mali who carries this title.*

*I think he is a bit simpler than that!*

*Maybe so, and he may have good will, but he is too strict. I would never be a member of Ancar Dine.....*

*Why?*

*Because it is so limiting.*

*I believe Haidara is liked by all. This can be supported by the fact that he has converted a lot of people. Probably because he is so serious and respectable.*

*I would agree, he says certain truths; yet he is not referential for everybody. His criticisms cause too much confrontation. His sermons are too violent. He criticizes too much. He pushes too much to the limits. That is not Islam. The Qur'an was not intended to be preached like he does.*

*I would say that the only good thing that the man has to say is that women should wear the veil” (Source: 2001; Mali; personal communication)<sup>81</sup>.*

This reconstructed dialogue that was comprised of the main voices of supporters and opponents is an attempt to reflect the diverse reactions to this influential figure. Since Haidara’s emergence in the public sphere, he has proven to be an extremely controversial figure. He is both worshipped and rejected as a charismatic figure. He has aroused opinions, both negatively and positively. In doing so, his presence is known, partially by the debates that are triggered. He is clever in this sense because enough of a commotion is created about him, so that he is well known and discussed. Whether he is supported or not, is another issue entirely.

### **5.9 Haidara: His Relationship with the Authorities**

Haidara’s impact on the population reveals the evident reaction by the government and the reasons for its involvement in the activities of this influential leader. His relationship with the government and other official bodies provides insight unto mapping his social position in the community.

During the dictatorship and the newer government regime, the government has arrested, censored, and intervened in Haidara’s activities. As a result of Haidara’s antagonistic relationship with the government, his sermons have undergone severe scrutiny and censorship. Much of the effort to restrain Haidara occurs through the state’s support and regulation of *AMUPI*, the lead Islamic association in the country. Ultimately, control over his activities is meant to weaken the strength of *Ancar Dine* and Haidara’s audience.

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<sup>81</sup> This compilation was originally intended to protect the identity of the speakers.

Haidara has been imprisoned three times. This may be partially explained by the content of his sermons. According to a council member of *AMUPI*, the lead Islamic association in Mali, they have had to bail Haidara from police arrests and imprisonment (General Secretary *AMUPI*-Segou; February 25; personal communication).

As Haidara has performed under three leaders, Traore, Konare and ATT, he has undergone various experiences in terms of surveillance<sup>82</sup>. I would argue that the strict censorship has eased a little since the dictatorship. During the Konare government (introduced in the early 1990s), Haidara was both tolerated and restrained. The intolerance, though, is interesting considering Mali's "democratic" context, in which his sermons have been censored; and he is banned from national radio and television.

Today, the relationship between Haidara, the government and other authorities remains antagonistic, yet harmless. During meetings with *AMUPI* administrators, they would ignore any questions or discussions about Haidara. A Malian shop owner informed me, "that *AMUPI* is not against Haidara anymore. The Moussa Traore regime was very difficult for him though" (Shop owner; March 6; Segou, Mali; personal communication). An employee at a radio station informed me that the relationship between *AMUPI* and Haidara has improved drastically. *AMUPI* now believes Haidara speaks the truth. They argue, that, "he is trafficking the *Qur'an*" (non-member; March 11; Segou, Mali; personal communication).

Haidara is currently viewed as less controversial. Yet, there still appears to be a large division between *AMUPI* and *Ancar Dine* followers. The latter is extremely marginalized. A division has been created between the *AMUPI* and/or *Ancar Dine* supporters. I believe, this division is determined by whether or not you profess to be a

Haidara devotee or not. At the national level, *Ancar Dine* is a significant actor in the structure and system of Islamic associations and Islamic landscape. That is not to say that it is an appreciated actor by everybody, though.

Consequently, the division further polarizes Haidara's relationship with the government, because of the close relationship between the government and *AMUPI*.

Recently the association members of *L'IMMAMA*, a large association for the Imams of Mali elected Haidara as the national president of all preachers. A majority of the Imams were called to a conference to choose the president for the association. This appears to be a strategic move by the authorities and powerful Imams of the country in order to cease the disagreements between the different leaders. The scheme behind this move reflects the cohesion desired amongst the leaders. However, it is also important to note that it indicates, in a sense, control over Haidara and his activities. It prohibits him from swaying to radically from the other leaders. According to a member of *Ancar Dine-Segou*, Haidara does not want to accept his position as the president. "He is a modest person" (*Ancar-Dine* member; March 4; Segou, Mali; personal communication). Haidara claimed, "I am a supporter, but not a member" (February 5; Bamako, Mali; personal communication).

Haidara's perception about other leaders was tactful, he stated, "They are all Muslim"(February 5; Bamako, Mali; personal communication). Haidara wants his relationship with the others to be peaceful, yet distant. Therefore, joining an association, such as *L'IMMAMA* is undesirable for the leader.

It appears that Haidara prefers to remain on the periphery of associations. In remaining on the periphery, as a spiritual guide, rather than, a president, he believes he

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<sup>82</sup> It is too soon to determine the impact that ATT's regime (April 2002) has had on Haidara's activities.

has a more objective understanding of the organisation. In his opinion, if he remains on the exterior he can view the internal workings of the association (Haidara; Bankoni, Mali; February 9; personal communication). He tends to function in the same way with *Ancar Dine*. He is central to the association, however he is differentiated from his leaders to such a degree that he obtains a different perspective from even the presidents, for example.

As Haidara responded to questions of censorship, a large grin crept over his face, like a devious child undergoing interrogation procedures. He seemed pleased to engage in this subject. Haidara's opinion about censorship upon him was narrowed down to three factors: his remarkable popularity; competition with the other leaders; his public critiques about the government (Haidara; Bankoni; February 9; personal communication).

Although Haidara has been prohibited to broadcast on the national networks, it does not stop his avid use of electronic media, as well as his sympathizer's appropriation of the media. The intent to weaken *Ancar Dine* and Haidara's strength has only encouraged the proliferation of other media forms (i.e. audiocassettes) and the leader's prominence. An *Ancar* commented: "Despite Haidara's censorship from national television and radio, he is still the most popular leader" (member; March 12; Segou, Mali; personal communication). According to Dale Eickelman, "censors may still restrict what is said in the mainstream press and broadcast media, but these media have lost the exclusivity they once had". He continues, that "the availability of alternative media has irrevocably altered how 'authoritative' discourse is read and heard" (Eickelman 1999: 29-30).

Eickelman writes, for example about small, local magazines in Tehran that publish varying subjects, like those of the Haidara's sermon cassettes,

As the authorities-who retain tight control on radio, television and the content of Friday sermons-know that their political impact is minimal and that the costs of repression outweigh those of turning a blind eye (Eickelman in Eickelman & Anderson eds. 1999: 35).

The situation in Tehran, in this instance is comparable to Haidara. Although he is prohibited to broadcast on the national networks and often, private ones too, he continues an avid use of alternative electronic media, like cassettes. His following is too large a number and too widely dispersed to censor all of the activities, especially his performances. It would be a feat simply to track the circulation of cassettes.

Despite the censorship that Haidara endures, the government is at the mercy of Haidara's popular, yet controversial status. If the secular government were to seriously repress Haidara, his support network and Mali's Muslim majority are large enough that they would protest. In the contemporary political environment, as long as the government does not repress him, to an extent of silence, there appears to be no public objection by his followers.

The secular government's concerns of Haidara's influence are justifiable. With supporters estimated, by Haidara, at over 80,000, the authorities cannot afford to ignore an influential figure that criticizes policies, law and civil conduct. Potentially, with enough support, Haidara could challenge civil order.

As I have mentioned, this intolerance of Haidara is interesting considering Mali's democratic context. It is unclear whether or not the government is truly cautious about these types of leaders taking the stage in a political or religious arena? Does a religious leader like Haidara realistically pose a threat to the government and the political order?



Haidara and his seemingly untameable endeavours are spread far and wide across the country. The educational, material, and religious power that both his message and image wield is evident throughout Mali.

This case study is just the beginning in showing the importance of understanding Islamic leadership, the role of Islamic leaders, and furthermore the power that their messages and images can wield, during performances. This is especially so in contexts with an open economy, freedom of religious expression and an independent and private media.

## **6. 0 MEDIATED LEADERSHIP: A CASE STUDY OF ANCAR DINE-SEGOU**

### **6.1 Introduction**

*I embarked upon the bus from Bamako. After uncertainties about which bus company to use, I chose Samatra. I had two hundred and forty kilometres of road to cover before reaching Segou. I chose a seat in the middle of the bus and prepared myself for the long journey. The loudspeakers on the bus blared Malian music. Five minutes into the voyage, the bus driver changed the music. He inserted a cassette- a religious cassette. I listened to the bellowing voice of the sermon. It was in Bambara. I recognized the deep-voice of the speaker. It was very distinctive. To confirm my assumptions, I asked the young man behind me who was playing on the cassette. He responded, "he is a preacher". "Yes, thank-you, but who?" He said, "it is the voice of Haidara, a good preacher". He added, "He is very popular, you know" (Journey from Bamako-Segou; February 10; personal communication).*

This experience was just one indication of the effectiveness of electronic media, in this case, audiocassettes. It was evident that following a leader did not require a member to remain in the leader's city of residence. The media, as I have argued throughout this

thesis, plays a strong role in the promotion of the leader, and attracting, increasing and diversifying the following.

To further emphasize the media's strong role in the leader's activities/ life, I conducted a case study of a branch of Haidara's association in Segou, Mali. Firstly, this was useful for examining the daily activities of the Haidara's following. Secondly, it emphasized the efficiency and usefulness of the media, allowing the leader to be followed from a distance. In this chapter, I have attempted to further explore the relationship of a leader with his following, including a detailed description of the activities, membership and reception of Segou-*Ancar Dine*.

Initially, I requested a contact of an *Ancar Dine*-Segou affiliate, from Haidara. He immediately lifted the telephone receiver and proceeded to speak in Bamana. He later turned to me and said, "not to worry, you will be received very well" (Haidara; February 9; Bankoni; personal communication). Little did I know that Haidara's phone call would pave the way for my work with *Ancar Dine*, in Segou. Once again, this confirmed the well-respected status of this renowned leader, even from a distance.

I witnessed the extent of Haidara's power from the moment that I arrived in Segou. I introduced myself to the guard at the association headquarters in *Hamdallyah B*, a neighborhood in Segou. He said, "You have finally arrived; we have been waiting for you". I realized the phone call from Haidara was as though the members had received a signal from God.

## **6.2 *Ancar-Dine*-Segou: The Organization**

*Ancar Dine*'s Segou branch was created in 1989-1990. According to Zachery, the General Secretary of *Ancar Dine*-Segou, "Prior to this epoch, associations were illegal.

The government regime of Moussa Traore did not want Islamic associations in the country". He reflects for a moment and then poses a rhetorical question: "Did *Ancar* exist prior to this time? I would say, there were supporters" (General Secretary *Ancar Dine Segou*; Segou; February 18; personal communication). With a chuckle Zachery adds, "Symbolically the association existed before *Medina*. Historically, the *Ancars* were the first to promote Islam".

The Segou branch founders included four men, all of whom, excluding Abou Male (the present Segou Treasurer) are deceased (General Secretary *Ancar-Segou*; Segou; February 18; personal communication).

Today, the most prominent roles in *Ancar Dine-Segou* include those that are similar to the other branches throughout the country and continent. *Ancar-Segou's* organization is comprised of a president and his assistant, a treasurer and his assistant, a general secretary, and his assistant, commissioners, guards, a commission of the wise, preachers and *medersa* instructors. To a certain degree, the women's division replicates the male's organization structure, however on a smaller-scale, as there are less female members than male.

In the association, each title has clearly defined tasks. The commissioners must work with the treasury. The treasury is responsible for collecting membership fees and paying for the association's expenses, for example materials for *Ancar dine* (Administration; Segou; February 15; personal communication). There are eight male committee representatives for the region of Segou (Administration; Segou; February 15; personal communication). There are seven committees for the women (Administration; Segou; February 15; personal communication). "The commission of the wise" is

responsible for divorces, marriage arrangements, widows, and orphans. Committees, sub committees and women's branch conduct meetings, activities and assemblies.

The guards are responsible for organizing the logistics of association activities, such as carpets, tables, as well as providing protection during the performance. They also guard the *Ancar dine* facilities.

Most importantly for this thesis, there is a committee of *Ancar Dine* preachers. The preachers conduct and present performances at the radio stations, the association headquarters or member's homes. They also determine the sermon material presented for all the performances conducted locally both, live and mediated. The preachers are present at the media activities that play Haidara's sermons. They will respond to any questions or clarify information of the sermons for the members.

The preachers are basically choreographers of the Haidara performances played in Segou. They must mediate the performances between the leader and the following because of the distance. Every two years, the most skilled preachers of the different branches receive training from the *Cherif*, in Bankoni. The preachers of *Ancar Dine* consider themselves "representatives of Haidara".

Ibrahim Coulibaly, the president of all the preachers, is also the director at one of *Ancar dine's medersas*. He coordinates the activities of both the preachers and the *medersa* instructors. All preachers, with the exception of one, are teachers at one of *Ancars Dine's medersas* (Administration; Segou, Mali; February 15; personal communication). Once again, we see the important links between the educational institutes and associative activities.

Haidara is certainly a reputable character amongst the students in the *Ancar Dine medersas*. In the schools, the teachers discuss Haidara only because he is the founder

and affiliated with *Ancar*-Segou. However, he is not necessarily part of the curriculum content. In the city of Segou alone, *Ancar Dine* has five *medersas*. The links between educational Islamic schooling, and associations will be evident.

In the “*Ancar Dine medersas*,” there are both male and female *medersa* instructors; they are usually either general members or administrative members of *Ancar Dine*. To instruct in the *medersas*, it is not obligatory for the teachers to be *Ancars*; however most of them are. Many of the students’ parents are members of the association, but, once again, this is not a requirement. If the parents are not association members, the children are usually attending the school, because they live in the neighborhood.

During a tour of Segou’s city center *medersa*, I gathered fairly standard information about the association’s *medersas*. The following describes a general portrait of one of the *medersas*: The downtown school was created in 1995. The school is considered a Franco-Arabic. To maintain a Franco-Arabic status, the school is required to have French language in the curriculum. The lower grades receive one hour per week and the higher grades receive two hours per week. The rest of the curriculum is taught in Bamana and Arabic. In total, there are six levels. More levels will be created as the students mature and demand higher levels. The levels range in size depending on the level, for example the 1<sup>st</sup> contains ninety students and the 6<sup>th</sup> entails twelve students. The school is coed, however there are less female students, than, males. The school fees are 600CFA/\$1.07 US per month. The fees increase by 50CFA per year. There are nine months in the school year (Director Ibrahim Coulibali; Segou, Mali; February 19; personal communication).

### 6.3 *Ancar Dine*-Segou: Membership & Audience

As a member, attendance to many of the activities is obligatory, especially the general assembly. This obligation is monitored by a regular role call. To be a member, it demands a large commitment. Members must be seriously devoted to the association because it requires money, time, and effort to Haidara and the way of *Ancar Dine*. According to the General Secretary “You must give in many ways to be a member of *Ancar Dine*” (General Secretary *Ancar Dine*-Segou; Segou; February 18; personal communication). Contributions must be made financially, materially, and physically to the activities. The attendance and reception of the sermons is essential (General Secretary *Ancar Dine*-Segou; Segou; February 18; personal). Numerous members commented “all of the activities of being a member result in being a good Muslim” (members; Segou, Mali; personal communication).

The high expectation of members is reflected in the admittance procedures to the association. Entry into the association is a long and arduous process. Firstly, the committee inquires about the applicant’s commitment to the association. Then, the potential members arrive for observation at Friday’s general assembly. They meet with the president and are introduced, at the assembly, to all members. Finally, the committee may discuss the applicants even further. He or she is either denied or awarded membership status<sup>83</sup>.

In general, there are approximately 275 *Ancar Dine*-Segou members. Joining *Ancar Dine* is a voluntary act of faith. There is no recruitment and no publicity of the association. According to the General Secretary of *Ancar-Dine* Segou, “Haidara does not

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<sup>83</sup> I am not sure if this policy applies to all *Ancar dine* branches.

choose a category of people, he does his preaching and those who are interested in a good path of Islam may join the association” (General Secretary *Ancar-Segou*; Segou; February 18; personal communication).

*Ancar Dine* does not discriminate about size, class, or origin. The association is open to everybody who agrees to a commitment. Members are of various ethnic and age groups, gender and income categories (Haidara; Bamako; February 9; personal communication)

Ethnic origins of the members vary considerably. However, in Segou, specifically, there is a significant proportion of *Bambara*. This can be explained because Segou was originally heart of the *Bambara* Kingdom during the Mali Empire. Refer to Table 3. (in Appendix B; p. 204) for a representation of ethnic groups in *Ancar Dine-Segou*.

There are also a significant amount of young members in the association. Lastly, women are very active members and comprise of a fair percentage, approximately 25.4%, of the membership. There are approximately seventy women in the branch (Administration; Segou; February 15; personal communication).

Levels of education for members include: *medersa* (at varying levels), *Lycee*, elementary school, and university. In a study conducted, it showed that a majority of the members had not attended school in the formal education system (refer to table 4. in Appendix B; p. 205).

The General Secretary stated, that, “it is difficult to determine the education level of the members. Some members are illiterate, others are highly educated and speak Arabic fluently” (General Secretary *Ancar-Segou*; Segou; February 18; personal communication). However, accounting for a sample of the association branch, it

appeared that most members had minimal levels of schooling. And, all the individuals with a higher level of education attended the religious school system.

Considering the member's limited access to education, it can be assumed that most *Ancars* are of a low-income status. Yet, one member retorted, "it is not the income level that is important, rather, the individual's conviction to Islam (*Ancar Dine*-Segou member; February 18; personal communication). Interestingly, the financial contribution to the association is considerable accounting for the income levels of most individuals.

Although Haidara does not actively seek new members for *Ancar Dine*, both the use of electronic media and the reception of his sermons play a large role in the recruitment of new members and further, expansion of his general following.

In Bankoni, I met an *Ancar* from Cameroon. He had heard about Haidara in Cameroon through friends. He was able to listen to his cassettes in a Malian community living in Cameroon. Eventually, He decided to move to Bamako to study with Haidara and to practice with *Ancar Dine*. The story of this young man was quite a common occurrence. The more time I spent in Bankoni, the more I would meet individuals from various regions in Mali and the continent. In analyzing the circulation and use of cassettes, electronic media has followed the migration patterns of audiences and members.

#### **6.4 *Ancar Dine*-Segou: Activities**

All *Ancar Dine*-Segou activities are conducted in Bamana, unless specified otherwise. Men and women participate in numerous coed activities, however there are several activities held for the respective genders. Activities are scheduled everyday of the week, usually in the evenings for the men, because many of them work exterior to



the home; whereas, activities occur for women during the day, because they are responsible for their children. Usually the women are able to bring the children to their activities.

The activities are designed, coordinated, and directed by the aforementioned administrative titles. Most activities unless specified otherwise, are held at the Segou-headquarters in a residential area of Segou, entitled *Hamdallay B*. The headquarters is a rented space set in one of Segou-*Ancars medersa*. A guard remains on the premise after school and during activity hours.

In general, activities include: theological lectures; media evenings, visual and/or audiocassettes of Haidara's sermons are played or radio stations play Haidara cassettes and they are listened to. Sermons commemorate varying events, for example weddings, baptisms. There are weekly general assemblies (refer to photograph 7. in Appendix C; p. 215), benedictions and committee meetings. During these meetings they organize logistics for marriages, funerals and baptisms. For a description of *Ancar dine*-Segou activities see Table 5. in Appendix B; p. 206.

Table 5 (in Appendix B; pp 206) indicates the activities that are held on a regular basis. However, it is important to note that the amount of performances increases during special months, events or holidays. There are also occasional activities, such as karate lessons, film projections (of religious films or recordings of *Ancar Dine* events) and youth sermons. For women, other infrequent activities include the organization of baptisms, benedictions for ill members, marriages, and other occasional sermons. They also have media evenings, when videocassettes are available (Administration; Segou; February 15; personal communication). As well, every year there is a big party, in Bankoni, for the Prophet Mohammed's birthday. People from all over the continent

attend this celebration (General Secretary *Ancar-Segou*; Segou; February 18; personal communication).

Table 5 (in Appendix B; p. 206) also reflects the variation in activities, the active nature of the association, the communal efforts required for coordinating these activities, the member's dedication to the association and the association's use of media for strengthening ties with their spiritual guide.

During each assembly, *Ancar Dine* administration requests a minimum of 25 CFA<sup>84</sup> from the members. As well, 100 CFA<sup>85</sup> is collected every Saturday evening (Administration; Segou; February 15; personal communication). The membership fees are 550CFA<sup>86</sup> per month. This income for the association pays for rental space and materials, such as carpets, chairs, etc. In general, this is primarily how the association branch is funded, besides the odd donation that the branch may receive.

### **6.5 Activity Sample: the Use of Electronic Media-“Mediated Performances”**

This section is a description of a particular activity that occurs in Segou. Every Wednesday night, in *Ancar Dine-Segou* there is a “media night”. During these evenings, the sermon cassettes of Haidara are played; or the audience listens to Haidara on the radio. There is a preacher who is present and he responds to any questions that the audience may have. One member mentioned, “that during these evenings, we may question the cassette content, however there certainly isn't a critique of what is being said by Haidara” (member; Segou, Mali; February 15; personal communication). This

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<sup>84</sup> This figure is \$0.04US, based on the exchange rate in 2001.

<sup>85</sup> This figure is \$0.18US, based on the exchange rate in 2001.

<sup>86</sup> This figure is \$0.98US, based on the exchange rate in 2001.

introduces, in a sense, a dialogue and relationship that occurs between the audience and performer. A relationship enabled by the use of electronic media, despite the leader's physical absence.

The following story illustrates numerous issues that I have previously addressed:

1) the movement of the leaders from one locale to another 2) the respected status given to a leader 3) the use of media tools.

I arrived at one of the "Media nights" of *Ancar Dine-Segou*. There were rugs laid-out on the ground of the *medersa*, the regular activity location for the association. A few men were sitting around listening to portable cassette players. At one point in the evening, I observed three different radios and cassettes playing different sermons of Haidara. A chair was placed just behind the rugs and I was beckoned to sit down. Initially, I was the only woman. But, it was difficult to tell because it was very dark, except for lanterns that provided partial lighting in the corners of the school's grounds. Later in the evening, I could see women sitting behind the carpeted area. Eventually, a cabinet was wheeled out from a shed, the whole apparatus looked like a refrigerator. The doors were opened and a television and VCR were revealed (Refer to photograph 8. in Appendix C; p. 216). I wasn't sure about what kind of film they would show, during Islamic association activities. The cassette was inserted into the machine though. The video was of Haidara's 2001, annual visit to Segou.

*On the road is a convoy of cars, mopeds and bicycles. There are swarms of people of either side of the road. They conduct a prayer on the road, blocking all the traffic. The road is aligned with those awaiting the arrival of Haidara. Two mopeds, carrying two people on each arrive. It is the beginning of Haidara's procession. There are security guards running alongside his car, carrying their large iron batons. Slowly, a green Mercedes appears in the distance. Haidara is seated in the passenger seat. Approximately one hundred people surround the car. The*

*street is chaotic. The entourage makes room for the oncoming traffic. People try to touch the vehicle, reaching for Haidara. The guards protecting the vehicle immediately condemn the crowd. The procession is long. Horns are hooting. Bystanders who interfere with the path are shifted to the side. The crowds get larger as the procession nears the city center. The streets are aligned with people cheering, others call "Haidara, Haidara!!" The procession was twenty-three minutes. They arrive at the performance area. Haidara exits the car, wearing a royal-blue boubou, adorned with white trim. He waves, saluting those around him. There is a banner set-up on the stage. It is a painting of Haidara. There are numerous photographers snapping photos of the event. I originally thought they were journalists and later learned they were individuals, who sell photographs of Haidara to the public. He slowly makes his way to the stage, stopping at the microphone. His voice bellows across the loudspeakers (Source: January 4, 2001-video of Haidara's visit to Segou).*

The evening was layered with events about the relationship between Haidara and his following, the influence of Haidara on his fans and the structure of *Ankar Dine*. This demonstrated a "mediated performance" on two levels. Firstly, the electronic media is used. Secondly, the performance is literally mediated between Haidara and his followship.

Throughout, the thesis I have shown that the use of media enhances the phenomenon of charisma and performance. The video content was impressive. I asked my research assistant about the film. He responded that it was a video of Haidara's January 4<sup>th</sup> 2001 annual visit to Segou. Usually he is in Segou at least once a year to visit his extended family and the *Ankar Dine branch*. The receiving committee for the association had blocked off the road for Haidara's large convoy. Apparently, the city of Segou did not mind the roadblock. All the religious leaders and associations in the area were invited. Out of respect, a few association members attended. However, several leader invitees declined their invitations. I was also intrigued by the reaction to Haidara's arrival in Segou. There were crowds of people and the evening's activity

created a lot of amusement. It emphasized his popularity and his large entourage. During the screening, it occurred to me just how influential and popular this leader really is.

The video supports Weber's claim that charisma is often produced and sustained by the membership and followship loyalty. While watching the video, the audience expressed their affections and gratitude for Haidara: "Oh Haidara!! Haidara!! He is international!" Throughout the evening, these comments were exclaimed. I watched individuals nudging their neighbors, commenting about different, recognizable characters on the screen.

#### **6.6 Consuming Haidara in Segou**

Electronic media appears to be an effective form of publicity. Many people learn of *Ancar Dine's* existence through Haidara, usually because of his sermons. Many individuals in Segou claimed that they had attended the same *medersa* as Haidara, heard of him via cassettes, or listened to him on the radio (Members; February 18; Segou, Mali; personal communication). Those individuals that had learned of Haidara's sermons were often introduced to them through social networks, such as family members, colleagues or friends.

Seemingly, most members of *Ancar Dine Segou* learned of Haidara through electronic media. According to the Administration of an *Ancar Dine* branch "Most people learn about Haidara through cassettes" (Administration members, *Ancar-Segou*; Segou; February 18; personal communication). In a survey conducted, more members

claimed that they had discovered the leader through cassettes rather than other means<sup>87</sup>. The cassettes appeared to be much more common, than other forms of electronic media, in the beginning and prior to the 1990s.

The second most popular response in the survey was the radio. As the use of radio became more popular, it appeared that Haidara was commonly discovered through this electronic medium.

In listening to Haidara's sermons, this is yet another tactic for increasing the knowledge of his identity and activities. In his sermons, Haidara often speaks about *Ancar Dine* and the members of *Ancar Dine*. It is evident that his messages attract a wide following. Indeed, his sermons are what created *Ancar Dine* in the first place.

An *Ancar* member explained that the cassettes are used as an educational tool within one's family. For example, "if somebody is a non-member, you, as a member of *Ancar Dine* can take information from the sermon and inform your neighbor" (member; February 13; Segou; Mali; personal communication). He continued, "I believe that providing knowledge to others is one of the roles of being a member; the cassettes just simply assist his/her role" (Ibid.).

Douga Toure, a 25-year-old *Ancar Dine* member, who had listened to cassettes regularly since the age of 17 claimed: he would listen to sermons with his friends. They would ask each other questions about Islam. They would often debate the definitions of a "good Muslim" (Douga Toure; February 13; Segou, Mali; personal communication).

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<sup>87</sup> The survey included 37 individuals. 21 of the individuals had learned of Haidara through cassettes (*Ancar Dine* Members; Segou, Mali; March 2001). There was a random selection of participants for the survey.

Although, *Ancar Dine* members gather to listen or to watch the cassettes of Haidara, they discuss the content, yet they do not criticize what Haidara is saying (*Ancar Dine* administration; Segou, Mali; February 15; personal communication).

There are people that follow Haidara, yet refuse to become a member of *Ancar Dine*, because of the stringent membership obligations. As mentioned, to be a member it requires a large commitment. According to another *Ancar Dine* member in Segou, “many people listen to Haidara’s sermons, they follow him, so to speak, but they are not ready to live the truth” (member; Segou; February 18; personal communication). One young *Ancar* commented, “My father regularly listens to Haidara’s cassettes but he is not a member of *Ancar dine*.” (Source: *Ancar Dine* member; Segou; Personal communication; February 13).

It was apparent that many individuals attend or consume the performances of Haidara, however they are not necessarily members of the association. In a discussion with sixteen members of another Islamic association, 94% reported that they listened to the sermons of Haidara. A majority of those questioned, listened to Haidara’s sermons in both cassette and radio format. All the individuals questioned were non-members of *Ancar Dine*, aged 17-23 years old (Questionnaire: *LIEEMA* members; March 2001; Segou, Mali; personal communication).

*Ancar Dine* Segou has a business arrangement with two radio stations, including those discussed in Chapter 4, *Radio Jamana Folko* and *Radio Balanzan Frequence Magique*<sup>88</sup>. The association rents airtime for an arranged fee per month. A whole programme is then dedicated to the Haidara in effect. Haidara’s sermons are played

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<sup>88</sup> *Ancar Dine*-Segou also had a contract with *Radio Libre*, in Segou, however there were management complications that led to the termination of the contract.

during this time, using his prerecorded audiocassettes. A local *Ancar Dine* preacher, in collaboration with the radio director, programmer or technician is responsible for determining the programming of each show. As mentioned, there is clearly a strong relationship between Haidara and the branch preachers. Occasionally, the preachers are trained at the various stations, by the radio technicians, in order to present the sermon topics and to play the actual cassettes. Later, the preachers are available to respond to any questions that listeners may have. Thus the effectiveness of Haidara's educational training session for preachers is evident, and the training session skills are applied in this context.

According to a few young *Ancar Dine* members, with cassette interpretation "the road is open" (*Ancar Dine* members; Segou, Mali; February 13; personal communication). With the cassettes, "You can listen to them and then you can go to the location of their preacher in *Ancar Dine* and he can usually help you, or else you can go to Bankoni and consult with Haidara yourself" (*Ancar Dine* members; Segou, Mali; February 18; personal communication).

According to Bissili Lassana Sacko, the radio technician of *Radio Jamana Folko* in Segou, "Haidara's show is very popular. It is a programme devoted to him. It has a very large audience of both young and old" (Segou, Mali; March 11; personal communication). The programmer at the station mentioned, "Among all Malians, Haidara is the most popular because of his truthfulness. His programme is the most popular, because everybody likes him" (*Radio Jamana Folko*; Segou, Mali; March 10; personal communication). Lamine Konare, another radio station director, stated, "I chose Haidara as one of the preachers to air, because he is so popular. It was a good idea



for the ratings of the radio station” (Lamine Konare; Segou, Mali; March 12; personal communication).

In essence, his audience is larger than even imagined. The consumption of the sermons is not limited to the actual attendants of the performance. Using electronic media, “those who do not want to listen are condemned to give up owning a radio and inevitably to listening to their neighbour’s radio which is always blaring” (Diawara 1994: 41). As a result, often, by default a performance will be consumed by an individual.

Haidara informed me that the audience of his sermons whether via cassettes or live performances are usually comprised of youth, between the ages of 20-35. The majority is young men, however there are more and more women. His explanation for this was that “*le jeune aime la verite*” <the youth like the truth> (Haidara; Bankoni, Mali; February 5; personal communication).

The importance of this chapter has shown a phenomenon where a leader’s charismatic appeal and in turn, his influence has managed to travel distances. It appears that Haidara did not necessarily consciously construct his popularity. It seems to have been partially constructed around him. This is further enhanced by the use of electronic media. Once again, it is important to recognize the agency of both parties-audience and performer and the force that the mass *mediatization* has on this relationship.

## **6.7 General Discussion: Haidara and Ancar Dine**

Early in the thesis, I mentioned that I would focus on the *display*, rather than, the *causes* of charismatic leadership. This was due partially to two reasons. Firstly, there is currently a large body of literature that concentrates on the explanatory of religious

phenomenon, versus the descriptive, which remains rather limited. Secondly, timing constraints in the field did not allow for a broad study that could effectively understand all the causes for charismatic leadership. The following section presents an analysis about the circumstances under which charismatic leadership arises and how it is produced, understanding Haidara's relationship with charisma and performance.

Examining both Haidara and *Ancar Dine Segou* as a case study has presented an opportunity to explore an extraordinary individual and his leadership endeavours. Following the work of Oakes, "the hope is that we may develop the tools to unravel the particular blend of factors that have combined to create the charisma of a specific individual" (Oakes 1999: 43).

The phenomenon of Haidara is astonishing. As well, his institution and its conduct prompt a substantial amount of intrigue. Why were people so attracted to this character? What makes Haidara so popular, yet, so controversial? Is it that he has strong charismatic traits or that his following is responsible for his charismatic leadership? I believe there are several explanations as to how this leader has managed to captivate such a large audience, and the ways in which his audience persists in further elevating his charismatic leadership.

Weber claimed that not every individual is able to appropriate a 'charismatic' leadership role, though; it is only possible among exceptional individuals. As a result, charisma creates status stratification. Furthermore, charisma is not hereditary; it is primarily produced and sustained by the membership and followship loyalty (Weber 1968). In effect, charisma is dependent on a set of social relationships. The new charismatic authority is based on the legitimacy of public acclaim (Weber 1947).

A general outlook of Haidara's followers and what motivates them is now important to address. Weber's notion of followers was that the following are searching for salvation (1968). Kohut extended this theory to include that the search for support is for a creative effort (1970). According to Oakes "charismatic followers join the leader for something. The stated aims of the leader and the beliefs of the group are important, but membership also performs a function for the follower. There is likely to be a deeper agenda for the follower, which may be different in each individual case (Oakes 1999: 126). I would agree with Oake's claim about follow-ship, in that "discussing anyone's deeper motivations is bound to be a speculative exercise, especially when a phenomenon such as charisma is involved" (Oakes 1999: 126).

A close look at Haidara's following in Segou indicated that individuals received spiritual/religious, educational, material and financial support from Haidara and his institution- *Ancar Dine*. See Table. 6 (in Appendix B; p. 207). The data was based on a survey conducted with *Ancar dine* members in Segou. The survey reflects the motivating factors for individuals to join and to maintain membership in *Ancar Dine*. Seemingly, the strongest motivating factor for following Haidara and joining *Ancar Dine* is material support. This included items such as lodging, food, and labour. Most individuals chose more than one of the variables for supporting the association.

Although it appears that the variables, including education, religion, material goods and finances are driving forces towards this charismatic leader and his institution, why people follow him with such vigour still remains rather inexplicable. I could discern that in one way or another, Haidara and his institution were compensating for a void in people's lives.

An aspect of charisma, proposed by Weber (1968), is useful at this time. He claimed that charismatic authority often arises during periods of social unrest and change. He believes that charisma can be a useful tactic for social change, as charismatic individuals are the driving forces behind social groups and collectives.

Mali is considered one of the fourth poorest countries in the world. A gross portion of the population is dissatisfied with the education system, political leadership and unequal access to resources. Oakes discusses a common trait of religious leaders. He states that, "the leader astutely registers the needs and vulnerabilities of the people he meets, subtly implying that he can fulfil these needs" (Oakes 1997: 15). Aberbach furthers this argument. He believes that, often, charismatic bonds are created between the leader and his following based upon resentment or hatred in certain environmental contexts (Aberbach 1996: 7). According to Schulz, in Mali, people are disappointed by democracy (Schulz 2001).

Youth in Mali have played a significant political role in reacting to the government in order to improve their social conditions<sup>89</sup>. As I have mentioned, Haidara is particularly popular among rural, lower class youth (Schulz 2001).

The logic of Haidara's large youth following is evident. The fact that Haidara critiques injustice led me to believe that he attracted a certain type of following. It is not coincidental that all Haidara's association members were not necessarily privileged members of society. They were individuals that did not have access to employment in the formal economy and high levels of education in the national/formal system.

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<sup>89</sup> See Louis Brenner's article (Forthcoming) "Youth as Political Actors" for a discussion about youth's role in Mali's political scene.

In his sermons, Haidara criticises injustice and bureaucracy. He defends those who are underprivileged or denied access to opportunity. Perhaps, this is another motivating factor for his following and the membership that he attracts. Mouloye, a non-member of *Ancar Dine* remarked that: "Of all the leaders, Haidara is the most dynamic". He added that: "He is more realistic and honest than the others; therefore, he attracts a very large following" (non-member; Bamako, Mali; March 10; personal communication).

Haidara believes that he is a realist in his sermons (Haidara; February 5; Bamako, Mali; personal communication). According to the General Secretary of *Ancar Dine*-Segou, "Haidara knows how to speak to young people. He captivates them in both the way that he speaks and by what he says" (Zachery; Segou, Mali; February 13; personal communication).

According to the administration of the *Ancar Dine* branch in Segou, "Haidara does not choose a category of people as his following. He does his preaching and he attracts those that want to proceed in a 'good way'. Those who are believers are convinced to be on the "*bon chemin*" <good path>. Those who are not on the "*good path*" have to change their character to be a good driver" (Administration *Ancar Dine*; Segou, Mali; February 18; personal communication).

"Charisma is a revolutionary spiritual power, and the follower is the spiritualizing of a relationship based upon extraordinary needs and ultimate concerns" (Oakes 1997; 186). Haidara's sermons have aroused much criticism, primarily because of his criticism of the government. His performance is related to the audience's reality. "As Gaffney relates in his detailed analysis of provincial Egyptian sermons, those identified as Islamists build their authority not only on personal reputation and

knowledge of texts but, increasingly, from a demonstrated practical grasp of society and an ability to share with their audiences a grasp of their daily challenges" (in Eickelman & Anderson eds. 1999: 13).

Ultimately, a skilled leader will make his message relevant to everyday life. Naturally, the leader's association will conform to the same ideology. The creation of *Ancar Dine* can be framed here by "the mission stage" of charisma, as defined by Oakes (1997). He argues that by building his following,

the [leader's] mission becomes clear. To recruit followers, the leader advances a bold claim to be the source of ultimate good for others, hence his term for spiritual guide. The boldness of his claim induces a fascinating effect arousing faith and hope.....of those who become his followers. In pursuing his mission the leader heads an organization dedicated to supporting him and spreading his truth (Oakes 1997).

In a weak social system, this type of leadership and its associative links provide a substitute for social security. This phenomenon may not be exclusive to Mali; perhaps, the support that Haidara receives from other parts of the globe reflects similar cases of the anomie experienced worldwide. Aberbach argues that, the mission of a leader is given clarity or becomes evident especially during crisis or times of distress. Ultimately, "crisis creates charisma" (Aberbach 1996:4). The leader is provided with an opportune moment for charismatic leadership during periods of economic, political or social instability.

Electronic media then further assists the spread of charisma. Often, "the charismatic artist uses the media to recreate himself, to enhance his worth in his own eyes and in the eyes of this society or nation or the entire world" (Aberbach 1996: 88). For Haidara, his mediated performance essentially expands and diversifies his reputation, his popularity, and his following.

In Mali, Haidara is one of the most active users of media. As discussed by Freeland-Hughes, often, "media representation affirmed who they [the performers] were in an intensely individualistic way as well as according to their social status". Because of the media and subsequently his popularity, mini-economic industries, in the informal economy, have been created. This was demonstrated by cassette sales and the print screening of clothing.

Haidara, however, is not to be exclusively credited for his fame and widespread popularity. Haidara's devotees have played as much a role in the creation of his heroism as the leader himself. His following's avid use of the media has prompted an even greater reputation of Haidara. Aberbach describes a portrait of the charismatic figure, "Lawrence of Arabia". Aberbach's description can be likened to Haidara's circumstances. Following Aberbach's work (1997):

[he] was not merely created and used by the media but in some ways created his own public image. Through his charismatic role, he harnessed qualities of a character.....corresponding to a political reality in which he was crucially important (Aberbach 1997: 77)<sup>90</sup>.

Often the following of charismatic leaders are inspired not exclusively by the leader's message, but also by their political skills (Aberbach 1996: 36). Once again it is too early in Haidara's career to predict whether he could have a political influence on the population. The amount of educational, economic, material and spiritual power that Haidara wields with his following is extensive. Accounting for the size and the distribution of his performance, because of audio and videocassettes, Haidara could potentially manipulate forces against the government.

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<sup>90</sup> At this stage in the research it is difficult to assert Haidara's political influences or potential involvement in Mali's political sphere.

It is unquestionable, though, that Haidara's popularity and leadership have increased over the decade; the images of his identity have aroused discussion and his religious expression has prompted censorship. Haidara believes that the censorship imposed on him occurs because of his public criticism of other leaders and the government. Yet, he professes to speak the truth and many of his followers, claim that he does too. His truths speak about the socio-economic and reality and political leadership in Mali. With a large grin that sweeps across his face, he proudly confesses, "my association is the best" (Haidara; Bamako, Mali; February 15; personal communication).

In the early 1990s, there was a political transformation in Mali. The new "democratic" context resulted in a dramatic shift in the economy, tolerance of religious expression and a more developed independent and private media. These shifts have produced a proliferation of popular Muslim leaders through their appropriation of electronic media. In the two case studies presented, this phenomenon has been explored through the religious performances of one such Islamic leader, Cherif Ousmane Madani Haidara. Like other Islamic leaders, Haidara's performances have become widely disseminated through electronic broadcast media. He has been able to spread his messages far and wide to remote areas of the country and beyond, throughout the region and across the globe.

The context of Mali, though, has been important for understanding conditions that produce charismatic leadership, such as Haidara's. According to Weber, it is situational. There are certain economic and social conditions that support charismatic leadership (1947). Yet, charisma is often unstable and vulnerable leadership, though; it



can collapse at anytime (Weber 1968). Hence, the future of Haidara's fame and status is unpredictable.

## **7. 0 BROADER IMPLICATIONS: CONCLUSION**

The reasons for the appeal of charismatic leaders remain complex: some of them can be explained by the various political and economic crises in Mali; some of them are spiritual. It remains an overall mystery as to why leaders are followed with such dedication, though. Is it an attraction to the leader's ideology or simply an adoration of a charismatic figure? The point is that: leaders' attractiveness cannot be reduced simply to factors such as "economic distress" or "personal deficiencies"(Oakes 1999: 126).

One researcher of charisma states that crisis can be an element of every society, yet very few produce these types of charismatic figures (Cruise O'Brien and Coulon 1988). Aberbach poses the question, then: "Did crisis create them or did they create crisis (Aberbach 1996: 1)?" Leaders begin to package the socio-political circumstances of the country to their followings, highlighting a nation's perceived economic dysfunction, unjust political leadership and/or the growing number of non-believers. This tactic can indeed benefit the charismatics (Cruise O'Brien and Coulon 1988) whose leadership, then, begins to fill a void in a political or social setting.

This study has begun to show the importance of understanding Islamic leadership, the role of Islamic leaders, and furthermore the power that their messages and images can wield. This power is especially so in contexts with an open economy, freedom of religious expression and an independent and private media. With the fall of the old political regime, religious activities and expressions flourished. The new regime

in Mali facilitated this phenomenon and influenced the way knowledge is disseminated by tolerating new forms of religious practice. As the technological facilities in Mali develop, there are more opportunities for new religious leaders to employ the media for their performances appropriating electronic media, specifically<sup>91</sup>. As performances have increased, the leaders' discourses have become more widely spread, enhancing their popularity and increasing the size of their followings.

Electronic media is the new phenomenon, not the continuity of articulated Islamic expression. Expression, though, now caters to a wider and more diverse audience, as new leaders and associations, themselves, have surfaced. Religious clerics *remain* the privileged agents of knowledge and their performances serve to diffuse Islam throughout Mali; but a transformation has occurred in the mode and scope of communication (Sanankou 1991: 140-141), creating a new type of leadership.

According to Eickelman and Anderson (1999),

In an era of multiple and alternative channels of communication, issues of how various publics are reached, how messages with religious and political content are listened to in the new Middle East and Muslim world, and what the limits on form and content are in different channels of communication are as important as the overt content of their messages (Eickelman & Anderson 1999: 7).

During the televised conference held in Bamako in January 2002, for example, at the final meeting of Islamic associations before the national elections, the message was blatant for those present. The Islamic leaders told their followers: the present government is not only guiding a secular path, but an "anti-religion" one. The formation

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<sup>91</sup> See Eickelman & Anderson 1999 for discussions about Islam and the Internet in the Middle East. There is always room for improving technological communications. According to Ziegler & Asante (1992) "Africa must begin to research new technologies, interactive, video and low power broadcast" (68). Today, radio and television stations are played on the Internet, for example *Radio Bamaken*. Once again, this presents great possibilities for the use of media in religious activities in the future.

of political parties on the basis of religion remains prohibited in Mali (Brenner 2000: 294)<sup>92</sup>. However, the clerics proclaimed: “It is time for Islam to enter the political arena” (Baxter 2002a: 48). While the message was delivered to an audience in the capital, the conference was recorded, and the tapes widely distributed. While “six million voters prepared to elect a new president on 28 April, [2002] Mali’s Muslim majority have been making sure their voice is being heard” (Baxter 2002).

The future of these Islamic leaders and their organizations is unknown. And while there has not been overt political or social threat by these groups to date – they have not posed an immediate challenge to the secular state or the dominant existing brotherhoods (Clark 1999: 164) – they are tolerated. The General Secretary of *AMUPI* believes that Mali has this tradition of tolerance. He insisted “The brotherhoods can live together in unity, if they try” (Khady Drame; January 25; Bamako, Mali, personal communication). There even remains interdependency between the dominant brotherhoods and the government. Clark has argued that Mali’s government should be encouraging the support of traditional Islamic leadership where leaders simultaneously need to support, or at least not challenge publicly, the dominant political parties (Clark 1999: 165). While this may have historically contributed to a certain amount of stability in Malian society, rather than any polarization, the emergence of a new leader like Haidara using newly available technologies, appears to pose a threat to an established social order.

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<sup>92</sup> However, during the recent 2002 presidential elections, there was a political candidate who built his candidacy on religion. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, “who left the ruling party last year and with many party barons, formed the RPM. Mr Keita also has the support of Mali’s Islamic associations. They have told their Muslim followers to vote for him,” according to Joan Baxter (Baxter 2002c).

The stakes could be high for a country like Mali depending on the types of messages circulated, especially in contexts where there is considerable discontent with the government or a socio-economic situation. The threat can be accentuated by the use of electronic media. This recently formed media and leadership context has provided new platforms for challenging the established political and religious order<sup>93</sup>.

Are these groups actually capable of weakening political authority? In viewing the leaders as role models, they could potentially arm their audiences, using religious knowledge, with political tools for challenging the social, political and economic system. While leaders such as Haidara can be seen as discrediting religion and the role of the established Islamic leadership, he continues to be viewed by his followers as expressing the fundamental truths of the religion. Haidara gains popularity because, according to his followers, “he speaks the truth”, both about religion and the existing political order. But there is a selective use of Islam.

Certain of Haidara’s activities are viewed as sacrilegious by the dominant brotherhoods. As I have shown, he sidesteps some traditions, for example occasionally conducting the religious prayers and sermons in Banmanan. His unruly actions are occasionally overlooked by the religious authority (such as *AMUPI*) because leaders like Haidara continue to preach Islam’s basic tenets. It becomes, then, almost impossible to dispute the voices of these types of leaders. Their words are popular with audiences of various backgrounds. Thus, many of these followers merge into a large Muslim community, part of the “Greater Muslim Collective” (Rubin 1990: 7). Once the leader

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<sup>93</sup> In an extreme case, networks such as *Radio-Television Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM)*, in Rwanda provides a recent example. *RTLM* was a situation of military communication. Journalist Joel Simon writes: it was “the use of civilian radio by the Hutu-led military junta in Rwanda to coordinate and carry out a genocidal campaign against ethnic Tutsis in 1994” (Simon 2001: 3).

has captivated an audience, he can begin to develop certain political concepts or religious expressions for his follow-ship, again sidestepping the previous concerns of the government or religious authorities.

Does this facet allow leaders to challenge the system in a socially accepted way? It can supply an acceptable manner for the devotees to reject or challenge the social system, in a way that may not be easily condemned. The sermon ideology is integrated into the everyday lives of the devout, because the sermons, inspired by the *Hadith* and *Qur'an*, address specific Muslim concerns, including political ones. Islamic associations have now become “the preferred form of socio-political organisation in Mali for those who wish to speak and act in the national political arena” (Brenner 2000: 299).

Although the established leadership in Mali marginalizes Haidara, he is still an influential leader with a lot of support from a faithful followship; and this support seems too great for the government to effectively silence the leader and his activities. This does not ease the government’s concern: Haidara continues to be censor from state-owned media outlets. Nevertheless, Haidara’s messages and image have become widely circulated by certain types of electronic media, such as video and audiocassettes. It is impossible to efficiently censor this type of alternative media, though. Thus the authorities have less power over him than suspected. Although Haidara is by no means the most fundamentalist preacher in Mali, extremism exists and the secular state is becoming increasingly wary of criticism in both religion and politics from many leaders.

Malian political scientist Cheiban Coulibaly suggests, “incipient Islamic extremism in Mali, which could lead to *Shaira* is a reality”(Baxter 2002a: 50). Coulibaly believes the rise of political fundamentalism is a response to a Konare

government that is unable to deliver proper education and a functioning economy to the population (Ibid.). Although there are advocates of fundamentalist ideologies in Mali among certain groups according to Brenner, and unlike Haidara, “they remain somewhat marginal” (Brenner 2000: 4).

These types of predictions, I believe, underestimate the power that new charismatic Islamic leaders and their performances have in shaping the lives of their devotees. When performances move the audience, the dedication to leaders in a place like Mali can be profound – especially among poor and marginalized people. Certain leaders wield a considerable amount of spiritual, economic, and social influence.

Fundamentalist ideologies, certain social environments, and new opportunities for religious leadership present individuals with opportunities for positions of authority, prestige or a sense of importance. These would otherwise be impossible to attain by other means because of the power structure, or unequal access to resources in their respective countries. This is true for Mali, as it is true for other parts of the world, regardless of the dominant religion. In Egypt, for example, according to Barry Rubin, “When fundamentalists criticize the existing order, they make sense to many people who may also be moved by their confidence that Islam provides the answers to <Egypt’s> problems or needs” (Rubin 1990: 7). This type of leadership provides the devotees, followers or audiences a moment to feel a part of something within their disparity, adding meaning to the surface of meaningless.

At the same time, extremist leadership that emerges from fundamentalist ideology is often a desire to control the population. In a case of precarious political leadership, extreme religious leaders can emerge issuing their own strict doctrine. Fundamentalism defends the leader’s rigid doctrines, then, and segregates the faithful

because leaders believe a purely secular society may obliterate their religion and their communities (Fulford 2001; see also Karen Armstrong 2000).

Within the present international context, including the powerful notion of a “clash of civilizations”, it is important to demystify or clarify misconceptions that are circulated in the media about Islamic religious leaders, fundamentalist or otherwise. To date, leaders in Mali, including Haidara, have done nothing extreme. Haidara does not have any overt political ambitions or political plans. In addition, the same could be said about his following. This study of these leaders is significant, though, given its relation to several concurrent global phenomena, including: certain failings of democracy in parts of the world, the widening of the gap between the rich and poor, cultural and religious movements filling spaces of political weakness, as well as the “West’s” relations with the Muslim world (Lewis 2001).

Once again, Abdul Wahid Hamid stated that in Islam the noble prophet advised that if there are as few as three persons going on a journey, they should appoint one as their leader (Abdul Wahid Hamid 1989). The goal of this thesis was not necessarily to examine the question of *why* there are leaders – religion requires them – so much as to address *how* leaders are followed. This was explored through the study of three major components: charisma, performance, and media. The preliminary findings show the importance of religious leaders and their new movements *and* consequences and the contexts in which they flourish. The research provides a foundation that prompts further investigation. This thesis, then, needs to be viewed as exploratory rather than conclusive. It has opened the arena to further explore the phenomenon of a new type of Islamic leadership.

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Ould Saleck-General Secretary of *LIEEMA*; Segou, Mali; March 16, 2001; personal communication (translated from French to English by the author).



**Mohammed Kone; Segou, Mali; March 16, 2001; personal communication. Lamine Konare; Segou, Mali; March 12; personal communication (translated from Banamanan to French by Lamine Konare. Later, translated from French to English by the author).**

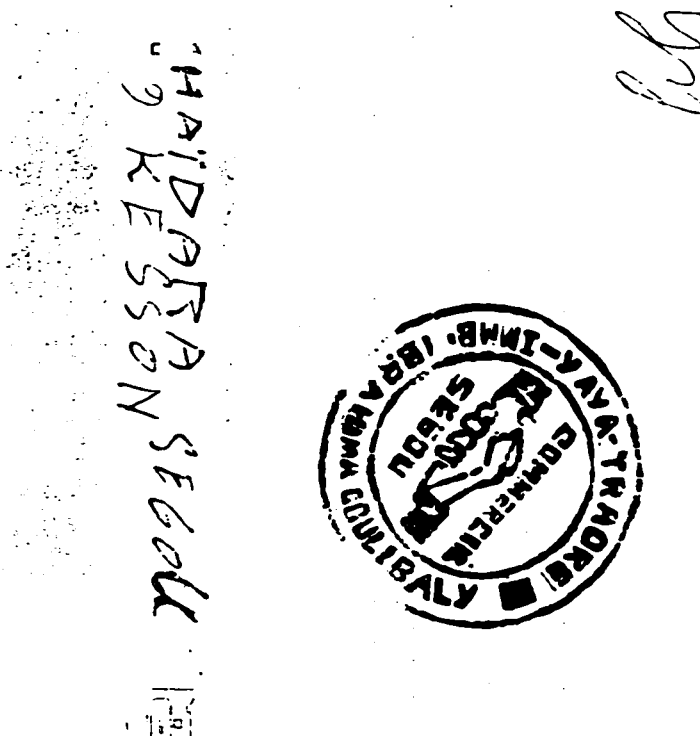
**Bintou Smanki & Moussa Traore; *Association de la solidarite Islamique*, Segou, Mali; March 17; personal communication (translated from French to English by the author).**

# **APPENDIX A: ILLUSTRATIONS**

1

**Illustration 1.**

**Cassette Covers (referred to in section 4.5)**



**Illustration 2.**

**Sample of Ancar Dine membership card (referred to in section 5.5)**

**M . S**

ASSOCIATION MUSULMANE POUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT DE L'ISLAM

N° 4850  
121

Nom : Abdrahamane Sogolon  
 Domicile : Hamoudoulaye  
 Profession : Elève au lycée catholique  
 Occupation : ANALYSEUR D'ISLAM  
 Fait le 21... Mai... et en 1995...

Signature du Président

*[Signature]*

**A . M . D . I . S**

ASSOCIATION MUSULMANE POUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT DE L'ISLAM EN SINCERITE

الاسم عبد الرحمان سولون  
 دomicile حمودولايه  
 Profession Elève au lycée catholique  
 Occupation ANALYSEUR D'ISLAM  
 Fait le 21... Mai... et en 1995...

CACHET DE CONTROLE

*[Circular Stamp]*

Illustration 3.

Ançar Dine Calendar (referred to in section 5.6)

# ANÇAR - DINE

CALENDRIER GREGORIEN

**HEGIRE**

LES SIX PROMESSES DE L'ISLAM

1. Je n'associerai rien à Allah.
2. Je ne volerais jamais.
3. Je ne ferais pas de faux serments.
4. Je ne me laisserais pas enlever.
5. Je ne me laisserais pas enlever.
6. Je ne me laisserais pas enlever.

**LE CHEMIN EST LA**

JANVIER	
1	TENNI
2	TARATA
3	ARABA
4	ALANESSA
5	DIJOURA
6	SIBRI
7	TENNI
8	TARATA
9	ARABA
10	ALANESSA
11	DIJOURA
12	SIBRI
13	TENNI
14	TARATA
15	ARABA
16	ALANESSA
17	DIJOURA
18	SIBRI
19	TENNI
20	TARATA
21	ARABA
22	ALANESSA
23	DIJOURA
24	SIBRI
25	TENNI
26	TARATA
27	ARABA
28	ALANESSA
29	DIJOURA
30	SIBRI
31	TENNI

FEVRIER	
1	ALANESSA
2	DIJOURA
3	SIBRI
4	TENNI
5	TARATA
6	ARABA
7	ALANESSA
8	DIJOURA
9	SIBRI
10	TENNI
11	TARATA
12	ARABA
13	ALANESSA
14	DIJOURA
15	SIBRI
16	TENNI
17	TARATA
18	ARABA
19	ALANESSA
20	DIJOURA
21	SIBRI
22	TENNI
23	TARATA
24	ARABA
25	ALANESSA
26	DIJOURA
27	SIBRI
28	TENNI
29	TARATA
30	ARABA

MARS	
1	ALANESSA
2	DIJOURA
3	SIBRI
4	TENNI
5	TARATA
6	ARABA
7	ALANESSA
8	DIJOURA
9	SIBRI
10	TENNI
11	TARATA
12	ARABA
13	ALANESSA
14	DIJOURA
15	SIBRI
16	TENNI
17	TARATA
18	ARABA
19	ALANESSA
20	DIJOURA
21	SIBRI
22	TENNI
23	TARATA
24	ARABA
25	ALANESSA
26	DIJOURA
27	SIBRI
28	TENNI
29	TARATA
30	ARABA
31	ALANESSA

JULIET	
1	KARI
2	TARATA
3	ARABA
4	ALANESSA
5	DIJOURA
6	SIBRI
7	TENNI
8	TARATA
9	ARABA
10	ALANESSA
11	DIJOURA
12	SIBRI
13	TENNI
14	TARATA
15	ARABA
16	ALANESSA
17	DIJOURA
18	SIBRI
19	TENNI
20	TARATA
21	ARABA
22	ALANESSA
23	DIJOURA
24	SIBRI
25	TENNI
26	TARATA
27	ARABA
28	ALANESSA
29	DIJOURA
30	SIBRI
31	TENNI

AOÛT	
1	ARABA
2	ALANESSA
3	DIJOURA
4	SIBRI
5	TENNI
6	TARATA
7	ARABA
8	ALANESSA
9	DIJOURA
10	SIBRI
11	TENNI
12	TARATA
13	ARABA
14	ALANESSA
15	DIJOURA
16	SIBRI
17	TENNI
18	TARATA
19	ARABA
20	ALANESSA
21	DIJOURA
22	SIBRI
23	TENNI
24	TARATA
25	ARABA
26	ALANESSA
27	DIJOURA
28	SIBRI
29	TENNI
30	TARATA
31	ARABA

AVRIL	
1	KARI
2	TARATA
3	ARABA
4	ALANESSA
5	DIJOURA
6	SIBRI
7	TENNI
8	TARATA
9	ARABA
10	ALANESSA
11	DIJOURA
12	SIBRI
13	TENNI
14	TARATA
15	ARABA
16	ALANESSA
17	DIJOURA
18	SIBRI
19	TENNI
20	TARATA
21	ARABA
22	ALANESSA
23	DIJOURA
24	SIBRI
25	TENNI
26	TARATA
27	ARABA
28	ALANESSA
29	DIJOURA
30	SIBRI
31	TENNI

MAI	
1	TARATA
2	ARABA
3	ALANESSA
4	DIJOURA
5	SIBRI
6	TENNI
7	TARATA
8	ARABA
9	ALANESSA
10	DIJOURA
11	SIBRI
12	TENNI
13	TARATA
14	ARABA
15	ALANESSA
16	DIJOURA
17	SIBRI
18	TENNI
19	TARATA
20	ARABA
21	ALANESSA
22	DIJOURA
23	SIBRI
24	TENNI
25	TARATA
26	ARABA
27	ALANESSA
28	DIJOURA
29	SIBRI
30	TENNI
31	TARATA

JUIN	
1	DIJOURA
2	SIBRI
3	TENNI
4	TARATA
5	ARABA
6	ALANESSA
7	DIJOURA
8	SIBRI
9	TENNI
10	TARATA
11	ARABA
12	ALANESSA
13	DIJOURA
14	SIBRI
15	TENNI
16	TARATA
17	ARABA
18	ALANESSA
19	DIJOURA
20	SIBRI
21	TENNI
22	TARATA
23	ARABA
24	ALANESSA
25	DIJOURA
26	SIBRI
27	TENNI
28	TARATA
29	ARABA
30	ALANESSA
31	DIJOURA

OCTOBRE	
1	TENNI
2	TARATA
3	ARABA
4	ALANESSA
5	DIJOURA
6	SIBRI
7	TENNI
8	TARATA
9	ARABA
10	ALANESSA
11	DIJOURA
12	SIBRI
13	TENNI
14	TARATA
15	ARABA
16	ALANESSA
17	DIJOURA
18	SIBRI
19	TENNI
20	TARATA
21	ARABA
22	ALANESSA
23	DIJOURA
24	SIBRI
25	TENNI
26	TARATA
27	ARABA
28	ALANESSA
29	DIJOURA
30	SIBRI
31	TENNI

NOVEMBRE	
1	ALANESSA
2	DIJOURA
3	SIBRI
4	TENNI
5	TARATA
6	ARABA
7	ALANESSA
8	DIJOURA
9	SIBRI
10	TENNI
11	TARATA
12	ARABA
13	ALANESSA
14	DIJOURA
15	SIBRI
16	TENNI
17	TARATA
18	ARABA
19	ALANESSA
20	DIJOURA
21	SIBRI
22	TENNI
23	TARATA
24	ARABA
25	ALANESSA
26	DIJOURA
27	SIBRI
28	TENNI
29	TARATA
30	ARABA
31	ALANESSA

**Illustration 4.**

**Cherif Ousmane Haidara Sticker (referred to in section 5.7)**



**Illustration 5.**

**Cherif Ousmane Haidara Badge (referred to in 5.7)**



# **APPENDIX B: TABLES**



Table 1.

## Profile of Religious Leaders in Mali

Name	Age	Birth Place	Residence	Titles	Religious Training	Media Appropriation	Leadership Roles	Association Affiliation	Association Role
Abobacar Thiam	70	Segou	Segou	-El Hadj -Medersa founder & Director Marabout	N/A	No	Consulting Medersa Directing	AMUPI-Segou	Co-founder
Ismael Drame	50s	N/A	Bamako	Cheikh Imam Professor	N/A	Yes	Preaching Teaching Consulting	Ligue Malienne des Imams et Erudits pour la Solidarite Islamique	District President
Khady Drame	56	Kayes	Bamako	Imam Professor General Secretary Elhadj	Egypt at Al Azher	Yes -Radio & Television	Preacher Teaching Consultant	AMUPI- Headquarters	General Secretary
Oyouba Sougoele	60s	Kayes	Bamako	Marabout Elhadj -Chief ulema Imam	Saudi Arabia	Yes -Television & Radio	Judging Preaching Consulting	Ulema	Chief
Mohammed Diko	32	Timbuktu	Bamako	Imam Radio Director Elhadj	Malian Qur'an school & Saudi Arabia (Medina)	Yes Radio & Television	Preaching	AISDE (association Islamique pour Epanouissement et Development)	Founder & President
A. Dougoune	31	Segou	Segou	Cheikh Imam Elhadj	Syria at Damas	No	Preaching	International Association from Pakistan Dawa	Principle leader in Mali
Ousmane Madani Haidara	42	Segou	Bamako	Cherif Imam Marabout Spiritual Guide Medersa founder Elhadj	Institut Saada Oumar Touré pour les Etudes Islamiques et la formation Professionnelle, a Malian medersa & Lycee in Cote d'Ivoire	Yes Radio & Television	Preaching	Ancar Dune	Founder & Spiritual Guide
Amadou Bahily	76	Segou	Segou	Imam for the Wahabite	Egypt Morroco	No	Preaching	Wahabite Association	Preacher
Mamadou Thiam	30s	Bamako	Bamako	Imam Preacher	Saudi Arabia	Yes Radio & Television	Preaching	N/A	N/A
Omar Dialo	61	Segou	Segou	Preacher Professor	N/A	N/A	Preaching -Ass. Coordination	AMUPI-Segou	Co-founder & Secretary General
Mohammed Traore	40	N/A	Bamako	Preacher	Malian Medersa & University in Iraq (Baghdad)	Yes Radio & Television	-Preaching -Ass. Coordination -Teaching	AMUM (Association Malienne des Jeunes Musulmans)	Vice President of the National Executive Office

**Table 2.****Radio Station Profiles: Segou**

<b>Radio Station Title</b>	<b>Date of Creation</b>	<b>Radio Ownership</b>	<b>Religious Programming</b>	<b>Religious Programming Funding</b>	<b>Association &amp; Preacher involvement</b>
<i>Radio Jamana Folko</i>	1992	Privately Owned -Affiliated with <i>Jamana</i> a NGO primarily funded by France	-Sermon Cassettes of Preachers -“ <i>Vie en Islam</i> ” -“ <i>Union des Musulmans</i> ” -Cassette of Friday Prayer *	Preachers & Islamic Associations rent air time -Cassette Sales -Notices, publicity and contracts	Yes
<i>Radio Balanza-Frequence Magique</i>	1996	Privately Owned -Partnership with French International Radio Station	-Sermon Cassettes of Preachers -Cassette of Friday Prayer	Preachers & Islamic associations rent air time	Yes
<i>Radio K. Libre</i>	N/A	Privately Owned -Partnership with Radio Mande in Mansine	-Cassette of Friday Prayer -“Call-in Programme” -Weekly guest preacher	Preachers & Islamic associations rent air time	Yes

Source: Personal Communication with employees at Segou's three radio stations.

\* *Radio Jamana Folko* hosts two Christian shows per week. These are programmes sponsored and implemented by the Protestant and Catholic Churches in Segou.

Note: *Radio Folko*

Interviewee: Programmer/Technician-Bissili Lassana Sacko

Date: March 11, 2001

*Radio Balanza*

Interviewee: Director Lamine Konate & Preacher/programmer Mohammed Kone

Date: March 12 & 16, 2001

*Radio K. Libre*

Interviewee: Animateur

Date: February 15, 2001

**Table 3.****Ethnic groups of *Ancar Dine-Segou* Members**

<b>Haoussa</b>	<b>Noumou*</b>	<b>Bambana</b>	<b>Dogon</b>	<b>Bobo-Fing</b>
2%	5%	35%	7%	5%
<b>Sarakole</b>	<b>Minianka</b>	<b>Peulh</b>	<b>Senoufo</b>	<b>Somono</b>
7%	23%	9%	2%	5%

\*Noumouw are another *nyamankala* referring to the specialization of ironworkers. In addition, interestingly, the informants differentiated between Banmanan and Noumou.

Source: This survey accounted for 43 female and male *Ancar Dine-Segou* members.

**Table 4.**

**Education Levels of *Ancar Dine*-Segou Members**

<b>No Formal Education</b>	<b>Elementary School</b>	<b><i>Lycée</i></b>	<b><i>Medersa</i></b>	<b>University</b>
48%	28%	6%	17%	0%

Source: The survey accounted for 46 female and male *Ancar Dine*-Segou members.

**Table 5.**

***Ancar Dine Activity Schedule***

<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Sunday</b>
Men's general office meeting (evening) -All decisions for <i>Ancar Dine</i> -Segou are made at this time	Men's Islamic information Session (evening)	Media evening (audio & visual cassette reception)	Women's Islamic training session (male instructor)	Haidara cassettes are played (2 hours)	Women's committee activities and meetings (2 x month)	Women's sermon by <i>Ancar</i> Preacher (i.e. Women's behaviour) Male instructed
		Haidara cassettes played at <i>Radio Jamana-Folko</i> (The branch rent airtime for 20,000 CFA/mth.- \$35.71US/mth.)	Men's sermon with <i>Ancar</i> preacher (member's home)	Men's general assembly and weekly blessing	Mens' committee activities & meetings	Men's sermon (French) Evening activity
		Q & A period of Haidara's sermons with <i>Ancar</i> Preacher		Media activity Haidara cassettes are played on <i>Radio Balanzone</i> (2 hours)	Youth sermon by an <i>Ancar</i> performed by an <i>Ancar</i> Preacher	

\*Source: *Ancar Dine* Administration; Segou; February 15; personal communication.

**Table 6.**

**Motivation for *Ancar Dine* Membership**

<b>Spiritual/Religious</b>	<b>Financial</b>	<b>Educational</b>	<b>Material</b>
10/25	16/25	12/25	19/25

\*The survey accounted for 25 female and male *Ancar Dine*-Segou members

## **APPENDIX C: PHOTOGRAPHS**

**Photograph 1.**

**Shop of Cassette Vendor in Segou**



**Source: February 2001; Segou, Mali.**



**Photograph 2.**

**Kiosk of Cassette Vendor in Segou**



**Source: March 2001; Segou, Mali.**

**Photograph 3.**

**Painting of Cherif Ousmane Madani Haidara**



**Source: March 2001; Segou, Mali.**

**Photograph 4.**

***Ancar Dine* Cassette Vendor**



**Source: February 2001; Bankoni, Bamako, Mali.**

**Photograph 5.**

***Ancar Dine* Cassette Vendor**



**Source: February 2001; Bankoni, Bamako, Mali.**

**Photograph 6.**

***Ancar Dine Photograph & Badge Vendor***



**Source: February 2001; Bankoni, Bamako, Mali.**

**Photograph 7.**

***Ancar Dine Activity: General Assembly***



**Source: February 2001, Segou, Mali.**

**Photograph 8.**

***A Mediated Performance during an Ancar Dine Activity***



**Source: February 2001; Segou, Mali.**