Sufi Muslims in Montréal: Tensions between Cosmopolitanism and the Cultural Economy of Difference

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Abstract: In this article, I describe how expressions of Western modernity—secularism, tolerance and cosmopolitanism—are articulated in post-9/11 Quebec. I explore the socio-political relevance of the appeal to cosmopolitanism in a neoliberal post–Cold War context where modern ideals of secularism have been deeply unsettled and the idea of post-secularism is taking hold. I consider how some Muslims, members of a Sufi circle, initiate forms of civic participation that position Islam as a site for intercultural negotiation and for the articulation of cosmopolitan religious identities. A discourse on spirituality brings together Sufi mysticism and a local Québécois version of openness to sociocultural diversity.

Keywords: Muslim, cosmopolitanism, Montréal, identity, Naqshbandi

Résumé : Dans cet article, je décris et j'analyse comment les idiomes culturels associés à la modernité occidentale—la laïcité, la tolérance, et le cosmopolitisme—s'articulent dans le contexte post-9/11 au Québec. J'explore la pertinence sociopolitique de la revendication de valeurs cosmopolites dans un contexte néo-libéral post-guerre froide où les idéaux de sécularisme moderne ont été remis en question et l'idée de post-sécularisme se répand. Je considère comment certains Musulmans, membres d'un cercle soufi, initient des formes de participation citoyenne qui placent l'Islam au cœur de la négociation interculturelle et de l'articulation d'identités religieuses cosmopolites. Leurs discours sur la spiritualité arriment le mysticisme soufi à une version locale québécoise de l'ouverture à la diversité socioculturelle.

Mots-clés : Musulman, cosmopolitisme, Montréal, identité, Naqshbandi

Introduction

Over the past ten years or so, when examining social contexts where multiple ethnic, religious and cultural groups coexist, the concept of cosmopolitanism has gained considerable grounds in anthropological research and theory. In the study of social and cultural dynamics in the city of Montréal, anthropologists have turned their attention to privileged sites for intercultural tolerance and for the production of cosmopolitan identities. While such interests certainly lies with the *air du temps*, called out by the renewed concern for *vivre ensemble* in a neoliberal post-colonial moment, notions of tolerance and cosmopolitanism seem to have permeated a certain anthropological reading of contemporary, post–Bill 101 Québécois society. Such a rendition is also the product of certain local institutions, both educational and governmental.

In this article, I discuss the case of a Montréal Sufi group to draw out some of the distinctive dynamics through which some inhabitants of the city appropriate logics of tolerance and cosmopolitanism. While various international circumstances tied to 9/11, particularly the "War on Terror" and the overt, often violent, resistance to Western domination by Muslims, have helped to push Muslims into a fraught position in Canadian society (for a similar analysis, see McDonough and Hoodfar 2005), one in which they often need to justify their religious and political loyalties in relation to Islamism and secularism (see Helly 2000, 2004; Renaud et al. 2002), the appeal to idioms of openness and cosmopolitanism by Montréal's Naqshbandi-Haqqani Muslims also fits with the growing presence in Quebec, and more specifically in Montréal, of modes of identity and expression that are related to conceptual categories such as tolerance and cultural openness. I would also emphasize that the budding interest for sites of cultural openness (*ouverture*) and cosmopolitan identities, as its theoretical anchoring, certainly also stems from of a concerted effort

by anthropologists in and of Quebec to move away from a folklorizing interpretation of Quebec culture.[1]

I consider how members of a Naqshbandi-Haqqani circle have initiated forms of civic involvement that position a Sufi tradition of Islam as a privileged site for intercultural tolerance and for the articulation of cosmopolitan identities. The claim that the Naqshbandi-Haqqani tradition of Sufism is a source of cosmopolitanism must be read alongside Quebec's ambiguous position on ethnic and religious diversity, especially the recent debates on the place of religion in society. I will show that, among Montréal's Naqshbandi-Haqqani Sufi devotees, the appeal to cosmopolitanism follows Hannerz's appeals to a "willingness to engage with the Other" (1992:252). However, it is more than the willingness of "globetrotting travel, sophisticated cultural knowledge and moral world-view of deracinated intellectuals" (Werbner 2006:496); cosmopolitanism is framed in terms of openness to cultural and religious differences while promoting a sense of moral responsibility to both the *umma*—the global community of Muslims—and Quebec society (see also Appiah 1998). Nonetheless, the casting of religious openness from a "Muslim" standpoint opposes Naqshbandi-Haqqani's cosmopolitan claims to the modern idea of a secular public sphere that is usually based on the notion of doctrinal neutrality regarding the assertion of religious truths. In other words, Naqshbandi-Haqqani's cosmopolitan claims are endowed with a moral content, which is embodied by what followers describe as the specificity of the Naqshbandi-Haqqani mystical experience.

Both notions, secularism and cosmopolitanism, can be related conceptually and historically to the emergence of European modern societies (Anderson 2006). To a large extent, their relationship lies within the modern emphasis on reflexivity and self-recognition, and both rest on the human ability to distance oneself from one's own primary frame of reference—whether religion, ethnicity, professional affiliation, kinship or nation—and to think critically about it (Beck 2000). As such, the form of cosmopolitanism claimed by Naqshbandi-Haqqani followers in Montréal can be read as an effort to encourage Muslims to understand themselves as "citizens of the world," an expression that Montréal Naqshbandi-Haqqani followers regularly use to describe themselves, and to open themselves up to different socio-political contexts. However, Naqshbandi-Haqqani's cosmopolitan claims extend access to cosmopolitan experiences from "deracinated intellectuals" to the locally situated condition of transnational migrants, who are often politically and socially marginalized (Cheah and Robbins 1998).

As I will show, Montréal Naqshbandi-Haqqani devotees assert a form of cosmopolitanism that is endowed with Islamic moral principles but is also opposed to so-called political Islam or Islamism. As such, the claim of religious tolerance on the basis of Sufi mysticism must be read in light of the post-9/11 North American readings of religious tolerance as a conspiracy to Islamize Western society (Starrett 2009). To a certain extent, the form of cosmopolitanism that Naqshbandi-Haqqani devotees assert echoes the wider political discourse in which several states, including the governments of Quebec and Canada, are trying to seek partnerships with presumably "tolerant" and "liberal" Muslims; that is, Muslims who are not perceived as a threat to the social norms and the moral principles claimed by Quebec and Canadian societies, opposing "good Muslims" to "bad Islamists."[2]

My reading of the type of civic participation encouraged by devotees at the Montréal Centre Soufi Naqshbandi—Masjid Al-Iman relates to my previous and ongoing ethnographic research among West African Muslims in Montréal, as well as a specific research interest in sites of intercultural negotiation and religious diversity more generally in the city of Montréal. The discussion presented here stems out of periods of ethnographic research that extends from 2004 to 2010, with a more focused episode in 2005 and 2006, when I conducted an ethnographic case study with two research assistants in the context of a research project on the everyday life of Muslims in Montréal.[3] The case study included audio-recorded interviews with leaders and members, informal conversations with members and participant observation research at the centre and in the surrounding neighbourhood. In what follows, I will first situate the socio-political implications of contemporary debates on the place of religion in Quebec's public sphere in view of the history of secularization in the province and the specificity of Montréal's cultural and religious landscape. Second, I present a brief history and overview of the Naqshbanditariqa and its contemporary expressions in Montréal. Next, I consider notions of Sufi tolerance and openness as they are articulated by devotees at the centre and explore their implications for the civic participation of Muslims in Quebec. Finally, I turn to the ways in which Naqshbandi-Haqqani disciples in Montréal see the roots of their order's cosmopolitan posture in their leader's *da'wa* or proselytizing efforts.

Religion, Secularization and the Public Sphere in Quebec

In Montréal, the public presence of Muslim groups must be understood, on the one hand, in relation to the

Canadian state ideology of multiculturalism. In 1971, the federal government implemented its policy of multiculturalism. In an attempt to reverse the earlier institutionalized efforts to assimilate immigrants culturally, the policy acknowledged the reality of cultural pluralism in Canada. In the context of growing English–French conflicts in the 1960s, the policy offered a blueprint for a Canadian identity based on the public acceptance of cultural difference and the equal participation of all in Canadian public institutions. Unlike the so-called "melting pot" model associated with the United States, Canadian multiculturalism has often been defined in terms of a "cultural mosaic"—implying that individual parts fit together into a unified whole. In support of the ideology of multiculturalism, the Canadian Human Rights Act was passed by parliament in 1977 and includes the protection of religious difference (Canadian Human Rights Act, RSC 1985, c. H-6, s. 3.1). While the act and the policy of multiculturalism have been extensively criticized in Canada, and their success—especially that of the multiculturalism policy—needs to be questioned, both have created a climate in which religious differences cannot be ignored or suppressed. If necessary, they must be accommodated so as not to limit a person's access to the goods, services, facilities or accommodation available to the general public (Canadian Human Rights Act, RSC 1985, c. H-6, s. 5).

On the other hand, Quebec's strong national identity project has had an impact on both the application of Canadian multiculturalism policy and the position of immigrant communities. In 1970, the first nationalist government led by the Parti Québécois (PQ) was elected. Since then, successive Quebec governments have claimed in various ways the right to self-determination, which encouraged, among other things, the creation of the Quebec Charter of Rights and the emergence of the concept of "interculturalism." In fact, in view of Quebec's claims to national self-determination, the province's political and cultural institutions have always had to wrestle with the paradoxical role of being dominant within Quebec while a minority within Canada (Anctil 1984; Meintel 1998). Given such a contradictory position, successive Quebec governments have emphasized the need to define a common societal project in view of an increasingly ethnically and religiously diverse population (Rousseau 2006). Such contradiction has had a tremendous impact upon recent migrants, bringing about both a model of cultural inclusion through linguistic policies[4] and distinct dynamics of exclusion based on race and religion. Recent studies show that Haitians, Africans, Arabs (both Muslims and Christians), North Africans (mostly Muslims) and South Asians (in large part Muslims) have been the principal victims of discrimination in Quebec; they mainly suffer from lack of employment opportunities, limited access to lodging and stereotyping in public institutions, especially in the health and educational sectors (Labelle 2006; McCall and Léonel 2004; Renaud et al. 2003, 2004).

To some extent, the Québécois political construction of the concept of interculturalism, the equivalent to Canadian multiculturalism, captures this ambiguity. As a philosophy of cultural exchanges, it requires an inherent openness to be exposed to the culture of the "others," an element of cultural dialogue and the recognition of multiple identities. The ideals of interculturalism assume that once a person is exposed to culture difference, a dialogue will develop such that those concerned will look for commonalities between that element of their own culture and the culture of the other. These ideals were largely detailed in the 1990 policy called *Au Québec pour bâtir ensemble* (Building Quebec Together) that aimed at capturing the essence of the Québécois citizenship regime, *Québécois vivre ensemble* (Quebec living together). Nonetheless, in practice, it has often meant, especially recently, that "others" need to find elements within their own cultural practices that fit the dominant French-speaking social institutions and agreed-upon social norms and moral principles.

To fully understand the socio-political context of interreligious dynamics in Quebec, the specific character of the province's history of secularism (Milot 2002) needs to be briefly described. The 1960s marked the end of the central role of the local Catholic Church in the socio-political domain. Quebec changed from a society in which Catholic clergy and their schools were extremely powerful and embarked on a process of secularization. However, unlike in France, secularization has not led to attempts to eliminate religion from the public sphere. Religious symbols are often present in government and public institutions. For example, the Catholic cross hangs in the *chambre des communes* (Chamber of the Commons, the provincial parliament), and individuals can wear religious symbols (such as "Islamic" veils, Sikh turbans or Christian crosses) when working in government offices and in government-managed institutions, such as schools and hospitals. The Quebec government largely finances private religious schools. Moreover, despite the dismantling of religious school boards in 2000, religion was taught as an academic topic in primary and secondary public schools until 2008. Since September 2008, following the educational reforms, a course on ethics and religious culture is now taught in public schools.

Over the past four decades or so, religiosity among the French-speaking majority in Quebec has changed dramatically. Major changes include the increased adoption of non-Catholic ritual, including the significant appeal of various forms of mysticism (Bibby 1990; Larouche and Ménard 2001; Meintel 2003). Such developments support the claim that religious revivalism in Western societies often takes the form of individualized religious practice oriented toward new forms of spirituality (Hervieu-Léger 2000; Hervieu-Léger and Davie 1996), including so-called New Age practices. Although the Catholic Church has suffered some of the greatest declines in religious affiliation and religion has largely flourished in the form of individualized commitment and forms of personal piety, this does not mean that religion plays no public role in Quebec. On the contrary, the intensity of recent debates about religion in the public sphere has highlighted the socio-political character of religion.

The event of 9/11 has encouraged a number of ethnically, racially and religiously plural societies like Quebec to revisit public debates on the place of secularism and religious rights. These included debates over the freedom of the press after the 2005 publication of the caricatures of the Muslim prophet Muhammad by a Danish newspaper, as well the 2003 through 2006 *sharia* (Islamic law) debate in Ontario and the 2006 Canadian Supreme Court ruling allowing Sikh children to wear the *kirpan* (ceremonial dagger) in public schools. More recently, in 2007, the Bouchard-Taylor Commission[5] on "reasonable accommodations"[6] has highlighted Quebec's ambivalence about ethnic and religious pluralism, placing Muslims at the core of discussions on the secular nature of Quebec.[7] While public debates within the commission, as well as in the broader society, have facilitated the proliferation of religious stereotypes, such as the anti-Muslim images reproduced in the media (centred particularly on gender issues and the veil), the attempt to reflect upon Quebec's contemporary dilemma to harmonize its plural character with its assertion of a common identity has helped to reinitiate concerted efforts to counter such religious stereotypes and promote amicable interreligious encounters.

To grasp the role of Muslims in these public debates, it is important to note that, since the second half of the 1990s, Islam has been the fastest growing religion in Quebec, mainly due to the rising rates of immigration of Muslims from North Africa (especially Algeria) and from South Asia.[8] Despite their increasing presence in Quebec, Muslims are still regarded as immigrant outsiders by the political majority of French-speaking Québécois (Antonius 2006; Rousseau and Castel 2006). Nonetheless, the relationship between Muslims and the dominant Quebec society is less tenuous than in the United States or Western Europe (Al Sayyad and Castells 2002; Cesari 2005; Cordell 2008; Haddad and Smith 2002; Joly 1998, 2008). In contrast with some European countries, there is no direct, shared colonial history with Muslim countries. In addition, the Canadian government's[9] initial lack of enthusiasm for the US and British "War on Terror" has to some extent facilitated a better rapport between Muslims and non-Muslims in Quebec (Fortin et al. 2008).

The city of Montréal plays a specific role in these complex dynamics to the extent that, historically, it has been the site of immigration flows in Quebec and where the majority of newer migrants of Muslim origin live. In fact, despite the fact that recent public discussions and debates regarding cultural and religious diversity have been framed at the general level of Quebec society, issues relating to diversity are specifically relevant to the context of everyday life in the city of Montréal and to the distinctive pluri-ethnic and pluri-religious character of Montréal within the province of Quebec. To a large degree, the question of Quebec society's contemporary dilemma to harmonize its plural character with its assertion of a common identity resonates distinctively in the city of Montréal. As the cultural capital of French-speaking Quebec, Montréal represents a particular pluri-ethnic and pluri-linguistic context. The bilingual situation in reference to Canada brings about what has been referred to as a "*double majorité*" in Montréal (Anctil 1984; Meintel 1998). One implication of the double majorité is that the boundaries between majority and minority groups are not so clearly defined. Moreover, recent legal and demographic changes have encouraged the emergence of a pluri-ethnic *francophonie* in the city (Lamarre et al. 2002; Meintel and Fortin 2002;). The appropriation of Québécois idioms of tolerance by Naqshbandi devotees fits with the particularity of Montréal's ethnic and religious dynamics.

The Naqshbandi-Haqqani *Tariqa*

Roots and Contemporary Affiliations

The *Naqshbanditariqa* (way or path in Islamic mysticism or Sufism used to designate different Sufi orders) has its roots in the Ottoman Empire; it was founded in the 14th century in present-day Turkmenistan in Central Asia. From there, it spread to the Balkans, India and Pakistan and gained prominence in Turkey and Persia (Abu-Manneh 2007). Today, the Naqshbandiyya has active centres in North America, the United Kingdom, much of Western Europe, the Middle East and South and Southeast Asia, as well as parts of Africa

(Draper 2004, 2006; Hicks 2008; Nielsen 2003; Werbner 2007). In the 1970s, Sheikh Nazim al-Qubrusi Al-Haqqani, who was born in Larnaca, Cyprus, in 1922, revived a branch of the order. Followers of Sheikh Nazim al-Qubrusi Al-Haqqani are also known as the followers of the Haqqaniyya order. Sheikh Nazim first preached in the Middle East. After considerable activities in Lebanon in the 1970s and 1980s, he opened his first mission in Britain in 1974 and sponsored the creation of the first North American mission in 1992 (Draper 2006).

The Sufi Centre (Masjid Al-Iman) in Montréal

The Naqshbandi-Haqqani tariqa has been in Montréal since the 1980s when it was brought to Montréal by a Jewish English Canadian psychiatrist and a few of his acquaintances. As one of the two prayer leaders at the Naqshbandi centre describes below, at first, the circle was informal and evolved in an unofficially manner:

> As elsewhere in the world, there were students of the Sheikh in North America and in Montréal. At the beginning of the 1980s, these students started to gather together for meditation circles and *suhbat* [association, companionship] circles. At first, we met in people's houses, in apartments. And, finally, it became more regular towards the end of the 1990s. There were ceremonies once a week during which teachings were transmitted. At the beginning of the 1990s, around 1992, we rented the first place on Park Avenue. Officially, it was a full-time Sufi centre. At that time, the place was open all the time, with ceremonies several times each week, Friday prayers ... many generations [were] trained, many people who came were initiated into the order, some went back home, others moved to other provinces in Canada, or they came for the teaching and followed their route elsewhere. [interview, November 24, 2005][10]

In 1984, the tariqa was officially registered with the Quebec government and in 2004 the tariqa bought a two-storey building to lodge the existing centre. The centre, which had previously shared a rented space with a local Senegalese Mouride group, bought a building in one of Montréal's pluri-ethnic neighbourhoods, at the centre of the city, where several the members had been active or had resided.

Two sheikhs head the centre in Montréal. Imam Farhat Jouini, originally from Tunisia, is the president of the centre in Montréal and leads the congregation; he also serves as a regional director of the worldwide Haqqani Foundation. Imam Jouini is the *muqaddam* (or official representative of Sheikh Nazim). However, while I conducted field research and debates over the pluri-ethnic and pluri-religious character of Quebec's population expansion, especially in 2005 and 2006, he was frequently absent due to regular travel to the other Naqshbandi centres in North America and to Sheikh Nazim's Cyprus home. As a consequence, the assistant imam, Omar Koné, led most of the centre's regular activities. Moreover, between 2005 and 2008, Imam Koné was notably present in Quebec's broader public sphere and media, especially for intercultural activities and public debates (see below).

In terms of its membership, the centre attracts multiethnic and multilingual groups.[11] Membership at the Montréal centre is relatively similar to the membership of other Naqshbandi tariqa in North America and Europe, which have had considerable success in attracting non-Muslim converts, as well as young educated professional Muslim migrants (Malik and Hinnells 2006; Westerlund 2004). The membership is mostly composed of first- and second-generation migrants. During fieldwork, I encountered members who had migrated from France, Senegal, Mali, Mauritania, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Congo, Rwanda, Morocco, Tunisia, Burundi, Madagascar, Somalia, Syria, Egypt, Turkey and Pakistan. Although there is no dominant ethnic group at the centre, English-speakers are more numerous than French-speakers. During the different periods of fieldwork, English speakers active in the centre were mostly from Somalia, Pakistan, Syria and Turkey. Nonetheless, religious and social activities at the centre are held in English, French and Arabic, often simultaneously during religious rituals and social activities. The number of devotees at the centre fluctuates significantly, and this is largely due to the significant number of international university student memberships. There was, nonetheless, a core group of about 15 participants, comprising West Africans, North Africans, English-speaking migrants from South Asia and several French Canadian and English Canadian converts. In contrast with some other Muslim groups in Montréal, such as the Senegalese Mouride Sufi order or Lebanese Shiites (LeBlanc et al. 2008; LeGall 2003), which tend to attract specific ethnic or national communities, the Naqshbandi-Haqqani circle tends to congregate on the basis of an expressed attraction to mysticism, as well as existing social networks based in educational and professional contacts, friendship and neighbourhood-based everyday interactions around the centre. It must be noted that while the Montréal Sufi centre is embedded in transnational Naqshbandi-Haqqani networks, including the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Sufi Order of America and the Haqqani Foundation, the Montréal branch has developed a significant degree of independence. Read against accounts in the existing literature on other

Naqshbandi tariqas in North America and in Europe, the centre in Montréal seems to have acquired its own distinctive identity and ways of functioning, which are tied both to the public role that its leaders have assumed over the years and to the membership of the circle.

In addition to recent immigrants, a significant number of the devotees are recent converts from both the local French Canadian and English-speaking communities. While the presence of such Canadian converts is significant, recent immigrants make up the majority of the centre's devotees. The membership also includes a sizeable number of mixed couples. The willingness of the two sheikhs to celebrate marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims may account for this. Further, many of the order's members in Montréal have international and transcultural experiences. Indeed, many of the recent migrants had lived in France and the United Kingdom before migrating to Canada. For instance, one of the devotees born in Madagascar lived in France for 15 years before moving to Montréal, where she married a Senegalese man. Another member had studied and married in the United States before settling in Montréal. Others, French Canadian converts in particular, grew up in ethnically, racially or religiously mixed families, travelled extensively abroad or simply developed ethnically diversified social networks through schooling in Montréal. Sheikh Koné is a good example of such a transcultural experience. The son of a French mother and a Malian father, he grew up in both Mali and in France. In the late 1980s, he migrated to Quebec to pursue his university studies.

As is the case with Sheikh Koné, who is trained as an engineer, the membership of the centre is relatively highly educated. Draper (2004) also notes the relative overrepresentation of highly educated migrants among Naqshbandi groups in Britain, while Hicks (2008) describes the New York group as being made up of more diverse economic and social backgrounds. The majority of the followers are in their twenties and early thirties. Unmarried, young adults without children, especially young men, are quite active at the centre. However, it is important to note that young women are also rather active at the centre. This contrasts sharply with many Muslim institutions in Montréal. While in many cases women tend to frequent other Muslim institutions when social activities are organized or Islamic discussion groups and Arabic language courses are available, in this case women frequent the centre for its weekly ceremonies. Some women also attend the weekly teaching sessions organized separately for women and for children. While women's activities are regularly held in spite of the low number of participants, children's classes are not regularly held. In fact, none were held during my more intense period of fieldwork in 2005.

Aside from the weekly *jum'a* (communal) prayers, held on Saturdays rather than Fridays, since the work schedules prevent Muslims from attending Friday afternoon prayers and the biweekly *dhikr* (remembrance) recitations (on Thursdays and Sundays), the centre also holds Arabic poetry recitations (Saturday evenings) and *hadra* night with dhikr and whirling dervishes (Sunday nights). There are usually between 40 to 50 devotees present at the weekly ceremonies, including regular devotees, occasional participants and those who are simply curious. The Sunday night ceremony is followed by a pot luck dinner—a communal meal and one of the distinctive features of the centre to which residents of the neighbourhood are invited.

The centre occasionally organizes activities such as fundraising events, which often incorporate meals, music and readings from the writings of Sufi poets (especially Rumi), and special rituals for holidays such as Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr (marking the end of Ramadan) and Eid al-Adha (the Feast of the Sacrifice). The centre also organizes events for the visits of international leaders of the Sufi order—such as was done in December 2006 for Sheikh Hisham Kabbani, who moved to the United States in 1991 where he established the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Sufi Order of America, or as was done in October 2004 for Sheikh Abdul Haqq Sazonoff, who is a native of the city of Chicago and the current national director of the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Sufi Order of America. The centre organizes special events for the yearly pilgrimages to Cyprus when Sheikh Nazim invites devotees to his home. Besides religious rituals, yearly festivals and the visits from and to other Naqshbandi groups and centres, the centre regularly opens its doors to non-Muslims for interfaith and intercultural gatherings and pedagogical purposes. In fact, the centre in Montréal is very active in various interfaith events and in pedagogical activities.

Idioms of Tolerance and Openness

In 2005, when I started to conduct ethnographic field research at the Montréal Naqshbandi-Haqqani centre, I went to meet Imam Koné, one of the two acting imams at the centre, to introduce my research to him. He graciously invited me to sit on a mat with him and quickly took over the discussion by "introducing me" to the centre. He emphasized numerous times, without any possibility of doubt, that Naqshbandi Muslims are not "fundamentalist" Muslims and that they practice an "open and tolerant type" of Islam: "We respect and fit with the ambient [meaning Quebec society and the city

of Montréal] openness and willingness to promote inter-religious harmony."

In this vignette, Imam Koné situates the Naqshbandi order within a construction of Quebec society as an open, multiethnic society, marked by the cohabitation of cultural or religious diversity, in opposition to one that would emphasize racial and religious differences, close-mindedness and discrimination. This constructed sense of self and the surrounding social context in which Muslims can potentially find themselves in marginalized socio-political positions in Montréal attempts to initiate forms of civic involvement that position them and their life-worlds (Sufi Islam) as privileged sites for intercultural tolerance and for the articulation of cosmopolitan identities. The appeal to "Islamic cosmopolitanism" as a space for Muslims in contemporary Western societies is not specific to the case of Montréal's Naqshbandi devotees. Rosemary Hicks (2008), in her study of Sufis in New York City, describes a similar process. However, while in the case of New York Sufis, the appeal to Islamic cosmopolitanism allows the devotees to "resolve what they identified as cultural conflicts between 'immigrants' and 'indigenous' (African American) Muslims, or among Muslims of diverse nationalities" (2008:283), in the case of the Montréal devotees. Besides the issues of authenticity and intra-Muslim tensions, it also relates to the specific of religious tolerance as it has been framed in the post-9/11 Quebec context.

While Imam Koné's discourse may seem to represent a caricature of the performance of traditional Sufism in a cosmopolitan context, which has seemingly been well-rehearsed for both visitors to the centre and to the mediatized public sphere, when asked why they frequent the centre, Naqshbandi followers referred mostly to three things: the specificity of the Sufi experience, the sociability around the rituals and the quest for religious tolerance. It is often with tears in their eyes that members will discuss the "warmth" they experience at the centre and the deep mystical experience through contact with the teachings of Sheikh Nazim. Women and men frequently cry during religious ceremonies and teaching sessions, while reading Sufi texts, or when recounting their experiences of religious enlightenment. Faith and knowledge are often clothed in deeply emotional expressions such as the oft-invoked "warmth to the heart." For other followers, mostly from West Africa and Morocco, the appeal of the centre lies with their familiarity with Sufism due to family-based practices in their place of origin. As a West African woman explained in relation to the weekly collective meals, religious practices and cultural references at the centre are thought to be "more familiar" and, along with other followers, she expressed this familiarity by saying:

> I started to frequent the centre with my husband and my baby when I was a student. I was drawn to it in great part by the fact that it provided a great place for socializing. After the weekly ceremonies, there is always a communal meal. It brings people together. For some reason, it reminds me of home; it is more convivial than other mosques in the city that are too impersonal. [Fatima, in her mid-thirties, interview, February 17, 2005]

Religious tolerance allows examination of the relationship between Quebec society's claims of interculturalism and the notion of religious openness, which is at the core of the Montréal's Naqshbandi-Haqqani's claim to an Islamic cosmopolitan identity.

The Logic of Tolerance

During my fieldwork, idioms of tolerance and openness were recurrent. It is through a discourse on spirituality that brings together Sufi mysticism and a local Québécois version of openness to socio-cultural diversity that devotees at the centre actively sought to situate themselves in view of other Muslims and Quebec society. An extract from an interview with Sheikh Koné illustrates the way in which Sufi philosophy is drawn upon at the centre to ground the interpretation of the tariqa's specific attitude of tolerance and openness:

> Because Sufis have a more advanced form of knowledge, this openness of understanding and especially the openness of the heart to everybody, seeing wisdom in all traditions is special to Sufism. As a consequence, we share many moments, many things with people of all horizons, of all orientations ... of all groupings, of all traditions, all experience, for our own knowledge, to learn. It is this openness of mind that allows us to relate to fundamentalist Muslims, to secular people, to fundamentalist Christians ... people of all traditions that exist, even if it is not a religious tradition. Sufism gives you an understanding of the highest standing on the functioning of men [*sic*] in general. As a consequence, Sufis are very, very open, very tolerant with all, but very strict with themselves. It is this openness of mind to all traditions that allow us to manage inter-cultural contacts.... An imam is someone who is rather 'fundamentalist.' When we face a mixed marriage, where the non-Muslim family enters in the mosque and starts kissing everyone, while men and women do not touch one another in Islam, it is a bit difficult. Imams, because of their tradition, their function, their origin, their life experience, always have a hard time facing

> such situations. Well, here, we take it more lightly, as a good point. We take the time to know people, which happens quite rapidly and we make sure that they feel at ease in any situation. It is part of our training. [interview, November 3, 2005].

Sheikh Koné's discourse about Sufi "openness" ultimately positions the tolerance of Sufis in contradistinction to those he calls "fundamentalists," including Christians. While recent studies have clearly demonstrated that the presumed opposition between Sufism and Islamic reformism is questionable, especially in the context of intensified globalization (Osella and Osella 2008; van Bruinessen and Howell 2007), it is clear that Naqshbandi-Haqqani followers' appropriation of this ideological opposition in Montréal is a political act with important implications. The casting of religious openness from a "Muslim" standpoint is endowed with a moral content, which is, in turn, embodied by what followers describe as the specificity of the Naqshbandi-Haqqani mystical experience. As such, the form of tolerant cosmopolitan identities claimed by Naqshbandi-Haqqani followers in Montréal can be read as an effort to encourage Muslims to understand themselves as "citizens of the world," an expression that Montréal Naqshbandi-Haqqani followers regularly use for themselves, and to open themselves up to different socio-political contexts. Concrete examples of the casting of religious openness are the regular opening of the centre to primary school children and to Concordia University students for the purpose of intercultural popular education or the sheikhs' willingness to celebrate interfaith marriages. In fact, under these circumstances, Imam Koné became a public religious personality in the context of debates on religious, social and cultural diversity that marked Quebec in 2007 through 2008 (The Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences or the Bouchard-Taylor Commission [CCAPRCD]), defending the openness and cosmopolitanism of "moderate" Muslims in Montréal. Imam Farhat Jouini is also very present in the media for preaching tolerance; recently, in December 2011, he joined his voice with other Canadian imams, during a Friday sermon that was presented in the local media in the context of reports on the Shafia lawsuit, to denounce violence against women.[12]

Aside from the reproduction of the ideological boundary between Sufism and Islamism, devotees draw on doctrinal components to assert that Sufism is an open and tolerant form of Islam; they especially evoke the Sufi notions of "Love," 'Unity" and "Truth." According to the Naqshbandi-Haqqani order's official website, Sufism is "the way of purifying the heart from bad manners and characteristics." In relation to Islam, it is "the path of spirituality that exists in Islam." This means that it involves "1. Seeking the pleasure of God; 2. Love and peace with one's self; 3. Harmony with all creations (mankind, animals, and nature); 4. To be dressed with the beautiful attributes of Prophets and Saints" (Naqshbandi-Haqqani Sufi Order of America). It should be noted here that my appeal to the Naqshbandi tariqa official website fits with the devotees' practice of consulting and referring to the information there for purposes of religious devotion. The doctrinal logic of tolerance, as articulated by imams and members at the Montréal centre, can be summarized as follows: Sufis believe that God desires the recognition of beauty. Just as one looks at oneself in the mirror, God looks at Himself in nature. This Sufi concept of love, nonetheless, is not limited to God; it includes human love with the idea that everything is a manifestation of God. This notion of "Love" is articulated with the notion of "Unity" (*wahdat*), understood through the doctrine of *tawhid*. Simply put, tawhid states that all phenomena are manifestations of a single reality, *al-Haq* (Truth/God). The chief aim of all Sufis is, thus, to let go of all notions of separateness, including the individual self, to realize the divine unity, which is considered to be the truth. As a consequence, the realization of divine unity necessitates absolute tolerance and openness toward others; namely, the necessity to look for similitude rather than difference.

It is striking that the mysticism that devotees at the centre associate with Sufism is consonant with the new forms of spirituality in Western post-secular societies, including New Age mysticism and the long Western fascination with Eastern mysticism (Genn 2007; Haenni and Voix 2007; Abu-Manneh 2007). In Quebec, the appeal to mystical Sufism cannot be dissociated from processes of secularization, during which provincial institutions have progressively moved away from the centralising control of the Catholic Church. In this context, religious experience has been privatized, and religion has been reframed as more plural. It is significant here that membership at the centre includes several French Canadian and English Canadian converts. As a female English Canadian convert to Islam explained:

> I converted to Islam close to 20 years ago. I was in my early thirties at the time. In my twenties, I had flirted with a number of New Age mystical practices but was never fully satisfied. I "discovered" Islam through a friend at the university, a women from Pakistan who was doing her Ph.D. with me. At first, it was more rigid than I was used to or that I would have expected. Through this friend, I met a man also from Pakistan and we married. A few years ago, we

> started to attend the Sufi centre and then I felt comforted in my spiritual choices. Teachings at the centre and the particular works of Sheikh Farath and Koné fit very well with my notions of tolerance, even if for a long time I hesitated to tell people around me that I had converted to Islam. It has such a bad reputation. [interview, May 22, 2007]

Nonetheless, the type of mystical experience that devotees describe as their "closeness to God" must also be read within the framework of a global appeal by urban middle classes to the hybrid mobilization of religious referents (Champion and Hervieu-Léger 1990; Haenni and Voix 2007). As I noted above, the transcultural life experiences and the middle-class background of most devotees at the centre certainly matches this reading of new forms of spirituality. In fact, when talking about their religious trajectory, devotees tend to be concerned mainly with direct personal experience, some even going so far as to compare their awakening to Sufism with other forms of mysticism such as Zen Buddhism and Gnosticism, as well as New Age movements. Moreover, at the centre, faith and religion are often presented as a source of psychological relief by Sheikh Koné, emphasizing the therapeutic dimensions of Sufism, often encountered in similar global religious contexts in which members of urban middle classes amalgamate different religious referents. In Sheikh Koné's own words:

> The world has become a difficult place. We are no longer comfortable in it. We are not at ease. Each one of us finds his own therapy: sport, Zen philosophy, raves.... Today, we spend a lot of time tending to our body, but we neglect our soul. One cannot be without the other.... Psychologists are the new preachers of good faith since the Quiet Revolution.[13] We no longer tend to the soul.... We apparently have come to the top closing stages of civilization. Nonetheless, man has never been so lonely, sad. He has never been so abused.... Educate your soul before your ego, its counterweight, takes over turning you into human robots. [field notes, extract from a sermon, March 2005][14]

The Socio-Political Significance of the Idiom of Tolerance

The discourse of openness to ethnic and religious pluralism used by the devotees and by the two imams has socio-political relevance on two levels: (1) in view of historically constructed distinctions among Muslims and (2) in light of recent debates about the place of religion in Quebec. On the first level, devotees strongly assert that their practice of Sufism does not follow the various Islamist trends within contemporary Islam. In the contemporary post-9/11 context, the leaders and members of the Centre Soufi Naqshbandi—Masjid Al-Iman have consciously insisted on differentiating themselves from Islamists, in the context of the research that we conducted, in public, and often in the mass media. This was also the case for several other mosques and Islamic centres in Montréal. At the time of our first meeting, Sheikh Koné insisted, "Here, we are not politicized. We are not 'extremists.' We share with people; we help people find their path in life. That is all" (field notes, April 2005). Beyond the geopolitics of the post-9/11 context, it is also worth noting that some of the devotees at the centre come from places in the world where religious identities have historically been articulated to the tension between longstanding local trends of Sufism and recurrent reformist streams. Past experiences of inclusion and exclusion certainly influence tariqa members' interpretation of religious tolerance. Furthermore, the Naqshbandis' portrayal of themselves as the "good" Muslims in contrast to Islamists, should be contextualized within the order's political agenda of playing this role at a more global level, as evidenced, for instance, in the conflict between Sheikh Hisham Kabbani with "Wahhabis," or so-called "fundamentalist Muslims" in the United States (for details, see Hicks 2008).

On the second level of socio-political relevance, I would argue that their positioning within an "open" and "tolerant" form of Islam allows devotees to partake in public debates about the place of religion in Quebec, as exemplified by their leaders' public involvement. This is not necessarily the case with Muslims perceived as "extremists" or "intolerant." While the latter group's viewpoint is often presented in the media as the only perspective of Muslims, so-called "extremist Muslims" are usually excluded from public debate and rarely, if ever, invited to intercultural exchanges; their perspectives tend to be construed as incompatible with Quebec's citizenship regime (i.e., interculturalism). The distinction that the Montréal members of the Sufi centre make between Sufism and "fundamentalists" allows them to appear removed from the "conspiracy to Islamize" in the context of the global "War on Terror" and recent debates about religion and secularism in Quebec.

The positioning of Sufism as a welcoming form of Islam opens up the possibility to participate in Quebec's privileged citizenship regime and, more specifically, in Montréal's plural cultural and religious everyday life; that is, to initiate and to promote interreligious encounters, as is the case with the celebration of interfaith marriages, the participation in interfaith events and the

multiplication of sermons and education regarding religious and social tolerance. In other words, the distinction between Sufism and "fundamentalists" plays a role beyond an instrumental response to the stigmatization of Muslims in Canada and abroad; it opens up the possibility of active and engaged participation in Quebec society. In fact, religious discourse at the centre reflects the readiness of devotees to participate in public discussions regarding the place of religion in Quebec. Themes raised in sermons at the centre illustrate this. Sermons by Sheikhs Farath and Koné tend to deal with everyday life issues in Quebec, such as a critique of materialist worldviews and the virtues of minimal materialism (referred to as *simplicité volontaire* in Quebec and adopted as a lifestyle by a growing number of people) and respect for the environment, as well as the intricacies of urban, ethnic, racial and religious pluralism. Beyond the production of discourses of openness, the centre is also dedicated to organizing social and religious activities that promote tolerance and intercultural exchange. The two imams and some of their followers participate actively in public awareness activities and in the promotion of intercultural and interreligious understanding with groups such as Présence Musulmane,[15] Vox Populi[16] and Journée conscience nouvelle (an interfaith meditation day held in 2006 and 2007). The pot luck dinner held weekly at the centre in 2005 and 2006 is another example of openness to others, where devotees are invited to bring their friends and family members. It is an occasion when French Canadian and English Canadian converts invite their siblings or parents to the centre. Furthermore, Sheikh Koné, more specifically, has consciously carved himself a specific space in Quebec's public sphere as an "open and tolerant imam," using this ideological construct to further his religious actions. Among other things, he regularly appears on television when questions of Islamic radicalism are discussed; this was more often the case between 2005 and 2008, with some more recent recurrences in the context of the Shafia trial. For instance, in October 2007, in the circumstance of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission's hearings that had already placed Muslims at the centre of debates in the media, there was a new scandal when a Montréal-based, radical imam, Jaziri, was expelled from Canada. The same week, Sheikh Koné, dressed in traditional Sufi garb (with a green turban), appeared on *Tout le monde en parle*, a very popular Sunday night Talk Show, and eagerly addressed such issues regarding women's status in Islam, the veil and homosexuality; his discourse contrasted sharply with the highly controversial discourse of Imam Jaziri that had saturated the press during the same week. During an informal discussion at the centre, one of the female devotees confirmed Sheikh's Koné's public image as the prototypical "good Muslim":

> After my conversion to Islam [at 16 years old], I started to read about Sufism and I looked for a brotherhood in Montréal. After the 9/11 events, I saw Sheikh Omar [Koné] on television, and I was impressed by his discourse. But I did not really try to locate the Naqshbandi centre in Montréal. While studying at McGill University, I heard Pakistani students talk about a Sufi mosque, I asked them about it and they invited me to come along. This is when I realized that it was Sheikh Omar's mosque. I did not look for another mosque and I started to attend the centre because I had been so impressed by the piety of Sheikh Koné. He is such a good Muslim, such a good example. [field notes, July 21 2005]

The idioms of tolerance and openness are framed in relation to Quebec and Canadian society. The discourse of tolerance produced by the devotees draws a parallel with the perception that recent migrants have of Quebec society in terms of openness to cultural differences and is not far from the idea of interculturalism. One female devotee of Tunisian origin compared her experience in Montréal with her experience in Paris:

> Here, as long as you do not disturb people, nobody will tell you to take off your veil or whatever. You can even go to work wearing your veil in a government office. You can teach in a public school wearing your veil. You could not do this in Paris! Here, I do not usually wear the veil, but I could. [field notes, May 2005]

The tolerance for individualized religious expressions is ultimately framed in the context of the Canadian Human Rights Act. As I explained earlier, the act guarantees that individuals and groups cannot be discriminated against on the basis of religious belief and practice, as long as they remain within the boundaries of the ideology of multiculturalism. Officially, multiculturalism[17] is based on the idea that Canada is composed of distinct cultural groups with equal status. It is worth noting that "equal status" does not necessarily lead to beneficial cultural exchanges; it means rather "of equal status" in the face of the two historically dominant groups, namely French Canadians and English Canadians (Helly 2000). In Canada, however, multiculturalism is not generally interpreted as an assault on national identity, sometimes translated into a "conspiracy to Islamize," as is the case in some European countries (Cesari 2005; Koenig 2005). In Quebec, there have always been political leaders, associated with both the political right and the political left, who have raised the

alarm about the "dangers" of intercultural exchanges to the possibility of a strong French-speaking Québécois identity; this has especially been the case in the context of the debates on "reasonable accommodation." The ambiguity of the political class regarding cultural and religious encounters in Quebec society draws attention to the necessity to show how claims of tolerance operate beyond the instrumentalization of popular political discourses.

Da'wa as a Source of Cosmopolitanism

According to devotees at the centre, openness is not only associated with the notion of tolerance and interfaith exchange but also to the idea of cosmopolitanism. In the anthropological literature, cosmopolitanism is often heralded as a cultural orientation ideally suited to the sociocultural and economic complexities emanating from the accelerating pace of globalization. It is also presented in contrast to notions of culture and identity (Kuper 1994), thus opening up the possibility of a more inclusive notion of cultural citizenship (Rapport 2005). In the context of Montréal's multiethnic and religiously plural landscape, the ideals of nomadic mobility and cultural flexibility certainly appeal to the members of the Centre Soufi Naqshbandi—Masjid Al-Iman. These ideals are generally regarded as requirements for contemporary urban life.

Beyond aspects of mobility and flexibility, for Montréal's Naqshbandi-Haqqani followers, the idiom of cosmopolitanism links two separate ideas: first, the notion that all humans belong to a single moral community (the umma in Islam) and, second, the notion that cosmopolitanism is associated with the notion of "citizens of the world," people who have developed extensive consideration for cultures beyond their own culture of origin. As noted above, Naqshbandi devotees frequently use "citizens of the world" to describe their life experience as well as their cultural affiliations. In many cases, the appeal to a worldwide citizenship relates both to their status and life experience as migrants and to their political sensitivities. In relation to the idea of "citizens of the world," the idiom of cosmopolitanism is evoked mostly as an effort by the devotees to open themselves to different socio-political contexts and to encourage tolerance in view of religious and cultural difference.

However, the conceptual association between cosmopolitanism and the sense of belonging to a single moral community situated within the religious framework of Islam is perhaps a less conventional way of claiming a cosmopolitan posture, at least in view of the definition that has historically been tied with the notion of modern secularism (Calhoun 2003). The "moralization" of the notion of cosmopolitanism is embodied, at the discursive level, within the proselytizing work of Sheikh Nazim. As such, the Sheikh's travels and da'wa efforts are described as the source of the order's multiethnic and cosmopolitan dimension or as the ethical potential for the unification of the umma. One of the tariqa's devotees in Montréal explained:

> The Sheikh is so committed and he is so popular around the world that we can only grow. Everywhere he goes, he gets followers. If you saw him, if you heard him speak, you would follow him. He is like an attracting force. [field notes, May 5, 2005]

In fact, for the devotees, the "attracting force" of the sheikh lies in his moral appeal to uniting the umma. The ethical potential of the umma comes about because the leader of the order is alive and is used to extensive travel, encouraging the integration of the otherwise culturally diverse umma. Sheikh Koné describes the ethical potential of the sheikh's da'wa in the following terms:

> Because it makes teachings more alive, we still have a living master, a true heir. In many Sufi orders, the heirs have not transmitted the secret of the heart to the order. As a consequence, they became orders of blessing rather than real orders of guidance based on in-depth teachings. The secret is still alive because here we talk about spirituality, the esoteric, in other words of spiritual realization and this kind of reality that is carried in the heart. Ah! We have a living example, who guides all day long, all year long, who teaches, who has travelled tremendously, who has travelled the world numerous times in the past 30 years.... And, his followers have always been as diverse as we are here. He has always attracted people of all ages, all ethnic origin, all groupings. He has done so in contrast with other orders that have mainly settled geographical monopolies without really spreading outside of their borders. [interview, November 24, 2005]

The figure of the sheikh as the link between local communities across different regions of the world where followers are located is no different from his contemporaries who are at the core of other national and transnational Sufi networks (Werbner 2007). While travel, especially pilgrimage to the graves of Sufi saints, has longstanding historical roots (Werbner and Basu 1998; Werbner 2003), the deterritorialization of Sufi cults and the translocal character of charisma (Allievi and Nielsen 2003; Grillo 2004; van Bruinessen and Howell 2007) has been extended to include the world travel of leadership

figures, as well as their considerable use of and presence in the media, enhanced by the accessibility of the Internet and other communications media (Bunt 2000; Hoover and Lundby 1997).[18] Nonetheless, beyond the global deterritorialization of Sufi charisma, the discursive process that ties the translocal character of Sheikh Nazim's charisma to the devotees' cosmopolitan claims as the source of the potential ethical unification of the umma relates to the specificity of post-secular debates within Quebec, including the challenges of interculturalism.

At the level of the everyday life practice of devotees, the "moralization" of cosmopolitanism can be tied to the attractiveness of the communitarian character of the centre. While devotees whom we interviewed generally traced their involvement with Sufism in terms of an individual search for mystical experiences, they were also attracted by the sense of belonging to the community that the centre provides. The intensity of the social networks woven around the centre attest to its communitarian character, as do the frequent social activities that take place within the centre and between the tariqa followers. It must be noted that the centre is situated in a downtown neighbourhood, which, until its gentrification in the 1990s, was populated by university students and artists and was home to one of the Montréal Hassidim; containing several community-based projects, this area has always had an intense neighbourhood life.

Besides ritualized religious ceremonies, the centre is also a socializing space for its members and some of their friends. As a significant number of its active members live or work in the centre's neighbourhood, the centre serves as their meeting place, along with a restaurant and two local cafés owned by some of the centre's members, located a few streets from the centre. The following excerpt from field notes gives a sense of the strength of neighbourhood life and the place of the centre in it:

> While getting out of the centre, Aïcha told me that she was going to the garden. I took it as an invitation and I followed her. We talk about the garden, which is a great element of pride for the centre. It was made as a communal effort by the members of the centre at the beginning of the spring. We admire the brick wall that has been painted wine red; Oriental designs have been painted around some of the windows. Aïcha explains that the project is to create a Mauritanian style taken from one of the books in the centre's library. She wants to show it to me but she cannot find it. Some men are working in the basement of the building; we hear them because the door to the basement is open. The restaurant owner from the neighbouring building comes by in the backstreet and greets us. Ismaël, another member of the centre, walks by and greets us. He will stop at the centre later; he needs to run errands in the neighbourhood. Adiba comes by the backstreet. She carries a cage with a cat in it. She is not wearing her veil. She did not intend to come in the centre. Aïcha calls her. Alassane [another man in the garden] takes the cage and tells her to come in. Adiba comes in for 'just a minute.' Alassane enters the basement. [field notes, June 8, 2005]

In fact, the centre is a space that helps to catalyze existing social networks. To a large degree, the weaving of these different social networks at the centre enhances cosmopolitan claims because, on the one hand, they are highly mobile and flexible, and on the other hand, they ultimately bring together members of the umma or individuals who belong to the same moral community. Moreover, participation in the different social networks that come together at the centre opens up the possibility of interaction with non-Sufis in Quebec, thereby encouraging one's attainment of Sufi love, or tolerance as I described it above.

Yet, this search for a moral community, whether it is embedded within everyday life practice at the centre or within the symbolic appeal of a "cosmopolitan umma," suggests that being a Muslim in Quebec's present context is not necessarily that simple. Beyond the socio-political implications of 9/11 for Muslims in North America, the recent religious transformations within the French-speaking Québécois community, the obvious tension between Quebec's appeal to interculturalism and its strong cultural identity project, and the nature of recent religious public debates place Muslims in a position where they need to justify their moral and political positions with regard to Quebec's society. Naqshbandi devotees have entered the few openings that have been offered to them under the practices of interculturalism. For both Naqshbandi cosmopolitanism and the Québécois version of interculturalism, the tension between the umma and world citizenry is very likely to mark out the limits of possible interfaith and intercultural exchanges. The compatibility between the umma, the world citizen and Quebec's nationalist cultural project is not readily evident. In other words, the balancing act for Naqshbandi devotees between their allegiance to the umma and to Quebec society may turn out to be rather precarious, especially if "proof" of their tolerance relies on their appropriation of the dichotomy between the "good" and the "bad" Muslim. In fact, the post-1970s Canadian context (in reference to the ideology of multiculturalism and the Canadian Human Rights Act) has created a situation where religious rights are recognized

but where the limits of these rights are not easily identifiable; that is, it is very delicate to decide where the rights of one person impinge on the rights of another. This makes the ideologically constructed dichotomy between "good" and "bad" Muslims potentially highly dependent upon the nature of the demands that are made under the right to religious freedom, keeping in mind that Muslims in Quebec are not the ones making most of the demands for religious "accommodation."

Conclusion

It goes without saying that the "willingness to engage with the Other," privileged by Muslim Sufis as a way to situate oneself within Québécois society and Montréal's everyday life, resonates with the local mood of interethnic and interreligious relations. The context of interreligious relations in Quebec may also be less strained than they are south of the border in the context of the long-standing institutionalization of racial distinction or the more recent "War on Terror" or, again, in the French context (another important point of reference for recent migrants to Quebec), where interethnic and interreligious rapport carries a heavily loaded historical trajectory, marked by the history of French colonization and the Algerian war. Nonetheless, the emphasis on sites of cosmopolitanism, in the recent reading of sociocultural dynamics in Quebec, runs the risk of silencing several *rapports de force* that mark contemporary Québécois society or of masking the "dark side" of Quebec's social and cultural context, including instances of discrimination and racism. In fact, in the context of my investigations of Muslims in Montréal, the issue of discrimination rapidly made itself heard, once the veneer of openness and tolerance was scratched.

The allegedly insuperable political conflict between Islam and the West at the beginning of the 21st century has cast a long shadow over the relationships among people whose religious experiences build on efforts to negotiate spaces of intercultural understanding. However, the appeal to cosmopolitan identities and tolerance extends beyond the fact that religious pluralism is part of the diversity to be recognized and accommodated in the context of contemporary transnational mobility and multiethnic societies. As is the case with the Centre Soufi Naqshbandi, there exist several religious endeavours that clash with local constructions of secularism, not because they are defensively set in religious worldviews but because they aspire to inhabit the same public space as secularism by providing a Sufi framework for civic participation. In the context of Quebec, as a Muslim, the necessity to position oneself, in view of recent debates regarding the place of religion in the public sphere, is clear. Naqshbandi-Haqqani devotees position themselves as compatible with the so-called openness of Quebec and Canadian society, in opposition to perceived radicalism of some other Muslims. Sheikh Farath's and Sheikh Koné's public activities specifically aim at the domain of intercultural understanding and, by extension, at global solidarity in a post-9/11 context. Moreover, devotion to Sheikh Nazim and the devotees' focus on his historical affiliations, or "Golden Chain," and life travels emphasize the fact that cosmopolitanism is not about the capacity to transcend all forms of belonging. Rather, it hints at the possibility of imagining that belonging enhances the likelihood of mutual understanding. Nonetheless, to preserve the distinction of Montréal's sociocultural dynamics, expressed through idioms of openness, tolerance and cosmopolitan identities, while maintaining at the forefront of anthropological analysis an interest for issues of discrimination, I would suggest shifting the nexus of analysis from a strict conceptual focus on privileged sites for intercultural tolerance toward an account of the cultural economy of difference that marks Quebec's contemporary complexity.

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Notes

1 The folklorizing reading of Quebec culture is probably best exemplified by some of Quebec's early and well-known sociologists, who tried to capture the cultural specificity of Quebec's character or its Québécitude and whose work became models for community studies in Quebec. The works of Léon Guérin and Fernand Dumont, amongst others, are examples of this perspective.

2 As Osella and Osella (2008) argue, academic literature tends to reproduce the dichotomy between the "good Sufi Muslim" and the "bad reformist/Islamist Muslim."

3 This ethnographic research was funded by the Social Science Research Council of Canada (2004–2007).

4 Most notably, since Bill 101 passed in 1971, children of immigrants who have not been schooled in an English-speaking school in Canada have to attend French-language schools.

5 The commission was named after its two leaders: Serge Bouchard, a well-known Quebec sociologist, and the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor.

6 The term *reasonable accommodation* is used in Canada and in Quebec to refer to the equality rights in section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the antidiscrimination laws in Quebec's Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. The origin of the term can be traced to labour law jurisprudence, arguing for the obligation of employers to change some general rules for certain employees, under the condition that this does not cause "undue hardship" to specific minorities.

7 The commission was created by the Liberal government in the context of a "perceived crisis" regarding recent reasonable accommodations that had been highly mediatized and that prompted a series of criticism of this practice by public institutions, especially government agencies, hospitals and schools.

8 According to the *Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés Culturelles du Québec* (2006). As an example, during the 1991 through 2001 decade, the Muslim population more than doubled in Quebec: Muslims in the province of Quebec went from 45,000 to 108,620 and, in the city of Montréal, where most of Quebec's migrants settle, from 41,000 to 100,185 (Statistics Canada 2004).

9 In 2003, Jean Chrétien, then leader of the Liberal Party and prime minister of Canada, refused to send Canadian army troops to the war in Iraq.

10 All interviews were conducted in French and have been translated by the author.

11 In Britain, some Naqshbandi groups are made up almost exclusively of an ethnic minority, whereas in other cases, they have a distinctively multiethnic following (Draper 2004; Werbner 2007).

12 The Shafia lawsuit refers to the murder of three sisters by their parents and brother on 30 June 2009 in Kingston, Ontario. This murder was prominently showcased in the Canadian media because it raised issues of honour crimes, Islam and the protection of vulnerable female populations.

13 This term is used to refer to the transformation of the dominant social and political power of the Catholic Church in Quebec society starting in the 1960s, which was accompanied by a series of political and economic reforms, including a move towards the secularization of the state and the emergence of the feminist movement.

14 This sermon was delivered in the context of an intercultural event organized by the group Vox Populi, where Sufis and non-Sufis met.

15 "Muslim Presence" is a network promoting universal values and active citizenship based on a contextualized reading of Islam, an open identity and a harmonious coexistence within the society (http://presencemusulmane.com/).

16 A local association that organizes conferences on themes linking psychology, philosophy and spirituality.

17 It should be recalled that this policy was created in 1971 in the context of national bilingualism to respond to grievances on the part of French Canadians.

18 Other authors have also highlighted the fact that some of the Naqshbandi order success in North America relates to its extensive use of information technology, especially the Internet (see Nielsen 2003).

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