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## The evolution of Moslem legitimacy's frontiers in Senegal

The Baay Faal community, a branch of the Murid brotherhood, is interesting to study as an account for the evolution of legitimacy, and more generally, of the Islamic frontiers in Senegal. Cheikh Ibra Fall (≈1858-1930), the founder of the community, is the most famous disciple of Cheikh Amadou Bamba. Since the beginning in the 1880', inside his master's *daara* (Islamic school), he has been criticised, mainly because he did not respect worship practices such as the five daily prayers and the fast of Ramadan. "The fool of Bamba" was working and praying (by singing the *sikar*, zikhr) all day, he showed various signs of extreme submission to his master (including the possibility to die for him) and neglected Koranic teaching. According to oral history, the other Bamba's students initially wanted to expel this strange man but they progressively understood his religious path and recognized its power and its depth. Nowadays, Baay Faal predict that "one day, there will one Baay Faal in each senegalese house" and some add "in the world". Indeed, since the 1980', Baay Faal community has grown in urban areas in Senegal and in the places where Senegalese emigration is important, such as Europe (France, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, etc.), United States and even China. Nevertheless, they are still stigmatized as "false" Muslims, or as rowdies. In this paper, I will try to understand the historical process of Baay Faal stigmatization and, more largely, the struggle for religious legitimacy and frontiers construction in Senegal.

**The difficult struggle for religious legitimacy**

The Baay Faal community has its origins in Sufism, an esoteric path which has known (and still knows) serious problems to put forward its legitimacy within the Moslem world. The first soufis were discredited for their will to unite themselves to God, for the interaction of the holy men and even for their use of music (Arberry, 1979, Popovic & Veinstein, 1996).

In the XIXth century, Sufism developed itself in sub-Saharan Africa, along with the intensification of colonization (Copans, 1980; Coulon, 1981; Babou, 1997; Searing, 2002). The observers were, at the time, unanimous to condemn this "black Islam" as "a pale copy of the original" (which still must be defined). Besides this religious debate, the colonialists deeply despised African and more largely "Black" people. According to a French

administrator who made a report on Islam in AOF (French Occidental Africa) in 1913: "their conception of religious freedom would shock a real orthodox muslim" ("Leur conception de la liberté religieuse ferait bondir un musulman vraiment orthodoxe"Archives d'Outre-mer, série 19G1).

In Senegal, criticisms concentrated on mouridism, accused of simplifying the Moslem faith, of exploiting the "ignorant masses" and suspected to overthrow the French power. Mourids are identified as *ceddo*, a Wolof term which has many significations. It strictly refers to the warrior slaves during the pre-colonial Wolof kingdoms, but it also includes, in the colonialist's mind, the whole ancient aristocracy, and also means violent or animist people. French colonialist had to struggle Mourids because they represented the Wolof power for them, which was seen as an oppressive one. The goal of France, said Ponty (gouverneur général in AOF) in 1908, is to "restore the rational development of moral and productive capacities of indigenous, their access to a better life" (Archives, 17G36). The condemnation of the Murids permitted to legitimate colonialist intervention. Then, relation between colonislists and Murids evolved, since the First World War (Coulon, 1981), to mutual "accommodation" (Robinson, 1999, 2000).

Nevertheless, until the 1950's, the Baay Faal have been confused with the whole of the Murid community. This confusion will only be dissipated when "black Islam" and Murids started to acquire certain legitimacy: people gradually started to analyze their mystique (Dumont, 1968) and to recognize its religious depth (Monteil, 1964). At the same time, the "Bureau des Affaires musulmanes" in Dakar ordered new research on "Black Islam", frigntened by the potential influence of "Arab Islam" (Robinson & Triaud, 1997). Within this framework, everyone was expected to understand that only the Baay Faal could be exempted from the five daily prayers and from the fast of Ramadan. Michel Villeneuve is the first one to identify the specificity of the Baay Faal followers in 1959. He concludes that: "Everything Amadou Bamba admitted when he was alived such as excentric behaviours, strangeness (...) is now concentrated within the Baye Fall trend" (Archives Nationales du Sénégal, bi I4°172). The Baay Faal identification is simultaneous to its devalorization both as a local and as a heterodox movement. For Cheikh Tidiane Sy, "Baay Faal is just a non-sens, a caricature of mouridism" (1969: 287).

Since the late 1970', the Murids themselves entered the debate by multiplying conferences, publications and, later, Internet sites. They generate, a return to the texts of Sheik Amadou Bamba (*xaasaid*), especially the intellectuals, and insist on their orthodoxy. Influenced by radicalism, the brotherhoods let some reformist groups develop themselves

inside their own community: Izbut Tarqiyya in the Murid brotherhood (Gueye, 1997, 2005; Bava, 2002) and Moustarchidines in the Tidjan one (Kane & Villalon, 1998) for example. In addition to these reforms, internal researches on Murid's history have a great success among many Murids, particularly because they insist on Sheikh Amadou Bamba's resistance to French colonialism. He therefore becomes a "hero", the protector of Wolof culture and identity, as his famous follower Sheikh Ibra Fall (Dieng, 1993).

**The Baay Faal frontiers**

Within this contemporary context, Baay Faal are more than ever criticized for their breach of the Koranic pillars. However, they are also praised and admired for their absolute devotion to their Master. In a context of pauperization and of "value crisis", Baay Faal education, based on respect of hierarchy, on hard work and acceptation of destiny, becomes a national model. "People don't like the Baay Faal, but everyone wants to have *his* Baay Faal", told me a dakarese *taalibe* (disciple), meaning that everyone seeks someone who accepts orders without negociation. When Serigne Ousseynou Fall, Cheikh Ibra Fall's grandson, ran for presidential election in 2000, he enhanced Baay Faal behaviour and put Khelcom, which is an enormous Murid farm, as a model for Senegalese economic development. Therefore, representations about Baay Faal are extremely ambiguous. Even the Izbut Tarqiyya considers Cheikh Ibra Fall as the perfect disciple, the master of doctrines such as "nothing is too difficult" and "do what you can't" (Gueye, 1999: 283). Submission becomes idealized in a context where Senegalese question their own identity and want "to construct their way of becoming proud of themselves" (according to a young disciple in Dakar, 2002). Murid submission had been criticized by early observers (as Marty and later Cruise O'Brien) who were convinced that it would disappear under the influence of urbanization and schooling. They obviously misunderstood the centrality of submission in Murid path and over all in the Baay Faal one. "You have democracy, we have *ndigël*. You need days to make a decision; we hear the order and that's done" told me one Baay Faal (Ngor, 2000). *Ndigël*, the maraboutic order and advise, is seen as the "traditional" Wolof, Senegalese, Black, African or anti-occidental way of being, which is able to struggle with so-called "occidental" and dominant values. The struggle for legitimacy is now exceeding Senegal of course, as the search for recognition has spread to all societies (Kaufmann, 2004).

In addition, Muslim frontiers are more than ever producing debate and tensions. In migration, muslim soufis are insisting on their common interest and usually present

themselves as peaceful and esoteric religious people, situated at the opposite side of fundamentalists (Serigne Abdoul Aziz Sy talk about "common brotherhood", "confraternité", between Tidjaan and Murid, in Geneva in 2004). In Senegal, although hierarchies tend to maintain such a point of view, the actions of a minority make the situation more complex. In 1999, Dakarese Baay Faals were imprisoned for setting fire to a mosque ("incendie volontaire") and aggression of Muslims from *Ibadou Rahmane*, a fundametalist movement. Thanks to a Baay Faal demonstration and to the khalifale intevention, they were free a few hours later.  It is supposed that the following accusation had initially come from the imam of *Ibadou* : "they were frozen by Koranic verses and fell in transe state with *xasaaid*", the Sheikh Amadou Bamba poems ("rester de glace en entendant les versets du Coran et tomber en transe avec les *xasaaid*"). Beside this example, Baay Faal are frequently involved in violent actions against others religious groups, in fact against everyone likely to criticize their behaviour or their master. This violence is strictly condemned by most Baay Faal but, at the same time, the condemnation remains global and does not concern individuals. Baay Faal are "the soldiers of the Murids", their mission is to defend, by any way, the honor of foundators and of current masters, yet they sometimes tend to pay the price for the others Murids assuming the double function of stigmata and "avant garde". Nowadays, they find recognition in the valorisation of Sufism and more especially of the *haqiqa*, the esoteric path distinguishing them from the others Murids who follow the *charia. The haqiqa* is the interior path, that of "the heart, the body and the soul", totally involving the disciple in the search of God. Baay Faal also try to explain their particularity by the organization of many conferences, publications (Mbow, 2000) and Internet sites.

However, there are disciples who don't stick to such an ideal of submission, those who are relatively disconnected from the maraboutic hierarchy: nowadays, they are called "Baye faux" in French (Baye false) or "Baay mbedd" in Wolof (Baye of the street). Everyone actually tends to justify his own practice by accusing others of being "Baye faux", by rhetorically excluding them from the community. The others, the "non Baay Faal" are generally identified as young, urban, single-life disciples, taking advantage of begging to buy goods, and sometimes *yamba*, cannabis weed. But even those corresponding to such caricatural description insist to be distinguished from the "Baye faux" (Audrain, 2002). The gap between normative discourse and practices is very probably due to the fact that Baay Faal must legitimate their religious revendication and can only do so by presenting themselves as

"real" Baay Faal. Individualization encourages disciples to perpetualy demonstrate their normativity, their acceptance and submission to the dominants norms.

Nevertheless, at the same time, proving their faith relies on interactions with others disciples, with "equals" (*moroomu taalibe*), and no longer on institutional or communitarian recognition (as a translation of Hervieu-Léger's concept of "Certification" 1999). In migration or in urban areas, disciples generally grow far from their master. Some of them are now thinking that freedom is the pillar of Baay Faal path: "Baay Faal is a free man and not a slave to anyone or anything. We make our own rules, and we are accountable only to God and his prophets. Some Baay Faal smoke, some don't, some pray, some don't" said Moussa Ngom to Savishinsky (1994: 215). These Baay Faal must deal with the importance of *ndigël* or submission on one side, and with freedom on the other side. Generally, they perfectly assume this contradiction, by claiming that faith and heart are placed above practices and intellect. However, the Baay Faal are not unanimous and these evolutions lead up to many debates.

The frontier of legitimacy thus moves within the community, inciting some Baay Faal to defend the duty to respect all the sharia. Indeed, some intellectuals try to convince the others to pray five times a day and to fast during one entire month. According to Serigne Moustapha Seye for example, the brother of a "marabout" in Rufisque, Cheikh Ibra Fall was the only one to be exempted from Koranic duties, because he was a fool, a mad man. The others Baay Faal should respect the sharia: "Baay Faal is Islam. It is not a culture. It is a religion. (...) Sharia is normal time. *Haqiqa* is extra time. You must do normal time to do extra time." (Rufisque, 2000) But the majority of Baay Faal, including the hierarchy, does not agree with this point of view. According to Cheikh Ibra Fall's lineages, tradition must prevail and Baay Faal such as Seye who constantly question their own faith, actually reveal its weakness.

Finally, everyone can adapt his practices in everyday life, as long as he respects his master and dedicates him some time and some "sweat" (sueur, *ñaq*). However the majority considers that not respecting Koranic rules is part of the tradition and is a mystical condition to surpass oneself, to overcome stigmatization and finally, to acquire moral strength. Difficulty is the substance of Baay Faal path. That's also why young urban disciples are accused of perverting it. But even the ones who claim their freedom want to be recongnized as Baay Faal and, for this reason, cannot directly oppose the maraboutic *ndigël*. They cannot deeply trick or negotiate ("bricoler") with their religious norms. Autonomization from maraboutic authority must not be exaggerated and individualism has not eliminated communitarian logic.

**Conclusion**

Baay Faal history shows how religious legitimacy frontiers can be displaced. They progressively shrinked from Sufism, to "black Islam", Muridism and finally to Baay Faal path. Frontiers are constantly moving, and therefore they do not exist as barriers, except in followers' mental and symbolical construction. Frontiers are constantly created, shaped and reshaped by the actors. This dynamic prevents religious community from stagnazion and allows its constant evolution and its strength. Nevertetheless, religious and social frontiers are still pregnant and the struggle for legitimacy is sharp [tough] The frontiers have therefore practical consequences. Some Baay Faal are not only suffuring for being treated as "false" muslims, they also undergo familial exclusion, unemployment and celibacy. Above all, the whole community knows and lives this stigmatization, even if they follow social dominant norms. In this sense, frontiers have a real power of classification and exclusion. During my fieldwork in Senegal, many persons asked me if I included "Baye-faux" in my research. Obviously! Because first "Who are they?" and then "Who am I?" to decide the frontier? Moreover, the researcher must focus on those who need to present themselves as Baay Faal and sincerely feel as such, even if they do not respect all the dominant norms. As a matter of fact, they are also struggling for changing or altering the norms and therefore, the religious frontiers. Religious frontiers, mixed with social ones, exist as an object of struggle. They constitute a powerful tool of domination between groups or individuals. Anthropologist must take them into account without following their logic. But, at the same time, it is obvious that the researcher is involved, voluntarily or not, in this struggle and must be very carefull with the debates it implies. (voeu pieux?)

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Panel 56: Dr. Shamil Jeppie ; Dr. Karin Willemse ; Dr. José van Santen ; Dr. Cheikh Gueye

Moving Frontiers: contestations in Muslim communities in Africa

This panel seeks to present recent research on selected Muslim communities in Africa. Its starting point is the ways in which a notion of "frontiers" (material and metaphorical, historical and imaginary) could be heuristically employed in studying tensions and transformations within Muslim communities in a range of African locations. This notion is

not used literally in its spatial connotation but is deployed in a whole other range of senses. How do new media push back visual and auditory frontiers? How do contestations in the realm of law force new frontiers to be constructed? What frontiers have been displaced in the public sphere through the many struggles between Muslims and between Muslim groups and the state? How are struggles over gender also struggles over frontiers? We will be concerned with showing how frontiers are made and unmade, how religion on the frontiers can be both an enabling and disabling. The temporal focus would be African settings after WWII and at present we have solicited promises of papers studying issues in the lives of Muslim communities in Sudan, Senegal, South Africa and Cameroon. In other words, the panel will cover parts of West, southern and the Horn of Africa. The panel will therefore explore cases where Muslims are in the majority and in others where they are minority communities. While the papers on the panel will seek to make a conceptual and theoretical contribution they will be empirically grounded.