

Cap, jeans and prayer beads. Cosmopolitanism and its opposite in Senegalese hip hop.

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When I first met Amadou, Laye and Ndiouga, the three members of a rap crew, we were in the room of a common friend in the university campus of Dakar. When I proposed an interview, they suggested to meet at the house of the elder sister of one of them. So I joined them and found a small detached house recently built in a modern style, located along the VDN (Voie de Dégagement Nord), a sort of highway built between the 90s and the 2000s to diminish traffic jams in the city, and connecting the southern central area of Plateau to northern suburbs of the Cap Vert peninsula. Gradually, many new residential areas, modern buildings and factories, even skyscrapers and fancy hotels, have appeared along the path of this highway, turning it into a particular segment of the urban landscape which embodies at a time the construction boom of the city, the growth of the middle class, the increasing visibility of leisure and conspicuous consumption, to sum up: a modern and cosmopolitan Dakar. In this house, we talked about rap music and the meaning of hip hop culture for Senegalese youth, but also about the marked Parisian accent of Seynabou, Amadou's sister, who had attended a private francophone school usually preferred by European expatriates; about the latest comical sketches of Djamel Debbouze, a Franco-Algerian actor very well known in France and whose performances were available to Amadou through a broadband Internet connection, still quite rare in 2006 Senegal; or about their attachment to the *baay Niasse*, a subdivision of the Tidjaniyya Sufi brotherhood, whose followers come from the United States to listen to the teaching of the founder Ibrahima Niasse, and learn his *dhikr* – prayer refrains rhythmically sung – through the international circulation of tape cassettes where his sermons and chants are recorded.

Strains of meaning and language come and go: they travel in both directions. In the situation I just sketched, multiple references to an imagined 'Elsewhere' co-exist and overlap: they follow the path of an internet connection, of religious faith and evocated pilgrimages, of piracy and the discography market, of schooling and educational careers. These references are recurrent not only when one 'studies up' and meets informants or collaborators from relatively privileged classes, such as in this case. Many other artists I met and worked with during my fieldwork came from poorer suburbs: though provided with fewer opportunities to travel, to consume and to get higher education, they were no less cosmopolitan in their artistic work, and in the way in which they explained it and identified with it. Cosmopolitanism could take in these cases the form of failed or interrupted migratory projects (including traumatic experiences such as imprisonment or deportation), dependence on more affluent relatives residing abroad, collaborations with fellow artists from neighboring countries, and especially the consumption of national – and, when available, international – mass media.

The trajectory of the spread of rap music and hip hop culture in Senegal is emblematic in this respect. Started in the late 80s, the influence of international hip hop consisted initially mainly in the diffusion of rap records imported from United States and France, in the adoption of a correspondent clothing style – oversize T-shirts and trousers, baseball caps, bandannas, big tennis shoes... – and in a certain interest in break dance. Understandably enough, the new fashion appealed mainly to middle and upper class youth, who had financial and cultural resources allowing them to have access to imported media and cloths. As Didier Awadi – leader of the pioneer group Positive Black Soul – put it: "We were *daddy boys* who wanted to belong to a trendy milieu" (quoted in Niang, 2006). But the growing visibility of rap in the world music industry and its transposition to France, where it became particularly popular among the African diaspora, expanded its influence in Africa. In Senegal, the opening of radio

frequencies also played a fundamental role: the first experiments of the mid 90s, limited to Dakar area, were followed by a definitive liberalization which replaced the monopoly of State-owned RTS (Radio-Télévision Sénégalaise) with dozens of new stations, among private broadcasts, local radios and *radios communautaires*. Radio pluralism benefited the national record industry, opening new spaces of promotion for young musicians: thus, rap was made more accessible for a broader audience and given an opportunity to significantly enlarge the social basis of the hip hop movement. As a result, it lost progressively its upper-class characterization and became more popular: by the end of the decade, rap had reached marginalized peripheral areas like Guediawaye, Pikine or Thiaroye, and other cities in the country.

The subsequent territorial controversies – between more central areas of the city like SICAP, where the first crew had their headquarters, and the popular suburbs, where a new generation of underground and hardcore rappers emerged – with mutual claims of exclusive authenticity, and the parallel differentiations in style, while effectively representing cleavages and lines of competition inside hip hop culture, do not overshadow the fact that, as a whole, it has become a credible means of expression for a whole generation and sometimes being identified with it. Jean-François Havard has used the title of a 1994 hit by Positive Black Soul to describe the new ethos characterizing urban youth in the last decades:

[...] la génération *bul faale* [...] appelle à l'émancipation par rapport aux carcans culturels, sociaux et familiaux, et met en avant l'individu, qui n'est plus seulement le produit de son milieu mais aussi le produit de ses actes. En ce sens, la jeunesse sénégalaise a produit une philosophie de l'action qui passe notamment par une revalorisation de la réussite par l'effort et le travail, que l'on retrouve véritablement de façon transversale dans toutes les formulations et manifestations du *bul faale* [...] (Havard, 2001: 70)¹

Recently, a large and ever-increasing amount of academic literature on youth in Africa has stimulated the reflection on the cultural role of youth, its condition in the post-colonial world and in the context of political and economical crisis, and its association with new patterns of consumption and cultural creativity².

What I would like to question here, though, is to interpret its association to cosmopolitanism as a radical rupture with the past. Undoubtedly, rap music and the hip hop movement have a markedly transnational characterization, with black cultural production in the United States (and in France), and images and emotions associated with the African American urban ghetto, serving as main reservoirs for building new identities. Yet, different authors have shown that the whole history of Senegalese music in the 20th century offers examples of reformulation of external elements as a basis for creativity and innovation.

Jean-François Bayart's notion of "extraversion" (Bayart, 2000) seems to be applicable in this case, as Senegalese musical production has constantly based a part of its vitality, success, and role in shaping a local or Senegalese identity, on the appropriation of influences and models from elsewhere. Be it through the colonial reference of a civilized elite during the diffusion of the first "modern" bands playing jazz and French *variété*; be it through the Spanish language as a symbol of alternative modernity in occasion of the success of rumba and Afro-Cuban music (Shain, 2002); be it through Rastafarianism – and its complex resonance with Sufi Islam and the attitude of *baay-fall* – with the spread of reggae (Savishinsky, 1994); be it through the growing "world music" industry, on which Youssou Ndour and other prominent artists built the contemporary scene of *mbalax*; global imaginaries, and sometimes global cash, have supported processes of innovation and internal differentiation in the articulated path of 20th century Senegalese music.

From this point of view, Senegalese rap seems to renew partly with a long-standing "tradition" in the evolution of national musical genres. The international arena of hip hop offers both a source of identification, and a promise of

¹ “[...] the *bul faale* generation [...] calls for the emancipation from cultural, social and family ties, and puts forth the individual, who is no more the mere product of its *milieu*, but also the product of its own actions. Thus, Senegalese youth has produced a philosophy of action which passes through a reassessment of success, achieved through effort and work, a reassessment that can be found across all formulations and manifestations of *bul faale* [...]”

² See, among others, the works of Mbembe (1985), D’Almeida-Topor, Coquery-Vidrovitch, Goerg and Guitart (1992), Diouf (1996), Cruise O’Brien (1996), Comaroff and Comaroff (2000), Durham (2000), Abbink and Van Kessel (2005), Argenti (2007), Burton and Charton-Bigot (2010).

global audiences and worldwide visibility: projects of artistic collaboration with renowned foreign artists and attempts to organize concert tours abroad, be they realistic or not, convey the desire for a musical and professional 'Elsewhere' to become part of one's own experience. Such a cosmopolitan awareness was present in many of the statements I collected during my interviews in Dakar. Ahma, who worked in the redaction of a fanzine called Car-Rap-Id, puts it this way:

[...] disons que le hip hop et le rap, c'est une culture qui n'a pas de nation. Donc, le *hard core* aux Etats-Unis, notre rap au Sénégal, ou bien... le rap français, ou même le *nip hop* au Japon... si tu les vois au delà de l'apparence, le message derrière, c'est la même chose, quoi. Bon, les hip-hoppeurs ont essayé de rapper dans leur langue nationale: aux Etats-Unis ils essaient de rapper en anglais, ou bien en argot, et même les gens qui habitent là-bas, des fois ils comprennent pas; en France aussi, le jargon que les jeunes de la banlieue utilisent des fois n'est pas accessible à nous. Donc, il faut rapper à partir de sa langue, de ce qu'on vit, même ici au Sénégal. Mais le but est international.³

Sometimes, the universalism of rap experience is tied to an idea of marginality, inspired by the image of the African American ghetto and resignified in the urban context of Dakar, as shown in this excerpt from an interview with P Blow, a member of group Tigrim B, based in the suburb of Pikine:

Là avant tout il faut noter que la musique rap américaine est née dans les *ghettos* newyorkais [...] Negger Jah dit déjà, dans l'intro de notre album, "*rap belongs to the ghetto, and the ghetto is everywhere you go*". C'est à dire que... le rap est né de la banlieue, du ghetto, et le ghetto est n'importe où tu vas. Mais seulement, n'importe où tu vas, d'accord... mais en ville tu ne peux pas voir ce que tu peux voir dans la banlieue. Donc là, la banlieue est quelque chose de très important par rapport à l'inspiration, par rapport à l'orientation du rappeur. Parce que là... il te suffit de te mettre sur ton balcon pour voir effectivement des choses que tu ne verras pas en ville, quoi. Et là il se passent des choses que l'on raconte parce qu'on les vit [...].⁴

This "subaltern cosmopolitanism" (as defined by Gidwani, 2006 – and used, among others, by Jaffe and Sanders, 2009, in reference to reggae artists in urban Suriname) usually assumes as its central element the ghetto, which embodies both a inherently urban and modern life, and a condition of marginality well represented by spatial segregation, so visible in both American and African cities. The racial level of this segregation, though, must be reformulated in a predominantly Black context where the lines of exclusion and subalternity do not necessarily follow ethnic or racial belonging.

The ensemble of mixed quotations that characterizes the peculiar cosmopolitanism adopted and performed by Senegalese rappers can be observed on the level of clothing and the display of the body. While *mbalax* artists have created, in the last two decades, a show-biz imagery which alternatively refers to traditional apparel or to a younger look influenced by international fashion, rappers have tried to use and subvert this modern-traditional continuum in the light of hip hop transnational culture. Many performers have chosen a clearly African American look, using caps, oversize jeans, bandannas and sport T-shirts; this is a choice both of rupture – a style which has (at least initially) cut them off from the rest of society and made them recognizable – and of conformity with

³ "let us say that hip hop and rap are a culture that has no nation. So, hard core in the United States, our rap in Senegal... even French rap, or *nip hop* in Japan... if you look at them beyond the appearance, the message behind is the same, you know. Well, hip-hoppers have tried to rap in their national language: in the United States they try to rap in English, or even in slang, and even people living there sometimes don't understand them; in France, too, slang used by youth from the *banlieue* is sometimes not accessible to us. So, everyone must rap starting from his own language, from what he lives, even here in Senegal. But the purpose is international".

⁴ "First of all you have to notice that American rap was born in the ghettos of New York [...] Negger Jah [another member of the group] says it in the introduction of our album, he says "*rap belongs to the ghetto, and the ghetto is everywhere you go*" [in English]. It means that... rap was born from the *banlieue* [suburbs], from the ghetto, and the ghetto is everywhere you go. But only, everywhere you go, ok... but in the city you can't see what you see in the *banlieue*. So, the *banlieue* is something very important for inspiration, and for the rapper's orientation. Because... here you just need to go in the balcony to really see things that you won't see in the city, you know. Here things happen and they are told because they are lived".

the model. Particularly interesting is the use of braids, a typical feature of female hairdos in Senegal, but nowadays popular among young males *via* African American influence.

Other rappers have opted, on the opposite, for the *buubu* and for elements recalling their africanity. As we will see, this can be explained either by political positions or with the desire to capitalize one's own origin in consideration of the African roots of rap. Many renowned rappers, in this sense, dress in typically Senegalese style when they tour abroad, but adopt a more standard hip hop look at home.

There is large room for playing with different elements, decontextualizing and recombining them. Malick, an informant of mine, and many other artists use the prayer bead and the rings and bracelets often worn by adherents to one of Senegalese Sufi brotherhoods as substitutes for *bling-bling*, evoking an analogous flashy effect but using religious and traditional items that both build their specificity in the global arena of hip hop, and prevent criticism from conservative sectors of society. An explicit playful and self-ironical attitude is exemplified in these portraits, where Fou Malade mimics different looks and attitudes both taken from the African American and the Senegalese imaginary.

As we can see from this example, youth active in the hip hop movement do not all express, or not all the time, a cosmopolitan attitude: for many reasons, they may sometimes prefer to locate nearer to the pole of the "local" or the "traditional". One of the main sources used to foster a discourse of difference and specificity in Senegalese or African rap is certainly Islam. Here is how Nasser, a rapper from Comores residing in Dakar, criticises the 'gangsta' attitude of American and French rappers:

[...] c'est un cercle vicieux. Ça commence d'abord aux Etats Unis. Et les rappers français imitent ceux des Etats Unis; ils voient 50 Cent, avec des belles voitures, des belles *meufs*... Ils viennent refaire ça en France, et puis le gamin voit ça, et il grandit dans cette délinquance, il voit que lui il fait du rap *hard core*, du rap... euh... du rap... quasiment... rythmé à l'américaine, quoi. Comment dire... pas du rap conscient, comme... Par exemple, je ferai un exemple: un musulman. Un musulman, c'est pas, c'est pas... c'est celui-là qui respecte les traditions. C'est celui-là... qui ne fait pas la même chose que les américains, je veux dire ça. Un musulman, c'est celui qui a une certaine tradition à respecter. Mais imagine un gosse musulman qui grandit dans ce mouvement-là: un mouvement où on parle... de sexe... tout à la télé, quoi. Il ne grandit plus avec cette tradition, il grandit avec une autre tradition.⁵

Another complex example can be found in the lyrics of the song "Jigéenu tey", that I collected during an interview with its author and one of my friends and informants, Alioune:

These days, can you find a proper woman, correct like those of talaatay Nder?

A woman with the attitude of Linguère Yacine Boubou?

A woman with the attitude of Aline Sitoé Diatta?

A woman with the attitude of Mame Diarra Bousso?

African woman has changed

She doesn't want to live in Africa nor to speak the African language anymore [...]

In the past, girls sat with their mothers

They were taught tradition, Quran and feminine occupations

To prevent them from deviating and falling into another culture like the one of nassaaran (white men) [...]

But look at Dakar now, how sad: sexy and beautiful girls sitting around and selling their bodies

If we come to the point where woman is perverted, who will keep fair?

⁵ "it's a vicious circle. First of all, it starts in the United States. And French rappers imitate those in the States: they see 50 Cent, with fancy cars, beautiful chicks... They go do the same in France, and the little boy sees that, and he grows up in this delinquency, you know, he sees him doing hard core, a rap... er... a rap... nearly... with an American rhythm, you know. How can I say... not an aware rap, like... I'll make an example: a Muslim. A Muslim is not, he's not... He's the one who respects traditions. He's the one... who doesn't do like the Americans do, that's what I mean. A Muslim is someone who has a certain tradition to respect. But imagine a Muslim child growing up in that movement: a movement where you talk... about sex... everything in TV, you know. He won't grow up anymore with that tradition, he'll grow up with another tradition".

I will leave aside considerations about the role and the representation of women in Senegalese rap, about the reconfiguration of gender relations in urban Senegal and about how popular music reflects these changes – I have taken them into account elsewhere, and it would take too much time. I would like to note, though, that the song starts by evocating some mythical women of the past. Mame Diarra Bousso, in particular, is the mother of Cheikh Amadou Bamba, the founder of the Islamic sufi brotherhood of Muridiyya, very popular in urban Senegal today: she is a recognized model of maternity and piety, and this quotation allows the artist to reaffirm the traditional feminine integrity, while connecting to the religious affiliation of a significant part of his audience. Quran is quoted here as part of the nostalgia for conventional division of roles, for traditional knowledge being transmitted through kinship relations inside the household unit, for family and village life, as opposed to the degeneration of Dakar – paradoxically, the very urban setting that allows the artistic career of Alioune and gives meaning to his creations.

References to Islam are accompanied in this example by references to other sources of meaning, which Alioune uses to reassess his attachment to tradition and authenticity. The women of the *talaatay Nder* were those who, in the beginning of the 19th century, killed themselves as a reaction to an attack by Moorish warriors to their village, in order not to be reduced to slavery. Aline Sitoé Diatta is remembered as the queen of Kabrousse, a village in the southern region of Casamance: she was probably a trader, active in the resistance movement against the colonial requisition of food and crops during WW2. The memory of slavery and colonialism, evocated both through “local” and “cosmopolitan” characters (Alioune’s stage name is “Kunta Kinte”⁶), contributes to the shaping of an African authenticity opposed to Western influence and to “the culture of the white man”. The paradigm of afrocentrism is growingly influential in Senegal both in the intellectual and academic circles, as shown by the heated debate on the pages of CODESRIA Bulletin under and after Achille Mbembe’s secretariat (a synthesis of this debate is found in Amselle, 2008), and in youth culture, particularly among the most politicized students and artists. The latter refer to prominent personalities of the black diaspora such as Malcolm X or Bob Marley, as well as to radical African politicians of the recent past such as Patrice Lumumba or Thomas Sankara⁷.

At both levels, a key character in the elaboration of the afrocentric discourse is Cheikh Anta Diop, to whom the University of Dakar is entitled. A prominent Senegalese linguist and historian, he has exerted a considerable influence on the intellectuals of his country and the whole continent through all his works, starting from the controversial doctoral thesis – where he argued the africanity of Ancient Egypt and the continuities between the Egyptian civilizations and all Sub-Saharan languages and societies – later published by *Présence Africaine* as “*Nations nègres et culture*”. It is during a ceremony dedicated to him that I first experienced such a discourse at an immediate ethnographic level. In 2006, Alioune invited me to “UCAD en fête”, the closing ceremony of an annual competition between students of the different nationalities present in the campus: he would receive an award as the representative of Hip Hop Campus, an association gathering several students active in rap and reggae music, and he asked me to take pictures of the event. Since the Moroccan team had won the competition that year, the ceremony was opened by a speech held by the Moroccan ambassador, where he openly referred to the role of Cheikh Anta Diop in building the intellectual foundation for a pan-African sense of belonging, and for demonstrating the superiority of African culture with respect to European culture. The applauses and the warm welcome received by his words made me realize that I was the only non African present in that hall, a consideration accompanied by a sense of uneasiness I had just very rarely experienced so far during my fieldwork.

This sense of uneasiness returned some days later, while I was filming an interview with another friend and informant of mine, Babacar – a rapper who also worked in the radio and organized musical events in a local cultural centre. Here is an excerpt of the exchange we had:

⁶ Alex Haley’s character is mainly known to the larger audience through the TV rendition of his 1977 novel, “Roots”. First aired in the U.S. and in Europe the late 70s, the episodes of the TV series – in its French translation, “Racines” – now circulate in Dakar and all around West Africa through the informal market of DVDs and video-CDs.

⁷ “Studio Sankara” is the name of the recording studio opened by Didier Awadi, leading vocalist of the rap crew Positive Black Soul, in the area of Sicap Amitié II.

(B.) En réalité, ici au Sénégal nous avons nos points de repère: les États-Unis. Si les américains ne faisaient pas du rap, moi non plus j'allais pas rapper: je ne le ferais pas. Mais les français, par contre, je ne les regarde même pas: je ne les kiffe pas. Je ne kiffe pas les français, j'écoute pas leur rap. [...] La France n'a pas de culture. Nous avons quelque chose qui nous appartient: mais toi, par exemple... ce que tu portes, là, cette chemise en *bogolan*, c'est africain, c'est pas *tubaab*. Mais les blancs, qu'est-ce qu'ils ont créé?

(me) Je ne sais pas... rien?

(B.) Rien. Ils n'ont pas de culture.

(me) Comment ça? Les blancs n'ont pas de culture?

(B.) Ils n'ont rien créé, à part les voitures, le luxe... mais ça c'est pas une culture.

(me) Ben, non, le luxe n'est pas culture.

(B.) Tu vois. Vous n'avez rien qui vous appartienne.

(me) Mais la littérature, le cinéma... c'est de la culture, non?

(B.) Mais... moi j'entend quelque chose de traditionnel, qui existe depuis le temps de nos arrière-grands-parents. Par exemple, nous avons les *djembé*, la *kora*, les *tamas*, les percussions, les flûtes... Mais vous, qu'est-ce que vous avez? Vos instruments sont tous copiés à partir des nôtres. Et nous pouvons utiliser vos instruments, mais vous ne pouvez pas utiliser les nôtres. Je sais manoeuvrer la guitare, toi tu ne peux pas utiliser le *xalam*.

(me) Ben, c'est normal, quelqu'un devrait m'apprendre.

(B.) [laughing] Je vais t'apprendre! Mais moi, j'ai pas besoin d'apprendre à jouer la guitare.

(me) [teasing him] Mais bien sûr tu en as besoin!

(B.) Si j'ai une guitare à la maison, au fur et à mesure de jouer je vais apprendre. [...] Bref, nous avons notre culture; et puis nous allons prendre vous, l'Occident... nous prendrons vos instruments, vos instrumentaux, vos *beats*... Vous jouerez une musique qui est carrée, et nous allons y ajouter notre Jumbo, le *saf safal*.⁸

I find this excerpt quite interesting because of the ironical tone and the nonchalance with which Babacar reverses the power relations embedded in the processes of globalisation in music, transforming the oppressed – African musicians “forced” to adopt the instruments of the West – into the masters – African musicians who can easily handle both musical traditions, unlike their westerner fellows. Babacar also contradicts himself in the final part of the statement, where he indirectly confesses the sins of hybridity and exchange, after having defended a rather primordialist approach: the cuisine metaphor is quite explicit and appropriate in this regard, since Jumbo and Cube Maggi are brands of bouillon glutamate cubes imported from Europe but so essential for Senegalese dishes to become a symbol of local taste.

Moreover, Babacar is not alone in his claim of an African origin of the musical traditions and instruments of the West, or of those genres currently popular in the international music business, including rap. Most of the rappers I interviewed declared that the origins of rap must be searched in the musical traditions of Africa, if not Senegal:

⁸ “(B.) In fact, here in Senegal we have our reference: the United States. If the Americans didn't rap, I wouldn't either: I wouldn't. But the French, I don't even look at them. I don't dig them. I don't dig the French, I don't listen to their rap. [...] France has no culture. We have something that belongs to us: but you, for example... the *bogolan* shirt you are wearing, this is not *tubaab* [European, or white]. But white men, what did they create? / (me) I don't know... nothing? / (B.) Nothing. They have no culture. / (me) How can you say that? White men have no culture? / (B.) They created nothing, except for cars, luxury... but that is not culture. / (me) Well, no, luxury is not culture. / (B.) See? You have nothing that belongs to you. / (me) But literature is culture, cinema is culture, isn't it? / (B.) But... I mean something traditional, existing since the times of our ancestors. For example, we have *djembé*, *kora*, *tama*, drums, flutes... But what do you have? Your instruments have been copied from ours. And we can use your instruments, but you can't use ours. I know how to handle a guitar, but you can't use a *xalam*. / (me) Well, of course, someone must teach me. / (B.) [laughing] I will. But I don't need to learn how to play a guitar. / (me) [teasing him] Of course you do! / (B.) If I have a guitar at home, I'll learn by playing it. [...] In short, we have our culture, and we're going to take you, the West... we'll take your instruments, your instrumentals, your beat... You'll play a music which is square, and we're going to add our Jumbo [or Maggi cube, a kind of bouillon cube], the *saf safal* [spices]”.

they quoted *taasu*, *taaxuraan* and *bakku*⁹ – all local forms of oral poetry and spoken-word declamation – as arguments for this claim. It might be interesting to analyze how the modern music industry in Senegal has incorporated these forms of declamation and transformed them: *taasu*-like performances are developed on stage and recorded on CDs by several artists such as Pape Ndiaye Thiopet, and they are a significant part of live *mbalax* concerts. What is much more difficult to confirm is the theory situating the origins of rap in these artistic forms: after all, rappers themselves have so far done very little philological work about this issue, since it would require training, technical and financial means far beyond their reach.

Still, we can acknowledge that this discourse allows rappers to credit as the authors of a recuperation of authenticity in Senegalese music, after so many years of “extraversion”, instead of admitting to perform a process of “globalisation” or, sometimes worse, “Americanisation from below”. At the same time, the alleged africanity of rap refers to an idealised image of African tradition that can mobilise transnational solidarities – especially among Black diasporas – and broaden the visibility and the respectability of Senegalese and African rap in the world music market.

Many rappers are acting towards an increase of transnational cultural flows and of hybridisation, while openly denying the same fact. Dakar and other big cities in Africa are evidently huge receptacles of diverse influences, but the fact that public policies, international trade and investments, media, and moving people all contribute to what we could superficially name as “cultural globalisation” doesn’t mean that an abstract rhetoric of *métissage* will convince the people to give up local/cultural/religious identities. The general trend to the reinforcement of the latter, of which we find an example in the common-sense afrocentrism we saw before, deserves greater attention on an ethnographic level, precisely in those contexts that we represent, and find represented, as increasingly cosmopolitan.

⁹ While the execution of *taasu*, a form of satirical praise-singing, and of *taaxuraan*, which often accompanies marriages, is a prerogative of women (Kesteloot, 1992; MacNee, 2000), the *bakku* is a self-praise performed by traditional wrestlers before the competition.

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