

French colonial system over the course of the second half of the nineteenth century as well as the competing forces, constraints and opportunities the Muslim interpreters faced. M'bayo redefines the relationships between colonizers and colonized to see them as 'reciprocal and symbiotic relations in which both groups contested and negotiated the terms of power relations'. His approach allows us to situate the interpreters in the context of the moment (temporal and spatial), and enables us to think about the internal pressures (such as growing conversion to Islam) as well as the external pressures (such as colonization and French rule making) that made the second half of the nineteenth century a complex and challenging period for both groups.

The intersections of gender, interpretership and the French colonial system are also discussed. In Saint-Louis, female interpreters were exceptional, almost non-existent. For M'bayo, the reason may be the growing influence of Islamic patriarchy in the region, which prevented women from participating in public office; it may also have been the result of traditional African patriarchal hierarchies. With regards to the opinion that the French administration did not employ women officially as interpreters during the period studied, the author affirms that no archival/written or oral evidence exists.

M'bayo discusses the interaction of Islam and the French colonial system. Some Muslims were concerned that Muslim interpreters worked for a non-Muslim colonial administration. How did the Muslim interpreters deal with the French concept of '*mission civilisatrice*'? Muslim interpreters did not see their employment as detrimental to the Islamic faith, as long as their employers respected the practice of Islam among Muslims. The most complicated challenges Muslim interpreters faced were whether the French would respond to growing demands for a Muslim court, and whether they met their employment obligations. Through examining these issues, M'bayo demonstrates how Islamic identities were constructed and makes us appreciate the different agencies interpreters navigated. In the end, as M'bayo highlights, Muslim interpreters were successful in pushing Faïdherbe to create the Muslim tribunal for Saint-Louis in 1857.

For M'bayo, Muslim interpreters chose to perform a 'selective kind of French acculturation to the extent [that] they sought to get the better of the two different and often conflicting worlds'. They hoped to satisfy both their own needs and the needs of the French by enhancing their influence over the French and the local population. This process is what the author calls becoming 'Frenchified' or reinventing their Muslim identity over time, as the French reinforced their grip on policymaking and as the importance of Saint-Louis grew.

This account is a very well-written, easy-to-read book. Most importantly, it sheds new light on the roles played by interpreters and intermediaries in general, and, more specifically, on the important role of Muslim interpreters.

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Mara A. Leichtman, *Shi'i Cosmopolitanisms in Africa: Lebanese migration and religious conversion in Senegal*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press (hb US\$80 – 978 0 253 01599 0; pb US\$30 – 978 0 253 01601 0). 2015, 294 pp.

For a long time, scientific work on the phenomenon of migrations within sub-Saharan Africa has focused on population movements towards more prosperous

or less conflictual areas. These include migrations from the Sudanese and Voltaic populations to low-lying lands (Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana) and the massive displacement of Hausa from the Sahel to southern Nigeria. Although these studies are abundant, they largely analyse such migrations from a socio-economic perspective, addressing religious issues only in a marginal way.

This study, *Shi'i Cosmopolitanisms in Africa*, Mara A. Leichtman's contribution to the understanding of a Lebanese Shiite community established abroad for several generations, has the merit of paying renewed attention to religious concerns. This work is the result of ethnographic research carried out in the field and in archives in Beirut, Paris, London and several localities in Senegal. It is organized around seven chapters and analyses the presence of the Lebanese in Senegal in terms of world migratory trends, Islam, French colonization and conflicts in the Middle East.

In fact, Muslim Lebanese as well as Christian Maronites in Senegal were welcomed into the trade community before spreading to other professional sectors (medicine, hotel management, etc.). The first migrants served as intermediaries between the French and growers in peanut production areas. But Leichtman shows that these Franco-Lebanese relations have not always been cordial, due to subversive movements in the 1910s in the Arab world and later as a result of the 1929 economic crisis. The colonial power developed a propaganda policy against the Lebanese, aimed at separating them from Senegalese populations practising moderate Islam (through traditional Islam/Sufi orders (mainly Tijaniyya and Muridiyya) and Islamic reformist movements) (p. 54). However, this policy was counterproductive insofar as it strengthened links between the Lebanese themselves and the Senegalese population of which these migrants were now an integral part (p. 59).

At independence in 1960, the author shows that this feeling of belonging to a dual culture (Lebanese and Senegalese) was reinforced by the cosmopolitan vision of Africanity developed by President Léopold S. Senghor, including African and Arab-Berber people (p. 68), and the promulgation of the 1967 law granting citizenship to the spouses of the Senegalese. Moreover, she summarizes this model of integration through this scheme as 'Lebanese by origin, French by decree, and Senegalese by adoption' (p. 89), and supports it with instructive illustrations: the Bourgi family was a support to Presidents Léopold S. Senghor and Abdou Diouf, and Dakar streets bear their names as a sign of gratitude; Saïd Fakhry assumed the presidency of the Senegalese Football Federation after his election in 2003; Zeïna Sahelî was a champion swimmer representing Senegal.

The cosmopolitanism of the Lebanese has also extended to the religious domain, with the personal enterprise of Abdul Mun'am al-Zayn (known as Shaykh al-Zayn), a Shiite who came from Lebanon in the 1960s and was well known in the Senegalese religious and diplomatic spheres (p. 94). According to Leichtman, the mutations carried out in the social and religious practices of Lebanese Muslims for nearly half a century are attributable to his mission. This was the basis of the construction of educational institutes, including mosques, in Dakar and Kaolack, where less educated women and men – mostly Lebanese – were taught about Islam, including canonical prayers, Ramadan fasting, receiving alms and participating in community service through formal charitable associations. He also encouraged Muslims to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, organized along a route (from Dakar via Beirut) that led generations of Lebanese born in Senegal to discover their country of origin (p. 102).

Shaykh al-Zayn's style of proselytizing has contributed to the development of a nascent patriotism in the Lebanese community by situating it within a global

universe where the feeling of belonging to Lebanon and Shiite Islam has become an important political issue. For instance, during *Ashura* celebrations or political events – such as the war between Hezbollah and Israel in 2006 in Lebanon – the Shaykh's followers (including Senegalese converted to Shiite Islam (pp. 173–200)) show solidarity with their compatriots and co-religionists in difficult situations (p. 117). In return, although linked to the latter, these Lebanese – Shiites or Maronite Christians – remain attached to their country of adoption, which they protect from subversive influences coming from elsewhere, including Lebanon.

Thus, Shiite Islam has succeeded, in collaboration with Sunni movements and Sufi orders, in securing a place in the Senegalese religious space. However, despite Shaykh al-Zayn's reforms, including the introduction of new forms of expression of the faith (*Ashura*, *mut'a* marriage or temporary marriage, etc.) that are in common usage (p. 229), Leichtman acknowledges that this strategy has not prevented the development of a Lebanese class with freedom of thought and more pragmatic in religion practices: a large part of the Lebanese community continues to claim to be merely 'Muslim' and pays less attention to certain Shia rites.

In short, this book gives us a part of the history of the Shiite Lebanese community that settled outside its original land. As this migratory enterprise was more a West African reality than specifically Senegalese, the analysis could have better accommodated a comparative approach. The author has tried to do this but her analysis is limited to a comparison of the flow of migrants in these countries – particularly Côte d'Ivoire (p. 35) – without including the social dynamics (integration, citizenship, etc.) linked to this phenomenon. This lack of comparative approach also appears when she addresses the attitude of young Lebanese towards their *marja'* and Shiite Islam. Indeed, although Leichtman easily explains the freedom of these young Lebanese in the expression of their faith, she does not analyse this change in the prism of the socio-political context – with the evolution of social perceptions of the notions of *ndiguel* – which has seen the authority of the shaykhs of Sufi orders crumble in recent years in Senegal.

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Cawo M. Abdi, *Elusive Jannah: the Somali diaspora and a borderless Muslim identity*. Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press (hb US\$94.50 – 978 0 8166 9738 0; pb US\$27 – 978 0 8166 9739 7). 2015, 296 pp.

*Elusive Jannah* explores the question of how the diasporic condition affects the lives of Somalis around the globe. In this well-written book, Cawo Abdi argues that displacement leaves a permanent mark as those in the diaspora remain in search of a home. She furthermore shows how 'place matters' by providing rich empirical descriptions of life for Somalis in the United Arab Emirates, South Africa and the United States. Yet in all these places, as Abdi argues, the search for cultural, religious and social belonging continues, often combined with a search for legal, economic and physical security. While the depth of fieldwork in these three very different contexts varied considerably, Abdi largely manages to portray convincing descriptions of people's lived experiences and the stark differences between some of their concerns, depending on where they live.

The book's introduction sets the stage for this comparison and adds the context of the research by positioning the researcher and elaborating on methods. It places