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Fabienne Samson

Classifications of Islam

> What is, in fact, the question? Do I think before I classify? Do I classify before I think? How do I classify what I think? How do I think when I want to classify? … It is so tempting to want to arrange the whole world according to a single code, a universal law governing all phenomena: two hemispheres, five continents, male and female, animal and vegetal, singular and plural, right and left, four seasons, five senses, six vowels, seven days, twelve months, twenty-six letters. Unfortunately, that does not work, it never did work, it never will work. But that will not stop us from continuing for a long time to come to categorize this or that animal depending on whether it has an odd number of fingers or hollow horns.
>
> Georges Perec (2003)

Classifying: What Does It Mean?

Naming, sorting, and classifying seem indispensable to our understanding of the world around us. It is the primary vocation of social sciences: defining, delineating, and classifying social facts so as to make them intelligible and give them meaning. It is the very condition of human beings seeking to understand their history and their contemporaries.

And yet, as Georges Perec (2003) said, all categorization will always be imperfect, temporary, and illusory. The anthropology of modernity has, since the second half of the twentieth century, understood that the world is made up of tensions, social transformations, and endlessly reinvented traditions. In France, Georges Balandier was one of the precursors of this new orientation in this field. The objective was then to consider the mutations, movements, and antagonisms experienced by societies and brought about by actors who were marked by habitus and structural constraints, but who were also motivated by a desire for individualism and a search for meaning. Classifying groups, defining events, and categorizing these actors perhaps became all the more necessary in order to grasp a world in perpetual motion.

However, naming means giving a fixed identity to a given moment. It therefore means taking the risk of producing knowledge which will soon have to be reviewed. Thus, every researcher knows that working on social mutations

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means accepting that, sooner or later, his or her analyses will be called into question.

The study of religion as social fact is concerned with societies first and foremost and is no exception to the rule. There are many ways in which one can believe, practice, and "deal with" all things spiritual, depending on the historical age and context. Those who have sought to understand Islam have, like everybody else, always devised categories which allowed them to make sense of the behaviors and beliefs of Islamic actors. In the face of a religion without a single authority—the way Catholics have their papacy—all manner of classifications have been developed. Beginning with the seventeenth century, this was primarily the work of Western specialists known as Orientalists, who wrote dictionaries, grammars, encyclopedias, and notes on Oriental languages (Laurens 2004). Beginning with the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century, this much fantasized about, exotic Orient created by the West (Said 1980), and often disparaged (see Ernest Renan's theses on Islamism), was studied so as to protect it from the Western domination that would supposedly make this civilization disappear. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Orientalism served colonial conquest in order to enlighten the administration on the customs and beliefs of the dominated peoples. Islam as a mobilizing force was already a central problem and great Orientalists (for example, Montagne and Massignon) became advisers to the Prince even if, at times, they were at odds with the anti-Muslim policy, as shown in this issue by Vincent Geisser. Besides, great decolonization thinkers (such as Jacques Berque and Maxime Rodinson), themselves products of Orientalism, have shown that this scientific discipline has not always necessarily been a product of French colonial power.

As far as sub-Saharan Africa is concerned, at the beginning of the twentieth century, social sciences too had a complicated relationship with Islam. Some anthropologists refused to study it in the name of a pure and authentic Africa (Griaule), while others perceived it as exogenous and therefore syncretic. From that point on, there developed the idea of a "black Islam" mixed with local and, in the eyes of colonial administrators, less daunting beliefs than the Islam that was bringing forth Arab nationalist ideas (Rondot 1958).

Today, sociologists, historians, anthropologists, and political analysts studying Islam seem, for the most part, more rigorous and less influenced by the ideologies or ideas of their time. This is true at least of those who study Islam in non-Western societies, who consider it a social fact in its own right. Researchers working on the Muslim question in France continue to be confronted, as Vincent Geisser explains, with a "hot topic." According to the author, there has historically been an "ambivalent relationship" between scholars and politicians on the question of Islam, with the former being often (at times without being aware of it) experts to the latter. If, as Vincent Geisser emphasizes, a new generation of anthropologists and sociologists has changed things, the fact remains that the majority of studies on Islam in France are produced, to this day, by political

analysts who are highly qualified on the subject but who often "indirectly reflect the political preoccupations of the moment."

The recent infatuation with Islamic studies, both in France and the rest of world, is most certainly linked to the Iranian revolution of 1979 and the new visibility of political Islam. Since the 1990s and the events of September 11, 2001, analysts have had to take into account the mobility of Islamic actors. Where researchers had established certain categories that allowed them to make sense of the various Islamic groups they were dealing with (Sufism, reformism, Wahhabism, Salafism, and so forth), they are today faced with a terminology which no longer corresponds to reality. Conscious of the limits of their specifications and in order to follow the evolution of the religious mutations, they today speak of "neobrotherhood movements," "neo-Sufism," "liberal Islam," "cultural Islam," "confusionist Islam," and so forth. "Post-Islamism," "post-re-Islamization," or "neofundamentalism" are new formulae that attempt to show the Islamic dynamism that exists throughout the world. However, this plasticity does not render well the complex recompositions of contemporary Islam. Researchers are faced with a real definition problem.

Besides, most Muslims do not recognize themselves in these terminologies; they call themselves by different names, and, above all, they often practice outside their theoretical limits. Thus, we know of—and this issue will illustrate—Sufis influenced by ideas of reform (Mara Vitale and Gilles Holder) or, conversely, "reformists" who take a brotherhood leader as their founding hero (Abdoulaye Sounaye). Reform groups are so different from one another that we wonder why we label them as such (Maud Saint-Lary and Denise Brégand), with the generational issue often being an element which explains Islamic pluralism (Marie Nathalie LeBlanc and Ashley Leinweber). Current political Islamic actors, coming from all categories, evolve in opposite ways (Mame-Penda Ba and Haoues Seniguer) and act in the same spirit as those in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Ousmane Kane); Salafists are today characterized by an often very nuanced kind of radicalism (Ould Ahmed Salem). Religious actors muddy the waters, transcend boundaries, and naturally combine theoretically paradoxical entities. Sometimes it is political authorities themselves who use Islam in order to attract the sympathy (and therefore the funds) of Middle Eastern countries, religion thus becoming an internal political tool (Doris Ehazouambela).

In short, reality is always considerably more complex than an established map. Furthermore, the appearance and use of classifications vary according to the sociohistorical contexts (Ousmane Kane) and the designations do not have the same meaning in the different societies in which they are used. They evolve with time and are often used by one group for the purpose of discrediting another. For example, if the Wahhabi category has negative connotations in certain West African countries and is rejected by those who are called such and who prefer the name of Sunni or Ahl al-Sunna (Mame-Penda Ba, Maud Saint-Lary, and Denise Brégand), it can be used by Islamic leaders to define

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their competitors and thus disparage them. Islamic groups are mobile, they adapt to changes in their society, and are receptive to the proselytizing methods employed by other spiritual guides. We therefore know of "born-again" Muslims who have taken their inspiration from evangelical movements, and religious entrepreneurs for whom Islam is a market made up of "new syncretic forms with the West" (Haenni 2005) and whose ideal is individual fulfillment (Marie Nathalie LeBlanc). Many believers do not recognize themselves in any of the categories and call themselves "simple Muslims" (Maud Saint-Lary), not wishing to be prisoners to a classification. They construct a "DIY" form of religious practice and create an orthodoxy which links the spiritual heritage of their parents with personal research into specialist literature or on the Internet. Others still dream of a great united *ummah* (community of believers) free of Islamic pluralism, but they refute those who they believe are bad Muslims, such as the Ahmadiyya Jama'at (Samson 2011). Finally, groups such as Islamic NGOs refuse all religious labels (Mara Vitale) in order to attract a maximum of resources from international and secular sponsors. As we can see, long is the list of "cases" which are difficult to classify.

This issue does not intend to come up with an illusory solution to these classifications. Rather, its ambition is to highlight the difficulties, and to remind us of the pluralism and fluidity of Islamic practices, which demonstrate the limitations and pitfalls inherent in every definition. Each author will show the obstacles connected to the categories employed, seeking to describe the complexity of conceptualizing religious actors by means of a simplifying terminology. Certainly, other works and articles have already addressed this question (Burgat 1988), but it has been useful to put together a special issue on this subject in order to tackle the problem head on.

The Origins of the Problem

I started questioning the Islamic categories beginning with my initial articles on Islam in Senegal. From the 1990s I studied a Senegalese Islamic movement which was an offshoot of the Tijaniyyah and, more specifically, of the brotherhood branch of Tivaouane (a holy city of the *tariqah*[1] in this country). However, this religious group, familiarly called the Moustarchidine movement,[2] had been founded and led by a spiritual guide (Moustapha Sy) who had broken away from his family hierarchy, seeking to both distance himself from it and draw on its legitimacy. Beside the quarrels with his relatives in Tivaouane, which were confined to the press, his independence took specific forms: the movement's established presence in towns and cities (essentially in Dakar); the search for an audience made up of young city dwellers; a new discourse for the improvement

1. The Arabic term for an Islamic brotherhood (plural: *turuq*).
2. The movement's actual name is *Dahiratoul Moustarchidina wal Moustarchidaty*.

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of urban morals; followed by political involvement through the creation of a party (the PUR) and the marabout's candidacy in the first round of the 2000 presidential election. I was therefore dealing with an Islamic organization which still claimed to be part of Tijaniyyah, but which refused its elders' way of "doing religion." It enjoyed the mystical aura of its leader, while at the same time emphasizing, not unlike the so-called reformist groups of Senegal, the closeness between the spiritual guide and his disciples (*talibés*).[3] It moreover wanted to acquire a social and political dimension. Having started a new Islamic approach in Senegal and a profound transformation of the brotherhood system in that country, the Moustarchidine movement was becoming hard to define using the analytical tools which pertained to the more traditional Sufi movements. I therefore ended up calling them a "neobrotherhood," the only category which seemed to illustrate the internal dynamics existing within the maraboutic world of that time (Samson 2005).

"Neobrotherhood," a term that Olivier Roy (2002) was one of the first to use, pertains, according to the author, to those religious groups which claim to be part of Sufi organizations but which "recruit according to modern forms of religiosity (individualization, globalization) and no longer go through an initiatory process, as is the case with the classic brotherhoods" (Roy 2002, 126–131; Coulon 2002, 23). To this definition one must add the political and social dimensions of these Islamic movements, as well as a new discourse on the decadence of today's world, to which Islamization and/or re-Islamization (the reactivation of Muslims' fervor) are the only answer. However, the term "neobrotherhood"—which took its inspiration from the "neo-Christian" groups that abound in the evangelical world—is not without its problems. Brotherhoods are not all the same throughout the Muslim world and they have been through many internal evolutions and transformations. What, then, should we call the future mutations of these movements that are already classified as "neo-?" This question poses a challenge to specialists.

My own studies on various other Islamic groups of young urban Senegalese—this time offshoots of the *Muridiyyah* who nevertheless took a lot of their inspiration from the Moustarchidine—reinforced my intuition about a new religious current in this country. Today, those who make the news in Senegal are these "marabouts for the young,"[4] who are very worldly and strongly involved in politics, and who often inhabit the public space in an ostentatious way. Criticized by their elders for their lack of orthodoxy, they seek to exist in an original religious autonomy. Some make music, others engage in politics or organize large-scale social actions, while some are licensed matchmakers. They all want to distinguish themselves from the others, but their common discourse is the moralization (Islamization) of the country.

3. The Arabic term for a religious brotherhood follower.
4. This phrase is commonly used in Senegal to designate these religious leaders.

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In what way are these movements original? Reform attempts have always existed within Islam, both in the Sufi world and other movements. As Ousmane Kane shows in this issue, great reformers within West African brotherhoods wanted, well before colonization, to return Islam to an imagined original purity. For this purpose, some led political struggles and founded Islamic states (Uthman dan Fodio, El Hadj Omar Tall, and so forth). From this point of view, the current reform movements within the Senegalese maraboutic brotherhoods offer nothing new. They plan to organize society around Islamic values as they conceive them. Their objective, as with many of their illustrious ancestors, is to Islamize their environment, even if that means using political means to further their ends (even though most of them do not really want to take power). Nevertheless, these new groups distinguish themselves on several levels. First of all, they are different with regard to their political positioning: they often contest the established political regimes, while their forerunners, at least once the country won its independence, were, with very few exceptions, legalists. Secondly, they stand out above all through their rhetoric, in which they do not hesitate to borrow their references from different Islamic registers. Thus, the Moustarchidine movement, to return to this example, draws abundantly on Salafism. Its leader gains his legitimacy from his maraboutic charisma and the supernatural gifts associated with it; he has criticized believers' excessive devotion toward brotherhood guides, and has declared himself equal with his disciples, with his own place in paradise not, according to him, guaranteed. He has criticized the worship of saints and the marabouts' non-Islamic practices (Samson 2005) and, in 1990, declared that his friends were members of the Algerian FIS and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. His political strategy is the Islamization from the bottom of society up, but he did not hesitate in founding a political party and standing for election (in 2000) in order to assert his ideas in the political debate. Another distinctive characteristic of this movement is its followers' diverse opinions on subjects such as secularism, the implementation of *sharia*, or the creation of an Islamic state. Some are much more radical than others. Their spiritual guide, Moustapha Sy, remains evasive on these issues. But they all see their movement as a project for an egalitarian society, which contrasts with the hierarchical system that dominates religious brotherhoods. Besides, according to Ousmane Kane (2005, 11), this is where the success of these movements, which have sprung from Senegalese *turuq*, lies: in this country—unlike Mali or Northern Nigeria—they have been able to curb the expansion of reformist movements "which have turned the egalitarian discourse into their leitmotif."

This analytical complexity, which defies all usual categories, is what gave the idea for this issue. It will be centered on sub-Saharan Africa, but will also open toward the Maghreb and France to enable comparisons that are indispensable to the decompartmentalization of Islam's image outside the Orient. By questioning the analytical categories, we will effectively also need to review the too commonly accepted representation of a central Islam (in the Arab world)

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and a peripheral Islam (in the rest of the world). The articles on France and Morocco will allow us to show that researchers are presented with the same difficulties as those working on Islam south of the Sahara since the Islamic dynamics are the same. Furthermore, the choice of articles has centered, at first without meaning to, on Francophone countries. This does not mean that Islam in Anglophone countries does not encounter the same issues, but the advantage, if ever there was one, is that we can make comparisons between sub-Saharan countries sharing the same colonial logic.

The Categories: What Are We Talking About?

Alongside mystical or Sufi Islam, reform movements within Islam grew in scale during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During this period, the Muslim world saw its military force contested for the first time, eventually leading to the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1920. Wahhabism (Muhammad ibn al Wahhab, 1705–1792) was born at this point in the Arabian desert, in an attempt to construct a strict and puritan form of Islam. This movement advocated a return to moral values, which translated into the banning of saint worship, mosque decorations, music, poetry, and tomb prayers. It was very successful in the nineteenth century and has inspired numerous fundamentalist groups (which seek to return to the founding texts alone) (Roy 1995). Faced with Western colonial conquest, two distinct schools of thought developed. Liberals thought that Islam as a political system was the reason for the Islamic societies' defeat. They preached the Westernization of people's ways of life. Reformists, for their part, refused this pejorative connotation of Islam and applied themselves to assimilating Western (essentially technical) modernity into their religion. The return to the Prophet's tradition had to allow for modernity. Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905) was behind the movement known as *salafiyyah* (return to ancestors), which was taken up and developed by Rashid Rida (1865–1935), who fought against customary law, maraboutism, the *ulama* tradition, Sufism, and the four schools of Islamic law.

Faced with Western domination, many young people in the Arab countries developed an affirmation of their national and Islamic identity, which became their battle cry against colonization. However, the newly gained independence saw new leaders being rapidly promoted and then quickly accused of playing into the hands of the West; in the 1970s, political Islamic movements began opposing the established regimes. Hassan al-Banna, an Egyptian schoolteacher (1906–1949), and Abu al-Ala Mawdudi, an Indian essayist (1903–1979), were the initiators of all these movements. Al-Banna formed the Muslim Brotherhood, and Mawdudi the Jama'at-i Islami. They both advocated a social reorganization based on Islamic states, criticized nationalism, and aspired to build a great *ummah*. Islam was to become a third way between capitalism and socialism. While fundamentalism is not a political ideology, radicalism (the return to the

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roots) (Étienne 1987) introduced radical political action linked to the conquest of the state, since *sharia* can only be implemented in a truly Islamized state.

In sub-Saharan Africa, even though Islamic states had already existed (Ousmane Kane), the introduction of political Islamic ideas (stemming from al-Banna and Mawdudi) happened too soon and was often linked to the question of Arabization (Otayek 1993). This became an important objective for the moral and identity rearmament in the face of the European school, becoming at the same time an instrument in the political struggle. To this day, Arabizing intellectuals in many countries find themselves in direct competition with Sufi brotherhood guides; faced with the traditional legitimacy of the latter, they look for their source of legitimacy in their knowledge. However, as many articles in this issue will show, the boundaries between these different groups are blurred and fluid. Also, at times, the best interests of a country's unified *ummah* lead these Islamic actors to collaborate within the same groups.

The various Islamic reforms are each linked to the particular context of a country. Thus, elements such as whether Islam is in a majority or a minority, whether brotherhoods have a significantly greater or smaller number of followers, and whether politicians acknowledge Muslim actors' demands all have an impact on the evolution and radicalization of each individual Islamic group. Nevertheless, transversal trends do develop thanks to the mobility of the faithful, the references to a globalized Islam, and similar aspirations to moralize/re-Islamize societies.

Sufism/Reformism: Where Does the Boundary Lie?

In the world of brotherhoods, the current spiritual guides are all, irrespective of the sub-Saharan country we look at, confronted with very strong competition linked to an increase in the number of *turuq* founding fathers' descendants. They are all legitimate by virtue of the *baraka* inherited from their ancestors and they all need to stand out in order to recruit followers and exist on the local religious scene. This situation exists both in Senegal and Burkina Faso. Thus, Mara Vitale paints the picture of several Sufi guides who, in order to distinguish themselves, redefine their role as preachers and aspire to a new civil society. Sheikh Bandé of the League of Muslim Women and Youth, Sheikh Ouedraogo and his many humanitarian associations, or Sheikh Doukouré and his Ittihad Islami association represent, like Moustapha Sy in Senegal, these new figures in Burkina. Having broken with the traditions of their maraboutic families, while at the same time maintaining close ties with them (so as to maintain their legitimacy), some have renounced the worship of saints and grave visits. They wish to simplify the relations between sheikh (spiritual guide) and disciples (*talibés*), and they no longer speak of Sufi mysticism, but rather explain how to apply the Koranic message to day-to-day life. Some even seek to construct an "African Islam" freed from Arab cultural connotations and integrated into the African

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context, while at the same time preserving the purity of the Koranic message. Others have caused Sufism to evolve into a secularized, socially engaged religious form, stripped of its mystical character. They have become veritable religious entrepreneurs constantly seeking support funds from Arab sponsors in order to build health, university, and media centers.

These are the means they have found in order to stand out and make themselves popular with an audience made up of young people, women, and believers not affiliated with any brotherhood. These new leaders effectively reject any reference to Sufism in the names of their organizations in order to attract financial aid from Arab countries and recruit more than just disciples of their original *tariqah*.

Standing out is also the principal concern of Chérif Ousmane Madani Haïdara, founder of a movement known was Ansar Dine (those who help religion), which is very popular in Mali and is analyzed in this issue by Gilles Holder. This religious guide and great orator oscillates between a popular form of Islam, mystical practices, and reformism, which makes him a special character on the Malian Islamic scene.

Although trained at a *madrasah* (Koranic school) run by the Tijaniyyah, his father's brotherhood, Haïdara has rejected the religious establishment based on a traditional heritage and become the preacher or guide of "the voiceless, the illiterate, and the outlaws of society." A self-made man, he draws his legitimacy from a supposedly original *baraka* passed on directly from the Prophet, casts himself as a reformer and an enemy of the Salafi-inspired Sunni reformists, and criticizes the brotherhood lineages while at the same time remaining loyal to the Maliki rite. The Islam he defends comes in the shape of a religious group which is very well structured at a national level and has international branches. He enjoys a certain mystical aura which followers ascribe to him, at the same time as denouncing maraboutism. Preaching is his credo (his sermons bring thousands of followers together) and he distinguishes himself by using the national languages of Mali to spread Islam. His objective, not unlike Sheikh Doukouré in Burkina Faso and his desire to create an African Islam, is to propagate a universal Islam stripped of its Arab references. His other battle is his disciples' reaffirmation of their Muslim identity. This identity cannot just be inherited; it has to be confirmed (in the Christian sense of the term) through a daily engagement with Islam made concrete by the *bayah* oath (Islamic oath). In actual fact, this *bayah* has a twofold character and is quite restrictive. It is made up of a first oath, which is very common in the Sufi practices of West Africa, but which the Ansar Dine use to pledge allegiance toward the religion of Islam rather than their spiritual guide. Through this practice, Haïdara comes close to Sunni reform rejecting all intermediaries (sheikhs) between believer and God. However, the second *bayah* oath takes us back to the Sufi brotherhoods since it consists of a follower pledging allegiance to the movement and its guide, Haïdara himself. Thus, as Gilles Holder explains, this second *bayah* "reintroduces in a central way the charismatic power" of the religious guide.

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However, since he does not belong to any specific brotherhood claiming direct descent from the Prophet, Haïdara casts himself as the real sheikh, the only one able to guide people toward the true path of Islam.

The boundaries between Sufism and reformism are equally blurred in Niger. Abdoulaye Sounaye looks into the Izala movement, which is known for spreading a strict form of Islam, and two organizations created after 2000 that have sprung from it (Kitab wa Sunna and Ihyau Sunna). He shows how the leaders of these two groups—reformist Islamic voices with a strongly anti-Sufi discourse—take their inspiration in their re-Islamization project from the nineteenth century's Uthman dan Fodio and his jihad. Uthman dan Fodio (1754–1817), a central figure of the Sokoto Caliphate and a follower of the Qadiriyya Sufi brotherhood, has become, for these antibrotherhood Muslims, a "*lieu de mémoire*," a site of memory. Muslim activists revisit his work and rewrite history in order to turn him into a hero of the spreading of Islam in West Africa. Thus, even though the Izala movement wishes to establish a real Islamic state in Niger and fights against the current regime—which it believes it to be not Islamic enough and too Westernized—in this example, the Sufi/anti-Sufi dichotomy reveals its limits. The rigidity of classifications does not help us understand this particular case where a group, which is radically opposed to Sufism—considered as *bid'a* (forbidden Islamic innovation)—and fights to spread the *sunna* (prophetic tradition), takes a brotherhood leader as its founding hero. However, by their rereading of history, the Izala see in Uthman dan Fodio a defender of the *sunna*, which he apparently sought to implement within an unfavorable context. By opposing the *ulama* of his time and the religious elites who supported the king of Gobir—who, according to them, took anti-Islamic measures and deceived the population—Uthman dan Fodio has become, for the current Islamic activists, a defender of Islam and promoter of a pious life. His reform has been justified by the moral corruption of his time, which is compared to the present time, while he has become the ideal representation of a "good leader," a man of action who transformed his community and showed that a truly Islamic community after the one created by the Prophet is perfectly conceivable.

Whither Reformism?

As shown by several other articles in this issue, the boundaries between the various Islamic trends are blurred. What of the highly polysemic issue of reformism?

Maud Saint-Lary describes the emergence of "new Islamic thinkers" in Burkina Faso. They employ a discourse in favor of a modernity characterized by a desire for individual freedom in religious practice, while at the same time expressing mistrust toward Western culture. She explains that the reformist category covers two accepted meanings in that country: there are those who go for a literal reading of the sacred texts, who are commonly known as Salafists

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or Wahhabis, and who identify with the Sunni movement; and those who do not claim to belong to any group but who, through their practices, way of life, and dress, adopt the Wahhabi "markers." Thus, she notes that several characteristics, which until recently were the exclusive domain of the most rigorist of Muslims, are today spreading among simple believers. The rejection of ostentatious ceremonies, the criticism of Sufism, the wearing of beards by men and of veils by women, praying with crossed arms, and so forth are all features which were initially classified as Wahhabi, but which are now being taken up by many Muslims who are "without movement." This generic reformism, as she calls it (the term was inspired by Jean-Louis Triaud), allows us to understand that many Burkinan believers reclaim these markers for pragmatic rather than ideological reasons. The rejection of Sufism is, in their case, linked to a desire to create a unified *ummah*; the rejection of ostentatious ceremonies is explained by a desire to fight against an expensive life; bodily markers (beard, veil) reveal the intention to express one's (non-Wahhabi) Islamic identity and are a fashion phenomenon. Ultimately, it is all a question of degree and intensity between strict reformists and the others. For example, while Wahhabi women wear the full veil, the women of this particular Islamic revival show their faces and refuse to wear black gloves.

The spread of a puritanical Islam among Muslims who do not follow extremist movements is the manifest sign of a desire to moralize society through believers who are individualistic in their practice and develop their own selves. Their main concern is to know how to be a "good Muslim."

Denise Brégand has noted similar things in Benin. The Ahalli Sunna, the "people of the tradition" (the equivalent of the Sunni movement in Burkina Faso), are re-Islamization actors who are very much involved in the *dawah* (preaching), though this name brings together various concepts. She notes that "more than a movement, it is a process reaching many believers." Some of them, like in Burkina Faso, are literalists, while others accept the interpretation of the Koran. Some reject the notion of reform as they believe they clarify rather than transform Islam, while others accept reform as a sign of modernity. Some follow a very puritanical practice and strict way of life, prescribing the reclusion and full veil for women, while others are socially involved, with women campaigning for the right to work and to choose their husband. There are numerous examples showing the heterogeneity and permeability of this category. As in Burkina Faso, the Ahalli Sunna inspire many believers who do not see themselves as their followers, but who adopt some of their characteristics. Once again, it is a question of degree.

Irrespective of their level of involvement, these Islamic revival actors in Benin are centered on the idea that Islam must be a life choice rather than a heritage. Most of them do not know the great reform thinkers (Rashid Rida and so forth) but they all refuse certain cultural practices (such as the anniversary of a death on the eighth and fortieth day) or magical (maraboutic) practices. They are all engaged in a process of re-Islamization of their environment that takes on

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various aspects: education, sermons, social actions, aiding the poorest, visiting prisoners, and so forth. They all seek in their own way to conform to the image of a pious and respectful Muslim they construe from the Koranic texts.

Youth and Reformism

The desire to moralize society and the personal quest to be a "good Muslim" evolve with time, as Marie Nathalie LeBlanc explains. The author raises the question of the link between youth (who are juniors within society) and Islamic reform, and shows how the logic of the "reform of the self" and of society changes with each period. In the case of Côte d'Ivoire, she compares young people's activism in the 1990s to that in the 2000s, when its society was deeply affected by the political crisis. What these two groups of youths have in common is a desire to return to Islamic practices and beliefs, the elimination of innovations, and the rejection of local customs. Both groups have believed that the Islamization or re-Islamization of the Ivorian society is the answer to the loss of faith and the failure of modernity, politics, and the economy. Nevertheless, the young people of the 1990s were very much involved in association activism, seeking to develop new forms of social control. Activism was an expression of their faith. Young people in the 2000s are no longer activist, as the associations have been damaged by the political crisis. Today, as the author notes, the spiritual quest is more individualized. Young people seek to become closer to God, like their predecessors, while at the same time remaining anchored in day-to-day life. The Internet has replaced the associations and, thanks to informal discussion groups, chats, and Islamic forums, young people can express their religious experiences, perceptions, and opinions. The necessity to moralize society is moving toward a quest for personal fulfillment and it is through their own knowledge that young people hope to change society. Islam has become a consumer product (Islamic fashion, dress style, behavior, and so forth), thus taking part in a "globalized youth culture." These young Muslims of the 2000s are religious entrepreneurs (Haenni 2005): many of them do Islamic business (they "sell Islam" in the form of clothes and other Islamic objects, or as marabouts, healers, *djinn* hunters, and so forth); the professional ambitions of others lie within the advancement of Islam (for example, the sale of Islamic clothes allows them to hope that they can rectify Muslims' practices). Islam is an integral part of their day-to-day life and remains an essential preoccupation, but follows the dictates of a moral economy.

Ashley Leinweber, too, has noted the importance of the generational issue in the perception of Islam in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Muslims there are in a minority but they are extremely divided doctrinally. Far from the simple Sufism/reformism dichotomy, the author points out the various causes of this Islamic pluralism. She finds that the generational problems are central to understanding these internal divisions.

In the various provinces of the DRC, important historical conflicts divide the Muslim community despite attempts at achieving unity similar to those seen in Burkina Faso. However, the characteristics of Islam in this country are as far removed as possible from those of Islam in West Africa, where Sufis are sometimes associated with local syncretic practices and the members of reformist movements are trained abroad. In the DRC, in the Maniema region for example, it is the *turuq* members, known as Sufis, who serve as strangers. Arriving in the 1920 and 1930s, the brotherhoods (essentially the Qadiriyya) came from Zanzibar and were very badly perceived by the Belgian colonial authorities. Their disciples are generally descendants of "Swahili Arabs." They are Arabized and considered, to this day, to be non-natives. On the other hand, those known as Tawahidi, who are associated with a reformist Islamic trend, are portrayed as natives of this country. Thus, they preach in the local language so that followers can understand the Koranic message. *Turuq* members preach in Arabic only. The conflict between these two communities is reflected in the fact that prayers are held in different mosques, with the Tawahidi believing that the Sufi rituals are imbued with *bid'a*. They criticize them for celebrating the birth of the Prophet (*mawlid*), for practicing *dhikrs* (the invocation of God's names), and so forth.

Over and above the doctrinal differences and origins ascribed to the followers of one group or another, the internal divisions between the DRC Muslims are linked to several factors which keep occurring in the country's various provinces. First of all, there are leadership problems between those who are Arabized and those who are not, that is—over and above those who are considered as locals or strangers—between those who have studied in their country and those who have been trained in the Arab countries. There is also the question of the place of Islam in the public space. Faced with domination by Christian schools and aid organizations, some Muslims would like Islam to take part in the development of the DRC, accusing traditionalists of being too withdrawn into their community and of not having the ambition to give a social dimension to Islam. One of the primary causes of this misunderstanding is, however, generational. The younger ones denounce the elders' monopoly over the management of their mosques, condemning them for their lack of open mindedness which, according to them, is the source of divisions within the community and Islam's lack of visibility in the national public space. Ashley Leinweber cites the work of Hamzati Oyoko (1998), according to which the problems of the Muslims in the DRC are explained by the power conflict between "the ruling conservative class, made up mostly of old people, and the class of young people, who represent the force of change and reflect the aspirations of a very large majority."

Islam and Politics

This debate over the right terminology designating Islamic groups is due to the variety of Islamic movements. Each one creates its own doctrine, its own

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specific religious, social, and political ideas within a given historical and national context. Each believes they have found the right way to God and criticizes the others for the errors in their analyses. Faced with this multitude of directions, researchers and their classifications attempt to establish a conceptual basis which would allow them to situate Islamic actors in relation to each other. However, irrespective of the imperfections of any of their categorizations, they are confronted with various pitfalls in which they could easily lose themselves.

In what way is contemporary "Islamism" new? This is a question raised by Ousmane Kane, who shows the errors that can be committed by researchers who are too attached to the concepts they devise. In his article, the author shows the similarities between the political Islamic movements of previous centuries (from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century), taking the example of West Africa, and the militant Islamic movements of today. Thus, he establishes that limiting the term "Islamism" to the current context does not allow us to gain a historical perspective of the more or less radical groups of today, who see Islam as a political and social program. The jihadis of the previous centuries fought against social injustice and Western domination, and wanted to create a society based on the laws and values of Islam. The current so-called Islamist movements, which are very different in character and the strategies they employ, have exactly the same objectives. While they take their inspiration from twentieth-century ideologies (socialism, constitutionalism, third worldism), they are also part of a long historical process, being inspired by their elders who have led similar battles in previous centuries.

Ousmane Kane also shows that the Salafist/Sufi opposition makes no sense today, any more than it did in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, since many Muslim brotherhoods have always held reformist views and some have even fought against the dominant political regimes. Finally—and in agreement with the point of view argued in all the articles of this issue—past or present political Islamic movements should always be placed in their proper context since their radicalization depends on their relationship with the established political order. Thus, if we leave aside the alarming way in which Islam and its political actors are portrayed by the Western media, not all so-called "Islamist" groups are essentially violent, but rather are pragmatic and adapt to the sociopolitical environment.

Following the same line of thought, Mame-Penda Ba explains that within the current Senegalese Islamic landscape, which is largely dominated by Sufi brotherhoods, Islamic reformism wants to establish a true Islamic society. However, behind the unifying concept of "fundamentalism" (the return to the founding texts of Islam), the Sunni movement (not to be confused with the vast majority of Senegalese Muslims being Sunni as opposed to Shi'ite), otherwise known as Ahl al-Sunna,[5] is characterized by a mosaic of small groups expounding various and even opposed doctrines. Therefore, the problem of classification arises. The

5. As we have already seen, we find the same name in Burkina Faso and Benin.

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author shows the dangers of creating a pseudo-class ("Islamism") that is supposed to explain the variety within this phenomenon, of "conceptual stretching," or of an overly broad classification that includes very different groups under the same name. She warns researchers against a desire to establish universal concepts, reminding them of the need to contextualize each of them by taking into account the social, political, and economic transformations in each country.

In Senegal, while no group calls itself Islamist, the Ahl al-Sunna category is rich and diverse. All those who recognize themselves in this terminology share a doctrinal fundamentalism, an imagined Islam (including the idea that the modern period is decadent, non-Islamic), and a political utopia based on the concept of a universal and total Islam (it must encompass all the aspects of the believers' lives and society). They all share a way of dressing (veil for women, beard and short trousers for men, and so forth) and a way of behaving (a ban on shaking hands with the opposite sex, praying with crossed arms, and so forth). They do not belong to any brotherhood and employ an anti-Western, anti-Sufi, and antisecular discourse. Nevertheless, these actors differ in terms of their means of action, their objectives, and their rhetoric. Some want to take power in order to change society and act accordingly (political parties and so on); others defy power, which they see as ungodly, and hope to see the advent, one day, of a truly Islamized society; still others tolerate the established regimes and devote themselves to the *dawah* (preaching) in order to Islamize society. Thus, Mame-Penda Ba suggests three groups which could represent the Ahl al-Sunna movement in Senegal:

– The modernizing reformers have been fighting since the colonial period against maraboutism, the ignorance of the masses, destitution, "the exploitation of man by man." They defend the teaching of Arabic. After independence (1960), the group split in two: those who tolerated secular state politics and focused on the moral, educational, and cultural sphere, and the more radical ones who wanted to be independent from power, questioning the social order.

– The pietist and conservative Salafists declare themselves to be apolitical. They do not want to take power but engage in *dawah*, the moralization of customs, social aid, proselytism, and education. Their goal is to correct the beliefs and practices of their coreligionists. Theirs is a rigid, strict concept of Islam and they believe in a literalist reading of the sacred texts.

– The political fundamentalists or the Islamists advocate reform that is not only moral but also political, and their objective is a takeover based on the Koran and the *sunna*. Besides their doctrinal fundamentalism and their desire to build an Islamic society, they distinguish themselves by a real desire to adopt power (unlike other Islamic actors, such as Sufi guides, who engage in politics in order to dominate the debate, but not out of a desire to lead).

While, as this article shows, political Islamic actors in Senegal adopt various strategies and different types of action and rhetoric, this "Islamist" pluralism can equally be seen in Morocco. By taking the example of the Moroccan Justice and Development Party (PJD), Haoues Seniguer explains the difficulties

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encountered when naming the groups that employ the language of political Islam. Citing Olivier Roy (1995), he reminds us that the emergence of Islamic radicalism in the 1980s led, in France in particular, to the construction of the subject of "Islamism." This term designates those movements which explicitly consider Islam as a political ideology. However, this designation is unable to disentangle the diversity of the many trends within this whole, or their evolution and mutation on the social and political scene. The categories of "Islamic totalitarianism" or "radical Islam" offer a frozen representation of these socioreligious phenomena, essentializing them while failing to take into account the complexity of the individual and collective trajectories of the actors within them. As Haoues Seniguer notes, there are various Islamisms and Islamists, who are part of the general movement of history and the upheaval which their societies undergo. Once again, contextualizing the concepts we use is of the essence. In order to give substance to his observations, the author retraces the itinerary of the Moroccan PJD, showing how the passage to politics and the exercise of public mandates led to a secularization of the ideology of this religious party, which was forced to critically examine itself and the actions of its leaders, who were once confined to violence and clandestine living. The birth of *La Jeunesse islamique* (Islamic Youth), a politicized association founded in 1969, caused a rupture in the Moroccan approach to Islam. It directed its actions against the central, albeit Islamic, government, denying its right to speak in the name of Islam. Established in towns and cities, this association sought to re-Islamize society and create what it held to be a truly Islamic state. After it was accused of the murder of a left-wing trade unionist, it was disavowed by the regime and several of its activists were jailed. In the face of repression, some of its leaders founded Jamaat al-Islamiyya, from which the PJD stemmed in 1998. In order to obtain a new respectability and legality, the party left behind its putschist origins and recognized democracy. It presented itself as a classic party whose references were primarily political, while religion became an added bonus, a guarantee of its leaders' morals and ethics. It no longer demanded the creation of an Islamic state and recognized the status of the king as commander of the faithful. Thus, as stressed by Ferjani (cited by Haoues Seniguer), the degree of reformism pertaining to one movement depends on the interaction between social and political forces within which it evolves. In the case of the PJD, its leaders strove to improve its negative image and to make it respectable and normal. Their legitimization strategy is based on the idea that one has to first re-Islamize the Moroccan society (from the bottom up) and the latter would, in turn, demand religiously stricter laws from the public authorities. Their radical discourse became merely a moralizing one centered on the demand that the laws of the country conform to the Islamic values. These tactics produced results, with the PJD winning the last legislative elections (2011) and obtaining many seats in the Moroccan parliament.

The passage from radicalism to a legitimist position is also analyzed by Zekeria Ould Ahmed Salem, who shows the extent to which, in Mauritania, the

radicalism of Muslim activists is conditioned by their—sometimes conflictual, sometimes peaceful—relationship with those in power.

The presence of the AQMI movement in Mauritania could deceive a less attentive observer initially unaware of the complexity of the political Islamic actors in that country. In effect, in parallel with the "reradicalization" of some, the vast majority of the Islamist movement has evolved toward a political pragmatism which has helped it regain recognition.

At the beginning, the Islamist movement was very discreet in the country, being made up of important business people close to the authorities, members of Tabligh, the Muslim Brotherhood, and even antiestablishment brotherhoods. They were not allowed to create any parties. Thus, these activists devoted themselves to preaching and fighting against "cultural alienation" by promoting Arabization. Zekeria Ould Ahmed Salem shows how the state's attitude toward them was decisive in their trajectory of radicalization and then moderation. In 1999, in order to please the United States, the Mauritanian authorities decided to support Israel, which caused an uproar among the mainly pro-Palestinian population. In 2003, the government suddenly banned NGOs, university institutes, Islamic clubs, and associations, thus showing its commitment to the international fight against terrorism. On June 8, 2003, a foiled but bloody military putsch was imputed to the Islamists, without a formal connection ever being established. There followed many arrests and the exile of certain Muslim activists. A year later, a new coup attempt was again attributed to them.

On August 3, 2005, the regime was finally toppled by the army, and the new government granted amnesty to the Islamists. The National Reform and Development Party (RNDD), an Islamist party better known as the Tawassoul ("encounter, connection"), was recognized, winning local elections in many towns and villages and thus taking root in the country. Faced with this new recognition, the Tawassoul leaders declared their adherence to representative democracy, which was the only way, according to them, to take over responsibilities. Not unlike the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamist party advocated reconciliation with the authorities, even integration into the system, a "progressive" and "process-driven" approach in its strategy to win power. From this point on, they would refute the "all-or-nothing" attitude of certain groups and fight against all forms of radicalization which could drive them back underground.

Beginning in 2007, the increasing number of terrorist acts and tourists killed in Mauritania turned "moderate Salafists" into mediators with the young jihadists who had been arrested. The latter were, in most cases, young Mauritanians excluded from society and unemployed. They lived in a difficult situation and/or were involved in crime, and they found recognition in the jihadi camps of (most often) Algeria, where they became members of AQMI. Their crimes reflected their anger against social injustice, the rigidity of the educational system, with these youths seeking to justify their own violence by pointing at the violence employed by the authorities, who had indeed gained power through the use of weapons. Thus, their actions were directly linked to the national political

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context. The Tawassoul leaders distanced themselves from them and suggested that they debate the Koran as a way to confront their different conceptions of Islam. For the "moderate Salafists," who were much better educated than the jihadists, the goal was to persuade them that theirs was the wrong interpretation of the sacred texts and to allow them to return to moderation. However, in March 2010, even though they had initially gone along with this plan, the authorities refused to show any clemency toward these young people, of whom many had "repented." They were given heavy sentences, which harmed the work done by the Tawassoul, and the relationship of the latter with the state became strained. Overall, though, the Mauritanian population seems to think that the jihadists are in a minority within the political Islamic movement in this country, while the Tawassoul leaders are gaining some sympathy as "centrist reformers."

The picture of the relationship between Islam and politics would not be complete if we did not also show how politics can use Islam. This is what Doris Ehazouambela undertakes to show in the case of Gabon, describing how President Omar Bongo's conversion to Islam enabled his country to join the main Islamic organizations (OPEP, OCI, and so on) in order to gain access to the resources of the Arab world. While the Gabonese president struggled to finish his development projects (such as the trans-Gabonese railway), his joining Islam and pilgrimage to Mecca opened doors to all the prominent Muslim state leaders. He was suddenly making profitable deals with the king of Morocco, Gaddafi, the oil kingdoms of the Gulf, and initiating large projects across Gabon. This study's primary interest, however, is the way in which Omar Bongo sought to disseminate Islam in his country, set a Muslim affairs policy that was useful in controlling immigration, and proclaimed himself the general caliph of all Gabonese Muslims, thus becoming both a "national pope" and leader of the faithful. The Gabonese, who are mostly inclined toward a "reformist" conception of Islam acquired in the Arab countries where they did their studies, had to accept their president's caliphate and submit to it just like all immigrant and native Muslims in that country. By acting in this way, Omar Bongo reinforced his grip on the state, combining symbolic power with executive power. Since his death, his son, also a convert, has followed in his father's footsteps.

As we have seen, Islamic actors hardly resemble each other; they change constantly, and are very much a part of their society's environment. Whether in the previous centuries or in our day, they are, to be sure, influenced by ideologies, but they are first and foremost pragmatic. Their reasoning is realistic and adapted to the political context in which they evolve according to their strategies on development, local recognition, leadership competition, and recruitment of new followers. This is one of the keys to understanding this abundance of trends found in all of the articles brought together here. Obviously, while Islam (and religion in general) is undergoing a globalized evolution and

a desire, everywhere in the world, for social moralization and "reenchantment," each specific Islamic group is different from the others and transcends conceptual boundaries since it exists in a relationship with the "world," with other religious movements around it, and with opposing political and social forces, and has to exist and stand out under this set of circumstances. All religious, social, and political tactics can, in this case, be of use.

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