
After World War II administrative reports in the Air region of the Niger colony (today’s Niger Republic) mention a ‘new’ brotherhood, Khalwatiyya, which competes successfully with the long-established Qadiriyya. The khalwati shaykh Malam Mūsā Abatūl maintains that his way has been introduced in Air by a 16th-century scholar and ‘saint’, Si Mahmūd al-Baghdādī, and transmitted up to him through a regular silsila. Khalwatiyya, rather than Qadiriyya (and even more than Sanūsiyya), could well be considered as the ‘national’ tariqa of Air. It is in fact far more likely that it was introduced or, at least, reactivated by Malam Mūsā, in order to strengthen the influence of the southern, sedentary ineslemen (members of the religious fractions) as against the northern warlike fractions, especially the Kunta. This is evidenced by the stress put upon gardening, modern European-style education and general policy of co-operation with the French, after the failure of Kaocen’s (Kaocen) uprising of 1916-17. The rise of the Khalwatiyya would thus result more from a manipulation than from a restauration.

A. Mary — Vision and Possession: An Alternative in Gabonese Religious and Curative Societies.

Vision, as an initiatory experience calling for the absorption of a hallucinogenic drug (eboga), has been retained by the Fang bwiti cult as a privileged medium of surrealist communication. It displays a number of traits differentiating it from possession as practised in other Gabonese therapeutic cults. The relations of complementarity or exclusion between vision and possession in the religious and curative field demarcate the male-dominated bwiti societies from the women-controlled ombwiri communities. The combinatory laws pertaining to these two kinds of initiatory experience govern the logic of ceremonial activities, the conception of worship, the calling up of spirits or genii through trance-inducing dances or mask parades. Since independence, there has been a weakening of the significant oppositions between vision and possession, together with a shifting of functions. The stressing of the divinatory use of vision, issuing from the constraints of a neo-colonial situation, the fight to dominate the ritual scene bear witness to a new distribution of power in favour of women, with political and social meaning as yet ambiguous.


Le passage, au xixe siècle, de la traite négrière au « commerce légitime » (palmiste et huile de palme) a provoqué une révolution socio-économique dont les effets n’ont
J. Schmitz — The Marabouts Viewed by a Political Scientist.

In his book *Le marabout et le Prince (Islam et pouvoir au Sénégal)*, the political scientist C. Coulon tried to point out that the same study can focus on and analyse the Mouride brotherhood, Al Hajj Umar's *jihad*, or the foundation of Médina Gonasse; he also brought new data about little-known maraboutic movements.

Re-examining some of the case studies in Coulon’s book, we intend to show that limiting oneself to analysing the marabouts’ politics in terms of resistance to colonisation, or as an Islamic culture expressing popular aspirations, cannot suffice. What is needed is to emphasize the relative autonomy of what should be considered a clerical class, which appeared well before the colonial period. This class is structured by propaedeutic-pedagogical relations which take shape with the acquisition of Koranic knowledge, and are reproduced by marriage exchange within the clerical hierarchy.