Chapter 6

Islam on both Sides: Religion and Locality in Western Burkina Faso

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Introduction

Although the history of Islam in West Africa has been studied by historians for a long time, anthropologists have tended to focus on the non-Islamic, 'traditional' elements of West African cultures (Launay 2006; Şaul 2006). A closer look at these cultures, however, reveals that Islamic elements seem to have been incorporated ever since Islam made its first inroads into the West African Sahel and Savannah zones more than thousand years ago. Instead of maintaining a dichotomy between Islam and non-Islam, Mahir Şaul (2006: 8) suggests regarding Islam as a "major ingredient of West Africa's historical heritage" that has created a shared 'canvas of meanings' through exchanges between West Africa, the Mediterranean, Europe, and the Middle East. Islam has had a profound influence on West African cultures, even where conversion did not take place.

Before the 19th century, Muslims rarely were politically dominant. A political division of labor between rulers and warriors, shrine priests, and Muslim advisors and mediators was a common feature throughout West Africa. Through their command of literacy, Muslims acted as secretaries, diplomats, and counselors at the courts of rulers. Conversion to Islam was not a one-way street; depending on the historical and local circumstances Muslim groups became non-Muslims and then Muslims again over the centuries, with some Islamic elements retained in local religious practice. Populations who never adopted Islam as a whole incorporated Islamic elements into local religion (Şaul 1997). On the other side, Muslims in some regions practiced masking traditions on the occasion of Islamic holidays. "People keep debating the Islamic or non-Islamic origin of certain practices, in which their own collective identities now hang. From a historical perspective, both sides of the divide are saturated with Islamic elements" (Şaul 2006: 23).

This paper is about two cases of 'Islam on both sides' in present-day Burkina Faso.[1] It compares the sacrificial site of Dafra and the Muslim village of Darsalamy, both in the vicinity of Bobo-Dioulasso. Bobo-Dioulasso is Burkina Faso's second-largest city, its population of an estimated half million is predominantly Muslim, and the *lingua franca* is Jula.[2] In terms of cultural history, Bobo-Dioulasso has much more in common with the Mande-speaking areas of the neighboring countries Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea than with the Moose (Mossi) areas which make up much of present-day Burkina Faso.

Dafra and Darsalamy are closely connected with the history of Bobo-Dioulasso and the history of Islamization of this region. At an initial glance, these two places seem to epitomize the difference between non-Islam and Islam. Dafra is seen by many Muslims as a quintessentially pagan place, but stories of the origin of Dafra told by Muslims and non-Muslims alike say that a Muslim saint discovered it. Darsalamy, on the other hand, was intentionally founded by Muslims in order to create a place where pagan practices are forbidden. The comparison of these two localities shows that they do not correspond to a clear dichotomy between Islam and 'paganism', but instead represent two points on a continuum of more or less Islam in Burkina Faso.

The Spread of Islam in Burkina Faso

In contrast with the neighboring polities of ancient Ghana, Mali and Songhai to the West, and the Sokoto caliphate to the east, the Islamization of what is today Burkina Faso began relatively late. Before the 19th century, and in some parts until well into the 20th century, many areas were predominantly inhabited by populations who were religiously non-Muslim, economically farmers and herders, and politically organized in largely autonomous units of localized kin groups, even if nominally part of overarching political hierarchies. Muslim traders probably came to the Volta region from at least the 16th century, but Muslims did not attain positions of political superiority. Although some rulers converted to Islam, and Muslims held important positions at rulers' courts (Kouanda 1989), the Moose (Mossi) polities were credited as be-

1 Fieldwork was carried out in 2006 and 2007 in the framework of the multidisciplinary research program SFB 295 'Cultural and linguistic contacts' at the University of Mainz, funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG). I thank Lamine Sanogo (CNRST) for taking me to Bobo-Dioulasso in March 2006, Lassina Sanon for introducing me to some of the old-established Muslim families, Alimatou Konaté for her cooperation and friendship, Bruno Doti Sanou (CAD) and Mahir Şaul for their comments on an earlier version, and all those who kindly agreed to be interviewed. This paper presents work in progress and may contain shortcomings yet to be corrected by further research.

2 The Jula spoken in Bobo-Dioulasso is very close to the standard Bambara/ Bamanankan of Mali.

ing 'bulwarks' against Islam until the beginning of French colonial rule (Clark 1982: 59; Levtzion 1968: 163-172). Only a small portion of what is today the northernmost part of Burkina Faso mainly inhabited by Tuareg and Fulbe populations fell under the influence of the *jihad* movements of the 19th century, and the Fulbe polity of Liptako became an emirate of the Sokoto caliphate (Kouanda 1995: 236; Pelzer et al. 2004: 265-269).The *jihad* movements also had repercussions on the upper Mouhoun where Mahmoud and Moktar Karantao tried to establish a Muslim polity around Ouahabou in the mid-19th century. In contrast with the neighboring West African regions, Sufi orders such as the Tijaniyya or the Qadiriyya were almost absent in Burkina Faso until the colonial period (Otayek 1988: 107).

Around 1960, the percentage of Muslims in what was then Upper Volta was estimated as 20-25 percent (Clark 1982: 214). During the 1980s, this figure rose to 40 percent, and currently there are around 50-60 percent Muslims[3]. Since the colonial period, Muslims founded several associations such as the *Communauté des Musulmans au Burkina Faso* (CMBF)*, Mouvement Sunnite du Burkina Faso* (MSBF), *Association Islamique de la Tijaniyya de Burkina Faso* (AITBF), *Association des Elèves et Etudiants Musulmans du Burkina Faso* (AEEMBF), *Centre d'Études, de Recherches et de Formation Islamiques* (CERFI). Most of these associations have recently been united under the umbrella of the *Fédération des Associations Islamiques du Burkina* (FIAB) which was created in 2005.[4] Rivalries exist both between these associations and among members of one and the same association (Kouanda 1998).

Burkina Faso is a laic state. "There is no official state religion, and the Government neither subsidizes nor favors any particular religion. The practice of a particular faith is not known to confer any advantage or disadvantage in the political arena, the civil service, the military, or the private sector" (International Religious Freedom Report 2005 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US Department of State).[5] Both Muslim and Christian feasts such as Eid al-Adha or Easter Monday are national holidays. Although individual politicians may support or sympathize with specific religious institutions or associations, or the other way around, the state by and large does not interfere in religious affairs. To date, religion has rarely been a cause of conflicts. When conflicts occur, it is within religious communities, such as for instances the clashes between Wahhabites and other Muslims in the 1970s,

3 https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/uv.html (last download August 8, 2007).

4 http://www.hebdo.bf/actualite2/hebdo349-350/societe_federation349.htm (last download June 4, 2007).

5 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2005/51451.htm (last download August 8, 2007).

rather than between Christians and Muslims (cf. Fourchard 2002: 243). The cohabitation between Muslims, Christians, and adherents of local religions has been mostly peaceful, partly because many families in Burkina Faso are multi-religious. Conversions occur rather pragmatically, and individuals can convert more than once from one religion to the other (Langewiesche 2003, 2005).[6]

Scholars, Traders, and Warriors

As in other West African regions, the spread of Islam in the Volta area was a concomitant of long-distance trade. Mande-speaking Muslim traders and craftsmen who came to be known as Jula[7] slowly made their way from further west. Some of these Muslims settled down in agrarian, segmentary communities and adopted local religions over the course of several generations (Levtzion 1968: 143; Wilks 2000: 101). Others settled in separate villages or town wards where they built mosques and founded Qur'anic schools for their own and other people's children.

Since Muslims in the Volta region lived in *dar al-harb* (land of the unbelievers), they needed legitimization for trading with unbelievers—an activity viewed with disdain by some North African Muslim jurists (Wilks 2000: 95). This legitimization was provided by Al-Hajj Salim Suwari, a 15th or 16th century scholar from the Sahelian town of Ja (Dia) who established "a pedagogical tradition that survives to this day despite the pressures of modernism" (Wilks 2000: 97; see also Wilks 1968: 177-180; Wilks 1989: 98-100). According to Suwari's teachings, the Jula developed a 'praxis of coexistence' (Wilks 2000: 98) with unbelievers which was rooted in the conviction that conversion to Islam could not be enforced, and that submission to non-Muslim rulers was acceptable as long as Muslims could keep their faith.

The Jula, notably those groups carrying the patronymic Saganogo,[8] were instrumental in the spread of Islam in the area between the Middle Niger and

6 For Islam in Burkina Faso since the colonial period, see also Cissé (1998); Deniel (1970); Koné-Dao (2005); Otayek (1988, 1993); Skinner (1966); Traoré (2005).

7 Alternatively Dyula, Dioula, Juula.

8 Other pronunciations and spellings: Sanogo, Saghanogho, Saghanughu. For the history of this patronymic, see Rey (1998). In conversations and in the literature, patronymic groups are frequently represented as one family or kin group, but individuals and groups adopted Jula patronymics at different times and for a variety of reasons which were not always connected with conversion to Islam, e.g. to facilitate marriage and war alliances; to show allegiance to a local ruler; to adopt one's master's name when being a slave; to become traders and thus Muslims; as a 'nom de guerre'; under colonial pressure; or simply as a nickname after having traveled to the Mande-speaking regions.

the forests of the Guinea Coast (Wilks 2000: 101).[9] The history of Islam in Bobo-Dioulasso is closely related with the history of Kong (Kpɔn), a major center for trade and Islamic learning in present-day Côte d'Ivoire, c. 250 km south of Bobo-Dioulasso. Those Saganogo who eventually settled in Bobo-Dioulasso were descendants of Muhammad al-Mustafa Saganogo, an important scholar who had twelve sons. Two of them, Ibrahim and Seydou, moved to Bobo-Dioulasso in 1177/1764 (alternatively 1168/1754 or 1188/1774[10]) at the request of warriors carrying the patronymic Watara[11] who needed the social and spiritual services of the Saganogo scholars. These consisted not only in providing religious advice, but in settling conflicts and mediating between different interest groups. Until today, the Saganogo act as 'maîtres de pardon' for the Watara (Quimby 1972: 53).

Bobo-Dioulasso, or Sya in pre-colonial times, was a trading center along the axis that linked Djenné in present-day Mali to Beghu in present-day Ghana, with connections to other trading centers such as Bondoukou, Bouna, Kong, and Salaga, in present-day Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana (Fourchard 2002: 31). The town of Sya emerged from several settlements of Bobo-speaking groups along the banks of the streams We (Houet) and Sanyon. Sya's inhabitants are the result of the merging of different groups, among them those known as Bobo-Jula or Zara.[12]

The Muslim scholars Seydou and Ibrahim Saganogo accompanied a group of Watara warriors from Kong.[13] The Saganogo settled in the quarter of Farakan where they built a mosque whose first Imam was Seydou. Another mosque was built later in the quarter of Kombougou where the Watara resided. As in other West African towns, there was a division of labor between the warriors who protected the trade routes and captured people as slaves, and the Muslim specialists who provided the warriors and traders with spiritual protection (Fourchard 2002: 34-35; cf. Green 1986; Launay 1982). Until the end of the 19th century, Islam in Sya was restricted to the families of the Saganogo *karamɔgɔw* ('the people who teach', from ar. *qara'a* 'read'), other groups of foreign traders such as the Dafing, and some converts among the

9 In contrast with Muslims east of the Mouhoun (Black Volta) who became politically and culturally integrated into the existing polities such as Dagomba, Gonja, or Wala, the Jula Muslims west of the Mouhoun retained their linguistic and cultural identity (Levtzion 1968: xxv).

10 Traoré (1996: 245); Wilks (1968: 175) and field research in Bobo-Dioulasso 2006/07.

11 On the history of the Watara and the Watara 'war houses', see Şaul (1998, 2003).

12 As elsewhere in Africa, collective identities in pre-colonial times did not necessarily correspond with what came to be referred as 'ethnic' today (Lentz 1995).

13 Jula scholars stood in defined relationships with, or 'belonged' to, their respective Watara allies (Quimby 1972: 42).

Watara and local families. It was only during colonial rule that Islam became the religion of the majority of the inhabitants of Sya (Fourchard 2002: 219). In 1904 Sya was officially renamed Bobo-Dioulasso.

Alliances and Rivalry: Relationships between the Sanou, Watara and Saganogo

A tourist in Bobo-Dioulasso will inevitably visit the 'quartier touristique Kibidoué'.[14] It is one of the oldest parts of Bobo-Dioulasso and characterized by compounds built of mud connected by a multitude of small passageways. In this part of town, the visitor is led to two houses said to be the 'first houses' of the respective communities. In front of one of the first houses is a board that says 'Sya-kourou. La maison et l'autel du premier ancêtre Bobo-Madarê'. In the courtyard, there is a huge shrine in the form of an ovoid mound of earth. The other first house has a board saying: 'Konsasso. La maison du premier ancêtre Bobo du Sya'.[15] The existence of these two 'first houses' reflects the complex processes of population movements, the emergence of 'ethnic' identities, and claims to firstcomership in western Burkina Faso. 'Bobo-Madare' is an umbrella term for groups known as Bobo or Bobo-Fing in the literature.[16] Guy Le Moal (1999) thinks that the groups known as Bobo today emerged from clans of sedentary farmers with various origins. The other group called Bobo is better known as Bobo-Jula or Zara. According to Le Moal (1999: 17-18), the Zara ancestors came from the Mande-speaking areas between the end of the 16th and beginning of the 18th century and specialized in trade and warfare.[17] They were later called Bobo-Jula by the Watara of Kong. The Zara, or at least some Zara families, first allied with the Watara, but later became their rivals for trade routes and political authority.

14 Bobo Dioulasso, Plan Touristique, IGB Ouagadougou 1990.

15 In fact, every ancient quarter has its 'first house', i.e. the house of the founding family which contains important cult objects and is the venue for specific celebrations.

16 For a discussion of 'Bobo' as an ethnonym, see Le Moal (1960).

17 For a reconstruction of the history of the Zara, see Le Moal (1999: 17-25). Sanou (2005: 51) situates the immigration of the Zara between the 11th and the 16th century. Traoré (1993: 10) differentiates between 1) 'Zara de souche', the ancestors from Mande, 2) Zara who married Bobo women, and 3) Bobo who converted to Islam and thus became Zara. Zara is used as a self-reference of the groups more widely known as Bobo-Jula, but the name Zara may not be known by other inhabitants of Bobo-Dioulasso, even if born and bred there. Today, the Zara families of Bobo-Dioulasso carry the patronymic Sanou/Sanon. Relations between the Watara and the Sanou predated the arrival of Watara in Bobo-Dioulasso (Kodjo 2006; Le Moal 1999: 21, n. 58; Rey 1998: 143; Şaul 1998: 548).

A legend repeatedly cited in the literature[18] and told in Bobo-Dioulasso has it that the ancestor of the Bobo-Jula/Zara was a Muslim who settled in Bobo-Dioulasso among the local non-Muslims. When he made the pilgrimage to Mecca, he entrusted his children to his Bobo hosts. During his long absence, the children gave up Islam and practiced the religious cults of their hosts. Underneath a small shrine in the first house of the Bobo-Jula/Zara there are said to be buried a Qur'an, a staff, or a prayer mat of this ancestor.[19] The majority of the Bobo-Jula/Zara remained non-Muslims until well into the colonial period.

There was, however, one Bobo-Jula/Zara who became an important figure in the history of Islam in Bobo-Dioulasso: Sakidi Sanou. According to what seems to be a fairly standardized version of his biography,[20] he was the son of a wood carver named Kiétré Traoré. Kiétré was a pagan but became friends with a Saganogo scholar named Seydou Babema. Babema was a grandson of Seydou, one of the two Saganogo brothers who first came to Bobo-Dioulasso. Kiétré converted to Islam and took the name Mahama. When Kiétré's wife died in childbirth,[21] he gave the child to Seydou Babema who entrusted it to his wife Makossara.[22] The child, Sakidi, was raised by Seydou Babema and Makossara and later became a pupil in Seydou's Qur'anic school. When he was old enough to be inititated into the Bobo mask cult, his non-Muslim relatives claimed him back, but Seydou refused. He arranged for Sakidi to be sent to a renowned Muslim scholar in Dia, Abubakar Karabinta. Sakidi's return to Bobo-Dioulasso coincided with mounting tensions between the Watara and

18 Rey (1998: 143); Traoré (1984: 20-21); Traoré (1993: 14); Traoré (1996: 199); Wilks (1968: 193).

19 Cf. Person (1968: 145) who found similar stories: "On nous raconte souvent dans la zone préforestière comment les descendants d'un Ladyi célèbre ont transformé le Coran que leur ancêtre, acheté à la Mecque, en 'fétiche' sur lequel ils sacrifiaient très régulièrement." See also Levtzion (1968: 144). Rey (1998) sees this legend as a condensed version of what also happened in other West African regions during a time when Islam was not yet permanently rooted. According to Rey, the reversion to local religion was a result of Suwari's and other scholars' exit of Dia after Askia Muhammad came to power in Songhai. Their retreat led to a general decline of Islam in Dia and in other Muslim centers.

20 Interview with Imam Siaka Sanou and others, 28.10.2006; Interview with Imam Mohammed Kassamba-Diaby, 4.11.2006; Interview with Ali 'Mossi' Moulaye, 14.11.2006; Interview with Mohammed Sabti Saganogo; 15.11.2006; Interview with Fajabi Saganogo, 23.3.2007; see also Person (1975: 1903, n. 53); Traoré (1984: 72-75), Traoré (1993), Traoré (1996: 640).

21 According to one document in the possession of Mohammed Sabti Saganogo and written by Elhaj Muhammad Fodé Mory Saganogo aka Marhaba, Sakidi was born in 1245/1829. Traoré (1993) gives 1840 as Sakidi's year of birth, Doti-Sanou and Sanou (1994: 126) between 1820 and 1830.

22 The fact that Babema's real name was also Seydou is probably the reason why these two persons are frequently confused in stories about Sakidi.

the Zara. Sakidi wanted to construct a Friday mosque but was not given permission. It was only after he and other Muslims had helped the Zara and Watara warriors against their enemy Tieba of Sikasso that he was given a piece of land for the mosque which was built in 1292/1875[23] in what is now the quarter of Dioulassoba.[24] The relationship between Sakidi and the warlord Samori Touré is said to have spared the town from being sacked in 1897. Sakidi also tried to act as mediator between the people of Bobo-Dioulasso and the French troups in the same year, but was killed in the course of the attack on the town. He was buried in his mosque, and is today venerated as a saint.

Sakidi is an important figure for the history of Islam in Bobo-Dioulasso because he personifies the historical alliance between the Watara and Saganogo on the one hand and their Zara hosts on the other. Sakidi also stands for the transfer of religious authority from the Saganogo to the Zara. Although he never became Imam himself, the building of the Friday mosque epitomizes a shift in the pattern of religious leadership, because the Imamate eventually came into the hands of the Zara.[25] To the present day, the Imam of the mosque of Dioulassoba is considered as 'grand Imam', although other Friday mosques have been built since then.

Darsalamy: A Saintly Place

Darsalamy is a settlement 15 km south of Bobo-Dioulasso that was founded around the mid-19th century by Muslim Jula scholars from Bobo-Dioulasso.[26] One particular incident is cited as the reason for their emigration: a pupil of one Saganogo scholar was flogged by a Bobo mask and thereby lost an eye.[27] This incident epitomized the mounting tensions between the Saganogo scholars and their Watara allies and Zara hosts, who—even if nominally Muslims—would not give up certain habits and customs such as drinking sorghum

23 Interview with Mohammed Sabti Saganogo 11.11.2006; according to others either in 1880 or after the war against Tieba of Sikasso which was in 1893.

24 Dioulassoba/Sya comprises the ancient quarters or villages of Kibidoué and Tiguihɔn (Sanou 2005: 61).

25 Since there was no 'central mosque' before that built by Sakidi, it seems unlikely that the Zara were Imams before that time, as claimed by Griffeth (1971: 173).

26 Exact dates are notoriously hard to come by in African history, even where written sources exist. According to Mohammed Sabti Saganogo, who relies on documents by Al-Hajj Marhaba Saganogo, Darsalamy was founded in 1266/1849; according to Balaji Saganogo from Loto 40 years before the arrival of Samori, which would be 1857; according to Traoré (1996: 785) and to Griffeth (1971: 174) in the middle or the latter half of the 19th century respectively.

27 Traoré (1984: 79-80); Traoré (1996: 639), interview with Baflémory Saganogo, Darsalamy, 31.1.2007; interview with Balaji Usman Saganogo, Loto, 16.3.2007.

beer, masking traditions, or the dances of *kurubi* and *jɔmɛnɛ*[28]. *Kurubi* is danced by Jula girls and young women in the 14th and 27th night (*laylat al-qadr*) of Ramadan. *Jɔmɛnɛ* is danced by Bobo-Jula/Zara girls and women on the day of the Muslim New Year (Ashura, 10th day of Muharram). These dancers were practically naked in pre-colonial times, and they still appear naked to present-day Muslims who do not consider a bra as a top and a cloth and some strings of pearls tied around the waist as decent clothing.

Darsalamy is one of the few settlements in Burkina Faso that were intentionally created or renamed in order to stress Muslim identity and piety. Other examples are Ouahabou near Boromo which was conquered and renamed by the Karantao during their attempt to wage *jihad* against the local populations in the mid-19th century (Kouanda 2000), and Ramatoulaye near Ouahigouya which was founded by one important figure of the Hamalliya/Hamawiyya in the early 20th century (Dassetto/Laurent 2006). The Muslims from Bobo-Dioulasso who went to settle in Darsalamy wanted to have a saintly, or 'pure', place (*yɔrɔ sanyiani*; 'ville saine et sainte', Kouanda 2000: 259), away from non-Muslim customs. "Darsalami became a place of refuge for learned Muslims, a center where judicial appeals were argued before clerical courts, and a school center" (Griffeth 1971: 174).

Today, Darsalamy is one of the few places in Burkina Faso where there are tombs of Muslim saints. Among them are the tombs of the founders, but also tombs of ordinary persons who were not considered as someone special during their life-time. Tombs are not normally marked. Old graves may only be discovered when holes are dug for new ones by accident. In Darsalamy, a horse stepped on an old grave several years ago. The ground caved in, and people discovered that the corpse of a woman who was buried there, and whose name was not even remembered, had not decayed. As in other parts of the Muslim world, this is considered as a sign of saintliness and, since then, the grave has been surrounded by an enclosure, pilgrims come to visit, and prominent Muslims, such as the late patriarch of the Saganogo in Bobo-Dioulasso, Al-Hajj Abdulkadir Asséou (died 10.1.2007), ask that their families be buried next to it. However, there is no unanimous opinion concerning these practices. Some scholars explicitly asked that their graves not be marked to prevent the emergence of a cult.

There are several versions of the foundation of Darsalamy, but those I have heard so far agree that the founder was Bassaraba Saganogo, a grand-son of one of the two Saganogo brothers, who came to Bobo-Dioulasso from Kong. Other Muslim families such as the Barro, Coulibaly, Diané, Diarra, Fo-

28 Other spellings: Djombele, Jombele, Zɔmɛlɛ. For the *kurubi*, see Bauer (2005: 345-377); Quimby (1972: 75, 1979); Traoré (1996: 706). "Le *Jõmènè* est chez les Bobo-jula ce qu'est le *Kurubi* chez les Mandé-jula" (Traoré 1996: 703; see also Sanou 1993).

fana, Kassamba-Diaby, Sesuma, Sissé, Touré, and Traoré joined them. Since the Barro do not specialize in Islamic scholarship, the Saganogo offered them the village headmanship (*dugutigiya*).[29]

The foundation of Darsalamy must be set in the historical context of the *jihads* that marked West Africa during the 18th and 19th century. The tolerance for pagan practices and non-Muslim rulers which for centuries had characterized the Jula scholars' attitude vis-à-vis unbelievers came under strain in the second half of the 19th century. In particular the new doctrines by the West African *jihad* leader Al-Hajj Umar Tall, according to which paganism had to be fought, not tolerated, created a dilemma for the Saganogo scholars whose philosophy rejected conversion by force (Traoré 1996: 690-691, 785). In contrast with the previous 'revolutionary' *jihads* which had primarily aimed at reforming Islam within the societies of the respective *jihad* leaders, Umar Tall's was an 'imperial' *jihad* aimed at imposing Islam on the lands east of the Fulbe *Dar al-Islam*, but also included attacks on Muslim polities such as Masina (Robinson 1985: 3-4, 323).[30] Umar Tall also was a major figure of the West African Tijaniyya whereas most of the Saganogo scholars belonged to the Qadiriyya. This situation probably led to diverging opinions among the Jula Muslims in Bobo-Dioulasso about how to position themselves. In any case, even before the creation of Darsalamy, there had been differences between the descendants of Ibrahim and Seydou which led to the relocation of Seydou's descendants from Farakan to Kombougou.

During the same period, there was a mounting rivalry between the Saganogo, the Watara, and the Zara about commercial and political interests. According to Traoré (1996: 784), the Zara who started resenting the Watara dominance suspected the Saganogo of 'connivance' with the Watara. In fact, spiritual and other support was exactly what the Watara had always expected of the Saganogo. The Zara's claim for political leadership meant that the Muslims could come under non-Muslim rule. Although this had not been a problem for the Jula in previous centuries, it became unacceptable in the historial context of the *jihad* period. Eventually, the circumstances made it difficult for the Saganogo to cohabit with their non-Muslim hosts. Rather than engaging in combat against paganism, a part of the Saganogo left Bobo-

29 Interviews with Ali and Bakoba Diané (Darsalamy), Bafaga Diané (Kotédougou), Baflémory Saganogo (Darsalamy), Balaji Saganogo (Loto), and Mohammed Sabti Saganogo (Bobo-Dioulasso) in 2007.

30 Umar's most spectacular achievement was the conquest of Segu in 1861. After the conquest, he sent a message to Kong demanding its rulers to submit. A delegation from Kong went to Umar and asked him to spare the city. To the relief of the people of Kong, Umar died shortly thereafter in battle (Binger 1892: 341; Robinson 1985: 300). According to a popular account, Umar Tall stayed with Ibrahim Saganogo in Bobo-Dioulasso for some time on his way to Mecca between 1810 and 1820, but Robinson (1985: 96) considers this as a legend.

Dioulasso and founded the village of Darsalamy. The name Darsalamy, 'land of peace', is significant in itself, because, in contrast to the old-established pattern of Jula scholars following the Watara warriors to new settlements, no Watara preceded or accompanied them this time.

The episode cited as the reason for leaving Bobo-Dioulasso—the Qur'anic student who was injured by a Bobo mask, see above—was probably only the last, or the most memorable, in a serious of similar events that preceded the move-out. This episode points to two different, but related aspects concerning the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims. On the one hand, Muslim scholars felt offended by the disrespect of their non-Muslim neighbors. On the other hand, they were also afraid that their children—many of whom obviously had the habit of watching the mask dances—might become non-Muslims (as had the children of the Zara ancestor). A third reason for the relocation to Darsalamy was brought up by a present-day Saganogo scholar:[31] some of the Saganogo, especially those considered as great *marabouts*, needed a more quiet place for practicing *khalwa* (spiritual retreat), away from the crowds and noises of town life, and from their religious and social obligations to attend name-giving-ceremonies, funerals, and the like. The relocation to Darsalamy thus led to a concentration of *marabouts* in a small place.

The combined spiritual powers of these Muslim scholars are reputed to have influenced some decisive historical moments. When the inhabitants of Bobo-Dioulasso were at war with Tieba of Sikasso (in present-day Mali) at the end of the 19th century, it was with the help of the Saganogo *marabouts* that an albino or a female *jinn* was transformed into Tieba's favorite wife and managed to poison him with food. In the colonial period, when the Watara were *chefs de canton*, one Watara was refused a woman of the Saganogo in Darsalamy on the grounds that she was already married.[32] As a revenge, he managed to have forced labor imposed on the Muslim scholars and made them build a road. This was highly offensive for the scholars because in Jula society manual labor was normally done by slaves or social minors. The Saganogo scholars united their spiritual forces and made the French remove the power of the hands of the Watara and give it to the Zara of Bobo-Dioulasso. Stories like these stress the political agency of the Saganogo although they never were officially political leaders. They also illustrate once more the shifting loyalties between Watara, Zara, and Saganogo that until today have repercussions in local politics.

Khalwa is also one of the means to obtain solutions for the problems of people who consult the scholars. Until today, Darsalamy is more a village than a town, but it is a place with a veritable 'prayer economy' (Soares 2005).

31 Interview with Mohammed Sabti Saganogo, 29.8.2007.

32 This represented not only an inappropriate request but an outright affront. Traditionally the Watara gave wives to the Saganogo and never the other way around.

Until recently, the main source of revenues seems to have been spiritual services by a number of *marabouts* who were visited by people from all over the region. Darsalamy has a train station which only a few years ago was closed after the privatization of the national railway company RAN. Whenever passengers got off the train, they were immediately surrounded by local guides who offered to take them to one of the local scholars who provide spiritual services. Obviously, religious and commercial interests have merged in the creation of Darsalamy.

The emigration to Darsalamy was not an exodus. From the existing literature, one may get the impression that all the Saganogo from Bobo-Dioulasso left for Darsalamy. In fact, it was only one branch that left and was later joined by others, many of whom came directly from Kong after the (in)famous warlord Samori Touré had destroyed the town in 1897. The move-out of a part of the Saganogo does not necessarily reflect a complete breach with the Watara and the Zara. There were and are close relations and a constant stream of visits between Bobo-Dioulasso and Darsalamy, especially on the occasion of Islamic holidays. The relocation of Bassaraba and his followers instead reflected internal divisions which may have been articulated, among others, in terms of religious differences. According to one interview partner, it was primarily the Saganogo who were allied with one particular Watara family or 'house'[33] who would not agree to tolerate pagan customs any longer. Those Saganogo who stayed in Bobo-Dioulasso kept acting as advisors and mediators for the Watara. Until today, the Imam of the Watara mosque in Kombougou is a Saganogo, and the relations between the Saganogo in Darsalamy and Bobo-Dioulasso are very close.

Dafra: A Sacred Place

Visitors to Bobo-Dioulasso are told to be aware of approaching the banks of the streams Houet and Sanyon which are inhabited by sacred silurids (catfish, j. *manɔgɔ*). These catfish are considered as tutelary spirits of Bobo-Dioulasso and figure in the city's coat of arms. Should anybody intentionally or by accident kill one of the fishes, he or she will be flogged and must pay a fine to the elders of the respective quarter through which the Houet flows.[34] They will

33 The Watara are subdivided into lineages or houses such as the Janguinajon, Sissira, Numabolo, Kinibolo, and Bambajon (Quimby 1972: 15; cf. Şaul 1998: 563). According to Traoré (1996: 294), these groupings corresponded in fact with military divisions or *garnisons*, comparable to the Zara houses of Forobakonso, Sangouélélouma, and Dagasso.

34 This and the fact that there are some masks which are thought to flog innocent passers-by are one of the reasons why many inhabitants of Bobo-Dioulasso who are not Bobo or Bobo-Jula never venture into the old quarters. Only tourists do that.

make a sacrifice in order to appease the powers embodied in those fishes, and the dead fish is going to be buried like a person.[35] The source of the Houet is at Dafra, a gorge some eight km southeast of Bobo-Dioulasso. Dafra is a sacrificial site that is visited by people from all over Burkina Faso and the neighboring countries. It has the reputation of being a powerful place where wishes made and confirmed by vows will be fulfilled.[36]

A pilgrim to Dafra is led on a footpath down a slope into the gorge. At bottom level, the source of the Houet forms a kind of basin. The pilgrims, each of whom has brought a chicken, are led to a shrine, a large boulder on one side of the banks of the basin covered with feathers, blood, and millet beer. The chicken is killed and some blood and feathers sprinkled on the rock. If the pilgrims are Muslims, however, they will not go to the shrine but kill their chicken directly on the rocky ground beside the basin. Before killing the chicken, the visitors hold them for a moment and silently utter their respective wishes to them. After the chickens have been killed, they are plucked and grilled on the spot at several fireplaces. Then the visitors proceed to the edge of the basin, throw pieces of *dɛgɛ* (fermented balls of millet paste) and the intestines of the chicken into the water, and call the fishes: "Dafra na tɔ!"—"Dafra, come and take!". Dafra is the name of the *genius loci* and encompasses the place and the fishes. Soon there will be a number of fishes (some of which easily measure about one meter) who snap at the food.

Having finished feeding the fishes in the basin, the pilgrims follow a small footpath to the other side of some big rocks. There is another basin where they can feed the fishes, and those who wish may strip and take a bath (a 'guard' will be posted on the footpath above in order to prevent other people from coming around the bend that hides those who bathe from view). The water of Dafra is considered to be purifying and healing in a spiritual sense and can be taken home in plastic bottles.

When all of this is done, the pilgrims either eat the chicken directly, sharing out pieces to other visitors who came after them, or take them home. On Fridays, when most pilgrims arrive, the scene resembles a kind of picnic site with groups or families gathered around a meal, were it not for the cadavers of a dozen or more goats and rams cut into large pieces, lying on their skins on the ground next to the basin. The goats and rams are offerings of thanks

35 Normally the fish will be buried on the spot where it is found. The quarters or former villages which share the ritual responsibility for the Houet and the fishes are Bindougousso, Dioulassoba, Kuinima, and Tounouma. In 2007, more than 60 fishes died of poisoning after an industrial accident on the level of Kuinima. They were buried next to a shrine along the Houet (interviews with the village heads of Bindougousso, Dioulassoba, Kuinima, and Tounouma in August 2007).

36 One football team in Bobo-Dioulasso is named 'Les Silures' after the sacred fish. Before home matches, its members collectively visit Dafra and make offerings (Royer 2002: 475).

made to Dafra according to a vow made once the respective wish has been fulfilled. The entire ground is covered with feathers, and skins that were left behind hang in the branches of two or three trees on the side.

There is no way of establishing how long Dafra has been a sacrificial site or *lieu de pèlerinage* (Sanou 1996: 128)[37] for the local populations. Dafra has probably always been an important place in the spiritual landscape of those who inhabited the region, who, like other populations elsewhere, made a 'pact' with the spiritual beings of the localities where they settled.[38] Today, visitors come from all over Burkina Faso and the neighboring countries, even from as far as Europe and the US. There are Muslims, Christians, and adherents of local religions. Their social backgrounds vary widely: on several visits my interpreter Alimatou Konaté and I met people as diverse as a doctor, a sociologist, traders, farmers, students, etc. Some people clearly did not like having witnesses and refused to talk to us, but others were quite open. Most visitors said that people come to Dafra because of some personal problem such as illness, infertility, lack of money, failure in school or business, nightmares, etc. We did not ask for personal information other than that which was provided voluntarily, but obviously there were some people who had tried other means of solving a serious problem before coming to Dafra as a last resort. Otherwise it would not be conceivable, for instance, to leave a town in southern Côte d'Ivoire and undertake a journey of several days, including the crossing of the military buffer zone that has separated the North and the South since the beginning of the civil war in 2002, just to get directly to Dafra and then back again.

Dafra lies on the land of Kuinima which was a Bobo village in precolonial times and is a quarter of Bobo-Dioulasso today. According to the present-day *chef de village* de Kuinima, the inhabitants of Kuinima were firstcomers in the region and thus have a special relationship with the site of Dafra and with the silures, and likewise other ancient Bobo villages that border the rivers Houet and Sanyon.[39] Therefore members of these Bobo communities act as 'sacrifice attendants' for the visitors. Today, the pilgrimage to Dafra clearly has an economic dimension. For the people who act as sacrifice

37 Sanou (1996: 128) cites two main reasons for the Bobo for making a pilgrimage to Dafra: in order to conduct a sacrifice after having breached certain interdictions concerning Dafra or the river Houet, and in order to ask for a child in case of infertility.

38 In Timothy Insoll's book on archaeology, ritual, and religion (Insoll 2004), the description of a visit to Dafra serves as a prologue.

39 Interview with Sanou Famara, *chef de village*, and Sanou Mamadou, Kuinima, Bobo-Dioulasso, 21.3.2007; Sanou (1996: 96). This version is contested by the *chef de terre* of the Tiéfo village of Kwakwalé who claims that Dafra belongs to the land of Kwakwalé (interview with Mori Ouattara, 10.3.2008).

attendants or tourist guides, going to Dafra has become a way of making money, which in turn attracts other less desirable visitors such as thieves.

Certain interdictions have to be observed when visiting Dafra. One should not wear clothing in red; on the way to and from the site, one should not speak to other persons; one should not wear shoes when approaching the edge of the basin and the shrine; no blood should get into the water. Most people come accompanied by guides, either some of the attendants who wait for 'clients' in a compound along the dirt road leading to the site, or relatives, or friends who have been there before. On the spot, every pilgrim is instructed and accompanied by one of the attendants while making the offerings. The attendants then pluck and roast the chicken or slaughter the other animals, and receive meat, millet beer, or cash by way of payment.[40]

In former times, visits to Dafra were only permitted on Mondays and Fridays, but nowadays people come on every day of the week, many at weekends. The visits continue from early morning to early afternoon; around 4 p.m. the stream of visitors ceases and vultures start descending to pick up the left-overs. Due to the constant coming and going, we were not able to count people systematically, but just to give an impression: on February 9, 2007, a Friday, we conducted brief interviews with 78 people, some of whom arrived in small groups of three to six people (among them a group of tourists), some alone or with a guide. These 78 people were probably half of the total number of people who visited that day. Most of the visitors we spoke to came from Bobo-Dioulasso or some towns and villages in the region such as Pala, Bare, Numudara, or Banfora, but there were also people who came from Abengourou and Korhogo in Côte d'Ivoire. Other Ivorian cities mentioned on other days were Abidjan and Gagnoa. Among the visitors were Muslims, Christians, and 'animists'; the ethnic affiliations mentioned were Bobo, Bobo-Jula, Lobi, Mossi, Tiéfo, Samo, Senufo, and Turka.

When asked what they knew about Dafra, most people said that Dafra is a place where you can go with any kind of problem. People come to make offerings (*saraka*) there. They had heard about Dafra either because they were from Bobo-Dioulasso, or because some relative or friend had already been there and a wish had been fulfilled. Some said that Dafra is a pagan place (*sɔnni kɛ yɔrɔ lo*). Others, on the contrary, stressed that Dafra is not a pagan shrine (*jo yɔrɔ* or *josɔnyɔrɔ*), but a place for the worship of God (*Ala dari yɔrɔ*). In the same vein, some said that Dafra is not a god, but a gift of God, and that their ancestors already had the habit of going there. These answers

40 It is forbidden to charge fees for these activities, but some of the attendants do so. Apart from theft, there have also been cases of attacks on tourists (John Messer: Travel: holiday disasters, The Independent, London, May 23, 1999, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4158/is_19990523/ai_n14237317, download 1.6.2007).

mirror the differences between Muslims and Christians who tended to declare Dafra as a part of local 'tradition' or something that did not have anything to do with religion at all, and those who were either 'non-practicing' Muslims and Christians, or outright proud to be 'animists' or 'fetishists' in popular Burkinabè French parlance.

Whatever the case, the 'discovery' of Dafra is attributed to a Muslim saint (*wali*) or scholar (*karamɔgɔ*). This Muslim is credited to be the ancestor of the Kassamba-Diaby, one of the Muslim families in Bobo-Dioulasso. According to a legend that is not only told by the Kassamba-Diaby but also by non-Muslims,[41] their ancestor came to the area on his way from Samatiguila in present-day Côte d'Ivoire. According to different versions, the Kassamba-Diaby ancestor either found the source by praying and then looking around, or by following an animal, or he prayed for water and lightening struck the earth, opening up the source.[42] Therefore, to the present day, the Kassamba-Diaby have a special relation to the site, although they are not its 'owners'.

The Kassamba-Diaby are a group of Mande origin who came to the region of Bobo-Dioulasso in the 18th century.[43] They became assimilated to the Bobo-Jula by intermarriage and by adopting their hosts' language. In the late 19th century, however, there were misgivings between the Kassamba-Diaby and the Bobo-Jula because the latter did not give up their pagan practices. Therefore, a part of the Kassamba-Diaby followed the branch of the Saganogo family who left for Darsalamy (Traoré 1996: 798). However, close relationships have existed between the Kassamba-Diaby and the Bobo-Jula up to the present day, and they still act as *maîtres de pardon* for each other.[44]

Concerning Dafra, there is no unanimous opinion among family members. Some have never gone and would never go to Dafra; others accompany visitors quite regularly and make offerings. The present-day Imam Muhammad Kassamba-Diaby stopped visiting Dafra many years ago. Nevertheless, he talks openly about it. He explained, for instance, that if a person has to make an offering of thanks but cannot do so because he or she is abroad, it is possi-

41 Interviews and conversations with Bobo elders, sacrifice attendants, and visitors at Dafra on several visits in February 2007; Interview with Sanou Famara, *chef de village* de Kuinima, Bobo-Dioulasso, and Sanou Mamadou, 21.3.2007.

42 Traoré (1996: 332); Interview with Imam Muhammad Kassamba-Diaby, 4.11.2006; Interview with Souleymane 'Doudou', 3.3.2007. A similar story is told about the springs at Sindou (interview with Bafaga Diané, Kotédougou, 17.2.2007).

43 According to Traoré (1984: 22, see also Roth 1996: 45-46), they arrived before the Saganogo, but the current Kassamba-Diaby Imam says the Saganogo and other Muslims were already there when their ancestor arrived.

44 According to the historian Bruno Sanou (personal communication, 22.8.2007), discussions about the origin of Dafra only emerged during the past 30 years in the context of political disputes about historical origins of collective identities in Bobo-Dioulasso.

ble to send money to a member of the Kassamba-Diaby family and they will take care of it. He also said that not all wishes will be fulfilled. This does not mean, however, that God has not heard the wish. Instead it means that God knows about the counter-productive consequences a wish may have for a person. For example, a person makes a wish to be promoted at work; but if he or she will be promoted at the expense of a colleague, this colleague will be angry and try to do harm to the person. Other Muslims in Bobo-Dioulasso, such as, for instance, Gaoussou Sanou, a son of the late Imam Salia Sanou, would ridicule people who go to Dafra on the grounds that everything is made by God anyway: there is no use of killing chicken and feeding them to fishes if you can speak to God directly through prayer.

The sacrificial practices at Dafra appear archaic but, although blood sacrifices are made at various shrines throughout the region, the killing of chickens in Dafra appears to be a recent introduction. Formerly the non-Muslims only made their vows and then washed with Dafra water, and the Muslims prayed two *rakat* at the site.[45] Twenty five years ago Mahir Şaul was told by Bobo informants that a blood sacrifice in Dafra was an abomination. The proper sacrifice was fried cakes or balls made of millet (*ŋɔmi, dɛgɛ*).

> The associations here are double and both interesting. First the centrality of millet, which is a kind of sacred crop among the Bobo and other savanna people (the pagan element if you wish). Second, it is vegetable food, which enters into the notion of *salaka*/*saraka* [from ar. *sadaka*]. Whenever village people say *salaka* they mean a non-blood offering.[46] It is an interesting case of continuity/reinterpretation. It goes with the prohibition of red, which is the color of very bloody shrines such as Komo/Kono[47] (Mahir Şaul, e-mail, 10.6.2007).

Obviously, not all Bobo people shared the notion that non-blood offerings are the only acceptable way to communicate with Dafra, but it is impossible to find out when, why, and by whom blood sacrifices were introduced in Dafra. However, it is conceivable that the ritual practices at Dafra changed several times ever since it first served as a sacrificial site. Since Dafra does not 'belong' to any one group, the Kassamba-Diaby Muslims could not prohibit blood sacrifices or the consumption of sorghum beer right next to the water. Likewise, it is difficult to set up rules or sanctions against those who violate the interdictions, because nobody can effectively control the site. The village heads who are responsible for sacrificial matters along the Houet say that Da-

45 Interview with Sanou Famara, *chef de village* de Kuinima, Bobo-Dioulasso, and Sanou Mamadou, 21.3.2007; interview with Fousséni Kassamba-Diaby, 1.9.2007.

46 Cf. Le Moal (1999: 80).

47 'Power associations' or 'initiation societies', sometimes transformed into witch-hunting cults in the Mande-speaking areas of West Africa.

fra will punish wrongdoers in its own time, which means that the person will drown, be killed by a wild animal (i.e. a bush spirit), or otherwise. It is probably the fear of this kind of punishment that keeps most visitors from breaking the rules of conduct at Dafra.

Even in the context of western Burkina Faso where earth shrines, ancestor shrines, and individual shrines are important for personal and collective well-being (regardless of the attachment to the universal religions), Dafra is an exceptional place. It does not 'belong' to any specific group or individual, although the Kassamba-Diaby and some Bobo and Tiéfo communities claim a special relation with it. Although frequently described as a pagan or 'traditional' place, Muslims do go there (according to some, even Wahhabites). Some Muslims who go there maintain a difference to the non-Muslims by not killing chickens at the shrine, and by not offering or drinking sorghum beer. Muslims who consider themselves as more orthodox and who would never go to Dafra argue that sacrificing chickens is a pagan practice and that if a Muslim does so, he is in fact a pagan.

As the example of the Kassamba-Diaby Imam has shown, an individual may find himself on both sides of this divide, and deal with the dilemma pragmatically by not going to Dafra himself, but not preventing other family members from going there. It is possible that other Muslim groups and families in Bobo-Dioulasso secretly doubt the orthodoxy of the Kassamba-Diaby Imam, but they do not do so openly. When the Kassamba-Diaby held a *tafsir* on 5 November 2006, during Ramadan, they routinely invited the 'grand Imam' and other Imams and Muslim notables. Whatever their personal views, the grand Imam and other Imams honored the *tafsir* with their presence, just as they would invite the Kassamba-Diaby in turn.

Conclusion

Darsalamy and Dafra are important localities in the spiritual landscape around Bobo-Dioulasso. Interestingly, places like these are terminologically differentiated both in French and in Jula. Whereas a Muslim place such as Darsalamy is called 'saintly' ('lieu saint' or 'lieu de prière'; *yɔrɔ sanyiani, Ala dari yɔrɔ*), places like Dafra are called 'sacred' ('lieu sacré': *joyɔrɔ* place of shrine, or *josɔnyɔrɔ* place of offering at a shrine).

The two places have some common features. Both are important places in present-day accounts of the history of Bobo-Dioulasso. For both places, Islam is a point of reference, though in different ways. Both are known beyond the region and are visited by people who look for help and spiritual support. In both places, the religious practice has a commercial dimension.

There are also some obvious differences between the two places. The creation of Darsalamy seems to have been modeled on the *hijra*.[48] The village was founded by Muslims for Muslims who wanted to set themselves apart from non-Muslim or only nominally Muslim people and practices such as masks, dances, shrines, and the consumption of alcohol. Dafra, on the other hand, is an inclusive place that does not 'belong' to any specific individual or group and is visited by all kinds of people, regardless of their professed faith.

Islam serves an important element in discourses about the constitution of collective identities. As elsewhere in West Africa, the reference to Muslim ancestors is thought to convey a somewhat superior status on a population. Historically, there were shifts between more and less Islam in the sub-region. This is mirrored in the present-day relations—and conflicts—between different groups of inhabitants of Bobo-Dioulasso. The Kassamba-Diaby—whose ancestor, a Muslim saint, is said to have 'discovered' Dafra—are labeled as 'guests' (i.e. socially juniors) of the Bobo-Jula/Zara in Bobo-Dioulasso who consider themselves as founders of Bobo-Dioulasso (a claim which is contested by the Bobo). The Zara themselves refer to a Muslim ancestor.

Today, both Islam and the sacred fish figure in the city's coat of arms: it shows four silurids forming a stylized S, the upper end surrounding a baobab, the lower end surrounding the old mosque. Thus, the coat of arms symbolizes the different religious traditions, and the co-existence of Muslims and non-Muslims in Bobo-Dioulasso.

The examples of Dafra and Darsalamy shows that there is no neat distinction between Islam and non-Islam in this part of West Africa. Although Dafra is clearly not an 'Islamic saintly place', Muslims do visit there and make offerings, and the story of its 'discovery' by a Muslim is acknowledged by Muslims and non-Muslims alike. On the other hand, even the *marabouts* of Darsalamy were not able to eradicate the custom of *kurubi* (dance by girls and young women during the 14th and 27th night of Ramadan)[49]. In fact, *kurubi* presently seems to be more important in Darsalamy than in Bobo-Dioulasso.

It would be too easy to dismiss the attitude of Muslims who go to Dafra as 'not really Islam' or to discredit them as pagans—as many people in Bobo-Dioulasso actually do. Debates about what constitutes 'true' or 'false' Islam are probably as old as the religion itself, but the contents of the actual disagreements vary according to the local and historical circumstances. It makes sense that disagreements in this case revolve around a sacrificial site, because sacrificial sites are an important feature of the spiritual topography of western Burkina Faso, much more than the tombs of Muslims saints, as discussed in

48 For a discussion of *hijra* as a form of liminal action with reference to a similar case of the spatial separation of 'true' and 'false' Muslims by the West African *jihad* leader Usman Dan Fodio in the 19th century, see Fisher (1986).

49 For modern-day debates about *kurubi*, see Quimby (1979).

other contributions to this volume. Other debated issues that seem to be typical for the region of Bobo-Dioulasso are the ongoing practices of masking traditions or the dances of *kurubi* and *jɔmɛnɛ*, all of which are condemned in the speeches of Muslim preachers but at the same time heralded as 'tradition', 'custom', and 'cultural heritage' during festivals such as the biannual *Semaine Nationale de Culture* or the *Festival de la Rue*. More generally, the coexistence of the diverging attitudes concerning religious practice itself points to the fact that there is no central religious authority on either side which could define general and binding norms. The ambiguity of certain practices—on the one hand deemed by many to be against religion and at the same time held to be important parts of cultural heritage and collective identity—appears to be a general pattern in regard to modernization and religious reform in much of the Muslim world.

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