

kristne og muslimer. De konkrete eksempler demonstrerer tydeligt, hvordan politiske, økonomiske og sociale forskelle spiller en afgørende rolle i konflikterne. Et samlet bud på, hvordan religionen kommer til at stå så central i konflikten, gives ikke. Rasmussen peger her på de religiøse leders ansvar, betydningen af de religiøse følelser, og tendenserne til at universalisere ens egen tro og skabe 'de andre' som fjendebillede. Samtidig peger hun på, at religion også kan have en positiv indflydelse i form af initiativer til at modvirke konflikternes eskalering. Desværre fremstår kapitlet uredigeret og svært at følge strukturen, bl.a. pga. den gentagende vekslen mellem eksempler fra de tre lande og inddragelsen af nyt eksempelmateriale, som fx Hizb ut-Tahrir. Det sidste kapitel, også af Lissi Rasmussen, omhandler forslag til brobygning og opstiller en række dialogmodeller. Det demonstrerer overbevisende, hvordan forskellige dialogformer virker i forskellige sammenhænge med forskellige formål.

Bogen præsenterer et meget stort og spændende empirisk materiale med mange komplekse analytiske perspektiver. Det er tale om indsigtfulde præsentationer. Komplexiteten gør det også nødvendigt at hjælpe læseren til at navigere. Her kunne en klarere præsentation af kriterier for sammenligning have hjulpet læseren til at få en endnu bedre indsigt i variationen og lighederne mellem konflikter og forsoninger i de tre lande.

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**Gina Gertrud Smith, *Medina Gounass: Challenges to Village Sufism in Senegal*. Copenhagen: Janua Religionum, vol. 4. 2008, 96 pp., 22 color plates.**

Medina Gounass is a large village or small town in a remote area of Senegal. It was established in 1936 by a Sufi shaykh of the Tijaniyya order, one of the two orders that dominate Senegal. Sufi settlements of this sort are now rare in the Arab world, but are found in more peripheral areas: Senegal, Sudan, Somalia, and Malaysia, for example. For many years Medina Gounass was very much a Tijani settlement, but since the 1970s it has become less isolated. Transport links with the rest of Senegal have improved, and outsiders (including to some extent the Senegalese state) have moved in, making it more of a town than a village. Many of the original inhabitants have left to work elsewhere – in Dakar, or even in Europe – but still return to the village, where they have often left their female relatives. At the same time, the Tijaniyya's control has been weakened, since two rival claimants for the succession to the founding shaykh's position emerged after that shaykh's death in 1980.

Gina Gertrud Smith's short book (only 96 pages, of which many are devoted to color photographs) aims on the one hand to "deepen, balance and bring the image of the community up to date" (p. 85), and on the other hand to see how Medina Gounass is coping with the various challenges it is facing. More specifically, one question is whether it has followed the pattern identified in Mali whereby a "rationalist episteme" is displacing

earlier esotericism – a pattern which might be identified with certain conceptions of modernization. Smith's conclusion is that this is not happening in Medina Gounass, and that – despite various challenges – the old ways generally survive.

Smith's book reports fieldwork performed in Medina Gounass in 2003. After a discussion of Sufism in Senegal and a historical introduction to Medina Gounass, she focuses on religious and ritual practices in the town, from standard Sufi practices such as the *hadra* to the use of charms. She also focuses on the Quran school and on the *daaka*, an unusual, large-scale annual "retreat" dating from 1942 that has evidently become something of a Senegalese institution, to judge from the reported presence there of Senegalese television on that occasion that Smith last observed it.

The sections of the book dealing with religious and ritual practices and with the Quran school are rather fuller than those dealing with the *daaka*, perhaps reflecting Smith's greater ease of access to the school and more limited access to the *daaka*, a primarily male event in a rigidly gender-separated society. Smith's gender, on the other hand, probably gave her better access to certain ritual practices than a male researcher would have enjoyed.

Smith provides a wealth of fascinating detail, which certainly satisfies her aim of deepening, balancing and updating our knowledge of the community. She also succeeds in demonstrating clearly that the old ways do, indeed, survive.

Smith's book is a revised version of an MA thesis, and in some ways shows its origins, for

example in its length, and in the ways that the descriptive outweighs the analytic. An alternative presentation might have made it clearer why the old ways do survive, quite how Medina Gounass has managed to cope with the challenges recent decades have brought, and why the process found in Mali (and elsewhere) is not found in Medina Gounass. The topic is also one that would benefit from a comparative treatment, placing Medina Gounass within a wider context, though of course such a treatment is beyond Smith's original scope. Despite these shortcomings, the book is a valuable contribution to our knowledge of an important aspect of Senegalese Sufism, which is itself an important aspect of Sufism in general, and one which sadly often receives less attention than it deserves. As a result, Smith's contribution is especially welcome. It will be of interest to all who work on Sufism or on Islam in Africa or in other parts of the Islamic periphery.

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