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Joseph Hill, *Wrapping Authority: Women Islamic Leaders in a Sufi Movement in Dakar, Senegal*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018. 320 pages. ISBN 9781487503079.

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Wrapping Authority: Women Islamic Leaders in A Sufi Movement in Dakar, Senegal is an ethnography about how Senegalese Muslim women negotiate religious leadership roles in an Islamic mystical community known as, “Taalibe Baay” (“Disciples of Father”), or “Fayda Tijāniyya” (the Flood of the Tijaniyya Order), or also the “Ñaseen” (Those of Ñas/Niasse), following the name of the Sufi movement’s founder Ibrahim Niasse (aka “Baay”)(b.1900 – d.1975). Hill’s feminocentric study of Muslim leadership in the Fayda movement is a recounting of women’s narratives depicting unique socio-religious changes introduced in majority-Muslim Senegal by Ibrāhīm Niasse’s movement; changes which were hard to predict in 1929 when Baay made the bold claim that, “he was the bringer of the long-awaited “flood” of divine knowledge – the Fayda – foretold by the Sufi Order’s founder Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijānī well over a century” (Hill 15).

As Hill rightly notes, Baay’s movement, like many of its kind, emerged out of what Victor Turner called “social drama” (195). The drama of 1929 did not just engender momentous schisms between Ibrāhīm and his Sufi brother as well as other Senegalese branches of the Tijaniyya order. Most importantly, Joseph Hill’s book shows how the subsequent birth of the Fayda movement, and its urbanization pioneered a gender-sensitive decentralization of Sufi Islamic authority in Dakar and beyond.

Wrapping Authority is structured around seven chapters in addition to a chapter-length introduction and an epilogue. The book’s introduction provides background history of Ibrāhīm Niasse’s movement, its formative days, and urbanization in Dakar, which is followed by a literature review centered on performance at the intersection of gender, cultural practice, and music. Here, Joseph Hill aptly situates his ethnographic study of Fayda women Muslim leaders in the global and global Muslim contexts while drawing on the works of Victor Turner, Leila Abu-Lughod, John Austin, Talal Asad, Judith Butler, Michel

Foucault, Amina Wadud. Among other things, the intersectional character of the review provides readers a look into the unique social change embodied in the Islamic subjectivities of the Fayda women that Hill calls "new *muqaddama*" (authorized spiritual trainers).

The introduction also outlines the book's driving concept of "wrapping." Hill presents "wrapping" as both an analytical concept and a performative feminine subjectivity, whose social meaning in the Fayda movement cannot be reduced to mere subservience as often associated with women's "veiling" in Islam. "Much of the talk about Muslim women today," Hill writes, "focuses on how women attenuate their presence through 'veiling'" (38). In *Wrapping Authority*, however, Hill sets out to "complicate 'veiling' by subsuming it under the larger field of semiotic acts of 'wrapping'" (38). While veiling denotes a potentially negative women's act of subservient submission, Hill argues that wrapping is a "productive process that represents, labels, and constructs – or, alternatively, misrepresents, mislabels, and misconstrues" to subvert religious patriarchal norms silently without provoking major controversy or repressive resistance from men.

Chapter One, "An Emerging Urban Youth Movement," expands on the urbanization of the Fayda beginning in the 1970s when a group of disciples, pioneered by women members Sayyida Diarra and Astou Diop, created the movement's first urban religious association (Wol. *daayira*) called *Nahnu Ansār Allāh* ("We Are God's Champions"). The 2004 foundation of the movement's federal *daayira* called *Ansār al-Dīn* ("Champions of the Faith") launched the full-fledged urbanization of the movement in Dakar and gave it a national weight under the eyes of the Senegalese state and non-Fayda Muslims. Most interestingly, the chapter shows how Fayda women's devotional labor (community cooking and mothering for authorities and their disciples) were pivotal in developing the movement organizationally. When the Fayda became a mass youth movement by 2000, it is interesting how women were systematically sidelined in the official leadership of the federal *daayira*.

In Dakar, pioneer Fayda women were simply relegated to the association's Women's Commission, which is usually in charge of cooking large meals to feed the attendees during large Fayda events. Yet, as Hill notes throughout the chapters, the whole point is to show how Fayda women subvert their apparently subjugated social roles and appearances (cooking, veiling, deference, etc.) to invent new forms of feminine piety enabling them to earn the top status of *muqaddama* (authorized spiritual guides/trainers) and openly lead mixed-gender communities of disciples. This chapter describes the emergence of Fayda women Islamic leaders as part of a global context of increasing female leaders in Islam, but most importantly, as the result of a rapid youth urbanization and what has been termed “a global ’resurgence of religion’” (13).

Chapter Two, “The New *Muqaddamas*,” examines the emergence and the roles of Fayda’s “new muqaddamas” who, as women Islamic leaders, followed in the footsteps of Ibrāhīma Niasse’s *muqaddama* daughter, Sayyida Maryam Niasse, who was given an *ijaza* (trainer’s certificate) by her father as early as in the 1960s. This chapter amplifies the narratives of three *muqaddamas*: Sayyida Bousso Dramé, Sayyida Seynabou Mbathie, and Sayyida Khady Fall. They all hold one or several *ijāza*s bestowed upon them by male Fayda authorities, and they all lead a *daayira* of mixed-gender membership.

The first *muqaddama* is based in Dakar’s suburbs of Yeumbeul and joined the movement in 1985 after she had left other movements/Sufi orders, namely the Muridiyya, the Sy branch of Tijaniyya, and the Dakar-based reformist movement Jamā ‘at Ibād al-Rahmān (JIAR). Bousso Dramé exemplifies Muslim wifely deference as a mark of respectability and piety. The second is a professional diviner who works two jobs and is based in middle-class Derklé neighborhood. Seynabou Mbathie leads a grassroots Sufi NGO and maintains an international travel schedule, which speaks to her profile as a rising international *muqaddama*. The third, Khady Fall, is also based in a middle-class neighborhood in Dakar, Sicap Sacré Coeur, and she joined the Fayda in 1991. She is a published University professor of German, former Minister, and is one of the rare Fayda *muqaddamas* who approve of *yëngu* (“moving oneself”) as part of her *daayira*’s chanted performances.

Chapter Three examines the book’s central concept, “wrapping” as performatively deployed in various implicit and explicit ways. Expanding on the earlier definition of the concept, this chapter examines wrapping as a multilayered performative practice whereby Fayda women’s apparent acts of subservience (serving food during Sufi events, veiling oneself, humility, and restraint) mean more than what they may seem to other onlookers (111). Using “wrapping” as a metaphor, Hill employs it to describe the subjective “ambiguity” – double meaning – of several acts among Fayda women leaders.

For the Fayda women, engagement in such acts of apparent subservience reflect their observance of Islam’s legalistic norms (*Sharia*), but the finality of such acts is to achieve what Ibrahim Niasse describes in Chapter Two as ‘Sufi spiritual manhood’, a gender-neutral station (*maqām*) of closeness to *haqīqa* (Truth) which both biological men and biological women achieve through some type of labor (103). Therefore, Fayda women understand that their acts of self-concealing and self-restrain (Wol. *kersa*), for instance, are not a finality in themselves as is often mistaken by other feminists, but rather they are means of attaining both *bātin* (inner) and *zāhir* ends.

Chapter Four, “Motherhood Metamorphosis Metaphors,” centers on how Sayyida Moussoukoro Mbaye legitimizes her female Sufi authority on local performative grounds of “motherhood”. Most remarkably, the chapter explains that when narrating her progressive ascent to Fayda leadership as *daayira* leader and *muqaddama*, Moussoukoro mythologizes her persona by narratively representing herself as someone elected by Baay and Allah (God) not just to join the Fayda movement, but also to take up the role of a spiritual mother of Baay’s children.

A mother of her own kids, the chapter explains how Mbaye became a “foster mother” of others’ children and her eventual metaphorical metamorphosis into a “spiritual mother” of Fayda disciples who study at the university of Dakar. Leader of the “Daayira des etudiants Talibés Baye Niasse” (The *Daayira* DETBN), Hill portrays Mbaye as the “mother” (Wol. *Yaay*) of “spiritual children” whose self-narration into the Fayda movement constitutes a form of “self-wrapping” (144). Mbaye claims that Baay “had done something to her,” and while her subsequent engagement in the seclusion during *tarbiyya* (mystical training) would go on to ruin her marriage, it engendered her transformation into a spiritual mother of disciples (155). Now a popular *muqaddama* based in Dakar’s elite neighborhood of Maristes, Mbaye emerges as a Fayda woman leader who attenuates her otherwise controversial claim to religious authority as the fulfillment of Baay’s and God’s will that should not be challenged.

Chapter Five, “Cooking Up Spiritual Leadership,” examines “devotional cooking” as a wrapped act that conveys a double meaning. Because commensality and culinary gift giving have been critical to the Fayda movement’s organizational development, Fayda women have made themselves vital to the movement’s success not just by committing themselves to “giving food,” but also by turning community cooking into a form of *khidma* (Ar. service) or “devotional cooking” (169). The chapter focuses on three women *daayira* leaders and *muqaddamas* hailing from different socio-economic backgrounds, the pioneer friends Sayyidas Diara Ndiaye and Astou Diop, and Aida Thiam. It shows that Fayda women infuse the traditionally feminized and ‘subservient’ domestic act of cooking into a religiously rewarding act.

Hill notes that the Fayda’s leading women “had distinguished themselves through organizing women to cook lunch for Shaykh Ibrāhīm and for fellow disciples” (166). While Senegalese men generally perceive cooking as feminine and often overlook it in their Sufi narratives, the chapter reveals that Fayda women perceive their acts of community cooking and food giving as twice rewarding. In the *bātin* sense, they believe it earns them *tuyaaba* (divine reward or divine credit) that potentially translates into blessing (Wol. *barke*) upon them or their offspring (Wol. *njaboot*) either in this life or in the hereafter. In the *zāhir* sense, Fayda women's devotional cooking earns them the public recognition of the Fayda central authority (*khalīfa*), the deferential respect of the community, and ultimately a new form of religious authority as *muqaddama*).

Chapter Six, "They Say a Woman's Voice Is Awra," explores how singing – seen indigenously as a practice of low-class bards (Wol. *géwël*) – has gained authoritative social meaning in Fayda social contexts. The chapter explores how Fayda women who specialize in the chanting of sacred poetry (Wol. *sikkar*; Ar. *dhikr*) have used singing as a medium of accessing leadership positions in the Fayda community. Drawing from Victor Turner's notion of cultural performance, Hill explains that Sufi *sikkar* performance constitutes a space where the performers negotiate the enactment of leadership and navigates tension (194). Because Islam defines a woman's voice as *awra*, a private part whose audibility should be restricted, Hill notes Fayda women's singing was, to some extent, controversial. Yet, through negotiated musical performativity and because the movement's founder has reportedly allowed women's singing, Fayda women Khady Ndiaye and Aida Faye have been able lead mixed gender *sikkar* groups and to rise to national fame as Islamic women *sikkar* leaders.

Chapter Seven, "The Ascetic and the Mother of the Knowers," examines the religious lifestyle of a charismatic, but at times, controversial Fayda couple: the ascetic Baay Mokhtar Ka and his wife Yaay Aicha Sow. In the chapter's depiction of the couple's public life, the wife, known by the disciples as "Oumoul Hanrifina" (Mother of the Knowers), negotiates religious authority through the persona of the husband. In Hill's account, Baay Mokhtar was a solitary ascetic who, in the past, had lost contact with society and neglected marriage due to his constant engagement in seclusive mystical practices and *khalwa* (spiritual retreat). Baay Mocktar was 're-socialized' by his wife, Yaay Aicha, following their marriage in 1996/1997.

While the wife played a pivotal role in the reintegration of Baay Mokhtar to make him a "complete shaykh," Hill shows how she has deployed her critical positionality to regularly influence Baay Mokhtar's decisions about his community. Most remarkably, the chapter suggests that the wife's conspicuous presence with the husband while he leads religious events is not just atypical of Senegalese and Fayda tradition, but it also constitutes a silent subversion of traditional gender roles. Eventually, the chapter shows how the wife wraps her religious authority around her re-socialized ascetic husband who serves partially as a "veil" attenuating the wife's religious influence over a large mixed-gender Fayda community.

For its worth both in terms of a rich ethnography and powerful methodology, *Wrapping Authority* is one of few books about Islam in Senegal that strive significantly to study Muslim womanhood outside the colonialist logics and ideological confines of either Western or Arabo-Islamic feminisms. Putting forward the metaphorical concepts of "wrapping" and "self-wrapping," both metaphorical terms evoking attenuating Wolof practices among Fayda members, Joseph Hill guides describes for us the localized and subtle ways in which eight Fayda women take up religious leadership roles which, in Senegal's traditionally hierarchical circles of *Tijaniyya*, are not just reserved for men, but often only to men of high social class. Unlike many studies of Muslim womanhood that describe "veiling" as a sartorial expression of female subservience, modesty, and subjugation, Hill's approach goes beyond superficially dealing with these issues. Through the wrapping concept, he shows how Fayda women's narratives about devotional labor of cooking, mothering (in both spiritual and apparent forms), singing, and accompanying Sufi men can be liberating in both *bātin* (inner) and *zāhir* (apparent) sense.

Methodologically, Hill's book also reflects a productive use of Wolof terminology, which supplements the book's decolonial approach to the study of Senegal's Taalibe Baay. In translation, Hill's notion of *wrapping* unburies and centralizes a wide spectrum of Wolof terms allowing him and us to dive deep into the Fayda's Islamo-Wolof epistemology and meaning-making. This effort at conceptual decolonization in African gender studies reminds of Oyeronke Oyewumi's book, *The Invention of Women* (1997), in which she argued that the socially loaded notions of "man" and "woman" as understood and performed today in southern Nigeria's Yorubaland in particular, were historically created by British (European) colonization. She notes that Yoruba religion (Ifà) is one of the areas of Nigerian life where colonial gendering has been strongly reproduced. Suddenly, notes Oyewumi, religious images of female Yoruba deities (Yor. *orishas*) were made more powerful than their female counterparts, a direct influence of Euro-Christian ideology on Yoruba society. In foregrounding Wolof terminology in translation, *Wrapping Authority* proposes a fresh look into aspects of Islamic feminism in contemporary Senegal in ways that accounts for Oyewumi's concern with decolonizing gender.

In short, Joseph Hill's book is powerful study of Senegalese Black-Islamic womanhood. The only probable shortcoming I can point is the relative lack of emphasis on class (Wol. *waaso*). While the author does touch on it briefly at times, more emphasis could have been used to reveal the intersectional dimension of Ibrāhīm Niasse's decentralization of Islamic authority in Senegal, which further highlights his movements unique character.

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