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Ndogalu Yàlla – The Judgement of God. Migration Aspirations and Sufi-Islam in Urban Senegal

Based on ethnographic research in Pikine, an urban area within the Dakar region, I argue that theistic predetermination plays a pivotal role in migration aspirations of young men in urban Senegal. Attainments within this religious popular belief such as successful migration or material wealth are believed to depend on *wərsəg* (luck) predetermined by one's fate (*Ndogalu Yàlla*). Likewise, the phenomenon of irregular migration from Senegal to Europe is similarly perceived: '*Barça wala Barsakh*' (Barcelona or die) is what young people in coastal Senegal used to call this form of migration. However, I will show that young men handle their fate proactively, as they accept the risks and uncertainties of migration at all costs. With their courageous behaviour and fearless acceptance of even life-threatening obstacles during irregular migration, young men show determination to challenge their destiny while trying to positively define and strengthen both their masculine and their religious identities.

Introduction

When I visited Pikine and Dakar in 2010 for the first time, I was astonished by the proliferation of religious symbols throughout the public space. Mural paintings and sophisticated colourful glass paintings, so-called *suweer*, with portraits of famous religious persons, particularly Cheikh Amadou Bamba,¹ Cheikh Ibrahima Fall,² El Hadj Malick Sy,³ Ibrāhīm Niass⁴ or other important sheikhs, have sprouted all over the town. The noteworthy proliferation of iconic Sufi representations is significant for their status as well as to their infiltration and penetration in urban Senegalese

¹ Cheikh Amadou Bamba, often called *Sériñ Tuubaa* (Cheikh of Touba), was the founder of the Murid brotherhood. Only one single unpretentious photograph exists of him, a grainy black-and-white photograph, taken in 1913, while he was kept under house arrest by the French in Diourbel. A slight man wearing a voluminous dazzlingly white tunic with long sleeves, while his head is mostly swathed by a loose white scarf, standing in locally made sandals in the sand in front of the wooden slats of a mosque, which is fervently venerated and graces businesses of all sorts, the walls of homes, junkyards, the windshields of cars and buses, etc. (Roberts / Nooter Roberts 2003: 43).

² Cheikh Ibrahima Fall, often called *Cheikh Ibra Fall*, was one of the most illustrious and fervent disciples of Sheikh Amadou Bamba, who established the prominent *Baay Faal* movement.

³ El-Hadji Malick Sy founded the religious branch *Sy Zāwiya* of the Sufi brotherhood *Tijāniyya* in Tivaouane.

⁴ Ibrāhīm Niass, often called *Baay Ŋas*, was the founder of the *Ibrāhimiyya* branch of the *Tijāniyya* order in Kaolack.

daily social life, and, related to this are the conferred sanctity and power of the Sufi brotherhoods⁵ and Islam in more general terms (Morgan 1998: 9).

In the agency around migration, Islam also plays a certain role. This became obvious, especially between 2004 and 2009, when the phenomenon of *Barça wala Barsakh* became a daily topic in Senegal. Journalists as well as many social scientists portrayed these forms of border crossings as those of the poorest and most vulnerable individuals. The slogan for this was the set phrase *Barça wala Barsakh*, meaning 'clandestine migration' to Europe. *Barça* alluded to the familiar name of the Spanish soccer club FC Barcelona with its numerous triumphs, or to put it simply, *Barça* meant reaching Spain. The Arabic word *Barsakh* described the intermediate state between hell and paradise in which the soul of the deceased waits for Judgment Day (Smith / Yazbeck Haddad 2002). In Senegal, *Barsakh* was adopted among young men to invert a potential 'social death' (Degli Uberti 2010: 109; Vigh 2006), supporting many young men's general longing to cease working in a country they perceived as a nightmare. For them, the series of successes of the Catalan soccer club embodied the chance of achieving something in life. Moreover, for many young men it simply meant that if they fail migration to the 'Global North',⁶ they would rather prefer to die, perceived as a 'good death' in moral terms, than to remain in Senegal. Psychologist Serigne Mor Mbaye analyses that ex-President Wade's unfulfilled promises drove Senegalese youth to mental suicide and rebirth, in his words "a project towards death in order to find life" (Sene Absa 2011).

This research paper does not want to controvert the significance of economic aspects and foundations behind migration. But in order not to be subject to the "economistic fallacy" (Polanyi 1977: 6) through essential elisions and constrictions, my intention is a deeper comprehension of socio-cultural motives for migration. As such, I am going to present fresh approaches to migration that depart from etiological explanatory models towards religious motivations. Hence, I will argue that

⁵ In Senegal the Sufi orders (*turuq*), the *Tijāniyya* (founded by Ahmad al-Tijani in Fez), the *Qadiriyya* (founded by Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani in Baghdad), the *Muridiyya* and the *Layennes* (founded by Seydina Limamou Laye in Yoff, an urban quarter of Dakar) are commonly associated with Islam in Senegal. In total, 92% of Muslims are said to be affiliated with Sufi brotherhoods (Pew Research Center 2012).

⁶ In this paper, I use the term 'Global North' (USA, Canada, the developed parts of Europe and East Asia) and 'Global South' (Africa, Latin America and the developing parts of Asia), implying a North-South divide based on socioeconomic criteria. Even though these terms lack analytic selectivity, I believe them to be more appropriate than terms such as 'developing country' or 'less-developed country'.

theistic predetermination plays a crucial role in migration aspirations. Young men's decision-making processes of staying in Pikine or leaving for intercontinental migration are guided by a strong belief in destiny. However, as many young men in Pikine use expressions such as "tenter sa chance" ('take one's chance') when addressing irregular migration (Hernández-Carretero 2017: 116) and its uncertain outcomes, this paper reflects upon their handling of fate. I will show that these young men do not accept their fate inertly or in a fatalistic manner; rather, they are actively striving towards challenging it, and by loading this challenge with male-related values, they are trying to restore their desired life scripts of manhood and 'social adulthood'. The courageous acceptance of challenging risks and uncertainties in order to find a meaningful and prosperous future represents the young men's determination to actively change their actual predicament and life situations, thus escaping social death, and, simultaneously also their intention to define and strengthen both their masculine and religious identities.

Methodology and Fieldwork

Based on an anthropological analysis of the socio-cultural meanings of 'migration' and 'immobility' among young men in Pikine, a very populated urban area within the Dakar region of Senegal, the focus of my research intended to map out the multifaceted socio-cultural interests, ascriptions and everyday practices in terms of the experiences of immobility and migration of young males (mainly unmarried, in the age span of 18 to 38 years). My aim was to understand the agency of young men in two neighbourhoods of Pikine as a complex phenomenon from a multidisciplinary point of view. As regards this multidisciplinaryity, the ethnological perspective is of pre-eminent significance because it opens the way to a more detailed understanding of "meaningful acts" (Mbembe 2001: 6) of human agency and of related tensions that emerge between structural conditions and possible courses of action and their limitations.

The present paper is based and relies on data collected and generated during eleven months of fieldwork in the neighbourhoods *Wakhinane II Quartier Mballo Der* and *Sadio Guissé* (Guinaw Rail Nord) in Pikine from 2011 to 2013. The interior of Pikine was selected as my research field because it is underrepresented in migration research. During fieldwork, I conducted 36 semi-structured interviews that I would describe, following David Fetterman, as "verbal approximations of a questionnaire

with explicit research goals" (1989: 48). When my fieldwork progressed, I modified, dropped and added questions and topics as I felt necessary in order to further deepen my understanding of the local society as a whole. The semi-structured guidelines had to be tailored individually to the respective interviewee(s) since I had a different degree of prior acquaintance with them. In particular, I had had informal, yet intensive preliminary conversations with some of the young men during which I had already taken notes on the memo pad of my mobile phone. The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to six hours, and from one to two meetings; they were recorded using a digital recorder. The interviews were narratively structured; in order not to disturb the natural flow of the conversations, I let the participants talk for as long as they liked. Describing my own experiences and observations of how certain issues are approached in Europe, I managed to maintain a relaxed atmosphere because my interviewees cherished the opportunity to gain some insights themselves from the interview.

Migration and its Entanglement with Sufi Islam: the Murid point of view

"Ku nekk dina lekk wërsëgam"⁷

Owing to the economic bias of migration theories, the significance of religious belief has found little attention. If we look more closely at religious aspects and go back to the beginnings of Islam, we will come to the finding that migration is inherent in Islam, as this monotheistic religion was 'revealed' to traders and Bedouins who themselves were mobile people (Babou 2009: 8).⁸ Beyond the domestication of migration by cultural logics, the sway of Islamic Sufi brotherhoods on migration in Senegal gets salient. The point here is that migration today is increasingly disconnected from strict family logics and steeped in a Murid identity that tracks down to migration (Tall 2002: 549). Yet, within recent years Murid migration underwent a veritable redefinition as a religious project. While initially, between 1965 and 1970, migrations were deeply anchored in veracious, strong religious undertakings,

⁷ Senegalese proverb: "Everyone has his chance. And you will eat what God gave you".

⁸ Cheikh Anta Babou further elucidates: "The importance of mobility in Muslim tradition is evidenced by the special provisions made in the *sharia* or Islamic law for the traveler and stranger. The traveler or *Musaafir* is allowed to shorten prayers, to delay fasting, to marry in special circumstances and to receive special alms. The *funduq* or hostel, the *Zawiya* or Sufi lodge, and the mosque, figure prominently in history as places designed to accommodate the lone traveler." (2009: 9).

emboldened by marabouts,⁹ when *taalibe*¹⁰ were looking for greener pastures for the sake of religion and for fostering the development of the brotherhood, Murids were later on enticed by the success stories of their numerous precursors, which uncoupled and separated the migration project gradually from its lopsided religious finality (Bava 2002b: 592).

Moreover, it is noteworthy that the mere history of the *Murīdiyya* itself is a rich story of migrations. Historically, the dispersion of Murid adherents can be explained with the lacking productivity of the groundnut fields in central Senegal in the last forty years. Originally, agricultural workers that were Murid disciples cultivated fields for their sheikhs and contributed greatly to the Senegalese economy. Since their farming practices exhausted the soils they had to migrate to new lands, "pioneer lands in the hinterlands" (Ebin 1996: 98). This search for new grazing lands outside the Wolof mainland goes back as far as to the early 19th century. By searching new lands, relationships with sheiks and ultimately with Amadou Bamba were accentuated. Later on, with the arrival of severe droughts, Murid adherents had to look for alternative work opportunities and localities (Bava / Gueye 2001: 424). At first, they migrated to Senegalese urban centres and from there, due to their highly adaptive abilities and their support networks, they 'conquered' new destinations everywhere in the world (Ebin 1995: 326). Victoria Ebin underlines this dispersal around the world with a citation in one of her interviews with a Murid trader in New York in the 1990s:

Our homeland [in Western Senegal] is built on sand, and like the sand, we are blown everywhere... Nowadays, you can go to the ends of the earth and see a Mouride wearing a wool cap with a pom-pom selling something to somebody. (Ebin 1996: 93)

Sheik Amadou Bamba himself saw travelling as a proof of one's faith. The journeys of other eminent sheikhs such as *Sidiya Baba*, *Seydou Nourou Tall* and *El Hadj Malick Sy* during the French colonial period are also highly regarded. In general, these sheikhs are considered role models, and their actions, especially their travelling, were seen as necessities (Gemmeke 2013: 124). The *Hijra* (in Arabic: هجرة) or *Hegira*, the journey of the prophet Muhammad with his adherents from Mecca

⁹ A marabout (*murshid* [مرشد] in Arabic), *sëriñ* in Wolof, is a Muslim religious leader and teacher in West Africa.

¹⁰ From the Wolof word *taalibe* (from Arab *talib* [طالب] = "student"). A child raised in a qur'ānic school (Seesemann 2010: 610).

to Medina, is also important for Murids (Roberts / Nooter Roberts 2003: 238). *Hijra* literally means "to abandon", a concept strictly related to the idea of travel (Maggi et al. 2008: 13; Pandolfo 2007: 337).

Inspired by their founder Sheikh Amadou Bamba, who was pushed into exile by the French colonists (Gabon 1895-1902 and Mauritania 1903-1907), exile and travelling became a pillar of Muridism and took on a certain degree of sacralisation, engendering a form of myth-making as well. Thus, in Murid cosmology the idea of '*s'exiler pour mieux revenir*' ('Going into exile to return on a better level') (Bava / Gueye 2001: 431) was born. Amadou Bamba's first exile and his stay in Mayombé, Gabon, was laced with miracles (كرامة [*karāmat*] in Arab). As the routes the Murids are navigating in their numerous destinations throughout the world are full of uncertainties, they refer to these miracles in combination with their encountered difficulties as guidance which help the *taalibé* to find a good place, where they can establish a successful business and can offer psychological assistance (Bava 2002a: 59) in prospect of success (Diouf 2000: 699). Since even Amadou Bamba had to endure many challenges in his two exiles, exile is seen by members of the *Murīdiyya* as one of the most difficult challenges and by some of them it is even interpreted as divine gift (Pezeril 2008: 145). The hardships of Amadou Bamba "have become part of an exemplar life for the Mourid followers" (Carter 1997: 63), seen by Victoria Ebin as the moral ethos of the Murids, and as "a part of their religious heritage" (Ebin n.d. quoted in Carter 1997: 84); or as one of my interlocutors explained to me during our voyage to Touba:

To be a real man, one has to turn a lot, Serigne Touba said that. [...] One must suffer in life [...] be in other villages, live with other ethnic groups, has to suffer to be a real man. (Amadou, Pikine)¹¹

For this reason, among Murids the handling of Bamba's two involuntary journeys is considered heroic and gritty. The deportation of Amadou Bamba serves as a role model for young Murid disciples because Amadou Bamba found himself confronted with very difficult situations in which he had to undergo many tests. Amadou Bamba saw these trials as 'benefits' that enabled him, according to Sufi logics, to access the highest divine graces. As such, Bamba's isolation and his remoteness from Touba, where he was protected by divine omnipotence, are seen by Murid

¹¹ The names of the informants have been changed in order to protect the anonymity of persons who contributed to this study.

adherents as a path to follow (Bava / Gueye 2001: 424). A journey represents in this sense 'dissociation', a temporary departure as well as a journey from which somebody returns as a winner with force and wisdom accumulated during exile. Therefore, migration, either for labour or business, is an important element among Murids. Adherents of the *Murīdiyya* frequently emphasise their ties with the brotherhood and with its founder through travelling (Metcalf 1996). If Murids are asked where acolytes can be found, they frequently reply "everywhere" ('fu-nekk ci àdduna' in Wolof).

The notion of *liggéey* ('work' in Wolof) also has important religious connotations, particularly in the Murid brotherhood. The basis of the philosophy of the *Murīdiyya* is the dictum: "Liggéeyal ni doo mes dee te jullil ni suba ngay dee. Defaral sa ëllëg fi ci àdduna ci ngiiru li ngay dund" ('Work as if you were going to live forever, and pray as if you were going to die tomorrow. Act in this world depending on the sojourn that you will make with respect to the Hereafter'), as well as "Liggéey ci jaamu Yàlla la bokk" ('Work is behaviour of submission to God') (Thiam 2010: 67), and "Liggéey ci top Yàlla la bokk" ('Work is a religious practice') (ibid.: 65). According to the underlying doctrine, work is the unavoidable invariable which enables a society to regain its equilibrium. Moreover, the expression "coono du réer" ('No effort is in vain') has a sense of solace and encouragement for Murid disciples and gives hope to those who do not see the results of their efforts quickly. "Liggéey len jariñu": work here is bound to the satisfaction of needs and the safety for the individual through material goods. The *Murīdiyya* see work as a creative activity which confers self-confidence to a man (ibid.: 64). Additionally, there is an entire spectrum of formulas such as "A good Murid is a hard worker", "The Murid must be a good worker", "We're in the sweat of the brow of Muridism", etc., serving as popular metaphors for the mystical and religious dimensions of the work of *taalibé*¹² Murids (Bava 2003: 72).

Nevertheless, not the accumulation of wealth, but the divesting and sharing of it will take a disciple to a desired higher rank (Buggenhagen 2012: 88). While visiting Touba, observers see numerous projects financed by itinerant Murids. The construction of the *Hôpital Matlaboul Fawzaini* and the numerous acquisitions of land in Touba are good examples. Sophie Bava found out that during the collections

¹² From the Wolof word *taalibe* (from Arab *talib* [طالب] = "student"). A child raised in a qur'ānic school (Seesemann 2010: 610).

made by the *dahira*,¹³ Murid migrants contributed at least five times more than those who have not migrated (2003: 72). Consequently, migration brings disciples nearer to Touba, which they perceive as "infinitely reproducible" (Ebin 1996: 100), an anchor point for spirituality, knowledge and work, anchored in their minds while on journey. Itinerant Murids who have donated a lot are viewed by young Murids as (additional) motivations for migration.

A would-be migrant normally undergoes meticulous spiritual preparation with his marabout. Carling & Hernández-Carretero note that spiritual preparation is "an important factor to the overall success of the journey. The role of marabouts is especially important, as they are said to provide spiritual protection for the journey as a whole as well as for individual travellers." (Carling / Hernández-Carretero 2008: 62) Esoteric services comprise the preparation of special potions and amulets (Gemmeke 2013: 114). Usha Adjamah goes so far as to say that would-be migrants have such strong confidence in their marabouts, their prayers, their *gris-gris*¹⁴ and their sacrifices that some of them are convinced that they are invisible when passing borders or border patrols.

"Mais c'est la vie, lolu la Yàlla ndogal"¹⁵ – Life and the Judgement of God

Fourteen months after Hassan and I met for the last time in *Sadio Guissé*, I saw his online status on Facebook; here we occasionally chatted. I asked him how he was doing. He left Senegal at the beginning of May 2012, and today (at the end of 2019) he is trying to make a living in Marrakesh. When asked how he was managing his life, he suddenly told me that he had taken a zodiac to Spain with fourteen other individuals. He further explained that the zodiac had lost direction and had spent five days on the open sea while nobody had anything to eat or drink. So five people

¹³ According to Adriana Piga the *dahira* is the backbone of the brotherhoods concerning the moral training of workless and idle urbanites (2002). *Dahiras* function as meeting places of urban *taalibé* and link them to the power of the brotherhoods. They provide the urban youth with socio-religious coaching. Originally, they were borne out of a need of faithful adherents, who left their rural origin and now live in the cities where they are facing problems relating to re-socialisation and constructions of new points of reference for identity. Thus *dahiras* provide spaces of reunion and solidarity (Mané 2012: 30-31).

¹⁴ A *gris-gris* is a leather amulet which contains writings from the Qur'an and is worn around a person's neck, waist, legs or arms. Only marabouts, which are believed to have divine grace (*baarke* in Wolof), can prepare and prescribe these objects. *Gris-gris* are considered to give an individual protection from the evil and bad luck in general, attracting good luck. The belief in these powerful amulets dates back to pre-Islamic animistic Senegal and was later- on incorporated into the Islamic religion.

¹⁵ Translated: 'But that's life, that is the Judgement of God'.

had died. "Mais c'est la vie, lolou la yala dogal" ('But that's life, that is the Judgement of God') was his written reply on Facebook when asked about the sense of this venture. Consequently, when referring to the issue of death in connection with the many deaths in pirogue migration, young people's reasons provided related to life predestined by God, who had already chosen the day of death and thus had deprived them of any influence on it. From this angle, sea-crossings to Europe in wooden boats that lay observers might perceive and interpret as alleged suicides¹⁶ are not regarded in the same vein by the respective actors. Many young Pikinois to whom I talked suggested that death was an integral part of life and, hence, should not be feared. According to them, a good Muslim would have to endure the day it actually arrives (Adjamah 2012: 111). A death which might result out of an attempt to migrate to the 'Global North' is morally even viewed as a 'good death' (Carling / Hernández-Carretero 2008: 13).

A lot of young men in Pikine told me that their fate was God's will, ineluctable and transcendent. They explained it with *Ndogalu Yàlla* ('Judgement of God'). According to them, everything happening in an individual's life would be caused by God (Sow 2009: 383-384).

Such predetermination is reflected in vernacular expressions like *Yàlla baax na* ('God is good') and *dina baax* ('It will get well') in Wolof; or also in Arabic expressions such as *In schā'a llāh* ('God willing'). Proverbs such as "Dagnal wala yanandé wodoundé" (Fula: 'Success or burial in faraway places') or the credo *Barça wala Barsakh* even suggest that young people are (almost) doomed to go to places where they will succeed or die (Sall 2011: 110). One informant expressed it as follows: "But the problem is that all we will have, God has already crossed our destiny, for me, all that you'll have, you'll have." (Abdou, 28 years). In this vein, the young men sometimes referred, for instance, to poverty as *nattu*, a curse from God, which, in accordance with their belief, can all of a sudden disappear if God decides so. Hence, overall, young men in Pikine see themselves not as ignorant or 'weary of life'; instead, they are aware of the risks and uncertainties around intercontinental migration. They consider themselves as "mûrs et vaccinés" ('ripe, mature and vaccinated'), just similar to two young men interviewed in Sene Absa's film *Yoole – Le Sacrifice*. This is also why awareness campaigns have had just minor success.

¹⁶ Suicide is condemned by Islam. Not only killing oneself, also desperate waiting for death is prohibited by Islam.

Sitting on the roadside with an acquaintance observing his neighbour going to his car, I asked my acquaintance what this neighbour had done to attain his obvious economically higher status in comparison to him. Instead of providing solid arguments, the acquaintance simply referred to *wërsëg* ('luck'). While I searched for possible explanatory approaches, namely that the neighbour might have finished school with a specific degree or that he might have had vocational training or that he might have attended university, Khadim quickly responded with the simple notion that he had had better luck. Generally, luck is seen as an "'operator' for conceiving the best of all possible futures" or the contrary (Da Col / Humphrey 2012: 12). However, the following is also said: *wërsëg yemul* ('Luck is not the same'); thus, luck is distributed unequally. This was the argument as well when I was talking with another acquaintance about my observations that in recent years Dakar had seen the proliferation of new upper-class residential areas and the emergence of a new class of *nouveaux riches*.

Migration and Masculinity

"Duñu bëgg toog" ('They don't want to sit down'), explains Mamadou Lamine Gueye alias *Master Nomila*, an underground rapper from Djeddah Thiaroye-Kao, another neighbourhood in Pikine, in his documentary *Mbeud mi* ('The Feet in the Water'). Mamadou is talking about young people in Pikine, who, being unemployed and with grim perspectives for the future, feel trapped in a growing gap between their individual aspirations and their actual economic realities. This is worsened by the fact that his neighbourhood has enormous problems with flooding every year. Mamadou Lamine Gueye also mentions the strenuous future-oriented motivations of these young men such as, in Wolof: "jéém niaffe dara" ('realise something'), "realizer samay projets" ('realise my projects') or "jëm-kanamv" ('to progress'). Most of them are overdue to become socially responsible ('social adulthood'), which implies taking on certain responsibilities and being interested in founding a family, in short, to respond to societal expectations of adult men. However, socio-economic conditions 'dictate' these young men prolonged dependencies and delayed marriages that can also be observed in a lot of other Sahelian towns as well as throughout the world in times of crises.

Against this societal background, unknown destinations that are believed to hold ready a lot of challenges and suffering, sometimes even death (for example, death

in the desert or in the sea) appear in a different light. Going to these places is a sign of masculinity and realisation, of moving forward and taking on responsibilities. *Góor-góorlu*¹⁷, the local term for hustler in Senegal, is thus related to masculine values. "Góor-góorlu moy taxa doon góor" ('It is by hustling that one becomes a man') and "Lu metti, góor lay dal" ('Pain is proper to a man') (Sall 2011: 110) are two familiar sayings in Senegal. Thus, the juvenile 'adventure' is associated and credited with positive qualities such as courage, masculinity, willingness to take risks, fearlessness and adventure. Face-to-face exposure of odds and downsides of migration has little impact on interpretations or evaluations of migration paths, as any deterrent narrative largely 'pales' against an individual's socio-economic life situation perceived as wretched. Yet, taking on such risks to attain one's goals does not have a negative connotation among young men in Pikine. Hence, it has to be emphasised explicitly that the particular mindsets, ideas and attitudes described are anchored in ideals of masculinity. *Jaambaare nga* ('You are strong') is used to refer to people who both work hard and take risks. Young men in Pikine translate it as *guerrier* ('warrior').¹⁸ Hints at the riskiness of migration ventures might even goad young men on because confronting such hazards indicates fearless masculinity and the will to overcome one's actual position as a so-called 'dead loss', a *defu dara* ('good-for-nothings') or a *beugge lo yomb*, which stands for someone who wants to achieve something or also to have a material good without doing anything for it, dodging responsibilities and hardship.

When young men are not able to take over the role of the 'breadwinner' as expected from them – to be a *góor njariñ* –, society relegates them to a position of perennial, inescapable adolescence. But, also in order to escape the predicament of being in a deprived position regarding their peers, young men do not see any meaningful alternative to irregular migration. For some young men, having the option of crossing the border serves as a comforting last resort because it – ultimately – offers a way

¹⁷ *Góor-góorlu* is also the name of an iconic character in a Senegalese comic from Alphonse Mendy alias *T.T. Fons*. He illustrates the everyday life of a Senegalese, who tries everything (hustles) to find the *dépense quotidienne*. The drawings were published in the satirical weekly *Le Cafard libéré* and gained popularity in the 1990s and 2000s.

¹⁸ The denomination *warrior* alludes to pre-colonial Senegal and its caste system where it was referred to as *ceddo*. In the nomenclature of the Wolof caste system *ceddo* were slave warriors, who were trying to preserve traditional cultural elements and therefore fighting against the onslaught of Islam and Christianity as well as against the slave trade. Through their appearance, armed with weapons such as muskets and moving with horses they were highly symbolic for ideals of force and masculinity (Searing 1988: 502).

out of their undesirable position of being unable to come of age. But migration comes also into play when a Muslim is not able to gain his life by honest means 'at home'. Then he has to migrate. It is viewed as a commitment. Then, even the so-called *émigration clandestine* (French term meaning irregular migration) is considered a possibility, among others, to hold up a certain social integrity.

Concluding remarks

This paper aimed at a more profound, enhanced understanding of socio-cultural motivations for migration of young men by analysing religious meanings of inter-continental migration. From the perspective of the people's social structure, and by turning one's back on economic biases frequently provided in the context of migration causes (however, still bearing them in mind) and, therefore, limiting, or foreshortening, assumptions on migratory incentives, I tried to focus on religious textures of migratory causes.

In Pikine, a lot of young men are ensnared in insecure, unstable and problem-ridden secular lives characterised by unfulfilled promises. Painful dependencies on kinship have removed their socio-cultural constructed paths of 'becoming', which comprises marriage, children and the financial care of the elderly and other family members, but today, also taking part in the new consumer society. This circumstance denies them the new positions they actually desire such as responsible 'social adulthood', which also maintains traditional role allocations. Instead, the current social environment infantilises young men and holds them captive in their grim situation. Additionally, uncertainty and unpredictability are their everyday companions which stop them from following the appropriate paths to pursue their future-oriented life scripts for a more meaningful future. Against this background, the French expression 'tenter sa chance', thus challenging one's destiny, here resonates with an active engagement with one's fate.

To sum up for policy recommendations, both the peak of pirogue migration policies and the media coverage regarding irregular migration were guided by misconceptions. When it came to risk awareness, the hypothesis of the allegedly misinformed migrant(s) prevailed. Numerous awareness campaigns extended this perception and aimed at informing aspiring boat migrants about the risks involved. Migrants were depicted as victims and as rather insane world-weary people gambling with their lives in certain campaigns. But, rather than discouraging them, the rise of more and

more discourses on hardship and inconvenient conditions in the 'Global North' appeals to young men, whose masculinity is severely weakened by their precarious life situations. In such circumstances, the attraction of the 'Global North' becomes transformed into a compelling power due to which young people beyond their aspired masculinity-related life scripts might feel like trying to demonstrate 'lost values' such as courage and determination by taking the risk of going to Europe at all costs and of working very hard by seizing every work opportunity. Through actively challenging their fate, the young men are not only able to patch up their arrested manhood, but also, due to their strong interest in Sufi Islamic discourses on suffering and sacrifice, they are able to strengthen their religious identity of being good Muslims as well.

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