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West-African religious entrepreneurs in France.

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The presence of "marabouts" in France – West African Muslim Holy Men who have become recognizable figures in the urban landscapes of Paris and other European cities – is connected to the history of migratory movements in West Africa. The first few marabouts arrived in the 1960s, and, for a long time, shared the experiences of other West African immigrants: like them, during periods of economic expansion in France, these marabouts worked at various industrial sector jobs, or as construction workers and rubbish collectors. It was rather unusual, in the 1960s, to come to France "for this," that is to say, *specifically* in order to engage in religious guidance or counseling. It was considered improper to tarnish a venerable occupation by trying to make a profit from it, even when one possessed specialized knowledge, and thus the respectability the identity conferred in Africa. The specialization of marabouts into magical-religious activities – soothsaying or providing amulets against misfortune – took place progressively and can be attributed to changes in the French economy, as well as to opportunities, quickly perceived by some, to tap an urban customer base beyond African immigrant communities (Kuczynski 2002).

Studies concerning the internationalization, or globalization, of religion have often focused on the growth and expansion of brotherhoods, religious movements, or well-organized churches, and on the analysis of their networks and "linkages" (Bava 2003,

Fourchard et al. 2005). The phenomenon I look at here is quite different. Indeed, the marabouts I consider very rarely engage in proselytism. They neither wish to be emulated nor to found religious movements around their persons. Weber's expression, "religious independent entrepreneurs," suits them perfectly.

In this article I will first consider the place of mobility in the careers of marabouts. I will subsequently attend to the impact of mobility on their statuses through a comparison of different locales. Finally, I will analyze how the fact of movement itself impacts maraboutic practices.

I. The place of mobility in the careers of marabouts.

I.1. Historians have shown that the presence of West Africans in France is by no means a recent phenomenon. Marc Michel (1982), for instance, has written about the religious importance of marabouts to the Tirailleurs Sénégalais of the First World War. While one cannot establish continuities between these earlier marabouts and those of the present day, it seems very clear that the coming to France of marabouts is only one aspect of the mobility that has long characterized Africans. Mobility begins in Africa. The following is an example of a possible trajectory: Diallo is originally from Eastern Senegal. His father was a respected "*silatigui*," a pastoral specialist. Diallo received additional training by a marabout living in his family. Before coming to France in 1961 Diallo spent several years in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, where he worked in business and as an unskilled factory laborer. Back in Senegal, he stayed in Dakar for a time and acquired yet more knowledge from various persons, and where, having received his father's authorization, he began his

own career as a silatigui/marabout. In Paris, Diallo spent time working at various jobs before setting himself up as a marabout. His business thrived for many years, during which he also spent time in the French West Indies (Antilles). Diallo never severed his ties with Senegal, and returns there quite often.

What can we make of this trajectory? First, it appears that people move to pursue and meet opportunities, both in business and commerce, as in the magical-religious domain. Diallo's case still resonates today. I have recently collected similar examples in the Antilles. Personal stories like Diallo's have deep roots in the history of West African Islam, where literate persons were also often businessmen who combined business with a magical-religious practice, either simultaneously or alternately, according to circumstances and contexts, although they could also change direction altogether, and turn to salaried employment. The marabouts' ideal, however, has remained the pursuit of free enterprise. There are other trajectories, some more closely influenced by religion. Take, for instance, the case of the son of a renowned marabout from Djenné, Mali. This young man left Mali for France in pursuit of the formative experiences of manhood, and to test his knowledge in an unknown environment. It was meant as an "educational journey," to be undertaken until this man's father gave him authorization to practice in Djenné, and left him his place. The journey, in this case, was one of personal initiation, and represented a necessary waiting period until future prospects could be realized. Moreover, the time spent in France was also a stop along a path that would eventually lead this man to Mecca, not only to perform the requisite pilgrimage, but also to improve his command of Arabic and acquire deeper theological knowledge. This person went back to Mali, took his father's place, and never came back to France. Another type of

migration, common in the training of marabouts, consists in journeying from one master to another, through several regions of West Africa. The journeying tradition presents another framework for understanding the coming to France, even though most migrants did not immigrate to France, as I mention in the introduction, with the specific intention of practicing maraboutic skills. The coming to France – and I emphasize once more that such migration is often only a stepping stone to other destinations – is also a manifestation of the spirit of "searching," which inspires marabouts (and other migrants as well). This quest, "for something," serves as an apt interpretive device to explain mobility because it combines the economic register (after all, these men came to France in order to earn a living), the search for religious knowledge (which must always be expanded), the search for new experiences, a curiosity about other cultures and environments, and the prestige connected with "leaving" (see recent work on African migration that analyzes the behaviors of "returnees" – from France, from Italy or Germany: Marfaing 2003, Fouquet 2007)

I.2. This strategy of the "elsewhere" for marabouts is entirely personal, even if it should be viewed within larger global migratory movements. Certainly, a number of these marabouts belong to Sufi orders such as the *Tijaniyya* or the *Qadriyya*, with which they maintain bonds of greater or lesser strength. But in France, the representatives of such brotherhoods are rare indeed. There is in fact a great distance between the individuals I have discuss here, and the members of brotherhoods. The latter usually come from founders' families and occasionally travel to countries where many of their disciples have settled in order to strengthen ties among the faithful and collect dues. The marabouts one

finds in Europe are, instead, the disciples of these religious leaders. During the tours of charismatic leaders, followers gather around them for prayers, *Dhikr* (invocation of God's name) sessions, and collections. It is among these faithful that our marabouts are to be found. However, the latter soon return to their private activities and their clientele after a leader's departure. In European cities marabouts are loosely connected: there is no clear leadership or top-down control. What one does find, on the other hand, are rivalries and swift competition to attract the greatest numbers of clients. The journey to France, undertaken by many, is a purely personal adventure. Indeed, it is important to note that, among Parisian marabouts, only very few are followers of the Muride brotherhood. The Murides are highly hierarchical and are organized into associations (the *dahira*), including outside Senegal. Their organization (Cruise O'Brien 2002) seems incompatible with marabouts' pursuits of autonomous careers. The favor accorded to commerce and trade among diasporic Muride members, is also, I believe, connected to the elitist nature of Islamic knowledge dissemination, and in particular of esoteric knowledge within this brotherhood.

I.3. As individualistic and non-proselytizing as they have been, marabouts, in France since the 1960s and especially the 1980s-1990s, have contributed to the emergence of a more subterranean form of Islam: the talismanic use of the Koran and other Islamic texts based on practices of propitiatory prayer, and the fashioning of amulets and other protective devices with the help of textual fragments and other items. Such usage of Islam was quite widespread in West Africa, as well as among African immigrants in France, and among all Muslim immigrants Hamès 2007, Kuczynski 2007); I will return

to these procedures (to find work, to win the interest or affection of a woman, etc.). These practices, however, have stayed within Muslim immigrant circles. If marabouts have successfully contributed to making their form of Islam – not the Islam of Mosques – better known, it is due, in part, to the visibility for which many have opted. Parisian Marabouts marketed themselves with expressions like "man of God," and made use of themes that revealed the presence, in Paris, of specialists of this particular form of Islam. However, the broadening appeal of this kind of Islam in European societies may be due, for the most part, to a phenomenon, affecting all contemporary religious movements – what Danièle Hervieu-Leger (1999) has called a "social recentering" of religion – which has gone together with a loosening-up of the market for symbolic goods, now mainly assessed in terms of their practical efficacies. The two connected phenomena, (visibility and "social recentering") above, explain why marabouts in France have gained a quite cosmopolitan clientele. It was through these actors that Islam was able to find a place among symbolic goods in a competitive market for "practical religion." Marabouts were the carriers of this Islam.

II. Impact of mobility on the status and functions of marabouts.

I will now focus on the different functions of marabouts. They have at their disposal a diverse toolkit of possible roles.

II.1. Marabouts first task is to teach the Koran; the number of disciples is a direct reflection of a marabout's prestige. They also preside over ceremonies marking rites of passage (naming ceremonies, marriages) and offer the required prayers and blessings on

those occasions. They settle disputes and conflicts between members of a family, or between families. Theirs can therefore be a peace-making, social-regulatory, function. They foretell destinies through various divinatory techniques (some permitted; others illicit in Islam) for any endeavor, undertaking, or desire (money, work, passport, a woman). They say prayers and create propitiatory or invocative talismans to either fight against misfortune or attract luck, "nudge destiny" in the right direction. Full command of these various functions mobilizes different kinds of skills: the knowledge possessed by a theologically literate person, and all that pertains to the occult and esoteric world of Islamic talismans, known, in Arabic, as "the science of secrets" (*'ilm al-asrâr*). This knowledge is not transmitted to just anyone, but rather is passed on within marabout families, or else when a master chooses a particular student. In Africa, each marabout can choose, according to his culture or depending on the context, to emphasize one or another of the activities listed above. There exist, moreover, significant gradations between the neighborhood marabout, on one hand, and, on the other, the religious leader who possesses considerable renown, who can bestow *baraka* (blessings and spiritual benefit), and in whose courtyard an enormous throng assembles daily (Soares 2005). These religious figures, however, are all considered intercessors with Allah, or sometimes more mysterious powers, like Djinns.

In Paris, the possible roles and functions available to marabouts are far fewer. For reasons too lengthy to explain here (see Kuczynski 2002), they have not been entrusted with Koranic instruction. Their dominant functions by far, for all the reasons I have just explained (connected with the explosion of practical religion) have become those of

diviners and amulet suppliers, which is how marabouts in France are best known. Some have held on to the function of social regulator within African families living in France. Noteworthy is the fact that marabouts' role as regulators has extended to their entire client-base. People come to them to ask not only for a divination or a talisman, but sometimes simply for advice. By drawing on a moral system inspired by Islamic values, as well as, at times, on their own common sense, marabouts readily become councilors and consolers for clients of many different backgrounds. I interpret this development as stemming from the absence, in contemporary French society, of a process of mediation. Mediation – among other recourses – is now sought with foreign men, who, in having come to France, have lost all the special charisma traditionally associated with their function. They cannot claim legitimacy by putting forward special kinds of knowledge, or especially, certain lineages, as such items are entirely unfamiliar to non-African clients. These men, in France, have reconstituted for themselves personal auras within the context of the pluralism I previously described. The demand for such personal and spiritual services is consistent, of course, with the requests other groups receive: for instance, evangelicals, charismatics, Pentecostals, or those who focus on "personal development." But in the case of marabouts, no single group unites them; no unique or common credo defines them. What characterizes the approach of contemporary marabouts based in France is a Muslim sensibility (not fully defined) combined with a "personal touch," all of which engages little religious commitment of the part of the customer.

II.2. The recomposition of marabouts' role in France is not the only noteworthy change affecting them. There have been transformations in the very nature of marabouts' status.

In Africa, marabouts clearly belong to the religious sphere, even if there are important differences between individual practitioners, as I already discussed. From the French perspective, opinions about marabouts have varied considerably. A quick historical look reveals five main interpretive frameworks, or tropes, that have been historically constitutive of the figure of "the marabout," in Africa and in France.

- The first frame dates from the era immediately preceding colonialism, and is found in the accounts of travelers like Mungo Park (1800) or René Caillié (1830). When describing the different activities of marabouts, these authors hesitate between calling them "priests" or "schoolmasters." "Priest" usually wins out. In these early glosses, marabouts are assimilated to the village priest, a figure still very much valorized in early nineteenth-century France. The "clerical" vision appears in the writings of early colonial authors.

- The second historical trope could be called the "Third Republic" frame because it appeared at a time when, in France, processes of delegitimation of the clergy, as well as discussions about secularism in education, raged. French constructions, therefore, go from "village priest" to another stock figure, that of "village schoolteacher." In this framework, what is put forward are the learned and literate aspects of marabouts, the set of traits Goody (1986) summarizes as *literacy*. Nonetheless, colonial authors often cast the knowledge of marabouts as being of highly variable quality. At times these writers placed the very value of Koranic teachings in doubt. Still the model endured. It is important to remember that the political project of the colonial state, from the late nineteenth century to the Second World War, was to transform literate individuals among the colonized into notables, as so many "links" connecting to the colonial administration.

- To speak of the colonial period is also to evoke the authorities' fear of Islam, especially at the turn of the twentieth century (Harrison 1988). One arrives, therefore, at a third construction, this time more resolutely political: that of marabouts as "bad" Muslims and as "charlatans." Marabouts were now cast as allegedly hostile to colonial presence, and numerous missions targeted marabouts for surveillance in this period. This was a context where one heard talk of "maraboutic conspiracies." A centerpiece of this colonial fear of Islam was the production of the notion of "maraboutage" (a way of associating marabouts with the perpetration of "shady" or "dirty" deeds). This colonial condemnation of marabouts was not openly based on politics – the real reason they were feared – but rather justified in religious terms, in the name of an idealized Islam, which the practices of marabouts supposedly "perverted." French colonial administration, therefore, condemned marabouts, as charlatans, for purportedly betraying an idealized and highly theoretical Islam, and for perverting the masses.

This extremely negative characterization of marabouts lasted a long time. Copans noted that, even as late as 1980, it maintained some traction in French society (1980: 32).

- However, by the 1950s, a new point of view had emerged, which I construe as a fourth interpretive trope: the association of marabouts with the role of therapist. The originators of this new intellectual turn were Dr. Collomb (1913-1979) in Dakar, his assembled team of researchers and therapists (see the well known book *Oedipe africain* by Marie-Cécile and Edmond Ortigues, 1966), and the journal *Psychopathologie africaine*.

Their work, at the time, was an early experimentation in African "ethnopsychiatry." It consisted in setting up collaborations between cultural anthropologists, psychiatrists, and traditional healers (whom the WHO then called "traditional practitioners") in order to

discover Africans etiology, African ideas about the place of the sick in society, the role of healers, etc. The goal was to create an African psychiatric practice that would not be merely derivative of western models. Among others practitioners, marabouts were therefore invited to join the ranks of these "traditional practitioners." Compared with an older colonial era, when healers were mocked, hunted down, and accused of superstition and obscurantism (as I have just shown), this status granted them a new legitimacy. Many marabouts I met in Paris still speak proudly of relatives who worked with Dr. Collomb. However, the socially acceptable role of therapist, like the other interpretive frames, focuses on a single item in the skill set of marabouts. Didier Fassin (1992) and Jean-Pierre Oliver de Sardan (1994) have effectively shown the part played by the prestige of western medicine in Africa in the "therapytization" of marabouts and other agents of the supernatural.

-A final construction: marabouts who migrated to France are often assumed to be psychics.

In an effort to codify and grant a specific status to marabouts in France, the newly elected Socialist government in 1981 focused on their religious role, which it considered as potentially helpful to integrating African populations into French society. This role, as imagined by the French government, allowed marabouts to reside in France, but not to practice their activities, and especially not divination, a key element of their professional-religious toolkit and particularly well-developed in France. It is important to note that, in France, divination is proscribed by various articles of criminal jurisprudence (Code Penal). Here, one finds a position very similar to the colonial era: a sanctimonious

leveling of all practices in the name of an idealized, imaginary, Islam that does not exist anywhere.

Below are the words of a contemporary civil servant in the Préfecture de Police (a governmental structure in France combining law enforcement and administrative surveillance of citizens and residents): “Marabouts have moved out of their traditional role, and today engage in illegal practices proscribed by our country’s Penal Code. This was not the reason they were brought here; the marabout is a religious figure, and not a diviner.” This notion of an idealized marabout juxtaposed with supposed deviations on the part of those who came to France, made marabouts the targets of many police investigations. Simultaneously, however, the French tax collection agency, who is decidedly less concerned with legal statuses as long as taxes are paid, considered that marabouts engaged in the *bona fide* and lucrative activity of… diviner. The fiscal status, in the end, won out against its legal counterpart. Marabouts have finally become integrated into the category of diviners, and this is how they are considered today. In France, therefore, marabouts are regarded as diviners, from both legal and fiscal standpoints. This story constitutes a clear example of a typical French “naturalization” of the role of marabouts.

What I hope to have shown, through the description of these five interpretive frameworks, is that it is possible to shed light on how the figure of the marabout has been constructed through an examination of historical and social contexts, which themselves, in turn, influence and orient marabouts toward exercising a particular aspect of their rich and diverse functions. These different representations and statuses, of which marabouts

are more or less in control, and which they also more or less manipulate, should also be seen within the range of marabouts' own strategies and tactics.

I found additional evidence to support the key influence of context in this process of disaggregation and polarization of marabouts' roles when I conducted research on Islam in Martinique. A person, whom I will call a "no frills," basic marabout – that is to say a man of no particular learning – came to the French Indies to work as a diviner-protector, for which people in the Caribbean have a particular appetite, and also to do a bit of trading. This man was the initial catalyst for Islam in Martinique: He gathered around himself the West Africans living on the island, with Palestinians (some of whom had been on Martinique for generations, but did not practice Islam); he is the one who converted some of Martinique's first Muslims He founded the first prayer hall, the first Koranic school, the first *Halal* butcher shop (Kuczynski 2010). What I wish to demonstrate here is that, in the context of Martinique, this marabout was able to reconnect with the roles of Koranic teacher, and also those of founder and organizer of religious spaces, roles which were no longer available in Paris.

II.3. A last point about how personal and professional statuses undergo transformations in the context of migration concerns what I call the "democratization of the *baraka*," i.e. the explosion of marabouts' activities outside of the literate and often holy lineages, whose prerogatives have most often been hereditary. This phenomenon, already at work in African cities, has amplified significantly in Paris. In addition to social circumstances, French administrative measures, and the leaderless character of the maraboutic environment, there is the fact that marabouts have left their relatives and larger social

groups behind in Africa; the latter are indeed very remote. The result has been a weakening of social control, along with greater possibilities for individual trajectories. It is not always clear, in Paris, what family an individual comes from, and it is not necessarily important. Conversely, those left behind in Africa are not always aware of what a "junior," who struck out on his own, is actually doing in Paris. All that matters is a person's success. In addition to all of this, there is the fact that a non-African clientele will know nothing of the particular aura conferred by belonging to a literate or saintly lineage. Because of these factors, therefore, some men who have been outsiders to maraboutic groups, have emancipated themselves from traditional structures and from the traditional relationship to a master, in order to build, for themselves, prosperous marabout careers in France. These "self-made men" carry out (or try to do so), sometimes successfully, the same functions exercised by the heirs of maraboutic lineages, whether famous or obscure, or by those who, not being scions of maraboutic families, studied with a master for a long time. A great diversity of trajectories characterizes the milieu of Parisian marabouts.

III. Practices recomposed.

III.1. I will start with a reminder: talismanic use of the Koran is widespread throughout the Islamic world: from India to Morocco, and from Turkey to the Comoros Islands. The condemnation since the fourteenth century of this particular, "heretical" (*bid'a*) form of Islam by those who would purify the religion, has not prevented the wide expansion of propitiatory and protective practices within Islam. Indeed, there are scholars who consider this talismanic culture as a "marker of unity in the Muslim world." (Hamès

2007: 89). This is a culture that marabouts introduced into France by taking it out of its Muslim social context. Second, T. Fahd (1987) and C. Hamès (2007) have shown that the magical register, now widespread in the Muslim world, was constituted by incorporating, in the earliest days of Islam, the practices and beliefs long-circulating in the Arabian Peninsula. These authors have also shown the significant inroads made by Hellenistic magical beliefs, particularly astrological beliefs, in the eighth and especially tenth centuries, A.D. This Arabic esoteric culture made its way into West Africa, from, at least, the twelfth century, A.D. As time went by, this body of knowledge was ever more influenced by the Koran. According to C. Hamès magical-religious writings and practices, widespread as they are throughout the Islamic world, have retained, everywhere, their original foundational elements. In the various countries where they are used, one finds only certain "cultural and social variations." (*ibid*.: 94) What is the situation in Paris?

III.2. What struck me in the field was the thirst for knowledge that marabouts communicated, and which probably goes beyond the Islamic register I just described. This attitude accords with what one consistently finds in Africa: an interest for Indian or European practices, like "magnetism," or simply for non-Islamic magical-religious practices. The case of Diallo, at the beginning of this article, clearly shows the combinations of types of knowledge that make up each marabout's toolkit; these are mobilized according to encounters, needs, etc. In France many marabouts venture off the beaten paths of the "science of secrets." To take Diallo's example, once more, he followed "radiothesia" or "dowsing divination" classes for several years, took an interest

in Jewish mysticism (Kabala), in hypnosis, and in sleeping divination, which he learned in the French West Indies. One marabout learned cartomancy, and another took an interest in the properties of plants indigenous to France. Examples abound. Clearly, this knowledge is extraordinarily dynamic.

III.3. How are these types of knowledges organized in the practices of individual marabouts? Research shows that juxtapositions or alternations of practices predominate. A marabout might use tarot cards with a given client or situation. He might go to an Islamic divination practice in another case, or possibly use both techniques simultaneously. The logic that emerges here is the principle of "clipping" (theorized by Bastide 1955), that is to say, the juxtaposing of various practices and techniques, while avoiding jumbles or clashes. Another avenue concerns reinterpreting practices: lexicons change, and what were once clients' "genies" are now their "guardian angels." One notes the emergence of a whole "new age" vocabulary: "bad vibes," for instance, might replace the *sejtan* or "evil eye." These adjustments are likely accommodations to contemporary clients, and do not represent truly new symbolic structures. On the other hand, certain interpretive paradigms are now considered obsolete in France. For instance, the wide array of possible causes of misfortune that prevails in Africa, has become much reduced in France. Negative characterizations of nature, for instance, or soul-devouring witches, tend to be replaced by the malicious acts of Genies and Angels. But the principal cause of misfortune, by far, is the harm done by another human being, and by, specifically, the envy of a close friend or relative. The French context, moreover, has propelled an internal reorganization of African practices. Thus, one of the most canonical practices in

Africa, that of dreaming as divination technique (*listikhâr*), has become supplanted in certain cases by the throwing of cowries, a practice frowned upon by Islam, but which has the significant advantage of taking less time than dream divination. And time, in Paris, is key.

On the other hand, it is also significant that some aspects of maraboutic practices have not undergone such modifications. Practices and techniques that interface directly with clients – divination, sacrificial practices, and lexicons – can change much more than, for example, the writing of talismans, which are not usually seen by clients. An analysis of approximately ten amulets written by six different Parisian marabouts for the same French female client (consulting for a classic case of unrequited love), provides strong evidence of cultural permanence (Kuczynski 2007). Indeed, these talismans are all connected to Islamic magic, as it is practiced in West Africa, and, as I mention above, throughout the Muslim world.

These various recompositions of maraboutic practice appear, for the moment, not to affect the hard nucleus of this "science of secrets," although there is evidence of numerous formal slippages, as well as a slow process of simplification or erosion.

Conclusion

If one of the effects of religious globalization has been the proliferation of competitive service offers in a particular area, Parisian marabouts, have, in the last few years, contributed to the emergence of the particular form of Islam I describe in this article by harmonizing it with the demands of an urban clientele. However, marabouts have had competition from those Islamic currents who see themselves as more orthodox. The

latter, connecting to an older register of anti-marabout sentiment, seek to promote ways of dealing with misfortune strictly based on prophetic medicine and on the use of Koranic sacred words (*ruqiya*). These Islamic "purists" are themselves faced with competition from the *Salafiya*, a very literalist movement that admits only prayer and excludes all intercession. Simultaneous to these various developments, the individual, adventurous, trajectories of "religious entrepreneurs" (such as marabouts are) seem to be giving way to international religious groupings, who are ever busy filling Islamic libraries with their publications, and particularly on the world wide web. This new development also tends to erode the culture of secrecy, on which maraboutic practice has rested.

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Abstract

West-African religious entrepreneurs in France

West-African marabouts – Muslim deviners and healers – came to France and to other countries in Europe in the 1960's. This movement of the marabouts to France continued to the middle of the 1990's. The interesting fact about this migration is that it involved individuals and remained fragmented. The marabouts did not form a cohesive group but remained independant practitioners. At first their primary role was to serve the needs of the West-African immigrants, helping them to maintain their cultural and religious identity. However the role of the marabouts quickly grew to include clients of many cultural backgrounds. This contact with these other cultural groups modified their practices. Based on extensive fieldwork and on case studies on Parisian marabouts, this article analyzes both the changing and the more permanent features of their practices. In comparing the functions of marabouts in metropolitan France and in Martinique, we will emphasize the importance of the cultural, social and historical context on the evolution of their roles.

Keywords: marabouts, Paris, Islam, West-African migration, healing practices, religious entrepreneurs.

Résumé

Des petits entrepreneurs religieux ouest-africains en France

La venue en France et dans d'autres pays d'Europe, depuis les années 1960, de marabouts d'origine ouest africaine présente l'originalité d'être une migration individuelle qui, si elle a fait tache d'huile jusqu'au milieu des années 1990, est restée atomisée, ne donnant naissance à aucun groupement religieux mais à des « petits entrepreneurs religieux » indépendants. Si l'implantation des premiers arrivés a correspondu au besoin ressenti par les familles ouest-africaines immigrées de maintenir leur identité culturelle et religieuse, l'activité des marabouts s'est très vite concentrée sur des rôles plus ciblés ; elle s'est aussi ouverte vers d'autres publics au contact desquels les pratiques se sont modifiées. On analysera divers aspects de ces transformations et permanences en s'appuyant sur une connaissance approfondie des marabouts parisiens et sur des étude de cas. La comparaison de la présence des marabouts entre la France métropolitaine et la Martinique permettra de montrer le poids du contexte culturel, social et historique dans ces évolutions.

Mots clés: marabouts, Paris, islam, migration ouest-africaine, pratiques de soin, entrepreneurs religieux.