

**GENDER**

**Adeline Masquelier.** *Women and Islamic Revival in a West African Town.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009. xxviii + 343 pp. Glossary. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Paper: No price reported.

The structure of Adeline Masquelier's *Women and Islamic Revival in a West African Town* is metonymic of Hausa culture itself: its three chapters on women are hidden beneath the veil of the first five ethnography chapters, which trace Niger's precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial histories and the complexities of contemporary religious tensions in the past three decades. Masquelier illuminates local competition among ethnic Mawri Hausa in Dogondoutchi, Niger, between Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya Sufis as well as between both of them and a Middle Eastern-inspired anti-Sufi (Izala) religious movement. This competition provides the context for the charismatic movement of the megalomaniacal preacher Malam Awal (called Awaliya), which attempts to trump its predecessors in redefining local Islamic practice. While women are acknowledged in Mawri culture as the embodiments of tradition, they are also the prime targets of reformist groups, which seek to write Islam on the feminine, making women metonymic of Islam in their attire and behavior. The newcomer Awal assumes that women will acquiesce to their assigned position as pawns in his self-serving game, but as this account clarifies, women in Hausaland have never been passive in response to such pressure. Masquelier's analysis stands as a case study of Mawri women's own fluid responses to Awal's machinations.

Masquelier describes the remarkable showmanship that allowed Awal to step into the spotlight while Sufis and Izala reformists were preoccupied with their own struggle for primacy. Marketing himself as uniquely superior to every authority, whether political, Islamic, or traditional (*bori*), he promotes "a vision of Islam that is owed to both reformist and traditionalist interpretations of the Qur'an while nominally rejecting them both." His iconoclastic response to local traditional practices involves first embracing and then transforming them in a Machiavellian scheme to control practices he says he rejects; in the West he surely would be running for a major political office. But Awal underestimates Mawri women when he treads on their turf: weddings, attire, domesticity, and religious education. The nature and exclusivity of female control over these is clarified in the final three chapters: "How Is a Woman to Marry without a Bed?" (chapter 6); "Fashioning Womanhood" (chapter 7); and "The Fat Will Not Light the Fire" (chapter 8). Any man who tries to disenfranchise women in these arenas will lose credibility, regardless of his self-avowed connection to divinity.

In the 1980s Dogondoutchi was a peaceful, quiet village where one could sleep under the stars. Today it has become utterly transformed by the jarring cacophony of motors and amplified evangelism. Masquelier's account of this change is masterful, and this work will stand not only as a

definitive account of Dogondoutchi's recent history and development, but also as a case study of contemporary development in the region. Even more welcome is the account of women's own responses to male assumptions of predominance. Awal fails to understand the women he tries to control. It is curious, for example, that one of his major talking points is a prohibition on makeup: among Hausa women in Nigeria in the 1980s, even an American "Baturiya" would be criticized for *not* wearing makeup ("I see you forgot to finish getting dressed this morning—no eyeliner!"). Indeed, Awal's claim that even the smallest criticism leveled by a woman against her husband—even an errant husband—would consign her to hell is blatantly contrary to both the merciful premise of Islam and the Hausa concept of good intention (*nufi*), which allows forgiveness for unintentional faults consistent with human nature. The reader should not assume that Awal's misogynistic interpretation of Islam is anything but misguided.

Masquelier states in her closing remarks that her study has "highlighted the profoundly gendered dimension of Islam" (279), although she should have noted, rather, that it sheds light on a gendered *Mawri* impression of Islam. There is no singular, "uniform, homogenized Muslim tradition" (279)—only local interpretations of a religion founded on concepts of mercy, equity, and beneficence. These notions of the human condition remain as radically idealistic in the twenty-first century as they were in the seventh, at the establishment of Islam. What Masquelier has elucidated in this study is the nature of Mawri culture, not the nature of Islam. That said, hers is a magnificent study of the region and the people that will stand as definitive in our time.

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**Chima J. Korieh and Philomina Okeke-Ihejirika, eds. *Gendering Global Transformations: Gender, Culture, Race and Identity*. New York: Routledge, 2009. ix + 291 pp. Notes. Bibliography. About the Contributors. Index. \$95.00. Cloth.**

The agenda of *Gendering Global Transformations* is ambitious. The migrations of Africans are central to human history; interdisciplinary African studies should more efficiently examine the globalization and transnationalization of Africans worldwide. The book focuses on gender and social change in the twentieth century, exploring themes of "gender, race, culture and identity" (2). It foregrounds male–female struggles for social equality, particularly in developing nations and historically marginalized groups, including some in the African diaspora. Desiring to move beyond the "West versus the rest" analyses generated by older economic and geopolitical relationships, it contends that there are "new forms of exchange . . . within and across