

# Francophone Muslim intellectuals, Islamic associational life and religious authority in Burkina Faso

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## Abstract

The attention paid to the security threats hanging over Burkina Faso, while legitimate, has overshadowed the underlying transformations in Islamic associational life since the fall of President Blaise Compaoré in October 2014. This major political upheaval had a significant impact on the participation of Muslims in socio-political debates, the relations between generations and, more widely, the bases upon which religious authority is claimed. This article analyses the competition for religious leadership between Islamic actors in the public sphere in Burkina Faso by focusing mainly on francophone 'Muslim intellectuals'. First, the study shows the gap between the gerontocracy at the helm of the main Islamic associations and the Burkinabe youth, which widened throughout the 1990s and 2000s and came strongly to the fore after the popular uprising of October 2014. Second, taking advantage of the space left vacant by traditional community leaders during the transition process, some young francophone 'Muslim intellectuals' actively sought to portray themselves as the vehicles of a 'civil Islam' and strove to promote new forms of civic engagement through religion. Other Muslim organizations have also tried to take advantage of the new political context to strengthen their presence in the socio-political arena.

## Résumé

L'attention portée sur les menaces sécuritaires qui planent sur le Burkina Faso a éclipsé les transformations sous-jacentes qui sont en train de s'opérer dans le paysage associatif islamique du pays depuis le départ du président Blaise Compaoré en octobre 2014. Ce bouleversement politique a eu des conséquences significatives sur la participation des musulmans dans les débats sociopolitiques, les dynamiques intergénérationnelles et, plus largement, les bases sur lesquelles l'autorité religieuse est revendiquée. Cet article propose donc d'analyser la concurrence que se livrent les acteurs islamiques dans la sphère publique pour le leadership religieux en se focalisant principalement sur la perspective des « intellectuels musulmans » francophones. L'étude montre, d'une part, que le fossé croissant entre la gérontocratie aux commandes des grandes associations musulmanes et les jeunes, qui était jusque-là demeuré à l'état latent, s'est révélé avec force suivant l'insurrection populaire. D'autre part, profitant de l'espace laissé vacant par les porte-paroles traditionnels de la communauté durant le processus de transition, certains jeunes « intellectuels musulmans » francophones ont cherché activement à se présenter comme les véhicules d'un « islam civil » en promouvant de nouvelles formes d'engagement citoyen par le religieux afin de se positionner plus avantageusement dans le champ islamique.

## Introduction

Since the fall of President Blaise Compaoré on 31 October 2014 following a popular uprising that put an end to his twenty-seven years of rule, Burkina Faso, a country often depicted as a model of peaceful coexistence between religions (Langewiesche Reference Langewiesche2011; Audet Gosselin Reference Audet Gosselin2016), has been affected by radicalization and various episodes of violence. Long spared by the Sahel's armed groups, the country now finds itself at the heart of the region's troubles and has suffered a growing number of terrorist attacks since 2016 (ICG 2017; Nsaibia Reference Nsaibia2018; Nsaibia and Caleb Reference Nsaibia and Caleb2018). At first glance, the security threats and the actions of Ansaroul Islam – the country's first jihadist group – have pointed to the radicalization of some Muslims. However, the media's focus on these fears and numerous analyses of extremism in Burkina Faso, while legitimate, have overshadowed the underlying transformations in Islamic associational life since the 2014 uprising. Indeed, this major political upheaval had a significant impact on the participation of Muslims in socio-political debates, the relations between generations and, more widely, the bases upon which religious authority is claimed.

This article analyses the competition for religious leadership between Islamic actors in the public sphere in Burkina Faso since 2014 by asking three questions: what are the foundations upon which different Islamic organizations and their leaders rely in order to claim the right to speak in the name of the country's 'Muslim community'? What is the influence of the state on religious authority through the designation of privileged interlocutors in its relations with Muslims? Finally, what capacity is there for individuals and groups belonging to usually marginalized social categories, such as youths, to publicly express divergent opinions in relation to the discourses of the 'official' or 'self-proclaimed' representatives of their community?

In this regard, the recent developments in Burkina Faso echo the diversification of the types and sources of religious authority observed elsewhere in the contemporary Muslim world. More individuals and groups from different segments of society now claim the right to speak in the name of Islam (Eickelman and Piscatori Reference Eickelman and Piscatori2004 [1996]; Krämer and Schmidtke Reference Krämer and Schmidtke2006; Mandaville Reference Mandaville2007), including new types of 'intellectuals' who play a significant role in the public sphere (Bamyeh and Salvatore Reference Bamyeh, Salvatore, Salvatore, Tottoli and Rahimi2017). As is the case for the 'new secular clerics of Islam' represented by Muslim intellectuals or 'speakers' (Frégosi Reference Frégosi2004), the religious authority claimed by francophone Muslim leaders in Burkina Faso stems less from their classical religious knowledge (Arabic: 'ilm) than from their ability to engage in the public sphere to debate notions of the 'common good' (al-maṣlaḥa al-'amma) (Salvatore and Eickelman Reference Salvatore, Eickelman, Salvatore and Eickelman2006).

In recent years, the increased involvement of Burkinabe Muslim figures in the socio-political arena contrasts sharply with the broad consensus that has emerged in the literature regarding the specificity of Islam in Burkina Faso compared with other countries in the subregion. In his comparative study on the Sahel, Idrissa (Reference Idrissa2017) argued that Islam's apolitical character and 'quiescence' in Burkina Faso was exceptional. Echoing the works that have highlighted the political subordination and co-optation of Burkinabe Muslim elites (Otayek Reference Otayek1984; Reference Otayek1996; Cissé Reference Cissé1994; Kouanda Reference Kouanda, Kane and Triaud1998; Vanvyve Reference Vanvyve2015; Madore Reference Madore2016a: 46–55, 70–91), Samson (Reference Samson, Holder

and Dozon2018: 292–3) argued that ‘Islam in Burkina Faso is not part of a process of politicization’ and that it has ‘never represented a dissenting force’. Although Islam has become the majority religion, Footnote1 it is the Roman Catholic Church that, through its vast network of schools since the colonial period, has helped retain a virtual monopoly among the ruling elite in the Burkinabe post-colonial state (Otayek Reference Otayek, Constantin and Coulon1997; Somé Reference Somé2001; Bouron Reference Bouron2011). Even today, despite the rise of Pentecostal and evangelical movements and the advent of the Catholic Charismatic renewal since the 1990s (Laurent Reference Laurent2009 [2003]; Fancello Reference Fancello2007), Catholics still see themselves as a dominant religious minority because of their weight in the state apparatus and the prestige of their educational and health institutions (Kane Reference Kane2016).

This research is based on fieldwork carried out in Ouagadougou in 2011 and 2015. Interviews were conducted with leaders and activists from most of the main Islamic associations in the country. Footnote2 I focus on these national organizations because they are a privileged vehicle for Muslims who wish to invest in the public sphere and take a stand in socio-political debates. Aside from some prominent religious figures such as imams or preachers, it is usually the leaders and spokespersons of the national Islamic associations who are the most widely publicized through the media. The analysis focuses mainly on francophone ‘Muslim intellectuals’ from the Association of Muslim Pupils and Students in Burkina Faso (Association des Élèves et Étudiants Musulmans au Burkina or AEEMB) Footnote3 and the Circle of Islamic Studies, Research and Training (Cercle d’Études, de Recherches et de Formation Islamiques or CERFI). Footnote4 In Burkina Faso, an imaginaire (ideal) has been built around the status of the ‘intellectual’ to designate university students and graduates (Mazzocchetti Reference Mazzocchetti2009). Thus, by extension, Muslims who followed a francophone, secular or Christian school curriculum before joining the civil service or the official economic sector call themselves ‘Muslim intellectuals’. This category, which has wide acceptance among these actors, usually excludes Arabic speakers trained in Arab universities. Several studies have highlighted the importance of these francophone Muslims, who intervene more frequently in Burkina Faso's public sphere to take a stand on social issues and prescribe moral standards (Saint-Lary Reference Saint-Lary2011; Ouédraogo Reference Ouédraogo, Degorce, Kibora and Langewiesche2019; Madore Reference Madore2016a: 151–61; Reference Madore2016b) and elsewhere in West Africa (Miran-Guyon and Oyewolé Reference Miran-Guyon and Oyewolé2015; Sounaye Reference Sounaye2015; Camara and Bodian Reference Camara and Bodian2016).

This study is also based on the mainstream and Islamic press in an effort to highlight the public statements of Burkina Faso's main Muslim figures, on whom this article largely focuses. Analysis of the mainstream press is revealing of the influence and beneficial treatment Muslim leaders and Islamic associations enjoy in the media. It is therefore useful for examining the participation of groups usually excluded from dominant public debates and the power relations that underlie them.

First, an overview of the Islamic associational landscape in the Compaoré era will show that the gap between the gerontocracy at the helm of the main Islamic associations and Burkinabe youth, which widened throughout the 1990s and 2000s, came strongly to the fore after the popular uprising of October 2014. Many Muslims, including young people, who were previously reluctant to openly criticize the behaviour of their community leaders, severely denounced these leaders’ more or less tacit support for the former regime. This led the leaders of the Federation of Islamic Associations of

Burkina Faso (Fédération des Associations Islamiques du Burkina or FAIB) to give young people and Muslim intellectuals more space in the organization's leadership.

Second, the article will analyse various declarations and initiatives by Muslim actors that illustrate their desire to become more directly involved in national debates and position themselves more advantageously in the Burkinabe Islamic landscape. Taking advantage of the space left vacant by traditional community leaders during the transition process, some young francophone 'Muslim intellectuals' actively sought to portray themselves as the vehicles of a 'civil Islam' (Hefner Reference Hefner2011 [2000]) and strove to promote new forms of civic engagement through religion. Although they have not replaced the country's major religious authorities, which continue to exert considerable influence, this elite has nevertheless managed to make the AEEMB and especially the CERFI privileged intermediaries between Muslims and President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré's government. Other Muslim organizations have also tried to take advantage of the new political context to strengthen their presence in the socio-political arena, as evidenced by the stance of FAIB leaders in the 2015 elections, and later on the Religious Freedoms Bill in 2017.

### **From a change of political guard to a new Islamic leadership? Turmoil within the FAIB**

Throughout his presidency, Blaise Compaoré relied successfully on a classic neo-patrimonial model based on co-optation and clientelism with Muslim elites to ensure their support. The figure of Oumarou Kanazoé, who combined important economic and political roles in addition to that of religious leader, was central in this endeavour. The growing frustration of some of the Muslim youth with the gerontocracy at the head of their religious community, a frustration that had until then remained dormant, was openly voiced in the months following the popular uprising. This led to some notable changes in the FAIB.

#### Islamic associations under the Compaoré regime

In the early 1990s, following the adoption of structural adjustment programmes promoted by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the Compaoré government launched a comprehensive plan for the privatization of public enterprises. This plan offered major enrichment prospects for local economic actors. However, access to these opportunities was dependent on proximity to the ruling party, the Organisation pour la Démocratie Populaire – Mouvement du Travail – renamed Congrès pour la Démocratie et le Progrès in February 1996 – which had rapidly spread its tentacles across the key sectors of the Burkinabe economy (Harsch Reference Harsch2017: 140–58).

In this context, many Muslim entrepreneurs and businesspeople who held prominent positions in several sectors of the Burkinabe economy endeavoured to support the regime in place, more or less openly, to ensure the prosperity of their businesses. Many of these actors engaged in various patronage activities and thus gained a strong influence over their fellow Muslims (Cissé Reference Cissé2015: 16–17). Some of them were able to use their financial capital to establish themselves in the country's major Islamic associations, even though they did not have a formal religious education. For example, in the main Salafi association in the country, the Sunni Movement, while francophone Muslims had played a central role in the creation of the organization in 1973 and had been leading the movement for over twenty years (Cissé Reference Cissé2009; Kobo Reference Kobo2012),

activists started turning to wealthy, poorly educated businessmen to preside over the association from 2001.<sup>Footnote5</sup>

Entrepreneur Oumarou Kanazoé, a great 'patron of the Muslim community' (Cissé Reference Cissé2010), embodied more than anyone else the tacit agreement between the political and economic classes, and the influence of several economic actors in Islamic circles. Having amassed a colossal fortune under previous regimes, Kanazoé became president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Burkina Faso in November 1995 and of the National Council of Employers of Burkina Faso in 1997. In addition to these two positions, which he held until his death in October 2011, he was also a major fundraiser and donor for Blaise Compaoré's party. In 2007, Kanazoé was made honorary president of the Associative Federation for Peace and Progress with Blaise Compaoré (Fédération Associative pour la Paix et le Progrès avec Blaise Compaoré or FEDAP-BC), a 'civil society organization' that aimed 'to unite the forces of all the admirers of the Burkinabe head of state'.<sup>Footnote6</sup>

Beside his economic and political roles, Kanazoé was also very influential among his co-religionists. Throughout the serious internal crisis that shook the Sunni Movement between 1995 and 2006 – and led to the association being suspended and to the Great Mosque of Zangouettin in Ouagadougou being closed down twice (Cissé Reference Cissé2009: 18–28) – Kanazoé acted as a mediator between the Ministry of Territorial Administration and the movement's protagonists. He was particularly influential among members of the Muslim Community of Burkina Faso (Communauté Musulmane du Burkina Faso or CMBF), which, since its creation in 1962,<sup>Footnote7</sup> was considered to be one of the three main interlocutors of Muslims with the state, alongside the Sunni Movement and the Tijâniyya Islamic Community of Burkina Faso (Communauté Islamique de la Tijâniyya du Burkina Faso or CITBF).<sup>Footnote8</sup> The journalists assigned to cover the CMBF congress in 1997 pointed out that Aboubacar Sana, the association's new president, had been able to rely on Kanazoé's support. This support was significant since the latter had paid the expenses of all 500 delegates.<sup>Footnote9</sup> In 2004, Kanazoé was promoted to become leader of the CMBF, a post he had already held between 1977 and 1982. As for the Sunni Movement, the choice of this illiterate businessman marked the decline of francophone Muslims from the state administration in the CMBF leadership, where they had occupied a central place since the 1960s.<sup>Footnote10</sup>

In December 2005, Kanazoé also became leader of the new FAIB, the constituent congress of which he had personally paid for. The federation brought together over a hundred Islamic associations, including all the major ones in the country.<sup>Footnote11</sup> If the idea of such an organization went back as far as the 1980s,<sup>Footnote12</sup> the creation process was set in motion only in the early 2000s after the country witnessed an almost anarchic proliferation of self-styled Islamic groups.<sup>Footnote13</sup> One of FAIB's objectives is to 'represent the member associations at the national level and provide the community of Muslims in Burkina Faso with a unique spokesperson'.<sup>Footnote14</sup>

Although the AEEMB and the CERFI were among the six founding associations, they were excluded from the FAIB's 'presidium', which consisted of the presidents of CMBF, the Sunni Movement, CITBF and Ittihad Islami, all of whom had veto power. Although some individuals in the AEEMB and the CERFI had actively called for the unity of the Burkinabe umma in the 1990s and had taken concrete steps to achieve this goal after 2001,<sup>Footnote15</sup> representatives of these two organizations eventually had to content themselves with the positions of sixth and seventh vice

presidents of the FAIB and a few other deputy roles.<sup>Footnote16</sup> Despite the fact that, according to a book published by this association (Sawadogo et al. Reference Sawadogo, Gansonré and Ouibga2016: 23–4), CERFI members ‘felt that the structure had been taken away from them to go in a direction which was not the original direction’, its leaders preferred not to endanger the federation and, with it, the unity of the community.

According to Aboubacar Doukouré, a member of the FAIB leadership, the presidency was entrusted to Kanazoé:

because he was a key figure, because he is respected by everyone. Because of his age first, as he is over eighty years old. No one among us can compete. Then because of his beneficence because there is not a religious leader in our country or in any Islamic association that Kanazoé hasn't helped ... Because appointing younger people is a source of problems. As soon as we say ‘so-and-so is president’, the others will challenge [this decision].<sup>Footnote17</sup>

These words illustrate not only the importance of financial capital, but also the highly gerontocratic nature of Muslim community leadership in Burkina Faso. This was well summed up by a young interviewee: ‘The leaders [of the main Islamic associations] are the old and the rich. If you are young, you do not have a place.’<sup>Footnote18</sup> For the president of the CERFI between 2009 and 2015, the involvement of his association's young ‘intellectuals’ within the FAIB was ‘difficult’: ‘We try to be present because we think we can bring many things ... You cannot change things with a magic wand. We must go at everyone's pace.’<sup>Footnote19</sup>

Others also saw the workings of state power behind Kanazoé's appointment, which aimed to better domesticate Islam and its main representatives. However, the close – and barely hidden – ties of patronage uniting Kanazoé to the regime explained why the leaders of the major Islamic organizations remained subservient to the state throughout Compaoré's reign. Indeed, behind their apolitical facade, they contributed above all to the legitimization of power by being complacent with regard to its excesses and by seeking, on their own initiative or in response to a request from the state, to prevent any potential mobilization by Muslim activists. A good illustration of this was the case of the death of journalist Norbert Zongo in December 1998. Many Burkinabes saw it as a murder orchestrated by the regime, because Zongo had begun an investigation into the role of the ‘little president’ François Compaoré – the president's younger brother and adviser – in his driver's death. While President Compaoré faced his worst socio-political crisis since coming to power, representatives of the main Islamic organizations wrote an open letter to urge the population to maintain order and peace.<sup>Footnote20</sup> Another example is the participation of Muslim leaders in the National Day of Forgiveness (Journée Nationale du Pardon or JNP)<sup>Footnote21</sup> in March 2001 (Vanvyve Reference Vanvyve2015: 496–500).

Even though these leaders often held positions that were out of step with the growing resentment among the population – especially some Muslim youth – towards the Compaoré regime, for the most part young people were almost completely silent about the conduct of their elders. Many of the young Muslims with whom I spoke attach great importance to the traditional respect of the status associated with seniority – the ‘parents’ (elders) – and so many of them were reluctant to criticize their elders openly, despite their disagreements. Indeed, traditional Moaga culture, which is

predominant in Ouagadougou, is extremely hierarchical and gerontocratic. Respect for the authority of elders has a great impact on younger people's ability to speak out (Gruénais Reference Gruénais, Abélès and Collard1985; Laurent Reference Laurent2009 [2003]: 263–9). More broadly, Burkinabe society under Compaoré's presidency was marked by a generational divide that was expressed through the political, social and economic domination of the elders over the young despite the latter's demographic weight (Hilgers and Loada Reference Hilgers and Loada2013: 203–5). The remarks made by Issaka Sam, CERFI president between 1991 and 1997, are particularly evocative of the respect shown to 'elders':

[W]e are not the type who will dismiss the elders. The elders have done a lot. They were the guardians of religion. We are trying, as young people, to have very good relationships with them and gradually bring them to understand the changes that are taking place in this world ... It is important to try to adapt. Our relationship to them is therefore respectful, we recognize our elders' rights as elders, and we want to be able to work together forever because neither them nor we the youth can bring about positive changes alone.<sup>Footnote22</sup>

Intergenerational tensions within the community therefore remained largely unchanged throughout the 1990s and 2000s. For instance, no leader of the CERFI or the AEEMB publicly stated his true position on the national situation following the death of Norbert Zongo. They also remained silent about the participation of many of their elders in the JNP two years later. However, the generational divide deepened in 2013 when the establishment of a Senate was first mooted. The opposition believed that President Compaoré intended to use the new institution to revise Article 37 of the Constitution, which prevented him from standing again in the 2015 election.<sup>Footnote23</sup> The public intervention of FAIB's secretary general in September to endorse the project of establishing an upper house in the name of the 'Muslim community' had contributed to growing dissatisfaction with the leaders of the federation at a time when the Compaoré regime was becoming more and more unpopular.<sup>Footnote24</sup> Moreover, the hundred or so comments on Burkina24<sup>Footnote25</sup> and LeFaso.net<sup>Footnote26</sup> prompted by the news of FAIB's support for the Senate testified to the organization's legitimacy crisis among part of the population and among Muslims themselves. Indeed, internet users, including many who called themselves Muslims, vilified the FAIB leaders and especially its spokesman, who was 'a shame for Islam' and 'spoiled the name of Muslims'. Some portrayed the federation's leaders as illiterate businessmen guided by their bellies.

The AEEMB and the CERFI even distanced themselves very clearly from the FAIB's stance in a letter signed by their presidents and published in Burkinabe newspapers a few days later (Madore Reference Madore2016b: 17–21). Nevertheless, the exacerbation of intergenerational tensions had not yet led to open protest. As Vanvyve (Reference Vanvyve2016: 38) has pointed out, in spite of this episode, 'respect for the elders seems difficult to circumvent' for many young Muslims from the University of Ouagadougou involved in the AEEMB who 'have internalized this model of gerontocratic domination'. Far from being a situation unique to Burkina Faso, intergenerational – often conflictual – relations are at the heart of the dynamics structuring the Islamic field elsewhere in West Africa and are closely linked to issues of power and religious authority (Gomez-Perez et al. Reference Gomez-Perez, LeBlanc and Savadogo2009; Janson Reference Janson, Herrera and Bayat2010). The post-Compaoré era, however, has led to a significant challenge to the legitimacy of community representatives and to many public calls for profound changes within the FAIB.

### 'Nothing will ever be the same again' within the FAIB?

Although a broad coalition of actors of different ages, genders and socio-economic backgrounds were behind the popular uprising that led to the fall of the Compaoré regime in October 2014, the mobilization of a large number of young Burkinabe, through movements such as Balai Citoyen (Citizens' Broom), Collectif Anti-référendum (Anti-Referendum Collective) and Ça Suffit! (That's Enough!) or through social media, played a decisive role in the insurgency. Hagberg has spoken of a 'generational shift' (Reference Hagberg2015: 115–16) to describe the repercussions of this revolution. Many young people had become aware of their strength and ability to change things, and consequently nothing could be done without taking them into consideration.

This shift in mentality, encapsulated in the slogan 'Plus rien ne sera jamais comme avant' ('Nothing will ever be the same again'), had a significant impact on the Muslim community. Indeed, a growing number of Muslims, especially young people, started to publicly question the legitimacy of the elders who represented them at the FAIB and demanded that they answer for their lack of integrity in their support of the fallen regime. Calls for in-depth reforms within the federation multiplied and the long-awaited new departure was to take place after the holding of a congress at the FAIB. The mandate of FAIB leaders had expired in 2010, and the provisional system of rotating presidency, which had been put in place after Kanazoé's death in 2011, was dragging on.

The open letter to the FAIB leaders written by Sidgomdé Yusuf Ouédraogo, who claimed to be the 'spokesman of Muslim youth', saying 'aloud what many think very quietly', went along those lines. Although Ouédraogo is a Muslim unknown to the Islamic associational world, his text published in November 2014 summed up very well the frustrations shared by many young people I interviewed:

[G]overning the FAIB through a 'rotating monthly presidency' is more akin to unionism than religion ... When will the next convention be held? When will there be reforms to better convey the aspirations of the Muslims of Burkina Faso? ... The Muslim youth from every corner of the country expect changes in the operation of the FAIB in the same way that it contributed quantitatively and qualitatively to the fall of the Compaoré regime ... The time of yes-men is over. The time of attending conferences only for per diems is over. The time of acquaintances with power is over. Footnote27

Although most of the calls were more restrained, no young Muslims had ever criticized the leadership of their elders so openly. Other voices also condemned the silence and inaction of FAIB leaders, who 'turned a blind eye and feared to call out misbehaviour as people of other faiths have done, and brilliantly'. Footnote28 The preacher Ismaël Derra, close to the Salafi movements and a very popular figure among the youth of Ouagadougou, stated in January 2015 that it was necessary to review the 'governance of Muslim matters in Burkina Faso' in order to 'allow for a renewal which takes into account the spiritual aspirations of Muslims and their positioning in political, economic and social affairs'. Footnote29

The FAIB's fracture lines that were brought to light were not only generational but also regional. The Muslim elites in the west of the country, especially those in Bobo-Dioulasso, felt totally excluded from the federation's establishment process. Footnote30 It was therefore not surprising that the leaders of the Coordination of Western Islamic Associations (Coordination des Associations Islamiques de l'Ouest), a group of about forty Muslim organizations mostly active in Bobo-



Dioulasso, strongly criticized the leadership of the Ouagadougou elites. In a letter published in May 2015, its leaders criticized the FAIB not only for the continual postponements of a new congress, but also for the concentration of powers in the capital due to the absence of regional representations. They also called for the ‘outright resignation’ of its leaders:

If you are prepared to do anything to always maintain yourselves at the head of the FAIB, you live in the wrong era. The popular insurrection inshallah has opened everyone's eyes, especially Muslims’. We also firmly say that ‘nothing will be the same as before!’ ... No to incompetence and to trickeries of any kind; no to the attempted patrimonialization of the FAIB.<sup>Footnote31</sup>

After several postponements, the FAIB finally held its long-awaited congress in June 2015. At first glance, the decisions taken at the congress seemed to be going in the direction of a ‘change in continuity’ rather than in-depth reforms. Indeed, the rotating presidency between the four members of the presidium was maintained. However, their role was transformed into that of a kind of board of directors, as full executive powers were now entrusted to the executive secretariat.<sup>Footnote32</sup> In this sense, the appointment of Cheikh Sidi Mohamed Koné as National Executive Secretary marked an important development. Koné, the holder of a master's degree in economics and management from the University of Ouagadougou, was a financial inspector and adviser to the Court of Auditors at the time of his appointment. A highly respected figure, he had been active in the Muslim community since the late 1980s, when he was a member of the AEEMB; he was also president of the CERFI from 2006 to 2009.<sup>Footnote33</sup>

The choice of this ‘Muslim intellectual’ as the main spokesperson for the federation in its interactions with the media and in meetings with government officials demonstrated the willingness of long-time leaders of the FAIB to give greater responsibilities to Muslims with this type of profile who had previously struggled to make their voices heard. Maintaining the status quo would have been untenable, as the secretary general of the Coordination of Western Islamic Associations and co-signatory of the inflammatory letter sent by his organization to the leaders of the FAIB pointed out at the end of the congress: ‘There were no taboo issues ... Really, we've been truthful to each other, and face to face, because we say that, as a matter of fact, the scene of this country in turmoil has awakened all consciences, all truths.’<sup>Footnote34</sup>

In addition to Cheikh Sidi Mohamed Koné, other appointments made it possible for the FAIB to take some steps towards rejuvenation. For example, Mikailou Kéré, a former activist of the AEEMB and the CERFI who had been editor of the former Islamic monthly *La Preuve* (2007–11), was put in charge of communication at the FAIB. The federation, often criticized in this regard, has been quite active on Facebook since it created an account in 2016.<sup>Footnote35</sup> Long blamed for its lack of presence outside the capital, the FAIB started setting up regional representations. The unprecedented positions it took in the November 2015 elections and with regard to the Religious Freedoms Bill in January 2017 later confirmed that these changes were not just cosmetic. Meanwhile, some AEEMB and CERFI leaders took advantage of the federation's lethargy until the holding of its congress in June 2015 to engage actively in the transition process on behalf of the Muslim community.

### **From ‘electoral cattle’ to political force? Muslims outside the spiritual arena**

In the first few months following the October 2014 uprising, some individuals in the CERFI and AEEMB francophone circles started to engage actively in the public sphere in an attempt to redefine the civic participation of the country's Muslim community and, in so doing, to seek to pose as legitimate representatives of their fellow Muslims. Other Islamic associations, including the FAIB, also became active outside the spiritual arena. After staying out of the socio-political debates since the Senate episode, the federation made very notable statements suggesting that the long-held accommodating attitudes of Burkinabe Muslim elites towards the state no longer seemed to be so unwavering.

#### Francophone 'Muslim intellectuals' and the promotion of a civil Islam

For many young francophone 'intellectuals' from the CERFI and the AEEMB, the events that led to the fall of President Compaoré were a good illustration of the lack of involvement of Muslim community leaders in major issues of national interest. This editorial of the AEEMB's *An-Nasr* Trimestriel newsletter, published in January 2015, was quite explicit in this regard:

Individual Muslims actively participated in this revolution. But it must be recognized that Muslims did not take part in this process as a community ... We dare to believe that the community of Muslims ... will now play its role, which is to educate and challenge political actors about their responsibilities to work honestly for the people.<sup>Footnote36</sup>

As early as the 1990s, and especially in the 2000s, some individuals gravitating around the two associations tried to promote Islam as a moral framework for the practice of citizenship. However, their ability to effectively influence the behaviour of their co-religionists remained limited because of their cautiousness in directly denouncing the drifts of the Compaoré regime and their silence on the actions of their elders at the centre of the clientelist mechanisms of power (Madore Reference Madore2016a: 152–61). Taking advantage of the silence observed by FAIB leaders over the course of the transition and the sympathy they had gained for their stance during the Senate crisis, CERFI leaders, and to a lesser extent the AEEMB, strove to better position their organization in the Islamic landscape. To do this, they put forward their generational differences by presenting themselves as being more able than the older generation to defend the concerns of their religious community in public debates. As pointed out by Masquelier and Soares (Reference Masquelier, Soares, Masquelier and Soares2016), positioning oneself as a 'young' Muslim can be a way of challenging established hierarchies by claiming leadership and a moral and intellectual superiority over the 'old' generation.

It was in those terms that Imam Ismaël Tiendrébéogo spoke in a televised interview in 2017. He explained that the people belonging to the 'old generation', who were for the most part illiterate or educated in Arabic, 'can be easily manipulated by political interests', whereas young francophone 'Muslim intellectuals' have a 'certain understanding of the [political] context' and 'a knowledge of power relations' that 'may help to enlighten the old generation'.<sup>Footnote37</sup> This echoed the comments of a former AEEMB activist, who deplored the fact that 'politicians are taking advantage of the Muslim community by treating them as electoral cattle'.<sup>Footnote38</sup> In the same vein, for Imam Tiégo Tientoré, the 'elders' in other large Islamic associations are 'more malleable' and more likely to be tempted by 'conscience buying':

They do not have a general political culture ... We're the ones who have one ... We live in a poor country too. If you hand 100,000 or 200,000 [CFA francs] to someone, it has

an effect [laughs] ... This is not the case in the Catholic Church; the cardinal does not need 100,000, 200,000 from the president ... They are safe from need. So they are free to say things ... It's difficult with our elders, partly due to poverty. But [in] the AEEMB/CERFI, thank God, people are civil servants and workers. Footnote39

The case of Moussa Nombo, the president of the CERFI between 2009 and 2015, was a particularly good illustration of the aspirations of these francophone Muslims, who often lacked formal training in the Islamic sciences, to act as 'opinion leaders' within their community (Triaud Reference Triaud2010). An administrator of financial services at the Ministry of Economy and Finance, Nombo's academic education between 1992 and 1997 concluded with a master's degree in legal sciences from the University of Ouagadougou. He initially considered himself to be more active as a 'union leader' before he opted for 'religious life' and became an AEEMB activist. Moussa Nombo held various positions of responsibility in the association, then joined the CERFI in 2004. He explained to me that his arrival at the head of the CERFI in December 2009 marked a 'generational change' within the association, because, besides him, other young people, among whom were former leaders of the AEEMB, had been assigned to the national office in decision-making roles. One of the three major strategic objectives of his second term (2013–15) was to 'make the CERFI an organization that could contribute to the awakening of civic awareness in Burkina Faso by promoting Islamic and republican values'. Footnote40

Far from advocating the hegemony of a religious framework over society, their objective was to promote forms of civic engagement through religion – a 'civil Islam' (Hefner Reference Hefner2011 [2000]) – or, to borrow the words of Salvatore (Reference Salvatore2016), an 'Islamic civility' that can foster democratic change. As the transitional government had just been installed, Moussa Nombo and the leader of the AEEMB made a statement in which they called on the members of the National Transitional Council (Conseil National de Transition) – responsible for organizing the presidential and legislative elections of 2015 – to tackle social problems, to demonstrate 'exemplary ethics in managing public affairs', and to avoid 'regionalist, religious, corporatist favouritism'. Footnote41 In July 2015, the CERFI president challenged the state on the importance of 'fair treatment of the various religious groups in the representativeness of decision-making bodies and public governance'. Footnote42 In September, he also expressed to the prime minister his 'bitterness' with regard to the 'selective management of religious concerns' by the government, which had ignored the Friday prayer in the introduction of the non-stop working day in public services. Footnote43

Throughout 2015, Moussa Nombo's focus on civic engagement resulted in several initiatives that received significant media coverage. In June, the CERFI organized an event on the theme 'Muslim intellectuals: being with God to build a better city', which included a round table entitled 'Different perspectives on the nation's situation'. The event, which I attended as an observer, turned out to be very successful both in terms of the number of participants – about 200 people – and the nature of the often-animated debate with the audience. The Muslims present appeared to be determined that their religious community would take advantage of the new context and finally have a voice in socio-political debates in a way that was commensurate with its demographic strength.

In his opening address, Moussa Nombo explained that this event was an opportunity for 'Muslim elites and leaders' to discuss the national situation in order to better fulfil their role as 'enlighteners'

in the Muslim community. By making a veiled reference to the criticism that the FAIB had faced, he said that Muslims now expected their elites to act in a way that went beyond the cultural sphere, something he said the CERFI was keen to contribute to by engaging more in socio-political issues. This meeting was part of a major national campaign of ‘civic awareness’ among Muslims on the theme ‘spirituality and citizenship in the light of Islamic teachings’. In July 2015, citizenship issues were the main subject of Imam Tiégo Tiemtoré’s sermon at the Eid al-Fitr.<sup>Footnote44</sup> For the first time in its history, the CERFI was also involved in overseeing the November elections by providing 121 volunteers who had been trained by the Independent National Electoral Commission (Commission Électorale Nationale Indépendante).<sup>Footnote45</sup>

While it is difficult to measure the real impact of these initiatives on the mobilization of Muslims, francophone ‘Muslim intellectuals’ have undoubtedly become rising figures in the country’s Islamic landscape since the October 2014 uprising. The leaders of the AEEMB and the CERFI benefit from the fact that the Catholic hierarchy and the Pastoral Service for the Training and Support of Leaders (Service Pastoral pour la Formation et l’Accompagnement des Responsables) seem to be willing to promote these two associations as the official voices of Burkinabe Islam.<sup>Footnote46</sup> Indeed, the Catholic Student Youth (Jeunesse Étudiante Catholique) maintains close relations with the AEEMB in schools and universities. Representatives of the Catholic Church regularly collaborate with CERFI and AEEMB members on events related to interreligious coexistence and dialogue.

Furthermore, francophone Muslim leaders became increasingly solicited to act as intermediaries between their community and the state, at the expense of other Islamic associations and their leaders who used to hold a much more dominant position under the Compaoré regime. The numerous political appointments by the Kaboré regime of people affiliated with the AEEMB or the CERFI are very evocative in this respect. In April 2016, Imam Ismaël Tiendrébéogo was made president of the National Observatory of Religious Facts (Observatoire National des Faits Religieux). Moussa Nombo was one of two representatives of the Muslim community at the Constitutional Commission, an institution responsible for the drafting of a constitution. In 2017, Souleymane Koné, the new president of the CERFI (2016–17), was appointed ambassador to Kuwait, while Imam Tiégo Tiemtoré was made Knight of the National Order. Finally, in October 2018, the CERFI mosque was preferred to the great mosque of the CMBF, the Sunni Movement’s Zangouettin Mosque or that of Aboubacar Doukouré in Hamdallaye<sup>Footnote47</sup> for holding the ‘religious service of the Muslim community’ as part of the commemoration of the popular uprising and the resistance to the September 2015 coup.

While these various political appointments and symbolic recognitions by the state helped to further legitimize francophone Muslim leaders, they could undermine the latter’s aspirations to embody a civil Islam that could play a role in the consolidation of democracy. Indeed, the Kaboré regime seems to want to pursue the clientelism used by its predecessor, but targeting other Islamic associations and leaders. Nevertheless, in addition to the CERFI and the AEEMB, several Burkinabe Muslim organizations, including FAIB, became more directly involved in the country’s national debates in order to defend the common good.

#### The FAIB: from ‘Moon Commission’ to new major player on the Burkinabe political scene?

Since its creation, the FAIB’s inaction on the socio-political front has meant that many Muslims compare it with a ‘Moon Commission’, the sole purpose of which is to observe lunar phases and

announce the official dates of Islamic holidays.<sup>Footnote48</sup> However, things seem to have changed since the 2015 congress, as evidenced by the publication of a letter from the federation in the press and on its Facebook page shortly before the presidential and legislative elections of November 2015. The FAIB then called on all Burkinabe to participate massively in both polls, because '[t]his act will be the key to change as wanted and expressed by the people in October 2014' and these 'votes are important for achieving change in Burkina Faso, in the light of both the Muslim faith and the values upheld and defended by Islam'.<sup>Footnote49</sup> Among the four criteria defining the choice of a good candidate were the need to have 'a clear and realistic project for society' and to advocate 'social cohesion and equity among men, irrespective of their religious affiliation'. This last point was particularly interesting in the context of the outcry caused by Ablassé Ouédraogo's interview in *Jeune Afrique* magazine a few months earlier.<sup>Footnote50</sup>

This public statement by the FAIB, adding to that by the Coordination of Western Islamic Associations in September 2015, which drew a broad list of 'concerns of Muslims in Burkina Faso' for the attention of the political class, which was warned that they would be 'very scrupulous in the way they would vote',<sup>Footnote51</sup> was completely new in its form of expression. Indeed, historically, the main Muslim leaders of the country limited themselves to simple blessings for holding peaceful elections without seeking to formally express the grievances of the community or to mobilize their fellow Muslims to take part in the polls.<sup>Footnote52</sup>

The Religious Freedoms Bill was another reminder of the change that had been taking place within the FAIB. At the cabinet meeting on 30 November 2016, the government announced the first details of the law, which was intended to fill the legal gap surrounding the definition and effective application by the state of the principle of *laïcité* (secularism), particularly regulations governing the construction of places of worship and the creation of religious associations.<sup>Footnote53</sup> The bill was to be examined by the National Assembly in a special session in January 2017. On 7 January, the FAIB issued a long press release to express its 'deep concern over certain provisions of the text', which could 'undermine freedom of conscience and worship' and 'most likely have damaging consequences on our living together'.<sup>Footnote54</sup> The ten articles that were considered problematic and were widely commented on in the document raised several concerns about the possible prohibition of street prayers; the need for formal or non-formal spaces of prayer in public services; the right for women to wear the veil in public administration; the right to pray and wear religious clothing at work for Muslim teachers; and the right for Muslim pupils' and students' associations in public institutions to organize activities and events. The FAIB concluded its statement by calling for the withdrawal of the bill.

Many Muslims warmly welcomed the FAIB press release, arguing that it defended the interests of the community. On the federation's Facebook page, the press release was shared nearly 1,000 times and received comments from nearly 700 people,<sup>Footnote55</sup> which was a very unusually high number of reactions for a post. Faced with this controversy, the Minister of State and Minister of Territorial Administration, Decentralization and Internal Security discussed the matter with a delegation of the FAIB two days later and informed them that the government had decided to withdraw the bill. On 11 January, representatives of the largest opposition party, the Union pour le Progrès et le Changement, met with FAIB officials to show their support. Finally, shortly afterwards, it was President Kaboré's turn to speak to the federation's leaders about the bill. During this exchange, Cheikh Sidi Mohamed Koné said he wanted 'a *laïcité* that can guarantee peace between the different

religious communities of this country' and alerted the head of state to the difficulties Islamic educational institutions confront and the desire of Muslims to be heard in the process of drafting the new constitution.<sup>Footnote56</sup>

In the past, the Burkina Faso state had already had to back down on a few occasions in the face of Muslims' discontent, especially regarding the state's involvement in the organization of the hajj. However, the speed with which the government retreated on the Religious Freedoms Bill and the way in which several politicians, both in government and in opposition, sought to spare the sensibilities of FAIB leaders attested to a potential shift of paradigm, which started after the fall of Blaise Compaoré. Until then, Muslim elites had almost always offered unconditional support to those in power.

## **Conclusion**

For Zaman (Reference Zaman2002), the scale of the challenges faced by ulama in the contemporary Muslim world is unprecedented as their religious authority is challenged by new intellectuals educated in Western secular universities and often without formal training in Islamic sciences. However, as he has pointed out, many theologians have nevertheless managed to adapt in order to preserve or even strengthen their position. In Burkina Faso, great religious figures who studied in prestigious universities in the Arab world still have a strong influence in the religious sphere. Indeed, the Salafi sermons and preachings of Ismaël Derra (Al-Azhar University), Mohamad Kindo (Islamic University of Madinah) and Mohamad Sawadogo (Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University of Riyadh) find an important echo among some young Muslims, are widely broadcast on Islamic radio Al Houda (Savadogo and Gomez-Perez Reference Savadogo and Gomez-Perez2011) and are shared on the internet (Madore Reference Madore2016c; Madore and Audet Gosselin Reference Madore, Audet Gosselin, Degorce, Kibora and Langewiesche2019). The leaders of the Sufi order, the Tijâniyya, Aboubacar Doukouré (Islamic University of Madinah) and Aboubacar Maïga II (Al-Azhar University), also attract a large number of followers (Dassetto et al. Reference Dassetto, Laurent and Ouédraogo2012; Vitale Reference Vitale2012). This is all the more the case since, even if French has become an increasingly legitimate language for the propagation of Islam, national languages remain essential to rally a large non-francophone audience that speaks Mooré, Dioula or Fulfulde.

Although francophone 'Muslim intellectuals' have not succeeded in replacing traditional religious elites, they have actively participated in significant transformations in the Muslim community of Burkina Faso since the departure of President Compaoré in October 2014. They were able to take advantage of the new political situation to position themselves more advantageously in the competition for religious leadership among Muslim actors in the public sphere. Some francophone figures from the CERFI and the AEEMB sought to differentiate themselves from the 'old generation' – criticized for their close proximity to the previous regime – by presenting themselves as the main vehicles of a civil Islam, which would ultimately contribute to the democratization of the country. While it is still too early to conclude that there have been lasting changes, the issue of Muslim citizen participation has never been tackled so much by Islamic structures and their leaders in the country's history.

While religious knowledge remains essential, the legitimacy and authority of leaders of Muslim organizations in Burkina Faso are increasingly derived from their ability to engage in the public

sphere to debate notions of the ‘common good’ in relation to Islam and to defend the aspirations of their fellow Muslims. At a time when we can witness the emergence of an Islamic public sphere in most of West Africa (Launay and Soares Reference Launay and Soares1999; Holder Reference Holder2009), this ability is now essential for leaders to assert themselves in the highly competitive field of Islamic associations and to claim the right to speak in the name of the ‘community’. While the media discourse on jihad in the Sahel in recent years has helped fuel concerns about Islam and politics in the region, recent developments in Burkina Faso point to many realities about these Muslim communities that are less mediatized but often more important, and are often overshadowed by acts of violence. The increased participation of Muslims in the political arena should therefore not be understood as the rise of ‘Islamism’ in Burkina Faso, but as a sign that the elites’ traditional ‘apoliticism’ may well be a thing of the past.

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## **Footnotes**

1 The proportion of Muslims in Burkina Faso has more than doubled in half a century: according to the 1960–61 census, Muslims made up 27.5 per cent of the population in Upper Volta (against 68.7 per cent animists and 3.7 per cent Catholics); according to figures from the last census in 2006, Muslims accounted for 60.5 per cent of the population against 23.2 per cent Christians. See ‘Enquête démographique par sondage en République de Haute-Volta 1960–1961 (Tome I)’ <[https://www.odsef.fss.ulaval.ca/sites/odsef.fss.ulaval.ca/files/fonds\\_gp/c-doc\\_365\\_odsef.pdf](https://www.odsef.fss.ulaval.ca/sites/odsef.fss.ulaval.ca/files/fonds_gp/c-doc_365_odsef.pdf)>, accessed 29 January 2018; ‘Recensement général de la population et de l’habitation au Burkina Faso (RGPH) en 2006’ <<http://www.insd.bf/n/index.php/publications/18-publications/enumerations-and-censuses/141-general-census-of-the-population-and-of-the-dwelling-in-burkina-faso-rgph-in-2006>>, accessed 20 January 2018.

2 Association des Élèves et Étudiants Musulmans au Burkina (AEEMB), Cercle d’Études, de Recherches et de Formation Islamiques (CERFI), Communauté Musulmane du Burkina Faso (CMBF), Fédération des Associations Islamiques du Burkina (FAIB), Ittihad Islami and Mouvement Sunnite (Sunni Movement).

3 Officially recognized in 1986, the AEEMB aims to promote Islam in the francophone educational community. The association has been informally active under other names since the 1970s: Union Discipline Croyance (Discipline Belief Union), Troupe Muhammad (Muhammad Troop) and Association Musulmane des Scolaires Voltaïques (Muslim Association of Voltaic Schools).

4 The CERFI, created in 1989, is a kind of extension of the AEEMB for activists who have entered the labour market.

5 Aboubacar Compaoré, a transporter who cannot read French or Arabic, took over the presidency of the Sunni Movement between 2001 and 2007. Adama Nikiéma, the current president since 2007, is a merchant from Ouagadougou, and is also illiterate.

6 ‘Soutien à Blaise Compaoré: la FEDAP-BC pour mieux canaliser les forces’, Sidwaya, 16 October 2007 <<https://lefaso.net/spip.php?article24004>>, accessed 24 November 2017.

7 Formerly Communauté Musulmane de Haute-Volta (CMHV).

8 Formerly Association Islamique de la Tijâniyya, founded in 1978.

9 ‘Ziniaré: AG statutaire de la communauté musulmane’, Sidwaya, 24–25 December 1997.

10 Toumani Triandé is a good example. Appointed general secretary of the association in 1962, this teacher by training, who was notably a museologist, deputy and minister, presided over the CMHV/CMBF from 1981 to 1983 and from 1986 to 1997.

11 Interview with FAIB leaders, Ouagadougou, 28 April 2015.

12 Interview with Souleymane Ouédraogo, former president of the Sunni Movement (1973–88), Ouagadougou, 5 November 2011.

13 Interview with FAIB leaders, Ouagadougou, 28 April 2015.

14 ‘Récépissé de déclaration d'association n°2006-078/MATD/SG/DGLPAP/DOASOC du 07 mars 2006’ <[http://www.legiburkina.bf/m/Sommaires\\_JO/Récépissé\\_MATD\\_2006\\_00078.htm](http://www.legiburkina.bf/m/Sommaires_JO/Récépissé_MATD_2006_00078.htm)>, accessed 25 November 2017.

15 In June 2001, CERFI members organized the ‘Conference of Muslim Leaders and Intellectuals of Burkina Faso’, which was intended as a forum to lay the groundwork for an ‘organizational unit’ of the country's Muslims, to which the leaders of the country's eighty-five Islamic associations were invited. See ‘Forum des musulmans: des jalons d'une unité organisationnelle’, Sidwaya, 19 June 2001.

16 ‘Récépissé de déclaration d'association n°2006-078/MATD/SG/DGLPAP/DOASOC du 07 mars 2006’ <[http://www.legiburkina.bf/m/Sommaires\\_JO/Récépissé\\_MATD\\_2006\\_00078.htm](http://www.legiburkina.bf/m/Sommaires_JO/Récépissé_MATD_2006_00078.htm)>, accessed 25 November 2017.

17 Interview with Aboubacar Doukouré, founder and spiritual leader of Ittihad Islami, and a member of the FAIB presidium, Ouagadougou, 15 April 2015.

18 Interview with a former AEEMB activist, Ouagadougou, 24 April 2015.

19 Interview with Moussa Nombo, former CERFI president (2009–15), Ouagadougou, 16 June 2015.

20 ‘Déclaration des associations islamiques du Burkina Faso sur la situation nationale’, L'Observateur Paalga, 4 January 1999.

21 This event, held under the aegis of religious and customary authorities as well as former Burkinabe heads of state, was intended as a national mea culpa for all political crimes committed since independence – the most notable being the murders of Thomas Sankara and investigative



journalist Norbert Zongo – without identifying any culprits for these crimes. Aboubacar Sana, Aboubacar Doukouré and Aboubacar Maïga II were the three representatives of Muslims in the JNP presidium.

22 ‘CERFI: la foi et le reste’, *L’Observateur Paalga*, 5 February 1997.

23 Article 37 of the Constitution stipulates that the president can serve no more than two five-year terms.

24 In June and July 2013, tens of thousands of people demonstrated in Ouagadougou and other places in the country. In the face of popular discontent, the president suspended the process of setting up the Senate.

25 ‘Sénat: la communauté musulmane soutient la mise en place de l’Institution’, 14 September 2013 <<https://www.burkina24.com/2013/09/14/senat-la-communaute-musulmane-soutien-la-mise-en-place-de-linstitution>>, accessed 30 January 2020.

26 ‘Mise en place du SENAT: le soutien franc des musulmans du Burkina’, 15 September 2013 <<https://lefaso.net/spip.php?article55892>>, accessed 30 January 2020.

27 ‘Lettre ouverte au Présidium de la Fédération des associations islamiques du Burkina’, 30 November 2014 <<https://lefaso.net/spip.php?article62053>>, accessed 30 November 2014.

28 ‘Vie politique nationale: la FAIB muette comme toujours’, *Le vrai visage de l’islam* 21, 5 December 2014–5 January 2015. For example, in a pastoral letter signed by all the bishops of Burkina Faso and published in July 2013, the Catholic Church claimed to reject the establishment of the Senate and drew the government’s attention to the threats that its establishment placed on social peace.

29 ‘Cheikh Ismaël Derra: “Beaucoup de responsables musulmans ne méritent pas leur place”’, *L’Autre Regard* 22, 5 January–5 February 2015.

30 ‘Musulmans du Burkina: pas de fédération restrictive’, *L’Observateur Paalga*, 23 October 2003.

31 ‘La Coordination de l’Ouest exige la démission du bureau fédéral’, *Sidwaya*, 7 May 2015.

32 ‘Imam Khalidou Ilboudo: “Nous devons refonder notre politique de la FAIB”’, *L’Autre Regard* 28, 5 July–5 August 2015.

33 Interview with Cheikh Sidi Mohamed Koné, an AEEMB pioneer and former CERFI president (2006–09), Ouagadougou, 21 May 2015.

34 ‘1er congrès ordinaire de la fédération des associations islamiques du Burkina Faso’, Radiodiffusion-Télévision du Burkina, 16 June 2015 <<https://youtu.be/wsy9M7t9vEo>>, accessed 23 November 2018.

35 See <<https://www.facebook.com/FAIB.Burkina>>.

36 ‘Situation politique du Burkina Faso: le rôle de la communauté des musulmans’, *An-Nasr Trimestriel* 54, January–March 2015.

- 37 'Le Grand déballage avec Imam I. Tiendrébéogo', Burkina Info TV, 11 July 2017 <<https://youtu.be/IwPvkH0EjUQ>>, accessed 26 November 2018.
- 38 Interview with a former AEEMB activist, Ouagadougou, 24 April 2015.
- 39 Interview with Tiégo Tiemtoré, imam of the AEEMB/CERFI, Ouagadougou, 1 May 2015.
- 40 Interview with Moussa Nombo, former CERFI president (2009–15), Ouagadougou, 16 June 2015.
- 41 'Insurrection populaire au Burkina: le message conjoint du CERFI et de l'AEEMB', 28 November 2014 <<https://lefaso.net/spip.php?article62037>>, accessed 30 November 2014.
- 42 'Ramadan: rupture collective du jeûne avec l'ambassadeur de France au Burkina', 13 July 2015 <<https://lefaso.net/spip.php?article65812>>, accessed 13 July 2015.
- 43 'Journée continue à la fonction publique: le CERFI dénonce une non-prise en compte des préoccupations des musulmans', Le Pays, 10 September 2015.
- 44 'Ramadan 2015: "Épargner le Burkina des images désastreuses et poignantes de populations faméliques, traversant les frontières..."', imam Tiégo Tiemtoré', 20 July 2015 <<https://lefaso.net/spip.php?article65929>>, accessed 22 July 2015.
- 45 'Élections du 29 November 2015: le CERFI déploiera 121 superviseurs', 23 November 2015 <<http://lefaso.net/spip.php?article68214>>, accessed 24 November 2015.
- 46 I thank one of the external reviewers for pointing this out.
- 47 An area of Ouagadougou.
- 48 This is, however, to be qualified, since the leaders of FAIB called for greater equity in the treatment of religions by the state at the Consultative Council on Political Reforms (Conseil Consultatif sur les Réformes Politiques) in 2011 and the National Forum on Secularism (Forum National sur la Laïcité) in September 2012.
- 49 'Élections 2015: la communauté musulmane définit les critères d'un bon choix', 14 November 2015 <<https://lefaso.net/spip.php?article68019>>, accessed 14 November 2015.
- 50 As a candidate in the presidential election, he presented the 'three main assets' that he thought gave him a good chance to win: 'I am Moagha of the central plateau, and the Mossis are a strong component of Burkina Faso. I am also a Muslim, which is not nothing in a country where 70% of people are too.' See 'Ablassé Ouédraogo: "J'ai toutes mes chances à la présidentielle d'octobre"', Jeune Afrique, 8 June 2015 <<https://www.jeuneafrique.com/234008/politique/burkina-ablass-ouedraogo-j-ai-toutes-mes-chances-la-pr-sidentielle-d-octobre/>>, accessed 29 September 2017.
- 51 'Lutte contre l'homosexualité au Faso: les musulmans de l'Ouest haussent le ton', 13 September 2015 <<https://lefaso.net/spip.php?article66830>>, accessed 14 September 2015; 'Lutte contre le terrorisme: le cheval de bataille du CERFI', Le Pays, 2 April 2016.
- 52 'Ramadan: la présidentielle au cœur des prières', Le Pays, 4 November 2005; 'Musulmans et chrétiens ont prié pour une élection apaisée', Sidwaya, 17 November 2010.

53 'Conseil des ministres: pour un encadrement de l'exercice des libertés de religion', *Le Pays*, 1 December 2016.

54 'Projet de loi sur les libertés religieuses: les associations islamiques demandent le retrait', 7 January 2017 <<https://lefaso.net/spip.php?article75098>>, accessed 8 January 2017.

55 'Communiqué FAIB relatif au projet de loi sur les libertés religieuses au Burkina', FAIB, 7 January 2017 <<https://www.facebook.com/FAIB.Burkina/posts/255830204837153>>, accessed 15 January 2017.

56 'Liberté religieuse: après le retrait du projet de loi, la FAIB est satisfaite et le dit à Roch Kaboré', 17 January 2017 <<http://www.fasozine.com/actualite/politique/662-liberte-religieuse-apres-le-retrait-du-projet-de-loi-la-faib-exprime-sa-satisfaction-a-roch-kabore.html>>, accessed 19 April 2017.

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