

Spring 2010

History 248/348: Colloquium in African History: Islam in Africa

Rm 260-007, Th 3:15-5:05

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Objectives

Between 200 and 300 million Muslims live on the African continent, representing about 20% of the entire Muslim world. Though people were practicing Islam in parts of North Africa and Ethiopia almost immediately after the religion's emergence, and have been practicing the faith in parts of West Africa for over 1000 years, many still see African Islam as an "alien" religion, particularly in the sub-Saharan parts of the continent. Furthermore, many specialists on Islam present African Muslims as deviant from or at the least marginal to the main development of the faith, which for them centers on the Middle East. Yet the relationships African Muslims have had with the broader Islamic tradition have been far more complex than can be accounted for by any model that stresses differences between a "core" and a "periphery". The experiences of Muslims globally reflect the diversity one would expect to find in any 1400 year-old religious tradition that has been drawn upon by nearly a fifth of humanity, a diversity that is as present within the Middle East as it is within Africa. Such diversity poses a serious interpretive challenge for historians and other scholars: how to talk about what it has meant to be Muslim in Africa when Islam seems to mean so many different things to so many different people, there and elsewhere?

Faced with such a question, many have sought refuge in the tools of sociology and anthropology—they have interpreted religion as either a form of politics or a form of culture, and then analyzed it in individual, local occurrences accordingly. Such an approach has great validity, yet it also serves to detach African Muslims from what is obviously an intellectual and spiritual heritage connecting people across vast stretches of time and space. Needless to say, it also creates pictures of peoples' behavior that differ quite radically from the ways they understand their own lives. African Muslims are not alone when they resist suggestions that their most deeply held beliefs are merely a product of socioeconomic variables or "custom."

It is into these quandaries that this course is designed to plunge us. Beginning with a methodological discussion and a quick overview of the modalities of the Islamic tradition's expansion and transformation in sub-Saharan Africa, we will proceed roughly chronologically through the adoption, endogenization and elaboration of this tradition by African Muslims. We will constantly pay attention to the interplay of religion, politics, culture and society, and to the ways a tradition can influence over someone who is nonetheless transforming that tradition radically. Above all, we will try to gain insight into the worldviews and lives of Africans who have considered themselves Muslims and to understand how and why those worldviews and experiences changed.

Readings

The following books, assigned as required readings, are available for purchase from the Stanford Bookstore:

David Robinson, *Muslim Societies in African History*

Beverly Mack and Jean Boyd, *One Woman's Jihad*

Cheikh Hamidou Kane, *Ambiguous Adventure*

Adeline Masquelier, *Women and Islamic Revival in a West African Town*

A course reading containing additional required material is available for purchase from Field Copy and will be sold mid-day during the first week of class in the basement of Building 200. The price of the reader includes the cost of securing copyright clearances.

For those who do not already own a Qur'ân, two good full-text versions are available on-line. Perhaps preferable is the version at <http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/ArabicScript/sindex.htm>. It provides not only a sura "menu", but also "facing" English/Arabic versions and RealPlayer recitations. There are also four English interpretations given at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/htq/index.htm>. One of these has "facing" Arabic text and pronunciation guide. In some cases the "translations" at sacred-texts are better than those at islamicity, so some students might find it useful to examine both sets.

The following major reference works are either on the shelves or in the "Information Center" stacks of Green Library:

Levtzion and Pouwels (eds.), *The History of Islam in Africa* [hereafter HIA]

The Encyclopaedia of Islam (New Edition) ([now on line](#)), must connect on campus or by proxy)

Holt, Lambton and Lewis (eds.), *Cambridge History of Islam*

Index Islamicus (quarterly index of works on Islam; [also now on line](#))

You may also find the standard surveys of Islamic history useful. The two best are Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (1 vol., new edition) and Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (3 vols., avail. online).

The following "classic" overviews of the topic are outdated and not part of the core readings for the course, but may provide helpful background information:

Spencer Trimingham, *History of Islam in West Africa; The Sufi Orders in Islam; Islam in East*

Africa; The Influence of Islam upon Africa (2nd ed.); and *Islam in Africa*

Finally, some readings are available in full-text versions on the web. Many, but not all, of these are "hot-linked" from the syllabus and all are indicated with a "W".

Assignments

Undergraduate students (248)

Weekly discussion comment/question (10% of final grade)

Students will post short (200-300 wd), formal responses to each week's readings on our CourseWork forum by 9am on the day of class, and make an effort to look at and respond to one another's postings.

Book review and presentation on it (25% of final grade)

Each student will choose one book or group of readings from the "ancillary" lists on the syllabus and write a short review (1000 wds) of it. Reviews should be formal, polished, critically balanced and reflect careful reading. At the end of the relevant class meeting, the student will make a short, polished, formal presentation on the book and its significance for our discussion. A paper copy of the review is due at the end of that meeting.

Short assignment (20% of final grade)

See below for details. Can be submitted any time but no later than the start of class on 5/27 (or 5/13, where indicated).

Research paper (30% of final grade)

Students will carry out original individual research on a topic of interest and write a mid-length (3000-4000 wd) research paper on it using library sources. Students must consult with me on topics and must email me with their topic selection no later than 5/4. The final draft of the paper is due 6/8 at 12:00 noon.

Attendance and participation in all class meetings (15% of final grade)

Timely and uninterrupted attendance at all class meetings is a necessary but insufficient condition for a participation grade of "B"; students must also participate actively and collegially in all class discussions. Attending without having prepared reading assignments places an unfair burden on one's classmates and is thus very uncollegial, as is dominating a conversation or failing to listen attentively to a fellow student's remarks.

Graduate students (348)

Weekly discussion comment/question (10% of final grade)

Students will post short (200-300 wd), formal responses to each week's readings on our CourseWork forum by 9am on the day of class, and make an effort to look at and respond to one another's postings.

Three book reviews and presentations on two of them (40% of final grade)

Each student will choose three books or groups of readings from three different "ancillary" lists on the syllabus and write three short reviews (1000 wds) of them. Reviews should be formal, polished, critically balanced and reflect careful reading. At the end of two relevant class meeting, the student will make a short, polished, formal presentation on the book(s) and its significance for our discussion. Reviews for readings presented on are due in class at that time; the third review can be submitted at any time but must have been received by no later than the start of class on 5/27.

Historiography paper (40% of final grade)

Each student will write a mid-length (4000-5000 wd) historiographic essay surveying the existing literature on one of the topics addressed in class or on some closely related topic. Topics must be approved in advance by the instructor. Due 6/8 at 12:00 noon.

Attendance and participation in all class meetings (10% of final grade)

Timely and uninterrupted attendance at all class meetings is a necessary but insufficient condition for a participation grade of "B"; students must also participate actively and collegially in all class

discussions. Attending without having prepared reading assignments places an unfair burden on one's classmates and is thus very uncollegial, as is dominating a conversation or failing to listen attentively to a fellow student's remarks.

Grading Guidelines

Attendance at all class meetings and timely completion of requirements are mandatory. Late papers will be penalized one step (ie. A- to B+) for each day of tardiness. If you have a valid medical or other extenuating circumstance, please talk to the instructor well in advance of the deadline about the possibility of an extension. No extensions will be granted on or after the due date of a requirement except in the case of a dire emergency.

All written work will be evaluated for how effectively it presents and sustains a focused thesis reflecting thorough understanding of the course material and original analytic reflection upon it. An effective essay or response paper is a polished one, eschewing mechanical, grammatical and stylistic flaws. **Word limits will be strictly enforced, and grades will be lowered for exceeding them.**

In-class presentations should be well-rehearsed and as efficient as possible (remember you are making use of everyone's time). They should reflect careful reading of the book under consideration, while also helping to place our shared reading in a wider context.

In all cases and for all requirements, a grade of "A" will only be given to reflect performance above and beyond the instructor's expectations.

Honor Code

Violating the Honor Code is a serious offence, even when the violation is unintentional. The text of the Honor Code is available at: www.stanford.edu/dept/vpsa/judicialaffairs/honor_code.htm . You are responsible for understanding the University rules regarding academic integrity; you should familiarize yourself with the code if you have not already done so. In brief, conduct prohibited by the Honor Code includes all forms of academic dishonesty, among them unauthorized collaboration, representing as one's own work the work of another (including plagiarism, lack of citation and relexification), or resubmitting work (in whole or part) already submitted for credit in another course. If you have any questions about these matters, see the instructor during office hours.

Provost's Statement Concerning Students with Disabilities

Students who have a disability which may necessitate an academic accommodation or the use of auxiliary aids and services in class must initiate the request with the Disability Resource Center (DRC). The DRC will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend appropriate accommodations, and prepare a verification letter dated in the current academic term in which the request is being made. Please contact the DRC as soon as possible; timely notice is needed to arrange for appropriate accommodations (phone 723-1066; TDD 725-1067).

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

Weekly comment/question postings

Students will post responses to each week's readings on our CourseWork forum. These responses should not simply summarize the readings, but rather try to indicate the significant conclusions drawn from the readings taken as a whole, identify problems of method, theory, argument or evidence in the readings, and ask provocative questions intended to prime our discussions. Postings should be between 200 and 300 words in length and written in formal prose. All postings should be made no later than 9am on the Thursday the readings are to be discussed. Students are strongly encouraged to read one another's postings before the class meets and to comment on them when possible. The grade for this assignment will take into account how well you have engaged your colleagues' postings either on the forum or in discussion.

Book reviews and presentations

A book review should provide a brief (<300 wd) overview of the material read, discuss its significance to the broader topic of Islam in Africa, and analyze its strengths and weaknesses. Resist the temptation to be overly critical; to paraphrase Kenneth Burke, we should learn to read books, not fear them. Even a bad book accomplishes many useful things. Reviews should be formal and polished. If you need models for reviews, good ones can be found in the *Journal of African History*, *Comparatives Studies in Society and History*, and the *American Historical Review*. Presentations should also be formal, well-organized and rehearsed. Grades for presentations will be based on how efficiently they convey the argument and significance of a book and relate it to the week's discussion more generally.

Research paper (undergraduates)

The research paper should investigate some topic closely related to the theme of the course but about which we have either not had any substantial reading or only addressed a portion thereof. Since not all topics are equally well supported by available materials, students must formulate their topic in consultation with the instructor. Papers should ideally draw on primary sources, but since that is often not possible, secondary sources should be of high quality and peer reviewed, and papers should address the reliability of all evidence, primary and secondary. The paper will be graded on its mechanics (spelling, grammar, intelligibility, flow), quality of argumentation (logical progressions, inferences, engagement with existing theories), and use of evidence (quantity, quality, interpretation of, and awareness of limitations of).

Historiography paper (graduates)

Each student will choose one week's topic or subtopic and become an expert on those readings and the broader literature on the topic. Students should read extensively to prepare for this paper (a minimum of five additional books or article equivalents) and present their findings in a formal paper (4000-5000 wd). In most cases the ancillary readings in the syllabus for each week will provide a starting point for your bibliography; in other cases students will have to start from scratch. All students are encouraged to consult with me on the sufficiency of their bibliographies. Papers should provide a brief overview of the materials read, but must also discuss in detail the theoretical and methodological differences among the works, the development of the literature over time, and the assumptions that remain shared and uninterrogated across the works, and should identify both overarching source problems and suggest new directions forward. Papers should be modeled on the longer review essays in the *Journal of African History* and the *American Historical Review*.

Short assignments

Undergraduates must complete one of the following assignments by the start of class on 5/27 (except option 1 which must be completed by 5/13):

Short assignments:

1. Write an evaluation of the archival materials on colonial-era hajj in the Gold Coast distributed in class on 5/6. What can these sources tell us about the experiences of Muslims under European rule? About twentieth-century Islamic practices in Africa more generally? Present your findings in essay form (c.1500 wds).
2. Choose any two objects depicted in René Bravmann's *African Islam* (available from the instructor) and discuss them in relation to the overarching themes of the course. You may find Bravmann's essay in *HIA* a useful reference/introduction. Present your findings in essay form (c.1500 wds).
3. Choose a piece of important Islamic architecture from sub-Saharan Africa, investigate its history, its stylistic features, its role in local social and cultural life, and its significance for our understanding of the history of Islam in its location or region. Present your findings either in essay form (c.1500 wds), as a PowerPoint presentation using visual aids with text (c. 1200 wds), or as a website.
4. Attend two or more of the events connected to the "Muslim Societies in Africa" series organized by the Center for African Studies and the Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies and write a short essay (c.1500 wds) discussing them and relating them to the themes of the course.

Submission of work

Any formal written work submitted by email must be sent as Word (.doc or .docx) files. Other file formats (pdf, rtf, iWork/Pages files not directly readable by Word, etc.) will not be accepted and will be counted late. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that his/her file is readable.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

1. Introduction (4/1)

2. Studying African Religious History, Studying Islam (4/8)

- 1) Okot P'Bitek, *African Religions in Western Scholarship* (Nairobi, 1970), chs. 6-8, 10-12 (pp. 40-69, 80-119) (C)
- 2) [Peter Brown, "Learning and Imagination," 3-21](#) (W)
- 3) Robinson, *Muslim Societies in African History*

Ancillary

- *Special issue of *Journal of Global History* on Islamic history as global history, 2:2 (2007)
- *Marshal Hodgson, *Rethinking World History*
- *Marshal Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vols. 1-2
- Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints and The Rise of Western Christendom*, Ch. 11
- V.I. Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa*

3. Early Sources (4/15)

- 1) selection from al-Bakri in J.F.P. Hopkins and N. Levtzion, eds. and trans., *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge U P, 1981) (C)
- 2) selection from Ibn Battuta in J.F.P. Hopkins and N. Levtzion, eds. and trans., *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge U P, 1981) (C)
- 3) from Paolo de Moraes Farias, *Arabic Medieval Inscriptions from the Republic of Mali* (Oxford, 2003) (**handouts**)

Ancillary

- Religious conversion debate: R. Horton, "African Conversion," *Africa* 41 (1971); H. Fisher, "Conversion Reconsidered," *Africa* 43 (1973); R. Horton, "On the Rationality of Conversion," *Africa* 43 (1973); H. Fisher, "The Juggernaut's Apologia," *Africa* 55 (1985); J.D.Y. Peel, "The Pastor and the Babalawo," *Africa* 60 (1990); [J.Peel, "For Who Hath Despised the Day of Small Things?" *CSSH* 37 \(1995\), 581-607](#) ; L. Sanneh, "Translatability in Islam and in Christianity in Africa: A Thematic Approach," in *Religion in Africa: Experience and Expression*, ed. by Thomas D. Blakely et al. (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1994) (all but last W)
- Levtzion, *Ancient Ghana and Mali*
- *P.F. de Moraes Farias, *Arabic Medieval Inscriptions from the Republic of Mali* (Oxford, 2003)
 - M.N. Pearson, *Port Cities and Intruders*
 - Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar*
 - R. Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent*
 - M. Horton, *Shanga*

4. Chronicles: Songhay and after (4/22)

- 1) [John Hunwick, "Secular Power and Religious Authority in Muslim Society," *Journal of African History* 37 \(1996\), 175-194.](#) (W)
- 2) Selections from Muhammad al-Sa'dî, *Tarîkh al-sudân* (Intro, Chs. 1-7, 12-13, 21-25) (C)
- 3) Paolo de Moraes Farias, "Reclaiming Space for Epigraphy from the Timbuktu Chronicles," in *Arabic Medieval Inscriptions from the Republic of Mali* (Oxford, 2003), lxix-cxii. (C)

Ancillary

Muhammad Kâtî, *Tarîkh al-fattâsh*

Hunwick *Sharî'a in Songhai*

S.M. Cissoko, *Tombouctou et l'empire songhay*

E. Saad, *Social History of Timbuktu*

M. Abitbol, *Tombouctou et les Arma, de la conquête marocaine du Soudan nigérien en 1591 à l'hégémonie de l'Empire Peul du Macina en 1833*

Louis Brenner, *The Shehus of Kukawa*

R. Cohen, *The Kanuri of Bornu*

Periplus of the Erythraean Sea

5. From the Arma to the slave trade: a West African Islamic middle period? (4/29)

- a) Ahmad Baba al-Timbukti, *Mi'raj al-su'ud ila nayl hukm mujallab al-sud*, trans. Bernard Barbour and Michelle Jacobs, in *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa*, vol. 1, *Islam and the Ideology of Enslavement*, ed. J.R. Willis (London, 1985), 125-138. (C)
- b) [Yahya Ould el-Bara, "The Life of Shaykh Sidi al-Mukhtar al-Kunti," in *The Meanings of Timbuktu*](#) (W)
- c) [Mahamane Mahamoudou, "The Works of Shaykh Sidi al-Mukhtar al-Kunti," in *Meanings of Timbuktu*](#) (W)
- d) [Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh, "A Man of Letters in Timbuktu: al-Shaykh Sidi Muhammad al-Kunti," *Meanings of Timbuktu*](#) (W)

Ancillary

Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley, 2006)

George Brooks, *Landlords and Strangers*

Slavery and Islam: [Searing, "Islam, Slavery and Jihad in West Africa," *History Compass* 4:5 \(2006\), 761-779.](#) ; Willis, ed., *Slaves and Slavery in Africa*, vol. 1, intro, and vol. 2, chs. 2, 5, and 7;

Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, 2nd ed., chs. 1, 2, 5.

6. Globalization/localization and reform (5/6)

- a) Murray Last, "Reform in West Africa: the Jihād Movements of the Nineteenth Century," in *History of West Africa*, vol. 2, ed. J.F.A. Ajayi and Michael Crowder (London, 1971), 1-29. (C)
- b) Usuman dan Fodio, *Kitāb al-farq*, in "Kitāb al-farq: A Work on the Habe Kingdoms Attributed to 'Ummān dan fodio" *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (1960), pp. 558-579 (W)
- c) Mack and Boyd, *One Woman's Jihad*

Ancillary

Ahmad ibn Tuwayr al-Jannah, *The Pilgrimage of Ahmad* (trans. H.T. Norris)
Loimeier and Seeseman, eds., *The Global Worlds of the Swahili* (Berlin, 2006)
*B. Scarcia Amoretti, *Islam in East Africa: New Sources* (1999)
*Reese, ed., *The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa* (Leiden, 2004)

7. Islam and colonial rule, the era of intermediaries and the rise of belief (5/13)

- a) Cheick Hamidou Kane, *Ambiguous Adventure* (P)
- b) R. Launay and B. F. Soares, "The Formation of an 'Islamic sphere' in French Colonial West Africa," *Economy and Society* 28 (1999), 497-519. (W)
- c) [Allan Christelow, "Islamic Law and Judicial Practice in Nigeria: An Historical Perspective," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 22:1 \(2002\), 185-204](#) (W)
- d) Muhammad Sani Umar, "Mass Islamic Education and Emergence of Female 'ulama' in Northern Nigeria: Background, Trends, and Consequences" in Scott Reese, *The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa* (C)
- e) Hajj materials from British Gold Coast archives (**distributed in class**)

Ancillary

Simpson and Kresse, eds., *Struggling with History: Islam and Cosmopolitanism in the Western Indian Ocean*
Cheikh Anta Babou, *Fighting the Greater Jihad: Amadou Bamba*
*Robinson and Triaud, *La Tijaniyya*
*Triaud and Robinson, *Le Temps des marabouts*
Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*
Brenner, *West African Sufi*
*Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge*

8. Islam and new civil societies (5/20)

- a) Adeline Masquelier, *Women and Islamic Revival in a West African Town*
- b) Brian Larkin, "Bandir Music, Globalization, and Urban Experience in Nigeria," *Social Text* 22:4 (2004), 91-112. (W)

Ancillary

Fair, *Pastimes and Politics*

Caplan and Topan, eds., *Swahili Modernities: Culture, Politics, and Identity on the East Coast of Africa* (2004)

Cooper, *Marriage in Maradi*

*Soares, *Islam and the Prayer Economy*

9. African Muslims and the (new?) global spirituality (5/27)

- a) [Gayatri Spivak and Achille Mbembe interview, "Religion, Politics, Theology," *boundary 2* 34:2 \(2007\), 149-170. \(W\)](#)
- b) [Brian Larkin, "Ahmed Deedat and the Form of Islamic Evangelism," *Social Text* 2008 26\(3 96\):101-121 \(W\)](#)
- c) [Chanfi Ahmed](#) , "The *Wahubiri wa Kislamu* (Preachers of Islam) in East Africa," *Africa Today* 54:4 (2008), 2-18. (W)
- d) Susan O'Brien, "Pilgrimage, Power, and Identity: the Role of the Hajj in the Lives of Nigerian Hausa Bori Adepts," *Africa Today* 46, 3-4 (1999):11-42. (W)
- e) [Goolam Vahed and Shahid Vawda, "The Viability of Islamic Banking and Finance in a Capitalist Economy: A South African Case Study," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* \(W\)](#)
- f) "Saving Amina Lawal: Human Rights Symbolism and the Dangers of Colonialism," *Harvard Law Review* 117:7 (2004), 2342-2386 (C)

Ancillary

Kai Kresse, *Philosophizing in Mombasa: Knowledge, Islam and Intellectual Practice* (Edinburgh, 2007)

Diouf and Leichtman, eds., *New Perspectives on Islam in Senegal: Conversion, Migration, Wealth, Power and Femininity* (New York, 2008)

Sean Hanretta
Hist 248/348: Islam in Africa
Course Reader

- 1) Okot P'Bitek, *African Religions in Western Scholarship* (Nairobi, 1970), chs. 6-8, 10-12 (pp. 40-69, 80-119)
- 2) selection from al-Bakri in J.F.P. Hopkins and N. Levtzion, eds. and trans., *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge U P, 1981)
- 3) selection from Ibn Battuta in J.F.P. Hopkins and N. Levtzion, eds. and trans., *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge U P, 1981)
- 4) Selections from Muhammad al-Sa'dî, *Tarîkh al-sudân*, from John O. Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), intro, chs. 1-7, 12-13, 21-25.
- 5) Paolo de Moraes Farias, "Reclaiming Space for Epigraphy from the Timbuktu Chronicles," in *Arabic Medieval Inscriptions from the Republic of Mali* (Oxford, 2003), lxix-cxii.
- 6) Ahmad Baba al-Timbukti, *Mi'raj al-su'ud ila nayl hukm mujallab al-sud*, trans. Bernard Barbour and Michelle Jacobs, in *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa*, vol. 1, *Islam and the Ideology of Enslavement*, ed. J.R. Willis (London, 1985), 125-138.
- 7) Murray Last, "Reform in West Africa: the Jihâd Movements of the Nineteenth Century," in *History of West Africa*, vol. 2, ed. J.F.A. Ajayi and Michael Crowder (London, 1971), 1-29.
- 8) Muhammad Sani Umar, "Mass Islamic Education and Emergence of Female 'ulama' in Northern Nigeria: Background, Trends, and Consequences" in Scott Reese, *The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 99-120.
- 9) "Saving Amina Lawal: Human Rights Symbolism and the Dangers of Colonialism," *Harvard Law Review* 117:7 (2004), 2342-2386