The Racialization of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Study of the Kingdom of Buganda

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Islam *noir* is the ideology that Islam practiced by Africans south of the Sahara is inherently inferior to the Islam practiced in North Africa and the Middle East.[1] This perception of Islam on the African continent has been espoused by not only European imperial powers, but also historically by Islamic authorities, such as leading Sheikhs and Imams, in the Middle East.[2] From the nineteenth century to the present, this racialized idea has affected the way that Muslims in Sub-Saharan Africa have interacted with the wider world. However, Islam has been present in some areas of Sub-Saharan Africa since, as early as, the time of Muhammad (ca. seventh century CE) and prior to the modern era, Islamic scholars from cities such as Timbuktu were revered across the Muslim world.[3] The racialism of

1. Jean-Louis Triaud, "Giving a Name to Islam South of the Sahara: An Adventure in Taxonomy," *The Journal of African History* 55, no. 1 (2014): 3–15; Preben Kaarsholm, "Zanzibaris or Amakhuwa? Sufi Networks in South Africa, Mozambique, and the Indian Ocean," *The Journal of African History* 55, no. 2 (2014): 191–210.

2. Marie Miran-Guyon and Jean-Louis Triaud, "Islam," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern African History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 243–259. Scott Reese, "Islam in Africa/Africans in Islam," *The Journal of African History* 55, no. 1 (2014): 17–26; Benjamin F. Soares, "Notes on the Anthropological Study of Islam and Muslim Societies in Africa," *Culture and Religion* 1, no. 2 (2000): 277–285.

3. Rudolph Ware, *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied Know-*

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colonialism and Islamic reformist movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, though damaging to the lives of Muslims in Sub-Saharan Africa, have not undone the prestige of Islam in the region.[4]

By using the Kingdom of Buganda, in what is now southern Uganda, as a case study, this article will examine how European interactions with, and studies of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa have harmfully affected African Muslim populations and overly racialized Islam in this region. In the context of this article, racialized and racialization refer to the differences which can be seen in the ways that Islam and Muslims are treated by colonial powers, and later by academics, in Sub-Saharan Africa, as compared to Muslims in North Africa and the Middle East. The principal argument of this article is that the cause for this difference rests largely on the ideology of Islam *noir* and the discriminatory ways that black Africans, and thus black Muslims, have been treated historically by imperial powers and contemporaneously by historians. The idea of race, as created by imperial powers and supported through theories such as Islam *noir*, was, and continues to be, crucial to the way in which Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa interacts with and is views by those in the West. Through a review of pertinent literature, this study will seek to understand the historic roots of this issue and will examine how current historians are working to find new, and better ways of interacting with Sub-Saharan Islam. Though this article will not deal with this issue directly nor expand upon it (as it is beyond the scope of this study), it should be noted that the separation of Africa into

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ledge and History in West Africa (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014). See also: John O. Hunwick and Alida Jay Boye, *The Hidden Treasures of Timbuktu Historic City of Islamic Africa* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 2008), 82–90; Nehemia Levtzion and Randall Lee Pouwels, *The History of Islam in Africa* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2000).

4. Anne Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea: Family Networks in East Africa, 1860–1925* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003).

Saharan and Sub-Saharan is a problematic way of understanding the continent.[5] In this article, the term Sub-Saharan will be used for the sake of simplicity, but the understanding of this research is similar to that of Richard Reid's, which views the Sahara not as an obstacle, but rather as a sort of ocean, through which (though difficult) transport and communication has flowed for centuries.[6] This study will also examine the different experiences of African Muslims in Muslim minority versus majority areas during the colonial period, and how this affected the negative racialization of these communities. Though there is still a long way to go, publications from the past two decades show that historians and other scholars in the humanities are recognizing the problematic of the racialization of Islam – and religion more generally – in Sub-Saharan Africa and are working to correct this issue.[7]

Historic Encounters: Europe and Islam

Prior to the advent of Islam and the global spread of monotheism, ancient Greeks and Romans interacted with groups of people from what would become the Muslim world. As early as the

5. For the purposes of this study, Saharan Africa is defined as that area of the African continent in which the Saharan desert sits, and includes the following countries: Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Western Sahara, and Tunisia. Countries which reside in the Sahel region, such as Mali, Niger, Chad, and Sudan, to the south, are not included in this understanding of what is considered Saharan Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa is understood to be all those countries which reside to the south of the Sahara, beginning with those countries in the Sahel region. This understanding of the delineation between Sahara and Sub-Sahara is representative of how these regions have historically understood each other and their positionalities, especially regarding the issue of race.

6. Richard Reid, *A History of Modern Africa: 1800 to the Present* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2020), 28–30.

7. For examples of publications which work against the racialization of religion in SSA, see: Kwasi Konadu, *Our Own Way in This Part of the World* (Durham:

fourth century CE, Romans described Arab mercenaries they hired as barbaric, claiming they drank the blood of enemies they killed on the battlefield.[8] Otherizing outside groups, such as those from the Arab world, was and remains a prominent political technique used to gain and consolidate power.[9] To fully understand how Europeans have interacted with Islam on the African continent, we must understand how European ideas about what Islam is and who Muslims are, were formed over centuries of European-Muslim interactions. Furthermore, to dismantle long held ideas of the "Africanization" and thus inferiority of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa, we must first understand how these ideas were formed.

From the eleventh century, as interactions and exchanges between the European and Muslim world grew, the Islamic "other" formed, and helped determine how Europeans viewed themselves vis-à-vis this other. Unfavourable depictions of Muslims can be found in European literature throughout the medieval and early modern periods. Muslims, commonly depicted as treacherous, sexually deviant, and barbaric, were seen in contrast with the heroic, chivalrous, and noble illustrations of Christian crusaders and knights.[10] During the early modern period Europeans became more knowledgeable about Islam and the Muslim world, but much of the

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Duke University Press, 2019); Ware, *The Walking Qur'an*; Triaud, "Giving a Name to Islam South"; Benjamin Soares, "The Historiography of Islam in West Africa: An Anthropologist's View," *The Journal of African History* 55, no. 1 (2014): 27–36.

8. Frederick Quinn, *The Sum of All Heresies: The Image of Islam in Western Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 25–26.

9. David Blanks and Michael Frassetto, *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 1–10; Arolda Elbasani and Jelena Tosic, "Localized Islam(s): Interpreting Agents, Competing Narratives, and Experiences of Faith," *Nationalities Papers* 45, no. 4 (n.d.): 499–510.

10. Savvas Neocleous, "Byzantine-Muslim Conspiracies against the Crusades: History and Myth," *Journal of Medieval History* 36, no. 3 (2010): 253–274.

literature and common conceptions from that period still portrayed Islam and Muslims in an ignorant and biased way.[11]

Another explanation for the European otherization and demonization of Islam and Muslims is that during the medieval and early modern eras the Muslim world was decidedly more culturally advanced than Europe. This is illustrated in the scholarly achievements in mathematics and the sciences, architecture, the arts, and other areas of Muslim cultural life during the period. Additionally, the Muslim world continued to be a military threat to Europe until the modern era. The geographic proximity of the Muslim world to Europe surely aided the sense of cultural inferiority which helped Europeans form negative opinions of Muslims and Islam.[12] Despite that fact that Southern European authors wrote about Islam in a more tolerant way in the early modern period it is also evident that they still noticeably distrusted it.[13] However, this is not to say that the often-negative Christian-Muslim dynamic of the modern period is solely inherited from the early modern and medieval eras. Though some continuity can be seen, the global context shifted dramatically over the course of the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries as Christian Europe rose to global preeminence and the Muslim world lost influence; affecting how the Christian-Muslim relationship developed in the modern era.[14] However, the process of otherization and distrust between Europe and the Muslim world, which began prior to the advent of Islam, has some continuity in the current period.[15] A primary example of how this distrust

11. Quinn, *The Sum of All Heresies,* 70–76.
12. Quinn, *The Sum of All Heresies*, 35–38.
13. Richard Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 4–6.
14. James Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A Hisory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), Chapters 3–4.
15. Blanks and Frassetto, *Western Views of Islam,* Chapter 1.

persisted into the modern era can be seen in European imperial projects.

When European powers began colonizing the African continent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they encountered Islam in a context they had never experienced before. However, the European experience of the crusades and centuries of cultural, social, political, and scholarly exchange with the Muslim world, meant that they already had well-formed ideas regarding Islam and Muslims.[16] Their long-held suspicions about Islam and their distrust of Muslims ultimately affected how they interacted with Muslims in their colonial states. In areas where there was a Muslim majority, such as in areas of West Africa, colonial powers often sought to cooperate with Muslim leaders through the common system of indirect rule.[17] But this was always done in extremely tactical ways and when Muslim leaders accumulated too much power the colonial state was quick to suppress them.[18] In areas where Muslims were a minority, policies towards Islam varied from colony to colony, with some imperialistic powers being more openly anti-Islamic than others.[19] Notably, almost all European colonial states in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw a rise in the institutionalization of Islamic policies and identities. This especially affected the education of colonized Muslims and their ability to communicate with the wider

16. Quinn, *The Sum of All Heresies*, 18–21.
17. Benjamin Soares and Rudiger Seesemann, "Being as Good Muslims as Frenchmen: On Islam and Colonial Modernity in West Africa," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 39, no. 1 (2009): 91–120; Gregory Mann, "Fetishizing Religion: Allah Koura and French Islamic Policy in Late Colonial French Sudan (Mali)," *The Journal of African History* 44, no. 2 (2003): 263–282.
18. Mario Artur Machaqueiro, "Foes or Allies? Portuguese Colonial Policies Towards Islam in Mozambique and Guinea," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41, no. 5 (2013): 843–869.
19. David Motadel, "Islam and the European Empires," *The Historical Journal* 55, no. 3 (2012): 831–856.

Muslim world, amongst other things. This was a situation that had not existed prior to this point, and which would continue to affect Muslims in those areas well into the postcolonial era.[20]

As the history of interaction between the Muslim and Christian world shows, by the nineteenth century Europeans held well-formed ideas about the Islamic world. This included how Europeans viewed the legitimacy of Islam as a religious institution outside of the Islamic heartland.[21] It is equally important to note that Muslim perceptions from within the Islamic world also played an important role in shaping how European imperial powers came to understand African Muslims. Since the eleventh century, even as African Muslims made valuable scholarly contributions to the global Muslim academy, Islamic scholars and religious leaders from the Islamic heartland often regarded Islam and Muslims in Sub-Saharan Africa as inherently inferior. This became especially potent during the Islamic reformist movements of the nineteenth century. These movements gave rise to a tradition of Pan-Arab discourse which sought to delegitimize any forms of Islam that were not widely practiced and normatively accepted within the Arab world, such as Sufism. Sufism is the sect of Sunni Islam that the majority of African Muslims belong to, and Sufism is more widespread in Sub-Saharan Africa than it is in any other region of the world.[22] In the nineteenth century, to be a Muslim in Sub-Saharan Africa was to belong to this

20. Richard Reid, *Frontiers of Violence in North East Africa: Genealogies of Conflict since c.1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 109–115; James Brennan, "Constructing Arguments and Institutions of Islamic Belonging: M. O. Abbasi, Colonial Tanzania, and the Western Indian Ocean World, 1925–61," *The Journal of African History* 55, no. 2 (2014): 211–228; Chouki El Hamel, "Constructing a Diasporic Identity: Tracing the Origins of the Gnawa Spiritual Group in Morocco," *The Journal of African History* 49, no. 2 (2008): 241–260.
21. Soares, "The Historiography of Islam in West Africa."
22. See: Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea*; Kaarsholm, "Zanzibaris or Amakhuwa? Sufi Networks."

group. Accordingly, when nineteenth century Islamic reformist movements depicted Sufi practices as unorthodox and anti-Islamic, this, by extension, depicted African Muslims in Sub-Saharan Africa as unorthodox and un-Islamic.[23]

As the pan-Arab sentiment underlying this discourse reveals, this view of Sufi Muslims was highly racialized, and became even more so as pan-Arab movements began to gain further traction. The history of the critique of Sufism put forward by these movements is beyond the scope of this article, but it is important to note that this critique developed over time and affected the level of legitimacy which Muslims in Sub-Saharan Africa were awarded by their coreligionists in the Islamic heartland. Amongst European imperial powers this racialized way of viewing Islam and Muslims in Sub-Saharan Africa was called Islam *noir*.[24]

Islam *noir*, beginning as a French colonial ideology, affected how all European powers interacted with Muslims and Islam in their Sub-Saharan African colonies in the nineteenth to twentieth centuries. In addition to the discriminating view of African Muslims that this doctrine espoused, it also led European powers to actively marginalize Islam within their colonies. This ranged from limiting the autonomy of Muslim leaders to underfunding Muslim education to suppressing Muslims' ability to communicate with the wider Muslim world, and much more.[25] The marginalization of Sub-Saharan African Muslims took place within the context of global colonialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In Muslim majority areas, Muslims held social and political power, meaning that

23. Ware, *The Walking Qur'an,* 166–171; Bang, *Sufis and Scholars*, 133–140.
24. Triaud, "Giving a Name to Islam South," 3–6.
25. Kaarsholm, "Zanzibaris or Amakhuwa? Sufi Networks," 191–195; Amal Ghazal, "The Other Frontiers of Arab Nationalism: Ibadis, Berbers, and the Arabist-Salafi Press in the Interwar Period," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42, no. 1 (2010): 105–122.

they were still able to demand certain levels of respect from their colonial states.[26] However, in Muslim minority areas, such as Buganda, Muslims held no such influence and were left to survive largely on their own in racially and religiously biased colonial states.

A Racialized Periphery: Sub-Saharan Islam in Academia

The marginalization of Islam by colonial states in Sub-Saharan Africa can be, to an extent, paralleled to how the academic study of Islam within Africa has been conducted. In areas of the African continent where Muslims comprised a majority of the population in the nineteenth century, such as North and West Africa and the East African coast, Islam was a feared and thus respected institution.[27] Colonial states recognized that they had to interact with Islam and as a result created specialized policies and institutions to work with Islamic leaders.[28] When these leaders were seen to wield too much power, colonial states reacted by enacting repressive measures against them and Islam more broadly or by sponsoring competing Islamic leaders who were more cooperative.[29] A similar attitude has also been adopted by western historians and thus, Islam in East and West Africa has been studied and researched extensively. Islamic institutions such as schools, religious brotherhoods, prayer methods, and social institutions have been widely studied in western

26. W. Montgomery Watt, "The Political Relevance of Islam in East Africa," *International Affairs* 42, no. 1 (1966): 35–44.
27. James McDougall, *A History of Algeria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 58–73; Machaqueiro, "Foes or Allies? Portuguese Colonial," 844–847.
28. Soares, "The Historiography of Islam in West Africa," 31–33; Levtzion and Pouwels, *The History of Islam in Africa*, 42–62.
29. Soares and Seesemann, "Being as Good Muslims as Frenchmen," 93–96.

academia since the mid-twentieth century.[30] In addition, the study of the political and cultural power of Islam in these areas has equally been the focus of academia exactly because they were feared and respected by imperial states.[31] However, this is not to say that historians only studied Islam in these regions because it was respected by colonial states; the fact that Islam played a prominent role in the governing of these areas during colonialism definitely contributed to academic interest.

Conversely, in areas of Sub-Saharan Africa where Muslims were not a majority – such as in southern, central and east-central Africa – colonial states often did not create Muslim specific policies or institutions. In this way, the needs of African Muslims were often blatantly ignored by colonial states.[32] Though not overtly oppressive, in areas such as Buganda, this led to the Muslim community being trapped in a reinforcing cycle of under-education and lower-class existence.[33] This marginalization is in some ways reflected in the

30. T. G. Baye, "Muslims in Ethiopia: History and Identity," *African Studies* 77, no. 3 (2018): 412–427; Geert Castryck, "Living Islam in Colonial Bujumbura – The Historical Translocality of Muslim Life between East and Central Africa," *History in Africa* 46 (2019): 263–298; Egodi Uchendu, "Being Igbo and Muslim: The Igbo of South-Eastern Nigeria and Conversions to Islam, 1930s to Recent Times," *The Journal of African History* 51, no. 1 (2010): 63–87; Jonathan Wyrtzen, "Colonial State-Building and the Negotiation of Arab and Berber Identity in Protectorate Morocco," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43, no. 2 (2011): 227–249. For an excellent transnational study of Islamic prayer practices, see: David Parkin and Stephen Headley, *Islamic Prayer across the Indian Ocean: Inside and Outside the Mosque* (Richmond: Curzon, 2000).

31. Motadel, "Islam and the European Empires," 838–845.

32. D. A. Low, *The Mind of Buganda: Documents of the Modern History of an African Kingdom* (London: Heinemann, 1971), section 20.

33. Hansjorg Dilger and Dorothea Schulz, "Politics of Religious Schooling: Christian and Muslim Engagements with Education in Africa," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 43, no. 4 (2013): 365–378; Nathaniel Matthews, "Imagining Arab Communities: Colonialism, Islamic Reform, and Arab Identity in Mombasa, Kenya, 1897–1933," *Islamic Africa* 4, no. 2 (2013): 135–163.

historiography dealing with Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa. Though there are notable historic works which focus on Muslims in areas where they were and still are a minority, this field remains relatively understudied when compared with the studies of Islam in Muslim majority areas of the African continent.[34] Additionally, these accounts largely focus on the political aspects of the Muslim communities they analyze, at the expense of social and cultural aspects of these groups' histories.[35]

Nowhere on the African continent has Islam and the lives of Muslims been dealt with in such depth as it has in the Sahara. Having centuries of interaction between themselves and Saharan Muslims, European imperial powers, while still racializing Islam, were able to recognize Islam as a potent force and came to understand some of the facets of Saharan Muslim culture and society.[36] Due to the long history of Islam in North Africa, and Europe's recognition of this, European colonial forces were aware prior to colonization that they would need Muslim specific policies and institutions in their Saharan colonies.[37] This recognition and sense of respect bestowed upon Islam in North Africa may stem from several reasons ranging from

34. For a notable example of a study of Ganda Muslims, see: A. B. K. Kasozi, *The Life of Prince Badru Kakungulu Wasajja, and the Development of a Forward Looking Muslim Community in Uganda, 1907–1991* (Kampala: Progressive Publishing House, 1996).

35. Kasozi, *The Life of Prince Badru*; Watt, "The Political Relevance of Islam," 35–38; Jonathan Earle, *Colonial Buganda and the End of Empire: Political Thought and Historical Imagination in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), Chapter 4; Michael Twaddle, "The Muslim Revolution in Buganda," *African Affairs* 71, no. 282 (1972): 65–70; Mauro Nobili, "Reinterpreting the Role of Muslims in the West African Middle Ages," *Journal of African History* 61, no. 3 (2020): 327–340.

36. Quinn, *The Sum of All Heresies*, 100–115; Bruce Hall, *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600–1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 69–75.

37. Wyrtzen, "Colonial State-Building and the Negotiation," 228–233; McDougall, *A History of Algeria,* Chapter 2.

cultural similarities between Europe and Arabia, the power of the Ottoman Empire, to the relative lightness of some Northern Africans' complexion, an element that is related to and imbedded in Islam *noir*.[38] However, what is important to note is that European powers respected Islam as a legitimate cultural, social, and religious institution in North Africa in a way that they did not in Sub-Saharan Africa. As with Islam in other areas of the African continent, this has also been echoed in the way that historians of North Africa treat Islam in their studies. Islam is analyzed in North Africa in a less racialized way that in turn reveals that historians view Islam in this area as a legitimate religious institution.[39] This is not to say that racially biased accounts are not prolific in this area as well, however, there is far more research available on what it means to be Muslim in North Africa than for the rest of the continent.

Academic representations of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa continue to approach the topic with a distinctly Western perspective.[40] Sub-Saharan Sufism,[41] though given due consideration by western scholars, is often examined in a racialized way. As such, the rituals and healing methods in Sufism are often depicted, across

38. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "A Tale of Three Empires: Mughals, Ottomans, and Habsburgs in a Comparative Context," *Common Knowledge* 12, no. 1 (2006): 66–92; Derek Peterson and Darren Walhof, *The Invention of Religion: Rethinking Belief in Politics and History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 115–150; Reid, *A History of Modern Africa*, Chapter 5.
39. El Hamel, "Constructing a Diasporic Identity," 241–260. For two other examples, see: Reid, *Frontiers of Violence in North East Africa*, and McDougall, *A History of Algeria*.
40. Ware, *The Walking Qur'an,* 10–30.
41. Sufism is generally portrayed as a mystical and esoteric – and therefore unorthodox – form of Islam, but in this article, I am arguing against this perception of Sufism. I argue that Sufism, as a dominant form of Islam on the African continent, is simply another sect of Islam. I also argue that this terminology works to delegitimize Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa, by portraying Sufism as an unorthodox sect, and thus this type of terminology needs to be avoided.

the African continent, as outside of Islam and inherently unorthodox.[42] Though this is a common trope amongst historians of Islam, Ware argues that the basis of this is rooted in highly racialized ways of viewing Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa which were cemented in the West during the colonial era.[43] Studies of Islam during Muhammad's life, and shortly thereafter, reveal that many Sufi practices which have been depicted as unorthodox actually have a long and notable history in the religion.[44] The purpose of this study is not to argue for the legitimacy or illegitimacy of Sufism as a religion, as this is beyond the scope of this article. However, the history and legitimacy of Sufism are central to understanding how Sub-Saharan Islam has been racialized and how it has been depicted within academic studies. Additionally, this study will also focus on the ideas surrounding the "Africanization" of Islam and the inherent racialization of the religion, and the way that this has affected historians' perceptions of Sufism and its legitimacy as a religious institution.

A Religious History of Buganda

Buganda is an interesting case in east and central Africa, because foreign religions were not introduced to the area until the mid-nineteenth century. This is around eight centuries later than when Islam arrived on the East African coast and four centuries after

42. Levtzion and Pouwels, *The History of Islam in Africa,* Chapters 20–21; Mann, "Fetishizing Religion: Allah Koura," 263–282; M. Miran-Guyon, "'Native' Conversion to Islam in Southern Cote d'Ivoire: The Perils of Double Identity," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 42, no. 2 (2012): 95–117; Castryck, "Living Islam in Colonial Bujumbura," 275–280; Nobili, "Reinterpreting the Role of Muslims," 332.
43. Ware, *The Walking Qur'an,* 30–36.
44. Ware, *The Walking Qur'an*, 54–60.

the arrival of Portuguese forces in the same area.[45] The study of why foreign religions took so long to penetrate the interior of East Africa cannot be undertaken in this study, but it is important to make note of it here since we will be focusing on religion in Buganda.

Following Islam's arrival in Buganda in 1844, it spread relatively quickly by gaining converts within the *kabaka's*[46] royal court. In 1862, the first Europeans arrived in Buganda. John Hanning Speke and those who accompanied him were, like many Europeans of the nineteenth century, seeking to map out the mysterious and "dark" continent of Africa. In 1877, the first Protestant missionaries arrived in Buganda, having allegedly been called for by *Kabaka* Mutesa I via Henry Morton Stanley. Catholic missionaries from France arrived in 1879. Competition for political influence began swiftly, and, compounded by existing political rivalries and inter-clan conflict, culminated in the Religious Wars of 1888–1890 in Buganda.[47] This conflict was brought to an end with the arrival of Lord Lugard and his advanced weaponry in 1890.[48] Throughout the 1890s Protestant Ganda leaders, such as Apollo Kagwa, worked with the British to conquer and develop what is now Uganda, each relying on the other for their growing authority in the region.[49] In 1900 the Buganda Agreement was signed, cementing not only British colonization of all of Uganda, but also the hierarchy of Buganda with Protestants first, Catholics second, and Muslims a distant third.[50]

45. Reid, *A History of Modern Africa*, 57–59.
46. This is the Luganda term for king.
47. Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda,* 153–157.
48. Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda,* 153–157.
49. Holger Hansen, *Mission, Church, and State in a Colonial Setting: Uganda 1890–1925* (London: Heinemann, 1984), Chapter 7; Ibrahim El-Zein Soghayroun, *Islam, Christian Missions, and the Colonial Administration in East Africa: A Documental Study with Special Emphasis on Uganda* (Muscat, 1992), Chapter 3.
50. Holly Hanson, *Landed Obligation: The Practice of Power in Buganda*

The 1900 Agreement was signed by British colonial officials and Ganda regency chiefs on behalf of the recently enthroned three-year-old *kabaka*. For the next sixty-two years the British colonial state worked with Protestant and Catholic Ganda leaders, while willfully ignoring the needs of the Ganda Muslim community.[51] Despite this atmosphere, Ganda Muslims flourished during the colonial period. By localizing Islam as a social, political, and cultural force, Ganda Muslims developed political influence and negotiated an influential space for themselves in wider Ganda society.[52]

The current state of Uganda's historiography reflects the marginalization faced by Ganda Muslims during the colonial period.[53] Though Islam has been dealt with by some notable historians, such as Kasozi and Kiwanuka, Christianity in Uganda has received a great deal more attention.[54] Additionally, historians of Uganda have largely written about religion in the region from a distinctly western perspective.[55] Religion in Buganda, as in most of Sub-Saharan Africa prior to the mid-nineteenth century, played a direct role in all areas of life.[56] When examining the colonial context this fact must be considered to fully understand how Ganda people

(Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003), Chapter 5.

51. Low, *The Mind of Buganda.*; Abasi Kiyimba, "The Muslim Community in Uganda Through 140 Years," *Journal of African Religion and Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (n.d.): 84–120.

52. Earle, *Colonial Buganda and the End of Empire*, Chapter 4.

53. Holger Hansen, "Church and State in Early Colonial Uganda," *African Affairs*, no. 338 (1986): 55–74; D. A, Low and R. C. Pratt, *Buganda and British Overrule, 1900–1955: Two Studies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960); Akiiki Mujaju, "The Political Crisis of Church Institutions in Uganda," *African Affairs* 75, no. 298 (n.d.): 67–85.

54. M. S. M. Semakula Kiwanuka, *A History of Buganda* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1971); Kasozi, *The Life of Prince Badru.*

55. Hansen, *Mission, Church, and State in a Colonial Setting*.

56. Neil Kodesh, *Beyond the Royal Gaze: Clanship and Public Healing in Buganda* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 69–80; Ware, *The Walking Qur'an*, 8–12.

thought of and sought to use religion as a social, cultural, political, and economic tool. Moreover, as noted the western perspective has greatly overshadowed the understanding of religion in the region and thus, examining Muslim communities in Sub-Saharan Africa from a less western perspective is a pressing issue facing all historians studying Islam in the region.

The racialization of Islam in the Kingdom of Buganda, and how this was used to view the group as an illegitimate organization, and then treat it in discriminatory ways, can be seen in early interactions between the Muslim Ganda and the British. As the 1900 Agreement was being negotiated, Frederick Lugard, an important British official who helped lead colonization efforts in Uganda, often referred to the Ganda Muslims as Mbogo's adherents.[57] Prince Nuhu Mbogo was a member of the Ganda royal family and a chief who had converted to Islam. He became the primary leader of all Muslims in the Kingdom of Buganda predominantly thanks to British policies which forced all Ganda Muslims into one county in the early 1890s.[58]

Prince Nuhu Mbogo represented all of the Muslims in Buganda during the negotiations for the 1900 Agreement, but the British viewed his authority over the Ganda Muslim community as stemming from a traditional context, rather than a religious one. Though this is not entirely incorrect, as Mbogo held both religious and traditional authority, the British clearly viewed him and his adherents in a less than legitimate way, as they did not refer to them as a religious group during their negotiations. This is in contrast to the way they referred to and worked with Ganda Protestants and Catholics, which were both referred to as proper religious groupings and were given much more land on which to host their communities

57. "The Uganda Agreement, 1900," 1900, MSS. Lugard, *Weston Library, Special Collections*, Box 81, File 4, 20.
58. Kasozi, *The Life of Prince Badru*, 27–30.

in the agreement – the missionary societies were given ninety-two square miles while the Muslim community was given only twenty-four.[59] The disproportionately smaller quantity of land which Muslims were given and the marginalization they then faced illustrates both the lack of legitimacy they held as a religious group in the eyes of the British, and that this perception was predominantly due to their identity as both Africans and Muslims.

Throughout the colonial era, ca. 1900–1962, this perception of African Muslims influenced the policies of the colonial state. The colonial state openly favoured Protestant and Catholic schools, missionaries, and, eventually, political parties.[60] Protestant and Catholic Ganda, having received what the colonial state deemed as the "correct" form of education, were able to achieve upward mobility both socially and economically and to take higher positions within the colonial state. By the mid-twentieth century, a large majority of university graduates in Uganda were either Protestant or Catholic.[61] For the first several decades of colonial rule, the British protectorate government allowed Protestant and Catholic missionaries to control the education system in Buganda, even though they knew that missionary schools – which catered to newly converted Christian boys – were leaving Muslims, girls, and other children who did not want to convert to Christianity behind.[62] This created a reinforcing cycle where better paying jobs went to Christians, those Christians sent their children to higher education, and the next generation did the same. This marginalization of Ganda

59. "The Uganda Agreement, 1900," 20–22.
60. Michael Twaddle, "The Emergence of Politico-Religious Groupings in Late Nineteenth-Century Buganda," *The Journal of African History* 29, no. 1 (1988): 81–85; Hansen, *Mission, Church, and State in a Colonial Setting,* 28–30.
61. See A. B. K. Kasozi, *University Education in Uganda: Challenges and Opportunities for Reform* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2003), Chapter 9.
62. Low, *The Mind of Buganda,* Section 20.

Muslims was a result of the colonial administration's lack of attention to the community and it's needs. The refusal of the colonial state to view the Ganda Muslims' problems as legitimate concerns sprouted from their refusal to see the community as a legitimate institution within the colonial apparatus. Lack of recognition led to lack of support and then lack of development.

By the 1950s, as Uganda prepared for independence, the majority of Ugandans in positions of political power within the colonial administration or emerging political parties were either Protestant or Catholic. Additionally, most were Muganda.[63] This influenced how the newly formed nation negotiated her independence, as the developing political parties were affiliated along religious lines.[64] Due to the scope of this study this article does not examine Uganda post-1962, when the country gained its independence. However, it is important to note how instrumental the politico-religious groupings of the early 1960s were, not just in shaping how Uganda gained independence, but also in determining the following tumultuous decades. Idi Amin (former president of Uganda) was only able to come to power in 1971 because of actions taken by the religiously affiliated political parties of the 1950s and 60s.[65]

Moreover, it is important to note that the work of Protestant and Catholic missionaries, as well as the Ganda who converted to these religions, have been studied in-depth. Much of the historical canon of Buganda and Uganda examines the powerful alliances made between Protestant Ganda and the British colonial state, as well as

63. Muganda refers to the people who belonged to the Ganda ethnic group of Buganda, rather than the numerous other ethnic groups which comprise Uganda.
64. Earle, *Colonial Buganda and the End of Empire,* 5–10.
65. Idi Amin was a powerful military dictator who came to power in 1971 through a violent coup. He remained in power until 1979 and is remembered as one of Uganda's most violent post-independence leaders.

the resulting power that Protestant Ganda held in the protectorate.[66] These studies are incredibly important for understanding Buganda history and contemporary Ganda society and culture. However, Islam and Muslims have been studied to a much lesser degree by historians of Uganda. Though many studies in the last decades of the nineteenth century have focused on Islam and Muslims, few have analyzed the role of Islam and the Muslim community in Buganda during the colonial era.[67]

I argue that this lack of academic attention is due to the marginalized position which Muslims and Islam held in colonial Buganda. Islam arrived in Buganda in the early 1840s, a few decades prior to the arrival of Europeans. Islam, like Christianity, quickly gained converts in the *kabaka*'s court. If it were not for the arrival of Lugard and the favouritism he showed Protestant Ganda chiefs, Buganda may not have become a Christian majority kingdom. However, Lugard did arrive, and British colonization solidified the marginalized position of Muslims in Buganda. As noted, the Buganda Agreement of 1900 allotted only twenty-four square miles of land to the Muslim Ganda community to survive and make a living on; this disproportionate allocation of land is a prime example of their marginalized status.[68] Throughout the colonial period British officials knowingly allowed the hardships facing Muslim Ganda to continue,

66. Examples of such studies are: Frederick Welbourn, *Religion and Politics in Uganda: 1952–1962* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1965); Low and Pratt, *Buganda and British Overrule, 1900–1955*; Hansen, *Mission, Church, and State in a Colonial Setting*.

67. For examples of studies which focus on Muslims/Islam prior to 1900, see Samwiri Rubaraza Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda* (Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980); Twaddle, "The Emergence of Politico-Religious Groupings"; Twaddle, "The Muslim Revolution in Buganda."

68. "Uganda Protectorate Buganda – United Kingdom The Buganda (Transitional) Agreement, 1955 Schedules and Appendices (EAF 71/6/08)," *The National Archives* (August 1955), File DO 118/115.

even as they were made aware of the challenges Muslims were facing.[69]

Despite this unfavourable treatment, the Muslim Ganda flourished during the colonial era. The Muslims of Buganda created an influential political and social niche for themselves by drawing on transnational Muslim organizations like the East African Muslim Welfare Society, overcoming divisions and creating a strong community within Buganda, using cultural and societal institutions such as education, and benefitting from gifted leaders such as Nuhu Mbogo. Over time, Muslim Ganda increased their number of university graduates, as well as the number of people in positions of power, and by the late 1950s and early 1960s they were a highly sought-after alliance as the political parties of Uganda negotiated leadership of the country.[70] By the mid-twentieth century, though other groups had already done so in the early twentieth century, Muslim Ganda had also drafted their versions of Buganda's history, an important step for a marginalized group fighting to create a more favourable position for themselves in their country.[71]

Histories about the Ganda Muslims have been written during the colonial period, but they are few. A significant source of information on Ganda Muslims during the colonial period can be found in the political histories of the time, such as those by Kiwanuka and Karugire.[72] Kasozi's work is especially notable for the focus that it places on Muslims and the Islamic community in twentieth century Buganda.[73] However, as of yet, there are no studies which focus on the Muslim Ganda experience of colonialism with the goal of understanding how this community used the resources at hand to

69. Low, *The Mind of Buganda,* Section 33.
70. Earle, *Colonial Buganda and the End of Empire,* 142–145.
71. Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda,* 251–252.
72. Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda*; Kiwanuka, *A History of Buganda.*
73. Kasozi, *The Life of Prince Badru.*

create a better position for themselves in an acutely anti-Islamic and overtly racially discriminatory colonial atmosphere. Other studies have focused on Muslims in Uganda in relation to Idi Amin, his rule, and the years that followed, but these again do not seek to situate this moment in Buganda's history within the larger context of Islam in the kingdom. I argue that the Muslim community of Buganda carved out a political and social position for itself despite its marginalized status in the British colonial state.

Recontextualizing Religion in Sub-Saharan Africa

As contact between Europeans and the African continent increased throughout the nineteenth century they increasingly came into contact with African religions. These religions, varying across the continent, cannot be discussed in depth here, but the reaction that missionaries, colonial officials, and European anthropologists had to these religions is pertinent to understanding how European imperialist powers developed their colonial states' religious policies and how religion in Africa has subsequently been studied and misunderstood.[74]

Religion, across space and time, is both a reflection of the society which practices it and a tool which people use for a myriad of ends. In the nineteenth century, Christianity in Europe became an institutionalized system through which common people sought eternal redemption and elites sought social and cultural influence in the here and now.[75] Many Europeans were devoted to their religions on a spiritual level, however in the upper echelons of society in Europe, religion was also an avenue for societal advancement despite

74. For an example of British colonial official's reactions to African religion in East Africa, see Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MSS. Brit. Emp. S. 290. Box 1.
75. Peterson and Walhof, *The Invention of Religion,* Chapter 10.

the fact that the continent was moving towards political secularization in the nineteenth century.[76] On the African continent, religion played a much different role. Generally, religion across Sub-Saharan Africa permeated every aspect of one's life.[77]

Africans believed that their livelihood, political leadership, economy, military success, and overall communal and societal wellbeing were all affected in very direct ways by religious practice.[78] The nineteenth century Christian definition of religion was simply not compatible with the African reality of religious practice. This was especially true as European states and political systems were becoming increasingly secularized.[79] However, despite this, European missionaries, colonial officials, and anthropologists used their understanding of religion to judge and then primitivize African religious practices.[80]

Examples of this devaluation can be seen across the African continent. Missionaries openly disrespected African religious beliefs, colonial policies gave an unfair advantage to those who converted to Christianity, and land policies, such as the *mailo* system in Uganda, prohibited Africans from practicing many of their spiritual and cultural traditions and rituals.[81] At the same time, the first in-depth studies of African religion were being undertaken by European

76. Clark Christopher, "From 1848 to Christian Democracy," in *Religion and the Political Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 190–213.
77. Kwasi Konadu, *Our Own Way in This Part*, 17–21; Peterson and Walhof, *The Invention of Religion,* 38–42.
78. Kodesh, *Beyond the Royal Gaze,* 39–48; Neil Kodesh, "History from the Healer's Shrine: Genre, Historical Imagination, and Early Ganda History," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49, no. 3 (2007): 527–552.
79. Christopher, "From 1848 to Christian Democracy," 193–200; Reid, *A History of Modern Africat*, 110–116.
80. Peterson and Walhof, *The Invention of Religion,* 37–41.
81. Holly Hanson, *Landed Obligation: The Practice*, Chapter 5; Richard Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 244–249.

missionaries, colonial officials, and anthropologists. These nineteenth and early twentieth century accounts, though often valuable due to their level of detail, are extremely racially biased and tend to cast Africans as inherently unintelligent, uncivilized, and incapable.[82] Some accounts, such as John Roscoe's, are admirable for the level of respect and genuine fascination they show towards African cultures and societies, but accounts such as these are the exception, rather than the norm.[83] It was from these biased accounts that Europeans, and much of the wider world, formed their ideas regarding religion in Sub-Saharan Africa. The presentation of African religion in these studies, and the common biases of the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries, caused those in the West to view religion in Africa as backwards, underdeveloped, idolatrous, and heathenistic.[84] These biases came from many sources in Europe, but largely they were due to the cultural superiority Europeans assumed for themselves over Africans and can be seen as a further example of politically motivated "othering" of peoples and cultures different from one's own.

Research on African religion by western scholars throughout the twentieth century, and even into the twenty-first century, was often done with a distinctly Christian and Western perspective. Looking through this kind of lens, African religion, including Islam south of the Sahara, has largely been delegitimized since the beginning of the colonial era.[85] However, there are notable examples of African religion being studied with due respect and from an

82. MSS. Brit. Emp. S. 290. Box 5.
83. John Roscoe, *The Baganda: An Account of Their Native Customs and Beliefs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911).
84. Konadu, *Our Own Way in This Part,* 174–180; Julia Day Howell, "Sufism and the Indonesian Islamic Revival," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60, no. 3 (2001): 701–729.
85. Ware, *The Walking Qur'an,* 19–23.

appropriate methodological viewpoint.[86] Religion on the African continent has historically played a different and larger role in society than Christianity has in modern Europe.[87] To fully grasp what religion was and who African people were before and during the colonial period, we as historians must work to study African religion, including African Islam, from an unbiased standpoint independent of all colonial assumptions. In practical terms, this means that historians must strive to avoid general and inaccurate terms such as "Africanized," and dive deeper into the local character of the Islam that they study, while also placing the Muslim group which they analyze into the wider, global community of Islam in which the community operates.

Historians and anthropologists have begun the work of understanding African religion from a less western and Christian perspective. A notable example is Rudolph Ware's *The Walking Qur'an* (2014). In this work Ware explores the central role played by Qur'anic schools within West African culture, religion, and society over the course of several centuries. He specifically analyzes the more controversial aspects of Qur'an schools, such as alms taking and the "drinking of the Qur'an,"[88] as well as Sufi practices of saint veneration and spirit possession, that have been described by others as unorthodox Islamic practices. By tracing the history of these practices, back to the time of the Prophet Muhammad, Ware makes

86. See Konadu, *Our Own Way in This Part*; Kodesh, *Beyond the Royal Gaze*; Gemetchu Megerssa and Aneesa Kassam, *Sacred Knowledge Traditions of the Oromo of the Horn of Africa* (Durham: Fifth World Publications, 2019).
87. Christopher, "From 1848 to Christian Democracy," 190–195; Holly Hanson, "Mapping Conflict: Heterarchy and Accountability in the Ancient Capital of Buganda," *The Journal of African History* 50, no. 2 (2009): 179–202.
88. This refers to the practice that is still common in West Africa where students drink the water that they have used to clean their wooden slates at the end of Qur'an lessons. This water contains the ink they used to write Quranic verses with and is thus seen as containing the holiness of the Qur'an itself.

an incredibly compelling case for the orthodoxy and history of these Sufi practices within Islam.[89] In Islam, innovations interpreted as having developed since the time of Muhammad are and have been the targets of reformist movements.[90] However, Ware shows that West African Sufi practices and Qur'an school teaching methods have a long history that perhaps date back to the time of Islam's founding, or shortly thereafter. By illustrating the historical development of Islam and Islamic practices in West Africa, Ware's work helps to call into question the idea that Islam in this region is somehow different from, and thus inferior to, the Islam of the Middle East. Thus, demonstrating that the Islamic practices of Western Africa have historic roots which date back to the time of Muhammad helps to support the claim that these practices are not unorthodox, but rather are legitimate forms of Islamic practice.

In all, Ware's work demonstrates that Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa is not an illegitimate or inferior practice of the religion. This in turn helps to discredit western and colonial notions of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa as being inferior. Perhaps most importantly, Ware argues for the recontextualizing of Sufi Islam within an African context. Both Europeans and Muslim leaders from the Islamic heartland have argued over the last few centuries that one cannot be both authentically Muslim and authentically African.[91] Proof of this can be seen in constant historical references to the "Africanization" of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa, in lieu of in-depth studies of what it actually means to practice Islam on the continent.[92] Ware's study of the movement of Islam to West Africa, shortly following the lifetime

89. Ware, *The Walking Qur'an,* 60–65.
90. Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East,* 240–245.
91. Reese, "Islam in Africa/Africans in Islam," 21–26.
92. Levtzion and Pouwels, *The History of Islam in Africa,* 270–275; Philip Gooding, "Islam in the Interior of Precolonial East Africa: Evidence from Lake Tanganyika," *The Journal of African History* 60, no. 2 (2019): 191–208.

of Muhammad, illustrates Islam's long history in Sub-Saharan Africa. Additionally, Ware's work also shows that West African Muslims were actively contributing to, and participating in, the global Muslim scholarly tradition by as early as the fourteenth century. Arab accounts from this period note that the scholars in Timbuktu were not only black but were knowledgeable and legitimate Islamic scholars. Finally, Ware draws upon Islamic scriptures and histories to show that the Sufi practices, which are often labelled as "mystical" and unorthodox, may actually be grounded in ancient Islamic traditions.[93]

Ware's work is an especially important example of how historians of Africa must strive to recontextualize Sufism in an African context. Many studies of Sufism in Africa describe the tradition as mystical, Africanized, unorthodox, or other such terms which, though not incorrect, are inaccurate and work to delegitimize African practice of Islam. Religion, in every corner of the world and in every moment of history, is localized to fit the needs of the society in question. However, this does not devalue the religion or the way that people practice their religion. Today the African continent's population has one of the highest proportions of Muslims of any continent in the world.[94] This Islamic population, largely known as Sufis, has been and continues to be active in shaping the global Muslim discourse. Though Sufism may be practiced differently than other forms of Islam, it is no less legitimate.[95] Religion changes and grows. It evolves throughout history and geography to fit people's

93. Ware, *The Walking Qur'an,* 55–65.
94. Drew Desilver and David Masci, "World's Muslim Population More Widespread than You Might Think," *Pew Research Center*, January 31st, 2017, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/01/31/worlds-muslim-population-more-widespread-than-you-might-think/#:~:text=However%2C%20the%20Middle%20East%2DNorth,in%20the%20Asia%2DPacific%20region.
95. Triaud, "Giving a Name to Islam South," 14–15.

needs. As we strive to create less biased historical accounts, we must recognize that Sufism, and Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa more generally, needs to be studied independent of the western perspective and instead, should be placed within its proper African context. To do this, we must dismantle racialized terms such as "Africanized religion" when we write about and seek to understand African religions.

A prime example of such recontextualization can be found in Kwasi Konadu's work *Our Own Way in This Part of the World* (2019). This study strives to understand the traditional religion of Ghana by tracing the life of a notable Ghanaian healer and analyzing how his life and experiences are mirrored by those in his immediate and surrounding communities during the colonial era. Most importantly, Konadu works to recontextualize Ghanaian traditional religion within a more African context. Unlike other studies which deal with traditional religions, this study does not devalue or delegitimize African traditional religious practices, but rather treats them as the powerful force which historically they have been in African society.[96] To understand religion in Africa, whether it is traditional African religion, Christianity, Islam, or anything else, we must first examine and grasp a society's history with religion and the role religion played in African society prior to the colonial era.

In the case of Buganda, Neil Kodesh's work is illuminating for historians seeking to understand pre-nineteenth century Ganda religious customs. Kodesh examines the evolution of religion in Buganda from the fifteenth to the sixteenth centuries and how changing religious traditions were not only influential but were implicated in creating changes in livelihoods, politics, and clan formations. Kodesh's study reveals the long, complex, and inter-

96. Konadu, *Our Own Way in This Part*.

twined history of religion and politics in Buganda and how religion has historically been a powerful force in the kingdom.

Though some have pointed to the late-nineteenth century, with the arrival of Islam and Christianity, as the point when politico-religious groupings became pronounced in Buganda,[97] Kodesh's work suggests that this has been the case for centuries. Kodesh's research is thus especially useful for this study because it details the role of religion in Buganda prior to the arrival of foreign religions in the nineteenth century.[98] Both Christianity and Islam affected major changes in Buganda, but the Baganda's efforts to use religion as a social, cultural, and political force, co-opted foreign religions into indigenous political patterns, rather than the other way around.

Conclusion

Since the first known contacts between Europe and what would be the Muslim world, Europeans have overtly racialized and demonized this non-Christian community. Even over centuries of engagement with the Muslim world, during the medieval era, Europeans remained distrustful of Islam and Muslims more generally. In the nineteenth century, as Europeans encountered Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa, they found an Islamic tradition different from what they had previously interacted with. Keeping with their historic attitudes, imperial powers racialized and sought to delegitimate the Islam they encountered in Sub-Saharan Africa. This racialization was then mirrored, to a large extent, by the anthropologists and historians who studied Sub-Saharan Islam in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This racialization, by the colonial state and western scholarship, affected the lives of Muslims and how those in the West

97. Twaddle, "The Emergence of Politico-Religious Groupings," 81–84.
98. Kodesh, *Beyond the Royal Gaze*.

perceived Islam and Muslims on the African continent. All of this has culminated in a lack of understanding of Muslim history in Sub-Saharan Africa and a negative perception of Sub-Saharan Islam. Historians such as Ware, Kodesh, and Konadu are working to dismantle these negative perceptions of African Islam and are seeking to understand and study African religion through a less western epistemology. These academics have made great strides, but there is still much work to be done as we seek to recontextualize Islam in Africa and gain a more holistic understanding of Muslims in Sub-Saharan Africa.