

## Importance of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa

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### Introduction

Islam is spreading not only to southern Asia, but also to Sub-Saharan Africa, where it now stands on an equal footing with Christianity. Nigeria is in the region, the most populous Muslim country, although the state does not support the official religion. Demographically, Islam has favorable trends, so that the Muslim population will soon surpass the Christian (Abusharaf, 2011). This paper will briefly study the importance of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa

### Discussion

The study of Islam in sub-Saharan Africa is not merely of religion - it provides a point of entry into the study of other institutional systems, allowing a consideration of concomitant changes in, for example, society, and politics. Therefore, along with the introduction of Islam in sub-Saharan Africa there are many changes in the material record in the continent south of the Sahara, and in many respects the archaeology of Islam in sub-Saharan Africa is really the archaeology of sub-Saharan Africa in the last millennium, the effects were so widespread and profound.

Nobody can overlook the importance of Islam in the world by the number of its believers and its geo-political influence in the world. The issue of Islam is also important because of the phenomenon of immigration. Many of the Africans who come in canoes are Muslim, have another worldview on religion and its place in society, they are used to dealing the subject of religion with respect and are shocked to see religious indifference Europe (Gelbard et al. 2014).

African Islam also has its own spirit, which distinguishes it from other parts of the world. Hampaté Ba, Mali sage, read as an expressive way: "Islam is like a river that wears the color of the land through which it passes." Both Christians and African Muslims somehow retain their traditional beliefs and mindset (Collins & Burns, 2013). The imprint of the family, ethnicity, and African culture remains good despite conversion to Islam. Africans explain in a very descriptive way: "Blood is heavier than water, they say." That is, family ties, blood, ethnicity matters more than religious conviction, to protect against spirits, using divination, consulting fetishes, the ancestor worship, maintaining the traditions surrounding marriage and funeral rites.

Linked to this aspect of syncretism is another aspect that typifies African Islam. It is a popular Islam, the Islam of the brotherhoods, the cult of the saints, intermediaries ... i.e. aspects that give importance to unacceptable aspects official Islam. Although popular does not mean weak belief (Gelbard et al. 2014).

Islam in Africa is part of Sunnism, with exceptions, and while part of Malikism jurisprudential. The politicization of religion in Africa is a new phenomenon. My experience in Sudan can say that Islam is trying to gain political ground and assume more influence in government posts, including imposing a social project with Sharia. With the result, on the other hand, a radicalization of positions and existence of a few groups trained militarily. The politicization of Islam began in 1970 when, after the Israeli-Arab war 1973 oil crisis occurred. The oil producing Arab countries began using the manna of petrodollars to spread Islam and establish Sharia in several African countries (Abusharaf, 2011). This idea is supported by the leading Islamic organizations such as the Rabita, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Islamic and Arab League. It is they who set the standard for action, through Bicia and other Islamic banks. At other levels, no less effective, they also act some moves. One of the most active Wahhabiya movements that comes from Saudi Arabia. It aims

at the Islamization of Africa and the world, urging the creation of structures Islamic (Sharia and Islamic courts) in countries where Islam is true density, for example Mali, Senegal, Niger and Burkina Faso. But these countries have managed to stay out for now. Its strength is based on money, building mosques, madrassas, and health centers (Gelbard et al. 2014).

Undoubtedly, the most important factor of Islamization, not only in the past but also in the present times, is trade. Trade and trade routes are as traces of Islam in Africa. Even today, in many places, such as Burkina Faso, Mali, Ivory Coast is synonymous with Muslim merchant or wealthy person. Trade and transport in the hands of the Muslims. Ninety percent of the drivers are Muslim. They represent the figure of social success and wealth, sign of divine blessing, something that fits well with traditional African mentality. Trade and Islam have been linked historically; the Arab world was part of the commercial communications network between East and West. Muhammad grew universe marked by commercial relationships (Collins & Burns, 2013). Therefore, it seems natural that the expansion of Islam greatly expands trade and traders Muslims find their way into the remotest parts of the world then known. Trade with Africa, despite the difficult barrier of desert is quite good documented. Trade routes of the time are too well known, as is business objectives: obtaining products such as salt, gold, tusks elephant, and slaves among other things (Abusharaf, 2011).

### **Conclusion**

It is difficult to make predictions about the future of religion in Africa. The future of Islam in terms of growth is actually a factor to consider. The Universalist religions have come, at least in terms of numerical growth. But the religious crisis affects all religions, and Islam is unlikely to get rid of it. The religious indifference and atheism are becoming ever more massive. True success will depend on how religions responsive to the hopes of the people, both human and religious, becoming solidarity of mankind, assuming the major

challenges today: hunger, poverty, disease, democracy, human rights, the status of women, economic development and creation care. The success of a religion is not measured only by the worship offered to God, but also for his selfless service to humanity.

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