The Course of Islam

In The Politics of West Africa

Ismail Kamal Abdel Rasoul
Researcher and Journalist- Georgetown -USA

Islam reached the grassland areas south of the Sahara in West Africa, known as bilad al-Sudan- land of the blacks- by the Arabs, through trade and the efforts of scholars from North Africa in the middle-ages. Gradually, Islam became an important element in the social, cultural and political fabric of the empires of the era, including Ghana, Mali and Songhai. As in other parts of the Muslim world, West Africa witnessed movements and calls for religious and political reform and renewal. How and why was Islam articulated politically in the course of West African history?

In order to address this question, I shall establish a framework of discussion and analysis that answers a series of relevant questions, and treats the topic in a chronological manner. By looking at distinguished periods, one may see that each one witnessed a particular role for “Islam and politics,” created by particular causes and manifested into particular forms. First, it is important to point to what the theoretical relationship between Islam and politics is, and define relevant Islamic concepts to this discussion. Second, I shall look into what were the pre-colonial roots of Islam in West Africa? How was it practiced by the public and what was its relationship to the state? What influence did renewal movements from North Africa play and what similar movements eventually emerged in West Africa? Third, I shall look into what role the advancement of European colonialism into the West African hinterland played in igniting particular Islamic responses. Which European colonial powers advanced in West Africa and what was their political and economic impact? How did Muslim leaders respond and why? Fourth, I shall point to how the colonial state dealt with Islam. What were these colonial policies? What were the effects of colonial institutions on the Muslim leadership? How did Muslims respond? Fifth, I shall look into the role of Islam in national
movements and post-independence states. What political parties were established? What was their political nature, secular or religious? What kind of independent states did Muslims envision? Finally, what is the contemporary role of “political Islam” in West Africa? What are its manifestations and what issues does it seek to address? To explain why and account for the political expression of Islam in the lives of West Africans is what this paper seeks to explore.

To begin with, an understanding of some Islamic concepts is needed. “The heart of the Islamic faith is the belief in one God who is directly involved in the affairs of humanity.” ¹ To be a Muslim is to submit to the will of God. Since “God is involved in the affairs of humanity,” the perfection of faith in Islam is to submit to God’s will in all human affairs, including moral, social, economic and political. Hence, Muslims often refer to Islam, not simply as a religion, but, as a way of life. The ideal Muslim society is one that “strives to implement God’s will as defined in the Qur’an here on earth in the context of history and society.”² An important element in implementing God’s will is the establishment of His law —shari’ā. Therefore, the ideal Muslim society and state would adopt shari’ā as its system of governance. From this one can deduce that Islam is not only a set of beliefs but also a culture where particular concepts manage social relations, trade, art, and politics. The commitment to establish the ideal, however, may wane from time to time, and a settling for a convenient form may dominate. This convenient— or decadent status according to Muslim scholars— would require a process of reform or renewal, known as tajweed. Thus, understanding the concept of tajweed is important to understanding the modivation of some Islamic revival movements. The relevance of these concepts may be seen when viewing the history of Islam in West Africa.

Muslim forces from Arabia made their first advances in Africa by occupying Egypt in 642.³ From there, they moved westward ultimately controlling all of northern Africa by 70l C.E.⁴ Considering trade dynamics “during the first half of the 8th century Islam began to work its way across the trans-Saharan trade routes from north to West Africa.”⁵ Muslim merchants brought cloth, salt, and horses in return
The Course of Islam

Ismail Kamal Abdel Rasoul

for slaves and gold. As trade increased, a number of trade centers were established along these trade routes and Muslim traders established quarters in West African cities. Many of these North African Muslim traders practiced an un-orthodox form of Islam known as Ibadism. This is an important point in understanding the rise of tajdeed (reform) movements in North Africa and how they influenced West African Muslims.

While many of these Arab-Berber merchants introduced Islam to West Africans, the practice of Islam among West Africans was for the most part nominal. Islam became the religion of the commercial classes. Sulayman Nyang states that “African elites were willing to embrace Islam as long as it was not imposed on the rest of the African population.” For these elites, becoming Muslim had commercial and political advantages. They become connected to not only the visiting merchants, but to the rest of the Muslim world and received their good will. West African Muslim rulers also benefited from the literary skills of their Muslim subjects. At the same time, their practice of a syncretic Islam maintained the loyalty of pagan subjects.

Of the Islamic-influenced states that rose in medieval Africa, three are worth mentioning: Ghana, Mali and Songhai. The state of Ghana was for a long time the main source of gold in the trans-Saharan trade. Ghana was later conquered by Al-Murabitun in 1076 C.E. This led some of its inhabitants to become Muslim, including its rulers, but Ghana “never became in any real sense a Muslim state.” Its rulers did not seek to make shari’a the law of the kingdom. In the kingdom of Mali, African customary law, not shari’a, governed the country. And while some Islamic ceremonies were observed by the rulers, such as Mansa Musa’s famous pilgrimage to Mecca, Islam in Mali “was adapted to fit traditional culture.” In Songhai, similarly, the role of Islam in the state was limited. However, with the rise of Askia Muhammad Toure, the role of Muslim jurists and scholars was greater, offering the rulers of Songhai recognition in the Islamic world, until the destruction of their kingdom by a Moroccan invasion.

As mentioned earlier, the practice of Ibadism was widespread among North African Muslim traders. In response, a Berber scholar,
Abd Allah bin Yassin, launched a militant reform movement among the Berbers known as Al-Murabitun (also known by its Latinized name Almoravids)\(^\text{18}\). Al-Murabitun became political and was able to extend its influence from Spain to West Africa.\(^\text{19}\) It came into contact with West African states such as Takur and Ghana. Conflict with Ghana led to Ghana’s eventual demise and the partial Islamization of its population.\(^\text{20}\) As a result of Al-Murabitun’s activities, a legacy of militant reform was created that would intellectually influence similar movements in the future.

In the eighteenth century, movements calling for the purification of Islamic practice rose in the region. These movements, known collectively as the West African \textit{jihad\textsuperscript{s}} (holywars), sought not only to control heterodoxy but to also establish states governed by \textit{shari’\textsuperscript{a}}, Imamates or Caliphates. There were many jihads, but the two most famous ones were that of Usman dan Fodio in Hausaland and al-Hajj Umar Tal’s in Futa Toro.

As mentioned earlier, many West African Muslims practiced a syncretic form of Islam. This included Muslim rulers and was approved by some scholars—other scholars, such as Jibril bin Umar, a teacher of Usman dan Fodio, objected to this. Among the things they objected to were “the idolatrous rites of animism sacrifices and libitations to various objects of worship; failure to observe the Islamic food prohibitions and prohibited degrees of marriage; the survival of inheritance through the female line in defiance of Islamic law prescribing inheritance through the male line.”\(^\text{21}\) Out of these circumstances emerged Usman dan Fodio (1754-1817) in Hausaland, and challenged these “corrupt” Muslim rulers and scholars.\(^\text{22}\) He was influenced by the Qadiriyya Sufi brotherhood, and by 1809, he established the Sokoto Caliphate.\(^\text{23}\) The Caliphate lasted until it was eventually conquered by the British in 1903. European powers, British, French, and German; came into the region and Hausaland became part of the British “Protectorate of Northern Nigeria”\(^\text{24}\).

To the west of Hausaland, another important jihad was led by al-Hajj Umar Tal in Foto Toro. He was influenced by the teaching of another Sufi brotherhood, the Tijaniyya.\(^\text{25}\) He declared a \textit{jihad} in 1852
and soon created an Imamate. He was, however, killed in 1864, and in 1893 this Imamate fell to the French. Other jihads worth mentioning were Ma Ba Diakhou in Gambia (1809), Ahmadu Ba in Jolof, and Mahamadu Lamine of Senegambia.

The spread of jihadist movements in West Africa at this time makes for interesting observations. As mentioned, the main catalyst for the emergence of these movements was the attempt to establish ideal Islamic societies, through a process of jihad and tajdeed. This was due to a sense of decline and weakness caused, in the minds of these scholars, by the prevalence of un-Islamic practices. The legacy of these movements may be seen in the advancement of orthodox Islam, the strengthening of the Sufi brotherhoods, particularly the Tijaniyya and the Qadiryya, and the establishment of new elite. In the end, these movements fell to internal divisions, and to a new threat: European colonialism.

European powers began to show interest in West Africa early with Portuguese attempts to circumnavigate the continent in the fifteenth century. Eventually, other European states, Britain, France, Germany, would arrive with their trading vessels, and ultimately, their armies. An important effect of European presence on the West African coast was the shifting of economic importance from the trans-Saharan trade routes to the Atlantic coast and the establishment of the tri-continental Africa/Europe/Americas trade network. This, would weaken Sahelian Muslim power, and may have been a catalyst for the jihad movements as well. The European colonial powers began their march inward to occupy the West African hinterlands after the Congress of Berlin in 1884, where imperial claims were made vis-a-vis Africa. The Islamic states that had been established began to suffer from internal divisions. As a result, in addition to the superiority of European weaponry, these states succumbed to the colonial powers without putting up an effective resistance.

West African Muslims’ responses to European advancements included hijrah, taqiyya, jihad, and militant resistance. Hijrah is an Islamic concept that means migration or withdrawal—physical or mental. This concept was taken from the Prophet Muhammad’s
hijrah from hostile Mecca to Madina. A Muslim is to “withdraw” from hostile conditions to his religion to more favorable ones. This was a tactic adopted by the last Sokoto Caliph, Attahiru dan Ahmadu in response to the advancement of British Forces into Husaland in 1903. Initially, there was a debate within the Sokoto leadership on how to handle the British, whether to submit, fight, or perform hijrah. The British had already advanced close enough to Sokoto, so there was no choice but to fight. The Caliphate was defeated, but Attahiru dan Ahmadu had made preparation to migrate, but he was killed fighting the British at Burmi.

Another response to colonial advancements was taqiyya or “dissembling.” This was adopted by some scholars, such as the ones that remained in Sokoto after the British occupation. Taqiyya allowed for Muslims “to submit to an infidel enemy, at the same time preserving (their) inner loyalty to Islam where physical resistance (was believed to be) hopeless.” At the appropriate moment, however, Muslims would work to regain their power.

Jihad was another option. This was to physically resist the advancing colonialists. Here, I distinguish between the jihads launched to reform societies and to set an Islamic state and between jihads meant to resist occupation. An example of this type of jihad was that of Sheikh Ma’ al-‘Aynayn (1835-1910) in Shinqit (Mauritania). He opposed French presence in Shinqit and fought them, but by 1909, most of Shinqit came under French rule.

Another example of military resistance, though not as religious in nature as Ma’ al-‘Aynayn’s jihad, came from Rabih Fadl Allah (also known as Rabih Zubeir) and Somari Toure. Both represent a distinct variety of Muslim political leadership in West Africa. Neither were scholars but military adventurers. Rabih Fadl Allah came from the eastern Sudan with a well organized slave army. He established himself in the areas around Lake Chad until he was defeated by the French in 1900. Samori Ture was a Mandinka from the region of Guinea. He established a state in the area west of present day Guinea and declared himself an almami (imam, Muslim leader). Initially, Toure was not a religious man, but over time he became more so and
The Course of Islam

Ismail Kamal Abdel Rasoul

built Qur’anic schools and fought pagan practices. He fought the French with a well-equipped army but was defeated in 1898 and died in exile. Samori would become a symbol of African resistance to colonialism. Rabih Fadl Allah and Samori Toure both represented a military/merchant Muslim political leadership that resisted Europeans for reasons that probably had more to do with economics and political authority than with religious revival as the jihads did. Nevertheless, these men, particularly Ture, remain as to be seen as heroes of resistance to European colonialism.

With the beginning of the twentieth century, most of West Africa was under European rule: French, British, German, and Portuguese. We shall now look into how the colonial states of France and Britain dealt with Islam. What were the policies adopted by these two powers vis-à-vis Islam? France ruled the greater part of colonial West Africa, organized into a single administrative unit known as French West Africa. French colonial policy in general was guided by the principle of assimilation that was to make French colonial subjects equal to Frenchmen through education. Initial French colonial attitudes toward Islam were hostile, shaped by the legacies of Christian-Islamic encounters (The Crusades and the Ottomans), not to mention some of the resistance they faced in West Africa from Muslims, as mentioned earlier. But now that France ruled over a large Muslim constituency in West and North Africa, France sought to adapt to this situation by presenting itself as a “Muslim power.” This meant that the French colonial state would use Islamic symbols and concepts, such as the fatwa (Islamic legal decree) and the khutba (Friday sermon), to legitimize French rule. Other tactics of demonstrating the French state’s commitment to its Muslim subjects included granting special privileges to Muslim leaders, donations to construct mosques and paid-for trips to Mecca. This was a shift from assimilation policies that were proven difficult to pursue in some areas. This conscious effort to control Islamic societies, select Muslim leaders and allies, and put a secular and tolerant face on imperialism was essential to whatever success French colonial rule enjoyed,” or what David Robinson describes as “paths of
An example of this policy is how French colonial authorities dealt with sheikh Ahmadou Bamba of Senegal. Bamba was the founder of the Muridiyya brotherhood, a branch of the Qadiriyyah. Suspicious of his activities in the beginning, French colonial authorities sent him into exile. When they realized that he did not pose a great threat, he was brought back to Senegal. Bamba, who sought to avoid confrontation with the French, helped the colonial administration recruit Africans to fight in the First World War, and even prayed for the victory of the allies from the pulpit. The French began to look positively at some of the Muridiyya’s activities, particularly their communal farming system that was based on the cultivation of groundnuts, seen as beneficial to the Senegalese colonial economy.

British colonial policy in West Africa toward Islam was exemplified in the concept of indirect rule, introduced by Lord Lugard. “This meant that, after the initial process of conquest, traditional Muslim rulers who cooperated with the British were not only left in their places, but were also actively supported by the colonial administration.” In part this policy stemmed out of the British colonial goal of promoting self-governance. It also helped the British control areas that lacked sufficient British administrative resources. An example of this policy was in Northern Nigeria, where the emirs, (Muslim rulers) and shari'a remained in power. According to Terrence Ranger, such a policy helped to facilitate a British “gentlemanly” exercise of power, thus making it more “respectable and orderly.”

Having discussed the overall policy of the colonial administration, we shall now look into how some of the colonial administration’s institutions affected the development of Islam. Of these institutions, the most important was the education system. In French West Africa, the education policy was meant to reflect the policy of assimilation, as a means for, as put by a French official, “the diffusion of our civilization.” Hence, emphasis was put on the establishment of a French curriculum, while subjects such as Islamic studies and Arabic were marginalized. This was combined with a
policy that mandated that the civil servants be graduates of French schools, and that chiefs speak French, thus undermining Islamic education.\textsuperscript{60}

In contrast to this were British educational policies, particularly in northern Nigeria. Under the system of indirect rule, the preservation and establishment of traditional Islamic schools, madrassas, was encouraged. This may have also occurred due in part to the unwillingness of the colonial state to finance new Western schools in Northern Nigeria.\textsuperscript{61} Within the modern schools that the British established, as few as they were, they attempted to combine a "Western, secular, and largely literary curriculum, with some Arabic and Islamic knowledge."\textsuperscript{62} This was initially directed toward the sons of the elite, but later included commoners. One of the problems these schools faced was in the fields of Arabic and Islamic studies, where most of the teachers were unqualified persons pressed into these positions by local authorities to fill a gap. Traditional scholars, ulama, refused to serve in these schools, and Muslim families were reluctant to send their children to schools that were perceived to be under Christian influence.\textsuperscript{63} "Thus...the spread of Western secular education in northern Nigeria was slows before World War II."\textsuperscript{64}

What were Muslim responses the colonial educational systems? In the case of the French colonial territories, most wealthy Muslims had no choice but to send their children to French schools, if they wished for them to advance in their societies. Since Islamic education was practically limited and neglected, some Muslims sought to start their own educational programs. An example of this was the efforts of Ly Cire, a Senegalese Muslim who started the Muslim Association of African Students (A.M.E.A) in 1954, with the goal of spreading Arabic education.\textsuperscript{65}

In Nigeria, Muslim reactions to British educational policies took more than one course. Most Muslim felt that these policies provided for an inadequate education. Muslim private organizations in predominantly-Christian southern Nigeria founded school organized structurally on patterns similar to Christian missionary schools. Among these organizations were the Ahmadiyyah movement and the
Muslim Association of Nigeria. “These organizations sought to provide Muslims with both a Western and Muslim education, in an atmosphere that would remove fears of having to become Christians.” In the north, there was a growing sense of frustration with what some Muslims believed to be the parental nature of British education policies. While in Nigeria’s south, Western education enabled southern Nigerians with the skills to enter the colonial bureaucracy, such skill-training was not available in the north. “Out of the estimated 12 million people in northern Nigeria in 1952, only about a quarter of a million people had basic competence in English.”

One Muslim leader condemned the indirect-rule system and its education policy as a “political belief fashioned solely for the purpose of maintaining law and order… a system… (that) makes the progress toward independence infinitely slow.” As a result, and out of fear of being left behind, northern Nigerian elites demanded more Western schools to help facilitate industrialization and the move toward independence.

Colonial policies as illustrated, contributed to the political realities for West African Muslims, whether they were policies toward Muslim traditional organizations (Sufi brotherhoods, emirates) or toward education. Out of these realities emerged various Muslim conceptualizations on how to participate in the emerging political processes, the national movements and the independent states.

How was Islam incorporated in the politics of the national movements and the independent states? In Senegal, as shown earlier, French colonial policy sought to accommodate the Muridiiyya brotherhood. Other important traditional Muslim groups during this period included the Tijaniyyah brotherhood, and the marabouts. The Tijaniyyah at this time were led by the charismatic Ibrahim Niass, and had a large following in Senegal. The marabouts were Muslim teachers who “were alleged to be exploiting the credulity of the masses by taking their money in return for amulets and charms.”

Nevertheless, the marabouts, along with the Muridiiyyah and the Tijaniyyah, had considerable influence in Senegalese society. Therefore, “all political parties in Senegal, whatever their ideology,
have had to use the leaders of the brotherhoods and the marabouts as
intermediaries in their search for [political] support.” An example of
this was Leopold Senghor’s (independent Senegal’s first president, a
Catholic) appeal to the Muridiyya’s leaders to mediate between his
government and striking trade-unionists in 1972.

A second articulation of Islam politically was in the form of
modernly-structured religious-cultural associations, that worked with
national parties and governments, but sought to limit their influence in
the areas of policy-making concerning education and religious affairs.
Examples of such groups are the Muslim Cultural Union (UCM) in
Senegal and the Subanna movement in Mali. These groups were made
up of Muslim teachers who graduated from Islamic universities in
Egypt and North Africa, and sought to bring out reforms in their
societies, mainly against the influence of Sufi brotherhoods and
marabouts. In 1953, Cheikh Toure established the Muslim Cultural
Union, with the initial goal of “undermining the three enemies of
Islam, colonialism, capitalism and maraboutism.” This ambitious
goal was proven difficult to achieve, thus the UCM limited its
objectives to the field of culture and education. It had considerable
influence with the rising political parties of French West Africa in the
fifties, particularly the Rassemblement Democratique Africain
(RDA). The UCM would later state in its statutes: “The association
will not intervene in political affairs except for that which affects
Islamic education and cult.”

A third example of Islam in the political sphere is its usage in
the formation of national political parties. After World War II, a
number of Muslim political parties were established in West Africa,
including, the Gambia Muslim Congress, the Muslim Party of the Gold
Coast (Ghana), and the Northern Peoples’ Congress (NPC) in
Nigeria. “Although these political parties mobilized Islamic
symbolism, they could not and did not advocate for an Islamic state.”
Rather, these parties represented communal Muslim interests
articulated through Western political rhetoric. In Nigeria, Muslim
political organizing was in response to the what northern Nigerian
Muslims believed was the underdevelopment of their region because
of the policies of indirect-rule, and out of the fear being dominated by Western educated, Christian southern Nigerians, as Nigeria moved toward self-rule and independence.\textsuperscript{78} Started by al-Hajj Ahmadu Bello in 1949, the NPC would receive the support of the northern emirs and leaders, and would successfully mobilize Nigeria’s northern region. As Nigeria would move towards the establishment of an independent federal state, the NPC, with a constituency representing half of the Nigerian population, would dominate the political scene. Led by independent Nigeria’s first prime minister, al-hajj Abu Bakr Balewa, the NPC followed a conservative policy aimed more at preserving the traditions and privileges of the northern areas.\textsuperscript{79} The political instability of the late sixties in Nigeria, caused by a struggle for power between Northern elites and rebellious Southerners, would ultimately lead to a civil war, the murder of some of the NPC’s leadership, and the demise of the party.\textsuperscript{80} The NPC would be criticized for being parochial and communal, and as a result, its political influence became limited.

What role was Islam to play in the political outlook of independent West African states? Of these states, including predominantly Muslim ones, none would emerge as Islamic states ruled by \textit{shari'a}. The debate over the role of \textit{shari'a} in the state, however, has taken place in some countries. I will discuss this shortly. Here, however, I will point to the use of Islamic symbolism by the state. In Guinea for example, President Sekou Toure legitimized his platform of African Socialism through Islamic symbols. African socialism, propagated by the likes of Kwame N’Krumah of Ghana, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Sekou Toure of Guinea and Madibo Keita of Mali, sought to “create a true synthesis of African and modern elements,” and to “breakdown the...division between the ruling elite and general population.”\textsuperscript{81} In predominantly Muslim Guinea, this was done by linking the state ideology with basic Islamic principles, such as communal solidarity, and with Guinea’s Islamic past. This was however, done in a way that undermined the power of traditional Islamic groups, such as the marabouts. The state invoked the memory of the likes of Samori Toure, a hero of resistance.\textsuperscript{82} On the
international scene, Toure contributed considerably to Afro-Arab, Pan-Islamic and Third World solidarities, through his blending of African socialism and Islamic symbolism. Like in Nasser’s Egypt, as Ali Mazrui describes, “Islam was a potential ally in the struggle against imperialism.”

The rise of Islam in the political discourse of national movements and the independent states was exemplified in the traditional religious organizations, modern religious associations, national parties and the ideology of independent states. These overwhelmingly reflected an adaptationist trajectory, influenced by Western colonial education, and concerns for non-Muslims’ reactions. Growing dissatisfaction with the (mis)achievements of independence, politically and economically, debates over Muslim identity, the impact of Islamic organizations from Libya and Saudi Arabia, and events such as Iran’s Islamic Revolution, led to calls for Islamicist oriented politics in some West African states. The core of this political discourse is the demand for the implementation of shari‘a, and the presentation of Islam in national political debates as a competing “ideology” among ideologies. Here, we will look again at Nigeria for examples.

In 1977, the Constituent Assembly, in its attempt to draft a new constitution, debated whether or not to allow for the establishment of a Federal Shari’a Court of Appeal, “which could hear appeals from State Shari’a Courts of Appeal, rather than sending them directly to the Supreme Court of Nigeria.” Nigerian Christians argued that this was a hidden attempt to Islamize the state, while Muslims argued that the application of shari‘a was essential to their religion and cultural lives, and denying them that was discrimination against them. A settlement was reached with the appointment of three experts on shari‘a to the Supreme Court of Appeals.

Islamicist political activism gained momentum in Nigeria in the 1980s, inspired by the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. An important activist on behalf of Islamism in Nigeria was university lecturer, Ibraheem Suleiman. Suleiman sought to present Islam as an “alternative to capitalism and communism, and to separate [true] Islam from communal division in Nigeria.” He was nevertheless critical of
Christianity in Nigeria, which he described as a "child of colonialism." Suleiman was influential among students, particularly the Muslims Students Association of Nigeria, who advocated for the implementation of shari'a in Nigeria from university campuses.

In conclusion, this paper has sought to follow the trajectory of Islam as a political instrument in West African politics, and find answers to why it developed and manifested in the ways it did. This has been done by looking into relevant questions regarding the history of Islam in the region and the reaction to and impact of colonialism and the modern state. To review, the presence of Islam in West Africa dates to the 8th century, where it was the religion of visiting merchants from North Africa, and then became the religion of the West Africa elites, mixed with local animist traditions. This syncretism was reflected in the political and judicial nature of the polities of the time. This reflects a political usage of Islam that satisfied both local animists and Muslims, guaranteeing the loyalty of both communities.

As the number of learned Muslims increased, and Europeans powers began their colonial quests in the region, a new political usage of Islam emerged, in the form of the jihads. The jihads sought to establish authentic Islamic states and to reform societies accordingly. Islam became a tool for and the basis of state building. Jihad was also a tool for military resistance to colonialism. Other Islamic concepts such as hijrah and taqqiyah were also used to respond to colonialism.

Recognizing the importance Islam and its potentials, the colonial administrations that followed adopted particular policies to suppress and accommodate it. In each case, Muslims responded in ways that beset their conditions, either by accepting or protesting these policies. The move towards independence witnessed the participation of a variety of discoursers representing the ideologically diverse Muslim community, such as the traditional religious organizations, modern associations, national parties and independent states’ ideologies. At times Islam was an expression of conservatism, and at others an associate of radicalism. As the hard realities of independence sank in, and criticism of the colonial legacy went deeper, Islam would be articulated in the form of contemporary Islamism.
Therefore, a legacy of Islam in the politics of West Africa lies in its many manifestations: syncretism, Imamate, conservatism, radicalism and Islamism. The contemporary resurgence of Islam globally, and the challenges posed by new forces, such as globalization and the “war on terror”, are likely to generate new responses and manifestations of Islam, politically in West Africa. These manifestations are likely to represent retractions and advancements, reflecting the weaknesses and strengths of West African Muslims, not dissimilarly from their past, as we have shown. An insight into this past perhaps may give us some clues to what may come.
End notes

2 Voll, p. 6.
5 Clarke, 8.
6 Ibid, 10.
7 Ibid, 9.
8 Voll, p 75.
12 Voll, p. 76.
14 Ibid, p 32.
15 Ibid, p32.
16 Clarke, p 47.
18 Clarke, p 37.
19 Ibid, p17.
20 Ibid, p 22.
22 Voll, p 143.
23 Ibid, p 143.
24 Tringham, p 207.
25 Voll, p 143.
26 Ibid, p 166.
29 Nyang, p 22.
30 Clarke, p 198.
31 Nyang, p 21.
32 Clarke, p 198.
33 Ibid, 199.
34 Ibid, p 200.
36 Ibid, p 269.
37 Clarke, p 196.
38 Ibid, p 196.
39 Voll, p 146.
40 Trimingham p 219.
42 Voll, p 146.
43 Clarke, p 185.
45 Robinson, 76.
46 Naying, p 22.
47 Clarke, p 190.
49 Robinson, p 77.
50 Clarke, 203.
51 Clarke, p 205.
52 Naying, p 20.
53 Clarke, p 206.
55 Ibid, p 277.
59 Ibid, p 293.
60 Ibid, p 293.
61 Ibid, p 294.
63 Ibid, p 294.
64 Ibid, p 294.
65 Clarke, p 210.
67 Ibid, p 222.
68 Ibid, p 222.
69 Ibid, p 209.
70 Ibid e, p 209.
The Course of Islam

Ismail Kamal Abdel Rasoul

71 Ibid., p 236.
72 Nyang, p 23.
73 Clarke, p 209.
74 Voll, p 265.
75 Ibid, p 265.
76 Nyang, p 22.
77 Ibid, p 22-23.
78 Voll, p 260.
79 Ibid., p 260.
81 Voll, 270.
82 Voll, p 272.
83 Nyang, p 23.
86 Hunwick, p 144.
87 Voll, p 354.
88 Nyang, "West Africa," p 270.
Bibliography

Ali Mazrui.

Clark, Peter B.

F. Cooper.

Hiskett, Mervyn.

John Hunwick.

Nyang, Sulayman

Robinson, David.

Terrence O. Ranger.

Thomas Hodgkin.
The Course of Islam

Trimmingham, J. Spencer

Voll, John.