

***Beyond Timbuktu: An Intellectual History of Muslim West Africa.*** By **Ousmane Oumar Kane**. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016. Pp. 282. \$39.95 cloth.

The academic study of Islam in Africa has long suffered from a double exclusion: Africa has been considered peripheral to Islamic Studies, whereas in African Studies Islam has been categorized as an external influence of superficial importance. *Beyond Timbuktu* very effectively dispels such misperceptions, demonstrating how, for over a millennium, African intellectuals writing in Arabic have not only been keenly aware of global debates and developments in the wider Islamic world but have actively contributed to them.

After a very useful opening chapter tracing the history of academic interest in scholarship in West Africa and surveying the present state of the field, the book is roughly divided in two sections: the first surveys the efflorescence of Islamic intellectual history in West Africa until the advent of colonial rule, while the second discusses more recent developments, particularly in the last fifty years.

The vast scope of the first half of the book, covering a thousand years in eighty pages, severely limits its effectiveness. The chapters on clerical lineages and on the curriculum of study are particularly useful and focused surveys of the field. They tell us more precisely exactly who and where were the more-or-less hereditary groups of Islamic intellectuals, and identify quite precisely the subjects, indeed the books, they studied as part of their training. On the other hand, Kane is far less effective in bridging between a purely intellectual and a broader social history of Islamic thought in precolonial West Africa. What Arabophone West African clerics were reading and writing to one another, and indeed to clerics outside West Africa, tells us little about how this knowledge was (or was not!) deployed within the context of the societies in which they operated. Kane informs us, for example, that Maliki jurisprudence was the most important focus of study, but not how it was (or was not) applied in practice in different historical contexts. A brief chapter on “political economy” can hardly do justice to such a rich and complex subject. The thinness of this analysis is particularly evident in his discussion of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century jihad movements, which are too often portrayed in the terms in which their leaders attempted to justify them.

The second half of the book, treating contemporary developments in Islamic thought in West Africa, is more successful, partly because its narrower focus allows for greater depth of treatment, but also because it relies far more intrinsically on the author’s own research, not to mention his personal experience. The chapter on modern Islamic universities is particularly noteworthy, as this is a very recent development—the first two were inaugurated in 1987 and 1988—which has received almost no attention in European and American academia. These first universities embodied two distinct paradigms of Islamic education, emulated by later institutions. Instruction at the Université Islamique de Say, in Niger, is exclusively in Arabic and restricted to religious subjects; the Islamic University in Mbale, Uganda, offers instruction in English in secular as well as religious fields, and does not rely exclusively on recruiting Muslim students. Kane’s own research demonstrates that researchers in these institutions are isolated, not only from Western academics, but from one another. Paradoxically, while Islamic scholars in precolonial

Africa were integrated into a global network, postcolonial scholars are, for the time being at least, relegated to a far more parochial existence.

Other important chapters in the latter part of the book deal with the unintended effects of the liberalization of mass media in Africa, which has opened entirely new avenues for the transmission and reception of religious ideas, not only in Arabic, but also in local languages, especially in Hausa in Nigeria and Wolof in Senegal. The vernacularization of religious knowledge, not only over the radio and television, but also the widespread use of *ajami*, non-Arabic languages written in Arabic script, has had a transformational effect on Islamic thought.

Finally, Kane includes a thoughtful and informative chapter on recent jihadi movements in Mali and Nigeria, a welcome change from the sensationalist and journalistic treatment such movements have all too often received.

All in all, this is a very useful survey of Islamic intellectual history in West Africa, including particularly original and illuminating material on recent, and sometimes dramatic, developments.

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***Children on the Move: Past & Present Experiences of Migration.*** Edited by Elodie Razy and Marie Rodet. Rochester, NY: James Currey/Boydell & Brewer, 2016. Pp. 255; 2 b/w illustrations, 5 maps. \$80.00.

*Children on the Move* is an edited volume by Elodie Razy and Marie Rodet that examines the migratory experiences of African children. The essays in this collection emphasize the fluidity and flexibility of migrant childhoods, in both definition and scope, and contribute to a recent body of work that goes beyond the victim narrative commonly associated with African childhood. Divided into three parts, *Children on the Move* addresses issues of competing conceptions of childhood, ambiguous agency, historiographical narratives, and methodological challenges central to current discourse.

The two essays in “Part I: Child Migrants in Africa” provide analysis from the early nineteenth and twentieth centuries to show that childhood migration is a historical norm in Africa, not a new phenomenon that came with (modern notions of) globalization. Looking at Senegalese children educated in France and colonial interventions concerning marriage customs in Togo, the authors work to complicate claims of child agency by noting the primary role of adult kinship networks in decision-making processes. Although the children in these two case studies had independent concerns, which they voiced, the history of childhood is inevitably linked to the history of parenting and broader social networks.

“Part II: Being a Child & Becoming a Gendered Adult” includes three essays that look at variations in domestic service and fostering in the postcolonial period. The authors’ use of anecdotes and oral history show variation both among and within genders, emphasizing

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