



La-Net

ISS 104

Islam in Africa



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Course code: ISS 104

Course title: Islam in Africa

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List of Series:

- Series 1: Spread of Islam Across Africa
- Series 2: Islam in Western Sudan
- Series 3: Institutional Development in African Societies
- Series 4: Relations with the Wider Muslim World
- Series 5: Interactions with Traditional Practices

Series 1: Spread of Islam Across Africa

Parts and Sub-Parts

Here's your outline properly formatted into clear bullet points:

1.1 Spread of Islam in North Africa

- 1.1.1 Islam's Entry into Egypt and the Maghrib
- 1.1.2 Routes, Communities and Centres of Learning
- 1.1.3 Conversion, Accommodation and Social Change

1.2 Spread of Islam in East Africa

- 1.2.1 Red Sea and Indian Ocean Connections
- 1.2.2 The Swahili Coast and Muslim Communities
- 1.2.3 Trade, Settlement and Cultural Exchange

1.3 Spread of Islam in West Africa

- 1.3.1 Trans-Saharan Trade and the Movement of Islam
- 1.3.2 Rulers, Merchants and Muslim Communities
- 1.3.3 Centres of Learning and Islamic Culture



1.4 Spread of Islam in Central Africa

- **1.4.1** The Lake Chad Basin and Kanem-Bornu
- **1.4.2** Trade Routes, Scholars and Muslim Networks
- **1.4.3** Patterns of Interaction with Non-Muslim Communities

Introduction

Islam has been part of African history for more than a millennium. Its spread was not a single event that affected every region in the same way. Instead, Islam moved through several interconnected routes, including conquest and administration in parts of North Africa, Red Sea and Indian Ocean commerce in the east, trans-Saharan trade in the west, and commercial and scholarly networks around the Lake Chad basin in central Africa. As you study this Series, you should therefore avoid thinking of the spread of Islam as only a military or political process. It was also a process of migration, trade, learning, settlement, marriage, diplomacy and cultural exchange.

The aim of this Series is to help you explain the major routes and historical processes through which Islam spread across North, East, West and Central Africa. You will examine how Muslim merchants, rulers, scholars, travellers and settled communities contributed to this process, while also considering how African societies responded to the new religion. The Series will encourage you to distinguish between the arrival of Islam in a region and the much longer process through which Islam became established within local societies.

We shall begin with North Africa, where Egypt became an important early gateway and Muslim rule later extended across the Maghrib. Next, we will examine East Africa, focusing on the Red Sea and Indian Ocean networks and the development of Muslim communities along the Swahili coast. We will then turn to West Africa, where trans-Saharan commerce linked Muslim North Africa with states and trading communities south of the Sahara. Finally, we will examine Central Africa, especially the Lake Chad basin and Kanem-Bornu, and consider how Muslim networks interacted with existing communities and political structures.



Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- SLO 1.1 explain the major routes and historical stages through which Islam spread in North Africa,
- SLO 1.2 analyse the roles of trade, migration, settlement and cultural exchange in the spread of Islam in East Africa,
- SLO 1.3 evaluate the contributions of rulers, merchants, scholars and trading networks to the spread of Islam in West Africa,
- SLO 1.4 discuss patterns of Muslim and non-Muslim interaction in Central Africa and identify major centres associated with the growth of Islam.

1.1 Spread of Islam in North Africa

1.1.1 Islam's Entry into Egypt and the Maghrib

North Africa was one of the earliest regions of Africa to encounter Islam. Egypt became an important gateway after the Muslim conquest of Egypt in the seventh century. From Egypt, Muslim political influence and communities extended westward into the territories that are now Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. The process was gradual, and the establishment of Muslim rule did not mean that the entire population immediately became Muslim.

As Muslim political authorities established themselves, they encountered diverse African and Mediterranean populations, including Christians, Jews and communities with other religious traditions. Islam therefore spread within a complex social environment. Over time, conversion, migration, intermarriage, administration and contact with Muslim scholars and merchants contributed to the growth of Muslim communities.

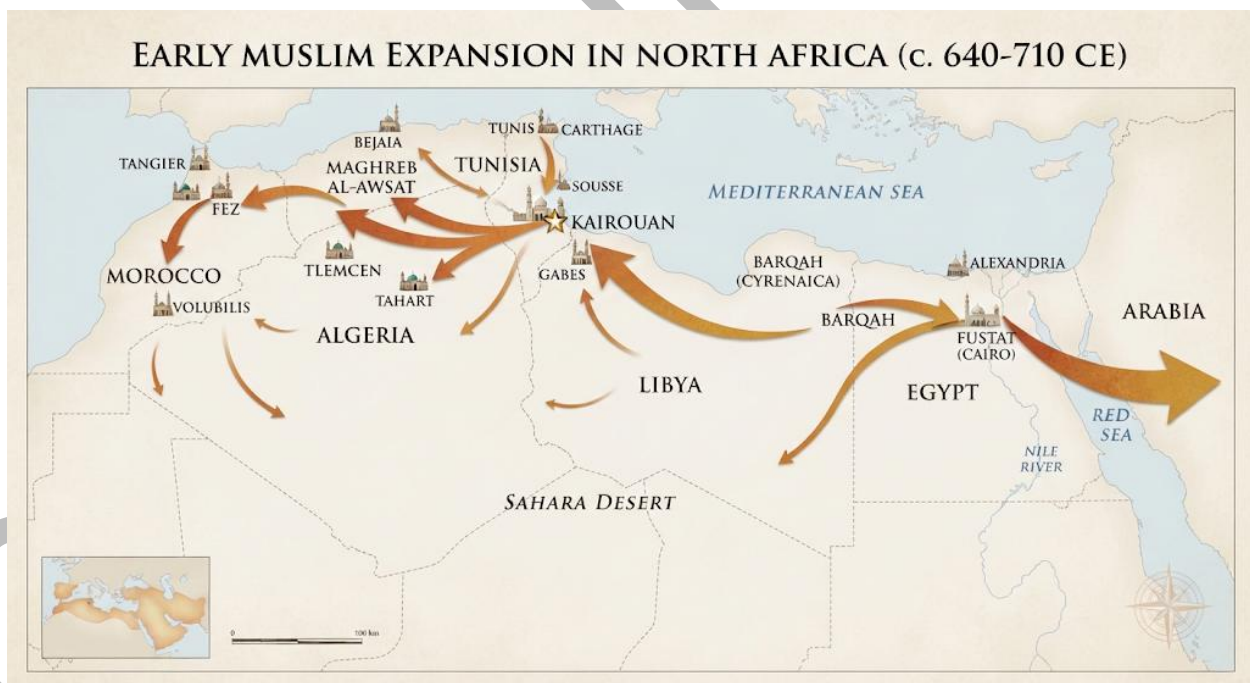


Fill in the blank: Egypt became an important early _____ for the spread of Islam into North Africa.

1.1.2 Routes, Communities and Centres of Learning

The spread of Islam across the Maghrib was supported by movement along established routes connecting towns, markets and political centres. Muslim communities developed around administrative centres and commercial towns. Mosques served not only as places of worship but also as spaces for teaching, public discussion and community organisation. Over time, centres such as Kairouan became important for Islamic scholarship and helped connect North Africa to wider Muslim intellectual networks.

The importance of these centres illustrates a major principle in the history of Islam in Africa: religion spread not only because people moved, but also because institutions helped preserve and transmit knowledge. Scholars taught Qur'anic studies, law, Arabic and other branches of learning, while travellers carried ideas between communities.



Map showing the principal early routes from Egypt across the Maghrib and major centres of Islamic learning.



Figure 1.1: Major routes and centres in the early spread of Islam across North Africa

Fill in the blank: Kairouan became an important centre of Islamic _____ in North Africa.

1.1.3 Conversion, Accommodation and Social Change

Conversion in North Africa occurred over an extended period. Some communities adopted Islam through personal belief and contact with Muslims, while political, economic and social circumstances also influenced the process. Muslim rulers often governed populations that included non-Muslims, so relationships between communities could involve cooperation, taxation, trade, scholarship and occasional conflict.

The historical lesson is that Islamisation and Arabisation were not identical processes. The growth of Islam in North Africa involved religious conversion, while the spread of Arabic language and culture followed its own patterns. African populations contributed to the developing societies of the region, and North Africa became an important bridge between Africa, the Mediterranean and the wider Muslim world.

Fill in the blank: Islamisation refers primarily to the process through which people and communities adopted _____.

Pilot Questions 1.1

1. What made Egypt an important gateway for the early spread of Islam in Africa?
2. Name two North African regions or countries through which Islam spread westward from Egypt.
3. Why did the arrival of Muslim rule not mean immediate conversion of the entire population?
4. State one function of mosques and centres of learning in the spread of Islam.
5. Explain one difference between Islamisation and Arabisation.



1.2 Spread of Islam in East Africa

1.2.1 Red Sea and Indian Ocean Connections

In East Africa, Islam spread through long-distance connections across the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. These maritime networks linked the African coast with Arabia, the Persian Gulf, India and other commercial regions. Muslim merchants and sailors travelled between ports, while some settled in coastal communities and established families and businesses.

Trade provided repeated opportunities for contact. Unlike a single event of conquest, maritime exchange allowed religious ideas and social practices to move through continuing relationships. Muslim communities could become established in port settlements while maintaining connections with Muslim societies across the ocean.

Fill in the blank: The two major maritime networks associated with the early spread of Islam in East Africa were the Red Sea and the _____ Ocean.

1.2.2 The Swahili Coast and Muslim Communities

The Swahili coast became one of the most important zones of Muslim settlement in East Africa. Towns along the coast participated in Indian Ocean commerce and developed societies in which African cultural traditions interacted with Islamic practices and overseas influences. Islam became deeply rooted in many coastal communities, while the Swahili language developed as an important medium of communication and trade.

Muslim communities on the coast were not simply foreign settlements imposed on Africa. Local African populations actively participated in coastal commerce and urban life. The resulting societies demonstrate how Islam could become African in social expression while remaining connected to the wider Muslim world.





Photograph or reconstruction of a historic Swahili coastal settlement showing a mosque, stone architecture and the relationship between town and harbour.

Plate 1.2: Muslim urban life on the historic Swahili coast

Fill in the blank: The Swahili coast developed through its strong connections with _____ Ocean commerce.

1.2.3 Trade, Settlement and Cultural Exchange

Trade was important because merchants created sustained contact between communities. Settlement made that contact more permanent, while marriage and family relationships encouraged social integration. Muslim scholars and religious teachers also contributed to the transmission of Islamic knowledge. In this way, commerce, community formation and religious learning reinforced one another.

Cultural exchange was not one-directional. African societies influenced the language, architecture, food, clothing, art and social life of coastal Muslim communities. The history of



Islam in East Africa therefore illustrates how Islam could be adapted to local circumstances without losing its central religious identity.

Fill in the blank: The spread of Islam through East African coastal communities was strengthened by trade, settlement, marriage and _____.

Pilot Questions 1.2

1. Identify two geographical networks through which Islam reached East Africa.
2. Why was Indian Ocean trade important to the spread of Islam?
3. What is the Swahili coast?
4. Mention two ways African societies contributed to the development of coastal Muslim communities.
5. Explain how settlement could strengthen the spread of Islam.

1.3 Spread of Islam in West Africa

1.3.1 Trans-Saharan Trade and the Movement of Islam

West Africa became connected to the wider Muslim world through trans-Saharan trade. Merchants crossed desert routes carrying commodities such as gold, salt and other goods. These commercial connections linked North African markets with communities and states south of the Sahara. Muslim merchants were therefore important agents in the movement of Islamic ideas, practices and institutions.

The spread was gradual because trade routes were not simply lines on a map. They connected people who met in markets, settlements and political centres. Repeated commercial contact created opportunities for Muslim merchants to live in West African towns, form communities and interact with rulers and local populations.

Fill in the blank: The major commercial network connecting North Africa with West Africa across the desert was the _____ trade system.



1.3.2 Rulers, Merchants and Muslim Communities

Muslim merchants were not the only people involved in the spread of Islam. Rulers played an important role when they adopted Islam, patronised Muslim scholars or incorporated Muslim officials into administration. The adoption of Islam by rulers could strengthen links with Muslim trading partners and provide access to literate administrators and diplomatic networks.

At the same time, the conversion of a ruler did not necessarily mean that the entire population converted at once. Different communities could maintain older religious practices while participating in political and economic systems that included Muslims. This explains why Islamisation in West Africa often developed through negotiation and gradual social change.

Fill in the blank: In West Africa, the conversion of a ruler did not necessarily result in the immediate conversion of the entire _____.

1.3.3 Centres of Learning and Islamic Culture

As Muslim communities expanded, centres of learning became increasingly important. Scholars taught Qur'anic studies, Islamic law, Arabic and related subjects. Cities such as Timbuktu later became famous for scholarship, libraries and manuscript culture. Other centres, including Jenne and Gao, also participated in wider networks of trade and Islamic learning.

These centres show that the spread of Islam involved more than the adoption of a religious identity. Islamic learning influenced literacy, scholarship, architecture, legal practice and intellectual exchange. The presence of scholars and books also strengthened links between West African societies and the wider Muslim world.

[Insert figure here]

Map showing the trans-Saharan routes connecting North African markets with major West African centres including Gao, Jenne and Timbuktu.

Figure 1.3: Trans-Saharan routes and major West African Islamic centres



AI prompt suggestion: “Create an educational historical map of West Africa and the Sahara showing major trans-Saharan routes and the locations of Timbuktu, Gao, Jenne, Sijilmasa and major desert crossings. Use clear labels and arrows.”

Search string: “trans-Saharan trade routes Timbuktu Gao Jenne Islam map OER”

Fill in the blank: Timbuktu became widely known as a centre of Islamic scholarship and _____ culture.

Pilot Questions 1.3

1. What was the role of trans-Saharan trade in the spread of Islam?
2. Name two commodities associated with trans-Saharan commerce.
3. Mention two ways rulers could support the spread of Islam.
4. Why did the conversion of a ruler not always produce immediate mass conversion?
5. Identify two West African centres associated with Islamic learning.

1.4 Spread of Islam in Central Africa

1.4.1 The Lake Chad Basin and Kanem-Bornu

The Lake Chad basin was an important zone in the history of Islam in Central Africa. Its location connected different commercial and political routes, making it a meeting point for merchants, scholars and rulers. The Islamisation of Kanem and later Kanem-Bornu developed over time and was closely connected to political authority, trade and links with Muslim societies to the north.

The experience of Kanem-Bornu demonstrates that the spread of Islam could become institutional when rulers supported Muslim scholarship and administration. Muslim scholars could advise rulers, teach religious knowledge and help maintain connections with other Muslim centres.



Fill in the blank: The Lake _____ basin became an important zone for the development of Islam in Central Africa.

1.4.2 Trade Routes, Scholars and Muslim Networks

Commercial routes around the Lake Chad basin connected communities across wide areas. Merchants transported goods, while scholars and travellers moved with or alongside these networks. The movement of scholars was especially important because it connected local communities to wider traditions of Islamic learning.

Muslim networks could therefore operate at several levels. A merchant might connect markets, a scholar might connect centres of learning, and a ruler might connect political institutions with the wider Muslim world. Together, these relationships created conditions in which Islam could become established beyond individual settlements.

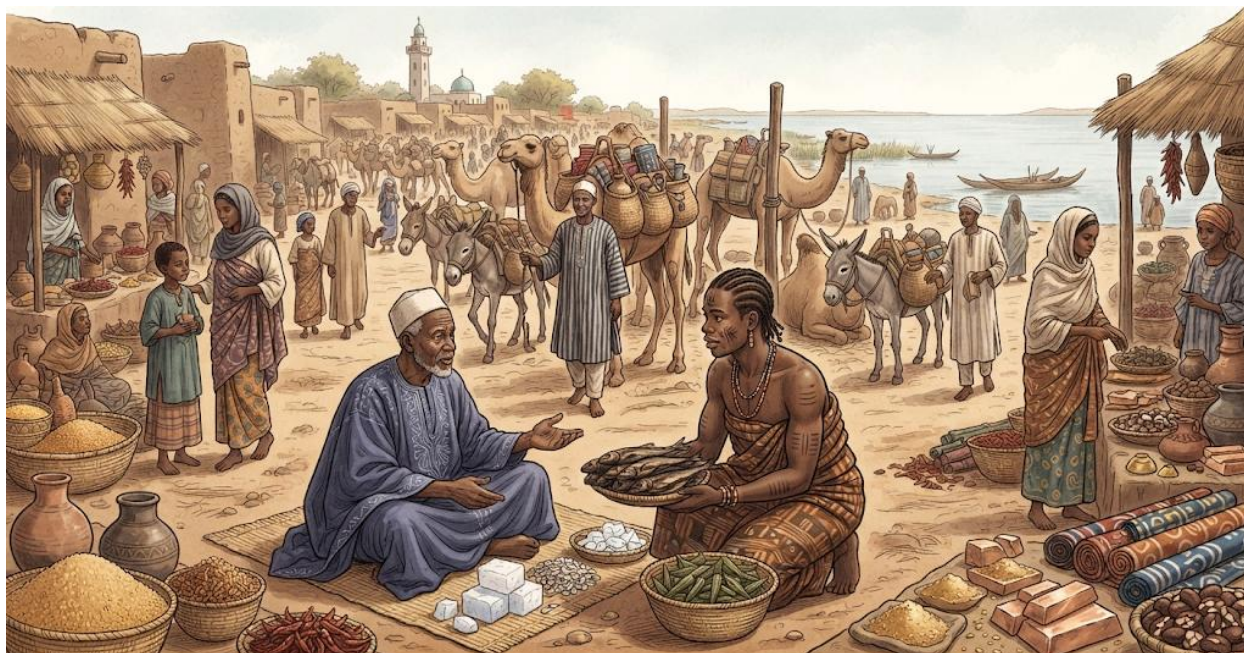
Fill in the blank: Scholars helped connect Central African Muslim communities to wider traditions of Islamic _____.

1.4.3 Patterns of Interaction with Non-Muslim Communities

The spread of Islam occurred in societies where Muslims and non-Muslims lived, traded and interacted. Their relationships could include cooperation, commercial exchange, diplomacy, intermarriage and competition. The nature of these relationships varied according to time, place and political circumstances.

For you as a student of Islam in Africa, it is important to avoid a simplistic picture in which Muslim and non-Muslim communities were always either completely separated or permanently in conflict. Historical societies were more complex. People could cooperate economically while maintaining different religious identities, and rulers could develop political arrangements that accommodated religious diversity.





Market Exchange in the Pre-Modern Lake Chad Basin.

Historical-style educational illustration of a Lake Chad basin market showing Muslim and non-Muslim traders interacting in a pre-modern African setting.

Plate 1.4: Commercial interaction in the Lake Chad basin

Fill in the blank: Historical interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims could include trade, diplomacy, intermarriage and _____.

Pilot Questions 1.4

1. Why was the Lake Chad basin important to the spread of Islam?
2. Name the major Central African political tradition discussed in this Part.
3. Mention two roles performed by Muslim scholars.
4. Identify three forms of interaction that could occur between Muslims and non-Muslims.
5. Explain why the spread of Islam in Central Africa should not be described only as a process of conflict.





Series Summary

This Series has introduced you to the major historical routes through which Islam spread across Africa. We began with North Africa, where Egypt served as an early gateway and Muslim communities gradually expanded across the Maghrib. You saw that political change, migration, trade, scholarship and conversion all contributed to Islamisation, and that Islamisation did not occur at the same speed in every community.

We then examined East Africa, where Red Sea and Indian Ocean networks connected African coastal communities with Arabia, the Persian Gulf and India. The Swahili coast developed as an important zone of Muslim settlement, commerce and cultural exchange. African participation in these communities demonstrates that Islam in Africa developed through interaction between Islamic traditions and local societies.

In West Africa, trans-Saharan commerce provided a major channel through which Islam moved south of the Sahara. Merchants, rulers and scholars contributed in different ways, while centres such as Timbuktu, Gao and Jenne became associated with Islamic learning and culture. Finally, the Lake Chad basin and Kanem-Bornu illustrated the development of Muslim political and scholarly networks in Central Africa. Across all four regions, the spread of Islam was a complex process involving movement, contact, institutions, adaptation and relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Glossary of Terms

- **Arabisation:** The process through which Arabic language and aspects of Arab culture become established within a society. It is not identical to Islamisation.
- **Indian Ocean trade:** The long-distance maritime commercial network connecting East Africa with Arabia, the Persian Gulf, India and other regions.
- **Islamisation:** The process through which individuals, communities or societies adopt Islam and develop institutions and practices associated with the religion.



- Kanem-Bornu: A major political tradition centred around the Lake Chad basin that became an important centre of Muslim political and scholarly activity.
- Maghrib: The north-western part of Africa, especially the region covering present-day Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and neighbouring areas.
- Swahili coast: The East African coastal zone where African, Islamic and Indian Ocean commercial influences interacted to produce distinctive urban societies.
- Trans-Saharan trade: Long-distance commerce crossing the Sahara and linking North African markets with communities south of the desert.

Concept Check Questions 1

Objective Questions

1. Which North African region became an early gateway for Islam in Africa? (Linked to SLO 1.1)
2. Which maritime network was especially important to the spread of Islam along the East African coast? (Linked to SLO 1.2)
3. Which trade system linked Muslim North Africa with West Africa? (Linked to SLO 1.3)
4. Which political tradition around Lake Chad became an important centre of Muslim development? (Linked to SLO 1.4)
5. Which West African city became particularly famous for Islamic scholarship? (Linked to SLO 1.3)

Short-Answer Questions



6. Explain why the arrival of Islam in a region should be distinguished from the longer process of Islamisation. (Linked to SLO 1.1)
7. Analyse two ways trade contributed to the spread of Islam in East Africa. (Linked to SLO 1.2)
8. Discuss how rulers and merchants could reinforce one another in the spread of Islam in West Africa. (Linked to SLO 1.3)
9. Explain two forms of interaction that could occur between Muslim and non-Muslim communities in Central Africa. (Linked to SLO 1.4)

Long-Answer Questions

10. Evaluate the relative importance of trade, political authority and scholarship in explaining the spread of Islam across Africa. Use examples from at least three regions. (Linked to SLO 1.1, SLO 1.2 and SLO 1.3)
11. Discuss how the history of Islam in Africa demonstrates interaction between a universal religious tradition and diverse African societies. (Linked to SLO 1.2 and SLO 1.4)

Answers to Concept Check Questions 1

Objective Questions

1. Egypt.
2. The Indian Ocean maritime network, together with Red Sea connections.
3. Trans-Saharan trade.
4. Kanem-Bornu.
5. Timbuktu.



Short-Answer Questions

6. Arrival refers to the first presence or introduction of Islam, while Islamisation is the longer process through which individuals and communities adopt Islam and develop related institutions, practices and identities.
7. Trade created repeated contact between Muslim merchants and African coastal communities, while settlement created permanent Muslim communities. Marriage, commercial partnerships and scholarly exchange could then deepen the process.
8. Merchants created economic links and Muslim communities, while rulers could provide political protection, employ Muslim officials and patronise scholars. These roles could reinforce one another by connecting economic, political and intellectual networks.
9. Muslims and non-Muslims could cooperate in trade, enter diplomatic relationships, form family connections and participate in shared political or economic systems, even while maintaining different religious identities.

Long-Answer Questions

10. A strong answer should argue that no single factor explains the spread of Islam across Africa. Trade created routes and repeated contact; political authority could provide institutional support; and scholarship transmitted religious knowledge. The relative importance of each factor varied by region. North Africa involved early Muslim political expansion, East Africa was strongly shaped by maritime commerce and settlement, while West Africa and Central Africa developed through commercial, political and scholarly networks.
11. A strong answer should explain that Islam entered diverse African societies but did not erase local social identities. African Muslims participated actively in trade, scholarship, urban development and political institutions. The Swahili coast, West African trading centres and the Lake Chad basin demonstrate how Islamic beliefs and institutions interacted with



African languages, cultures, political structures and economic systems. The result was a variety of African Muslim societies connected to a wider Islamic world.

Answers to Pilot Questions 1

Part 1.1

1. Egypt provided an early entry point from the eastern Mediterranean and became a base for further Muslim expansion and contact.
2. Any two of Libya, Tunisia, Algeria or Morocco.
3. North Africa already contained diverse religious communities, and conversion took place gradually through social, political, economic and religious contact.
4. Mosques and learning centres supported worship, teaching, community organisation and the transmission of Islamic knowledge.
5. Islamisation concerns adoption of Islam, while Arabisation concerns the spread of Arabic language and aspects of Arab culture.

Part 1.2

1. The Red Sea and Indian Ocean networks.
2. It created sustained contact among merchants, sailors, settlers and coastal communities.
3. The East African coastal zone where African societies interacted with Islamic and Indian Ocean commercial networks.
4. Africans participated in trade, urban life, family formation, language development and cultural production.
5. Settlement created permanent communities that could establish mosques, businesses, families and learning networks.



Part 1.3

1. It linked Muslim North African markets with West African communities and created repeated contact between merchants and local populations.
2. Gold and salt.
3. Rulers could patronise scholars, employ Muslim administrators, support Muslim communities and strengthen links with Muslim trading partners.
4. Populations could maintain existing religious traditions while gradually encountering and adopting Islam.
5. Timbuktu and Gao, with Jenne also recognised as an important centre.

Part 1.4

1. It connected commercial and political routes and became an important zone of interaction among merchants, scholars and rulers.
2. Kanem-Bornu.
3. They taught Islamic knowledge, advised rulers and connected local communities with wider scholarly networks.
4. Trade, diplomacy and intermarriage, among others.
5. Muslims and non-Muslims could cooperate economically and politically while maintaining different religious identities.



References and Attributions 1

Scholarly Sources

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- Hodgkin, T. (1975). *Nigerian Perspectives: An Historical Anthology*. Oxford University Press.
- Insoll, T. (2003). *The Archaeology of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Cambridge University Press.
- Levtzion, N., & Pouwels, R. L. (Eds.). (2000). *The History of Islam in Africa*. Ohio University Press.
- Robinson, D. (2004). *Muslim Societies in African History*. Cambridge University Press.
- Trimingham, J. S. (1962). *A History of Islam in West Africa*. Oxford University Press.

Illustrations

- Figure 1.1: Major routes and centres in the early spread of Islam across North Africa
- AI-generated suggestion: “Create a clean historical map of North Africa showing Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, with arrows indicating the westward expansion of early Muslim political and commercial networks and labels for major centres such as Kairouan.”
- Suggested OER search string: “early spread of Islam North Africa Egypt Maghrib Kairouan map OER”.
- Plate 1.2: Muslim urban life on the historic Swahili coast



- AI-generated suggestion: “Create an educational historical reconstruction of a Swahili coastal town, showing coral-stone buildings, a mosque, a harbour with sailing vessels and African merchants engaged in Indian Ocean trade. Avoid modern objects.”
- Suggested OER search string: “Swahili coast historic Muslim town mosque Indian Ocean trade OER”.
- Figure 1.3: Trans-Saharan routes and major West African Islamic centres
- AI-generated suggestion: “Create an educational historical map of West Africa and the Sahara showing major trans-Saharan routes and the locations of Timbuktu, Gao, Jenne, Sijilmasa and major desert crossings. Use clear labels and arrows.”
- Suggested OER search string: “trans-Saharan trade routes Timbuktu Gao Jenne Islam map OER”.
- Plate 1.4: Commercial interaction in the Lake Chad basin
- AI-generated suggestion: “Create a historically informed educational illustration of a pre-modern Lake Chad basin market, showing African Muslim and non-Muslim traders exchanging goods, with modest period-appropriate clothing, pack animals and no modern objects.”
- Suggested OER search string: “Lake Chad basin premodern trade Muslim communities illustration OER”.

General Attribution

- Historical interpretations and regional examples in this Series are based on the scholarly sources listed above.
- AI prompts are original educational prompts prepared for this Series. Any externally sourced image should be used only with appropriate permission or an applicable open licence, and its source should be recorded.



Parts and Sub-Parts

2.1 Meaning and Historical Setting of Western Sudan

- **2.1.1** The Geographical Meaning of Western Sudan
- **2.1.2** Major Peoples, States and Trade Corridors
- **2.1.3** Islam and the Pre-Islamic Political and Commercial Environment

2.2 Early Muslim Contacts and the Growth of Islam

- **2.2.1** Trans-Saharan Merchants and Muslim Communities
- **2.2.2** Rulers and the Adoption of Islam
- **2.2.3** Scholars, Mosques and Islamic Learning

2.3 Islam and the Major States of Western Sudan

- **2.3.1** Ghana and Early Muslim Influence
- **2.3.2** Mali and the Consolidation of Islam
- **2.3.3** Songhai and the Expansion of Islamic Institutions

2.4 Islamic Scholarship, Pilgrimage and Social Transformation

- **2.4.1** Timbuktu, Jenne and Centres of Learning
- **2.4.2** The Hajj and Links with the Wider Muslim World
- **2.4.3** Islam, Society and Cultural Change in Western Sudan

Introduction

Western Sudan refers broadly to the belt of West Africa south of the Sahara that became connected to North Africa through trans-Saharan trade. In the history of Islam in Africa, this



region became one of the most important areas for the development of Muslim communities, states, scholarship and commercial networks. The spread of Islam in Western Sudan was gradual and uneven. Merchants, rulers, scholars, migrants and travellers all contributed to the process, while local societies actively shaped the forms Islam took in the region.

The aim of this Series is to help you examine the historical development of Islam in Western Sudan. You will first consider what is meant by Western Sudan and the political and commercial environment into which Islam entered. You will then examine the roles of merchants, rulers and scholars in the growth of Islam. The Series will proceed to the experiences of Ghana, Mali and Songhai, before concluding with Islamic scholarship, pilgrimage and the wider social and cultural effects of Islam in the region.

We shall begin by locating Western Sudan and identifying the major trade corridors and political communities that formed its historical setting. Next, we will study how Muslim merchants and communities established contact with the region and how rulers responded to Islam. We will then examine Ghana, Mali and Songhai as major political settings in which Islam developed. Finally, we will consider Timbuktu, Jenne and other centres of learning, the importance of the hajj, and the ways Islamic knowledge and institutions contributed to social and cultural change.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- SLO 2.1 explain the geographical and historical meaning of Western Sudan and identify its major political and commercial features,
- SLO 2.2 analyse the roles of merchants, rulers and scholars in the growth of Islam in Western Sudan,
- SLO 2.3 evaluate the development of Islam in Ghana, Mali and Songhai,



- SLO 2.4 assess the contributions of scholarship, pilgrimage and Islamic institutions to social and cultural change in Western Sudan.



2.1 Meaning and Historical Setting of Western Sudan

2.1.1 The Geographical Meaning of Western Sudan

The expression Western Sudan does not refer to the modern Republic of Sudan. In historical studies of West Africa, Western Sudan commonly describes the savanna belt south of the Sahara extending across parts of present-day Mauritania, Mali, Senegal, Niger, Burkina Faso, northern Nigeria and neighbouring areas. The region was connected by rivers, pastoral zones, agricultural settlements and long-distance trade routes.

This geographical setting mattered because the Sahara was not an absolute barrier. Desert routes connected North Africa with communities to the south. Towns located near rivers, wells, markets and caravan routes could become important meeting points for merchants and travellers. Western Sudan therefore developed as a zone of interaction rather than an isolated region.

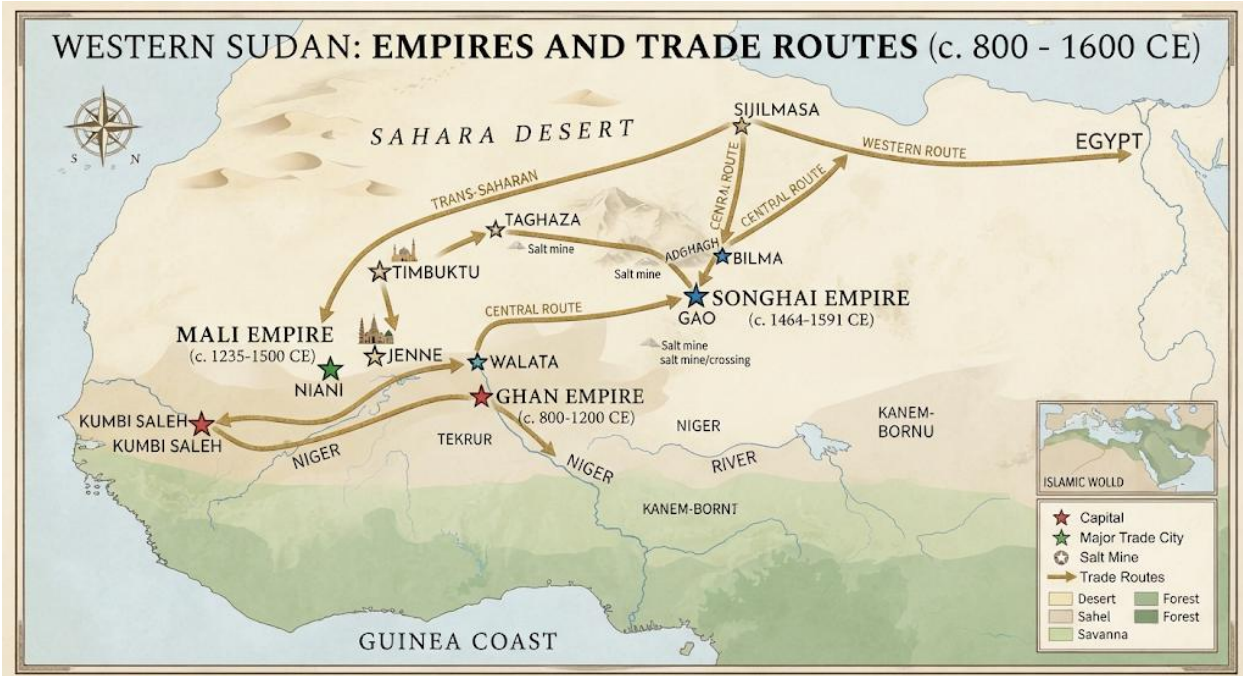
Fill in the blank: In historical African studies, Western Sudan refers broadly to the savanna belt south of the _____.

2.1.2 Major Peoples, States and Trade Corridors

Western Sudan contained diverse peoples and political communities rather than a single kingdom or ethnic group. Among the better-known political traditions were Ghana, Mali and Songhai. Hausa-speaking communities and the states around the central Sudan also became important in the wider history of Islam in the region.

Trade corridors linked gold-producing areas, agricultural communities, pastoral zones and markets north of the Sahara. Gold and salt were especially important commodities, while textiles, horses, books and other goods also circulated. These routes brought Muslim merchants into sustained contact with African rulers and communities.





Map showing the historical Western Sudan and major trans-Saharan corridors linking North Africa with Ghana, Mali and Songhai.

Figure 2.1: Western Sudan and major trans-Saharan trade corridors

Fill in the blank: Gold and _____ were among the most important commodities in trans-Saharan commerce.

2.1.3 Islam and the Pre-Islamic Political and Commercial Environment

Islam entered Western Sudan societies that already possessed political institutions, commercial systems and religious traditions. This meant that Muslim communities developed within an existing African social environment. Early Muslim presence therefore did not automatically replace older institutions or religious practices.

Muslim merchants could participate in local markets and maintain their religious identity while interacting with non-Muslim communities. Rulers could also maintain relationships with Muslim



traders and scholars without immediately requiring the whole population to adopt Islam. This pattern helps explain the gradual character of Islamisation in Western Sudan.

Fill in the blank: Islam entered Western Sudan societies that already possessed political institutions, commercial systems and _____ traditions.

Pilot Questions 2.1

1. What is meant by Western Sudan in African history?
2. Name three political traditions associated with Western Sudan.
3. Why was the Sahara not an absolute barrier to interaction?
4. Mention two commodities associated with trans-Saharan commerce.
5. Why was the spread of Islam in Western Sudan gradual?

2.2 Early Muslim Contacts and the Growth of Islam

2.2.1 Trans-Saharan Merchants and Muslim Communities

Muslim merchants played a major role in establishing sustained contact between Western Sudan and North Africa. They travelled with caravans, established commercial relationships and sometimes settled in towns. As communities became established, mosques and spaces for religious instruction could develop alongside markets.

The importance of merchants should not be understood simply in economic terms. Repeated commercial contact created social relationships through which religious ideas, languages, legal practices and cultural forms could circulate. Merchants were therefore among the important agents through whom Islam became visible and established in Western Sudan.

Fill in the blank: Muslim _____ helped create sustained commercial and social contact between Western Sudan and North Africa.



2.2.2 Rulers and the Adoption of Islam

Rulers were important because their decisions could influence political administration, diplomacy and relations with Muslim trading communities. A ruler who adopted Islam could patronise scholars, appoint Muslim advisers or officials, and strengthen diplomatic and commercial links with other Muslim societies.

However, the adoption of Islam by a ruler did not necessarily produce immediate conversion among the population. Political authority, popular religious practice and social identity could change at different rates. In some cases, rulers maintained policies that accommodated Muslim and non-Muslim subjects within the same political system.

Fill in the blank: A ruler who adopted Islam could patronise Muslim _____ and strengthen links with Muslim societies.

2.2.3 Scholars, Mosques and Islamic Learning

Scholars helped transform Muslim presence from isolated communities into networks of religious learning. They taught the Qur'an, Arabic, Islamic law and other subjects, while mosques provided places for worship and instruction. Learning could be transmitted from one town to another as students travelled to study with respected teachers.

Over time, Islamic scholarship became one of the most important features of Western Sudanese Muslim societies. Knowledge linked local communities to the wider Muslim world while also producing African scholars whose work contributed to Islamic intellectual history.





Educational illustration of a pre-modern West African Muslim learning environment, showing a scholar teaching students near a mosque and manuscripts.

Plate 2.2: Islamic learning in Western Sudan

Fill in the blank: Mosques served not only as places of worship but also as centres of _____.

Pilot Questions 2.2

1. What role did Muslim merchants play in Western Sudan?
2. State two ways a Muslim ruler could support the growth of Islam.
3. Why did the conversion of a ruler not necessarily mean immediate mass conversion?
4. Mention two subjects taught by Muslim scholars.
5. Explain why mosques were important to the development of Muslim communities.



2.3 Islam and the Major States of Western Sudan

2.3.1 Ghana and Early Muslim Influence

The Ghana Empire developed before the large-scale establishment of Islam in the region, but it became closely connected to Muslim merchants through trans-Saharan commerce. Muslim traders lived and worked in or near important commercial centres, creating sustained interaction between Islamic communities and the political authorities of Ghana.

Accounts of Ghana illustrate an important pattern in the history of Islam in Western Sudan: a state could benefit from trade with Muslim merchants while maintaining a population with diverse religious practices. Muslim influence could therefore grow through commercial and diplomatic contact even when Islam was not yet the dominant religion of the state.

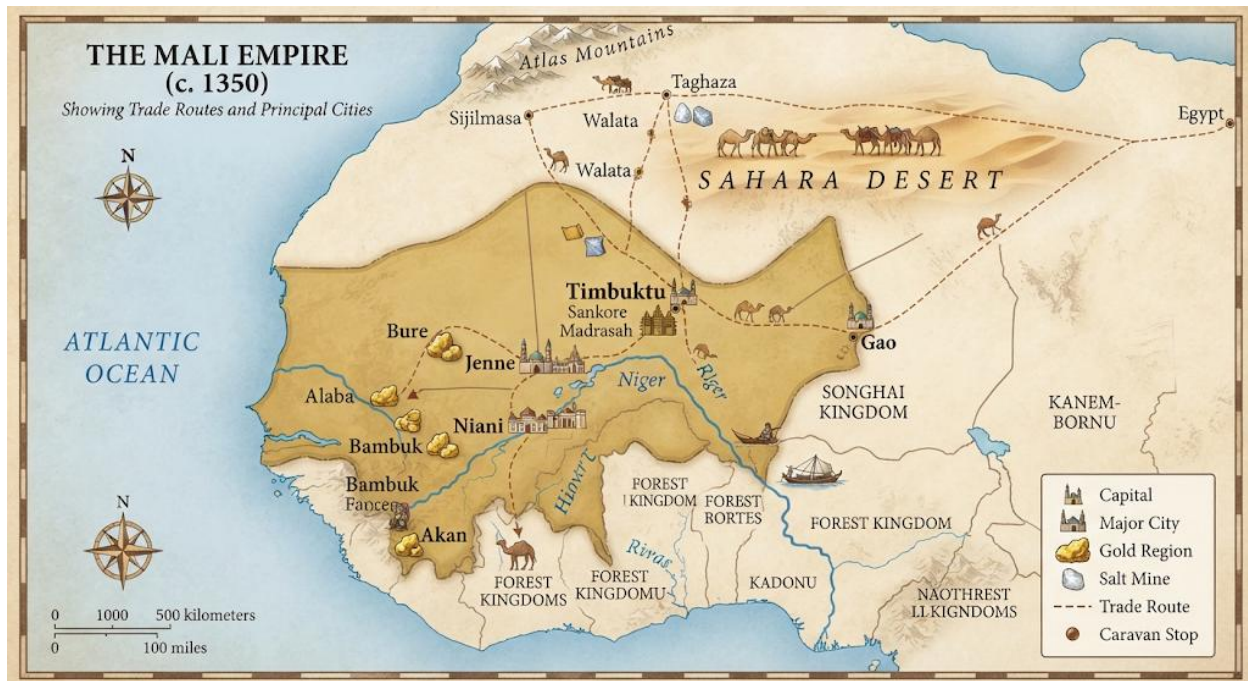
Fill in the blank: Ghana became closely connected to Muslim merchants through _____ - Saharan commerce.

2.3.2 Mali and the Consolidation of Islam

The Mali Empire became one of the most important Muslim states in the history of Western Sudan. Muslim rulers and merchants contributed to the development of political, commercial and intellectual connections with North Africa and other Muslim societies. The famous pilgrimage of Mansa Musa to Mecca demonstrated the wealth and international connections of Mali to the wider Muslim world.

The importance of Mali extended beyond pilgrimage. Muslim scholars, architects and administrators participated in the development of cities and institutions. Timbuktu and Jenne became associated with Islamic learning, while trade in gold and other commodities strengthened Mali's economic position.





Historical map showing Mali and the principal centres of trade and learning associated with its development.

Figure 2.3: Mali, its commercial networks and major centres of learning

Fill in the blank: Mansa Musa's famous pilgrimage was to _____.

2.3.3 Songhai and the Expansion of Islamic Institutions

Songhai became a major political power in Western Sudan and inherited many of the commercial and scholarly networks that had developed around the Niger River. Under rulers such as Sunni Ali and Askia Muhammad, the political and religious dimensions of the state developed in different ways. Askia Muhammad is particularly associated with the promotion of Islamic institutions and stronger connections with the wider Muslim world.

Songhai demonstrates that the history of Islam in Western Sudan cannot be reduced to a simple sequence of conversions. Political authority, military expansion, commerce, scholarship and religious identity interacted in complex ways. Institutions supported under Muslim rulers could



strengthen Islamic learning and administration, while local practices continued to influence everyday social life.

Fill in the blank: Askia _____ is particularly associated with the promotion of Islamic institutions in Songhai.

Pilot Questions 2.3

1. How did Muslim merchants interact with the Ghana Empire?
2. Why is Mali important in the history of Islam in Western Sudan?
3. Who was Mansa Musa?
4. Mention two centres associated with Islamic learning in Mali.
5. Which Songhai ruler is particularly associated with the promotion of Islamic institutions?

2.4 Islamic Scholarship, Pilgrimage and Social Transformation

2.4.1 Timbuktu, Jenne and Centres of Learning

Timbuktu became one of the best-known centres of Islamic scholarship in West Africa. Its location within commercial networks helped attract merchants, scholars and students. The city developed a reputation for learning in Qur'anic studies, Islamic law, Arabic language and related intellectual fields.

Jenne also became an important centre of commerce and Islamic culture. Scholars and students moved between West African centres and other parts of the Muslim world. Libraries and manuscript collections preserved evidence of this intellectual tradition and demonstrate that Western Sudan was not merely a recipient of Islamic knowledge; African scholars actively produced, copied, taught and transmitted knowledge.

Fill in the blank: Timbuktu became famous as a major centre of Islamic _____ in West Africa.



2.4.2 The Hajj and Links with the Wider Muslim World

The hajj provided one of the most important ways through which Muslim rulers, scholars and travellers from Western Sudan connected with the wider Muslim world. Pilgrims encountered other Muslim societies, exchanged knowledge and strengthened personal and political relationships.

Mansa Musa's pilgrimage became particularly famous because of the wealth and international attention associated with it. More generally, pilgrimage contributed to the circulation of people, ideas, books and religious practices. It helped demonstrate that Western Sudanese Muslim societies were part of a wider network extending across Africa and beyond.

Fill in the blank: The pilgrimage to Mecca is known in Islam as the _____.

2.4.3 Islam, Society and Cultural Change in Western Sudan

The development of Islam affected several areas of life in Western Sudan. Islamic education encouraged literacy in Arabic and supported scholarly activity. Muslim legal ideas influenced some aspects of administration and social life, while mosques became visible centres of community organisation. Trade and pilgrimage also connected local societies to wider networks.

At the same time, cultural change did not mean the complete disappearance of earlier African traditions. Muslim communities continued to use African languages, participate in local economic systems and adapt Islamic institutions to local conditions. This interaction produced distinctive African Muslim societies that were simultaneously connected to the wider Islamic world and rooted in their African environments.

Fill in the blank: Islamic education in Western Sudan supported literacy in _____ and the transmission of scholarly knowledge.

Pilot Questions 2.4

1. Why did Timbuktu become an important centre of Islamic learning?



2. Name another Western Sudanese centre associated with commerce and Islamic culture.
3. What is the hajj?
4. Mention two ways pilgrimage connected Western Sudan to the wider Muslim world.
5. Explain one way Islam influenced social or cultural life in Western Sudan.



Series Summary

This Series has examined the historical development of Islam in Western Sudan. You began by locating Western Sudan as a broad savanna region south of the Sahara and by considering the political and commercial environment into which Islam entered. Trans-Saharan routes connected North Africa with West African markets and helped Muslim merchants establish communities and relationships.

You then examined the roles of merchants, rulers and scholars. Merchants created sustained commercial contact, rulers could patronise Muslim communities and institutions, and scholars developed networks of Islamic learning. The experiences of Ghana, Mali and Songhai showed that Islam developed through different combinations of political authority, trade, scholarship and social interaction.

Finally, you studied Timbuktu and Jenne as centres of scholarship, the hajj as a means of connecting Western Sudan with the wider Muslim world, and the social and cultural changes associated with Islam. The history of Western Sudan therefore demonstrates that Islam became established through interaction between a wider religious civilisation and diverse African societies.

Glossary of Terms

- **Ghana Empire:** An early major state of Western Sudan that participated in trans-Saharan commerce and interacted extensively with Muslim merchants.
- **Hajj:** The pilgrimage to Mecca that Muslims who are able and meet the required conditions are expected to perform.
- **Islamisation:** The gradual process through which individuals and communities adopt Islam and develop related religious, social and institutional practices.
- **Jenne:** A historic West African commercial and cultural centre associated with Islamic learning and the Niger River trading system.



- Mali Empire: A major Western Sudanese empire that became an important centre of Muslim political power, trade and scholarship.
- Songhai Empire: A major Western Sudanese state that developed powerful political and commercial networks around the Niger River and supported Islamic institutions under some rulers.
- Timbuktu: A historic West African city renowned for commerce and Islamic scholarship, particularly manuscript and learning traditions.
- Trans-Saharan trade: Long-distance commerce across the Sahara linking North African markets with communities south of the desert.
- Western Sudan: A historical geographical term for the savanna belt south of the Sahara in West Africa; it is distinct from the modern Republic of Sudan.



Concept Check Questions 2

Objective Questions

1. What geographical zone is commonly meant by Western Sudan? (Linked to SLO 2.1)
2. Which commodity, together with gold, was central to trans-Saharan trade? (Linked to SLO 2.1)
3. Which group played an important role in establishing early Muslim commercial communities? (Linked to SLO 2.2)
4. Which empire became especially associated with Mansa Musa? (Linked to SLO 2.3)
5. Which city became famous for Islamic scholarship in Western Sudan? (Linked to SLO 2.4)

Short-Answer Questions

6. Explain why the Sahara did not prevent interaction between North Africa and Western Sudan. (Linked to SLO 2.1)
7. Analyse how merchants and scholars performed different but complementary roles in the spread of Islam. (Linked to SLO 2.2)
8. Compare the significance of Ghana and Mali in the development of Islam in Western Sudan. (Linked to SLO 2.3)
9. Explain how pilgrimage contributed to the intellectual and diplomatic connections of Western Sudanese Muslims. (Linked to SLO 2.4)

Long-Answer Questions

10. Evaluate the importance of trade, political authority and scholarship in the Islamisation of Western Sudan, using examples from Ghana, Mali and Songhai. (Linked to SLO 2.2 and SLO 2.3)



11. Discuss the argument that Islam in Western Sudan became an African expression of a wider Muslim civilisation rather than a simple replacement of existing African culture. (Linked to SLO 2.4)

Answers to Concept Check Questions 2

Objective Questions

1. The savanna belt south of the Sahara in West Africa.
2. Salt.
3. Muslim merchants.
4. The Mali Empire.
5. Timbuktu.

Short-Answer Questions

6. Desert routes, wells, caravan stations and markets made regular movement possible. Trade created sustained contact between North African and West African communities.
7. Merchants created commercial and social contact and helped establish Muslim communities, while scholars taught religious knowledge and developed institutions of learning. Commerce created channels of contact, while scholarship deepened and transmitted Islamic knowledge.
8. Ghana provided an early setting for sustained interaction between Muslim merchants and a major West African state. Mali went further in consolidating Muslim political and intellectual connections, including through the pilgrimage of Mansa Musa and the development of centres such as Timbuktu.



9. Pilgrimage brought Western Sudanese Muslims into direct contact with scholars, rulers and communities elsewhere in the Muslim world. It facilitated the movement of ideas, books, relationships and religious knowledge.

Long-Answer Questions

10. A strong answer should explain that trade created the networks through which Muslim merchants and communities became established; political authority could protect, patronise and institutionalise Muslim activity; and scholarship transmitted Islamic knowledge. Ghana illustrates early commercial contact, Mali demonstrates stronger political and international Muslim connections, and Songhai shows the expansion of Islamic institutions under some rulers.
11. A strong answer should show that Western Sudanese societies adopted Islamic beliefs and institutions while retaining African languages, social structures and cultural practices. African rulers, merchants and scholars actively shaped Muslim life in the region. Timbuktu, Jenne and the empires of Mali and Songhai demonstrate that Islam became embedded in African political, commercial and intellectual environments while remaining connected to the wider Muslim world.

Answers to Pilot Questions 2

Part 2.1

1. It is the broad savanna belt south of the Sahara in West Africa.
2. Ghana, Mali and Songhai.
3. Caravan routes, wells, markets and trading settlements enabled regular movement across and around the desert.
4. Gold and salt.



5. Islam entered established African political, economic and religious environments, so conversion and institutional development occurred over time.

Part 2.2

1. They established commercial relationships, settled in towns and helped create continuing Muslim communities.
2. A ruler could patronise scholars, employ Muslim advisers or officials, protect Muslim communities and strengthen external relations.
3. Political conversion and popular religious change could occur at different rates.
4. Qur'anic studies and Islamic law; Arabic was also taught.
5. Mosques provided places for worship, teaching and community organisation.

Part 2.3

1. Muslim merchants traded within and around Ghana and maintained sustained contact with its political authorities and communities.
2. Mali became a major Muslim political, commercial and scholarly power in Western Sudan.
3. He was a famous ruler of Mali associated with a renowned pilgrimage to Mecca.
4. Timbuktu and Jenne.
5. Askia Muhammad.

Part 2.4

1. Its commercial location attracted scholars and students and supported a strong tradition of Islamic learning.
2. Jenne.



3. The pilgrimage to Mecca.
4. It connected pilgrims with scholars and communities elsewhere and facilitated the exchange of ideas and relationships.
5. It encouraged Islamic education and literacy, supported mosques and scholarly institutions, and influenced aspects of administration and social life.



References and Attributions 2

Scholarly Sources

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Illustrations

- Figure 2.1: Western Sudan and major trans-Saharan trade corridors
- AI-generated suggestion: “Create a clear educational historical map of Western Sudan showing the Sahara to the north, the Niger River, major political centres associated with Ghana, Mali and Songhai, and major trans-Saharan trade routes. Label Timbuktu, Gao, Jenne and important desert crossings.”
- Suggested OER search string: “Western Sudan trans-Saharan trade routes Ghana Mali Songhai map OER”.
- Plate 2.2: Islamic learning in Western Sudan
- AI-generated suggestion: “Create a historically informed educational scene of a pre-modern West African Islamic learning centre, showing an African Muslim scholar teaching students



with handwritten manuscripts beside a mosque. Avoid modern objects and avoid depicting sacred figures.”

- Suggested OER search string: “West Africa Islamic scholarship manuscript school Timbuktu OER”.
- Figure 2.3: Mali, its commercial networks and major centres of learning
- AI-generated suggestion: “Create a historically informed map of the Mali Empire showing the Niger River, major cities including Timbuktu and Jenne, gold-producing regions, and principal trade connections toward North Africa.”
- Suggested OER search string: “Mali Empire Timbuktu Jenne trade Islamic history map OER”.

General Attribution

- Historical interpretations and regional examples in this Series are based on the scholarly sources listed above.
- AI prompts are original educational prompts prepared for this Series. Any externally sourced image should be used only with appropriate permission or an applicable open licence, with its source recorded.



Series 3: Institutional Development in African Societies

Parts and Sub-Parts

3.1 Islamic Institutions and the African Social Order

- **3.1.1** Meaning and Types of Islamic Institutions
- **3.1.2** Mosques and Religious Communities
- **3.1.3** Islamic Institutions and Social Organisation

3.2 Islamic Education and Scholarship

- **3.2.1** Qur'ānic Schools and Centres of Learning
- **3.2.2** Scholars, Literacy and the Transmission of Knowledge
- **3.2.3** Libraries, Manuscripts and Intellectual Life

3.3 Islamic Law, Governance and Justice

- **3.3.1** Islamic Law and the Administration of Justice
- **3.3.2** Muslim Rulers, Officials and Political Institutions
- **3.3.3** Islamic Governance and Relations with Diverse Communities

3.4 Islamic Economic and Social Institutions

- **3.4.1** Trade, Markets and Muslim Commercial Networks
- **3.4.2** Zakāt, Charity and Social Welfare
- **3.4.3** Monuments, Architecture and Institutional Legacy

Introduction

The development of Islam in Africa involved more than the adoption of religious beliefs. As Muslim communities became established, they developed institutions that organised worship, education, justice, commerce and social welfare. These institutions helped transmit Islamic



knowledge across generations and gave Muslim communities durable structures through which religious and social life could be organised.

An institution is a relatively established pattern or organisation through which a society performs important functions. In African Muslim societies, institutions such as mosques, Qur'anic schools, centres of scholarship, courts, markets and charitable practices developed in different forms and at different times. Their development was influenced by local African political and social conditions as well as by wider Islamic traditions.

The aim of this Series is to examine the major institutions associated with the development of Islam in African societies and explain the functions they performed. You will begin with religious and community institutions, then study Islamic education and scholarship. You will next examine law, governance and justice, and finally consider economic, welfare and architectural institutions. As you study the Series, pay attention to how these institutions interacted with one another rather than treating each as an isolated development.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- SLO 3.1 explain the functions of major Islamic religious and community institutions in African societies,
- SLO 3.2 analyse the contribution of Islamic education, scholarship and manuscript culture to African intellectual development,
- SLO 3.3 evaluate the roles of Islamic law and political institutions in organising Muslim societies and administering justice,
- SLO 3.4 assess the contributions of Islamic economic, welfare and architectural institutions to African social development.



3.1 Islamic Institutions and the African Social Order

3.1.1 Meaning and Types of Islamic Institutions

Islamic institutions are organised practices, structures and community arrangements through which Muslims express religious commitments and manage aspects of social life. They may be formal organisations, such as schools and courts, or established community practices, such as charitable giving. Their forms have varied across African societies according to historical period, political conditions and local culture.

Important institutions include the mosque, Qur'anic school, scholarly centre, court, market and charitable system. Some institutions served primarily religious purposes, while others connected religious principles with education, economic activity, governance and welfare. Understanding these connections helps explain why the growth of Islam could influence the wider organisation of African societies.

Fill in the blank: A mosque, Qur'anic school and Islamic court are examples of Islamic _____.

3.1.2 Mosques and Religious Communities

The mosque is one of the most visible institutions of Muslim community life. Its central function is worship, especially congregational prayer. In many African societies, however, the mosque also became a place for teaching, public communication, community meetings and the transmission of religious knowledge.

Mosques could therefore contribute to social cohesion. Regular congregational activities brought people together, while sermons and teaching provided opportunities to discuss religious and social responsibilities. In towns and trading centres, mosques could also form part of wider networks connecting local Muslim communities with scholars and travellers.

Fill in the blank: Besides worship, mosques could support teaching, community meetings and the transmission of religious _____.



3.1.3 Islamic Institutions and Social Organisation

As Muslim communities expanded, institutions helped organise relationships between individuals, families and wider communities. Religious teachers provided guidance, scholars offered legal and educational services, and charitable practices supported vulnerable members of society. These functions helped create a sense of community while also connecting African Muslims to wider Islamic traditions.

The impact of Islamic institutions should not be understood as identical everywhere. African societies adapted institutions to their own political structures, languages and social arrangements. This process produced diverse forms of Muslim community organisation while retaining common Islamic functions.

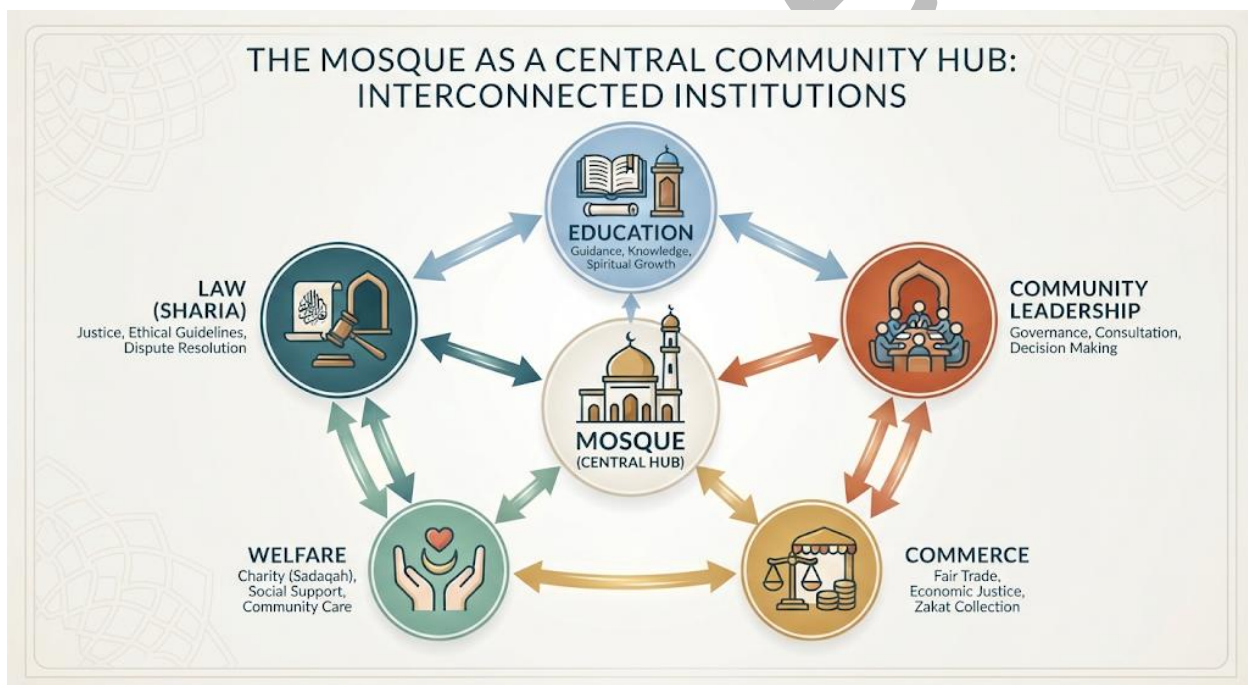


Diagram showing the relationship among mosque, education, law, welfare and commerce as interconnected Islamic institutions.

Figure 3.1: Interconnected Islamic institutions in African societies



Fill in the blank: Islamic institutions helped organise religious, educational, legal, economic and _____ life.

Pilot Questions 3.1

1. What is meant by an Islamic institution?
2. Name three Islamic institutions found in African societies.
3. State two functions of the mosque besides worship.
4. How can institutions contribute to social cohesion?
5. Why did Islamic institutions develop in different forms across Africa?

3.2 Islamic Education and Scholarship

3.2.1 Qur'anic Schools and Centres of Learning

Education was central to the development of Muslim communities. Qur'anic schools introduced children and new learners to the recitation and study of the Qur'an, while more advanced centres provided instruction in Islamic law, theology, Arabic language and other scholarly disciplines. The organisation and level of education differed from one community to another.

In many African societies, education was closely connected with the mosque or the residence of a scholar. Students could travel to respected teachers and centres of learning to deepen their knowledge. This movement of students helped connect communities and supported the growth of scholarly networks.

Fill in the blank: Qur'anic schools introduced learners especially to the recitation and study of the _____.



3.2.2 Scholars, Literacy and the Transmission of Knowledge

Muslim scholars served as teachers, interpreters of religious texts, advisers and transmitters of knowledge. Their activities encouraged literacy in Arabic and helped preserve Islamic learning. In communities where Arabic literacy was established, written correspondence and scholarly texts could circulate beyond the immediate locality.

The influence of scholars extended beyond formal teaching. They could advise rulers, train judges, provide religious guidance and participate in intellectual debates. Their authority often depended on knowledge, reputation, teaching relationships and links with other centres of learning.

Fill in the blank: Muslim scholars contributed to the spread of Islamic knowledge and _____ in many African communities.

3.2.3 Libraries, Manuscripts and Intellectual Life

Manuscripts are an important part of the historical record of Islamic intellectual activity in Africa. Written works preserved discussions of religion, law, history, language, science and other subjects. Libraries and private collections protected these materials and allowed later generations to access the intellectual work of earlier scholars.

The manuscript traditions of places such as Timbuktu demonstrate that African Muslim scholars were producers and users of written knowledge, not merely recipients of ideas from outside Africa. Intellectual life developed through local scholarship and through continuing connections with wider Muslim centres.

Fill in the blank: Manuscripts provide evidence of African Muslim intellectual activity in religion, law, history, language and _____.





Photograph or educational reconstruction of a West African Islamic manuscript collection.

Plate 3.2: Manuscripts and the preservation of Islamic scholarship in Africa

Pilot Questions 3.2

1. What was the primary purpose of Qur'anic schools?
2. Mention two subjects that could be studied at advanced Islamic centres.
3. State two roles performed by Muslim scholars.
4. Why are manuscripts important to the study of Islamic intellectual history in Africa?
5. Explain how movement of students could strengthen scholarly networks.



3.3 Islamic Law, Governance and Justice

3.3.1 Islamic Law and the Administration of Justice

Islamic law, commonly referred to as Sharia in discussions of Muslim societies, provided principles and rules that influenced aspects of religious and social life. Its interpretation and application depended on schools of jurisprudence, scholars, rulers and local circumstances. In African societies, Islamic legal traditions were therefore expressed through particular historical institutions rather than through one uniform system.

Judges and scholars could apply legal principles to matters such as marriage, inheritance, contracts and disputes. The extent of Islamic legal administration varied. Some Muslim states developed formal judicial structures, while elsewhere Islamic law operated alongside customary practices and political authority.

Fill in the blank: Islamic legal traditions influenced matters such as marriage, inheritance, contracts and _____.

3.3.2 Muslim Rulers, Officials and Political Institutions

Muslim rulers could establish institutions that supported administration, taxation, diplomacy, justice and religious education. Muslim officials and scholars sometimes served in courts or advised rulers. In some states, rulers also appointed judges and supported mosques and schools as part of the organisation of public life.

Political institutions and religious institutions were connected but were not identical. A ruler's support for Islam could strengthen Islamic education and legal institutions, while scholars could provide religious legitimacy and administrative expertise. These relationships varied according to the political structure of each society.

Fill in the blank: Muslim rulers could appoint judges and support mosques and schools as part of public _____.



3.3.3 Islamic Governance and Relations with Diverse Communities

African Muslim states often governed populations with different religious identities and cultural traditions. Political authorities therefore had to manage diversity. Depending on the period and political context, Muslims and non-Muslims could participate in trade, taxation, diplomacy and local administration while maintaining different religious practices.

This historical reality is important when studying Islamic governance in Africa. The presence of Islamic institutions did not necessarily eliminate other traditions. Instead, political arrangements often involved negotiation between religious principles, existing customs and practical requirements of governance.

Fill in the blank: Islamic governance in Africa often had to respond to religious and cultural _____.

Pilot Questions 3.3

1. What is meant by Islamic law in the context of Muslim societies?
2. Name two areas of life that Islamic legal traditions could regulate.
3. What roles could Muslim judges and scholars perform?
4. How could rulers support Islamic institutions?
5. Why did Islamic governance have to accommodate religious and cultural diversity?

3.4 Islamic Economic and Social Institutions

3.4.1 Trade, Markets and Muslim Commercial Networks

Muslim commercial networks contributed to the development of towns and markets across many parts of Africa. Merchants connected producers and consumers across regional and long-distance



routes. Markets became places where economic exchange was combined with social and cultural interaction.

Commercial activity could support the development of Muslim communities because merchants often required places of worship, accommodation, communication and legal assistance. Over time, trading towns could develop interconnected institutions including mosques, schools and markets.

Fill in the blank: Markets were centres of economic exchange and also places of social and cultural _____.

3.4.2 Zakat, Charity and Social Welfare

Islamic teachings place importance on charity and social responsibility. Zakat is an obligatory form of almsgiving for eligible Muslims, while voluntary charity, or sadaqah, provides another means of supporting people in need. In African Muslim communities, charitable practices could contribute to assistance for the poor, travellers, students and other vulnerable groups.

Welfare practices strengthened community relationships by directing resources towards social needs. Their specific organisation varied across communities and historical periods, but the principle of supporting those in need remained an important part of Muslim social ethics.

Fill in the blank: Zakat is an obligatory form of _____ for eligible Muslims.

3.4.3 Monuments, Architecture and Institutional Legacy

Islamic institutions also left visible architectural legacies across Africa. Mosques, schools, tombs, palaces and other structures provide evidence of the historical presence and development of Muslim communities. Some buildings became landmarks because of their religious importance, architectural form or association with important scholars and rulers.

Architecture can therefore help historians study institutional development. A mosque may reveal the importance of a community, while a scholarly complex may indicate the existence of



organised education. These monuments also demonstrate how African builders and communities adapted Islamic architectural ideas to local materials, climates and artistic traditions.

Fill in the blank: Mosques, schools and other historic structures provide visible evidence of the institutional _____ of Islam in Africa.

Pilot Questions 3.4

1. How did Muslim commercial networks contribute to urban development?
2. What is zakat?
3. How can charitable practices contribute to social welfare?
4. Why are Islamic monuments useful to historians?
5. Explain how African communities adapted Islamic architecture to local conditions.



Series Summary

This Series has examined the institutional development associated with Islam in African societies. You began by considering Islamic institutions as organised structures and practices that support religious, educational, legal, economic and social life. The mosque was examined as a central institution that could serve worship, teaching and community organisation.

You then studied Islamic education and scholarship. Qur'anic schools, advanced centres of learning, scholars, manuscripts and libraries helped preserve and transmit knowledge. African Muslim intellectual traditions were connected to wider Islamic networks while also developing local scholarly cultures.

The Series also examined Islamic law and governance. Judges, scholars, rulers and officials could contribute to the administration of justice and public life, although the application of Islamic law varied according to historical circumstances. Finally, you considered economic and welfare institutions, including markets, Muslim commercial networks and charitable practices, as well as the architectural monuments that remain evidence of Islamic institutional development.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to explain the functions of major Islamic institutions (SLO 3.1), analyse Islamic education and scholarship (SLO 3.2), evaluate Islamic law and political institutions (SLO 3.3), and assess the contributions of economic, welfare and architectural institutions (SLO 3.4).

Glossary of Terms

- **Islamic institution:** An established organisation, practice or structure through which Muslim religious, educational, legal, economic or social functions are performed.
- **Islamic law:** The body of Islamic legal principles and jurisprudential interpretations used to guide aspects of religious and social life.
- **Manuscript:** A handwritten document, often used to preserve and transmit scholarly knowledge before or alongside printed materials.



- Mosque: A place of Muslim worship that may also serve educational and community functions.
- Qur'anic school: An institution or learning arrangement in which students study the Qur'an, especially its recitation and basic religious knowledge.
- Sadaqah: Voluntary charitable giving in Islam.
- Scholar: A person recognised for advanced knowledge, teaching or interpretation within an Islamic intellectual tradition.
- Zakat: Obligatory almsgiving required from eligible Muslims under specified conditions.



Concept Check Questions 3

Objective Questions

1. Which institution is central to Muslim congregational worship? (Linked to SLO 3.1)
2. What type of written sources provide evidence of African Muslim intellectual activity? (Linked to SLO 3.2)
3. Name one institution involved in the administration of Islamic justice. (Linked to SLO 3.3)
4. Which obligatory charitable practice supports social welfare? (Linked to SLO 3.4)
5. What can historic mosques and schools reveal to historians? (Linked to SLO 3.4)

Short-Answer Questions

6. Explain how the mosque could function as more than a place of worship. (Linked to SLO 3.1)
7. Analyse the role of scholars and manuscripts in preserving Islamic intellectual traditions in Africa. (Linked to SLO 3.2)
8. Explain why the application of Islamic law differed across African societies. (Linked to SLO 3.3)
9. Discuss how charity and commercial institutions could contribute to the organisation of Muslim communities. (Linked to SLO 3.4)

Long-Answer Questions

10. Evaluate how religious, educational, legal and economic institutions worked together to consolidate Muslim societies in Africa. (Linked to SLO 3.1, SLO 3.2 and SLO 3.3)



11. Assess the contribution of Islamic institutions to African social development while explaining why their forms varied across different societies. (Linked to SLO 3.1 and SLO 3.4)

Answers to Concept Check Questions 3

Objective Questions

1. The mosque.
2. Manuscripts.
3. An Islamic court or judgeship.
4. Zakat.
5. They can provide evidence of religious, educational, social and architectural development.

Short-Answer Questions

6. It could support teaching, sermons, community meetings, public communication and the transmission of religious knowledge in addition to congregational worship.
7. Scholars taught, interpreted and transmitted knowledge, while manuscripts preserved written discussions of religion, law, history, language and other subjects. Together they supported continuity between generations.
8. Islamic legal traditions were interpreted by different scholars and schools and were applied within different political and social contexts. Local customs, existing institutions and relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims also influenced practice.
9. Markets connected people economically and socially, while charity directed resources towards people in need. Together they strengthened relationships, supported vulnerable groups and helped sustain community institutions.



Long-Answer Questions

10. A strong answer should explain that mosques provided religious and community organisation; schools and scholars transmitted knowledge; courts and judges supported justice; and markets and charitable practices supported economic and social life. Their interaction created durable structures that helped Muslim communities reproduce religious and social life.
11. A strong answer should argue that Islamic institutions contributed to education, literacy, justice, welfare, commerce, urban development and architecture. However, their forms varied because African societies had different political systems, cultures, languages, environments and historical experiences.

Answers to Pilot Questions 3

Part 3.1

1. An established organisation, practice or structure through which Muslim religious or social functions are performed.
2. Mosque, Qur'anic school and Islamic court.
3. Teaching and community meetings.
4. They bring people together around shared activities and provide structures for communication and mutual support.
5. African political, social, cultural and environmental conditions differed, so institutions were adapted locally.

Part 3.2

1. To teach the Qur'an, especially recitation and basic religious knowledge.
2. Islamic law and Arabic, among others.



3. Teaching, interpreting texts, advising rulers and transmitting knowledge.
4. They preserve evidence of intellectual activity and allow knowledge to be transmitted across generations.
5. Students carried knowledge between communities and created links among teachers and centres of learning.

Part 3.3

1. Islamic legal principles and jurisprudential interpretations guiding aspects of religious and social life.
2. Marriage and inheritance, among others.
3. They could administer justice, teach, interpret texts and advise communities or rulers.
4. By supporting mosques, schools, scholars, judges and other public institutions.
5. Muslim states often governed populations with different religions, cultures and customs.

Part 3.4

1. They connected producers and consumers and encouraged the growth of trading towns and related institutions.
2. Obligatory almsgiving for eligible Muslims.
3. They direct resources to people in need and support vulnerable members of the community.
4. They provide physical evidence of religious, social, educational and architectural development.
5. Builders used local materials, environmental adaptations and African artistic traditions while developing forms associated with Islamic architecture.





References and Attributions 3

Scholarly Sources

- Insoll, T. (2003). The Archaeology of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa. Cambridge University Press.
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Illustrations

- Figure 3.1: Interconnected Islamic institutions in African societies
- AI-generated suggestion: “Create a simple educational diagram with a mosque at the centre and connected nodes labelled education, law, welfare, commerce and community leadership. Show arrows indicating how these institutions support one another.”
- Suggested OER search string: “Islamic institutions mosque education law charity Africa diagram OER”.

General Attribution

- Historical and conceptual explanations in this Series are based on the scholarly sources listed above and standard Islamic institutional terminology.
- AI prompts were prepared specifically for educational illustration. Any externally sourced image should be used with appropriate permission or an applicable open licence and its source recorded.



Series 4: Relations with the Wider Muslim World

Parts and Sub-Parts

4.1 Africa and the Wider Muslim World

- **4.1.1** Meaning and Scope of the Wider Muslim World
- **4.1.2** Early Contacts and Routes of Communication
- **4.1.3** African Muslim Communities and Transregional Connections

4.2 Pilgrimage, Scholarship and Intellectual Exchange

- **4.2.1** Hajj and African Muslim Mobility
- **4.2.2** Scholars, Students and Centres of Learning
- **4.2.3** Books, Manuscripts and the Circulation of Knowledge

4.3 Trade, Diplomacy and Political Relations

- **4.3.1** Commercial Networks Across the Muslim World
- **4.3.2** Diplomatic Contacts and Muslim Rulers
- **4.3.3** African Muslim States and Wider Islamic Political Networks

4.4 African Contributions to the Wider Muslim World

- **4.4.1** African Scholars and Intellectual Contributions
- **4.4.2** African Muslim Communities in the Hijaz and Other Regions
- **4.4.3** Mutual Influence and the African Place in Islamic Civilisation



Introduction

African Muslim societies have never developed in complete isolation from other Muslim communities. From the earliest centuries of Islam, movement across the Sahara, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean connected African societies with North Africa, Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula and other parts of the Muslim world. These connections involved merchants, pilgrims, scholars, students, rulers and ordinary travellers.

Relations with the wider Muslim world were therefore multidimensional. They included religious journeys such as the Hajj, intellectual exchange through scholars and books, commercial activity, diplomatic relationships and the movement of communities. African Muslims participated in these networks while also contributing their own knowledge, institutions and experiences to Islamic civilisation.

This Series examines these relationships without treating Africa as merely a recipient of ideas. You will first examine the meaning and historical scope of the wider Muslim world and the routes that connected African societies to it. You will then study pilgrimage and scholarship, followed by trade and diplomacy. The final Part considers African contributions to the wider Muslim world and the significance of mutual exchange.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- SLO 4.1 explain the historical connections between African Muslim societies and the wider Muslim world,
- SLO 4.2 analyse the roles of pilgrimage, scholarship and intellectual exchange in strengthening these connections,
- SLO 4.3 evaluate the importance of trade, diplomacy and political relationships between African Muslim societies and other Muslim regions,



- SLO 4.4 assess African contributions to the intellectual, religious and social development of the wider Muslim world.



4.1 Africa and the Wider Muslim World

4.1.1 Meaning and Scope of the Wider Muslim World

The phrase wider Muslim world refers to the diverse societies and regions in which Islam became established and through which Muslims developed religious, intellectual, commercial and social connections. It is not a single political state. It includes communities that have differed in language, ethnicity, political organisation and local culture while sharing participation in Islamic religious traditions.

For African Muslims, the wider Muslim world included neighbouring North African societies as well as important centres farther east, including Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula and other regions connected by land and sea routes. These relationships changed over time as political centres, commercial routes and centres of scholarship changed.

Fill in the blank: The wider Muslim world refers to diverse Muslim societies connected by religious, intellectual, commercial and _____ relationships.

4.1.2 Early Contacts and Routes of Communication

The geography of Africa created several channels of contact. The Sahara linked West African societies with North Africa through caravan routes. The Red Sea connected north-eastern Africa with Arabia, while the Indian Ocean connected the East African coast with Arabia, Persia, India and other maritime regions.

These routes carried more than merchandise. Merchants and travellers transmitted religious ideas, languages, books, technologies and cultural practices. Coastal settlements and inland trading centres could therefore become points at which African societies interacted with communities from other Muslim regions.

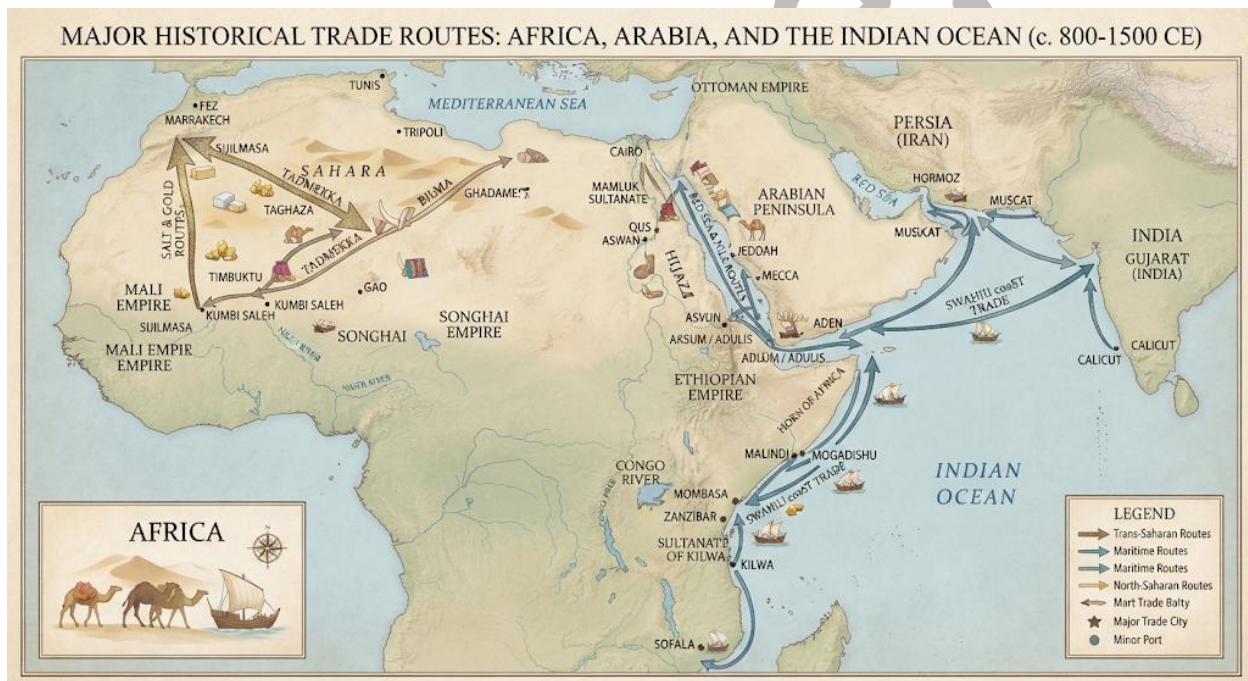
Fill in the blank: The Sahara, Red Sea and _____ Ocean were important routes of contact between African societies and the wider Muslim world.



4.1.3 African Muslim Communities and Transregional Connections

African Muslim communities participated in transregional networks through migration, trade, scholarship and pilgrimage. Some individuals travelled temporarily, while others settled outside their places of origin and established new communities. These movements created social links between African Muslims and other Muslim societies.

The relationships were not one-directional. African Muslims carried their languages, scholarly traditions, commercial practices and cultural experiences into other regions. The resulting networks were made up of repeated interaction and movement rather than a simple flow from one centre to a passive periphery.



Map showing major land and sea routes linking African Muslim regions with North Africa, Egypt, Arabia and the Indian Ocean world.

Figure 4.1: Routes connecting African Muslims with the wider Muslim world

Pilot Questions 4.1

1. What is meant by the wider Muslim world?



2. Name three geographical routes or regions that connected African Muslims with other Muslim societies.
3. Mention two things that travelled along these routes besides merchandise.
4. How did migration contribute to transregional Muslim connections?
5. Explain why relations between African Muslims and the wider Muslim world should not be described as one-directional.

4.2 Pilgrimage, Scholarship and Intellectual Exchange

4.2.1 Hajj and African Muslim Mobility

The Hajj to Makkah was one of the most important forms of mobility connecting African Muslims with the wider Muslim world. Pilgrims travelled from different parts of Africa to the Hijaz, often passing through major centres along the way. The journey exposed them to people, ideas, institutions and scholarly traditions from many regions.

The Hajj could also strengthen the social and religious prestige of individuals who completed it. Some pilgrims returned with books, contacts, new learning and experiences that influenced their communities. Famous West African rulers such as Mansa Musa illustrate the historical visibility that pilgrimage could give to African Muslim societies.

Fill in the blank: The Hajj takes place in and around the holy city of _____.

4.2.2 Scholars, Students and Centres of Learning

Scholars and students formed another important link between Africa and the wider Muslim world. Students could travel to established centres of learning, study under respected teachers and return to teach in their home communities. Scholars could also move between regions, maintaining networks based on teaching, correspondence and scholarly recognition.



These relationships helped African Islamic scholarship develop within a broader intellectual tradition. African centres such as Timbuktu became connected with North African and Middle Eastern scholarly networks, while African scholars themselves contributed to debates and teaching within those networks.

Fill in the blank: Students travelled to established centres of _____ to study with respected teachers.

4.2.3 Books, Manuscripts and the Circulation of Knowledge

Written materials played a major role in intellectual exchange. Books could be purchased, copied, carried by travellers and preserved in libraries or private collections. Manuscripts therefore connected scholars separated by long distances and allowed legal, theological, linguistic, historical and other works to circulate.

The movement of books was accompanied by the movement of ideas. A scholar who studied a text in one region could teach its contents elsewhere, while local scholars could write commentaries or adaptations. Intellectual exchange was consequently both the transmission and reinterpretation of knowledge.

Fill in the blank: Books and manuscripts helped scholars circulate knowledge across great _____.





Plate 4.2: Pilgrimage and scholarly mobility

Pilot Questions 4.2

1. Why was the Hajj important to African Muslim communities?
2. State two ways pilgrims could influence their communities after returning home.
3. How did students contribute to intellectual exchange?
4. What role did manuscripts play in relations with the wider Muslim world?
5. Explain how African centres of learning participated in wider Islamic intellectual networks.



4.3 Trade, Diplomacy and Political Relations

4.3.1 Commercial Networks Across the Muslim World

Trade created sustained relationships between African societies and other Muslim regions. Trans-Saharan commerce connected West Africa to North African markets, while Red Sea and Indian Ocean commerce connected eastern and north-eastern Africa with Arabia and other maritime regions. Muslim merchants often formed long-distance networks based on trust, partnership and repeated exchange.

Commercial networks also created opportunities for the spread of information. Merchants learned about political conditions, prices, communities and routes, and their movements linked otherwise distant societies. Trading settlements could become multicultural spaces in which different African and non-African communities interacted.

Fill in the blank: Trans-Saharan, Red Sea and Indian Ocean networks supported long-distance _____.

4.3.2 Diplomatic Contacts and Muslim Rulers

Relations between rulers could involve diplomacy as well as commerce and religion. African Muslim rulers maintained contacts with other Muslim rulers, scholars and political authorities. Diplomatic exchanges could communicate political intentions, establish alliances, facilitate trade or strengthen religious and scholarly relationships.

Pilgrimage could also have diplomatic significance. A ruler travelling to Makkah could meet representatives of other states and establish relationships beyond Africa. Such contacts increased the visibility of African Muslim states within wider political and religious networks.

Fill in the blank: Diplomatic exchanges could help establish alliances, facilitate trade and strengthen religious and scholarly _____.



4.3.3 African Muslim States and Wider Islamic Political Networks

Some African Muslim states became important participants in wider Islamic political networks. Their rulers could correspond with scholars and other political authorities, receive visitors and maintain relationships with centres of learning. These contacts were shaped by changing political circumstances and should not be understood as evidence of one unified Muslim political system.

The relationship between African Muslim states and other Muslim regions was therefore based on multiple interests. Religious solidarity could coexist with economic competition, political negotiation and local priorities. Understanding this complexity helps avoid reducing African diplomatic history to purely religious motivations.

Fill in the blank: African Muslim states participated in wider networks through political, economic, religious and scholarly _____.

Pilot Questions 4.3

1. How did commercial networks connect African societies with the wider Muslim world?
2. Mention two purposes of diplomatic exchanges.
3. How could pilgrimage have diplomatic significance?
4. Why should African Muslim states not be viewed as part of one unified Muslim political system?
5. Explain how economic and religious interests could exist together in political relations.

4.4 African Contributions to the Wider Muslim World

4.4.1 African Scholars and Intellectual Contributions

African Muslims were not simply receivers of Islamic knowledge. Scholars in African societies studied, taught, copied, interpreted and produced texts within Islamic intellectual traditions.



Centres of learning in West Africa and other regions developed reputations that attracted students and connected African scholarship to wider networks.

The intellectual contribution of African scholars can be seen in areas such as Qur'anic studies, Islamic jurisprudence, Arabic language, theology, history and related disciplines. Their work demonstrates that Islamic intellectual life was geographically diverse and that African scholars participated in the production and preservation of knowledge.

Fill in the blank: African scholars participated in the production, preservation and interpretation of Islamic _____.

4.4.2 African Muslim Communities in the Hijaz and Other Regions

African Muslims also became part of communities outside the continent. Pilgrims, scholars, merchants and migrants could remain in places they visited and establish social ties. The Hijaz, especially Makkah and Madinah, attracted Muslims from across Africa and became an important setting for interaction among African and other Muslim communities.

These communities helped sustain connections between Africa and other Muslim regions. People who moved between regions could carry religious practices, languages, scholarly traditions and family connections across geographical boundaries.

Fill in the blank: The Hijaz includes the important holy cities of Makkah and _____.

4.4.3 Mutual Influence and the African Place in Islamic Civilisation

Relations between African Muslims and the wider Muslim world involved mutual influence. African communities adopted and adapted Islamic traditions while contributing their own institutions, scholarship, commercial practices and cultural expressions. Other Muslim regions likewise influenced African societies through texts, teachers, political contacts and trade.

The history of Islam in Africa should therefore be understood as part of the broader history of Islamic civilisation. Africa was not simply an outer recipient of a civilisation created elsewhere.



African Muslims participated in shaping Islamic intellectual, religious and social life through their own historical experiences.

Fill in the blank: The relationship between African Muslims and the wider Muslim world involved mutual _____.

Pilot Questions 4.4

1. Why is it inaccurate to describe African Muslims only as recipients of Islamic knowledge?
2. Name two areas in which African scholars contributed to Islamic intellectual life.
3. Why was the Hijaz important to African Muslim communities?
4. How did migrants and travellers help maintain connections between Africa and other Muslim regions?
5. Explain the meaning of mutual influence in the history of Islam in Africa.



Series Summary

This Series has examined relations between African Muslim societies and the wider Muslim world. You first learned that these relations developed through several geographical routes, including the Sahara, Red Sea and Indian Ocean. These routes enabled the movement of people, goods, religious ideas, books and cultural practices.

You then examined pilgrimage and scholarship. The Hajj connected African Muslims with the Hijaz and with Muslims from many parts of the world. Scholars and students travelled to centres of learning, while books and manuscripts circulated across regions. These activities strengthened intellectual networks and helped African Muslim communities participate in wider Islamic scholarship.

The Series also considered trade and diplomacy. Commercial networks connected African markets with other Muslim regions, while rulers used diplomacy and pilgrimage to develop political relationships. Finally, the Series emphasised African contributions. African scholars, merchants, pilgrims and communities contributed to the development and circulation of Islamic knowledge, institutions and cultural practices.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to explain the historical connections between African Muslims and the wider Muslim world (SLO 4.1), analyse pilgrimage and intellectual exchange (SLO 4.2), evaluate trade and diplomatic relations (SLO 4.3), and assess African contributions to wider Islamic civilisation (SLO 4.4).

Glossary of Terms

- **Diplomacy:** The management of political relationships between rulers, states or communities through communication, negotiation and representation.
- **Hajj:** The pilgrimage to Makkah that is a major religious obligation for Muslims who are able to perform it.



- Hijaz: The historical region of western Arabia containing the important Muslim holy cities of Makkah and Madinah.
- Intellectual exchange: The movement and discussion of knowledge, ideas, texts and scholarly methods between people and communities.
- Muslim world: The broad and diverse network of Muslim societies connected by religious, social, intellectual, economic and political relationships.
- Pilgrimage: A religious journey to a place regarded as sacred; for Muslims, the Hajj is the major pilgrimage to Makkah.
- Transregional: Extending across or involving more than one geographical region.
- Ummah: The wider community of Muslims understood as connected by the Islamic faith.



Concept Check Questions 4

Objective Questions

1. Name one major route connecting African Muslims with the wider Muslim world. (Linked to SLO 4.1)
2. Which pilgrimage was especially important in connecting African Muslims with other Muslim societies? (Linked to SLO 4.2)
3. What types of sources helped circulate Islamic knowledge across regions? (Linked to SLO 4.2)
4. Name one function of diplomatic relations between Muslim rulers. (Linked to SLO 4.3)
5. Why is Africa's place in Islamic civilisation described as participatory rather than merely receptive? (Linked to SLO 4.4)

Short-Answer Questions

6. Explain how the Sahara, Red Sea and Indian Ocean contributed to relations between African Muslims and the wider Muslim world. (Linked to SLO 4.1)
7. Discuss two ways the Hajj could affect African Muslim communities after pilgrims returned home. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
8. Explain how trade and diplomacy could reinforce one another in relations between African Muslim states and other regions. (Linked to SLO 4.3)
9. Discuss the contribution of African scholars to the wider Islamic intellectual tradition. (Linked to SLO 4.4)

Long-Answer Questions



10. Evaluate the roles of pilgrimage, scholarship, trade and diplomacy in connecting African Muslim societies to the wider Muslim world. (Linked to SLO 4.1, SLO 4.2 and SLO 4.3)
11. Assess the argument that African Muslims were active participants in the development of Islamic civilisation rather than passive recipients of external influence. (Linked to SLO 4.2 and SLO 4.4)

Answers to Concept Check Questions 4

Objective Questions

1. The Sahara, Red Sea or Indian Ocean.
2. The Hajj.
3. Books and manuscripts.
4. Establishing alliances, facilitating trade, communicating political intentions or strengthening relationships.
5. African scholars, pilgrims, merchants and communities produced, transmitted and adapted knowledge and institutions within wider Islamic networks.

Short-Answer Questions

6. The Sahara linked West Africa with North Africa; the Red Sea linked north-eastern Africa with Arabia; and the Indian Ocean connected East Africa with Arabia, Persia, India and other maritime regions. These routes enabled movement of people, goods, texts and ideas.
7. Pilgrims could return with books, scholarly contacts and new knowledge. Completing the Hajj could also strengthen religious and social prestige and increase connections between their communities and the wider Muslim world.



8. Trade created continuing contact between rulers and commercial communities, while diplomacy could protect or facilitate commercial relationships. Political contacts could therefore support trade, and commercial interests could encourage diplomatic engagement.
9. African scholars studied, taught, interpreted and produced Islamic texts and participated in fields such as law, Qur'anic studies, Arabic, theology and history. Their work connected African centres of learning with wider intellectual networks.

Long-Answer Questions

10. A strong answer should explain that pilgrimage created religious and social mobility; scholarship and books created intellectual networks; trade created sustained economic contact; and diplomacy connected rulers and political communities. Together, these channels produced durable relationships between African Muslims and the wider Muslim world.
11. A strong answer should use African scholarship, pilgrimage, commercial networks, institutions and cultural adaptation as evidence that African Muslims actively shaped Islamic life. The answer should also acknowledge that African societies received ideas and institutions from other Muslim regions, making the relationship one of interaction and mutual influence.

Answers to Pilot Questions 4

Part 4.1

1. The diverse network of Muslim societies and regions connected through religious, intellectual, social, economic and political relationships.
2. The Sahara, Red Sea and Indian Ocean.
3. Religious ideas, books, languages, technologies or cultural practices.
4. Migrants established relationships and communities across regions and maintained links with their places of origin.



5. African Muslims also contributed knowledge, institutions, commercial practices and cultural experiences to other Muslim regions.

Part 4.2

1. It connected African Muslims with the Hijaz and other Muslim communities and exposed pilgrims to wider religious and intellectual networks.
2. They could return with books, contacts, knowledge and increased religious or social prestige.
3. Students travelled to teachers and centres of learning and later transmitted what they learned in their home communities.
4. They preserved and circulated texts and ideas across long distances.
5. African centres such as Timbuktu maintained relationships with scholars and centres in North Africa and the Middle East.

Part 4.3

1. They connected producers, merchants and consumers across long distances.
2. Establishing alliances and facilitating trade, among other purposes.
3. Rulers travelling to Makkah could meet representatives of other political communities and strengthen relationships.
4. Muslim states had different political interests and were not governed by one unified political authority.
5. Trade and economic interests could encourage relationships while religious solidarity provided another basis for cooperation.

Part 4.4



1. African scholars and communities produced, preserved, interpreted and transmitted Islamic knowledge.
2. Islamic jurisprudence and Qur'anic studies, among others.
3. It contained the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah and attracted Muslims from across Africa and the wider Muslim world.
4. They carried knowledge, texts, religious practices and social relationships between regions.
5. African Muslims both adopted and adapted Islamic traditions and contributed their own scholarship, institutions, practices and cultural expressions.



References and Attributions 4

Scholarly Sources

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Illustrations

- Figure 4.1: Routes connecting African Muslims with the wider Muslim world
- AI-generated suggestion: “Create a clear educational historical map of Africa showing the Sahara, Red Sea and Indian Ocean, with arrows linking West Africa to North Africa, East Africa to Arabia, and North-East Africa to Egypt and the Hijaz. Label major routes and avoid modern political borders where they would confuse the historical period.”
- Suggested OER search string: “Africa Muslim world trans-Saharan Red Sea Indian Ocean routes OER map”.
- Plate 4.2: Pilgrimage and scholarly mobility
- AI-generated suggestion: “Create a historically informed educational scene showing African Muslim pilgrims and scholars preparing for long-distance travel to the Hijaz, with



manuscripts and travel provisions. Use a pre-modern African setting and avoid modern transport.”

- Suggested OER search string: “African Muslim pilgrimage Hajj historical scholars travel OER”.
- Figure 4.3: Multiple channels of relations with the wider Muslim world
- AI-generated suggestion: “Create an educational network diagram linking an African Muslim state to North Africa, Egypt, Arabia and the Indian Ocean world. Use separate labelled arrows for trade, diplomacy, pilgrimage and scholarship.”
- Suggested OER search string: “African Muslim states diplomacy trade Islamic world OER”.
- Plate 4.4: African scholarship and participation in Islamic civilisation
- AI-generated suggestion: “Create a historically informed educational scene showing African Muslim scholars in a pre-modern scholarly setting studying and discussing manuscripts with visiting scholars from other Muslim regions. Emphasise intellectual exchange and African agency.”
- Suggested OER search string: “African Muslim scholars Islamic intellectual history OER”.

General Attribution

- The Series follows the ISS 104 course focus on relations with the wider Muslim world and treats Africa as an active participant in Islamic history.
- AI prompts were prepared specifically for educational illustration. Any externally sourced image should be used with appropriate permission or an applicable open licence and its source recorded.



Series 5: Interactions with Traditional Practices

Parts and Sub-Parts

5.1 African Traditional Practices before and alongside Islam

- **5.1.1** Meaning and Features of Traditional Practices
- **5.1.2** Religion, Community and Social Organisation
- **5.1.3** Traditional Practices and Everyday Life

5.2 Muslim Responses to Traditional Practices

- **5.2.1** Acceptance, Rejection and Modification
- **5.2.2** Islamic Teachings and Local Customs
- **5.2.3** Scholars, Leaders and Community Negotiation

5.3 Areas of Interaction between Islam and Traditional Practices

- **5.3.1** Family, Marriage and Social Relations
- **5.3.2** Leadership, Authority and Community Life
- **5.3.3** Healing, Festivals, Dress and Material Culture

5.4 Continuity, Change and Cultural Adaptation

- **5.4.1** Processes of Religious and Cultural Change
- **5.4.2** Islamic and African Cultural Expressions
- **5.4.3** Evaluating Interaction in Historical Perspective

Introduction

When Islam spread into African societies, it entered communities that already had established religious beliefs, social institutions, moral expectations and cultural practices. Muslims therefore



encountered traditions that had developed over generations. The resulting relationship was not identical in every African society. Some practices were rejected because they were considered inconsistent with Islamic teachings; some were modified; and others continued as social or cultural customs.

This Series examines that interaction. The focus is not to assume that African traditional practices were the same everywhere, nor that Muslim communities responded to them in one uniform way. Instead, you will examine how religious belief, local custom, family life, leadership, healing, festivals, dress and material culture could become areas of negotiation and change.

You will begin by identifying the kinds of traditional practices that existed in African societies and their roles in community life. You will then examine Muslim responses to those practices. The third Part considers specific areas where Islam and local traditions interacted, while the final Part examines continuity, change and the development of cultural expressions that reflected both Islamic and African experiences.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- SLO 5.1 describe major features of African traditional practices and explain their roles in community life,
- SLO 5.2 analyse different Muslim responses to traditional practices, including acceptance, rejection and modification,
- SLO 5.3 evaluate areas of interaction between Islamic teachings and African customs in family, leadership, healing and cultural life,
- SLO 5.4 assess how interaction between Islam and traditional practices produced both continuity and cultural change in African societies.



5.1 African Traditional Practices before and alongside Islam

5.1.1 Meaning and Features of Traditional Practices

Traditional practices are established beliefs, customs, values, ceremonies and social behaviours transmitted within a community over generations. They are not necessarily identical from one African society to another. A practice may have religious significance in one community and mainly social or cultural significance in another.

Before and during the spread of Islam, African communities had systems for explaining the world, organising relationships and responding to important events. These could include ceremonies associated with birth, marriage and death, forms of respect for ancestors, ideas about sacred places, communal festivals and methods of resolving disputes. You should therefore avoid treating 'African traditional religion' as one single, uniform system.

Fill in the blank: Established beliefs, customs, values and ceremonies transmitted across generations are examples of _____ practices.

5.1.2 Religion, Community and Social Organisation

Traditional religious ideas could be closely connected with community organisation. Religious specialists, elders, lineage heads or other recognised authorities might perform particular social or ritual functions. In some societies, religious and political responsibilities were connected, while in others they were more clearly separated.

Community life was also shaped by ideas about obligations to family, kinship groups, neighbours and wider society. Ceremonies could strengthen social relationships by bringing people together and marking important stages of life. These social functions remained relevant even when particular religious meanings changed.

Fill in the blank: Traditional practices could strengthen community relationships through ceremonies, kinship obligations and shared _____.



5.1.3 Traditional Practices and Everyday Life

Traditional practices could influence everyday activities such as marriage arrangements, naming, farming, conflict resolution, dress and festivals. They could also provide explanations for illness, misfortune or other experiences. However, the importance of each practice differed according to community and historical period.

When Islam entered these societies, Muslims encountered this existing social world. The interaction between Islam and traditional practices therefore occurred at everyday as well as political and religious levels. This helps you understand why Islam in Africa developed through processes of adaptation and negotiation.

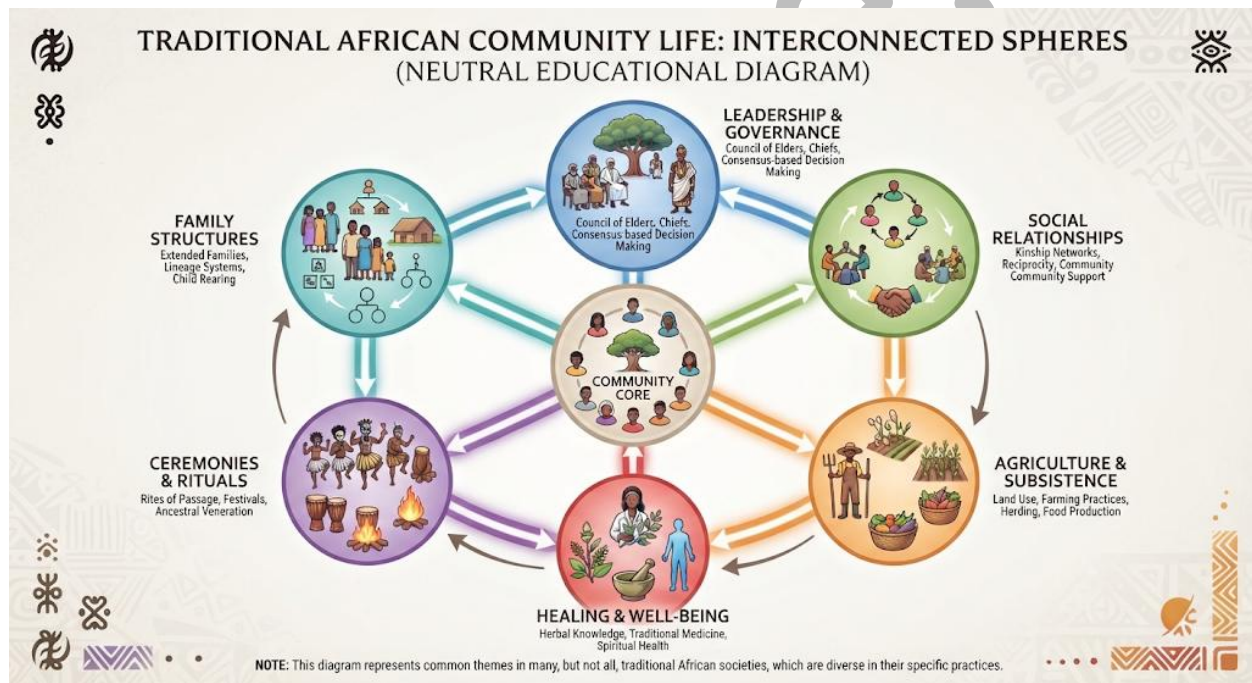


Diagram showing traditional practices connected with family, leadership, community ceremonies, healing and economic life.

Figure 5.1: Areas of traditional practice in African community life

Pilot Questions 5.1

1. What is meant by a traditional practice?



2. Why should African traditional practices not be treated as one uniform system?
3. Mention three areas of African community life that could be influenced by traditional practices.
4. How could ceremonies strengthen social relationships?
5. Explain why understanding existing traditions is important when studying the spread of Islam in Africa.

5.2 Muslim Responses to Traditional Practices

5.2.1 Acceptance, Rejection and Modification

Muslim communities did not respond to every local practice in exactly the same way. Where a custom was regarded as compatible with Islamic principles, it could continue. Where a practice was considered incompatible with Islamic belief or law, Muslims could reject it. In other cases, a practice could be modified so that its social function continued while elements regarded as religiously unacceptable were removed or changed.

This distinction is important because conversion to Islam did not necessarily mean that every existing custom disappeared immediately. Religious change could occur gradually, with individuals and communities negotiating the relationship between Islamic teachings and established ways of life.

Fill in the blank: A local custom could be accepted, rejected or _____ when Muslim communities encountered it.

5.2.2 Islamic Teachings and Local Customs

Islamic teachings provided principles by which Muslims evaluated beliefs and practices. Questions of worship, belief, morality, family relations and social conduct could lead communities to reconsider established customs. At the same time, many customs were social



rather than strictly religious and could continue because they did not necessarily conflict with Islamic principles.

This process helps explain the diversity of Muslim cultures in Africa. Muslims could share core religious commitments while differing in language, clothing styles, marriage customs, architecture and other cultural expressions. Local culture therefore remained important even as Islamic religious identity developed.

Fill in the blank: Muslims could retain local customs when those customs did not conflict with Islamic _____.

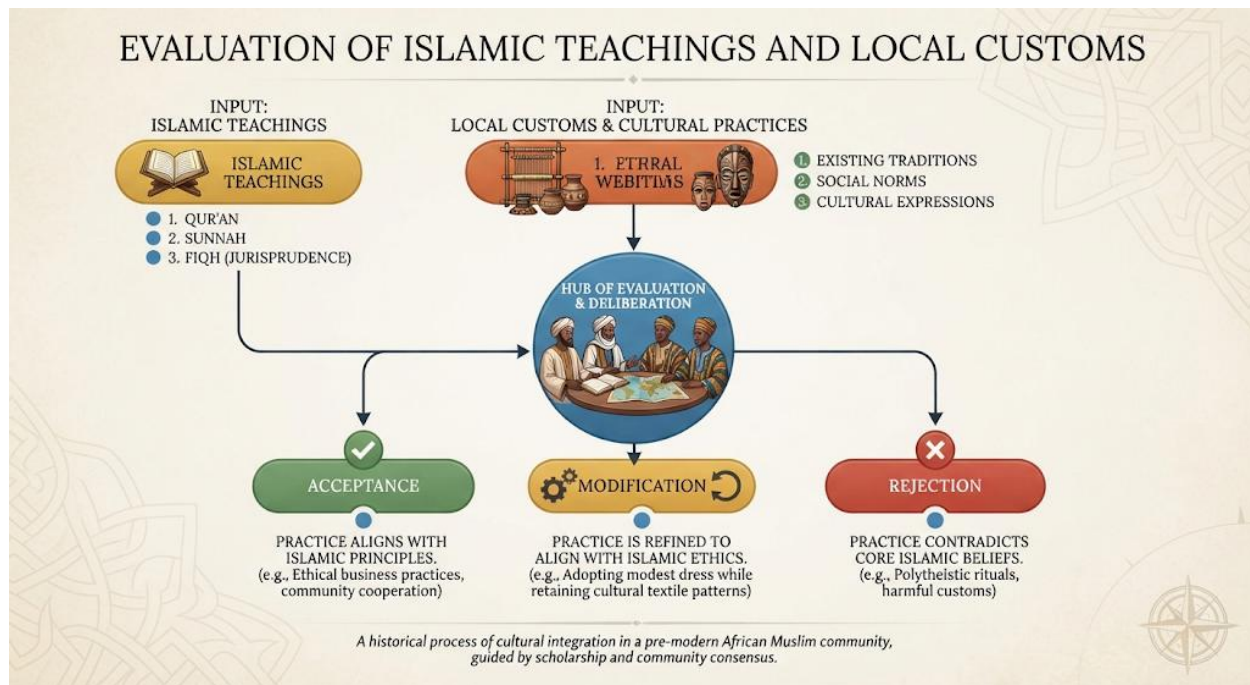
5.2.3 Scholars, Leaders and Community Negotiation

Scholars, teachers, rulers, elders and community leaders could influence how Muslims responded to local practices. Scholars interpreted Islamic teachings and provided guidance, while community leaders helped manage practical relationships and social expectations. The authority of each group varied across societies.

The interaction was therefore a social process as well as a theological one. People had to decide how religious teachings should be expressed within families and communities. Over time, repeated decisions could establish new patterns of behaviour that combined Islamic identity with local African cultural forms.

Fill in the blank: Scholars could influence Muslim responses to local practices by providing religious _____.





Flow diagram showing how Islamic teaching, local custom, scholars and community practice could interact.

Figure 5.2: Negotiating the relationship between Islam and local custom

Pilot Questions 5.2

1. Identify three possible Muslim responses to a local traditional practice.
2. Why did conversion to Islam not necessarily eliminate every existing custom?
3. How could Islamic teachings influence local customs?
4. What roles could scholars and community leaders play in negotiating local practices?
5. Explain why Muslim communities in Africa could share religious identity while retaining different cultural practices.



5.3 Areas of Interaction between Islam and Traditional Practices

5.3.1 Family, Marriage and Social Relations

Family life was an important area of interaction. Marriage practices, inheritance, naming and responsibilities within families could be influenced by Islamic teachings. At the same time, families often retained social customs relating to ceremonies, kinship and community participation.

The interaction could therefore produce differences between formal religious requirements and local ceremonial practices. For example, a marriage could be recognised according to Islamic requirements while the wider celebration retained local language, dress, food or musical traditions. The specific form depended on the society and historical period.

Fill in the blank: Family life could reflect both Islamic requirements and local social and _____ customs.

5.3.2 Leadership, Authority and Community Life

Leadership provided another area of interaction. Muslim rulers and local authorities sometimes operated within political systems that retained established forms of authority. In other situations, Islamic institutions such as scholars, judges or religious teachers became important sources of authority.

The relationship between Islamic and traditional authority was not necessarily one of immediate replacement. Existing leaders could become Muslims, cooperate with Muslim institutions or continue performing social roles under changing religious conditions. These possibilities help explain the varied political histories of Muslim communities in Africa.

Fill in the blank: Existing African leaders could cooperate with, adapt to or be replaced by new forms of Islamic _____.



5.3.3 Healing, Festivals, Dress and Material Culture

Healing practices, festivals, dress and material culture provide useful examples of cultural interaction. Some practices were evaluated according to Islamic beliefs, while others continued because they functioned mainly as social or cultural expressions. Muslim communities could also develop new forms of dress, architecture, art and celebration that reflected Islamic identity while using local materials and styles.

You should distinguish between religious meaning and cultural form. A particular style of clothing or architecture may be African in origin without being opposed to Islam. Conversely, a practice with explicitly religious significance could become a point of disagreement if Muslims considered its beliefs inconsistent with Islamic teaching.

Fill in the blank: When studying cultural interaction, you should distinguish religious meaning from cultural _____.

Pilot Questions 5.3

1. Name two areas of family life that could be affected by Islamic teachings.
2. How could traditional and Islamic forms of authority interact?
3. Mention three cultural areas where interaction between Islam and local practices could occur.
4. Why is it useful to distinguish religious meaning from cultural form?
5. Give one example of how a Muslim community could retain a local cultural form while maintaining Islamic identity.



5.4 Continuity, Change and Cultural Adaptation

5.4.1 Processes of Religious and Cultural Change

Religious and cultural change usually occurs through a process rather than at one moment. As people adopted Islam, they learned new beliefs and practices while continuing to live within families and communities shaped by older traditions. Change could therefore be gradual, uneven and different from one locality to another.

Generational change could also influence the process. Children educated in Muslim schools or households could develop different religious understandings from older generations. Marriage between communities, migration, trade and scholarship could further introduce new practices and interpretations.

Fill in the blank: Religious and cultural change can be gradual, uneven and different from one _____ to another.

5.4.2 Islamic and African Cultural Expressions

The history of Islam in Africa produced cultural expressions that were both Islamic and African. These could be seen in architecture, clothing, language, scholarship, festivals and community organisation. Islamic identity did not require Muslims to abandon every aspect of African cultural life.

For example, Islamic architectural principles could be expressed using local building materials and construction techniques. Arabic could become important for religious scholarship while African languages remained central to everyday communication. Such examples show adaptation rather than simple cultural replacement.

Fill in the blank: African Muslim cultural expressions could combine Islamic identity with local materials, languages and cultural _____.



5.4.3 Evaluating Interaction in Historical Perspective

When you evaluate interaction between Islam and traditional practices, avoid assuming that either Islam or African tradition always produced one predictable outcome. Historical evidence shows variation. Some practices declined, some changed, and some continued in cultural forms. The same practice could also have different meanings in different communities.

A useful historical approach is to ask four questions: What was the original function of the practice? Was it religious, social or both? How did Muslims interpret it? What happened to the practice over time? These questions help you distinguish evidence from assumptions and allow you to evaluate continuity and change carefully.

Fill in the blank: Historical evaluation should distinguish between evidence and _____.

Pilot Questions 5.4

1. Why is religious change often described as a process rather than a single event?
2. Mention two factors that can contribute to cultural and religious change.
3. Give two examples of African cultural forms that could coexist with Islamic identity.
4. Why should historians avoid assuming that Islam produced the same result in every African community?
5. State two questions you should ask when evaluating an interaction between Islam and a traditional practice.



Series Summary

This Series has examined the interaction between Islam and traditional practices in African societies. You first considered the diversity of African traditional practices and their roles in religion, family life, leadership and community organisation. You learned that these practices differed across societies and should not be treated as one uniform system.

You then examined Muslim responses to local practices. Communities could accept, reject or modify practices depending on how they understood their compatibility with Islamic teachings. Scholars, teachers, rulers and community leaders could influence these decisions, while ordinary families and communities also participated in the process of adaptation.

The third Part examined interaction in specific areas such as marriage, family relations, leadership, healing, festivals, dress and material culture. The final Part considered continuity and change. You learned that Islamic identity in Africa could coexist with locally adapted cultural forms and that the historical outcome varied across communities and periods.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to describe African traditional practices and their social roles (SLO 5.1), analyse Muslim responses to those practices (SLO 5.2), evaluate areas of interaction between Islam and local customs (SLO 5.3), and assess continuity, change and cultural adaptation (SLO 5.4).

Glossary of Terms

- **Adaptation:** The process through which a belief, practice or institution is modified to fit a new social, cultural or historical setting.
- **Change:** A transformation in beliefs, practices, institutions or cultural expressions over time.
- **Continuity:** The persistence of a practice, institution or cultural form over time.
- **Cultural expression:** A visible or practised form through which a community communicates its values, identity and experience.



- Custom: An established way of behaving or organising social life within a community.
- Islamic identity: A sense of belonging to Islam expressed through religious beliefs, practices and social or cultural life.
- Local practice: A custom or established behaviour associated with a particular community or society.
- Traditional practice: A belief, custom, ceremony or social behaviour transmitted within a community across generations.

Concept Check Questions 5

Objective Questions

1. Why should African traditional practices be studied as diverse rather than uniform? (Linked to SLO 5.1)
2. What are three possible Muslim responses to an existing local practice? (Linked to SLO 5.2)
3. Name two areas of social life in which Islam and local customs could interact. (Linked to SLO 5.3)
4. What does cultural adaptation mean in the context of Islam in Africa? (Linked to SLO 5.4)
5. Why is it important to distinguish religious meaning from cultural form? (Linked to SLO 5.3 and SLO 5.4)

Short-Answer Questions

6. Explain how traditional practices could contribute to social organisation before and alongside the spread of Islam. (Linked to SLO 5.1)
7. Analyse why Muslims could accept some local customs while rejecting or modifying others. (Linked to SLO 5.2)



8. Discuss how family life and leadership could become areas of interaction between Islamic teachings and African customs. (Linked to SLO 5.3)
9. Explain how African Muslim cultural expressions demonstrate adaptation rather than simple cultural replacement. (Linked to SLO 5.4)

Long-Answer Questions

10. Evaluate the statement that the spread of Islam in Africa involved negotiation with existing social and cultural practices rather than the immediate disappearance of traditional practices. (Linked to SLO 5.1, SLO 5.2 and SLO 5.4)
11. Assess how the interaction between Islam and traditional practices contributed to the diversity of Muslim societies in Africa. (Linked to SLO 5.2, SLO 5.3 and SLO 5.4)

Answers to Concept Check Questions 5

Objective Questions

1. Because African societies had different histories, beliefs, social systems, languages and cultural practices.
2. Acceptance, rejection and modification.
3. Family and marriage, leadership, healing, festivals, dress or material culture.
4. It means modifying or expressing practices in ways that fit a new Islamic and local social context.
5. Because a cultural form such as clothing, architecture or language may be locally African without necessarily conflicting with Islamic religious principles.

Short-Answer Questions



6. Traditional practices could organise family relationships, ceremonies, leadership, moral expectations and community obligations. They could also provide established ways of responding to events such as marriage, death and illness.
7. Muslims evaluated practices according to their understanding of Islamic teachings. Practices regarded as compatible could continue, while those considered incompatible could be rejected or changed. Some practices were also mainly social or cultural and therefore could continue without being treated as religious acts.
8. Marriage and family customs could be influenced by Islamic rules while retaining local ceremonial forms. Leadership could involve existing authorities working with, adapting to or being replaced by Islamic institutions such as scholars and judges.
9. African Muslim communities could retain local languages, materials, architectural methods, clothing styles and social forms while expressing an Islamic religious identity. This demonstrates adaptation and synthesis rather than complete replacement.

Long-Answer Questions

10. A strong answer should explain that Islam entered societies with established practices and that change occurred through processes of acceptance, rejection and modification. The answer should use examples from family life, leadership, healing, festivals, dress or material culture and should emphasise variation across societies.
11. A strong answer should argue that interaction with local practices produced diverse forms of Muslim social and cultural life. Students should discuss how Islamic teachings interacted with local customs and how African languages, materials, social forms and cultural expressions continued or were adapted within Muslim communities.

Answers to Pilot Questions 5

Part 5.1



1. An established belief, custom, ceremony or social behaviour transmitted within a community across generations.
2. African societies had different histories, cultures, languages, social structures and religious traditions.
3. Family life, leadership, ceremonies, healing, agriculture, marriage, conflict resolution or festivals.
4. They brought community members together and marked important social stages and shared experiences.
5. Islam entered existing African societies, so understanding those societies helps explain how Muslim communities responded to and adapted local practices.

Part 5.2

1. Acceptance, rejection and modification.
2. People could adopt Islamic beliefs while continuing social or cultural practices that were not regarded as incompatible with Islam.
3. They provided principles for evaluating beliefs, worship, morality, family relations and social conduct.
4. Scholars could interpret and teach Islamic principles, while community leaders helped manage practical social relationships and expectations.
5. Muslims can share core religious commitments while differing in language, clothing, architecture, marriage customs and other cultural forms.

Part 5.3

1. Marriage, inheritance, naming, family responsibilities or other social relations.



2. Existing leaders could cooperate with Islamic authorities, adapt to new institutions or in some cases lose authority to new forms of leadership.
3. Healing, festivals, dress, architecture, marriage and material culture.
4. The same cultural form may have different meanings, and not every local cultural expression is a religious practice.
5. A community could use local language, clothing, architecture, food or ceremonial forms while observing Islamic religious requirements.

Part 5.4

1. People often adopt new beliefs and practices while continuing to live within existing families and communities, so change takes place over time.
2. Education, migration, trade, intermarriage, scholarship and generational change.
3. Local architectural styles and African languages, clothing, food or artistic forms.
4. Historical societies differed, so the interaction between Islam and local practices produced different outcomes.
5. What was the original function of the practice? Was it religious, social or both? How did Muslims interpret it? What happened to it over time?



References and Attributions 5

Scholarly Sources

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- Trimingham, J. S. (1962). A History of Islam in West Africa. Oxford University Press.
- Trimingham, J. S. (1964). Islam in East Africa. Clarendon Press.
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Illustrations

- Figure 5.1: Areas of traditional practice in African community life
- AI-generated suggestion: “Create a neutral educational diagram showing traditional African community life with connected areas labelled family, leadership, ceremonies, healing, agriculture and social relationships. Avoid presenting all African societies as identical.”
- Suggested OER search string: “African traditional practices community social organisation OER”.
- Figure 5.2: Negotiating the relationship between Islam and local custom
- AI-generated suggestion: “Create an educational flow diagram showing Islamic teachings and local customs entering a community, with scholars and community leaders helping evaluate practices, leading to acceptance, rejection or modification. Keep the diagram neutral and historically appropriate.”



- Suggested OER search string: “Islam African traditional customs adaptation scholars OER”.

General Attribution

- The Series is aligned to the ISS 104 course content on interactions with traditional practices and treats African traditional practices as diverse rather than as a single uniform system.
- AI prompts are provided for educational illustration. Any externally sourced image should be used with appropriate permission or an applicable open licence and its source recorded.

