

**Texts, Knowledge, and Practice:
The Meaning of Scholarship in Muslim Africa**

Harvard University, 16-18 February 2017

Conference sponsored by:

Harvard Divinity School

The Center of African Studies

The Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Islamic Studies Program

The Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations (NELC)

The Islam in Africa Speaker Series

Conference Conveners

Ousmane Kane, Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Professor of Contemporary Islamic Religion
Harvard Divinity School and Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Civilization Faculty of
Arts and Sciences, Harvard University

Matthew Steele, Ph.D student, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations,
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Executive Summary

Sitting at the intersection of African, Islamic, and Middle Eastern Studies, Islam in Africa has long suffered from a crisis of disciplinary identity. Perhaps because it is neither strictly area nor solely religious studies, Islam in Africa has only recently received attention within the academy. The shift is long overdue, for Africa has influenced scholarship throughout the Islamic World for more than a millennium. With the spread of Arabic literacy, African scholars developed a rich tradition of debate over orthodoxy and meaning in Islam. The rise of such a tradition was hardly disconnected from centers of Islamic learning outside of Africa. From Mecca to Sind, African scholars have played significant roles in the development of virtually every field of Islamic sciences.

Islamic scholarship in Africa remains just as significant today. By the end of the twentieth century, thousands of integrated curriculum schools and dozens of modern Islamic universities had redefined Islamic studies across Sub-Saharan Africa. Since then, the spread of communications technology has reshaped Islamic scholarship still further. New representations of Islamic scholarship have formed across Africa through teaching websites, mp3 and social media apps. The emergence of these new spaces, both physical and virtual, has the potential to recast notions of class, authority, canon, and orthodoxy common to the study of Islamic scholarship in Africa today.

This conference offers a venue for us to rethink how such an evolution occurred. It will be the first of two meetings intended to bring together specialists from Western academia and the Islamic World. The first meeting will explore the ways in which Islamic scholarship integrated Africa in the Islamic world, as well as the interconnections between West, North, and Saharan Africa on the one hand, and East Africa and Western Asia on the other. Conference participants from a variety of disciplines including history, Islamic studies, anthropology, philosophy, religious studies, and political science will explore six main themes:

- **Panel 1:** History, Movement and the Spread of Islamic Scholarship
- **Panel 2:** Courts, Colonialism, and Islamic Law in Africa
- **Panel 3:** Authors, Texts, and Islamic Scholarship:
- **Panel 4:** Contemporary Expressions of Islamic Scholarship in Africa
- **Panel 5:** Vernacular in Text and Verse
- **Panel 6:** Quranic Education in Africa

PROGRAM

Thursday 16 February, 2016

Sperry Room, Harvard Divinity School

6:45-7:00 PM: Introductory Remarks by **David Hempton**, Dean of Harvard Divinity School

7:00-8:00 PM: Keynote Address by **Ousmane Kane**, Alwaleed Professor of Contemporary Islamic Religion and Society at Harvard
“History, Movement, and the Spread of Islamic Scholarship in Muslim Africa”

Friday 17 February, 2016
Harvard University CGIS South S010 Tsai Auditorium

8:30-10:30 AM *Panel 1: History, Movement, and the Spread of Islamic Scholarship*

Chair: Oludamini Ogunnaike, College of William and Mary

Zachary Wright, Associate Professor of History, Northwestern University Qatar “Visionary Knowledge: Encounters with the Prophet in Islamic Africa, 18th Century to the Present”

Khaled Esseissah, Ph.D. student, History Department, Indiana University-Bloomington
“The Ulama of Bilad Shinqiti (Mauritania) and their Roles in Disseminating Islamic Learning Outside Africa”

Ahmed Chanfi, senior lecturer, Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany
“Northeastern African ‘ulamā’ and Salafism in Mecca and Medina: The Case of the Ethiopian Born Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Alī Amīn al-Jāmī and the al-Jāmiyya Movement in Saudi Arabia

Dahlia Gubara, Assistant Professor, American University of Beirut
“Black Magic, White Magic, and the Man from Katsina”

11:00 AM-1:00 PM *Panel 2: Courts, Colonialism, & Islamic Law in Africa*

Chair: Zachary Wright, Northwestern University Qatar

Etty Terem, Associate Professor, Rhodes College
“The New Mi`yar of al-Wazzani: Redefining Islamic Orthodoxy and the Making of Modern Morocco”

Ismail Warscheid, Research Fellow at CNRS
“A West African Approach to Islamic Law? Sahelo Saharan Legal Writing in Post Classical Malikism”

Sarah Eltantawi, Assistant Professor, Comparative Religion and Islamic Studies, The Evergreen State College
“The Influence of Northern Nigeria’s Encounter with European Colonialism on the Development of Islamic Law.”

Matthew Steele, Ph.D. Student, Harvard University
“The Khalil and Commentary: The Making of Legal Literary Canon in West Africa”

2:00-4:00 PM: Panel 3: Authors, Texts, and Islamic Scholarship

Chair: Charles Hallisey, Harvard Divinity School

Mauro Nobili, Assistant Professor of History, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign
“A Nineteenth-Century Political Project: Nūḥ b. al-Ṭāhir’s Tārīkh al-fattāsh”

Noah Salomon, Associate Professor of Religion, Carleton College
“Rethinking Scripturalism: Ethics, Knowledge, and Textual Practice in Contemporary Sudan”

Oludamini Ogunnaike, Assistant Professor of Religion, College of William and Mary
“Philosophical Sufism in the Sokoto Caliphate: The Case of Shaykh Dan Tafa”

Farah El-Sharif, Ph.D. Student, Harvard University,
“Sunnah as ‘Open Source’ in Hājj ‘Umar al-Fūti’s Kitāb al-Rimāh”

4:00 – 6:00 PM Panel 4: Contemporary Expressions of Islamic Scholarship in Africa

Chair: Kai Kresse, Columbia University

Iqbal Akhtar, Associate Professor, Florida International University
“The Indic Chronicle of Light from Zanibar”

Kim Wortmann, Ph.D. Student, Harvard University
“Zanzibar and Oman: Ibadi Revival in an East Africa Town”

Caitlyn Bolton, Ph.D. Student, Graduate Center CUNY
“Divine Science: Knowledge, Islamic Education and Development in Zanzibar”

Ahmed Sharif, Ph.D. Student, NYU
“Somalia, Sudan, and the Rise of Scholar Politics in the ICU”

Saturday 18 February, 2017
Harvard University CGIS South S010 Tsai Auditorium

8:30-10:30 AM *Panel 5: Vernacular in Text and Verse*

Chair: Chanfi Ahmed Humboldt Universität,

Abdulkadir Hashim, Senior Lecturer Department of Philosophy & Religious Studies “Praise and Prestige: The Significance of Elegiac Poetry among Muslim Intellectuals in the Late Twentieth-Century Kenya Coast”

Lidwien Kapteijns (Wellesley College), *Mohamed Kassim* (Seneca College), and *Alessandra Vianello* (independent and SOAS affiliate)
“‘Ilm and the Common People: Sufi Vernacular Poetry and Islamic Education in Brava, c. 1890-1925”

Hassan Mwakimako, Associate Professor, Department of Religious and Philosophical Studies, Pwani University, Kenya
“Swahili Islamic Manuscripts: The Friday Lhutba of Shaykh Al-Amin b. Ali al-Mazrui, 1890-1947”

Kai Kresse, Associate Professor Columbia University
“Enduring Relevance: A Sample of Oral Poetry on the Swahili Coast”

11: 00 AM – 1:00 PM *Panel 6: Quranic Education in Africa*

Chair: Mohamed Mbodj, Manhattanville College

Corinne Fortier, Researcher, CNRS
“Orality and Transmission of Quranic Knowledge in Mauritania”

Yunus Kumek, Visiting Scholar, Harvard Divinity School
“Understanding Common Egyptians Muslim Identity with the Tradition of Recitation of the Quran”

Laura L. Cochrane, Associate Professor of Anthropology, University of Michigan
“New Daara: Integrating Qur’anic, Agricultural, and Trade-Based Education in a Community Setting”

Pearl T. Robinson, Associate Professor, Tufts University
“Mama Kiota: Koranic Education in Postcolonial Niger”

Biographies of Panelists

Chanfi Ahmed is Lecturer on the History of Islam in Africa at the Institute for Asian and African Studies, Humboldt Universität, Berlin, Germany. Trained in Islamic Studies and in History, Ahmed received his Ph.D. in history at the EHESS in Paris. His research areas are history and anthropology of Islam in Africa and the history of Muslim world in general. He has written on a variety of topics related to Islam in Africa, including Sufi revival, Muslim preachers, Islamic education and Islamic faith-based NGOs. His books include: *West African 'ulamā' and Salafism in Mecca and Medina: Jawāb al- Ifrīqī- The Response of the African* (Brill, 2015); *Les Conversions à l'Islam Fondamentaliste en Afrique au Sud du Sahara : Le Cas de la Tanzanie et du Kenya* (L'Harmattan: 2008); *Ngoma et Mission Islamique (da'wa) aux Comores et en Afrique Orientale: Une Approche Anthropologique* (L'Harmattan, 2002); and *Islam et Politique aux Comores* (L'Harmattan, 2000). His current research topics are: 1) The transformation of Islamic teaching in the two main mosques of al-Ḥaramain (Mecca and Medina) introduced by the Wahhābī since 1926, and 2) Present life and the history of the African communities of Mecca (and of the Ḥijāz in general) since the nineteenth century.

Iqbal Akhtar is a dual-appointment Assistant Professor in the Departments of Politics & International Relations and of Religious Studies at Florida International University. He completed his doctoral studies at the University of Edinburgh's New College School of Divinity. His most recent monograph is entitled *The Khōjā of Tanzania: A Study of an Indic Muslim Merchant Caste in East Africa*. Some of his publications can be found on Academia. Akhtar's next book is a translation of the *Nūr Nāmā*, a study reconstructing the eighteenth-century religious cosmology of the Sindhi and Gujarati Khōjā. Recently, he developed a Center at FIU for the study of the western Indian Ocean region, which is emerging as an important component for international interdisciplinary scholarly cooperation. The Center's current project focuses on the preservation of the Luwati and Kacchī-Swahili. These two contact languages are invaluable in understanding the economics of pre-colonial Western Indian Ocean trade, how pluralistic Indic cosmologies were Islamized in negotiation with Semitic and Bantu linguistic cultures, and the forms of traditional medicine historically used by the community which drew upon Indic, African, and Near Eastern healing traditions and transplanted botanicals.

Caitlyn Bolton is a Ph.D. Student in Cultural Anthropology at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York and teaches at Hunter College. Her research focuses on international Islamic development organizations working in education in Zanzibar, and the role of religion and religious knowledge in their approaches to progress and social change. Bolton has a B.A. in Anthropology and Africana Studies from Bard College and an M.A. in Near Eastern Studies from New York University, and has worked at Harvard Kennedy School's Middle East Initiative and the Cordoba Initiative on issues related to Islamic Law and the modern state. Her paper draws on Arabic, Swahili, and English archival and ethnographic research in Zanzibar.

Laura L. Cochrane is Associate Professor of Anthropology and Director of Cultural and Global Studies at Central Michigan University. She teaches topics within African studies, cultural and linguistic anthropology, the anthropology of religion, and ethnographic methods. Her longitudinal research in Senegal concerns local development, discourse on faith, and artisanal production, all

in the contexts of economic challenges and environmental shifts. Cochrane's work on faith-based motivations for local economic development includes following locally-run gardening, agricultural, and artisanal projects. She also studies textile production and its importance for social identities and community life. She is the author of *Weaving through Islam in Senegal* (2012) and has published articles in both anthropology and African studies journals. She is currently completing a book manuscript entitled *Everyday Faith in Sufi Senegal*, based on life histories of faith.

Sarah Eltantawi is a social and intellectual historian of contemporary Islam. She is an Assistant Professor in Comparative Religion and Islamic Studies at the Evergreen State College in Olympia, WA and a research scholar at the Middle East Center of the University of Washington. Her forthcoming book, *Sharia on Trial: Stoning and the Islamic Revolution in Northern Nigeria* (University of California Press, 2017), examines why Northern Nigerians took to the streets starting in 1999 to demand the re-implimentation of sharia law, and uses the stoning punishment and the trial of Amina Lawal as a lens. Eltantawi earned her Ph.D. in the Study of Religion in 2012 from Harvard University and has held fellowships at Brandeis University, UC Berkeley, and at the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin. She has an MA in Middle Eastern Studies from Harvard University and a BA in Rhetoric and English literature from UC Berkeley.

Khaled Esseissah is a Ph.D. Student of African history in the Department of History at Indiana University-Bloomington. He received an M.A. in American Culture Studies from Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio, a D.E.A (*Diplôme D'Études Approfondies*) in American Studies from the University of Cheikh Anta Diop in Senegal, and a Maîtrise in English & Literature from the University of Nouakchott in Mauritania. Esseissah's research interests broadly include slavery, colonialism, ethnicity, Islamic authority, and identity formation in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Northwest Africa. He seeks to understand the unfinished process of abolition in Mauritania from the colonial era to the present, and how members of the Harateen community have mobilized Islamic knowledge and Harateen cultural production to protect their rights and assert their autonomy and respectability.

Corinne Fortier is a researcher at the French National Center of Scientific Research (CNRS). She is a member of the Social Anthropology Lab (LAS) (CNRS-EHESS-Collège de France, Paris). She received the 2005 Bronze Medal of the French National Center of Scientific Research (CNRS), and has completed field research in Algeria, in the Moorish society of Mauritania, in an oasis in Egypt, as well as research on Islamic scriptural sources related to gender, the body, misfortune, and the transmission of knowledge. Fortier was an Invited Fellow of the Berlin Graduate School for Muslim Cultures and Societies (Freie Universität, Berlin) and of the Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO) in Berlin from September-October 2011. Beginning in 2014, she has directed the seminar at l'EHESS, Paris, entitled *Gender and Subjectivation in the Middle East and in Islam*.

Dahlia E. M. Gubara is Assistant Professor in the Civilization Studies Program of the American University of Beirut, Lebanon. Her work bridges the fields of Islamic and European intellectual history, is regionally focused on the Middle East and Africa, and is principally concerned with the production and transmission of knowledge in and about the Islamic tradition. Gubara studied law at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, concentrating on Islamic legal traditions both classical and modern; and later history at Columbia University, New York, where

her Ph.D. dissertation explored the Cairene mosque-seminary of al-Azhar and the orders of knowledge in the long eighteenth century. Her current research project is entitled “Virtuous Narratives and the Many Lives of Luqmān al-Ḥakīm.” It traces iterations of a polymorphous figure, central to an elusive concept of knowledge (ḥikma) in the Islamic tradition and its interlocutors in the variegated cultures of late Antiquity, across various epistemic and textual formations to explore connections between wisdom-knowledge, myth-history, virtue, and tradition in light of their enduring discursive resonances.

Abdulkadir Hashim is a Senior Lecturer in Sharia & Islamic studies at the University of Nairobi and an Advocate of the High of Kenya. He obtained his LL.B in Sharia & law from Omdurman Islamic University, Sudan in 1993, his LL.M from the London School of Economics, University of London in 1996, and his LL.D in 2010 from the University of Western Cape in South Africa. Hashim’s LL.D research highlighted the patterns of British colonial dynamics on the administration of Islamic law in the Zanzibar Sultanate. He has published several articles and book chapters on Muslim personal law and Muslim intellectual contributions along the East African coast. His research interests include Muslim personal law, Muslim intellectual history, and Muslim-State-Christian relations in Kenya.

Ousmane Oumar Kane has been Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Chair of Contemporary Islamic Religion and Society at the Harvard Divinity School and Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University since July 2012. He received a Bachelor of Arts in Arabic and a Master in Islamic Studies from the Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales at the University of the Sorbonne Nouvelle, and an M. Phil, and a Ph.D in Political Science and Middle Eastern Studies from the Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Paris. Kane is the author of *Beyond Timbuktu: An Intellectual History of Muslim West Africa* (Harvard University Press, 2016) ; *The Homeland is the Arena: Religion, Transnationalism and the Integration of Senegalese Migrants in America* (Oxford University Press, 2011); and *Muslim Modernity in Postcolonial Nigeria: A Study of the Society of the Removal of Innovation and Reinstatement of Tradition* (Brill, 2003).

Lidwien Kapteijns is Kendall/Hodder Professor of History and teaches African and Middle Eastern history at Wellesley College. She lived and worked in the Sudan for about five years and published widely about late pre-colonial Sudanese history, including a volume of Arabic sources from western Darfur (with Jay Spaulding). She turned to Somali studies in late 1988. Her *Women’s Voices in a Man’s World* (with Maryam Omar Ali, 1999) deals with notions of proper womanhood in Somali folklore texts and in the Somali popular songs of the 1960s-1980s. *Clan Cleansing in Somalia: The Ruinous Legacy of 1991* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013) is an analysis of Somali civil war violence in text and context. Kapteijns is currently working on Arabic primary sources for Somali history, as well as (with Alessandra Vianello and Mohamed Kassim) on an anthology of late nineteenth-and early twentieth-century Islamic didactic religious poetry from Brava on Somalia’s Benadir coast.

Kai Kresse is an Associate Professor at MEASAS Columbia University. He is an anthropologist and philosopher who specializes in East Africa and the Swahili coast. He received his Ph.D. in Anthropology and African Studies from SOAS (2002) and a Master’s degree in Social Anthropology from LSE (1997), both University of London, and a Magister degree in Philosophy

from the University of Hamburg (1996). He has held appointments as Lecturer in Social Anthropology at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland (2002-2009), Research Fellow and Vice Director for Research at the Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO) in Berlin (www.zmo.de) (2006-2012), and is affiliated with the Berlin Graduate School for the Study of Muslim Cultures and Societies and the Department of Anthropology, at the Freie Universität, Berlin. In 2005, he was Evans-Pritchard Lecturer at All Souls College, Oxford. Kresse's research interests include African philosophy and intellectual history; social theory; intercultural philosophy; the study of texts in social contexts; Swahili genres of poetry and rhetoric; Islam and Muslim debates in East Africa; African literature; and social connectivity across the Western Indian Ocean. His interdisciplinary research engages with the study of history, literature, and religion.

Yunus Kumek's research interests include theological and anthropological studies of Islamic peoples and cultures, mysticism, Sufism, the anthropology of Islamic education and medicine, as well as the analysis of sacred texts. He teaches undergraduate and graduate level courses on religious studies, mysticism, Islam, and critical sacred text analysis. Kumek is currently the religious studies coordinator at the Department of Philosophy and Humanities at SUNY Buffalo State, and has been a research associate in the Anthropology Department at SUNY at Buffalo. He has ethnographic fieldwork experience among the Muslim communities and institutions in Turkey, Egypt, and the United States. His recent articles include: "Text and Behavior: A Common Word Among Us in the Quran [3:64]"; and "God from the Bird's Eye: The Metaphysical and Physical Understanding of Birds among Muslim Practices and Scholarship." He will be a visiting scholar at Harvard Divinity School in Spring 2017.

Hassan Mwakimako is Associate Professor in the department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Pwani University and presently is an African Studies Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Cambridge, UK. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Cape Town. Mwakimako's research is focused on the interface between colonial and post-colonial African states policy and the practice of Islam in Sub-Saharan African. In 2002 he was appointed junior research fellow at the Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa (ISITA) at the Centre for African Studies, Northwestern University, Evanston, USA. From 2009 to 2012 he was a postdoctoral research fellow at the Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO) in Berlin, Germany. He has published articles in journals including *Islamic Africa* and the *Journal of Eastern African Studies*. He has co-translated from Swahili to English Shaykh Al Amin Mazrui's *Uwongozi* (Guidance) publication (Brill, 2016).

Mauro Nobili is Assistant Professor in African History at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is also Honorary Research Associate at the Tombouctou Manuscripts Project, Huma, University of Cape Town. He is a specialist in West African history and his research focuses on Arabic manuscript culture and Islam in Africa. Nobili published the *Catalogue des Manuscrits Arabes du Fonds de Gironcourt (Afrique de l'Ouest)* de l'Institut de France (Istituto per L'Oriente C.A. Nallino, 2013) as well as several articles on the Arabic script styles in West African manuscripts and on the Timbuktu chronicles. He is currently working on a book on the Tārīkh al-fattāsh.

Oludamini Ogunnaike is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at the College of William and Mary. He graduated from Harvard University with a Ph.D. in African and African American Studies and the Study of Religion in 2015, and held a postdoctoral fellowship at Stanford University before joining William and Mary. Ogunnaike's research examines the intellectual and artistic dimensions of postcolonial, colonial, and pre-colonial Islamic and indigenous religious traditions of West and North Africa, especially Sufism and Ifa.

Pearl T. Robinson is Associate Professor of Political Science at Tufts University. She has authored more than forty articles and book chapters on African and African American politics. She is co-author of *Stabilizing Nigeria: Sanctions, Incentives, and Support for Civil Society* (The Century Foundation Press) and co-editor and co-author of *Transformation and Resiliency in Africa* (Howard University Press). A member of the Council on Foreign Relations and a past President of the African Studies Association, she has chaired the SSRC/ACLS Joint Committee on African Studies; served on the boards of Oxfam-America and TransAfrica; been a curriculum consultant for the PBS/BBC series *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* and an advisor for *Hopes on the Horizon*, a two-hour documentary film about democratic movements in Africa during the 1990s. Robinson is a past Director of Tufts' International Relations Program and has taught at Makerere University in Uganda and the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. In 2011 UC San Diego's Research Center in African and African American Studies named Robinson the recipient of its Teshome H. Gabriel Distinguished Africanist Award. Her current projects include an intellectual biography of 1950 Nobel Peace laureate Ralph Bunche, and *Mama Kiota!*, a documentary film about Islam and female empowerment in Niger. Robinson spent two years as a Peace Corps volunteer in Niger providing public health education in a rural Hausa town.

Noah Salomon is Associate Professor of Religion and Director of Middle East Studies at Carleton College. He is the author of *For Love of the Prophet: An Ethnography of Sudan's Islamic State* (Princeton University Press, 2016) and several articles on the intersections of religion, politics, and Islamic knowledge in Sudan and South Sudan. Salomon recently began work on a new project that will attempt an introduction to contemporary Muslim societies through a series of micro-analyses of individuals and movements whose existence problematizes the taxonomic logic of common introductions to the Islamic world: from Sufi communists to Salafi faith healers to the place of *jinn* in political life.

Ahmed Sharif is a Ph.D. Student in cultural anthropology at the Graduate Center at City University of New York. His dissertation is an ethnographic research project on the formation of Shari'a courts in Mogadishu, Somalia after the collapse of the central state in 1991 and the transformation and evolution of these courts into the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) in 2006. Through his research, Sharif explores the role of local Shari'a-informed structures of authority and discourse on justice and social responsibility in creating the conditions of possibility for the emergence of the Shari'a courts, and, the transformation of Shari'a structures of authority and practice as political power and authority were centralized in the process of the Shari'a courts' transformation into the UIC. His dissertation is based on a twenty-month period of fieldwork in Mogadishu, Somalia conducted between January 2014 and September 2015.

Farah El-Sharif is a Ph.D. Student in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Harvard, specializing in Islamic intellectual history in the early twentieth century, with particular attention to the ulama and modern state formation, Sufism and Maliki law in West Africa, the Hijaz, and the Levant. El-Sharif did her undergraduate work at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and her M.A. is in Islamic Studies from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California.

Matthew Steele is a Ph.D. student in Islamic Studies at Harvard University. He researches jurisprudence and knowledge production in Islamicate Africa, focusing on the social lives of legal texts and the (re)construction of their meaning across time and space. Steele's dissertation deals with a medieval manual of Islamic law, the *Mukhtasar Khalil*. Through the *Khalil's* nearly seven-century commentarial history, the project explores evolving notions of community, canon, and genre in pre-modern Maliki thought. His secondary research interests are in the development – and especially the decline – of legal schools in East Africa, and in the Pulaar Arabic `ajami scholarship of West Africa. Steele received his undergraduate degree at Swarthmore College and Master's degree at Dartmouth College, where his work on customary law in Yemen won the outstanding graduate thesis award of 2012. He has conducted fieldwork in Yemen, Egypt, Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea, and Sudan, completing his formative training in Maliki law, grammar, and tafsir under scholars in Mauritania (2013, 2014), and Sudan (2014-2016).

Etty Terem earned her Ph.D. from Harvard in 2007, and is now Associate Professor of Middle Eastern History at Rhodes College. Her research focuses on Islamic modernity, especially on ideologies of Islamic revival and reform in Morocco during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She wrote *Old Texts, New Practices: Islamic Reform in Modern Morocco* (Stanford, 2014). Terem's current project is an expansion of her research into the Moroccan colonial period (1912-1956), in which she explores a project of reform conceptualized by Muhammad al-Hajwi (1874-1956), a prominent Moroccan thinker and an outspoken advocate for change, who held influential positions within the bureaucracy and the political elite that emerged under the French Protectorate.

Alessandra Vianello is an independent scholar and researcher, affiliated with the Department of Languages and Cultures of Africa at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). She lived and worked in Somalia from 1970 to 1990 and has specialized in the history and culture of Brava, on the Benadir coast of Somalia, especially also Brava's Bantu language called Chimiini or Chimbalazi. She edited the two-volume *Servants of the Sharia: The Civil Register of the Qadis' Court of Brava, 1893-1900* (with Mohamed Kassim) (Brill, 2006), a source publication with Arabic texts, English translations, and an extensive introduction to the history of Brava. Vianello is currently working on an anthology of the religious poetry of Brava in Chimiini in collaboration with Lidwien Kapteijns and Mohamed Kassim.

Ismail Warscheid is a tenured researcher at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and a member of the Institut de Recherches et d'Histoire des Textes in Paris. He received his training in History and Arabic studies at the University of Geneva and the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, from which he obtained his Ph.D. in 2014 with a dissertation on the practice of Islamic law in the oasis of Tuwat in eighteenth-century southern Algeria. Combining methodologies from history, social and legal anthropology, as well as philology, his research deals primarily with the cultural and social history of North and West Africa, with a strong emphasis on

the study of Islamic legal texts. Warscheid is currently developing a new research project that engages in a comparative analysis of Islamic law's role in the construction of social order within pre-modern Saharan societies (southern Algeria and Morocco, Mauretania, and Mali).

Kimberly Wortmann is a Ph.D. Student in the Committee on the Study of Religion at Harvard and a Graduate Student Associate at the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs. Her work focuses primarily on Islamic social and intellectual history in eastern Africa and southern Arabia. Wortmann's dissertation traces the development of trans-national Ibadi Muslim institutions and activism since the 1964 revolution in Zanzibar, and her research for this project has taken her to Tanzania, Kenya, Oman, and Yemen, among other places.

Zachary Wright is Associate Professor in History and Religious Studies at Northwestern University in Qatar. Wright received his Ph.D. in history from Northwestern University, with a dissertation that focused on the history of Islamic knowledge transmission in West Africa. He also has an M.A. in Arabic studies, Middle East history, from the American University in Cairo, and a B.A. in History from Stanford University. He teaches classes on Islam in Africa, modern Middle East history, African history, Sufism, Islamic intellectual history, and Islam in America. Wright's book publications include *Living Knowledge in West African Islam: the Sufi Community of Ibrahim Niasse* (Brill, 2015), and *On the Path of the Prophet: Shaykh Ahmad Tijani and the Tariqa Muhammadiyya* (AAII & Faydah Books, 2005, 2015). He has also translated several West African Arabic texts into English, including *The Removal of Confusion Concerning the Saintly Seal* (Fons Vitae, 2010, and reprint forthcoming). His current research concerns eighteenth-century Islamic intellectual history in North Africa.