

African Muslim Intellectual History

Early 19th–Early 21st Centuries



Muhammad al-Amīn al-Shinqīti (1897–1972)

MAURITANIA

An accomplished shaykh that specialized in various fields of Islamic studies. He wrote several texts, including *Alfiyyah wa Mantiq*, *Muthakkirah Usūl al-Fiqh* and *Adwaa-ul-Bayaan fi Tafseer-il-Qur'an bil-Qur'an*. The latter is the well-known commentary of the shaykh.



Tierno Bokar Saalif Tall (1875–1939)

MALI / NIGER

A Malian Sufi sage and a spiritual master of the early twentieth century. Though trained in the Tijani order, he retreated to the Hamaliyya. He then became famous for his message of religious tolerance and universal love. He advocated civil inter-religious dialogue and opposed religious bigotry and chauvinism of any kind.



Khayr al-Dīn al-Tunīsī (1810–1890)

TUNISIA

A statesman and intellectual of the 19th century who elaborated an original approach to the question of reformism within the house of Islam. His significant work titled *Aqwām al-Masālik fi Ma'rifat Ahwal al-Mamālik* (*The Surest Path to Knowledge concerning the Conditions of Countries/Regions*) dealt with Islam, modernism and the West.



Aisha Abd al-Rahman (1913–1998)

EGYPT

She was an Egyptian writer also known as Bint al-Shati, best known as a professor of Arabic language and literature and Quranic studies. Bint al-Shati wrote more than sixty books on Arabic literature. Among the known publications are *New Values in Arabic Literature* (1961), *Contemporary Arab Women Poets* (1963), and *The Mother of the Prophet* (1966).



Ahmadu Bamba (1853–1927)

SENEGAL

The Senegalese founder of the Muridiyya order who was trained in the Qadiriyya order. As a result of his anti-French revolts, he was exiled to Gabon and Mauritania. His written works include *Jawharu-n-nafis* (*The Precious Jewel*) and *Mawāhibul quddūs* (*The Gifts of the Holy Lord*).



Sokhna Magat Diop (1917–2003)

SENEGAL

A Senegalese leader who headed the Mouride community, of which her father had been the leader. He appointed her head of one section in 1943, having no male heirs, and due to her abilities. A work produced by Christian Coulon and Odile Reveyrand titled *L'Islam au féminin: Sokhna Magat Diop, cheikh de la confrérie mouride* provides a record of her work in the Mouride community.



Uways Al Barawi (1847–1909)

SOMALIA

This Qadiriyya Somali scholar is credited for having contributed to the pan-Islam revivalism in 19th century across East Africa. He was part of a network that included the Ottoman and Zanzibari Caliphate. Part of the shaykh's legacy was the formation of the Uwaysiyya order which was not as rigorous as other orders. He compiled an anthology of poems titled *Majumu'a Qasa'id fi Madh Sayyid Al-Anbiya* (*A Collection of Qasidas in praise of the Master of the Prophets*).



Shaykha Maimouna al-Kabir (1875–1959)

NIGERIA

She was the daughter of Shaykh Ahmad Bamba and became a leading authority on Qur'an and Hadith. She wrote approximately twenty mushafs from memory and was a committed advocate for women's education. Part of her legacy is the establishment of several schools for girls.



Sitti 'Alawiyya al-Mirgāni (1892–1940)

ETHIOPIA / ERITREA

An Ethiopian scholar and representative of a well-established transnational Hatmiyya Sufi order in the Red Sea region. She was one of the respected itinerant teachers in that region. Sylvia Bruzzi wrote an insightful text on Sitti, entitled *Islam and Gender in Northeast Africa: Sitti 'Alawiyya – Uncrowned Queen*. Photo: Courtesy Dr Silvia Bruzzi



Shaykh Nāsir Muhammad Umar Kabara (1924–1996)

NIGERIA

A Nigerian scholar of Islam and philosopher who was also the founder and a prominent leader of Darul Qadiriyya in Nigeria's Kano State. He was a former leader of the Qadiriyya order in West Africa. Shaykh Kabara wrote over 100 works of which *Alfiyyah al-Sira* and *Azhar al-Hadiqa* are biographies.



Al Amin bin Ali Mazrui (1891–1947)

KENYA

He was an East African scholar who produced several works on Islamic studies. He was a writer, an editor, a critic of Swahili and Arabic poetry and a theologian. He was also a social reformer as well as a journalist. This multi-faceted figure was the father of the famous Prof Ali Mazrui.



Shehu Usman dan Fodio (1754–1817)

NIGERIA

A Fulani scholar who was a religious teacher as well as a philosopher-cum-revolutionary. Besides having founded the Sokoto Caliphate and referred to as the Amir al Mu'minin in 1803, he wrote several manuscripts, including *Tanbih al-Ikhwan 'Ala Away al-Sudan* (*Concerning the Government of Our Country and Neighboring Countries in Sudan*).



Nana Asma'u (1793–1865)

NIGERIA/CHAD/CAMEROON

She was the daughter of Shehu Usman dan Fodio and sister of Muhammad Bello, the first and second ruler of the Sokoto Caliphate. Apart from making scholarly input and being an active educationist, she was a respected poet and composed *Wakar Gewaye* (*The Song of Wandering*) which captured her experiences.



Shaykh Ismail Ganief Edwards (1907–1958)

SOUTH AFRICA

This Cape Town-born and Al Azhar-trained scholar may be described as a reformer. He produced several texts on Islam in Afrikaans, using Arabic script. One of his publications is *Hidayat al-Talibin fi Fiqh al-Din*.



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