

# Islam in Africa in Question

*History, Trends, Emerging Perspectives*

**International Conference**

**June 3-5, 2026**



**Organizers:**

**Agnieszka KEDZIERSKA-MANZON (EPHE-PSL, IMAF)**

**Marie MIRAN-GUYON (EHESS, IMAF)**

**Benjamin F. SOARES (University of Florida)**

**Zachary WRIGHT (Northwestern University in Qatar, ISITA)**



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Since the early 2000s, the humanities and social sciences have played a major role in advancing the study of Islam and Muslim societies in Africa, both north and south of the Sahara. Increasingly, the field of Islamic Africa has benefited from interdisciplinary dialogue between historians, anthropologists, archeologists, art historians, political scientists, sociologists, and religious studies scholars.

This international conference has two major objectives. The first aims to revisit and renew historical approaches. Since 2000, notable attempts to synthesize the history of Islam and Muslim societies in Africa include Levtzion & Powell's *History of Islam in Africa* and Robinson's *Muslim Societies in African History*. One can also point to important case studies on early modern and modern Africa (too numerous to cite), as well as scholarship documenting and analyzing Africa's Islamic textual traditions (e.g., John Hunwick's oeuvre, Ousmane Kane, etc.). More recently, many scholars have recognized the need for a greater synthesis that will show the state of the field and the achievements of this now established subfield. In the past decade, Loimeier's *Muslim Societies in Africa* and two "handbooks" (Palgrave & Routledge) have appeared.

Although valuable for the field's consolidation, the current historical juncture is ripe for a more general authoritative reference work about the history of Islam in Africa. The participants in the first panels of the conference will reflect critically on previous scholarship and attempts at synthesis in order to lay the ground for a new reference work on the topic that would make it accessible to broader audiences and ensure such scholarship demands and commands attention. They will address thematic areas, including law/jurisprudence, gender, politics, religious encounters, Sufism, etc. in the early modern and modern periods throughout Africa.

The second objective of the conference is to engage with the wide-ranging multidisciplinary transformations in the field and to reflect on its innovative directions and future prospects. It welcomes strategies to map and expand the influence of the "Islamic Africa" field into related fields of Islamic studies, the study of African religions, Indian Ocean studies, and Black studies. These open and critical reflections are intended, in part, to encourage discussion about the future of specialized publishing in the field—notably *Islamic Africa* and *Islam et Sociétés au sud du Sahara*, both longstanding journals that have marked the field and which are currently experiencing renewal. The conference not only seeks to spark ideas for possible cooperation between these journals and other publishing ventures, but also to discuss future research collaborations between appropriate institutes.

Designed as an informal gathering, participants in the second half of the conference will be invited to give a brief oral presentation on their latest research or area of specialization, as well as their perspectives on the broader issues at stake, followed by extended discussion. Possible guiding questions include: How might social science, historical, and philological approaches be more productively related to one another? To what extent should area studies, global perspectives, or comparative religions' approaches be emphasized—or not? What kind of shared research agenda might be envisioned for the future in a plural and inclusive way?

The organizers expect that participants will arrive at some preliminary proposals concerning the editorial management and intellectual development of both journals, including potential special issue proposals, as well as broader shared research initiatives.

# Wednesday, June 3, 2026



EPHE, Sorbonne, 17 rue de la Sorbonne  
Room Delamare (2<sup>nd</sup> floor, staircase E)

**14:00-14:30**

## Opening & Welcome

**Agnès Kedzierska Manzon** (EPHE-PSL)

**Marie Miran-Guyon** (EHESS-IMAF)

**Benjamin Soares** (University of Florida)

**Zachary Wright** (ISITA & Northwestern University in Qatar)

**14:30-18:00**

## History of Islam & Muslim Societies in Africa, I

**Chair: Agnès Kedzierska Manzon** (EPHE-PSL)

*Interrelations among Islam and Traditional Religions in West Africa: Twelve Hundred Years of History*  
**Tal Tamari** (CNRS)

*L'aš'arism dans l'espace mauritanien*  
**Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh** (University of Lorraine)

*Non-Muslim Africans ("Pagans") in Islamic Sources: Between Literacy and Orality, Arabic and Vernacular Languages*  
**Francesco Zappa** (University of Rome, La Sapienza)

## Coffee break

*Rethinking Islamic Intellectual Heritage in Africa through Women's Contributions*  
**Britta Frede** (University of Bayreuth)

*Fighting for Social Respectability: Jihad, Memories of Slavery and Social Transformations in Central Mali*  
**Ibrahim Poudiougou** (Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU))

*The History of Islam in the Horn of Africa during the Medieval Period Reconsidered*  
**Amélie Chekroun** (IREMAM, Aix-Marseille)

**Thursday, June 4, 2026**



EPHE, INHA, 2 rue Vivienne  
Amphitheater (basement)

**10:00-13:00**

**History of Islam & Muslim Societies in Africa, II**

**Chair: Benjamin Soares** (University of Florida)

*Historiographical Reboot: The Islamization of West Africa during the Medieval Period (8th-11th Centuries)*

**Hadrien Collet** (IREMAM, Aix-Marseille)

*La pensée juridique de Cheikh Moussa Kamara revisitée*

**Seydi Diamil Niane** (IFAN, Dakar)

**Coffee break**

*Islamic Authority, Gender, and Land Rights in Mali*

**Asmao Diallo** (University of Bayreuth)

*Constructing Knowledge from "Elsewhere": Japanese Scholars on Islam and Muslim Societies in West Africa*

**Kae Amo** (Kyoto University)

**13:00-14:00**

**Lunch Break**

**14:00-18:00**

**Workshop: Current State & Future Directions of the Field, I**

**Chair: Marie Miran-Guyon** (EHESS-IMAF)

**Oludamini Ogunnaike** (University of Virginia)

**Farid El Asri** (Sciences Po Rabat)

**Coffee break**

**Cheikh El Hadj Abdoulaye Niang** (IFAN, Dakar)

**Dahlia El-Zein** (Northwestern University in Qatar)

# Friday, June 5, 2026

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EPHE, EHESS, 54 boulevard Raspail  
Room 1 (basement)

**10:00-13:00**

## **Workshop: Current State & Future Directions of the Field, II**

**Chair: Rebecca Shereikis** (ISITA, Northwestern University)

**Mauro Nobili** (University of Illinois)

**Anouk Cohen** (Centre Jacques Berque, Rabat) & **Mahamet Timera**  
(University of Paris Cité)

### **Coffee break**

**Rahmane Idrissa** (African Studies Centre, Leiden & Global Studies  
Institute, Sharjah)

**Erin Pettigrew** (New York University Abu Dhabi)

**13:00-14:00**

### **Lunch Break**

**14:00-16:00**

### **Concluding Roundtable**

**Chairs: Benjamin Soares** (University of Florida)

**Zachary Wright** (ISITA & Northwestern University in Qatar)

**Souleymane Bachir Diagne** (Columbia University)

**Felicitas Becker** (Ghent University)

**Brahim Afrit** (Tulane University)

**16:00**

### **Conference Closing**

Informal discussions may continue until 18:00h.

# VENUE

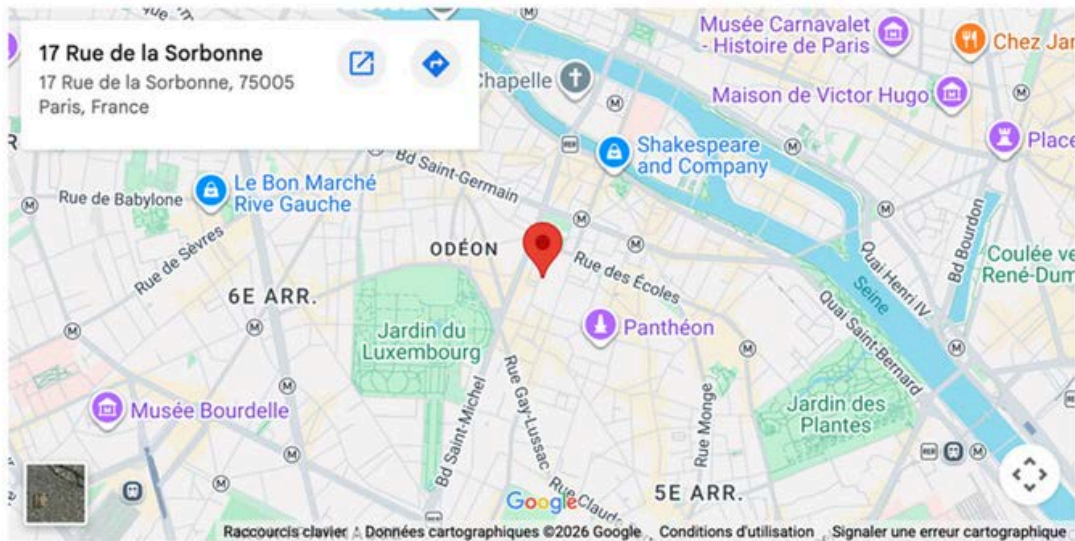
Day 1, Wednesday, June 3, 2026

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## École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE), Sorbonne

17 rue de la Sorbonne, 75005 Paris

Room Delamare (2<sup>nd</sup> floor, staircase E)



### Public Transport

- Métro 10 (Station « Cluny-La Sorbonne »)
- Métro 4 (Station « Odéon »)
- Métro 10 (Station « Maubert-Mutualité »)
- RER (Station « Luxembourg » ou « Saint-Michel Notre-Dame »)
- Bus 24, 63, 75, 86...

# VENUE

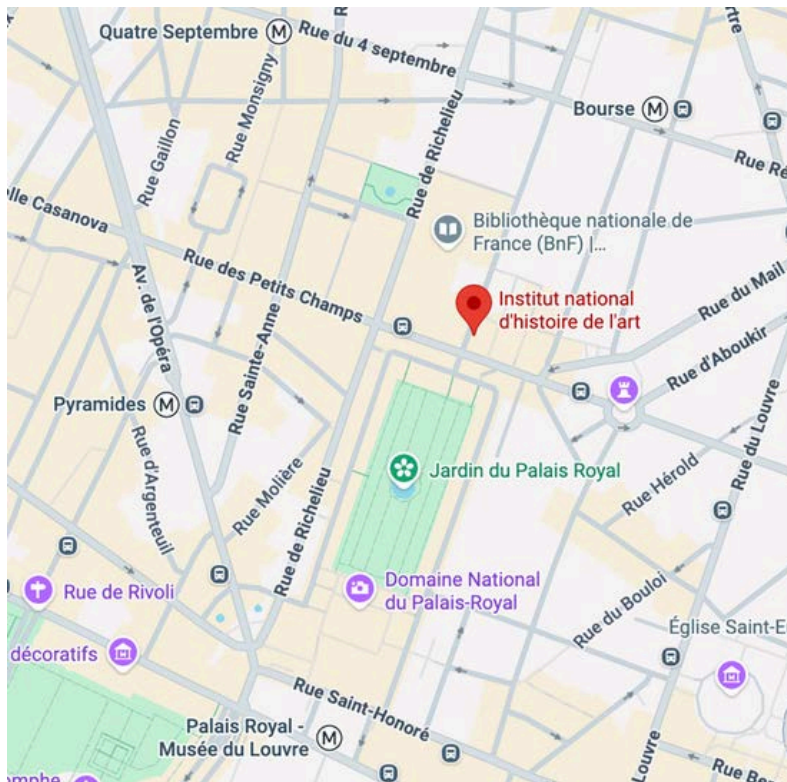
Day 2, Thursday, June 4, 2026

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## École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE), Institut national d'histoire de l'art (INHA)

2 rue Vivienne 75002 Paris

Amphitheater (basement)



### Public Transport

- Métro 1 and 7 (Station « Palais-Royal-Musée du Louvre »)
- Métro 3 (Station « Bourse »)
- Métro 7 and 14 (Station « Pyramides »)
- Bus : 29 (Stations « Bibliothèque nationale », « Mairie du 2<sup>e</sup> » or « Victoires »)
- Bus 39 (Station « Sainte-Anne-Petits-Champs »)

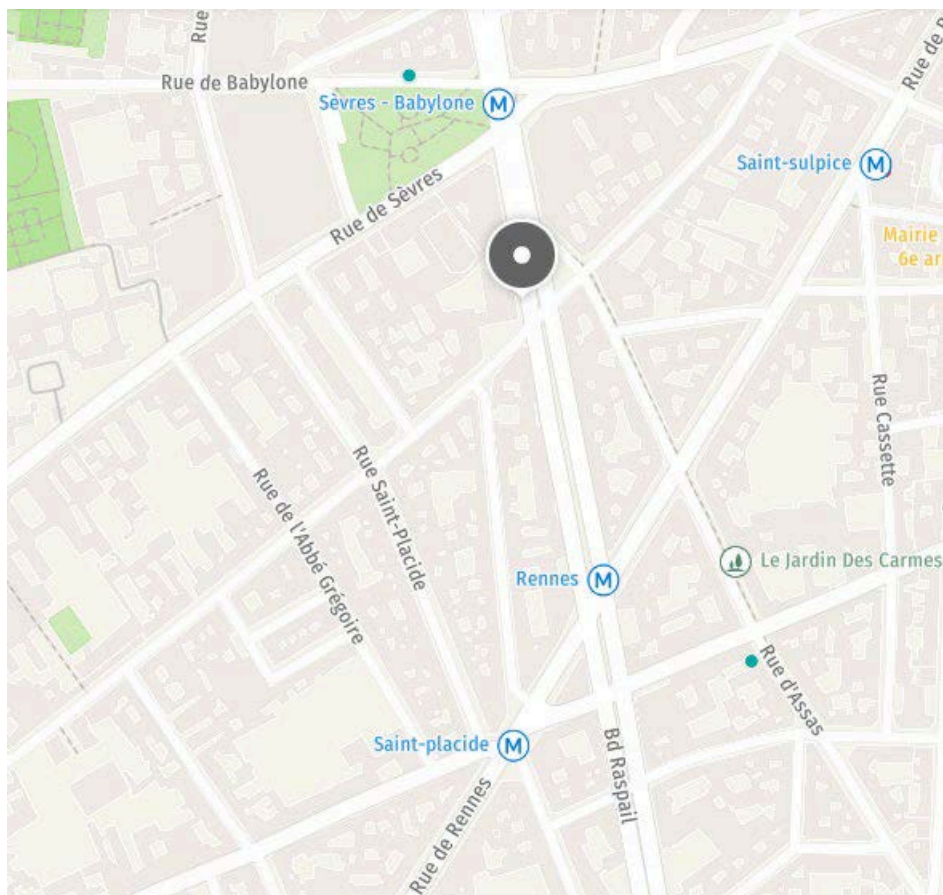
# VENUE

Day 3, Friday, June 5, 2026

## École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE), École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS)

54 boulevard Raspail 75006 Paris

Room 1 (basement)



### Public Transport

- Métro 4 (Stations « Saint-Sulpice or Saint-Placide »)
- Métro 10 (Station « Sèvres Babylone »)
- Métro 12 (Station « Sèvres Babylone »)
- Bus (Station « Sèvres Babylone »): 63, 68, 70, 83, 84, 86 et 94

## PARTNERS

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Centre Jacques-Berque (Rabat)

École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS)

École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE)

Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa (ISITA, Northwestern University)

Institut d'études de l'Islam et des sociétés du monde musulman (IISMM)

Institut français d'islamologie (IFI)

Institut des mondes africains (IMAF)

Paris Sciences & Lettres (PSL)

Universiteit Gent