



Islamic Scholarship in West Africa: A Comparative Historical Exploration

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Abstract

Islamic scholarship has played a significant role in West African history, particularly in South Africa where it influenced cultural, intellectual, and educational development. A comparative historical analysis will be employed using archival research, secondary sources, and interviews with contemporary scholars and historians. Two prominent schools of Islamic scholarship emerged in Cape Town and Durban, each with distinct thematic emphases: legal studies in Cape Town and religious education in Durban. The proportion of female scholars was notably higher in the Durban region. The findings suggest that while both regions have contributed to South African Islamic scholarship, they differ significantly in focus areas and gender representation. Further comparative research should include a broader geographical scope to understand regional variations better.

Keywords: *Sub-Saharan, Sufism, historiography, ethnohistory, syncretism, diaspora, intellectual history*

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