**Panel Title: The Production and Contestation of Muslim Institutions in Contemporary Africa**

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**Panelists:**
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**Discussant:**  Robert Launay, Northwestern University (rgl201@northwestern.edu)

**Panel Abstract**

Islamic religious infrastructure has had – and continues to have – great importance for processes of socialization and the production and maintenance of Muslim identities in Africa. Changes during the post-colonial period have, however, affected Muslim institutions, causing structural rearrangements and new modalities to emerge. Much of this is produced by intra-religious discourses, but is also related to broader socio-political developments. This panel will investigate such changes, discussing a range of different Muslim institutions across the African continent. Hadiza K. Abdulrahman will explore changes in the mode of Islamic education in Nigeria, pointing to how different voices are engaged in debates about the meaning of education for the construction of contemporary religious identity. S. A. Chembea examines the emerging problems related to the management of *waqf* properties in a Kenyan context, focusing on the relationship between local Muslim communities and the state – and how a more active state has created tensions among local Muslims. Frédérick Madore similarly addresses the question of the role of the state as a religious actor – relating this to the organization of *hajj* in contemporary Ivory Coast. His paper demonstrates how uneven state-policies have augmented intra-religious discussions about the *hajj* – and how those discussions intersect with competition over economic and religious resources. Jep Stockmans examines the growth of mosques in Addis Ababa, pointing to how this has intensified intra-religious tensions. His paper focuses on religious infrastructure in a concrete and physical manner, relating this to the question of religion and materiality in general, and to local religious actors' perceptions of the other's physical presence in particular.

**Paper Abstracts**

**Hadiza Kere Abdulrahman**
*Contested Representations of Northern Nigeria's Qur'anic Schools and Almajirai*

Almajiranci, Islamic-based system of education in Northern Nigeria, involves boys as young as seven being sent off to study and memorize the Qur'an under the tutelage of a Malam. It is currently a topic of great debate in Nigerian society as researchers and the media have linked Almajiranci and Almajirai to everything from religious uprisings to Boko Haram and political unrests. Early indications from my phenomenological study of the products of Almajiranci have shown that the narratives employed above are contradictory to the narratives that the past Almajirai create and utilize for themselves. The critical and negative representations of Almajiranci are at odds with the ones they have of themselves. There is therefore a tension between the dominant

narratives and the experiences of these young men, who see the value of Almajiranci and whose identities—as humans and as Muslims—have been shaped by the system. This research gives voice to the Almajirai, who are centrally involved in the construction, contestation and transformation of meaning in the system. The misrepresentation of the Northern Nigerian Almajiri's identity and its broader political and social significance is at the heart of this research, which opens up cross-disciplinary inquiry on religion, education and identity.

### S. A. Chembea
### *Marginalization Narratives in the Institution of Waqf: Voices from Kenya's Coast*

Consecrated *waqf* properties (religious endowments) in Islam are expected among other obligations to help alleviate the suffering of designated beneficiaries including the progeny of the dedicator in case of *waqf dhurri* (posterity *waqf*) as well as a multitude of other socio-cultural endeavors in the case of *waqf lillahi* (philanthropic *waqf*) not to mention the spiritual grace that befalls the endower. The realization of the intentions of the endower in either case, however, solely depends on the personnel or institution entrusted with the task of *mutawalliship* (management). This task becomes even more daunting in the environment of Muslim minorities in non-Muslim societies where *mutawallis* are appointed by a state keen to maintain grip on the institution of *waqf* ostensibly to control the economical-political life of the minority group. This situation could not be demonstrated better than in Kenya where profound mistrust by beneficiaries of *waqf* against a state appointed body of managers continues to widen the rift not only between the state and the minority religious group but also amongst Muslims themselves who feel marginalized and favored in equal measure in the affairs of the state body and execution of the expected obligations of *waqf* as a whole.

### Frédérick Madore
### *The Organization of the Hajj and the State: Cohesion and Rivalries within the Muslim Community of Cote d'Ivoire (1978-2010)*

The importance of the *hajj* for Muslims and the considerable sums of money devoted to it arouse the envy of both religious and political actors. Thus, it is not surprising that since independence many West African states have often been at the center of organizing the Muslim pilgrimage. In this regard, the case of Côte d'Ivoire is very interesting since the state recognized the Association Musulmane pour l'Organisation du Pèlerinage as the first official pilgrimage organizing association of the country in 1978. The aim of this communication is twofold. On the one hand, it shows how the organization of the *hajj* has been a vector of unity for Ivorian Islam while fostering intense rivalries between several associations and Muslim leaders struggling for economic, religious and symbolic resources. On the other hand, the supposedly secular state has played a murky role in this business. The different Ivoirian political regimes from 1978 to 2010 have alternated between a policy of engagement and withdrawal. These strategies have allowed the ruling party to use patronage as an instrument to ensure the loyalty of some Muslim elites and to reduce the influence of other organizations and leaders suspected of being close to the opposition.

**Jep Stockmans**
*The Material Aspects of Inter-Religious Conflict: Muslim Minorities Challenging Orthodox Christian Spatial Dominance*

Orthodox Christianity has a long history as the state religion in Ethiopia and today dominates the Addis Ababa cityscape. Ethiopian Muslims have endured a long history of discrimination and alienation but have since 1991 been increasingly recognized by the state. Although Muslims have consequently carved out public space to create their own perceived sacred spaces in the city, this has often been a struggle. The growing presence of Islam in the public sphere challenges Christian presence, generates active competition over public space, and has in some cases resulted in physical violence. In this paper I detail interreligious conflicts over public space in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, focusing on the issue of constructing mosques and churches, and examining broader questions about the interrelationship of religion and materiality. Based on ethnographic research performed in Addis Ababa during 2014, the paper will put forward suggestions for how we might better understand the contest for space in contemporary Ethiopia. I will examine the questions such as what importance do Christians and Muslims attach to physical presence of their religious infrastructure, how these communities view the others' physical presence, and why this is such a contentious issue.