DECOLONIZING AFRICAN ISLAMIC HISTORIOGRAPHY: ITS CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

BY

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Abstract

This paper attempts to highlight on the decolonization of African Historiography on Islamic perspective. It aimed to challenge the dominant Eurocentric western views and promote a more balanced understanding of African Islamic Historiography and culture. The study scrutinizes the historical context of African Islamic historiography and analyzes the European intrusion into Islamic Historiography. It also explores the roles of Muslim historians in developing and maintaining sound historical narratives written by native African scholars. The research adopted a qualitative method, which includes descriptive, historical and analytical approaches. It found out that, the Glorious Qur'an and Sunnah provide divine legitimacy for moral and historical truth in narrative construction. Therefore, Ajami literature mirrors original Islamic Historiographies, often ignored and misrepresented in the Western/colonial academic circles. Moreover, decolonizing African Historiography needs to adopt a multidisciplinary approach, this means to study African History, particularly Islamic History and its culture through the divine sources and literature interpreted by the indigenous works of Muslim scholars in the region. It also explores that Islamic Historiography in Africa preexisted colonialism and must be recognized as an authentic intellectual tradition. The paper concludes that decolonizing African historiography is a ladder towards promoting a more inclusive and equitable representations of African histories and culture. Finally, it recommends the integration of Afrocentric historical narratives into African History curricula and research as long as they met the criteria for Islamic principles, so that national, Ministries of education and universities can integrate African-centered material, oral sources and indigenous knowledge into history curricula.

Keywords: *Islam, Historiography, Africa, Decolonizing and Challenges*

Introduction

Historiography, the study of historical writing and methods, has long been shaped by dominant epistemological paradigms rooted in European Enlightenment thought. In the African context, the colonial enterprise significantly restructured knowledge systems by devaluing indigenous intellectual traditions, including Islamic historiography and privileging European archives and documentation methods. This epistemic reconfiguration marginalized not only oral traditions but also the rich corpus of Arabic and *Ajami* manuscripts produced by African Muslim scholars across centuries (Mazrui, 2005; Nobili, 2020). The colonial state, through educational and archival institutions, institutionalized a Eurocentric historical narrative that undermined the legitimacy of Islamic sources and methodologies. As a result, the historiography of Islam in Africa became filtered through foreign lenses, which often portrayed African Muslim societies as passive recipients of Islam, rather than dynamic agents in shaping Islamic thought and civilization.

Islamic historiography in Africa has deep roots, particularly in West Africa, where cities like Timbuktu, Kano, Katsina, Agadez, and Sokoto served as intellectual hubs for centuries. Scholars in these centers produced thousands of manuscripts covering jurisprudence (fiqh), theology (ʿ*aqīdah*), biography (*sīrah*), governance (*siyāsah*), astronomy and more (Hunwick, 1995; Robinson, 2004). The works of prominent scholars like Aḥmad Bābā al-Timbuktī, ʿUthmān dan Fodio and *Sheikh* Ibrāhīm Niasse represent a sophisticated intellectual tradition that predates and outlives colonial impositions. These works were not only religious treatises but also historical commentaries reflecting African agency, memory and identity. Despite this, they were systematically excluded from colonial archival projects and academic discourse, which privileged European documentary methods and often characterized Islam in Africa as peripheral or derivative (Loimeier, 2013).

The call for decolonizing African Islamic historiography is part of a broader intellectual movement aimed at reclaiming African voices, epistemologies and historical narratives. Decolonization in this context entails challenging the epistemic dominance of Western methodologies,

reintegrating indigenous Islamic sources into mainstream academic discourse and legitimizing oral traditions and manuscript cultures as valid sources of historical knowledge (Mudimbe, 1988; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). It also involves re-evaluating the disciplinary boundaries between history, religion and literature to better capture the complex interplay of belief, memory and identity in Islamic African societies. Furthermore, the contemporary landscape offers new opportunities for such a project. Advances in digital humanities, renewed interest in manuscript preservation, and the rise of indigenous academic movements create a conducive environment for challenging entrenched epistemic structures. However, the decolonization process is fraught with challenges, including lack of access to manuscripts, language barriers, limited institutional support and persistent academic gatekeeping that privileges Euro-American theoretical frameworks. This article aims to examine the historical development of African Islamic historiography, explore the impact of colonialism on its evolution and highlight both the challenges and opportunities of decolonizing the field today. It concludes with a roadmap for future directions, advocating for methodological pluralism, digital scholarship and the empowerment of African Muslim scholars in rearticulating their own histories.

Background to the Study of African Islamic Historiography

I. Concept of Islamic Historiography

According to Hasan Mas'ud, Islamic History is a record of the impact of Islam on Muslims and their environments. It seeks to study how Islam, through the course of history, has shaped the destiny of the people who believed in Islam. The history of Islam illustrates how Muslims were inspired to action, strengthened by Islamic teachings, and benefited from the exemplary lifestyles and lessons of earlier pious generations Hassan M. (1982).

The relationship between history and historiography is both interconnected and interdependent. Although they are distinct concepts, history being the actual record of past events and historiography the writing and interpretation of history, they share key similarities that shape the way scholars understand and reconstruct the past. One essential similarity lies in

their mutual concern with understanding the past. Both history and historiography are rooted in the investigation of past human experiences. History provides raw material events, figures and developments while historiography offers the analytical framework through which these elements are interpreted and structured. As Georg G. Iggers (2005) notes, "Historiography is not merely a record of events, but an intellectual activity that shapes the way we perceive and remember the past". Islamic historiography refers to the interpretation of history from an Islamic perspective. It places Almighty Allah at the center of history. In line with the above, Allah (SWT) says:

أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ كَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَأَثَارُوا الْأَرْضَ وَعَمَرُوهَا أَكْثَرَ مِمَّا عَمَرُوهَا وَجَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ (٩)

> Do they not travel in the land and see what the end of those before them was? They were superior to them in strength and they tilled the earth and populated it in greater numbers than these (pagans) have done and there came to them their Messengers with clear proofs. Surely, Allah wronged them not, but they used to wrong themselves (*Surah Ar-Rum*: 30:9).

The above verse shows justice and the fair decision taken by Almighty Allah upon every community in accordance with their evils, since they were admonished to adhere with Allah's laws and they refused because of their disbelief and ignorance. He (SWT) also further says with regards to history as a means of moral instruction:

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَى وَلَكِنْ تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (١١١)

> Indeed, in their stories, there is a lesson for men of understanding. It (the Qur'an) is not a forged statement but a confirmation of the Allâh's existing Books [the Taurât (Torah), the Injeel (Gospel) and other Scriptures of Allâh] and a detailed explanation of everything and a guide and a Mercy for the people who believe. (SuratulYusuf :12: 11).

However, Imam Al-Ghazali 2001) b.1058 AD d.1111 in *Ihya' Ulum ad-Din* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences) notes that history strengthens faith by showing how Allah's promises to the righteous are fulfilled, encouraging believers to remain steadfast in their trials. The above verse one may come to realizes that to uphold truth reflected in Islamic historiography integrates divine revelation, prophetic tradition and moral instruction "history as lesson" It emphasizes sacred meaning and ethical truth in narration.

II. Decolonization in Islam

This is the effort to clearing the Muslims' mind from colonial narratives and reconnecting them with divine sources of knowledge. Iqbal Muhammad (2013) asserted that" The reconstruction of religious thought in Islam" begins with reawakening the Muslim intellectual spirit.

III. Pre- Colonial

The Kanem Borno Empire and Sokoto Caliphate scholars have written and documented various books which includes comprehensive histories, biographies and Geographies that gave details on African Muslim societies. Meanwhile, non-African historians have made their contributions on the gesture such as, Abdullahi Smith, John Ellis Lavers, Murry Last and Hiskett Mervyn. Hiskett, M. (1984) in his book "The Development of Islam in West African" asserted that, Ajami writings in Hausa, Fulfulde and Kanuri languages reflects a mixture of Arabic- Islamic scholarship with African identity.

IV. Colonial

Despite the arrival of Islam into Africa in the seventh century Clarke, B. Peter: (1982) and the Savannah region of West Africa in the eighth century A.D., which was the date from which the written History of West Africa began, it has long been speculated by Europeans that Africa had no History due to the unavailability of European document evidence. According to Trevor- Roper (1965), 'There is only the History of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness…. He later referred to Africa as "unscientific "or 'unhistoric' .Therefore, George Hegel, (2001) in his book, titled**:** "Philosophy of History" uttered the following statement. "At this point we have to leave Africa … for it is no historical part of the world; it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movement in it, that is, in

its northern part, it belongs to the Asiatic or European world". Various misconceptions and misinterpretations by Europeans on the concept of the *Jihad*, particularly the nineteenth century *Jihad* in West Africa and neglected its theme, were found through their writings.

Similarly, the status of oral traditions as the source of History or otherwise became another problem, which led to European intrusion against African History. Nigeria was also among the target areas. Therefore, from the eighth up to the twentieth century, efforts were made on various responses by early and contemporary Muslim historians against European intrusion into Islamic History in Nigeria. This needs to be reviewed through the writings of contemporary Muslim European historians because of the gap and existing approaches used in the 21st century which will be cross-examined.

European Intrusion in the Writings and Study of African Islamic Historiography:

Post-Colonial

I. Misrepresentation of Islamic Historical Facts

Most of the Islamic intellectual legacies often ignored by modern academic historians. For instance, the Qur'anic meanings Prophetic biographies and Islamic jurisprudence are rarely referenced in African historical studies. Thus, also often omit Islamic legal, spiritual and scholarly sources

II. Language Barriers and Deficiency to Comprehend Concepts

Secular terminology often fails to capture key Islamic concepts such as *barakah* (blessings) and *niyyah* (intention), because Western academic language lacks the spiritual and metaphysical dimensions found in Islamic historiography. This is because the mentioned concepts have no equivalents in secular terminology, which distorts Muslim Histories.

III. Disintegration of Historical Memory of Muslim

Lack of integration between Islamic education (*madãris*) and secular education has produced disjointed historical consciousness among African Muslims. Sheikh Uthman ibn Fodio (1984) warned, "A nation without history becomes a nation without direction. Therefore, Colonial curricula suppressed integration of Qur'anic and secular education, weakening historical continuity.

African Historiography Prior to the European Imperialism: Strengths and Weaknesses

Recent scholarship has re-emphasized the sophistication of African historiography before European imperialism. Scholars highlight how oral traditions were not only mnemonic devices but also dynamic frameworks for collective memory and identity formation (Boahen, 2019). They functioned as community archives that encoded political legitimacy, cosmology, and social ethics (Osborn, 2020).

Contemporary research also underscores the intellectual vibrancy of Islamic centers such as Timbuktu and Kano, where scholars engaged in jurisprudence, theology, and historiography (Brenner, 2016). The discovery and digitization of thousands of *Ajami* manuscripts has further revealed the depth of African written traditions, challenging colonial claims of a "preliterate" Africa (Bondarev, 2018).

However, weaknesses remain evident in the pre-colonial historiographical framework. Oral traditions, while rich, were subject to contestation and fluidity, requiring critical methods of triangulation (Osborn, 2020). Similarly, manuscript cultures, although extensive, were often tied to elite scholars, limiting broader accessibility. These limitations underscore why a decolonial historiography must carefully balance oral, written and archaeological sources.

Pioneers of Afrocentric Historians and their Roles in Debunking Eurocentric Views

In the twenty-first century, Afrocentric historiography continues to expand its scope, building on the pioneering efforts of *Sheikh* Anta Diop, Jacob Ajayi, and others. Recent works argue that Afrocentric frameworks are not merely about correcting Eurocentric distortions but also about re-centering Africa in global intellectual history (Asante, 2017). Contemporary historians emphasize the global resonance of Afrocentric thought. Falola (2022) argues that Afrocentricity provides tools for reconstructing African agency in world history, while Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2018) highlights the decolonization of knowledge through African languages. Modern Afrocentric historians have moved beyond nationalist narratives to embrace intersectional perspectives-

addressing issues of gender, class and diaspora within African historiography (Adi, 2018).

Thus, the pioneering role of Afrocentric historians continued in contemporary debates, ensuring that Africa is understood as a subject of history rather than an object of colonial narratives.

Contribution of Muslim Scholars to the Islamic Historiography in Africa

The African Muslim historians play vital roles in developing and maintaining African heritage and Culture as Mazrui (2006) posit what implies a decolonization that "Islamization of knowledge is not merely Islamizing what others have said, but rethinking knowledge with the Qur'an and *Sunnah* as paradigms."

I. Muslim Scholars

Sheikh Uthman ibn Fodio is one of the African Muslim revivalists (1754–1817), who is seen as both a political and scholarly figure, produced historical, theological and legal texts, such as *Bayan Wujub al-Hijra* and *Tazyin al-Waraqat*, which have become foundational to the study of Islamic movements in West Africa, particularly in Northern Nigeria. These texts are frequently employed by historians, including those of his generation and contemporary, to trace the development of Islamic governance and reform. This study interrogates the historiographical use of Ibn Fodio's legacy and explore how his contributions are framed differently across various scholarly traditions. (Hiskett 1973).

Another major figure in the modernization of Arabic and Islamic education in Nigeria, *Sheikh* Adam Abdullah al-Ilory emphasized historical consciousness alongside religious instruction. His legacy, particularly through his *Markaz* in Agege, demonstrates a Muslim scholarly tradition that actively engages in historical documentation and reform. Oloyede (2003). On the other hand, Sheikh Ibrahim Niasse (1900–1975), a Senegalese and a major leader of the *Tijaniyyah* sufi order, left behind a vast corpus of Arabic texts that offered a narrative to African Islamic historiography. His writings according to Ware (2014) he mentioned that, it reflected a *Sufi* intellectual tradition that has shaped Islamic identity in the region, providing a necessary balance to narratives that misrepresented Sufism in favor of reformist

movements. Furthermore, Muhammad Tukur Bature, a Sokoto-based Islamic historian, played an important role in preserving local Islamic manuscripts and offering indigenous perspectives on precolonial governance. His archival and historiographical efforts challenge dominant Eurocentric interpretations and support the research's objective of recovering misrepresented Muslim voices in historical writing, (Last 1992).

Nevertheless, Muhammad al-Kanemi the scholar-ruler of Borno, engaged in extensive theological correspondence with the Sokoto leadership, particularly with *Sheikh* Uthman ibn Fodio and his successors. His writings offered insight into intra-Muslim debates on orthodoxy and political legitimacy, serving as primary sources that have been selectively interpreted by both Smith and Lavers (Last 1967). Collectively, these Muslim scholars provide diverse and original perspectives that expand the historiographical landscape. Their contributions are essential for a holistic understanding of Islamic History, particularly in Northern Nigeria and West Africa in general.

II. The Glorious Qur'an as a Historical Source

Recent scholarship emphasizes how African Muslim historians continue to use the Qur'an as a hermeneutical tool for historical writing. (Abdallah, 2016) stressed that the Qur'an's focus on memory and moral lessons remains central to framing African Muslim historiography in a way that integrates faith and history.

III. The Influence of Indigenous Scholarship and *Ajami* Manuscripts

Digitization projects such as the Mali Magic initiative by Google Arts & Culture and scholarly projects led by Bondarev (2018) and Kane (2019) are making *Ajami* manuscripts accessible to a global audience. These efforts show the enduring significance of African Muslim historians in preserving indigenous heritage. They also illustrate the adaptability of *Ajami* scholarship to modern archival and research methods.

IV. Revisit and Revival of the Islamic Scholarly Tradition

The revival of Islamic scholarly traditions is visible in both academic and community initiatives. Ware (2019) demonstrates how Qur'anic schools continue to shape collective memory and historical consciousness in West Africa. Contemporary debates now emphasize not only preserving manuscripts but also revitalizing the pedagogy of Islamic knowledge in

African contexts (Ahmed, 2021). This revival ensures that African Muslim historiography remains a living tradition rather than a static relic of the past.

Challenges in Decolonizing African Islamic Historiography

Despite renewed efforts to reclaim African historical voices, significant challenges remain in the process of decolonizing African Islamic historiography that include, but are not limited to the following:

First, archival accessibility is a major obstacle. Thousands of *Ajami* manuscripts and Islamic scholarly texts remain uncatalogued or inaccessible due to poor preservation, lack of funding and political instability in regions like Mali and northern Nigeria (Bondarev, 2018; Kane, 2019).

Second, linguistic barriers complicate research. Many sources are written in Arabic or African *Ajami* scripts, requiring specialized training that few contemporary historians possess (Osborn, 2020). This limits broader engagement and perpetuates reliance on Eurocentric translations.

Third, epistemological dominance of Eurocentric methods continues to marginalize African ways of knowing. Western historiography often prioritizes written archives over oral traditions, undervaluing the dynamic role of memory and performance in African Muslim historiography (Falola, 2022).

Finally, the politicization of history in postcolonial African states adds complexity. According to (Adi, 2018), competing nationalist, ethnic and religious agendas sometimes distort historical narratives for political purposes. Going by this submission it makes it difficult to construct objective and inclusive decolonial frameworks. Hence, addressing these challenges requires investment in manuscript preservation, training in African Islamic scholarly traditions and methodological pluralism that values oral, written, and archaeological evidence.

Opportunities in Decolonizing African Islamic Historiography

Alongside the challenges, numerous opportunities exist for advancing the decolonization of African Islamic historiography which not limited to the following:

First, digitization projects such as the Timbuktu Manuscripts Project and Mali Magic are making centuries-old *Ajami* and Arabic manuscripts globally accessible, ensuring preservation and wider scholarly engagement

(Jeppie & Diagne, 2008; Google Arts & Culture, 2022). Second, the growth of Afrocentric and decolonial scholarship provides theoretical tools to reinterpret Africa's Islamic intellectual heritage on its own terms. Scholars like Falola (2022) and Asante (2017) stress the importance of centering African voices in global historiography. Third, global collaboration and interdisciplinary research are creating new avenues for rediscovering African Muslim scholarly traditions. Partnerships between African universities, Western institutions and digital humanities initiatives are expanding research capacity and training (Ahmed, 2021). Finally, the rise of African Muslim intellectual revivalism-including renewed interest in Qur'anic schools, Sufi orders (*Turuq assufiyyah)* and *Ajami* literatures - highlights the resilience of Africa's Islamic heritage (Ware, 2019). This revival ensures that decolonization is not merely academic but also lived within African Muslim communities. Together, these opportunities provide a solid foundation for constructing a future-oriented, decolonized African Islamic historiography that is inclusive, global, and authentic.

Future Directions in Decolonizing African Islamic Historiography

The future of decolonizing African Islamic historiography depends on sustaining momentum in research, preservation and intellectual renewal. Several directions appear promising include not limited to the following:

1. **Seeking Knowledge**

The first and foremost Future Directions for decolonizing African Islamic Historiography based on Islamic Principles is seeking knowledge, Allah says:

أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَانِتٌ آنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُو رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ (٩)

Is one who is obedient to Allâh, prostrating himself or standing (in prayer) during the hours of the night, fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the Mercy of his Lord (like one who disbelieves)? Say: "Are those who know equal to those who know not?" It is only men of understanding who will remember (i.e., get a lesson from Allâh's Signs and Verses) (Suratul Zumar :9)

2. **Integrating Oral and Written Traditions**

Future historiography should harmonize Africa's oral traditions with manuscript sources, archaeological data and digital archives. This pluralist methodology will capture the full spectrum of African Muslim historical experiences (Osborn, 2020).

3. Expanding Digital Humanities

Ongoing digitization projects must be scaled up, with African institutions taking leadership roles in preserving and curating their heritage. Advances in artificial intelligence and digital archiving can support translation and wider accessibility of *Ajami* and Arabic manuscripts (Google Arts & Culture, 2022).

4. Training a New Generation of Scholars

Investment in language proficiency training (Arabic and *Ajami* literacy), Islamic studies, and interdisciplinary approaches is critical. Building research capacity within African universities will reduce dependency on Eurocentric scholarship, this is as (Ahmed, 2021) postulates.

5. Global and Interfaith Dialogue

Decolonized African Islamic historiography should engage with global conversations on history, religion and identity. Collaboration with scholars across the Muslim world and beyond can strengthen Africa's intellectual visibility (Falola, 2022).

6. Community-Based Historiography

Finally, the involvement of local Muslim communities-through Qur'anic schools, mosques and cultural organizations-will ensure that historiography remains relevant, accessible and reflective of lived realities (Ware, 2019). In summary, the future lies in blending tradition with innovation: safeguarding Africa's Islamic past while empowering new generations to narrate history with authenticity and global relevance.

Findings

This research found out that Islamic historiography in Africa predates colonialism and must be recognized as an authentic intellectual tradition. The Qur'an and Hadith provide divine legitimacy for moral and historical truth in narrative construction. *Ajami* literature reflects local Islamic historiographies, often ignored in Western colonialized academic circles. Islamic historical writing centers on *tawḥīd (*oneness of Allah), *ʿilm*,

(knowledge/science) and ʿ*adl (Justice and fairness)*, presenting a distinct epistemological alternative to Eurocentrism. It found that colonial educational policies disrupted Islamic knowledge transmission, causing fragmentation in Muslim communities. Therefore, Islamic historiography in Africa is deeply rooted and predates colonial frameworks (illuminated in Timbuktu and Hausaland scholarship). *Ajami* literacies provide written Muslim traditions often ignored by Western colonialized historiography. Islamic epistemology centers *tawḥīd*, ʿ*ilm*, and ʿ*adl*, offering moral coherence absent from colonial frameworks. Digitalization of manuscripts creates new opportunities for reclaiming Muslim historiographic agency. Pan-Islamic networks (Sankoré, Sokoto, Traditional Qurʾānic schools) remain central in knowledge preservation.

Conclusion

Decolonizing African Islamic historiography is not simply an academic exercise; it is a political and epistemic imperative. Therefore, it is not merely a return to the past, but a spiritual and intellectual rebirth rooted in the principles of *tauhid ilm* and justice. It is not a chronicle of events, but a means of moral reflection and divine remembrance which, Islamic historiography offers African framework of history. The glorious Qur'an enjoins believers to travel through the earth and observe the end of those before them, a directive for active historical consciousness. This decolonization needs to revive *Ajami* traditions, empowering Islamic institutions and re-centering the Muslim worldview in African historical narratives, laying the foundation for a perspective liberated African Islamic historiography and have spiritual consciousness of it. Therefore, decolonizing African Islamic historiography is both an intellectual necessity and a moral responsibility. Due to the fact that for too long, Eurocentric narratives dismissed Africa as a continent without history, erasing the contributions of its Muslim scholars and communities. Yet, as the evidence from oral traditions, *Ajami* manuscripts, and Islamic scholarly traditions demonstrates, Africa has long possessed vibrant systems of knowledge production, memory preservation and cultural continuity. Nevertheless, the challenges of decolonization remain significant-archival inaccessibility, linguistic barriers, Eurocentric epistemologies and politicized histories.

However, emerging opportunities such as digitization projects, Afrocentric scholarship, global collaborations and intellectual revival within African Muslim communities offer hope. Moreover, this study maintains that the future of African Islamic historiography lies in a pluralist approach that harmonizes oral and written traditions, invests in scholarly training and connects African voices with global discourses. By doing so, African Muslim historiography can reclaim its rightful place in world history-not as a peripheral appendage, but as a central, dynamic and enduring intellectual tradition. Ultimately, decolonizing African Islamic historiography is not merely about correcting distortions of the past. It is about affirming African agency, sustaining cultural heritage and charting new directions for future generations of scholars and communities alike.

Recommendations

1. Invest in *madāris* and traditional learning circles, ensuring their alignment with formal academic systems to bridge Islamic and secular scholarship.
2. Call for the repatriation of Islamic manuscripts, particularly from Western archives, to their communities of origin in Africa especially African Muslim communities.
3. Curricular Reform: Integrate Islamic sources *Tafsīr*, *Sīrah*, historical chronicles into African historiography syllabi.
4. Digitize and Decentralize Manuscripts: Support initiatives preserving *Ajami* and Arabic manuscripts across African institutions.
5. Promote *Ajami* Literacy and Research: Encourage scholarship in indigenous languages written in Arabic script, bridging Qurʾānic learning and local historiography.
6. Institutional Collaboration: Strengthen networks among Islamic institutions (*Az-Zaytuna*, *Timbuktu* institutes, local *madāris* etc*).*
7. Public History and Heritage Projects: Utilize mosques, *khutbahs* (sermons) focusing on local Muslim legacies and community storytelling to convey Muslim historical narratives.
8. Digitize *Ajami* manuscripts and establish research centers across African universities to preserve and study Islamic writings.

9. Promote bilingual Islamic scholarship, combining Arabic and local African languages in historical research and dissemination.
10. Encourage intra-Muslim academic collaboration, across African regions, to build a pan-Islamic historiographical network.

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