

A BRIEF
LOOK
AT

ISLAM



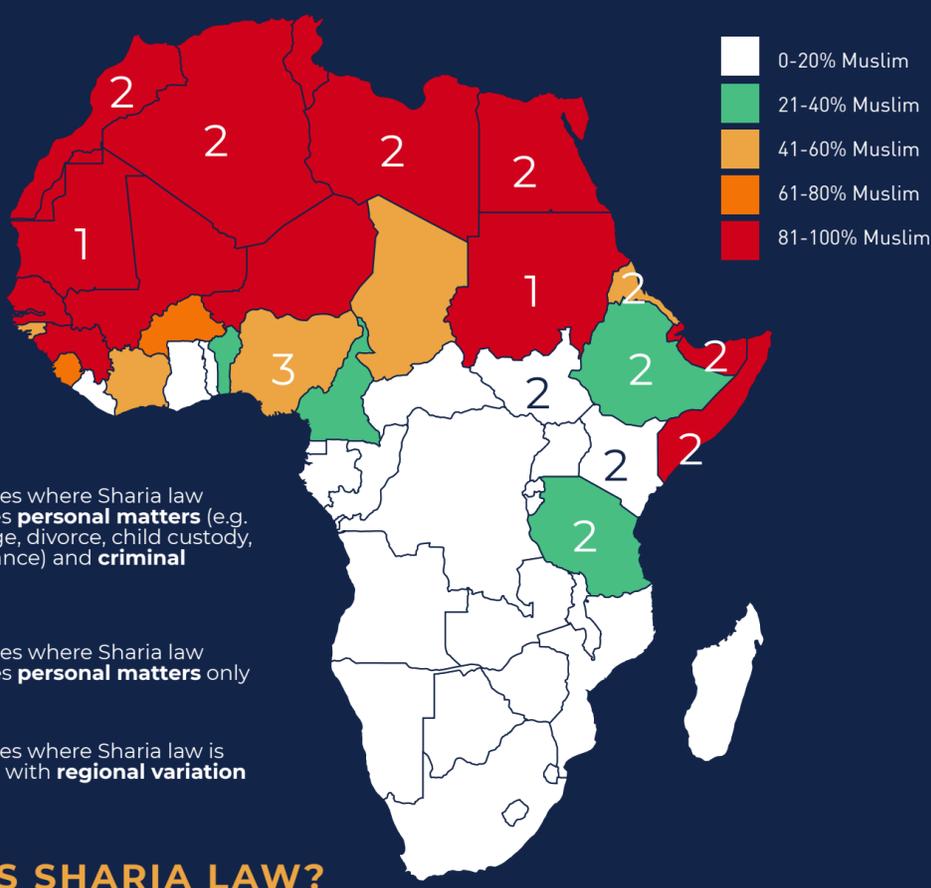
IN AFRICA

Approximately **43%** of all Africans consider themselves Muslim

HOW DID ISLAM COME TO AFRICA?

- 610 AD** Religion and practice of Islam began in Arabian city of **Mecca** through Prophet Muhammad
- 615-616 AD** Followers of Muhammad **fled persecution** in Arabia and arrived in **Ethiopia** (Christian kingdom of Abyssinia)
- 639-642 AD** Arab army invaded **Egypt** (then under control of the Byzantine Empire)
- 705 AD** **Berber** (Amazigh) territory to the west (Bilad al-Maghrib) was 'Islamised' and 'Arab-ised' and became a **province of the Muslim empire**
- 740 AD** Muslims from **Southern Mesopotamia** arrived in **East Africa**, developing a new East African Islamic culture from southern Somalia to northern Mozambique
- 900 AD** More Muslims settled in several places on the coast of **Somalia**
- Late 900s** Muslims from North Africa and Spain helped bring about the collapse of the Chanaian empire, making **militant Islam** a political force in West Africa
- 1085 AD** Islam became the **official religion** of Kanem (in Chad) as well as other kingdoms farther west (such as Gao in Mali)
- 1100 AD** Further **Muslim migration** to Somalia and southwards brought Islam as far as north-eastern Kenya
- 1800 AD** Islam spread to East African interior (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania) through **Muslim merchants** from a trading empire based in Zanzibar setting up new trade routes to the interior and establishing **settlements** and **caravan routes**

ISLAM IN AFRICA BY PERCENTAGE



WHAT IS SHARIA LAW?

The **Islamic legal system** that can affect every aspect of daily life – based on the **Quran**, the **Hadith** (traditions or sayings of Muhammad) and **fatwas** (rulings of Islamic leaders)

PRACTICE OF ISLAM IN AFRICA

Influenced by **social, economic** and **political** conditions
Adapted to **local cultural contexts** and **belief systems**
Differences and **varieties** in Islamic practice across Africa
Much of African Islam is **syncretic** – **combining/assimilating** different beliefs and traditions

2 NOTABLE EXPRESSIONS OF ISLAM IN AFRICA:



SUFISM
Found in many parts of **West Africa** and **Sudan**

- Focuses on mysticism and emotion
- Ceremonies can include emphasis on music, dancing, chanting and meditation
- Criticised by conservative Islamic schools of thought



SALAFISM
Originated in **Egypt**

- Reformist branch of Islam focusing on traditional practices (reflecting the first three generations of Muslims)
- Rejection of contemporary religious innovation
- Divided into three groups focusing on 'purifying' Islam, activism and jihad

"Islam in West Africa has evolved somewhat differently from the Middle East, having been influenced by pre-existing African traditions. It is [generally] characterised by **tolerance and nonviolence.**" (Konrad Adenauer Foundation)

MILITANT ISLAM IN AFRICA

A rise in radical Islamic groups in Africa since the 1990s can be attributed to the political and social crises in many African states

Primary militant groups in Africa:

AL-QAEDA IN THE ISLAMIC MAGHREB (AQIM)

- Oldest Islamist militant group
- Mainly operational in Sahara and Sahel region
- Announced allegiance to Osama bin Laden in the 2000s
- Involved in operations in Algeria, Mali and Tunisia
- Has given rise to other splinter groups in North and West Africa

ANSAR AL-SHARIA

- Two primary groups using name in Libya and Tunisia
- Arose in 2011 in the wake of the removal of governments during the Arab Spring revolutions
- Drew international attention after US ambassador to Libya was killed in Benghazi in 2012
- Tunisia group declared loyalty to al-Qaeda in 2013
- Libya group announced official dissolution in 2017

BOKO HARAM

- Based primarily in Nigeria but also operational in neighbouring countries (Niger, Chad and Cameroon)
- Fighting to create an Islamic state in Nigeria and wider region
- Founded in 2002 and launched insurgency in 2009
- Announced allegiance to the Islamic State (IS) in 2015
- Ranked as the world's deadliest terror group by the Global Terrorism Index in 2015

AL-SHABAAB

- Based in Somalia but has also carried out cross-border operations in Kenya and Uganda
- Arose in 2006
- Announced allegiance to al-Qaeda in 2012
- Controls mostly rural areas in Somalia
- Focus on nationalist issues as well as regional and global jihad

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