

## [Archaeological Perspectives on Conversion to Islam and Islamisation in Africa](#)

Announcement published by Nathan Anderson on Wednesday, September 4, 2019

Type:

Conference

Date:

December 17, 2019 to December 18, 2019

Location:

United Kingdom

Subject Fields:

African History / Studies, Archaeology, Islamic History / Studies

**Tuesday 17th and Wednesday 18th December 2019, Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter, UK**

Why do people convert to Islam? People convert as individuals but also as communities, and various factors can be influential. Assessing issues of genuine belief is difficult, but the impact of trade, of Saints, Sufis, and Holy men, proselytization, benefits gained through Arabic literacy and administration systems, enhanced power and prestige, warfare, facilitating marriage, and the feeling of belonging in the larger Muslim community have all been suggested as powerful influences over time. Equally significant is the context of conversion, raising the question as to why were certain African contexts key points for facilitating conversion to Islam and Islamisation. The interpretation of Islam might also be an important impetus, and adherence to different Islamic sects and schools of law could change over time. Syncretism could also be relevant to the success of Islamic conversion and sustained Islamisation, whilst the chronology of conversion may be immediate, drawn-out, punctuated or staggered.

Whilst historians are engaging with conversion to Islam and Islamisation processes, though largely outside Africa, archaeological engagement with these themes in Africa is variable, and in significant parts of the continent remains under-researched. Although it is fully acknowledged that conversion to Islam and Islamisation processes are not universal, but subject to significant variation and complexity, this conference has considerable value for the paradigmatic structure of our archaeological understanding of becoming Muslim in sub-Saharan Africa. This will be achieved through two days of presentations and discussion that will explore these issues through a comparative perspective, and discuss and summarise the 'state of the art'.

This conference is funded by the ERC through the advanced grant "Becoming Muslim" (BM694254-ERC-2015-AdG) awarded to the conference organiser, **Timothy Insoll** ([T.Insoll@Exeter.ac.uk](mailto:T.Insoll@Exeter.ac.uk)). The conference assistant is **Nathan Anderson** ([na419@Exeter.ac.uk](mailto:na419@Exeter.ac.uk)).

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## Conference Programme

1. *Archaeological Perspectives on Islam and Islamisation in Central Africa*  
**Noemie Arazi** (Groundworks, Université Libre de Bruxelles), Igor Matonda  
 (Université de Kinshasa), Olivier Mulumbwa (Universté de Lubumbashi) and  
 Alexandre Smith (Royal Museum of Central Africa, Université Libre de  
 Bruxelles, Gaes Wits)

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2. *Archaeological Perspectives on Islam and Islamisation in southern Africa*  
**Shadreck Chirikure** (Department of Archaeology, University of Cape Town,  
 and British Academy Global Professor, University of Oxford)

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3. *Archaeological Perspectives on Islam and Islamisation in the West African  
 Sahel*  
**Mamadou Cissé** (Head of the Cultural Mission, Kangaba, Mali)

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4. *The Red Sea in the Islamisation of Egypt*  
**John P. Cooper** (Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter)

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5. *Archaeological Perspectives on Islam and Islamisation in the Maghreb*  
**Corisande Fenwick** (Institute of Archaeology, University College London)

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6. *Archaeological Perspectives on Islam and Islamisation in Egypt*  
**Alison L. Gascoigne** (Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton)

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7. *Rethinking the Acceptance of Islam on the Northern Swahili coast*  
**Mark Horton** (School of Arts, University of Bristol)

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8. *Archaeological Perspectives on Islam and Islamisation in Ethiopia and the  
 Horn of Africa*  
**Timothy Insoll** (Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter)

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9. *Archaeological Perspectives on Islam and Islamisation in the West African  
 Savanna and Forest*  
**Kevin MacDonald** (Institute of Archaeology, University College London)

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10. *Archaeological perspectives on Islam and Islamisation in the Central Sahel*  
**Carlos Magnavita** (Frobenius-Institut at the Goethe-Universität Frankfurt)

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11. *Archaeological Perspectives on Islam and Islamisation in Nubia*  
**Artur Obluski** (Polish Research Centre in Cairo)

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12. *A Historian's Perspective on the Archaeology of Islam and Islamisation in*

*sub-Saharan Africa*

**Andrew Peacock** (History Department, University of St Andrews)

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13. *Archaeological Perspectives on Islam and Islamisation in the Comoros and Madagascar*

**Chantal Radimilahy** (University Museum, Antananarivo, Madagascar)

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14. *An Anthropologist's Perspective on the Archaeology of Islam and Islamisation in Sub-Saharan Africa*

**Tal Tamari** (Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences, Université Libre de Bruxelles)

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15. *Archaeological Perspectives on Islam and Islamisation on the southern Swahili Coast*

**Stephanie Wynne-Jones** (Department of Archaeology, University of York)

Contact Info:

**Registration** for attendance as a member of the audience **is free** and includes tea, coffee, and lunch over the two days of the conference. Please register by emailing Nathan Anderson ([na419@Exeter.ac.uk](mailto:na419@Exeter.ac.uk)).

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URL:

<https://www.exeter.ac.uk/news/events/details/index.php?event=9330>