**Spread of Islam to West Africa Lecture Notes**

**Directions:** While Ms. Babbitt is giving the lecture, you should be following along, making QUALITY annotations, including underlining AND marginal notes!

**Slide 1: Introduction- Islam in West Africa**

* Africa was the first continent, outside of Arabia , that practiced Islam into in the early 7th century. Almost one-third of the world's Muslim population now resides in this continent.
* It was estimated in 2002 that Muslims constitute 45% of the population of Africa. Islam has a large presence in North Africa, the Swahili Coast, and much of West Africa.
* Today we will look at Islam in West Africa from the 7th to 13th centuries. Overall, the **population embraced Islam gradually and peacefully**. I will argue that **West African society was predominantly Islamic by the 13th century**, but **many elements of traditional African culture remained in African Islam**.

**Slide 2: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

* Islam was first introduced to West Africa due to **two main factors- Muslim merchants traveling from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Africa,** and the **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of rulers and local merchants.**

**Slide 3: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

* The diffusion of Islam into Africa occurred through several separate phases of development.  Islam first came to Africa through Egypt and North Africa in the late 7th century in the early phases of Islam through Muslim \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* Then, from the 8th to 12th centuries, Islam crossed the Sahara Desert to the West African states through merchants and long-distance camel caravan routes of traders from North Africa.
* In this sense, **Islam’s spread to West Africa was similar to how Islam spread along the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to Asia** during this time period.

**Slide 4: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

* Widespread conversion to Islam accelerated in the 13th to 16th centuries.
* **Unlike other places where it was lower class people converting, in Africa, it was the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ who converted to Islam first, then others followed.**

* Many rulers desired to convert to Islam to connect Africa to the larger world of Eurasia, civilization, refined culture, and the busy Silk Roads. **There were major economic benefits to joining dar al-Islam- the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of Muslims within the Post-Classical World.**
* Rulers (like Mansa Musa) performed the hajj to Mecca, but most West Africans could not afford the voyage.
* Here he made a great display of the wealth and prosperity of his region, by lavishing people and governments along the way with enormous gifts of gold, slaves, and exotic animals.
* It is hard for history to tell if this was a political statement on Mansa Musa's part, or an attempt to show the Islamic leaders who had invaded Africa that Africans were not backward but were quickly progressing and in a wealthy position.
* Sharia (Islamic law) was rarely followed as the majority of the population was not Muslim.
* **Most West African Muslims were \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Sufis attracted many followers and were venerated as saints. It was believed that they could perform miracles.**

**Slide 5: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

* By the **late 13th and 14th centuries large well established cities in the Sahel and Mali had large Muslim institutions.  The building of large prominent mosques at Timbuktu and other cities in Mali reflect this development**.
* These cities flourished as **West African cities and kingdoms flourished from the prosperous trade in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and various metal wares produced by the region**.

**Slide 6: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

* Mosques in the Middle East, in the original birthplace of Islam, are characterized by minarets (tall spires), domes, and arches often decorated with mosaics.
* While **early converts to Islam set to work to build mosques as places of worship, their architecture reflects a unique \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**
* In Western Africa, along the Niger River, mosques were most often built of clay. They were fortified and strengthened through wooden stakes used for both scaffolding and decoration. The flat roof is supported by pillars and the floor is usually covered with sand on top of which mats are laid. Illumination is achieved by holes pierced in the ceiling.
* Except for the massive pillars and their arches, interiors are undecorated. Their elegant simplicity attests to the lack of distraction between the worshipper and his Creator.

**Slide 7: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

* **Madrasas (\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) were established in all trade cities to teach students the Quran and Arabic.**
* Previously, African tradition had been passed down orally. However, with education becoming more accessible, **surrounding Africans took advantage of the opportunity to participate in higher learning, and literacy rates in Africa soared**.

**Slide 8: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

* After the 12th century, Timbuktu flourished from its extensive trade in salt, gold, ivory, and slaves as a trading center of the Mali Empire.
* In its golden age, **Timbuktu rose up as a place of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and enterprise**. Famous for its two large mosques, **Muslim scholars from north Africa would come to Timbuktu to debate theology and try to keep fellow African Muslims “pure” of the paganism of the past and to keep them “true” to the doctrines of Islam**. This created for wide spread cultural crossing in Africa as people from all over the world came to share and spread ideas, particularly of the Muslim faith.
* Additionally, the Muslims of Timbuktu began a unique tradition of building shrines for sufi saints, eventually building 333. Today, Muslim militants linked to al-Qaeda in northern Mali have begun to destroy them, as they see the tombs as idolatry and an “impure” form of Islam.

**Slide 9: Ibn Battuta’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

* While West Africa became predominantly Muslim by the 13th century, many West African traditions were maintained as well.
* **Ibn Battuta was a** Moroccan traveler and qadi (judge) who visited most of the known Islamic world in the 14th century- he noticed this same juxtaposition in Islamic practices and African traditions when visiting.
* He observed the following…
* Overall, Ibn Battuta was impressed by the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the Koran, but was appalled by the women’s nudity.

**Slide 10: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

* **Some Africans traditions continued much more strongly and stood out even while existing \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ traditional Islam**.
* This was due, in part, because Islam did not see these local traditions as a threat to their religion. This acceptance of local traditions was a large benefit of converting to Islam in the Post-Classical Era.

**Slide 11: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

* One of the clearest examples of African traditions persevering alongside Islam can be seen in the Tuareg people of Mali, Niger, Chad, and Algeria.
* The Tuareg were able to travel throughout the Sahara using camel caravans. In Tuareg culture, men veil themselves due to the dust/sand of the desert. This is an Impact of the environment.
* On the other hand, and contrary to Muslim beliefs, women are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. In addition, inheritance is passed through the mother’s side (matrilineal). And, women use henna designs to ward off evil spirits.

**Slide 12: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

* Another lasting African tradition can be seen in the use of amulets. West Africans continued to use pre-Islamic amulets to protect themselves from evil spirits or curses.

**Slide 13: Conclusion**

While West African societies retained elements of their traditional culture, by the 13th century they had become mostly Islamic. Mosques and madrasas were established by rulers in all major cities, and most of the population accepted Islam.