

Amir Syed

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EMPLOYMENT

2017— University of Pittsburgh
History Department
Visiting Assistant Professor

EDUCATION

2009 – 2017 University of Michigan—Ann Arbor
Ph.D. in Anthropology and History
“Al-Hajj ‘Umar Tāl and the Realm of the Written: Mastery, Mobility and Islamic Authority in 19th Century West Africa”
(Committee: Rudolph Ware (Chair), Paul Johnson, Andrew Shryock, Rüdiger Seesemann)

2009 – 2012 University of Michigan—Ann Arbor
Master of Arts, Anthropology and History

2007 – 2009 University of British Columbia
Master of Arts, History
“Rethinking the Ben Ali Diary: Multiple Contexts and Muslim Slaves”

2000 – 2004 University of British Columbia
Bachelor of Arts, History

PUBLICATIONS

“Between Jihād and History: Re-conceptualizing the Islamic Revolutionary Movements of West Africa” in *Handbook of Islam in Africa*, edited by Fallou Ngom, Mustapha Kurfi, Toyin Falola, Palgrave Press (*forthcoming*)

Jihad of the Pen: The Sufi Literature of West Africa. Co-authored book manuscript with Rudolph Ware and Zachary Wright (American University of Cairo Press, 2018).

Special Issue of *Islamic Africa*, Volume 9 (2018), “From Texts to Meanings: Close Reading of the Textual Cultures of Islamic Africa,” Introduction and co-edited with Charles Stewart.

“Poetics of Praise: Love and Authority in al-Hajj ‘Umar Tāl’s *Safīnat al-sa‘āda li-ahl du‘uf wa-l-najāda*, *Islamic Africa*, Volume 7 no. 2 (2016), 210-238.

Foreword to “In Praise of the Intercessor: *Mawāhib al-Nāfi‘ fī Madā‘ih al-Shāfi‘* by Amadu Bamba Mbacké (1853–1927).” Co-author with Rudolph Ware and Zachary Wright. *Islamic Africa*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Fall 2013), 225-227.

In progress

Book Manuscript

The Ink of the Scholar and the Blood of the Martyr: ‘Umar Tāl and the Making of the Tijāniyya

Articles & Chapters

“At the intersection of the Oral, Textual and the Personal: The Islamic Religious Sciences and the Art of Transmission”

“‘Umar Tāl and the Envisioning of New Futures: Legal Discourses of the Past, Islamic Knowledge, and the Making and Unmaking of Believers in Nineteenth Century West Africa”

Reviews and Entries

Review Essay (invited): *The Crucible of Islam* (Harvard University Press, 2017), in *Boundary 2* (in preparation)

Review of: *African Dominion: A New History of Empire and Medieval West Africa* (Princeton University Press, 2018), in *Islamic Africa* (Submitted).

Review of: *Islam, Youth, and Modernity in the Gambia* (Cambridge University Press 2013), in *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 85, No. 03 (August 2015).

Taal, Al-Hājj ‘Umar (1797-1864) in *African Religions Beliefs and Practices through History*, Douglas Thomas and Temilola Alanamu, eds. (ABC-CLIO Greenwood, *In Press*).

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- 2017— **University of Pittsburgh**
Africa Since 1800 (Spring 2019)
Africa before 1800
West and West Central Africa in the Era of the Slave Trade
Islam and Conflict in Global Contexts
The Middle East after 1945
- 2010 – 2011 **University of Michigan (Graduate Student Instructor)**
Africa until 1850 (Fall 2011), The History of the Middle Ages (Fall 2010), Africa and its Diaspora (Winter 2010)
- 2007 – 2009 **University of British Columbia (Graduate Teaching Assistant)**
European History: Pre-modern to modern (2008-2009)
African American History (2007--2008)

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS:

- 2018 Registers of Rhetoric: Commentary and Classical Islamic Scholarship through the *Kitāb al-Rimāh* for African Studies Association UK, Birmingham
- 2018 Making and Unmaking Believers: The Futanke-Masinanke Conflict through Al-Ḥājj ‘Umar Tāl’s *Bayān* for “The Caliphate of Hamdullahi: A History from Within”, University of Illinois—Urbana-Champaign
- 2016 The Library of Al-Hajj ‘Umar Tal: Travel, Texts and Transmission in Precolonial West Africa, African Studies Association, Washington, DC
- 2016 The Pen & the Unseen: Islamic Esoteric Sciences of Writing in the Library of al-Hajj ‘Umar Tal, American Academy of Religion, San Antonio, Texas
- 2016 Love and Authority in al-Ḥājj ‘Umar Tal’s *Safīnat al-sa’āda li-ahl du’uf wa-l-najāda* for Sacred Word: Changing Meanings of Textual Cultures of Islamic Africa, Northwestern University
- 2015 “The Pen & the Unseen: Esoteric Sciences of Writing in the Library of al-Hajj ‘Umar Tal for Mystic Motherland Conference, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor
- 2015 Materializing Love through Verse: An Analysis of Safīnat al-Sa’ada in the life of ‘Umar Tal for Knowing Islam: An Interdisciplinary Seminar on Muslim Epistemology, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor
- 2015 Materializing Love through Verse: A Glance at al-Hajj ‘Umar Tal’s Safīnat al-Sa’ada. Prophetic Poetics Colloquium, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor

Discussant

- 2018 *Beyond Timbuktu: an intellectual history of Muslim West Africa* by Ousmane Kane, for The Consortium for Educational Resources on Islamic Studies (CERIS), University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh
- 2017 Panel discussant: "Formative Texts of 19th century West African Statecraft: A Conceptual Reading"?, African Studies Association, Chicago, Illinois

FELLOWSHIPS & AWARDS:

- 2016 Rackham One Term Dissertation Fellowship
- 2015-16 Rackham Humanities Dissertation Fellowship
- 2014-15 Rackham Pre-Doctoral Fellowship
- 2013 Rackham Humanities Research Fellowship
- 2013 Rackham International Research Award
- 2012 International Institute Fellowship
- 2011 African Studies Fellowship and DAAS African Initiatives Research Grant
- 2010 Rackham International Student Fellowship
- 2009 Regents Fellowship

LANGUAGES:

English (native), Arabic (reading, listening and speaking proficiency), French (reading and listening proficiency), Urdu (speaking, reading and listening proficiency), Latin (intermediate reading proficiency)

REFERENCES:

Dr. Rudolph (Butch) Ware
Associates Professor
Department of History
University of California—Santa Barbara
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Dr. Charles Stewart
Emeritus Professor
Department of History
University of Illinois
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Dr. Lara Putnam
Professor
Department of History
University of Pittsburgh
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