



ENCYCLOPEDIA OF WOMEN AND ISLAMIC CULTURES

Muslims in Sub-Saharan Africa

Dr. Suad Joseph, General Editor

Distinguished Professor of Anthropology and Women and Gender Studies, University of California, Davis

EWIC Staff: Datasheet

- ❖ As of 2010, 15% of the world's Muslims are in Sub-Saharan Africa. This percentage is expected to grow to 17.6 by 2030.¹
- ❖ The Muslim population in Sub-Saharan Africa is 242.5 million as of 2010 and projected to grow nearly 60% by 2030, increasing to 385.9 million. Muslims currently make up 29.6% of the region's population.¹
- ❖ From 2000 to 2010, Muslim population growth in the region surpassed the population growth of non-Muslims, mostly due to fertility rates. Women living in Muslim majority countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have higher fertility rates than women non-Muslim majority countries in the region as well as Muslim majority countries in other regions.¹
- ❖ Currently there are 13 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with a Muslim majority. West Africa is the only part of the region with a Muslim majority. South Africa has the smallest Muslim population in the region.
- ❖ Less than 10% of the population of Middle Africa, which includes Cameroon, Congo, and Republic of Congo, is Muslim. The Muslims population in this part of Africa is expected to increase from 11.8 million as of 2010 to 18.4 million by 2030. The Muslim population in East Africa is expected to increase from 70.3 million in 2010 to 109.5 million by 2030. South Africa has the smallest Muslim population in the region.²
- ❖ Expansion of Islam into Sub-Saharan Africa was slow and began as early as the ninth century. Initially Islam was the religion of the African merchants and traders from countries such as Sudan where Islam has already spread.³
- ❖ Elites were the first to adopt this religion in the Sub-Saharan region, due to their interactions with the merchants. The religion gradually spread to the commoners due to the efforts of Muslim scholars in later centuries.⁴
- ❖ Eventually, Sub-Saharan Muslims developed their own branches of Islam with unique practices and brotherhoods, often referred to as "African Islam".⁵

¹ <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/01/27/future-of-the-global-muslim-population-regional-sub-saharan-africa>

² http://www.newsfromafrica.org/newsfromafrica/articles/art_12273.html

³ <http://www.encyclopedia.com/article-1G2-3424501553/islam-islam-sub-saharan.html>

⁴ <http://muslimvoices.org/islam-spread-subsaharan-africa/>

⁵ http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/tsis/hd_tsis.htm