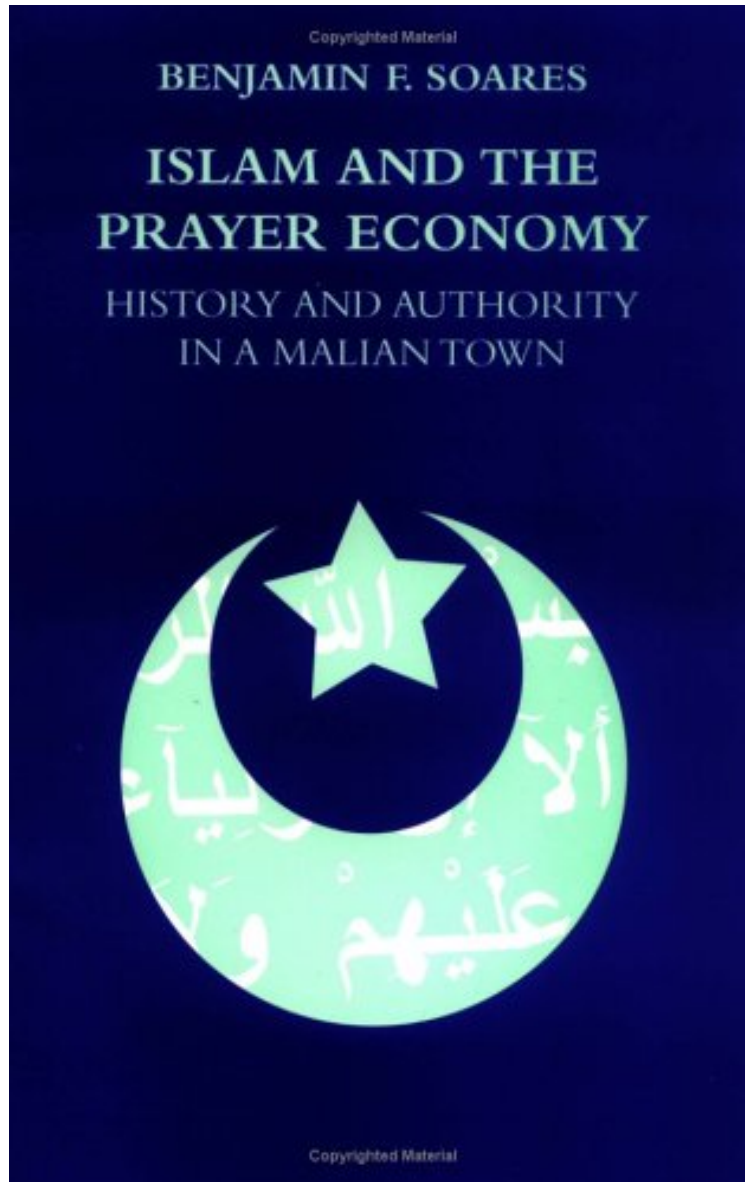


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Islam and the Prayer Economy: History and Authority in a Malian Town

Benjamin F. Soares

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Benjamin F. Soares : Islam and the Prayer Economy: History and Authority in a Malian Town before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Islam and the Prayer Economy: History and Authority in a Malian Town:

14 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Common Sense on Islam in Mali By Robert Pringle I served as US Ambassador to Mali fifteen years ago. I wish this book had existed then. It would have helped me enormously to understand the apparently mysterious world of Malian Islam. But Soares' book is even more valuable today, when US policy makers are grappling with the possibility that Islamic extremists could turn the Sahara, including Mali's northern region, into another Afghanistan, even (some would have it) threatening US oil interests in the Gulf of Guinea. The author brings to this book not only first-rate scholarly credentials (he has lived with the people whereof he writes) but also a refreshingly level-headed approach to a subject which is often obscured by repetitive and alarmist group thought. According to most commentary, Malian (and West African) Islam is increasingly polarized between Islamist radicals on one side and so-called traditionalists, centered in and around the Sufi brotherhoods, on the other. Soares' careful, field-honed analysis demonstrates that in Mali there is a broad spectrum of Islamic belief that defies simplistic categorization. His insights help explain why Mali's diverse Islam has been a significant component of Mali's successful democratization based on a culture of tolerance. Anyone interested in Mali, Islam or African politics will profit from reading this well written book. Robert Pringle Ambassador (retired)

At a time when so-called fundamentalism has become the privileged analytical frame for understanding Muslim societies past and present, this study offers another way of looking at Islam. In an innovative combination of anthropology, history, and social theory, Benjamin Soares explores Islam and Muslim practice in an important Islamic religious centre in West Africa from the late nineteenth century to the present. Drawing on extensive ethnography, archival research, and written sources, he provides a richly detailed discussion of Muslim religious practice Sufism, Islamic reform, and other contemporary ways of being Muslim in western Mali and more broadly in the country. This book provides a major contribution to the study of Islam in Africa and will be welcomed by scholars and students in history, religion, and the social sciences, particularly those interested in anthropology, Islam, colonialism and the public sphere.

"...[a] nuanced and smoothly written study of Muslim leadership, practice and culture in this community [Nioro, Mali] from the nineteenth century to the present."---African Studies