

Workshop

## Researching Religion, Morality and Boko in West Africa

June 14, 2022

Remoboko is a study of religiosity and how it affects secular education (boko, in Hausa) in West Africa. It focuses on the presence, competition and conflict between secularism, Salafism and Pentecostalism on four campuses (Université Abdou Moumouni, Niamey, Niger; University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria; Université de Lomé, Togo; and Université d'Abomey-Calavi, Bénin). It examines how students that seek a degree that would ensure them a better life, resort to Salafism and Pentecostalism. How boko in this context is both appealing and rejected is at the core of the project.

In Niger and Nigeria, boko is criticized for being morally corruptive, culturally alienating and socially unfit because it supposedly lacks grounding in religious norms. In targeting secular schools, the terror organization Boko Haram has illustrated the problematic nature of boko and the dark side its appropriations may have. Across Africa, Salafis and Pentecostals have targeted learning institutions. These religious groups criticize these institutions for practices and values they deem inauthentic and dangerous. In that process, as one may notice on campuses across West Africa, students have become religious actors in their own right, challenging and redefining conceptions of good life and being a student.

In this workshop, explicitly designed for doctoral candidates and postdocs, the remoboko research team will present its work, and discuss the methodological difficulties associated with researching a sensitive topic from an ethnographic perspective.

### Program:

- 10.30 – 11.00 Introduction to the workshop and institutional greetings
- 11.00 – 13.00 *The innocent spy who came in from the cold: Fieldwork in the Sahel and self-reflexivity.* Vincent Favier  
*Being a Muslim and a researcher: conducting research in a context of religious competition.* Bello Adamou
- 13.00 – 14.30 Lunch break (Waschhaus)
- 14.30 – 16.00 *A "Yovo" Historian in Benin and Togo: Conducting Fieldwork in Times of Pandemic and Fears of Jihadism Spreading.* Dr. Frederick Madore
- 16.00 – 17.00 Open discussion
  
- 18.00 – 19.30 Guest Lecture **"Who is your father? What family do you belong to?" and "Patience, I'll call you back!": Researching Islam and Muslim Life in Contemporary Sahel**  
Dr. Abdoulaye Sounaye (Leibnitz Zentrum Moderner Orient)

If you are interested in joining the workshop, please register with Daniele Cantini ([daniele.cantini@scm.uni-halle.de](mailto:daniele.cantini@scm.uni-halle.de)).