



EINLADUNG / AUSHANG

**Islamic Discourses on European Visitors to
West Africa in the Mid Nineteenth Century**

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As an important part of ideological justifications for colonialism, European discourses on Africa as the “dark continent” have been contentious since the nineteenth-century, or even earlier. Still, Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) has spurred a new genre of critiques against European discourses on societies of Asia, Middle East and Africa and the linkage between those discourses and European imperialism. One of the fields of study reflecting some of Said’s influential ideas is Subaltern Studies, which emphasizes the agency of the natives in the context of encounter with the Europeans. Drawing from Subaltern Studies, I examine Islamic discourses on European visitors to West Africa during the mid nineteenth century through a critical reading of selected writings of al-Shaykh Ahmad al-Bakka’i (d. 1865), who hosted the German scholar and traveller, Heinrich Barth, during his eight months sojourn in Timbuktu in 1853-54. Al-Bakka’i’s hospitality was implicated in the power tussle between Timbuktu notables and the rulers of the nearby Masina, one of the Islamic theocracies resulting from the West African jihads of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, thus suggesting that the local political context is very important for understanding his writings arguing for favourable treatment of Heinrich Barth.

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Weitere Informationen:

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