

---

## Lecture

Maurice Borrmans Library - PISAI  
Thursday 21 May 2026 at 17.00 (CEST)

---

### From Lavigerie to PISAI: The Institutional History of the Missionaries of Africa's Engagement with Islam and Islamic Studies

**Moussa Serge Traore**



Marking the centenary of the **Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies** (PISAI), this lecture offers a fresh historical perspective on the Missionaries of Africa's engagement with Islam. By examining a largely unexploited source – the minutes of the Society's General Council – the author shifts the focus from the personal vision of Cardinal Lavigerie to the institutional mechanisms that shaped the order's strategy.

Today's lecture argues that the Missionaries of Africa's engagement with Islam was not simply the unfolding of Lavigerie's personal vision, nor merely the result of individual scholarly initiatives, but rather the product of sustained collective discernment, administrative choices, and strategic adaptation. Through the decisions of the General Council, one can trace the gradual passage from a predominantly missionary concern with Muslims to a more structured commitment to the scholarly study of Islam and to forms of encounter that would later resonate with the wider Catholic Church's reorientation in *Nostra Aetate*. By reconstructing this internal history, the relation sheds new light on the origins of PISAI and on the Missionaries of Africa's distinctive contribution to twentieth-century Catholic relations with Islam.

Moussa Serge Traore is a Catholic missionary priest from Burkina Faso and a member of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa. He holds a PhD in History from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. In August 2026, he will join the Institute for Interreligious Dialogue and Islamic Studies at Tangaza University, Nairobi, as a faculty member.

Please register at  
**eventi@pisai.it**  
to participate in person  
or via Zoom

Viale di Trastevere 89 00153 Roma  
+390658392611  
**info@pisai.it**  
**www.pisai.it**