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West African Jihadist Movements in the Light of History

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After some forebodings, Western governments became very concerned with Jihad in West Africa in 2012. It remains controversial how much of this concern is justified, and where. Are AQMI and MUJAO more dangerous, or “Boko Haram”? What obstacles do they face, and what opportunities does West Africa offer for them?

The Shadow of History: the Great Jihads

Jihad had not appeared for a century in West Africa. Now it has arrived. But the extraordinary interest of this theater of the war on terror comes from the exceptional and long-continued successes of jihads from the late eighteenth century until these mighty waves of enthusiasm were stilled by colonial conquest. These jihads were not just border campaigns against pagans or Christians, like many declared jihads, but real revolutions that changed the structure, domestic regimes, and international behavior of big Islamic communities—like the ‘Abbasid revolution (749), the Isma’ili revolution (909), or the Safavid revolution in Iran (1501). Had not European colonialism moved into and overshadowed the Middle East, history might have seen West African jihadists moving east through the Sahel corridor, then north through the Nile valley, and into the Middle East to change it massively, as the arrival of the Turks did in the eleventh century.

The historic jihads hang over the future. In spite of the failure of jihad to move south, these historic triumphs have a sacrosanct status in much of the Sahel, especially in the Hausa areas of northern Nigeria and throughout the Francophone Sahel. The study examines the factors that will influence whether this tradition, difficult to challenge, is invoked again.

The historic jihads were not, however, mere trial runs for the present. They were

- Sufi, not Wahhabi-Salafi.

- Nevertheless, they raised many of the same puritan, rigorist critiques of contemporary practice as the Salafis do today.
- However, their ethical seriousness and level of learning were much higher than those of the contemporary jihadists.
- Perhaps this is because they were led by well-trained scholars, not by specialists in violence who had co-opted some scholars.

Difficulties facing West African Jihad

- The Sahara is not, for the most part, favorable terrain for guerrilla warfare under modern conditions.
- Here a key issue is the level of resources, particularly overhead reconnaissance, devoted to the theater by great powers.
- The Sahel and its huge, shapeless cities, on the other hand, present many opportunities for terrorism and military successes against *local* armies.
- The local style of Islam seems quite divergent from jihadist demands. There is a complex debate, not decided in spite of the scholarly unpopularity of the concept, about whether there is a distinctive “black Islam.” But clearly there is a progressive “normalization” of Islam in West Africa.
- This normalization is not necessarily a disadvantage; it prevents local Muslims from suddenly discovering how defective their Islam is. Islamization can be a barrier to Islamism.

Opportunities for Jihad

- The Inequality of local societies and the heritage of slavery
- Competition with Christianity
- The weakness of the state, due to its artificial colonial origins
- Boko Haram is more dangerous, but limited by:
 - its local focus and interest in revenge
 - its Kanuri ethnic base

--its impoverished and crude content

Future investigation should focus on:

- The Kanuri and their past;
- Nomads;
- The Tuareg;
- The Fulani, motor of the great historic jihads

Chapter One: Geography

This study of West Africa focuses its discussion on 19 African states: Western Sahara, Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Gambia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Chad. The Cape Verde Islands, geographically part of this zone, are culturally much more like the Caribbean or Indian Ocean island societies, with Islam absent, and are not discussed. I focus attention particularly on Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and northern Cameroon, where Jihadists have recently been active. Those readers who know West African geography can skip ahead to Military Topography on page 10.

This chapter discusses the topography and climate of the three primary bands of sub-Saharan West Africa: Sahara, Sahel, and the forest area. These areas are where jihadists may fight.

Mountains

Because the African continent is primarily a single rigid block of rock of marine origin, the process of formation of the continent left it with very little folding. As a result, the entire continent has few mountain chains comparable to those of other continents. While Morocco has Atlas ranges and East Africa contains some plateaus, West Africa is a part of the so-called “low Africa,” made up of level-surfaced plateaus that fall sharply to a narrow coastal plain. The highest peaks of West Africa are the Cameroon Mountain (13,354 ft) in Cameroon, at the edge of our region, Tibesti Mountains (11,302 ft) in Chad and Libya, Air Plateau (6,634 ft) in Niger, Mont Agou (3,235 ft) in Togo, and Ahaggar and Hoggar Mountains (3,000 ft) in Algeria, relevant to us because their hills expand into Mali.

Please refer to the physiographic diagram of West Africa at the end of the entire study for further information on topography of the region. This map, done in the 1940s, is far more useful in understanding the landforms, so important for military operations, than most contemporary maps.

Water systems

It is also a result of the process of formation of the African continent that it lacks major navigable rivers, except the Niger River. In West Africa, rivers enter the ocean, not through navigable estuaries, but through deltas, often obstructed by shifting sand bars. Because of uplift, other natural harbors are extraordinarily few, except along the western Mediterranean coast. The irregular elevation also accounts for mostly shallow, brackish lakes.

Rivers

Niger River

The River Niger is the only major river of West Africa and the third-longest in Africa. It is navigable for great distances on the interior plateaus but becomes impassable as it approaches the coastal plain. It extends approximately 2,600 miles, its drainage basin is 817,600 sq miles in area, and it runs through Mali, Niger, Benin, and Nigeria.

Along with its eastern tributary the Benué River, which runs almost 870 miles and is almost entirely navigable during the summer months, the Niger River has significant economic importance as a transportation route in the regions through which it flows and a source of hydroelectric power to Nigeria and other West African states. Also, the Niger Delta of Nigeria is among the richest deltas in the world. The Niger Delta has huge oil and gas reserves and ranks as the world's sixth largest exporter of crude oil and the second largest producer of palm oil¹.

Historically, the ports located on the coast and Niger River provided access for exporting commodities such as palm produce, timber, and rubber, as well as peanuts and cotton from the distant northern parts of Nigeria. These ports also allowed access for the slave trade.

In order to further contribute to the ease of transporting goods to isolated settlements located deep inland, the Nigerian government launched an over 200 million

¹ Online Nigeria: <http://www.onlinenigeria.com/links/Festivaladv.asp?blurb=497>

dollar dredging project of the Niger River in 2009. Various sources report conflicting information on whether the project is complete²³.

Simultaneously, the economic importance of the river has also caused some unrest:

Violent agitation by the people of the Niger Delta for the control of their petroleum resources and involvement in the petroleum industry is a most serious threat to the Nigerian economy and national security. [...] Attempts to suppress them have not restored peace.⁴

While the River Niger is the only major river in the West Africa, the Senegal River and Volta River are also important for the region.

Senegal River

The Senegal River is a 1,110 mile long river that runs along the Senegal and Mauritania border and has a drainage basin of approximately 104,247 square miles.

The river used to be used as a mode of transportation until 1970s, however due to the lack of investment in the infrastructure, it is no longer able to compete with other modes of transportation in the area, such as roads and railways. Now very limited use is made of the river for the transport of goods and passengers. The Organization for the Development of the Senegal River (OMVS) has looked into the feasibility of creating a navigable channel of 180 ft in width between the small town of Ambidédi in Mali and Saint-Louis, a distance of approximately 650 miles⁵. This project would give landlocked Mali a direct route to the Atlantic Ocean.

² National Inland Water Authority: <http://niwa.gov.ng/projects.html>

³ Vanguard, 2012: <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/04/dredging-of-river-niger-completed-obis-aide/>

⁴ Online Nigeria:

<http://www.onlinenigeria.com/links/economyAdv.asp?blurb=497#ixzz38gz7bO1f>

⁵ The Organization for the Development of the Senegal River: <http://www.portail-omvs.org/domaines-dintervention/projets-programmes/sitram>

Volta River

The Volta River flows primarily in Ghana and drains into the Gulf of Guinea and Atlantic Ocean. The river system has a length of 1,000 miles and a drainage basin of 153,800 square miles. Volta River makes up a reservoir, Lake Volta, in Ghana which is the largest reservoir in the world. The lake generates electricity and provides inland transport.

Lakes

In addition to the river systems, West Africa also has several lakes worth noting.

Lake Chad

Lake Chad is the largest lake in West Africa. It once covered more than 15,000 square miles and straddled Chad, Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon. However, between 1963 and 1998, Lake Chad lost 95 percent of its area. Still, the lake has economic importance, providing water to more than 68 million people living in the four countries surrounding it on the edge of the Sahara Desert.

Lake Nyos

Lake Nyos is located in the volcanic region of Cameroon. Although of no significant economic importance, it is noteworthy because in 1986 it released a cloud of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, killing 1,700 people and 3,500 livestock in nearby towns and villages.

Climate

The climate in West Africa is extremely irregular. In West Africa, rainfall is vastly more critical than temperature in determining the regional climate. Not only do various parts of the continent show wide differences in mean annual precipitation, but these are accentuated by uneven seasonal distribution and by large variations from year to year. The climate of much of the interior fluctuates widely because of the lack of mountain barriers, so that regions that receive plenty of rain in one year may suffer severe drought the next. Because of this extreme irregularity, the productivity of agriculture and the

consequent density of population, as well as the nature of the vegetation cover, reflect not the annual mean precipitation but rather the recurrent bad years. The coasts of Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Nigeria receive the highest amount of rainfall per year (ranging from 2,500 millimeters to more than 4,000 millimeters).

Roads

The roads in West Africa are few and bad, especially in the Sahara, because roads are not needed most of the time, just bridges, and as a result they are not "all weather roads." There are few roads in the forest zone as well, mostly due to their costs. Roads are a little better in Nigeria and Chad due to the oil money.

In general, major cities are linked within each country, a major highway runs along the coast from Ivory Coast to Nigeria, and a major linkage in the north that connects Senegal, Guinea, Mali, and Burkina Faso.

Three primary bands of sub-Saharan West Africa

There are three main bands of land in West Africa that reflect the region's climate, agriculture, and population patterns.

Sahara

Although Sahara is popularly conceived as a desert made up of sand dunes bereft of vegetation, it is much more diverse than people think. In fact, only 15% of Sahara is occupied by sand dunes.⁶ Another 15% is occupied by rocky plateaus and 70% is covered by gravel plains called *hamada* in Arabic. It is also dotted with oases which support intensive irrigated agriculture. Natural resources found in the desert include iron ore, copper, uranium, phosphate deposits, coal, oil, and natural gas.

As mentioned above in the Climate section, the rain is both irregular and unevenly distributed throughout the desert. In the south of the desert it tends to rain in the summer, while the Mediterranean areas tend to receive rainfall in the winter. There

⁶ California Academy of Sciences:
<http://www.calacademy.org/exhibits/africa/exhibit/sahara/more.htm>

might be heavy precipitation in one area while there might be no rain at all just a few miles away. Again, average levels of rainfall are less significant in Sahara, the duration of periods between rains much more important, so that there is the sufficient amount of water for grazing land to mature -- the life of cattle, and therefore the lives of their owners, depend on this.

The nomadic cattlemen migrate as far south as possible during the dry season, where the cattle feed after the crops have been gathered while simultaneously fertilizing the land. As the rain season resumes, the nomads head north again in search for green pastures that have grown during their migration south.

The Sahara has been expanding due to overgrazing and much of the land is sacrificed for goat milk and meat. In the areas where the wildlife depends directly on the amount of rainfall, the effects of overgrazing and cutting down wood for fuel are predicted to be catastrophic⁷. However, it is unrealistic for the population to voluntarily reduce cattle breeding, as their survival depends on their cattle during the years of droughts. Agriculture in the border lands also contributes to the expansion of the desert through erosion of the land -- the overused land turns into dust and it is easy for the wind to sweep it away during the years of droughts.

Today the Sahara's population is approximately 2.5 million⁸ with the majority of the people living in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania and Western Sahara. The population includes those who live in permanent communities near water sources, those who move from place to place with the seasons, and those who follow the ancient trade routes as permanent nomads. Most have Berber or Arabic roots.

Most of the people living in the Sahara today do not inhabit cities. Instead, they are nomads who move from region to region throughout the desert. As a result, the region represents various nationalities (Arabs, Tuareg, Teda or Tubu) and languages, but Arabic is the most widely spoken. For those who do live in cities or villages on fertile oases, crops and the mining of minerals like iron ore (in Algeria and Mauritania) and

⁷ J.K. Cloudsley-Thompson, ed., *Sahara Desert*, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1984), Ch. 1.5.3.

⁸ Encyclopedia Britannica:

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/516375/Sahara/37016/The-people>

copper (in Mauritania) are important industries that have allowed population centers to grow.

Because the Sahara is so sparsely populated, it cannot be controlled by the state easily. As a result, it is open to drug lords and jihadists, who manage to get along with each other.

Sahel

The word *Sahel* originates from the Arabic word for “shore,” in this case of the desert, and describes the agricultural area between the desert and the forest. We are more concerned with this band of land, which is the climatic and biological zone of transition in Africa between the Sahara desert to the north and the forest to the south. This land is characterized by semi-arid climate. In West Africa, the Sahel spans over three million square miles and covers parts of the Gambia, Senegal, southern Mauritania, central Mali, Burkina Faso, southern Niger, northern Nigeria, Cameroon, and Chad. (For a political map of West Africa, see the end of this study.)

The topography of the Sahel is mainly flat, and the region mostly lies between 660 and 1,310 ft in elevation. Several isolated plateaus and mountain ranges rise from the Sahel.

The Sahel has a tropical, hot steppe climate, and is somewhat windy year around. One could say that Sahel has the same climate as the Sahara desert, but is a little less extreme. The Sahel is characterized by constant, intense heat and the temperatures don't really vary. Similarly to the Sahara, the Sahel mainly receives a low to a very low annual precipitation. The steppe has a very long, dry season and a short and extremely irregular rainy season. In fact, for hundreds of years, the Sahel region has experienced regular droughts and mega-droughts, and consequently, famines. For example, one mega-drought, from 1450 to 1700, lasted 250 years.

The Sahel is composed mostly of grassland with scattered trees, including baobab and species of acacia, where rainfall is sufficient, and thorny shrubs in more arid sections. During the long dry season, many trees lose their leaves, and the predominantly annual grasses die. These areas can support African animal life and play

an important role in the economies of the indigenous peoples who live a pastoral life. Over-farming, over-grazing, over-population of marginal lands, and natural soil erosion, have caused serious desertification of the region. Major dust storms occur frequently.

The Sahel has a higher population than the Sahara and includes northern Nigeria, which has a very large population. In fact, 20% of all West African population is concentrated in the Sahel. The United Nations projects⁹ that the population will leap from 100 million today to 340 million in 2050 -- this area has already experienced a significant increase in population over the past 60 years, during which time it increased by 70 million people. The Sahara will never have a large population, geopolitical weight, or a big economy, except from minerals, increasingly explored, so that the greatest danger from jihadist movements there would be their spread south into the Sahel.

About 65%¹⁰ of the active Sahelian population – more than half of which are women – work in the agricultural sector and are therefore vulnerable to climate hazards and environmental factors. Their vulnerability is further increased by the fact that agricultural production in the subregion is dominated by subsistence farming, almost exclusively based on rain-fed agriculture and extensive animal husbandry systems.

Forest zone

Popular opinion greatly exaggerates the extent of tropical rainforest, or “jungle,” in Africa. Actually, this covers only restricted coastal strips in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Togo, Mali, Burkina-Faso, Chad, Mauritania, Senegal, and Guinea-Bissau and even here it is less dense than in comparable regions in Southeast Asia or South America.

Being so close to the equator, the forest zone experiences almost no variation in temperatures across the year. The climate is consistently hot, the temperature averaging

⁹ United Nations, 2013:

http://esa.un.org/wpp/documentation/pdf/WPP2012_%20KEY%20FINDINGS.pdf

¹⁰ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2011:

http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/emergencies/docs/DRM_Strategy_Sahel_2011-2013_web.pdf

at 75.2- 87.8 °F, the major factor governing the climate being the rainfall as is the case with the other two bands.

In the eastern part of the forest zone, because of the influence of volcanic Mount Cameroon, soils are often fertile and there are large areas of subsistence farming. Major crops include millet, yams and rice, and cocoa. Further west, due to the ancient geology of the region, soils are much less fertile and farming is chiefly confined to the raising of perennial crops. Forestry, however, has devastated much of the natural rainforest in countries such as Ivory Coast and Liberia, and farmers without land have been pushed by population growth onto land with soil very marginal for agriculture. Population growth in this area, despite frequent warfare, continues to be among the highest in the world.

Military Topography

From the standpoint of the Defense Department, the military potential of West African geography, for the jihadists and for their opponents, is probably most important aspect. There is a professional literature on this, but it may still be useful to give my impressions. Many officers have had experience in desert fighting, so they might skip over the first part of this section.

Half of the area we are concerned with suffers from an extremely dry climate. The coast in Western Sahara and Mauritania is a little wetter, as are the small mountain areas. Because it is so dry, there are few oases and other inhabited points. This feature of the theater gives an advantage to anyone who has airpower. Airlift is crucial, and it is a French weakness. Operation Serval depended on American and British airlift, and drove armored vehicles up from the Ivory Coast by road. Because it is so dry, there is little cloud cover, making overhead reconnaissance easy if the powers that can do it devote adequate resources to the area. According to 2013 interviews at the International Institute of Strategic Studies in London, they were still not doing so at that time.

A very dry climate also means little plant cover, leading to rapid erosion. It is exacerbated by windblown sand, which creates oddly rounded, wind-sculptured features in places like the Air Plateau in Niger and the Tibesti mountains of Chad. In such

places, the wind has hollowed out softer rocks, leaving a surprising number of *gueltas*, rock pools of water. Because most of the Sahara is so flat, the larger area of it is accessible to wheeled vehicles. But their maintenance is a constant headache, because of high temperatures and sand carried by the wind into every nook and cranny. Because of the attrition of equipment, the cost of modern mechanized operations is high. The following figure shows the French troop commitment in their recent overseas deployments, and the cost to their defense budget.

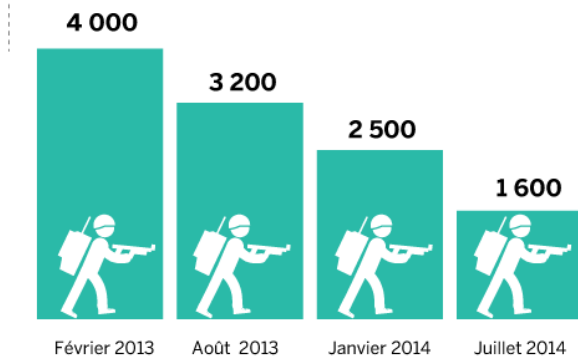
Figure 1: Operation Serval, French military operation in Mali

L'opération militaire française « Serval » au Mali

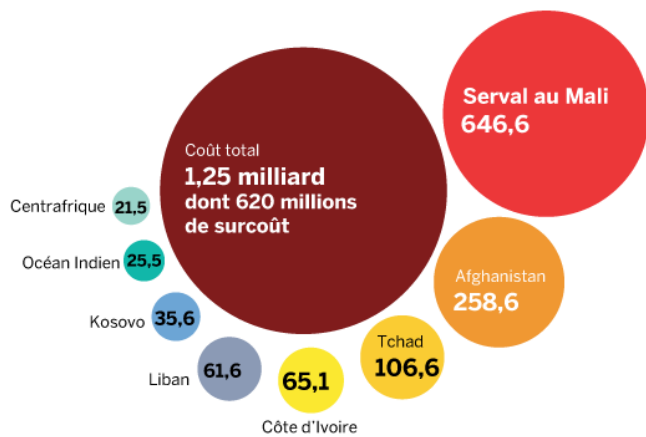
Effectif des forces françaises déployées au Mali

11 janvier 2013

Lancement de l'opération Serval, pour stopper la progression des islamistes armés et soutenir les troupes maliennes



Coût des opérations extérieures (OPEX), en 2013, en millions d'euros



 LeMonde.fr/lesdecodeurs

It is easy to see that Operation Serval, which was not as big as some other deployments, absorbed a disproportionate amount of money.

Because it is so open, the Sahara is not a welcoming country for guerrillas who are fighting a modern, well-supplied enemy. To begin with, there are few places to hide, except in the mountains, rare by Middle Eastern standards or those of the arid American West. An army with airlift can easily secure and garrison most of the inhabited points.

On the other hand, it is good guerrilla terrain against armies like those of Mali and Niger, which lack reconnaissance, air power and good equipment maintenance. Therefore the amount of French support for these armies, and the degree of their cooperation, are decisive factors in victory or defeat. My interviewers told me that the army of Chad, with plenty of oil money and much desert fighting experience in the constant civil wars, was much more capable.

The great paradox of desert topography is the huge power of water in a dry land. Because arid climates have great fluctuations in the weather, there are downpours that can quickly fill a wadi (North African Arabic *oued*) that an unlucky army happens to be using as a road or water source. Then, in the eastern Sahara, it may not rain again for years. Dry, dusty surfaces with few plants are easily scoured out by these sudden spates. The result is stark, dramatic relief, with barren mountains rising abruptly above a sandy plain, many steep-sided wadis and mesas. Flowing water rapidly carves up the land along fault lines and the edges of harder rocks. Local knowledge is vital for knowing where a wadi edge can be crossed, for example; even on a Joint Operations Graphic you may see only a blue dotted line where there is an impassible barrier to movement. There are vast areas of internal drainage into one or another salt pan (American *playa*, North African Arabic *shott*). Where there is any wet season these form a morass of mud; when it is dry you see an apparent flat and hard white surface or polygonal cakes of dried mud with their edges raised, the latter difficult to cross in any way. Both are deceptive and treacherous, traversed beneath the surface by winding channels of deep mud that can be dangerous, swallowing a camel or a car. Here again, local knowledge is tremendously useful.

The few mountain areas are particularly important because they alone are good guerrilla country against modern armies. These are the Ahaggar or Hoggar mountains in southeast Algeria, with their hills extending into northeast Mali, the Aïr Plateau in northern Niger, and the high Tibesti mountains on the border of Libya and Chad, extending at lower elevation south along the Sudanese border. In general, these mountains have many hiding places (including caves) and are impassible for wheeled vehicles. They are an ideal habitat for guerrillas. Therefore, jihadists hiding there are easy to defeat, hard to eliminate.

The Sahel is very different in the geography textbook but has many features of the desert. Flying into cities, you seem to be in the desert. The open country is generally a rolling plain with many sharp-sided local features, dotted with bushes, rising to complex scrub covered hills in southern Mali, Burkina-Faso, and eastern Chad. Sand and dust are still everywhere, a danger to machinery and to the lungs. The Sahel does have big cities that also provide ideal cover for guerrillas. In Mauritania, Senegal, Mali and most of Niger few of these, like Djenne, display the narrow twisting lanes of traditional African cities. French urban planning and rapid urbanization has left them almost without centers (think of Houston or Los Angeles), divided by broad avenues in a checkerboard pattern, but with few traffic lights and immense, frustrating traffic jams. In the spaces of the grid are shoved together many African villages where life continues in its old way in many respects. It is difficult to find specific addresses. Northern Nigeria, the southernmost fringe of Niger, and the northern tip of Cameroon, as a traditional area of old city-building, have very different cities, the centers unplanned labyrinths of mud-brick surrounded by thick city walls, but their suburbs resemble the francophone African cities.

There are six highly specific areas of different military terrain in the Sahel:

1. The Niger River, navigable with difficulty and in part seasonally from well upstream in Mali into Nigeria, provides a ribbon of cultivation and thick population, except in its upper bend (French *boucle*) which is almost in the desert. The Niger has an inland delta which is seasonally inundated, difficult for military operations in the wet season, and easily flooded by damage to French-colonial irrigation works.
2. Lake Chad, where the borders of Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad come together, was once a big lake with reedy margins and thousands of islands formed by relict sand dunes, and inhabited by the cannibalistic pagan Buduma people, skilled boatmen. What remains of the basin that has shrunk by 95% is a complex swampy area, partly overgrown by tough weeds impenetrable by boats: a very difficult military environment, even with local knowledge. The southwestern Lake Chad area is the center of Boko Haram.

3. The Mandara mountains along the Nigeria-Cameroon border, forested, are not high but complex, a base and R & R area for Boko Haram.

4. The Badiangara scarp in southeastern Mali, homeland of the recently pagan Dogon people, is a precipitous series of cliffs sharply separating the plateau and the plain.

5. The Jos plateau, in the center of northern Nigeria, is surrounded on the south and west by steep cliffs, and covered by artificial lakes and piled-up tin mine tailings. A pagan refuge never conquered by the Fulani Caliphate, the Jos Plateau is now heavily Christian with many Muslims, both the targets of mutual massacres. There are many refugees from Boko Haram.

6. The tangle of rivers that empties northward into Lake Chad feed some swamps, especially upstream, and vast areas of seasonal inundation that cover the almost flat “duck’s beak” area of Cameroon and adjoining Chad, extending southeast almost to the Sudan border. These navigable rivers, rising in the tropical rainforest, swell and fall sharply with the rains, flooding and then drying the featureless plains.

Between the Sahel and the coast the Guinea Forest zone, heavily degraded by cultivation and logging, missing in eastern Ghana and Togo where the savannah dips down to the sea, has the usual difficulties of fighting in thick tropical forest. For guerrillas, it is an excellent environment exploited by some fighters who resisted colonial conquest, like Bai Bureh in Sierra Leone and Samory in Mali, Guinea, and Ivory Coast. The most successful resistance was in these forest zones. Three areas present special military features:

1. The Futa Jallon plateau, dominated by the highly Muslim Fulani, has steep cliffs like the Jos Plateau, but is also dissected by the deep canyons carved by local rivers.

2. The coastland from Gambia and Casamance (a rebellious province of Senegal) south through Guinea-Bissau and Guinea is tidal marsh bordered by mangrove thickets, both extremely challenging military environments, with some marsh and inland swamp reclaimed for rice paddies.

3. The Niger delta is swampland intersected by creeks, the difficult local environment damaged by oil drilling and its infrastructure, exploited off and on by the Christian Niger delta resistance.

Population

The total population of West Africa as of 2010 was 303,231,210, Nigeria's population accounting for half of this number.

As mentioned in the previous sections, settlement trends are linked with the climate. Three-quarters of the population lives in the forest zone, 20% in the Sahel, and 5% in the Sahara.¹¹ In all the countries, there is a general pattern of high population densities in and around urban areas. There is also a generally higher population density along the coast. Nigeria also has a high population density.

¹¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2011:
http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/emergencies/docs/DRM_Strategy_Sahel_2011-2013_web.pdf

Chapter Two: Ways of life and their Military Implications

Ways of life

Nomadic economy

Nomadism:

Of the estimated 30–40 million nomadic pastoralists worldwide, most are found in Central Asia and the Sahel region of West Africa. These are people who exploit land that is too arid or too poor to grow cultivated crops. Instead, they live by raising animals who graze on the plants that grow by nature: sheep, goats and camels in the Sahara, and more of the same animals but many more cattle in the Sahel. Because edible vegetation changes with the seasons and the altitude, “pastoralists” --those who raise animals--have to move around with their animals. Such nomads live off milk products and a little meat, but also by trading them with farmers for grain, vegetables, and fruit. Increasing numbers of livestock have led to overgrazing and desertification, perhaps exacerbated by climate change, when lands are not allowed to fully recover between one grazing period and the next. Increased enclosure and fencing of land has reduced the amount of land available for this way of life. Sometimes nomadic pastoralists move their herds across international borders in search of new grazing terrain or for trade. This cross-border activity can combine with smuggling, including the smuggling of drugs, cigarettes, tea, arms and illegal migrants. Although they are vital for Africa's economic prosperity, studies report that their way of life is being undermined by governments, conservationists, and large-scale farmers.¹²

Nomads and tribes

It may seem strange to pay attention to this topic in the age of high-tech warfare. But a number of experts, in Europe and in Africa, have told me that the Tuaregs, or certain groups of them, were the motors of the 2012-13 jihadist takeover of northern Mali. The French army certainly made splitting some Tuaregs away from the jihadists their strategy. And the United States faced huge problems with the particular habits of

¹²*The Guardian*, 2010: <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2010/feb/07/sands-shifting-africa-nomadic-herders>

Sunni tribes in Western Iraq during its occupation of Iraq. As we will see in the chapter on precolonial history, nomads were also key troops in the Sufi jihads that changed the face of West Africa in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

It should not be surprising. Nomads were the terrors of the civilized world until after the Mongol invasions. And, for some reason, they loomed far larger in the Muslim world than in the Christian or Chinese. In her especially interesting work on nomads and tribes,¹³ Patricia Crone raises the question,

...one of the most alien aspects of Islamic history is the role played in it by tribes: why did they never disappear? To the seasoned Islamicist, on the other hand, it is the virtual disappearance of tribes after the age of [barbarian] invasions [in Europe] that is puzzling: why are there no Hashid and Bakil [great tribal confederations in Yemen] in Switzerland?¹⁴

Elsewhere, she asks, “Why did feudalism rather than tribalism turn out to be the solution to the organization of post-Roman Europe?”¹⁵ In other difficult works, beginning with her second book,¹⁶ she has advanced the notion that there is an intrinsic connection between the survival of tribalism and Islam’s insistence that political authority be religious and universal.

Tribes, who may live by agriculture in the Sahel or the mountains as well as by herding in the deserts, and who no longer may move around, share with nomads a particular type of social organization. These societies in West Africa are characterized by *segmentary lineage*.¹⁷ A segmentary lineage society is characterized by the hierarchic organization of the society into segments nested in one another, like Russian matryoshka dolls, determined by descent through their ancestors, real or nominal. This

¹³ “The Tribe and the State,” chapter in J. A. Hall, ed., *The State: Critical Concepts*, (London: Routledge, 1994), 446-473, and “Tribes and States in the Middle East,” Patricia Crone, review of Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner, eds., *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 1991), *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3 (1993), 3, 352-387.

¹⁴ “Tribes and States,” 353.

¹⁵ Patricia Crone, *Pre-industrial Societies: Anatomy of the Pre-Modern World*, (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003), 152.

¹⁶ Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

¹⁷ Fredrik Barth, “Descent and marriage reconsidered” in Jack Goody, ed., *The Character of Kinship*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 3-19.

very technical term gives a more precise meaning to what is often referred to as a tribal society.

A simple, non-anthropologist's explanation is that the nuclear family is the smallest and closest segment, whose members will generally stand with each other in case of conflict. But brothers often quarrel or fight in societies of this kind. That extended family of brothers is also a part of a larger segment of more distant cousins and their families, who will stand with each other when attacked by outsiders. They are then part of larger segments with the same characteristics, up to the tribe and the tribal confederation, which is the largest traditional social unit of Tuareg and Arab tribal society. In other words, brothers will fight against cousins, unless outsiders counter them, in which case they will join their forces, and so on. This sentiment is expressed very well in the Bedouin saying: I'm against my brother, my brother and I are against my uncles, my extended family is against the tribe, and the tribe is against other tribes. As a result, these societies have no state or government, but they still have a way of coordination and governing which is effective in warfare.

Military Potential of the Tribes

Why have tribes been so formidable in war? It is often traced on their mobility, and this doubtless plays a certain role. In addition, the life of nomads, at least, is tough. During a migration, heads of families, and above all tribal leaders, have to figure out how to cope with unexpected situations: drought, attack by hostile tribes, or mistreatment by the state, which usually hates nomads. Meeting such situations requires coordination. But in the absence of state capacity for coercion, leadership must be accepted by the group. The normal form of tribal organization in West Africa is thus chosen, by consent of the group, from an aristocratic clan. Leaders must be chosen not only for their hereditary prestige, but for competence. And most tribes were used to raiding and stealing. As Judith Scheele argues in her book on the Sahara, most of the ecological niches the tribes occupy were never able to support the population for long by their own resources of livestock milk and meat. They were forced to trade, to smuggle,

or to raid. As Henri Lhote points out, there are noble Tuareg clans whose names precisely mean “those who prey on others.”¹⁸

These things are widely discussed. But Crone alone has brilliantly formulated the advantages of segmentary tribal social organization for war.

The tribal military unit was a preexisting social group, endowed with cohesion by its shared experience and concerns and habituated by the normal conditions of its life to mobility, violence and frugality...they arrived fully trained and *encadre* [separated out], with recognized leaders and a familiarity with the terrain in which they were to be employed...¹⁹

Usually the state is victorious over tribes, but there is a “nomadic exception... every now and again they have proved tribes to be vastly superior,” because coordinating society by coercion and bureaucratic organization, as states do it, is inherently inefficient.

But if an entire tribal society were to acquire a sense of common purpose, it would be able to co-operate without coercion and without liability to fission, or in other words that its very primitivity would give it a huge advantage over the state.²⁰

That sense of common purpose has again and again been given by Islam. That is why tribal societies have provided the dynamism of so many Muslim jihads, from the original expansion of Medina under Muhammad to al-Shabab in present-day Somalia. Defense planners need to ask themselves: could this happen on a wider and more explosive scale in the Sahel?

The following is a list of the main West African nomadic pastoralist tribes. The reader should consult the detailed ethnic maps of western Africa, including the

¹⁸ Henri Lhote, *Tuaregi Akhaggara* (Moscow: Nauka, 1989), 36.

¹⁹ Sir Ernest Gellner, “Tribalism and the State in the Middle East,” in Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner, *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 1991), 109, 113.

²⁰ “The Tribe and the State,” in Crone, ed., *From Arabian Tribes to Islamic Empire,: Army, State and Society in the Near East c. 600-850*, (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Variorum, 2008), I 458.

Maghreb, and of the area of most concern to us, from Mali to Chad and south, at the end of this study.

1. Arabs, including “Moors” (Western Arab speakers in Mauritania and Mali), and Shuwa Arabs in Chad. These are very diverse groups speaking mutually unintelligible languages united by the prestige of the Qur’an and of classical Arabic, so having in common pride as Arabs. Most of these groups are heavily mixed genetically with sub-Saharan African groups, but a few, like the Ouled Sliman in Chad, emigrated recently from North Africa. For Arab pride, see the discussion of racism.
2. Tuaregs, in northeast Mali, southeast Algeria, the edge of Libya, and Burkina Faso and Niger, with some straying into northern Nigeria. The Tuaregs are discussed at length in later.
3. Teda or Toubou, less Muslim, in Chad and southern Libya, since the overthrow of Gaddafi under pressure of their Arab neighbors.
4. Zagawa, Daza, and other small groups on the Sudan border.
5. Fulani (French *Peul*, the language *Fulbe*, *Pulaar*, or *Halpulaar*) a widespread, mysterious group spread between two very different poles: simple pastoral nomads who may still be pagans, and strongly Muslim elites who carry Islamic learning and gained, in many places, a dominant position in kingdoms they established by conquest.²¹ The Fulani will also be discussed at length.

Farming

Although the rural economy has become increasingly diversified in West Africa and the Sahel, and now includes agro-processing, mining, crafts, trade, transport and tourism, it is still dominated by farming, which provides the bulk of the rural population’s income. The agricultural sector accounts for about 35% of the sub-region’s overall GDP, as much as 60% of the national GDP of some countries in the subregion,

²¹ Murdock’s discussion in George Peter Murdock, *Africa: Its Peoples and Their Culture History* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1959), 413-421, highly prejudiced against the Fulani because of their role in jihads and Muslim statebuilding, is hardly definitive.

and employs approximately 60% of the region's population.²² As a result, those engaged in agriculture are subsistence farmers and generally extremely poor.

In general, plantation tree crops as well as root crops dominate the humid coastal areas, cereals are predominant in the northern territories, and the Sahel region is dedicated to crop and livestock production systems. The most important crops grown and consumed in West Africa are cereals (sorghum, millet, maize, and rice), roots and tubers (cassava, sweet potatoes, and yams), and legumes (cowpeas and peanuts [British groundnuts, French *arachides*]). Major cash crops are cocoa, palm oil, coffee, and cotton, which made some coastal farmers rich but are subject to wild swings in international commodity prices and to plant diseases.

The indigenous methods of farming in West Africa, more gentle on the land, include permanent and temporary intercropping, livestock, and mixed farming.²³ However, as a result of the population growth, it is difficult to come by the true shifting cultivation method which has almost disappeared and most farming now is conducted using rotational bush/grass land fallow and rotational woody bush fallow methods. Also, there has been a general shift of emphasis toward food crops production and away from cash crop farming.²⁴

Since independence many agricultural production projects involving government corporations, parastatals, state farms and farm settlement schemes have been implemented, but most have been unsuccessful. There are three key socio-economic challenges that constrain agricultural development in West Africa:

- Rapid population growth has simultaneously created socio-economic pressures and has altered traditional farming systems.
- Locals continue to rely on simple farm tools and manual labour as a result of limitations in mechanization using animals in areas with sleeping sickness, which

²² Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2011: http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/emergencies/docs/DRM_Strategy_Sahel_2011-2013_web.pdf

²³ eHow, 2012: http://www.ehow.com/way_5437479_farming-west-africa.html

²⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 1983: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/004/x6543e/x6543e03.htm>

almost rules out big domestic animals, or tractors which most farms cannot afford to buy, maintain, hire, or fully utilize.

- Division of labor between sexes, rural-urban migration, and education for children cause a shortage of labour at seasonal peaks of demand. This means that only older men and women remain for farm work. As a result, farms are therefore less productive and there's a relatively low return to agricultural work.

Monocultures

Africa is currently one of the primary suppliers of many tropical cash crops. Much of the cash crops are farmed through the agricultural practice called “monoculture.” This practice aims to collect large harvests from minimal labor and involves the production of a single crop over a wide area and for a large number of consecutive years.²⁵

Countries at the southern edge of the Sahara, including Burkina Faso, Mali, and Chad, mainly export cotton. Countries in the Gulf of Guinea specialize in cocoa beans, coffee, peanuts, and palm-oil. In fact, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon are the first, second, fourth, and sixth largest suppliers of cocoa beans in the world²⁶. Coastal countries such as Senegal, Gambia, and Nigeria are typical peanut monoculture countries, with peanut, peanut flour, and peanut oil providing more than 70% of an export gain in Senegal and more than 80% in Gambia. The largest producer of peanuts in Africa, and fourth in the world, is Nigeria²⁷. Finally, the olive palm tree is also a typical monoculture for Benin, providing approximately 60% of income from exports.

The practice of growing only one crop year after year is very problematic for a number of reasons.²⁸ Here are several key issues:

²⁵ 4th International Crop Science Congress, 2004:
http://www.cropscience.org.au/icsc2004/symposia/2/1/1128_cookrj.htm

²⁶ Research Network “Knowledge,” 2012: <http://the-books.biz/world-geography/101-the-monoculture-countries-63680.html>

²⁷ United States Department of Agriculture, 2014:
<http://apps.fas.usda.gov/psdonline/psdreport.aspx?hidReportRetrievalName=BVS&hidReportRetrievalID=918&hidReportRetrievalTemplateID=1#ancor>

²⁸ Green Health Report, 2010: <http://greenhealthreport.com/2010/07/the-dangers-of-monocultures/>

1. Monoculture are extremely vulnerable to diseases and a single virus can eradicate the entire plantation.
2. Once pests build resistance due to the same crops being grown year after year, they become even more destructive. As a result, farmers have to use stronger pesticides with each year, which is environmentally devastating and has negative health impacts.
3. Because there's no crop rotation, nor is the soil given rest, the soil gets depleted and requires chemical fertilizers. Ultimately, this practice encourages erosion.
4. Commodity prices fluctuate due to weather patterns and cycles of under- and over-production of crops.

Modern Economy

The industrial and service economy is not very large in West Africa --as discussed, vast majority of the local population is employed in agriculture -- however, due to the export business of cash crops and rare minerals, there is now a class of very wealthy individuals, causing great social and economic inequality.

GDP per capita has been growing at various rates in the West African states, some countries topping the lists of annual GDP growth and others being some of the slowest growing economies. The overall growth levels remain low. In 2008, GDP per capita ranged from about 128 USD in Guinea-Bissau to 530 USD in the Ivory Coast and Senegal.²⁹ Furthermore, countries like Ivory Coast, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Niger, and Togo, suffered a per capita GDP decline between 1988 and 2008 as a result of civil wars and political unrest.

Still, there has been a slow increase in crop productivity in the area, as well as growth in the service sector (including tourism), resulting in a slow decline in the share of agriculture in overall GDP.

It is illuminating to briefly focus on Guinea, Sierra Leone, the Ivory Coast, Ghana, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria and their current national economic activities:

²⁹ International Food Policy Research Institute, 2013:
<http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/rr178toc.pdf>

- Guinea has abundant natural resources. The most important of these is its bauxite reserves, as they add up to at least 25% of the world's known supply (24 billion metric tonnes). Bauxite and alumina are currently the only major exports. Still, agriculture employs 80% of the nation's labor force.
- Sierra Leone is also rich in minerals and relies economically on mining, especially diamonds (it is known for blood diamonds). In fact, the country is one of the top ten diamond producing nations. It also has one of the world's largest deposits of rutile, a titanium ore used as paint pigment and welding rod coatings. As with Guinea, approximately two-thirds of the population engages in subsistence agriculture, which accounts for 52.5% of national income.
- The Ivory Coast is the world's largest exporter of cocoa beans, and the fourth largest exporter of goods, in general, in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Ghana is another major cocoa bean producer, right behind the Ivory Coast. Unlike Guinea and Sierra Leone, it's more of a service country and services account for 50% of GDP.
- Mali's is another country in the region where agriculture holds a key place in the national economy. Of crop exports, cotton is the country's largest one. That said, Mali is the third largest gold supplier in Africa. Gold, livestock, and agriculture add up to 80% of Mali's exports.
- Niger has one of the highest uranium deposits in the world, which provides 72% of national export proceeds.
- Finally, Nigeria is the eleventh largest producer of petroleum in the world,³⁰ the fourth largest exporter (2012), and has the second largest proven reserves in Africa.³¹ The US used to import 9-11% of all of its crude oil supplies from Nigeria, however this number has fallen to 4% in 2013. As of 2014 it is the largest economy in Africa, having overtaken South Africa.

Poverty

My first impressions of Bamako, Mali were the heat, the dust on unpaved streets, and the teeming vitality of the crowds living outdoors, beside the road, one of many

³⁰ Bloomberg, 2013: <http://www.bloomberg.com/visual-data/best-and-worst/biggest-oil-producers-countries>.

³¹ US Energy Information Authority, 2013: <http://www.eia.gov/countries/country-data.cfm?fips=NI>

signs of great poverty. Although my expectations may have been naïve, it seemed (in spite of the teeming cars) a more traditional place than I anticipated, more like Africa before colonialism as we see it in European explorers' reports. Little in my experience of West Africa changed these views.



Life in the Streets of Bamako, Mali

Disorder and improvisation were everywhere; I had planned to travel to Burkina Faso and to Nigeria, and had made appointments, but as I was boarding the plane in Bamako I learned that it was going to Niamey and would not fly to Ouagadougou. My flight from Niger to Abuja, Nigeria was cancelled by ASKY, now the Nigerian national airline, without explanation. It is wrong to blame West Africa for all these difficulties, which had the deepest root in the fact I was starting in Tbilisi, Georgia, which shares diplomatic relations with the West African countries but where they have no consulate or other powers' consulate that handles interactions. But nothing Georgian explains the fact that I had to pack in the dark to leave Niamey, because the electricity failed for hours and the faded, expensive hotel had no generator.

The strong subjective impression of poverty is confirmed by such quantitative indicators as are available. Widespread poverty remains a challenge in West Africa. The

majority of population in the area lives below poverty line, while the middle class is very small (only 33% of the regional population), faces very high living costs, and sits constantly on the verge of reverting back to poverty.³²

According to some estimates, 58% of people in sub-Saharan Africa were living on less than 1.25 USD a day until the end of the last millennium. However this number reduced to 48.5% by the 2010's.³³ Most of the population (70-80%) of the subregion, with the exception of the Ivory Coast and Mauritania (40–50%), lives on less than 2 USD per day, and an average of about 70–80% of the population lives on less than 2 USD per day. That said, coastal areas of Ghana and Nigeria seem to be doing better, with only 10-20% of the population living on less than 2 USD per day.³⁴

Simultaneously, several West African countries are among the twenty highest growing economies in the world: Sierra Leone (13.3%), Liberia (8.10%), Ivory Coast (8.0%), Ghana (7.9%).³⁵ It must be noted however, that Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Ivory Coast have such high growth rates as a result of a comeback from state failure and civil wars.

One must be careful when looking at the average per capita GDPs and national growth rates as they do not always reflect socio-economic equality:

Countries with abundant natural resources — oil-rich Nigeria, for example — score even worse in terms of progress on human development indicators than countries without them, and their poverty ratios decline even more slowly. As countries become more dependent on mineral and oil extraction, inequality increases.³⁶

In fact, while Nigeria is one of the top 40 fastest growing economies with an approximately 6.2% GDP growth, 84.49% of the Nigerian population lives on less than 2

³² Financial Times, 2014: <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/49812cde-c566-11e3-89a9-00144feabdco.html#axzz38sXzvJnt>

³³ The New York Times, 2013: http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/06/world/africa/behind-those-fast-growth-rates-rising-inequality.html?_r=0

³⁴ International Food Policy Research Institute, 2013

³⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, 2003: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2003rank.html>

³⁶ The New York Times, 2013

USD per day, 63% lives on below 1 USD per day, and top 10% of the population holds 38.23% of the income share.³⁷

In Mali,

According to World Bank figures, 43.6% of the Mali population lived below the national poverty line in 2010. This increased to 46.1 percent at the end of 2012, due to the 2011 drought and the 2012 political crisis. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs says that according to Malian statistics almost 25% of the population faces severe food insecurity. The high unemployment rate in Mali is linked to crimes, experts say.³⁸

According to the World Bank, Niger has a poverty rate of 56%, making it one of the poorest countries in the world. According to the 2010 United National Development Program Human Development Index report, Niger ranked 167th out of 169 countries.³⁹

The Nigerien⁴⁰ researcher Abdel Kadir Galy said that, as of a few years ago, life expectancy in his country was 44 years. Niger has the highest birthrate of any country in the world for which we have figures, and Mali comes next.

Given these realities it is not surprising that I found that in neither country do most people really know French, the national language. Education in French began in 1886, but the first Malian gained the certificate of completion of primary school in 1925. The generation that ought to be finishing graduate school from the central Kayes region now began its education in schools where there were more than eighty students for every teacher.⁴¹ In Niger, education can be judged from the fact that, according to Galy, 19% of adults are literate. Throughout West Africa, many students do not attend school, and a huge number of those who do attend traditional Qur'anic schools, where they are

³⁷ Global Finance, 2012: <http://www.gfmag.com/global-data/economic-data/wealth-distribution-income-inequality>

³⁸ West Africa Democracy Radio, 2011: http://wadr.org/en/site/news_en/2409/Mali-High-youth-unemployment-linked-to-rise-in-crimes.htm

³⁹ World Bank, 2014: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/niger/overview>

⁴⁰ Both Niger and Nigeria are named after the river Niger. The convention has grown up of using the French form Nigerien as the adjective meaning "pertaining to Niger," while the more normal Nigerian means the same for Nigeria.

⁴¹ *Atlas de Mali*, (Paris : Les Editions J. A., 2001), 58.

taught to recite memorized Arabic texts but do not learn the Arabic language. That can be traced to the fact that their teachers do not know Arabic, in the sense of being able to pick up a new Arabic book and read it. In Francophone countries, the teachers do not know French, nor do the students learn it, although it is the national language.⁴²

Nigeria is a much more populous country, by far the biggest in Africa with an estimated population of 168 million. Thus it possesses the most important resources, human beings and their labor. Areas such as the Yoruba and Ibo cores and Kano state are densely populated, avoiding the thinly spread populations characteristic of traditional Africa, which retarded economic development. The better known resource is oil. That gives the Nigerian a far better relative position, if we take only the overall figures.

But wealth is very unequally distributed, not only among the social classes but within the States of the federal system. As regards the former, the GINI coefficient is a recognized measure of income inequality among richer and poorer parts of the population. Recent West African figures, where “0” is perfect income equality and “100” implies perfect inequality, are as follows:⁴³

GINI coefficient, measure of income inequality

GINI 2010	GINI 2008	Country
33.0		Mali
-	34.6	Niger
48.8		Nigeria

⁴² Seydou Cissé, *L'enseignement islamique en Afrique noire*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1995), 88.

⁴³ World Bank, 2014: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI>

The Muslim areas of Northern Nigeria are among the very poorest in the country. Sokoto state, the seat of the greatest and most stable African empire of the last four hundred years, once the destination of vast amounts of plunder and slaves, now is the poorest in Nigeria with a poverty rate of 86.4 %.⁴⁴

Mining

West Africa is very rich in mineral supplies and a number of countries located there are some of the highest exporters of minerals in the world. Most noteworthy of these, and also mentioned above in the Modern Economy section, are petroleum, uranium, gold, diamond, iron, bauxite, and rutile reserves. You may acquaint yourself with the tables below in order to study the production of selected mineral commodities in all of the 19 countries of West Africa:⁴⁵

Production of Selected Mineral Commodities in 2011, Part 1 (Thousand metric tons unless otherwise specified)							
(Source: USGS, 2011 Minerals Yearbook, Africa)							
	Bauxite	Cobalt	Copper	Gold (kg)	Iron Ore, Gross Weight	Steel Crude	Lead
Western Sahara (and Morocco)	...	2,159	13	520	79	4,600	30,675
Mauritania	40	8,172	11,160	50	...
Senegal	4,089	...	...	...
Guinea-Bissau
Gambia
Guinea	15,300	...	...	156,955	...	...	...
Sierra Leone	1,457	...	...	164	1,300	...	...
Liberia	469	1,300	...	...
Ivory Coast	9,871	...	...	...
Ghana	408	...	...	82,993	...	...	...
Togo	16,469	...	...	...
Benino	20	...	...	...
Mali	35,728	...	...	...
Burkina Faso	31,774	...	...	...
Niger	1,879	...	...	...
Nigeria	100	70	400	NA
Cameroon	1,600	...	...	...
Chad	100	...	...	...

⁴⁴ BBC, 2012: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-17015873>

⁴⁵ US Geological Survey, 2011: <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/country/2011/myb3-sum-2011-africa.pdf>

Production of Selected Mineral Commodities in 2011, Part 2 (Thousand metric tons unless otherwise specified)								
(Source: USGS, 2011 Minerals Yearbook, Africa)								
	Manganese Ore	Zinc	Cement Hydraulic	Diamond, Natural	Phosphate Rock, Gross Weight	Coal, Anthracite etc.	Petroleum Crude	Uranium (Metric Tons)
Western Sahara (and Morocco)	230	45,065	14,000	...	28,052	...	1,500	...
Mauritania	...	...	565	...	...	...	2,824	...
Senegal	...	...	4,677	...	1,411	...	403	...
Guinea-Bissau	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Gambia	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Guinea	...	...	322	304	...	...	...	...
Sierra Leone	>	...	311	357	...	...	...	...
Liberia	...	...	61	42	...	.....	...	...
Ivory Coast	20	...	99	...	...	...	14,800	...
Ghana	484	...	2,550	302	...	...	24,100	...
Togo	...	...	1,780	...	866	...	...	...
Benino	...	...	1,300	...	...	...	...	...
Mali	...	...	...	...	200	...	...	...
Burkina Faso	22	...	450	...	2	...	...	.....
Niger	...	...	400	...	...	250	...	5,131
Nigeria	...	NA	11,600	...	...	39	866,245	...
Cameroon	...	...	1,100	10	...	...	22,046	...
Chad	...	...	10	...	...	...	44,000	...

Many African countries are highly and dangerously dependent on exports. The Nigerian state has been hollowed out from within like termite-infested wood by the oil economy because it is very corrupt. To take one case widely reported in the press, a unit of the Nigerian army posted to Maiduguri, capital of the State where Boko Haram is most active, rebelled on May 12, 2014 against its officers. In the self-censored language of a Nigerian newspaper:

The general officer commanding (GOC), 7 Division, Nigerian Army, Major General Ahmadu Mohammed, yesterday escaped death by a whisker when a group of disgruntled soldiers turned their gun at his vehicle and pulled the trigger.... [An “insider” explained] they were not happy that their allowances were not paid as and when due and it was not sufficient for them....there was nobody to listen to them. But when the GOC arrived and they were in the process of making their ordeal known to him, the corpses of those killed on their way to

Maiduguri were brought in and this led to one of them opening fire at the general.⁴⁶

Nigeria is becoming a failed state in spite of its huge revenue. Similar corruption, on a more modest scale, crippled the Malian army when it was attacked by jihadists in 2012. In such cases the state becomes like one of those machines designed by artists that noisily destroy themselves in front of an audience. The state's capacity to raise revenue, rather than strengthening it, wrecks it from within.

Drugs and Smuggling

Smuggling of various things is an important part of the modern economy, as it was of the pre-colonial economy. The Sahara cannot be secured against it, and some regional countries like Algeria, according to Judith Scheele, wink at illegal trade in return for bribes. Many accounts paint lurid pictures of how the drug trade nurtures jihadist movements, while other experts like Jeffrey Keenan and, to some extent, Scheele minimize it. The truth is hard to know, because it is the nature of smuggling in high-value commodities to constantly shift routes, commodities, and patrons. The sociologist Naffet Keita told me in Bamako that major smugglers had recently begun to emphasize tea as opposed to drugs and cigarettes. We will revisit this subject briefly towards the end. It is a kind of investigation in which intelligence agencies have a huge advantage over academic researchers, and therefore I do not emphasize it. But it was clear from interviews that there is much complicity by some governments. Guinea-Bissau, a nation with one of the lowest GDPs per capita where more than two-thirds of the population lives below the poverty line, has been experiencing drug trafficking problems since 2005 which have increased since the 2012 coup d'état. *Time* magazine reports⁴⁷ that Latin American drug traffickers, along with several neighboring West African nations, have transformed Guinea-Bissau as a transshipment point to Europe for cocaine. Sources report that the government and the military have made very few steps to counter this trend.

⁴⁶ Abdullahi Umar, Agency Report, Bayo Oladeji, Kareem Haruna, et al., "Mutiny In Maiduguri: GOC Shot By Angry Soldiers, Removed," *Leadership*, May 15, 2014, <http://leadership.ng/news/370897/mutiny-maiduguri-goc-shot-angry-soldiers-removed>

⁴⁷ Time, 2009: <http://content.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,1933291,00.html>

Chapter Three: Society and Islam

An hierarchic society

The disorder that seems, to the Westerner, to pervade West African society is partly misleading. These societies are indeed multiethnic, and the states to that extent artificial. The following map indicates the ethnic diversity of Mali.

The diversity in Nigeria is much greater. These societies include Muslims of many kinds, to be discussed later, Christians of many kinds (nearly half the population in Nigeria is Christian) and a few pagans.

The level of development of the arts and sciences was very different, ranging from cities hundreds or thousands of years old, like Djenne and Timbuktu in Mali, Kano and Katsina in Northern Nigeria, and the Yoruba cities in the southeast of Nigeria, to nomadic encampments in northern Mali and Niger and quite “primitive,” egalitarian peoples of the forest zone at the southern fringe of Mali or the Jos Plateau of Nigeria.

These societies appear disorganized to the traveler. He or she sees a huge city in hectic expansion like Bamako, with its roughly two million people, and learns that it does not have ethnic quarters like Middle Eastern or East African cities. He sees also that it does not have religious quarters where there are more people in Wahhabi mustaches and beards or hijab. He will imagine that it must be an anonymous society like those of the modern West, where people make their way on their own and form their own associations. Quite the contrary, sociologists such as (b) (7)(C) told me. It is still a society with a very keen sense of status and of the wounds inflicted by low status. Businessmen of low origins who have become rich in the market economy, now more open, and bought a seat in Parliament are still not respected. The nomadic societies of the Sahara, the Arabs and Tuaregs, are even more hierarchic. Traditional Tuareg culture is one of the most structured in the world, with nobles, a special status for Islamic marabouts, blacksmiths, and bards, commoner tribes, and Tuareg-speaking black slaves who are still treated badly. I asked (b) (5), (b) (5), specifically how the ethnic groups and clans, more or less prestigious, maintain

contact if there are no ethnic or religious neighborhoods. They said it is by gathering at ethnic festivals which draw everyone of a certain origin.

An American will be surprised to find that racism is still a powerful force in the societies where the Sahara meets the Sahel. Most of those involved would have been considered black in the South where I grew up, as this French-colonial illustration of people who consider themselves Arabs shows.



Image: Racism in West Africa: whiteness confers status, blackness diminishes it, but “color” ultimately comes from status

But they would be proud to be Arabs, a term that excludes blacks. Unlike the old South, status can change your racial reputation, but basically being “white” is prestigious and being “black” lowers your reputation. Many social scientists in West Africa, such as Cheikh Chikouna Cisse, Naffet Keita, and Seyni Mamouni, said that there is still throughout the Sahara a notion that “blacks” do not need Islam, an idea altogether repugnant to Islamic tradition. Because black African society in the Sahel is aware of these attitudes, racism divides north and south and creates a resistance to the spread of northern movements south.

Of all the horizontal status divisions in the society, the deepest is that between former masters and former slaves. As I learned from European explorers’ memoirs and from scholars in Paris, these societies had very high percentages of slaves when conquered by Europeans. The new colonial masters abolished the legal status of slavery,

but did little to end the relationships between slaves and masters which continued to be marked by inequality and obligations to serve involuntarily.

(b) (7)(C) in Mali, and (b) (7)(C)

(b) (7)(C) in Niger, said that slavery is still a huge problem that the society has not yet had the will to cope with. (b) (7)(C) says he has calculated that there are still over 870,000 slaves out of Niger's population of about 17,000,000. The Tuareg administrative units, Agades and Tahoua, are the highest in slaves. In Mali, there are still many people escaping from slavery, especially among Tuaregs. The resentment of ex-slaves (and others of subordinate status) played a major role in some jihadist movements.

So the discovery I made in Paris, that extreme Islamism has a major opportunity further south if it chooses to lead a radical egalitarian movement, was confirmed in West Africa. There are difficulties in seizing this opportunity, especially the fact that slavery is a permitted institution under the Shari'a (Islamic law), for which the jihadists profess great respect. In fact, the practice of the jihadists when they controlled northern Mali showed much inconsistency about status issues. Two West African scholars supported what I had heard in Paris, the jihadists never carried out the Qur'anic punishments (amputation for theft, etc.) on anyone of high status.

Sahel Islam: Weak, or Just Different?

I was struck that I could not hear the call to prayer in Bamako, this was my third impression of this city. Strictly speaking this is not true, the jet-lagged traveler can pick it up in the far distance just before dawn, when traffic noise is calmed, but the contrast with even half-secular country like Turkey is truly striking. Part of the reason is that there are (in Niger as well) many tiny mosques beside the road, often just a rough roof, a canopy, or just an open place along the busy thoroughfare. At the hours of prayer, however, a small fraction of the people haggling, driving, talking, eating, or joking turn aside to fulfill their duty to God. "Pas de problem" is the feeling.

In neither Mali nor Niger do you see many women in *hijab*; I saw only one in Mali in the full Saudi or Afghan-Pushtun covering. There were somewhat more in Niger, but the difference is marginal. Women's dress does not try to remove sexuality from the public space, the aim of strict hijab.



Image: Women's Dress in Bamako, Mali

I attended a Malian wedding, where the guests were entertained by sexy female dancers swaying to loud African music, itself a frequent Wahhabi taboo. Smoking, forbidden for strict Wahhabis, is almost universal for men who can afford it, cigarette and drug smuggling has allegedly been a major livelihood for jihadist supporters. While the traditional religious practice of nomads was also not strict, I have the sense it has become much more so with the wave of secessionist and now Islamist movements. Judith Scheele's book and interview presented religious observance as a marker of prestige among Arabs and Tuaregs, who see the Sahel (southern agricultural zone)⁴⁸, as the domain of seductive female beauty which can make a man forget his standards. Strict observance is evidently not a standard for prestige among the "black African" population of the Niger valley.

⁴⁸ The word Sahel comes from the Arabic word for "shore," in this case of the Sahara desert. It designates the agricultural but dry area between the desert and the "Savanna-Forest Mosaic," the patchy edge of the tropical rainforest, which had very different indigenous cultures.

Tolerance

A tolerance of different faiths and opinions is widespread in Mali; a historian and a local scholar of Islam who has the call to prayer for his cell phone ring turned out to be married to an Evangelical Christian (it is in fact is permitted by Islamic law). The sociologist (b) (7)(C), a major source for me in Mali, said “there is no tension between Christians and Muslims.”

In Niger, (b) (7)(C), another very useful source, said there are “no problems between them...the problems are within Islam.” According to an American diplomat I talked to, many Malian Muslims give presents, especially toys, on Christmas, without considering it compromises their faith. So Sahelian Islam is syncretistic. Christians are at least “People of the Book,” that is, monotheists with a scripture who have a legitimate and protected status within traditional Islam. More shocking, to a strict Muslim, is the tolerance of paganism. As we will see, it has a considerable place in officially sponsored celebrations of Malian identity. In Niger, (b) (7)(C) even claimed it existed in the Caliphate established by the jihad of Usman dan Fodio: “the animists could stay at peace within the Caliphate,” an interpretation my reading makes doubtful, but one indicating the local model.

The tolerance between Muslims and Christians does not exist in Nigeria, as I had been told in London and Paris earlier. (b) (7)(C), who observes Nigeria closely from next door, said there is a “strong competition between Muslims and Christians.” According to the London and Paris scholars, both have messianic expectations. While waiting in Paris for a visa, I was able to interview (b) (7)(C) outside Paris and a recognized authority on violence and government repression in Africa. According to (b) (7)(C), the first group to attack Christians was those nicknamed the “Taliban,” in 2010. Muhammad Yusuf, the martyred first leader of the murderous Boko Haram group, was an ethnic Gwoza, a small group south of Maiduguri that was pagan until recently with many Christian converts, “so it is a religious war.” In fact, the Christian clergyman who heads their largest association in Nigeria has called for a “holy war” against Muslims. The result of all these tensions is lots of massacres between Muslims and Christians.

I finished the trip wondering how long the mutual tolerance of Christians and Muslims in the Francophone Sahel countries will last. Although Christians comprise only about three percent of the Malian population, (b) (7)(C) told me that “at the base of society, the Protestants are more energetic” than the Muslims. Twice as many Protestant chapels as Mosques are now being founded. These Protestants are representatives of African evangelical groups tracing their origins to American missionary activity in the 1980s. Many Christians are in the army. While driving with the Muslim (b) (7)(C), past Army headquarters, he said “there are the Christians,” pointing to a church on the garrison grounds. (b) (7) explained that there are indeed many Christians in the army, “of Bobo or Dogon [small southern tribes, traditionally pagan] origin,” though there are more Muslims. The Dogon Christians of the high leadership at the time of the 2012 coup have been replaced. Amadou Sanogo then-Captain and a leader of the coup is a Dogon Christian, who is in jail now. But the strength of Christians in the army is another sign of the weak Muslim identification of the Malian state, and a potential point of friction when militant Islam is the nation’s biggest problem. Christianity, according to several informants, is also spreading in Niger, although they seemed less struck by it. Christianity is one of several factors I learned about in West Africa that might cause Jihadi Islam to spread to the south, to the Sahel, as it did in Nigeria.

Black Islam?

Many works on sub-Saharan Africa speak of a special variety of Islam, nicknamed “Islam Noir” in the French literature. First impressions of Islam in some Sahel countries certainly bring this idea to mind. The existence of a special black African Islam is an idea that has recurred again and again. Jean-Louis Triaud has defined it as “an age-old and constantly recycled stereotype” that there is

...a black Islam characterized by membership in Sufi orders, by saint worship, by [a] certain proximity with animist practices, and a general tolerant attitude.⁴⁹

The issue is important for American security interests. As the Mali happenings of 2012-13 showed, the Sahara is an enormous, unpopulated and wild area where jihadist groups have circulated rather freely, and the chaotic condition of Libya is likely to keep the Sahara open to them. Such jihadist groups, I argue, are invariably at least strongly under Wahhabi-Salafist influence. If there really is a distinctive “Islam Noir” or black Islam in the Sahel, with the characteristics Triaud sketches, it would seem to offer a barrier against the expansion of Muslim extremism in the more populous areas to the south, which matter more internationally. (It needs to be acknowledged already that a major jihadist group, Boko Haram, is already fighting in northeast Nigeria, in the zone said to be home to black Islam.) Perhaps the United States and its allies might even mobilize black Islam against jihadists inspired by the Salafi-Wahhabi ideas so inimical to Sufism.

Unfortunately, the concept of black Islam is no longer respectable. That is understandable, given some of the reasons the idea was attractive earlier. It is easy to show that the first people to voice similar ideas were medieval Arab racists, who considered Islam as an Arab possession and disdained the blacks as uncivilized and savage. I consider the nature and power of Arab racism elsewhere. French and British colonialism discovered new reasons to develop ideas that were floating around in the Arab and European contexts and to give them a more precise and scholarly form. The term “Islam noir” itself was coined in 1924 by Captain Pierre-Jean André, but the concept was in use from the turn of the century; I wonder why it began so late. Alain Quellien, a civil servant in the French Ministry of Colonies, wrote already in 1910 that

Sudanic Islam has the advantage of losing its fanaticism as the color of black increases; fanaticism persists only among those mixed race blacks resulting from the conjoining of Arab and Fulani....This Islamism, *shapeless and heterodox*, will

⁴⁹ “Giving a Name to Islam South of the Sahara: an Adventure in Taxonomy,” *Journal of African History* 55: 1 (March 2014), 9-15.

not become dangerous as long *as it is permitted to keep to itself* and suffers no major modifications as a result of intrusion from external influences.⁵⁰

Because black Islam was thought of as shapeless, there was the hope that it might change so as to become more immune to Middle Eastern contamination. Paul Marty, a major colonial official, wrote in 1913 that the Senegalese Mouride Sufi order “should be thought of as a sort of new religion descended from Islam.”⁵¹

Given this lineage, African scholars and Muslim leaders, with a few exceptions, hate the idea of “black Islam.” It would be easy for well-intentioned American officials or analysts to praise West African Islam for its moderation and apolitical nature, but they should be aware of this controversial history and exercise great caution in treating this subject unless they know their interlocutors very well. Partly because of African attitudes, but more because of general revulsion against colonial concepts and postures, the ceaseless tides of academic revisionism have washed away this understanding of African Islam, although one can find serious scholars who can be seen as returning to it in one way or another. In the following, I attempt to examine this topic afresh.

Is sub-Saharan African Islam in fact “heterodox?” There really is heterodox Islam, like the Ahmadiyya around the world, centered in Pakistan, which argues that its founder was another Prophet after Muhammad, the Isma’ilis in Syria, India, East Africa, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan, the ‘Alawis who have ruled Syria, the various vaguely defined Turkish, Iraqi, and Persian groups called ‘Alawis, with a different meaning, ‘Ali Illahis, or followers of the “Cult of Angels.” The Bahais, the Druses in Syria and Lebanon, and the Yezidis trace at least some of their origins to Islam, but are usually considered to be different religions. But we do not find them in sub-Saharan Africa, except for tiny groups recently imported or inspired from abroad, like the Ahmadi converts of missionaries who came by sea recently, or the “Shi’ites” in northern Nigeria who partially imitated the Islamic Revolution of 1978-79. Unlike the Middle

⁵⁰ A. Quellien, *La politique musulmane dans l’Afrique occidentale française*, (Paris, 1910), 172, quoted in Triaud, « Giving a Name to Islam, » 7.

⁵¹ Ibid.

East and North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa lacks the heritage of the early and deep splits in Islam between Shi'ites (themselves the source of many further splits and heterodoxies), Sunnis and Kharijites. In fact, as of the nineteen-twenties when foreign influences began to enter more powerfully, sub-Saharan Islam was *unusually uniform*, and in spite of these influences it is still more uniform than Middle Eastern Islam, which the “black Islam” stereotype presents as the standard. All West African Muslims were Sunni, all followed the Maliki school of law, all practiced some version of Sufi or “maraboutic” Islam whether or not they had formally joined a Sufi order. And, as opposed to the baffling profusion of Sufi orders in India or some Middle Eastern countries, those who were members of the orders were either Qadiris or Tijanis. The “heterodoxy” notion is nonsense.

That is not the entire story, however. West African Islam can be *syncretic*, mingle non-Muslim religious beliefs or practices with Muslim ones. But syncretism is not distinctively black African. Most Persians, Central Asians, Kurds and Azerbaijanis celebrate and cherish the originally Zoroastrian New Year's festival, Nawruz, with non-Muslim habits like the display of sprouted wheat—a practice they share with Orthodox Christian Georgians, who do it on Easter. The difference in West Africa is that more of the practices and beliefs that mingle with originally Muslim ones are arguably of pagan, polytheistic origin, like the great role of rhythmic music and drumming in celebrations, or the employment of what Benjamin Soares calls “power objects.” In large parts of the central Sahel, as in East Africa, there is the belief in spirits who can possess you and must be exorcised by special female specialists, much suspected by strict Muslims. To the extent that polytheism is worse for a Muslim than the beliefs of the “People of the Book,” that is, Christians and Jews, there is a little ground for the black Islam notion. But again, the worst syncretism would be abandoning or compromising the belief in one God, and this deviation is found more in Middle Eastern “sub-Islamic” cults influenced by Shi'ism, like the Syrian-Cilician 'Alawis, Yezidis and 'Ali-Illahis, or in the Neoplatonist Isma'ili theology introduced by al-Nasafi in the Middle Ages, than in West Africa. For Salafis or Wahhabis, the reverence accorded to Sufi sheiks is un-Muslim, because it makes human beings “share” in divine qualities, but the respect for the family

of the Prophet, and thoroughly “orthodox” doctrines like the sinlessness of Muhammad, in early Islam makes this view highly implausible.

There is much sorcery and witchcraft practiced by some categories of Muslims in West Africa. Whole occupational groups of Islamic experts devote themselves to magical spells, the preparation of amulets, and so forth. This challenges Islam, whose strict doctrine (e.g. Qur’an 113.4) is that to assert human ability to command superhuman forces is to deny the omnipotence of God. It can easily descend into the perspective common in pre-monotheistic religion, that man controls the gods, through magic, rather than the other way around. But a glance at the *One Thousand and One Nights* is enough to reveal magic and sorcery at home in the traditional Middle East.

As in the West, there is a distinct difference in the respectability of “white” and “black” magic, the former omnipresent and serving to get advantages or success, the latter to harm or kill.⁵² The latter is not respectable and is the object of fascinated whispers. Some scholars, such as Constant Hames and Elisa Pellizzari,⁵³ have explored this inaccessible subject. Pellizzari quotes at length the horrifying written confession of the assistant of a *mobbo*, a teacher in a traditional elementary school for the memorization of the Qur’an:

I myself worked with demons to enrich certain people, shedding innocent blood for the demons. Many merchants come from everywhere for these practices: there are also civil servants and politicians who want important posts; they ask [us] to kill people whose place they wish to occupy, and there are those who want to be Members of Parliament, mayor of a city or ministers. It was suggested to them to sacrifice the tongue, the head, the heart or the genitals—either of a woman or a man—[according to] the demon who was going to be invoked.⁵⁴

⁵² For examples, see Soares, *Prayer Economy*, 146, 155.

⁵³ Constant Hames, « Problématiques de la magie-sorcellerie en islam et perspectives africaines, » *Cahier d'études africaines* 48 : 1-2, 86-89; Elisa Pellizzari, « éduquer par la souffrance : les élèves des écoles coraniques au Mali, », 94-99, « André-Muusaa ou du baptême diabolique : histoire d'un échec », 166-172, in Elisa Pellizzari and Omar Sylla, eds., *La transmission du savoir traditionnel au Mali : entre soufisme tijani et écoles coraniques*, (Turin : Harmattan Italia, 2012),

⁵⁴ Pellizzari, « André-Muusaa, » 166-67.

Usually it was little boys turned over by their parents to the teacher, who are exploited in many ways, that were sacrificed. André-Musaa first had homosexual intercourse, also forbidden by Islam, with the drugged boy, since “the *marabout* said it was obligatory in the ritual,” and then cut the little boy’s throat with a knife engraved with Arabic characters, collected the blood in a calabash, and saved the body parts for potions and amulets.⁵⁵

Such cases are not always mentioned in polemics against the idea of black Islam. One can understand why rumors about them supported the powerful prejudices of colonial officials formulating the concept. André-Muusaa also underwent in Timbuktu a “diabolic baptism,” visiting 333 tombs of saints at night, invoking the spirit of the saint, saying certain magic verses and striking the tomb three times, whereupon a demon would appear in the form of the person for whom he was doing magic. Henceforth he “knew the Qur’an in its authentic translation, ” could leave his body every night for “mystical voyages,” and so forth. This aspect of Sufi, or sub-Sufi, saint worship might give us more sympathy for the Wahhabis of AQMI and Mujao who destroyed these tombs during their occupation of northern Mali.

The sacrifice reminds of the black masses celebrated by the “witch” Catherine Malvoisin and a priest at the command, apparently, of Madame de Montespan, the fading mistress of King Louis XIV; these also involved human sacrifice. As in the black mass, the sacred when inverted or reversed becomes a powerful way of evoking evil forces that are as powerful as the sacred ones. The invocation of the Timbuktu saint also summons a demon. André-Muusaa had the forbidden homosexual relations with his teacher on a prayer rug. The European example shows that such horrors are not strictly evidence of black Islam. Nevertheless, the presence of things like human sacrifice, and cannibalism, in some African cultures of the forest zone⁵⁶ must have made it easier for

⁵⁵ Pellizzari, « André-Muusaa, » 169-171.

⁵⁶ It occurs in traditional Yoruba, Igbo and Ijaw religion, for example. For a recent Liberian example see Jonathan Paye, "news.bbc.co.uk, [I ate children's hearts, ex-rebel says.](http://news.bbc.co.uk)" 22 January 2008, BBC News. Retrieved 2014-05-25.

these practices to penetrate local Islam. Reading Pelizzari's accounts, we are also impressed by the furtiveness of this side of Qur'anic elementary education.

These practices seem to be relatively rare. What was probably more powerful in advancing the black Islam stereotype was the perception that West African Muslims are not very observant, but rather lax and tolerant. In a superficial journey, this was certainly my own impression.

Once more, some cross-cultural comparisons are in order. It is odd to find servants of the secular French Republic denigrating African Muslims for their lax faith; these French officials varied tremendously but many probably baptized their children and never revisited a church. In the America of my childhood, many Protestants of the "Mainline" churches used to attend on Christmas and Easter, send their children to Sunday School, but never prayed or read the Bible. The architecture of Reform and Conservative Jewish synagogues recognizes a similar reality by creating a sanctuary space that can be increased manyfold on the High Holy Days. In visiting a city like Bamako or Niamey, the impact of rapid urbanization needs to be remembered. Most people were peasants a few years ago, a category that is not very observant in many Middle Eastern countries either, where religion is traditionally strongest in medium-sized towns.

In the African context, loose observance does probably facilitate some instances of innovation that are not unique, but unusual in the Middle Eastern contexts. Example are the call of the popular Muslim leader Haidara, in Mali, for saying prayers in Bambara as well as Arabic, or the formation of little groups in Nigeria of Qur'aniyya, sects that acknowledge the religious authority of the Qur'an alone.

The greatest difficulty with the black Islam thesis are simply factual ones. There is one major, and exceedingly fanatic, jihadist group in the Sahel: Boko Haram in Nigeria. In discussing Boko Haram elsewhere, we will probe the specific geographic and historical reasons for the emergence of Boko Haram. At this point, we can say it suggests

the Sahel will not necessarily repel jihadism. Finally, as Jean-Louis Triaud reminds us,⁵⁷ there is a major indigenous tradition of Islamic revivalism that used jihad to establish correct Islamic practice and spread Islam: the great jihads between the late seventeenth and the late nineteenth centuries. The most important question this study will explore is whether this great example will inspire Muslims in the Sahel again.

Slavery

(b) (7)(C) [REDACTED], one of the two most important centers of African studies in Paris. He had been particularly recommended by (b) (7)(C) [REDACTED]. The discussion with him was particularly rewarding, although it was conducted entirely in French and I undoubtedly missed some things. I began by asking about religious geography, but (b) (7)(C) [REDACTED] led the conversation on the topic of slavery, which he is an expert on. He complained that the older anthropologists had denied the importance of Islam and of slavery. The former neglect is obvious from general textbooks of Islamic history that treated Islam in sub-Saharan Africa as afterthoughts described in a few pages. By the eighteenth century, in my own view, this was no longer true. At a time when civilization and political power in the central Islamic lands, from Morocco to India, was declining, Islam in sub-Saharan West Africa was entering a new, dynamic phase of Sufi religious innovation, triumphant jihads, and vernacular writing. Had European colonialism not intervened, these newly confident and powerful movements might have entered the central Islamic space in the way that Berbers and Turks did beginning in the tenth century.

The topic of slavery is important for two obvious reasons. Explorers' narratives like that of Mungo Park show that slavery was the condition of the vast majority in the societies of the Sahel (the zone between the forest and the desert) until it was, formally, ended by the European conquest.

⁵⁷ "Giving a Name to Islam," 12-13.

The slaves in Africa, I suppose, are nearly in the proportion of three to one to the free man.⁵⁸

May 11th.- At daybreak we departed from Dindikoo, and after a toilsome day's travel arrived in the evening at Satadoo, the capital of a district of the same name. This town was formerly a considerable extent; but many families had left it in consequence of predatory incursions of the Foulahs of Foota Jalla [Futa Jallon, now in Guinea], who made it a practice to come secretly through the woods and carry off people from the corn fields, and even from the wells near the town.⁵⁹

(b) (7)(C) explained here that the French, initially zealous for the real as well as nominal suppression of slavery, lost interest after the draining shock of the First World War. The "freed" slaves continued to be stigmatized, obligated in many places to offer labor and deference to their former masters, and unequally treated in religious contexts. In West Africa, according to (b) (7)(C) the descendents of slaves still do not lead prayer. Naffet Keita, a Malian anthropologist, gives the numbers who are still held in slave status or stigmatized because of their origins as from 30 à 35 % of the population around Timbuktu, 30 % at Mopti (in the center), 20 % at Gao (in the northeast), from 12 % à 15 % à Kayes (in the west).⁶⁰

All this is against the background of a highly inegalitarian traditional society, in which not only slaves but some occupational groups like blacksmiths and oral poets are treated as separate castes.

Among the many strands of Islam is one that emphasizes the equality of all believers before God. So Islamic practice that subordinates slaves or ex-slaves will invite protest and revolt, revolt that can easily legitimize itself by Islamic texts. (b) (7)(C), like some of my London interview subjects, affirmed the view of 'Abd-al-'Aziz Batran that

⁵⁸ Mungo Park, *Travels*, (London: J. M. Dent, 1907), Everyman's Library ed., 220, originally published 1799 and 1815.

⁵⁹ Mungo Park, *Travels*, (London: J. M. Dent, 1907), Everyman's Library ed., 264, originally published 1799 and 1815.

⁶⁰ [Boris Thiolay](#), « Mali, la révolte des esclaves, » *L'Express*, 17/05/2013 12:09 PM.

the nineteenth century jihad of al-Hajj ‘Umar was significantly fueled by the support of slaves who hoped for freedom. (b) (7)(C), in London, disagreed partly, saying we really don’t know who the nineteenth-century jihad warriors were.) The governments established by the jihads failed, on the whole, to satisfy these hopes, a situation that the present governing elites inherit from their precolonial and colonial predecessors. The manipulation of the sites of slave suffering, like the island of Goree, for tourists is misleading; it is still shameful in West Africa to have had enslaved ancestors, prestigious to have slaving ancestors. The communist or quasi-communist regimes like those earlier in Benin or Mali did not interfere with these traditional status distinctions.

I raised the question whether these conditions do not mean that a Islamic egalitarian movement would have huge potential. He said that it could, and that some current movements are taking that opportunity, some moderate, like Endam Bilal in Senegal or the Haratin (black ex-slave) leader Biram ould Abeid in Mauritania, others extreme. MUJAO, the most authentically black African of the terrorist movements that seized northern Mali in 2012, was founded and led by Tilemsi Arabs from Mali, former slaves with little claim to be Arab, also active in the drug trade (a claim questioned by (b) (7)(C)). Nevertheless, as (b) (7) had told me, MUJAO and its allied movements were afraid to cut off the hands of people with high status.

(b) (7)(C) also dealt with the impact of slavery. She said that, contrary to the “international donor discourse,” there is “dire subjugation” only in in very isolated communities in northern Niger, and to a lesser extent in northern Mali. Rather, the relationship of former masters and former slaves is “constantly being renegotiated.” In Timbuctoo, Goundam and Gao the Haratin (former black slaves of nomads) have been free since colonial times, but may still have some social or economic dependence on their former masters. She said that local memories of the jihads are very different in different areas, which makes sense given the enormous area, the many ethnic groups, and the their quite different fates then and under colonialism. In Kayes, in western Mali close to the border of Senegal, where she did her most extensive field work, people say that the great jihads brought slavery. The history suggests it is partly, but not wholly true. Kayes was a connecting area for the Tuareg and Arab slave trade. In other areas of

Mali, it was done by locals. Sheikh Hamallah, the head of a currently vigorous branch of the Tijaniyya sufi order, attracted slaves, women, and other “subalterns” (a trendy term used by (b) (7)(C)). In (b) (7)(C) view, the recent jihadist takeover of northern Mali triggered very different reactions among former slaves and former masters. The ex-slave tribes in the Timbuctoo and Gao areas were afraid of their former Tuareg masters.

Muslim Societies without a Muslim History

Although impressionistic, these differences between Sahara and Sahel are confirmed by my interviews in London, Oxford, Paris, Mali and Niger. Bamako is, as (b) (7)(C) told me, a “Bambara city.” You hear many languages in Bamako, but inquiry elicits the information that Bambara, not French, is the general language of daily life. Almost all indigenous-language publishing is in Bambara, as are many children’s books and elementary textbooks. (In Niger, knowledge of French is even more sketchy, and Songhay and to some extent Hausa hold a similar position to Bambara in Mali.) To understand the bearing of this, a little background on the Bambara people is necessary.

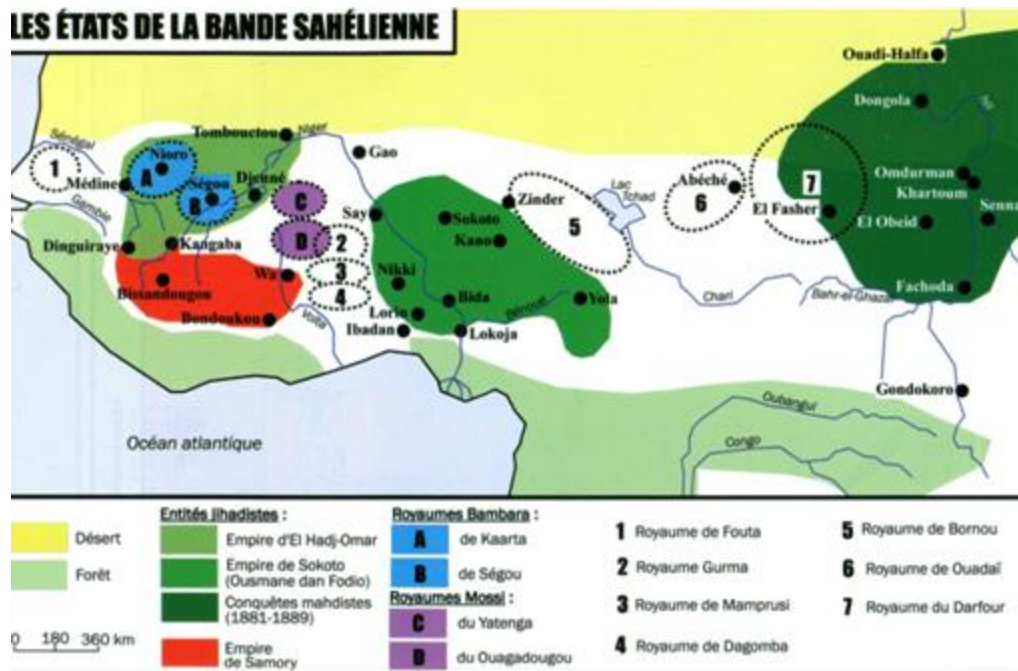
According to a prominent Kenyan historian of Africa,

The Bambara kingdoms of Segu (which is now in Mali) and Kaarta emerged in the Niger Bend (northern part of River Niger) and the upper reaches of River Volta between the sixteenth and eighteenth century. These kingdoms took up state-building in West Africa with sophisticated political machinery and intermixing of ethnic groups. The Bambaras were basically peasants from Niger who rebelled against their chiefs. From this the Kulibali clan came about and founded these kingdoms.

...Although Bambaras practiced their own religion and were animists (basically the belief that animals or other non-human entities such as plants have a spiritual essence) with traditional practices and beliefs, they maintained a relationship with the Muslims based on tolerance, syncretism and exchange of service.⁶¹

⁶¹ Bethwell A. Ogot, ed., *Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (UNESCO General History of Africa), quoted at <http://www.joshuaproject.net/people-profile.php?peo3=10617&rog3=ML>

The tolerance and syncretism attributed to the Bambara did not prevent al-Hajj ‘Umar, the great leader of Jihad in what is now Mali beginning in 1846, from waging war against the Bambara kingdoms until he had utterly subjugated them, annexed them to his empire, and made them submit to proper Islam as he saw it.



Traditional States before Colonial Conquest

As in many newly independent countries, Malian intellectuals made great efforts to fashion, or perhaps fabricate, a historical lineage for the new state. The answer most commonly developed was to emphasize modern Mali's connection with the big medieval empire of Mali, which was not originally Muslim, or very Muslim in general.

Particular effort was made by intellectuals and by ceremonies and holidays of the new state to connect Mali with the guilds of traditional hunters. In the southern fringe of Mali, belonging to the very different cultures of the "Guinea forest zone," with its magic and secret societies, hunters—who also served as warriors for their tribes—were a group set apart, with special ritual practices and clothing for the hunt.

They wore special costumes covered with talismans (anathema to Wahhabis) and mirrors, intended to deflect the ill-will of the animals being hunted.⁶²



Image: Chasseur "Simbo"

In developing a modern army for independent Mali, an effort was made to draw on these traditions. The official title of the Chief of Staff of the Malian army is "Chef des Tamajors." A more negative reflection of the attitude toward the Islamic past is the National Museum. Islam is largely missing from the National Museum. The Museum does not attempt to follow any chronological line, but presents highlights: archeological artifacts from pagantimes, ancient and modern textiles, unusual ceremonies.

One small room has a model of the medieval Muslim city of Djenne, and one manuscript of the Qur'an. They are put in the shadows by the display of magical masks and costumes used by people in the extreme southeast, and by strange ethnographic filmstrips of their magical ceremonies, all decidedly non-Muslim. The Malian state, in the words of Gilles Holder, is thus "a schizophrenic republic: a Muslim society that comes out of a history without Islam."⁶³

⁶² Francis Simonis, "Récit national et recours au passé: a chacun son Mali," in Patrick Gonin, Nathalie Kotlok et Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, eds., *La tragédie malienne*, (Paris : Vendémiaire, 2013), 183-199, especially 190-192.

⁶³ Gilles Holder, "Un pays musulman en quête d'un Etat-nation," in *Ibid.*, 111.

The official presentation of identity belonging to the state of Niger and its citizens is also somewhat ethnic, emphasizing the medieval Songhai Empire ruled by the Songhai people, although the Songhai do not have a plurality in the population. But it is a more Muslim history, because the Songhai Empire was Muslim centuries before Bambara Kaarta and Segou. The most famous event is the splendid pilgrimage of the King to Mecca. As seen in places like poorer and more amateurish National Museum, it celebrates the ethnic diversity of Niger somewhat more than Mali, but not sufficiently—my informants said—to prevent it from being a major problem. The largest ethnic group in Niger is Hausa, who live in a narrow strip of agricultural land along the borders of Nigeria. The presence of this ethnic group tends to import Nigerian Islam and Nigerian extremism into Niger. Hausa publishing and television within Nigeria is on a huge scale compared with Niger, and far more sophisticated, ensuring huge Hausa influence from abroad. According to several informants in Niger, the Nigerian Wahhabi group Yan ‘Izala, to be discussed later, now has a major presence on the Nigerien religious scene, and the fanatic Nigerian jihadist group Boko Haram has a small but real foothold in the Diffa area of southeast Niger, near Lake Chad.

West Africans deal with the complexities of life with resigned, humorous acceptance. The national motto of Mali is the stirring totalitarian call: “Une Peuple, Un But, Une Foi” One People, One Aim, One Faith, fastened on the country by Modibo Keita, its first “Socialist” dictator after independence, but it ought to be what you hear every few minutes, “pas de problem,” no problem. To the traveler, the mood of Muslim West Africa seems very different from that of Middle Eastern countries, where pride is the keynote.

Religious geography

I made an effort in London, Oxford and Paris to clarify the complex religious geography of West Africa, that is, where alternative interpretations of Islam are dominant or where alternative potentials for religious transformation are latent.

From the standpoint of the struggle against terrorism, the most important religious identity is the one that calls itself throughout most of the Muslim world

“Salafi,” the same identity as that pejoratively labeled as “Wahhabi” by others. (b) (7) (C) added a crucial clarification to this issue, saying that in Mali a distinction is normally made between “Wahhabis” and “Salafis.” “Wahhabis” are Muslim reformists who began to arise in Mali in the 1930s, under Saudi influence, but whose interest is confined to the jihad of the soul. Wahhabis have separate mosques, but are a respectable group who occupy positions in the religious establishment. Those militant Muslims who appeared in the 1990s, under the influence of exiled Algerian Islamists are generally called “Salafis” and form a distinct group. They are more anti-Western and are reputed in northern Mali to be involved in smuggling, including drugs (see elsewhere for this disputed issue).

(b) (7)(C), an American anthropologist (b) (7)(C), forthrightly said that “to me, contemporary militancy is a product of modernity.” Particularly powerful in changing the religious identity of various parts of West Africa was the very different colonial experience under Britain and France. In Northern Nigeria, a British colony, the educated elites were encouraged to pursue Islam, and people could enter the new political economy through Islam. Modern schooling was left to Christian missionaries. In the French colonies education was state-controlled and secular. The French were more suspicious of Islam, particularly of the Tijaniyya sufi order implanted throughout most of their area by the al-Hajj ‘Umar. (b) (7)(C), who has done most of his fieldwork in Mali, described its religious evolution at a length that cannot be repeated here. He thought the Salafist movement in Mali came from socioeconomic conditions there. Fundamentally, he agreed with Olivier Roy’s interpretation of Salafism or Wahhabism in the central Islamic lands as a means of shedding pre-modern features of folk or Sufi Islam so people can enter modern society. “In Mali, people who enter the civil service become Salafis to be modern.” Like all of my interview subjects, he did not know what had happened to these people when Salafi fighters seized the north in 2012. In spite of the appeal of Salafism, some modern Sufi organizations have adapted well to the modern economy and remain strong, he said referring to the work of Benjamin Soares at Leiden University in the Netherlands.

Northern Mali has a long history of banditry, and was drawing income from drug and cigarette smuggling and from kidnapping. “At some point they usually adopt an ideology,” and in Northern Mali this went on gradually in the early 90s. In Mali the events of 2012 were seen as a northern, secessionist movement, and the harshness of Salafi rule in the north lost them support.

I asked many of my interview subjects specifically about the recurrent presence of extremism in northeastern Nigeria (historic Bornu and neighboring emirates) and the adjoining parts of Niger and Cameroon. (b) (7)(C) had done his dissertation work in Bornu a half-century ago, but had no ready explanation. He found people nostalgic about the great days of Bornu, with a sense of loss, but he did not find the environment particularly extreme. He sees Boko Haram as a generational revolt against the authority of elders.

(b) (7)(C), a scholar at University College London who is still very active in understanding both historical and current phenomena, had a much more interesting explanation of the extremism of northeast Nigeria. He argued that “Radical Muslims [usually] went to the edges of civilization,” a thing I knew to be true of the earliest radicals, the Kharijites and then Shi’ites. Moreover, “in expecting the Mahdi [messiah], you’d go east; he will be in Mecca.” Places like Marwa, Cameroon, are also on the pilgrim road.

An important issue, though less so than at one time, is the distribution of the major Sufi orders. The oldest in the region, the Qadiriyya, exists all over the Islamic world in widely differing forms. (b) (7)(C) said that the Qadiris are strong in Mauritania, weak in Mali. But in northern Mali locations like Kidal, many of the Tuaregs are Qadiris. One would think this would divide them from the Salafi leadership of the current jihadist movements, but she said it had little political impact.

A much more important reality, especially south of the desert, is the Tijaniyya Sufi order whose religious practice was imposed by al-Hajj ‘Umar in the vast empire he founded beginning in 1846. The Tijaniyya, however, is very fragmented into differing

and often hostile groups. Most Fulanis (Fulbe, French Peuls) are now Muslim, and most are Tijanis. (She assumed that I knew most Mande, the dominant ethnic group of Mali, also adhered to the Tijaniyya.)

Religion

Religious beliefs present in West Africa are African traditional religion, in many differing polytheistic forms, Christianity and Islam. African traditional religion is in retreat, strongest in the forest zone to the south, and is not too significant in the Sahel states from Senegal and Guinea across to Chad. Its greater significance lies in its influence on Christianity and Islam, and on attempts of secular national elites to express national identities. The latter we will treat in the context of the African state, and we will discuss the issue of pagan influence on Islam shortly. One might see the influence of African traditional religion in the popularity of Pentecostal and Charismatic forms of Christianity. One of the things that most surprised me was the importance of Christianity in the Sahel, even in largely Muslim countries like Mali and Niger. American government analysis of Islam in West Africa needs to study it more. Nigeria is the scene of very active competition between Islam and Christianity and great mutual hostility; there have been many massacres of one group by the other.

Islam

Our major concern, however, is with Islam. It may be worth beginning with some basic considerations that could be well-known, but are important enough to repeat. The second surah, or chapter, of the Qur'an seems to criticize Judaism for not being universal, and Christianity for not being political.⁶⁴ Islam should be both universal—believed in by the whole world—and political, producing political rule that is somehow Muslim. Because Islam is political and universal, it was hard for Muslims in areas of the Sahel ruled by Muslims to submit to colonial rule. Because of these two claims, there should in principle be only one Commander of the Faithful, or Caliph, a rigorous deduction now carried into effect with the declaration of the Islamic State, no longer confined to Syria and Iraq. But the term Islamic State expresses a misunderstanding.

⁶⁴ I owe this interpretation to Hillel Fradkin.

The historic Caliphates were not states in our sense; precisely because of their universality, their rulers could not be sovereigns over a precisely defined territory. We will see that Islamists have difficulties with the concept of the territorially defined state. Coexistence with other states is anomalous, even if they are Muslim. Sometimes these elements of doctrine are purely latent, sometimes they return to determine events. Because Islam is political, waging war is religiously proper—but only in the cases defined by Islamic law.

Jihad

Those fighting against their own governments and France and denouncing the United States claim to be engaging in jihad approved, or even required, by Islam. Thus it is necessary to review what jihad is and is not. In the popular conception it probably is the late M. G. S. Hodgson calls it in a moment of inattention, “a war against non-Muslims sanctioned in certain circumstances by religion.”⁶⁵ On the contrary, in most West African military operations called by the warriors “jihads,” as in many Middle Eastern, the opponents and most of the victims have been other Muslims. This is conspicuously true not only in Mali, but also in Nigeria, where there are many Christians but Boko Haram does not seem to be killing them disproportionately. The Crusades are indeed the most likely association with Jihad for Western Christians and Jews. But there were three major distinctions. First, as Bernard Lewis notes, it developed late, after a thousand years of Christian history. In contrast,

Jihad is present from the beginning of Islamic history—in scripture, in the life of the Prophet, and in the actions of his companions and immediate successors. It has continued throughout Islamic history and retains its appeal to the present day.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, (Chicago: university of Chicago Press, 1974), paperback ed., 1: 69.

⁶⁶ Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror*, (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2004), 37.

Perhaps more important is the second contrast, the keynote of G. W. F. Hegel's thought-provoking discussion of the crusades, is that the crusades *ended*. They now belong to an earlier phase of Christian history, marking a *stage* of Christianity's development.⁶⁷

A third contrast, usually ignored, was raised by Albrecht Noth, and is well explored in Michael Bonner's useful book on jihad.⁶⁸ Many *'ulama* (religious scholars) fought with weapons in their hands, killed and died in jihads. We will see several scholars like Usman dan Fodio, founder of the Sokoto Caliphate in what is now northern Nigeria, who had never wielded the sword but became a general in the cause of God, in his case at the age of fifty. In contrast, the Anabaptists who fought at Muenster in 1534—amateurs, not clergymen, with one exception--and possibly some localized episodes of the Peasant War, were the only attempts, in the great upsurge of Christian religious enthusiasm called the Protestant Reformation, to fuse spiritual leadership, terrestrial rule, and military leadership in the Muslim manner. This shows the distinctiveness of Christianity, with its deprecation of the world and the resulting separation of church and state. We do see in Oliver Cromwell a general who was also a religious radical. Cromwell was an extremist believer who tried to make his secular rule as godly as possible. There are many such cases, both Protestant and Catholic, in the Reformation. But they never involve clerics like so many Muslim cases.

Fourth, the crusades, like the Jewish holy wars praised in the Bible, were ...wars for limited objectives—the conquest of the promised land, the defense of Christendom against non-Christian attack...The Muslim jihad, in contrast, was perceived as unlimited, as a religious obligation that would continue until all the world had either adopted the Muslim faith or submitted to Muslim rule. In the latter case, those who professed what Muslims recognized as a revealed religion were allowed to continue the practice of their religion.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, translated by J. Sibree from the Karl Hegel edition of the lectures, (New York: Dover, 389-97.

⁶⁸ Michael Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), first paperback ed., 97-116.

⁶⁹ Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East: A Brief History of the Last 2,000 Years*, (New York: Scribner, 1995), 233-34. Lewis omits an important Christian exception: the crusade of the Teutonic Knights to convert the pagan Prussians and Lithuanians.

So we should forget the crusades and go back to basics. Jihad is derived from the Arabic root meaning effort, struggle or striving, and the Qur'an contains many calls for jihad "of the sword," jihad in the military sense. But in the classical jurists the jihad of the heart, hand, and tongue is also important. Jihad of the heart is self-overcoming, the internal struggle against evil desires; of the hand, working to right evils; of the tongue, preaching against them, which is a necessary prelude to jihad of the sword. While recent Western excusers of extremist Islam have shamefully minimized the importance of the jihad of the sword in the Qur'an, the Hadiths (sayings of the Prophet) and Islamic law, the other kinds of jihad remain important because they define the purpose and limits of military jihad. All military jihad should aim at securing a moral purpose by moral conduct. This fundamental backbone of traditional Islamic teaching on jihad is virtually ignored by contemporary jihadists, who have used the concept to justify any attack waged by Islamist groups for any purpose and in any manner, unlimited by moral rules. Thus jihad has been falsely assimilated to the all-out total war against enemies pioneered by atheistic Communism and Fascism and carried out without limits or moral self-examination. When and where Jihad can properly be waged is defined in great detail in the texts of Islamic law.

Jihad is not the same as just war. Wars are just, for the classical jurists, if they are waged against unbelievers who have not agreed on terms of peace with the Muslims; against Muslims who have abandoned Islam; against rebels; or against bandits.

While all four are legitimate, only the first two count as jihad...conferring different rights on the victors. This is particularly important in relation to enslavement, to which non-Muslims are liable but from which Muslims, even when vanquished as rebels or bandits, are exempt....The object [theoretical] of jihad is to bring the whole world under Islamic law. It is not to convert by force, but to remove obstacles to conversion.⁷⁰

Jihad is an obligation occasionally elevated to a sixth pillar of the faith. It can be either offensive or defensive, the former an obligation of the Muslim community as a

⁷⁰ Lewis, *Middle East*, 234.

whole (in practice, of governments), while defensive jihad is an obligation of every individual Muslim. This might seem to open the door to terrorism, but all textbooks of Islamic law agree that war against women, children, and helpless people is improper, as are methods of attack that target enemies and bystanders indiscriminately. Only one very early group now regarded by jihadists as schismatic, the Azraki Kharijites, ever regarded it as legitimate to kill women and children—until recently.

The Islamic community is divided today, first in the ancient split between Sunnis and Shi'ites. There are hardly any Shi'ites in West Africa, with small exceptions we will touch on, so this first great division is irrelevant. Much more significant is the division between Sufis and Salafis. The old basic textbooks of Islam will tell you that Sufism is mystical, unworldly, unorthodox and rejects Islamic Law (Shari'a). In West Africa, all this can be forgotten. What remains that is distinctive is that God and truth are hidden, distant, secret. Therefore the individual Sufi needs a path (Arabic *tarika*) to God. These *tarikas* turned in practice into religious groups, not sects because most of them do not differ in doctrine. Rather they remind of Roman Catholic religious orders: communities within one religion that have different founders and distinctive disciplines or ways of acting to reach God or serve his purposes. But Islam has no priesthood—there are many types of religious specialists of differing prestige, many part time—so something like Opus Dei or the Order of Gideons might be closer analogies. The Sufi has many points of access to the divine: the tombs of saints, mountains (Mount Balda in Cameroon, for example), trees, amulets, and so forth. The world is enchanted; Sufism opposes the Wahhabi emphasis on the otherness of God. In some ways the most familiar analogy for many Americans might be Roman Catholicism before Vatican II. It also shares the sense of the sacredness of many phenomena in the world to which contemporary environmentalism is returning. The famous specialist J. Spencer Trimingham sums up the nature of Sufism by the eighteenth century in these words:

“Though the orders can never regain their former influence in Islamic life they will continue to exist.”⁷¹

⁷¹ Trimingham, *Sufi Orders*, 257.

This view has been falsified by developments. But it had an important effect on the region through Western, especially British, patronage of Wahhabi-Salafi Islam. We will see the serpents' eggs it hatched in the north of Nigeria.

Chapter Four: The Historic Jihad

West africa has a tradition of Jihad since the 18th century, which ended by colonialism and arrived again in the twenty-first century in some places in Africa. The question is will the old tradition return to make twenty-first-century west african Jihad powerful and seductive, or on the other hand might it protect against twenty-first century Jihad?

These are dry historical narratives of unsuccessful begining of Jihad and some minor jihads. which are:

1. Usman dan Fodio
2. Cheikou Amadou
3. All-Hajj ‘Umar

Womb of Jihad

Social origins of the Jihad leaders were distinctive and interesting.

Proverbs collected by Gaden proclaim the humble stature of this group and the inevitable complement of abuse suffered at the hand of Fulbe warriors . One such saying, : the Torodo Is a beggar “ Betrays the mendicant activities of Torodbe *shaykhs* and their students, who condemned themselves to the austerity of public charity . Similar epithets : “ son of the calabash, “ and “ if the calabash did not exist , The Torodo would not survive, “ sustain the notion of mendacity – raise a perpetual memorial to their ancestry is low esteem . Again , the openness of Torodbe society – that they struggled beneath this burden – is seen by the wicked emphasis given in the following proverbs . “ if a fishes pursues learning he becomes a Torodo , and will take a Fulbe woman for this wife “ , or , “ a slave need only pursue learning in order to be considered a Torodo “ ; and finally “ a Torodo is a slave.”⁷²

⁷² John Ralph Willis , *In the path of Allah* , (London : BPC Wheatons Ltd , Exeter , 1989) , 58-59

“Here Allah is informing mankind to have fearful awareness in order to be saved from the suddenness and terror of the Hour, which is surely approaching.”⁷³

During 1795-1810 years the clash between interests and ideas caused a full-fledged war. Increasing number of inhabitants claimed privileged status and local government officials, deprived of the previous authority, tried to reclaim the latter – by raiding markets, confiscating peoples’ possessions and importantly, attacking Fulani pastoralists which, as a result, allied them with reformers –the camp that eventually won the war. Formally, the war was declared in 1804. Ten per cent of the warriors were scholars, who knew the Quran by heart, because books were a rarity, most scholars studied the Quran by heart, however, the movement mainly depended on the less educated muslims. The warfare strategy consisted of decentralization of command, using guerrilla tactics and weaponry. Reformers tried to capture sultans’ palaces in each state, the goal resulting from an understanding, that the battle was about kingship not the territory. By 1809 main Hausa states capitulated. It is noteworthy that the success reached was taken as a miracle. Moreover, paralleling Prophet’s experience was proving the rightness of their mission in their eyes. Here is what M. Last writes on the morale of muslim reformers.

“ ...The advantage of morale was also theirs [the muslims’] : facing destruction if they were captured, expecting the reward of martyrdom if they died, convinced Muslims and refugees from a pagan state, they had the Shaikh, the most powerful Muslim in Gobir, to encourage and pray for them. Conversely, the supernatural power with which the Shaikh was credited and which had made him valued ally of the Sultans of Gobir would scare the Gobirawa. Thus with superior morale, the Muslims began the battle and charged the enemy.”⁷⁴

This is what Mack and Boyd say on the same issue:

⁷³ Shaihu Usman dan Fodio , *Umdat Al-Bayan Umdat Al-Muta’Abideen Umdat Al-Ubaad Umdat Al-Ulama* , (Timbuktu : Institute of Islamic - African Studies , 2014) , 6

⁷⁴ Murray Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate*, Hong Kong: Sheck Wah Tong Printing Press, Longman, 1977, p 26.

The model for the Sokoto jihad was that of the Prophet Muhammad's own seventh-century campaign to promote Islam. That this was the Shehu's model is not surprising, since one of the guiding principles of Islam is following the *Sunna*, imitating the life of the Prophet. Asma'u's works demonstrate that comparison of the Shehu with the Prophet was intentional; such comparison gave credibility to the jihad and the Shehu's actions in his campaign.⁷⁵

The final stage of caliphate formation took place between 1810 and 1820; Times when new government tried to cope with the consequences of the war. Reconstruction was a difficult task. In response to the problem of shortage of educated and capable personnel, former officials got employed – action which would give rise to other set of problems such as distrust, disputes and increase the number of dissidents. Many of disputes were due to continuing pattern of decentralized military effort; Amirs had to share authority with others. By this time, the areas that were under complete control of reformers were restricted.

In the beginning, dan Fodio used to be strict in what a proper Muslim was to be like.

Nana Asma'u, dan Fodiyo's daughter, in her poem *The Journey*, which is dedicated to her father and to the Sokoto Caliphate, shows this campaign in the religious light in the the following manner

[4] Usman dan Fodiyo, Shehu--the Almighty God
Gave him to us here in Hausaland through His mercy.
He brought the True Believers out of ignorance, dispelled the darkness and made
Everything clear for us with His light.
...
[101] Victory was obtained in every quarter,
...
[102] When people heard the Shehu's call to religion they all
came
From North, west, east, and south, for his sake.

⁷⁵ Beverly B. Mack and Jean Boyd, *One Woman's Jihad Nana Asma'u Scholar and Scribe*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000, p 63.

[103] He composed *Tabban Hakika* and *Sitirajo* in order to praise God's blessing to him.

...

[107] From the beginning of that year he was preaching, All people knew what he meant.⁷⁶

in the Caliphate, religious obligations were taken into account even in administrative appointments. The sources depict the instructions which contain religious obligations required by the Shaikh from the appointee. Murray Last illustrates this by bringing seven instructions posed to Ya'qub when he was appointed as Emir :

(i) to be consistent and stand by what he says and commands; (ii) to be zealous in maintaining mosques; (iii) to be zealous in praying there; (iv) to study the Quran and its teachings; (v) to study the (Islamic) sciences and their teachings; (vi) to maintain the markets and prevent illegalities there; (vii) to wage the Jihad. ⁷⁷

the Shaikh believed in the supernatural, claiming to have mystical experiences and was leading an ascetic life, avoiding property and wealth. But after 1810 he changed his position, starting to tolerate previously condemned practices (like using music). In 1815 Shaykh retired and later in 1817 he died.

Jihad of Usman dan Fodio

(Based almost entirely on M.G. Smith article - The jihad of Shehu dan Fodio: some problems. In *Islam in Tropical Africa*. I. M. Lewis, ed. London: Oxford University Press.)

⁷⁶ Beverly B. Mack and Jean Boyd, *One Woman's Jihad Nana Asma'u Scholar and Scribe*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000, p 157-163.

⁷⁷ Murray Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate*, Hong Kong: Sheck Wah Tong Printing Press, Longman, 1977, p 56

Usman dan Fodio's jihad created the largest empire in Africa since the fall of Songhai in 1591 [...]An analogy has been drawn between Usman dan Fodio's jihad and the French Revolution in terms of its widespread impact. Just as the French Revolution affected the course of European history in the nineteenth century, the Sokoto jihad affected the course of history throughout the savanna from Senegal to the Red Sea.”⁷⁸

Evaluations made on Usman dan Fodio's Jihad vary. According to S. Trimingham, dan Fodio “from 1786 preached the *jihad* in such a way that it became a racial as well as a religious war; (it) ... differs from the other *jihads* on account of the number of nomads who joined in.”⁷⁹

According to S. J. Hogben:

Religion was often made the pretext for the acquisition of worldly power.... [The *jihad*] had as its confessed object the purification of the Muslim religion, and it was directed against the corrupt rulers of Hausaland, who had been supposedly oppressing or ignoring the rights of their Muslim subjects. In reality, it was originally a national fight of the Fulani, both Muslim and pagan, against the forces of Yunfa, the king of Gobir, who had decreed their extermination. Only after the victory, when the pagan Fulani, who had borne more than their full share in order to achieve it, had retired to their flocks and herds, did the malams who had been the leaders, exploit the opportunity under the cloak of religion to oust the native rulers and put themselves into their places, with Usman dan Fodio at their head. Henceforth the movement was no longer confined to a particular race; yet from its very nature it appealed more strongly to the fanatical and more highly strung element in the Fulani clans.⁸⁰

Contrary to above mentioned views, according to V. F. Gowers

⁷⁸ (Helen Chapin Metz, ed. *Nigeria: A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1991. Source: *U.S. Library of Congress*)

⁷⁹ (1902, p. 102. Trimingham, J. Spencer (1962) *A History in West Africa*. London.)

⁷⁹

⁸⁰ (Also from M.G. Smith's article. Not sure quoting or paraphrasing - Hogben, 1930, p, 73. *The Muhammadan Emirates of Nigeria.* Oxford.)

The *jihad* was the raising of the standard of revolt by Othman dan Fodio against the tyranny of the non-Moslem rulers of Gobir, in defence of his co-religionists, whether Hausa or Fulani. It was not in any sense a conquest of the Hausa race by the Fulani; indeed, the Hausa adherents of Othman were probably as numerous as his Fulani followers. Even the leaders were not, strictly speaking, Fulanis.⁸¹

Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sarauta of Sokoto, the late Premier of Northern Nigeria and a descendant of dan Fodio said:

The Shehu Usumanu was a Fulani leader ... a great preacher and man, of the utmost piety ... he was among a people who were nominally Muhammadan;... the religion had become very corrupt, and many pagan practices had crept in and had taken firm hold even in the highest quarters. The Shehu Usumanu declared a Holy War against the polluters of the Faith. In 1804 he started by attacking the Chief of Gobir, one of the worst offenders, in whose territory he was living ... Meanwhile, to cleanse the religion, the Shehu had organized revolts in all the great Hausa states; the Fulani living in them rose and overthrew the Hausa kings. The Shehu appointed new rulers, either from among the victorious generals, or from among other important Fulani.⁸²

As mentioned, interpretations of Jihad widely vary, one view claiming it to be a revolution against misrule and another viewing it as “a cloak for racial conquest and imperialism.”⁸³

While traditionalists view jihad as an attempt to spread Islam in the region and argue its historical impact to be beneficent in many ways and claim realizing jihad objectives in moderate ways are of relevant necessity. Radicals, viewing jihad as a revolutionary or imperialist war, see different consequences of its spread.

⁸¹ (Gowers, W. F. (1911) *Gazetteer of Kano Province*. London: Waverlow.)

⁸² (Ahmadu Bello, Alhaji Sir, 1962, *My Life*. Cambridge. pp. 10-11)

⁸³ (M.G. Smith, *The jihad of Shehu dan Fodio: some problems*. In *Islam in Tropical Africa*. I. M. Lewis, ed. London: Oxford University Press. pp 410)

While studying the issue it is important to try and understand what principles could direct dan Fodio's jihad efforts and how were they related to the actual turnout of the events and the parties involved. The great majority of free men in the Fulani empire were illiterate and may hardly have been acquainted to the content of dan Fodio's writings. Yet, these books were intended for wider public use.

When discussing the nature of Jihad, one should take into account the following opinion:

Jihads fall into two main classes: revolts by Muslims against their non-Muslim rulers; and attacks by Muslims organized in autonomous political units against non-Muslims. The character of the Fulani *jihad* of Northern Nigeria is disputed mainly because it was launched against rulers who claimed to be Muslim, although undoubtedly lax in their observances.⁸⁴

In his work, dan Fodio discusses different contexts where jihad is obligatory or unlawful and how it is regulated. He discusses the obligation of hijra – and claims it must be unconditional for everyone.

Withdrawal from the towns of the heathen is an essential duty, both in the Koran and the Traditions, and in the consensus of the learned.... Now the capital cities of the Sudan are included in the towns of the heathen; ...these cities fall into three classes ... In one class of these towns, paganism predominates and Islam is very weak, for instance ... Massi, Gurma, Bussa, Borgu, Dagomba, Yoruba ... and Gombe.... The rulers of these countries are all heathen, and so too ... their subjects.... Another class of towns are those in which Islam is dominant and there is little paganism; but the countries of Bornu, Kano, Katsina, Songhai and Malle, as Ahmed Baba shows, ... all these are heathen states without any doubt, since the chiefs ... are heathens like the first group, although they practice religion

⁸⁴ (M.G. Smith, The jihad of Shehu dan Fodio: some problems. In *Islam in Tropical Africa*. I. M. Lewis, ed. London: Oxford University Press. pp 410)

of Islam, because they are polytheists also. They have obstructed the way of Islam, and have put worldly standards before the Faith. In the view of all the *'ulama*, all this is simply heathen.⁸⁵

Shehu writes:

The Prophet said ... 'he who obeys my Representative undoubtedly obeys me also; he who disobeys my Representative undoubtedly disobeys me also' ... Subki says 'it is unlawful to withdraw allegiance from the ruler. All agree on this if the ruler is righteous, and even when he is not righteous this is the better opinion, that is, unless he becomes a heretic.' Ahmadu Zaruk says ... 'It is forbidden to withdraw allegiance from a ruler, either in speech or in deed, and this consensus extends to praying under all rulers and their officials, good and bad alike'.⁸⁶

Shehu classifies heathen:

There are three classes of heathen; first those who are clearly heathen by descent; ... second ... the man who has become a Muslim, and then openly apostasized, returning to heathendom and abandoning Islam. His apostasy is quite open and he declares it with his own mouth; ... third, there is the one who claims he is a Muslim while we for our part classify him as a heathen because that which does not occur apart from heathenism occurs with him openly. (Ibid., Section t.)

Since Shehu and Bello considered Hausa to fall under the third category, found the holy war to be obligatory. But in order to understand the motives of the people participating and look at the process from the addressees' perspective it would be useful to have more information on their part. M.G. Smith writes that probably the most Fulani sided with dan Fodio irrespective of their faith. In western Hausaland among large Fulani population pastoral nomads were pagan, sedentary Fulani – mostly Muslim; Both of the groups dissatisfied with the Hausa chiefs. Before dan Fodio's jihad, there had been a number of clashes, which arguably indicates that even without Shehu the conflict could have escalated. As Muslims, heathen, pastoralist, farmer, immigrant

⁸⁵ (Smith, M.G. and Kumasi, M Muntaka (1959) An Account of the Obligations of Withdrawal, being a translation of the Bayam Wujub al_Hijra alal Ibad of Shehu Usumanu dan Fodio. (Un-published).

⁸⁶ (Smith and Kumasi, op. cit., Section 6.)

and native people – all were engaged in the conflict, dan Fodio could have felt in order to direct the movement in one direction, he had to regulate it under the Islam principles. As the conflict spread and went far beyond a single Hausa state, Muslim leaders had to face more problems of directing their jihad in accordance with religious rules and proper policy.

M.G. Smith argues that jihads that are directed against heathen rulers require some kind of need for pursuing political advantage in parallel with maintaining the law and religion as a general feature. “the Shehu and his closest supporters, having identified themselves as the focus of opposition to Gobir government, were very largely governed by the circumstances of their situation and had to adjust, within the limits their religion permitted, to its requirements. This pattern is a general characteristic of Islam, enshrined in the doctrine of *ijma'*, by which consensus legitimates necessary changes. As Weber pointed out, Islam is one of the very few major religions which has a practical orientation to the affairs of this world, 'an essentially political character',²⁹ as seen in the injunction of jihad. The ambiguous character of Shehu dan Fodio's jihad derives from the ambiguous character of jihad itself.”⁸⁷

The Sokoto Caliphate

Following features characterized the old system – The king (*mai*) had ritual functions and his palace was considered sacred. King was above politics and symbolized authority, representing the state. Muslim reformers wanted the king to be replaced by an amir, that wouldn't be seen as sacred. Allah had to be the highest authority. Amir was to be chosen not by inheritance but according to his religious standing and piety towards Allah. Amir's companions shared power under his leadership. He, unlike the king, took part in political process. The reformers tried to keep bureaucracy minimal and stay loyal to Shariat Law.

⁸⁷ (M.G. Smith, *The jihad of Shehu dan Fodio: some problems*. In *Islam in Tropical Africa*. I. M. Lewis, ed. London: Oxford University Press. pp 419) (.. Weber, 1963, p. ,63.)

The most significant reform was introducing the office of Caliph – that was above any ethnic or other identity, Allah being the source of his authority. Unlike the mai, it required no ceremony and rituals and was not to possess any great wealth. In 1817 Muhammad Bello, Usman dan Fodio’s son became the caliph.

In 1812, after the fall of Alkalawa, the Shaikh decided to divide the administration in two parts, and made his brother ‘Abdullah, a Vizier, govern Gwandu, while his son Bello, also a Vizier was destined to rule at Sokoto. Though this was an administrative division, it seems there was a deeper split as well, which had begun earlier, in 1807 when ‘Abdullah’s during a campaign of Alkalawa left the army and intended to flee to Mecca, because he was dissatisfied, he thought “the attitudes of Muslims was becoming worldly”. Next year Bello attacked Alkalawa successfully. After some years, when the Shaikh was dying he did not nominate a successor. It seemed that most obvious successors were ‘Abdullah and Bello, Bello became new Shaikh. Murray Last describes the split between the two Viziers in the following way:

‘Abdullah, who was a scholar and poet of distinction, had been somewhat reclusive since his dissatisfaction with the trends in the Muslim Community had resulted in his leaving for Kano in 1807. Friction between ‘Abdullah and Bello had evidently been incipient when the Shaikh was at Gwandu, and it had worsened during the last three years when the Shaikh lived in Sifawa and ‘Abdullah at Bodiganga. Lists of those at Gwandu given by al-haji Junaidu suggest that many of the older generation stayed with ‘Abdullah, while the younger men stayed in Sokoto with Muhammad Bello.⁸⁸

The major administrative division was between the Sokoto Caliphate and the Gwandu Emirate. In 1815, Usman dan Fodio retired from the administrative business of the Caliphate and divided the area taken over during the Fulani War with his brother Abdullahi dan Fodio ruling in the west with the Gwandu Emirate and his son Muhammed Bello taking over administration of the Sokoto Caliphate. The Emir at Gwandu retained allegiance to the Sokoto Caliphate and spiritual guidance from the

⁸⁸ Murray Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate*, Hong Kong: Sheck Wah Tong Printing Press, Longman, 1977, p 64-65

Sultan, but the Emir managed the separate emirates under his supervision independently from the Sultan.⁸⁹

Towards the end of the first jihad the Community was a divers group, since people who didn't share standards of the early reformers had joined the community. In a pamphlet, Muhammad Bello describes the new community and points out how nine out of ten members are not genuine. Among others, he criticizes Fulani, for thinking just belonging to the group to be enough and for disliking the others. In his text called *Infaq al- Maysuur* Bello writes:

It has not reached us that any of their rulers and scholars - regardless of his station - ever refuted these corrupt customs, except from those who refused to associate in their affairs with them from among the Arabs and the Fulani. These scholars continued to reject what they were doing and declared them as disbelievers because of it. There is no doubt concerning their disbelief, even if their scholars claim that they do not intend to associate deities with Allah, nor do they believe that these customs have any positive or negative effect. They are disbelievers, because the idols of trees, water and sacred places which they make sacrifices for are the same idols of their grandfathers who were non-Muslims. Thus, they now follow them in that even if they manifest Islam and do good deeds besides, mainly because *Islam* was brought here by travelers and merchants passing through their land. Thus, those among the people of Bornu took their religion from them.

...

The *Shaykh* declared the Fulani to be disbelievers. This was due to their customs that they perform in the deserts before the advent of the *Shaykh*. This custom included them assembling and going out with their little children until they reached a place far from the outskirts of the village. They then tie something upon the heads of their children. Then they ignite a huge fire and sacrifice a cow or what they are able. They then cut the meat and place it around the fire. When

⁸⁹ Burnham, Peter; Murray Last (1994). "From Pastoralist to Politician: The Problem of a Fulbe "Aristocracy"". *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 34: 313–357.

the time of predawn approaches, the larger boys come and stand holding sticks. They then began to beat the younger boys driving them towards the fire and the meat. They then go around the fire saying, “*We are the charge of Allah, then your charge, O Fire! You are our father and mother.*” Some of them dance upon the fire and some even sit in the midst of the fire, without any harm coming to them. The older boys and the younger ones then eat from the sacrificed meat. When the dawn appears a speaker arises from among them and speaks to them with words that they consider eloquent. They then discipline their children with what they consider as discipline.

Shaykh al-Bakri declared them as disbelief as a result of their actions, while *Shaykh* Abdullahi considered that they were not disbelievers. He only considered what they did as disobedience, since they have pronounced the word of divine unity, do not believe that there are partners with Allah, they pray and fast. However, the correct opinion was with *Shaykh* al-Bakri since one is considered disbeliever by the outward judgment of the *shari`a* for least than their actions. And Allah knows best.⁹⁰

As Bello became the Caliph, the community was no longer as cohesive as before. Some Fulani had different motives now. Bello would complain how the new community to has oriented to “obtain delights and acquire rank” like other nonbelievers, some collecting “fine clothes and horses that gallop in the towns, not on the battlefields, and the devouring of gifts of sanctity, and booty and bribery, and lutes, and flutes, and the beating of drums.”⁹¹

Administration

The Caliphal Administration was arranged in a following way; It was responsible for supervision of the eastern emirates and maintaining revenue it depended on. Caliph had

⁹⁰ Mohammad Bello, *Infaq l-Maysuur*, Muhammad Shareef, Translated & Edited by Shaykh Muhammad Shareef bin Farid, 2008 <http://www.ibnfodio.com/index.php/library/sultan-muhammad/69-infaql-maysuur>

⁹¹ Murray Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate*, Hong Kong: Sheck Wah Tong Printing Press, Longman, 1977, p 66

adviser (*waziri*) – that bound links with emirates. The main task of Caliph administration was managing appointing amirs. Its delegates like *waziri* helped manage the process and play mediator's role. The informal nature of the process of collecting gifts, taxes and tributes made the Caliph dependent on the goodwill of emirates and their capacity to ensure the former received tributes, etc.

In terms of the Military and diplomatic activities, Sokoto Caliphate didn't maintain a standing army. Caliphate didn't put much effort in this area as it had no intention to expand its territory militarily. The army it had wasn't a professional force. No new strategy or technology has been initiated and in the terms of military overall, Sokoto had no great advantage, but owning potential resources. ⁹²

Military limitations were attempted to be balanced out by diplomatic efforts. (Caliphs handled correspondence themselves). Bello wanted not just commercial or political, but intellectual relations with other countries too – especially, he wanted to integrate into metropolitan Muslim world. Most commonly, he used an economic instrument; using economic leverages smartly that would result in economic profits. Here is M. Last's summary of Bello's non military achievements:

Fulani clans were persuaded to join the Community of the Shaikh and accept men to teach their children Islamic practice and behaviour. They were also taught agriculture and encouraged to breed horses, camels and flocks of sheep and goats and to reduce their herds of cattle. By these means, Bello balanced the economy of Sokota, and the two groups, nomad and peasant, were able to live side by side to mutual advantage: he thus also reduced the military risk involved in the annual exodus for some two months by the cattle Fulani, a practice he could not abolish. ⁹³

What regards relations with external forces, with Tuareg they were somewhat ambiguous, with Caliphate at Massina it seemed to be problematic, but the ones with

⁹² Joseph Smaldone, *Warfare in the Fulani Caliphate*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1977

⁹³ Murray Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate*, Hong Kong: Sheck Wah Tong Printing Press, Longman, 1977, p 79-80

Kunti Shaykhs at Timbukto – were relatively positive. Sokoto scholars preferred looking into Timbukto direction more than to Borno. With Borno – neither compromise has been reached not public peace has been made after Borno invasion in Kano in 1824-26.

The Fulani jihadists, under Usman dan Fodio's banner tried to conquer Borno in 1808. They partly succeeded. They burnt the capital, N’Gazagarmo and defeated the main army of the *mai* of Borno. The latter called for the help of Al-Kanemi to repel his Fulani opponents⁹⁴

By planning, inspiration, and prayer, he attracted a following, especially from Shuwa Arab networks and Kanembu communities extending far outside Borno's borders.⁹⁵

The *mai* (monarch), Dunama IX Lefiami rewarded the leader with control over a Bornu province on the Western march. Taking only the title "Shehu" ("Sheikh"), and eschewing the traditional offices, al-Kanemi gathered a powerful following, becoming both the voice of Bornu in negotiations with Sokoto, as well as a semi independent ruler of a trade rich area with a powerful military. Dunama was deposed by his uncle in 1809, but the support of al-Kanemi brought him back to power in 1813.⁹⁶

Social Structure

Society was grouped in two categories; One was the office –oriented that united title-holders, kinsmen, scholars, clients and their household slaves – they were immobile, had great concern regarding genealogies and their women were relatively restricted. Among not office – oriented people, like farmers, traders, representatives of various craft occupations and slaves – women were relatively liberated, they maintained of general identity with the group by physical features and traditions, not genealogies.

⁹⁴ Louis Brenner, *The Shehus of Kukawa: A History of the Al-Kanemi Dynasty of Bornu*, Oxford Studies in African Affairs (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1973).

⁹⁵ Elizabeth Allo Isichei, *A History of African Societies to 1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 318-320, [ISBN 0-521-45599-5](#).

⁹⁶ Louis Brenner, *The Shehus of Kukawa: A History of the Al-Kanemi Dynasty of Bornu*, Oxford Studies in African Affairs (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1973).

There was no apparent division between the two groups, though. “The boundary between these two was never clear-cut, and allowed for movement both sides.”⁹⁷

In terms of economy, there are three important things worth noting. All of them contributed to overall economic prosperity. Tax imposed of free men wasn't high. Given that population was large, it resulted in a great sum anyway. Consumption level was relatively low; as mentioned in the quotes, people of higher class didn't tend to spend a lot. “ethos of caliphates, as shown in the writings of its founders and in the popular vernacular poetry of its scholars, was sceptical about the ultimate value of great wealth and its consumptions.”⁹⁸ Caliphate highly invested in agriculture.

Changes in Sokoto Caliphate

The period of 1820-1845 can be counted as a period of establishment. There were two requirements prevailing the times – need for maintaining security and rebuilding agricultural economy. This required certain charisma either through common faith as Muslims or common pride in being Fulbe. Notable that the process was intensified by the urgency that the world's end was about to come.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century in the Western Sudan, the masses of the faithful awaited fulfillment of the prophecies attributed to Muhammad. One such prophecy held that the thirteenth century of the Hijra – that is, the period extending from 1785 to 1882 – was to mark the final triumph of Islam over infidelity. Moreover, according to the Ta'rikh al-Fattash, this epoch was to signal the appearance of the last mujaddid and caliph of Takrur. The Ta'rikh mentions that the Prophet had declared that twelve caliphs would follow him; ten had already appeared, and Askia Muhammad was designated the eleventh; the twelfth caliph was to appear during the course of the thirteenth century of the

⁹⁷ J. F. Ade Ajayi (ed.) *General History of Africa VI, Africa in the Nineteenth Century until the 1880s*, California, Heinemann, UNESCO, 1989, p 576

⁹⁸ J. F. Ade Ajayi (ed.), *General History of Africa VI, Africa in the Nineteenth Century until the 1880s*, California, Heinemann, UNESCO, 1989, Chapter 22 by M. Last, p 579.

Hijra, and his reign would be followed by the rule of the Mahdi and the end of the world.⁹⁹

The period 1845-1855 was a decade of transition and disquiet. Reformers simply got old and died that somewhat froze the great change. Some military dangers and setbacks did take place, but nothing too serious has happened. During this period the intellectual disquiet took place, scholars parting ways out and in the government.

The period 1855-80 is when the economic expansion took place. Caliphates and opponents agreed to disagree by now. Peace and stability was reached in most of the cases and the Caliphate expanded economically.

Worshipping of idols, for example, or trees, or anything or anyone except Allah was particularly abhorrent. Social mixing of the sexes; the eating of food improperly slaughtered – the eating of dogs, horses, cadavers, or animals dead from disease; the playing of boisterous music and participation in wild dancing to the disruption of prayers in the mosque, were also soundly condemned. For as long as such practices were tolerated, the dignity of the *Shari'a* would inevitably be compromised.¹⁰⁰

The characteristics of this mujaddid are described in the correspondence between al-Maghili and the Askia, where it is stated that the distinctive feature of this learned man must be that he 'commands what is right and forbids what is wrong, and ameliorates the affairs of the people and judges justly between them, and

⁹⁹ Mahmud al-Kati, *Tarikh el-Fettach*, trans. And ed. O. Houndas and M. Delafosse (1913), text, 66

¹⁰⁰ A main obstacle to a settlement between al-Hajj 'Umar and the French was seen in the former's insistence that the French declare themselves his tributaries and pay the canonical *jizya*, both of which the French were apparently unwilling to do. Cf. Archives d'Outre-Mer (Paris), Sènègal I. 46a; E. Mage, *Voyage dans le Soudan occidental* (Paris, 1868), 234; and John Ralph Willis, review article, Jamil M. Abun-Nasr's *The Tijaniyya, a Sufi Order in the Modern World* (in the Centre of Arabic Documentation Research Bulletin, II (Ibadan, January 1966), 44)

assists the truth against vanity, and the oppressed against the oppressor, in contrast to the characteristics of the other learned men of his age.”¹⁰¹

Jihad of Cheikou Amadou¹⁰²

The first *jihad* started by Usman Dan Fodio in Hausaland in 1804, became the source of inspiration for the second great jihad led by Cheikou Amadou (Ahmadu Lobbo, previously called Amadou Hammadi Boubou – 1773-1845, born in Malangal, province of Massina), the founder of a “Massina¹⁰³ Empire” in the Inner Niger Delta (now Mopti region of Mali). According to accounts, Usman Dan Fodio sent Amadou a flag, a sign of commissioning someone to conduct jihad, and awarded him with the title of Sheykh. In addition, Amadou was given books on Muslim law from Sokoto. In 1818 Amadou overthrew the ruling Fulani dynasty of Ardo’en in Massina. With the influence of Usman dan Fodio’s teachings, Amadou created a theocratic state, based on Qadiri Sufi views. He ruled in 1818-1845. Noteworthy is the fact that this jihad, and only this, represented a split among Fulani leaders and fighters.

Everything started from the confrontation with a pagan Fulani chief, who was not pleased with Amadou’s radical views; Amadou was accusing local Fulbe rulers of “idolatry” and claimed that Islam, practiced back then was not “pure”. As in many old jihads, it is not clear what these charges were. Reputation of Amadou as honest man as well as his strivings towards restoring pure Islam, gathered lots of people around him. The second great jihad was directed against the pagan groups. Amadou was supported by Tukulors, escaped slaves and others, seeking freedom from their Bambara masters, as well as literate Muslims, who were striving towards Islamic reform. It is notable that by then Islam had lost its vitality, thus Amadou’s approaches were, it seems, popular among the people.

¹⁰¹ M. Hiskett, *An Islamic tradition of reform in the Western Sudan from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century*, (London : Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies , 1962), 577-596, 584.

¹⁰² This name is spelled in number of various ways; we are using the French version from A.H. BA, J. Daget, *L’empire peul du Macina*. We have come across with other versions of the name: Sheku Ahmadu; Seku Ahmadu; Ahmadu Lobbo;

¹⁰³ In French Massina is often referred to as Macina.

The Segu army was defeated by Amadou. Amadou executed the Djenné¹⁰⁴ marabouts, who were against him from the very beginning. A general rising began under Amadou, who established a theocratic Muslim Fulani state through Massina and extended to the ancient Muslim centers of Jenne (Djenné) and Timbuktu. This second great jihad is also referred to as “ the Tukolor War”.

The Fulani chief called for help from the Bambara king of Segu¹⁰⁵[4], suzerain of Massina. Seku Amadou defeated the Segu army at Nakuma. Even though Amadou managed to establish a powerful empire, he was in constant ruthless war against the neighboring Bambara Empire, which was under the rule of Da Monzon. Confrontation continued for years. It was still raging in March 1828 when René Caillé, French traveler reached Djanné and wrote that:

Seku Ahmadu, the chief of the land of Jenne, is still waging a fierce war against the Bambara of Segu whom he wants to win over to the banner of the Prophet. But these Bambara are warlike and are resisting him.¹⁰⁶

War, lasting several years, ended by the Bambara accepting the presence of Massina on its borders. Simultaneously, Amadou had to deal with another attempt of jihad from Sufi shaykh al-Husayn Koita and the Fulbe of Fittuga. Fittuga was situated on the route linking Timbuktu to Gwandu and was an important trading center for the Kunta clerics and Sokoto. Muhammad Bello, the second sultan of Sokoto supported al-Husayn Koita, because Amadou had by this time repudiated the authority of the Sokoto Caliph, for reasons we are not fully aware of. Backed by Muhammad Bello, Fittuga struggled against Seku Amadou until 1823, but this struggle was finished by Amadou’s victory.

Massina successfully managed to seize Timbuktu as well. Due to the high importance of Timbuktu in trade, the locals called on a Kunta leader to help them get rid of Massina rule. The Kunta failed to defend Timbuktu.

¹⁰⁴ Also referred to as Djanné, Jenné and Jenne, Djanné

¹⁰⁵ City in Mali (Ségou)

¹⁰⁶ M. Ly-Tall, “Massina and the Torodbe (Tukuloor) empire until 1878” in J.F. Ade Ajayi (editor), *General History of Africa; VI*; (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2000), 603.

Amadou managed to create the powerful empire of Massina, which, at its apogee, covered the territory from Djanné to Timbuktu and from Nampala to Dogon country.

The Empire of Massina

Seku Amadou provided the new theocratic state, generally called *dina*, from Arabic *din*, faith, and established the system of provincial governors, who were mostly his relatives, and a central council consisting of forty elders. This council was in charge of assisting Amadou in all areas of the exercise of power. In order to become the member of this council, one had to comply with the following requirements: it was necessary “to be married, to lead a blameless life, to boast a good education and to be 40 years old”.¹⁰⁷ The supreme judicial body was the grand council, but once Amadou realized that he was not always able to impose his views on them, so he himself opposed to council's decision to abolish castes:

The marabouts on the Grand Council, on the strength of the verse in the Ku'ran: 'all believers are brothers', had proposed the abolition of castes. Next day Seku Ahmadu had lizards, frogs, fish, chickens and mutton cooked all together, offered the dish to the marabouts and invited them to eat. 'What,' they cried, 'would you have us eat such a mixture?' 'Is a single one of all these meats forbidden by the Ku'ran?' retorted Amadou. ' No, but although the Book may not forbid it, it disgusts us to eat lizard and frog and mix these meats with those we are used to eating.' 'Likewise, although the Book does not forbid it, it disgusts me to mix together nobles and caste people and abolish the barrier by which we customarily separate them.'¹⁰⁸

This incident, if true, is very interesting. Early Islam contained an element of egalitarianism symbolized by the identical white garment worn by the faithful on the pilgrimage to Mecca. In sub-Saharan Africa, the story of the Prophet's Muezzin, Bilal, a

¹⁰⁷ M. Ly-Tall, “Massina and the Torodbe (Tukuloor) empire until 1878”, 605.

¹⁰⁸ M. Ly-Tall, “Massina and the Torodbe (Tukuloor) empire until 1878”, 605-606.

black man, was popular. Here Amadou affirms Sahel (and Saharan) culture over the Muslim egalitarian current. he was a puritan but not a revolutionalry.

Massina was largely self-sufficient; every significant asset could be raised locally, including horses.¹⁰⁹ Amadou pursued the policy of settling the nomadic herders. He made efforts to promote Islam through harsh and puritan attitudes, such as banning the use of tobacco and requiring full segregation of women from men. So, in other respects, there was some resemblance to Wahhabi-Salafi rules. Administratively the country was divided into five military provinces. Hamdallahi (Praise God!) the new capital established in 1820 was said to be very tidy. As *L'Empire Peul Du Macina*¹¹⁰ claims, hygiene and cleanliness was the subject of detailed regulation. It was forbidden to urinate in the streets or let the blood of a slaughtered animal flow. The dogs, regarded as ritually unclean, were not allowed in the city; sheepdogs should remain near the herds. Any container licked by a dog ought to be washed seven times. To avoid the stains by contact with the ground, clothing should not fall below the ankle; the sleeves should not exceed the end of the finger of the hand. Slaughter animals should be killed by murderers who stood in public slaughterhouses. Amadou forbade praying at home, instead, he ordered that every Muslim gather in Mosque and pray together, unless some of them were physically unable to attend the payer due to sickness.

Life at Hamdallahi was governed by extreme austerity. There were strict rules about how the various classes of society spent their time. Anyone found on the streets after the evening prayer, for example, had to establish his identity and, if married, was taken to court; in town, people on horseback might not, on pain of severe penalties, glance into the compounds they were passing; both the young and elderly widows had to be kept in seclusion so that old men should not be reminded of their youth; and so on;¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Ralf A. Austen, *Trans-Saharan Africa in World History*; (Oxford University Press Inc., 2010), 61. accessed online - <http://goo.gl/kHZljH>

¹¹⁰ A.H. BA, J. Daget, *L'empire peul du Macina*; (Les Nouvelles Éditions Africaines et Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1984), 50.

¹¹¹ M. Ly-Tall, "Massina and the Torodbe (Tukuloor) empire until 1878", 607-608.

The violation of laws cost locals dearly. The prosecutor Ahmadu Hammadi Samba Bubakari, known as Hambarbe Samata, was very strict, not only with the ordinary people, but with officials as well. As for taxation and levies, the UNESCO General History of Africa, vol. 6 describes this process in a following manner:

Taxes and levies were collected with the same stringency by officials who were paid partly out of the fruits of their labour. In addition to the ordinary dues provided for by Islam (*zakât*, *mudu* and *usuru*), the grand council introduced the *pabé* or war-contribution for those who could not physically take part, and for the non-Islamized countries.¹¹²

Only the latter (*jizya*) is prescribed by the Shari'a.

At the height of the Empire's power, a 10,000 man army was positioned in the city, and Seku Amadou ordered the construction of six hundred madrasas¹¹³ for further spread of Islam. He also constructed a social welfare system to provide the widows, orphans, and the poor.

Seku Amadou Lobbo died in 20 April 1845, leaving control of the Massina Empire to his son, Amadou II. Under his son, Timbuktu was included in the empire for some time. The rule of Amadou's family continued until Amadou III, who was defeated by the initiator of third jihad, al-Hajj 'Umar in 1862¹¹⁴.

Jihad of Shaykh al-Hajj 'Umar

Summary

Shaykh al-Hajj 'Umar, one of the most famous Tijani figures, was a scholar, author, and social activist. He is known for his jihad, which he waged in hopes for establishing a Muslim empire in West Africa, and the "Umariyan" state called Jama'a,

¹¹² M. Ly-Tall, "Massina and the Torodbe (Tukuloor) empire until 1878", 606.

¹¹³ Arabic word for any type of educational institution, whether secular or religious (of any religion)

¹¹⁴ General information about the jihad of Cheikou Amadou was collected from these two internet sources: <http://www.onwar.com/aced/chrono/c1800s/yr10/fahmadu1810.htm> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seku_Amadou

which was short-lived, but was one of the largest ever seen in West Africa, encompassing much of what presently constitutes Guinea, Mali and Mauritania, and has since served as an inspiration to many West Africans. Al-Hajj 'Umar's magnum opus, the *Kitab rimah hizb al-rahim 'ala nuhur hizb al-rajim* ("The book of the lances of the league of [Allah] the Merciful against the necks of the league of [Satan] the accursed") is also noteworthy as one of the most important works of the nineteenth century in the entire Muslim world.

Al-Hajj 'Umar was called Umar bin Sa'id before his embark to Mecca; Umar bin Sa'id was born in 1796 in village Halwar - present-day Senegal. In his youth he attended madrasa until embarking on Hajj in 1820s (date is doubtful). Hajj is the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, where Muslim people all over the world gather every year. In 1830 (date is doubtful) he returned from pilgrimage with the title of Al Hajj and took the name of the caliph of Tijaniyya sufi brotherhood in West Africa. he stayed in the Fulani caliphate while being openly professing Tijani sufi allegiance, although the authoritative sufi order of the Fulani caliphate was Quadiriyya. Then he went further to the west to what is now Guinea, Futa Jallon.

Even though he had no intention to, disobedience of the French to Al-Hajj's rules (not paying the *Jizya*) dragged him in war against French, calling it jihad against the French and other African enemies. Even though he managed to besiege the French army siege failed on July 18, when Louis Faidherbe, French governor of Senegal, arrived with additional forces.

After the failed attempt to defeat the French, he moved to the East with the intention to capture Bambara kingdoms of Kaarta and Ségou. The Kaarta capital of Nioro du Sahel fell quickly to Umar, followed by Ségou on March 10, 1861.¹¹⁵ His next step was Timbuktu; only the united forces of Tuaregs, Moors, and Fulani tribes managed to stop him. Meanwhile, relative of executed Amadu III, monarch of Massina started rebellion in Hamdullahi; Al-Hajj died in this battle as a result of an explosion of his gunpowder reserves on February 12, 1864;

¹¹⁵ <http://www.africansuccess.org/visuFiche.php?id=337&lang=en> accessed July 31, 2014

Pilgrimage in the Path of Allah

Shaykl al-Hajj ‘Umar started Pilgrimage from the age of seventeenth. He embarked on Hajj and visited Mecca, as well as Hamdullahi, Bodo-Dioulasso, Kong, Hausa, Sokoto, Gwandu, Katsina, Cairo. The jihad he started to pursue differed from the two previous jihads in two major respects. According to *Muslim Societies in Africa*, a historical anthropology by Roman Loimeier claims these two differences to be: the previous two jihads were affiliated with Qadiriyya, while Al-Hajj affiliated himself with Tijaniyya which claimed to be supreme over other sufi orders. Secondly, Al-Haaj led jihad was dominated by one group, FulFulde-speaking population from Fuuta Tooro in Senegal. As for the previous jihads, originally they were dominated by scholars, but later become of more inclusive character, relying on the support of many other groups.¹¹⁶

During his pilgrimage Al-Hajj reached Futa Jallon,¹¹⁷ which was followed by Diaguku. “Diaguku has been considered the place where Al-Hajj ‘Umar began his spiritual mission in earnest” - reads the *In the Path of Allah* by John Ralph Willis.¹¹⁸ The Shaykh settled at Dinguary in 1849_1850. During 3 or 4 years, when he was living at Diaguku, he commenced intensive visits to Futa Jallon and the Walo¹¹⁹ – preaching and teaching. The next destination of Shaykh was Tuba, located next in the mountains of Futa Jallon; afterwards, across the Rio Grande (Geba), he arrived in the country of Fskaw.

The jihad

There have been assumptions that Al-Hajj started the Jihad against the French, but some historical facts prove it wrong, Al-Hajj had not intended to wage Jihad against the French. Firstly, according to Islamic law, Christians are not considered as infidels; Jihad can be waged against the Muslims. Furthermore, based on *Cambridge History of*

¹¹⁶ Roman Loimeier, *Muslim Societies in Africa*; (Indiana University Press, 2013), 120.

¹¹⁷ Also referred to as Fouta Djallon

¹¹⁸ John Ralph Willis, *In the Path of Allah; The Passion of Al-Hajj ‘Umar*; (Great Britain: BPC Wheatons Ltd, Exeter, 1989), 108; <http://goo.gl/F2nlrN>, accessed July 31, 2014

¹¹⁹ Also referred to as Waalo

Africa, Al-Hajj had attempts to collaborate with the French government of Senegal, however, his proposals were rejected both times.¹²⁰ In case of paying the *jizya*, payment of tribute, French would have been allowed to pursue their previous lives, including practicing their own religion. French were referred to as *dhimmi*, term for non-Muslim citizens living in Islamic state. If French had agreed on paying the *jizya*, there would be little chance of Al-Hajji waging Jihad against them. In addition, the *talibes*, who had been suffering from French domination, encouraged him. As a result, Al-Hajj declared Jihad against French and other African enemies. In other words, some circumstances dragged him in war against the French, rather than his intention and will.

In April of 1857 Al-Hajj declared war against Khasso¹²¹ Kingdom and besieged the French army, however, the siege failed on July 18, when Louis Faidherbe, French governor of Senegal, arrived with additional forces.

After his failure to defeat the French, Al-Hajj ‘Umar launched a series of assaults on the Bambara kingdoms of Kaarta and Ségou.

His next step was Timbuktu; only the united forces of Tuaregs, Moors, and Fulani tribes managed to stop him. Meanwhile, relative of executed Amadu III, monarch of Massina started rebellion in Hamdullahi; Al-Hajj died in this battle as a result of an explosion of his gunpowder reserves on February 12, 1864.

This is what John Ralph Willis writes about Al-Hajj and his powerful state:

The religious community (Jama’a) established by the Shaykh al-Hajj ‘Umar b. Sa’id al-Futi al-Turi al-Kadawi, stretched over a wide canvas – some one hundred and fifty thousand square miles in its widest geographic extent. Developed over a remarkably short period (c. 1849-1864), the Jama’a came to encompass much of what presently constitutes modern Guinea, Mali and Mauritania. Never before and never again was so much territory in this region of the Western Sudan to submit to one Islamic authority.¹²²

¹²⁰ *Cambridge History of Africa*; vol.5; (Cambridge University Press, 2001) 164; <http://goo.gl/gzu89b>, accessed July 31, 2014;

¹²¹ Also referred to as Xaaso

¹²² John Ralph Willis, *In the Path of Allah the Passion of Al-Hajj ‘Umar* (Great Britain: London, 1989), 1.

El Hadj Umar Tall remains a prominent figure in Senegal, Guinea, and Mali, though his legacy varies by country as some praise him as hero, while the other part insists, he was an invader.

Chapter Five: Colonialism and Ethnicity

The Colonial Experience

The Scramble for Africa

Colonialism loomed so large in the international controversies of the twentieth century as to give the impression that the colonial occupation of Africa lasted a long time. On the contrary, at the middle of the nineteenth century European possessions in West Africa were confined to tiny forts and trading posts, British, French, Dutch, Spanish, Danish and Portuguese, typified by the Portuguese colony of São João Baptista de Ajudá on the coast of Benin. It occupied a territory of five acres (two hectares) and had five inhabitants and a garrison of two when seized by newly independent Benin in 1961.

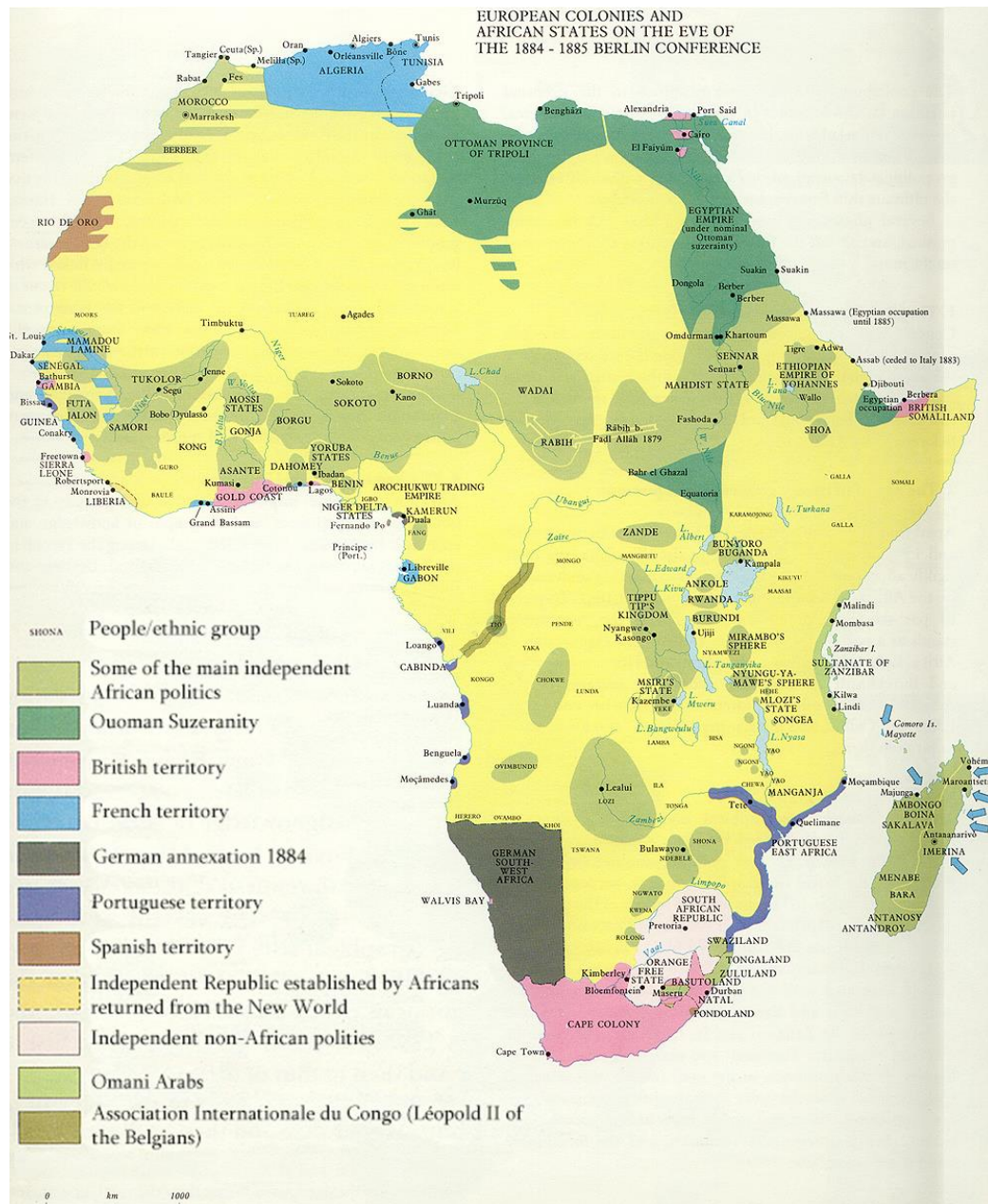
West Africa about 1850¹²³



¹²³ J. F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, *Historical Atlas of Africa*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 45. This and the following map contain substantial inaccuracies. For a detailed map of the forts on the coast of Ghana that comprised most of the European possessions in 1850, see H. Bengtson and V. Milošević, *Grosser Historischer Weltatlas* (München: Bayerischer Schulbuch-Verlag, 1958-1984) 3: 128-129.

Even in 1883, when Britain had expanded shallowly into the Ghana hinterland, and annexed Lagos, and France spread down the Senegal coast and up the river Senegal, establishing also a few posts on the Guinea coast, European colonies were still tiny and lost amid the immensity of West Africa.

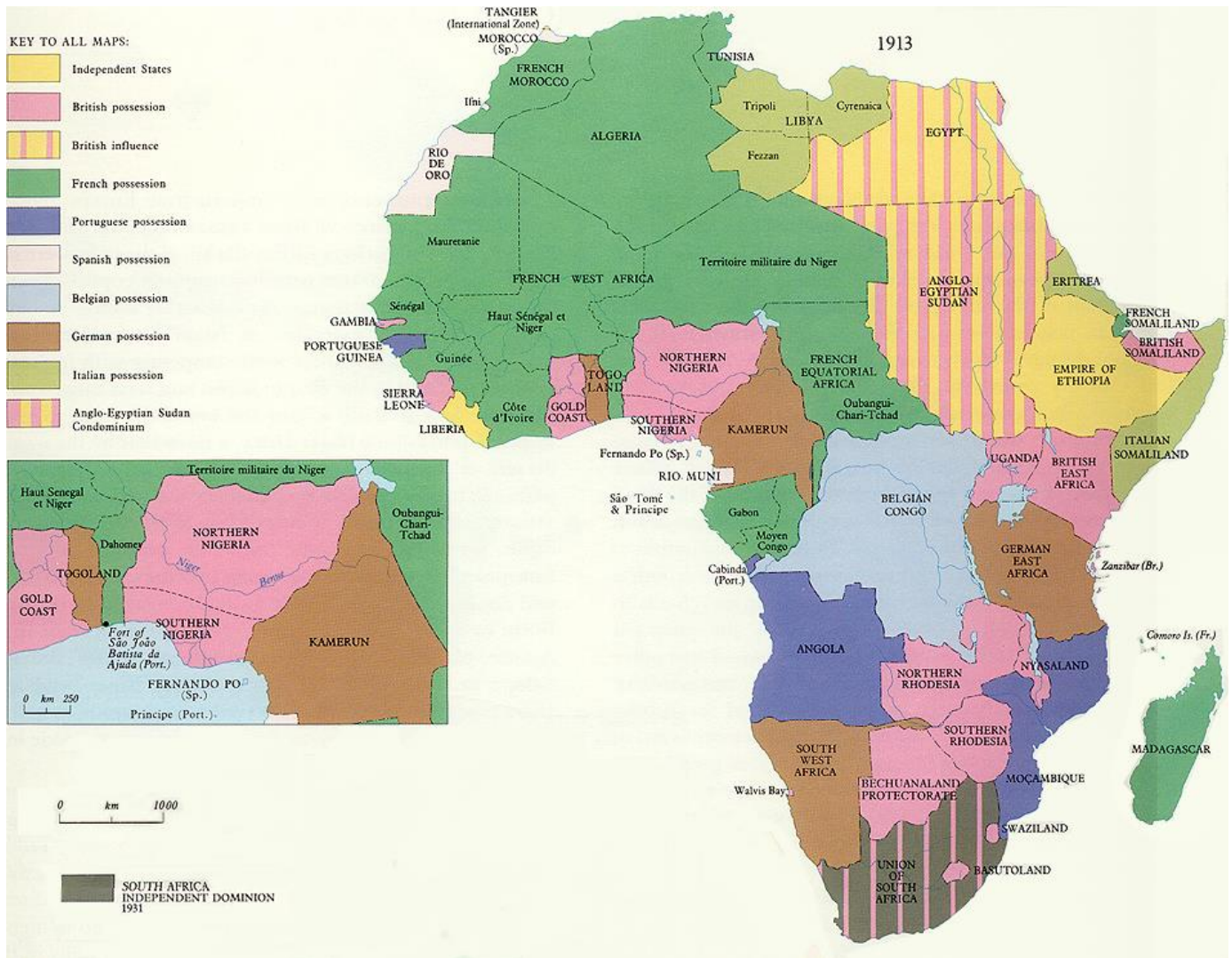
*European Colonies and African States*¹²⁴



¹²⁴ J. F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, *Historical Atlas of Africa*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 55.

The European colonization was an explosive process that began in 1884 and ended in 1899 with the entire African continent, except Ethiopia, Liberia (an American semi-colony of freed slaves), Morocco and Ottoman Libya divided up among the European powers by treaty. Libya and Morocco were snapped up in 1911 and 1912 by Italy and France. Egypt, nominally an autonomous dependency of the Ottoman Empire, had actually been occupied by the British army since 1882 and was *de facto* ruled from London. A continent carved up in fifteen years!

Africa in 1913¹²⁵



the aforementioned tiny fort and the little islands of São Tomé, Príncipe, and Annobón. Spain emerged only with a long neglected claim to largely uninhabited Spanish Sahara,

¹²⁵ J. F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, *Historical Atlas of Africa*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 63.

the island of Fernando Poo and tiny Spanish Guinea (these two areas comprising the present Equatorial Guinea.) It is not surprising because the Iberian countries were backward and poor. Germany, a colonial latecomer, got only Cameroon (partly Muslim) and Togo, both of which became largely French in 1919. What is more surprising is that wealthy and mighty Britain got only the small enclaves of Gambia and Sierra Leone plus the bigger and richer areas of the Gold Coast, modern Ghana, and Nigeria on the coast. Britain deliberately neglected some possibilities of acquisition in West Africa. An 1884 Foreign Office memorandum proposed

. . . to confine ourselves to securing the utmost possible freedom of trade on that [west] coast, yielding to others the territorial responsibilities. . . and seeking compensation on the east coast. . . where the political future of the country is of real importance to Indian and imperial interests.¹²⁶

Yet “West Africa seemed to offer better prospects of markets and raw materials than East Africa and the upper Nile,” which suggested to Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher that the British ruling elite was not very interested in African expansion in sub-Saharan Africa.¹²⁷ Robinson and Gallagher argue that the scramble was triggered by the Arabi Pasha revolt against the Khedive [Ottoman Viceroy] of Egypt in 1879, the subsequent British military occupation, and the ensuing rivalries among the great powers. It probably was not known at the time, but Nigeria turned out to be heavily populated and, in places, fertile. Later it emerged that the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone had some gold and diamonds, while much later oil was drilled out of the Nigerian swamps. So, in spite of its reluctance to scramble, Britain did not come out badly.

Nevertheless, there was something absurd about the scramble for Africa. In 1898 Britain and France nearly went to war over conflicting claims to a tiny French post,

¹²⁶ F.O. Confidential Print (East Africa), 5037, 1884, quoted in John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, “The Imperialism of Free Trade,” *The Economic History Review*, Second series, Vol. VI, no. 1 (1953), at <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/ipe/gallagher.htm>, accessed 22 December 2013.

¹²⁷ Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher with Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Climax of Imperialism*, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1968), 462.

Fashoda, amid the steamy swamps of what is today Southern Sudan. The French arrival there was another attempt to link territories separated by immense distances, here the port enclave of Djibouti on the Red Sea with French Equatorial Africa (AEF), and through the AEF the rest of France's new African domain, an ambition that was about the map itself and not about the places on the map. The scramble led to competition for territories that were not worth anything in any obvious way, and at its outcome Britain and France found themselves suddenly responsible for ruling, funding, and uplifting immense territories quite strange to them. Intellectual debates shortly to be surveyed were important in developing the British and French styles of colonization, but not as important as the lack of resources. The new empires rarely paid for themselves. The French territories included many Muslims throughout the Sahel and some of the forest territories like French Guinea, the British many in Northern Nigeria and Gambia.

We should not ourselves be seduced by the map. On paper Africa was all divided, but in fact the colonialists did not govern most of what the map showed in their color. We might take the example of the arid mountain region of Tibesti in northern Chad, much fought over by Gaddafi and his opponents. Tibesti was not actually occupied or administered by France until 1910.¹²⁸ In 1916 it was lost again to the great pro-Ottoman desert revolt led by Firhoun, Kaocen, and 'Ali Dinar—and not reoccupied until the early thirties, when the remoter parts of the Atlas Mountains in Morocco were conquered for the *first* time. In 1940 already the prestige of France was irreparably damaged by its loss of the war to Nazi Germany, and by 1945, it was clear that the colonial enterprise might not endure for long. Britain had promised independence to India before the war, and granted it in 1947; before the war there had already been discussion within the British Government of when and how to decolonize Africa. France had no wish to decolonize, but after the lost war in Indochina, and giving up Algeria, with much pushing from Africans, it was bound to come (for Guinea in 1958, and the other West African colonies in 1960). Seen in the light of such facts, the colonial period of West African history was

¹²⁸ See Jean Tilho, ed., *Documents scientifiques de la Mission Tilho*, (Paris : Ministère des colonies/Imprimerie Nationale, 1910-11, 2 vols. and maps.

in fact extremely brief. We consider what it left behind under the heading of the African state. Colonialism itself, however, left important legacies.

Colonialism and the Soul

There remains something elusive in the reality of colonialism or imperialism; it is not accidental that it has been best captured by fiction writers rather than historians or social scientists. The greatest writers on colonialism, for me, were people who belonged to the West but were in some sense products of colonialism, Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad and V. S. Naipaul. Conrad wrote most about the relation in the East Indies between the English and Dutch, on the one hand, and the Malays and Chinese, on the other. Throughout Conrad most of the English have a sense of superiority that makes them responsible; the poet Rudyard Kipling, a thoughtful imperialist, coined the phrase “the White Man’s Burden” for this complex of ideas in 1899. In Conrad’s *Lord Jim*, a merchant officer’s guilt after failing in his responsibility to take care of Muslim pilgrims on his ship determines his whole life thereafter. The same sense of responsibility lives on, weakened, in the French intervention to stop internecine killings in the Central African Republic and the “#Bring Back Our Girls” campaign against Boko Haram. But that sense of responsibility could easily descend into condescension, as in Conrad’s *Karain* where a Malay haunted by the imaginary world of spirits is cured when Hollis, the enlightened Englishman, gives him a Queen Victoria sixpence and tells him it is a talisman infallibly protecting him from the spirit world. Karain’s terrors are assuaged. As this story illustrates, the colonial European is sometimes only able to master the alien and to (to him) primitive environment of his colonies by entering into its assumptions. Europeans saw Africa as plastic, something that they could with reform and mold as it ought to be. These assumptions still powerfully motivate Western conduct, whether they move Western human rights activists trying to stop the Nigerian army from murdering Boko Haram suspects without a trial, or EU army officers trying to turn the armies of Mali and Niger into institutions more like EU armies. When the African reality failed to soften under Western fingers, colonialism could turn disappointed, bitter, and cruel. In Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, Kurtz begins as a benefactor trying to help the Africans, but ends in murdering cruelty because in his frustration he has “gone native,” and his

compound is surrounded by severed heads displayed on posts. As Conrad's narrator recalls:

The original Kurtz had been educated partly in England, and -- as he was good enough to say himself -- his sympathies were in the right place. His mother was half-English, his father was half-French. All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz; and by and by I learned that, most appropriately, the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs had entrusted him with the making of a report, for its future guidance. And he had written it, too. I've seen it. I've read it. It was eloquent, vibrating with eloquence, but too high-strung, I think. Seventeen pages of close writing he had found time for! But this must have been before his -- let us say -- nerves, went wrong, and caused him to preside at certain midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites, which -- as far as I reluctantly gathered from what I heard at various times -- were offered up to him -- do you understand? -- to Mr. Kurtz himself. But it was a beautiful piece of writing. The opening paragraph, however, in the light of later information, strikes me now as ominous. He began with the argument that we whites, from the point of development we had arrived at, 'must necessarily appear to them [savages] in the nature of supernatural beings -- we approach them with the might as of a deity,' and so on, and so on. 'By the simple exercise of our will we can exert a power for good practically unbounded,' etc., etc. From that point he soared and took me with him. The peroration was magnificent, though difficult to remember, you know. It gave me the notion of an exotic Immensity ruled by an august Benevolence. It made me tingle with enthusiasm. This was the unbounded power of eloquence -- of words -- of burning noble words. There were no practical hints to interrupt the magic current of phrases, unless a kind of note at the foot of the last page, scrawled evidently much later, in an unsteady hand, may be regarded as the exposition of a method. It was very simple, and at the end of that moving

appeal to every altruistic sentiment it blazed at you, luminous and terrifying, like a flash of lightning in a serene sky: `Exterminate all the brutes!'¹²⁹

The colonial official's position was capable of the best and likewise of the worst, as Conrad saw, and these things were connected, as in communism and in fascism. You find this feeling of impunity, of the ability to do anything one pleases, in real colonial memoirs and diaries. On the daring and difficult French crossing of the Sahara by the column of Foureau and Lamy (1898-1900):

This evening, Miloud [a French soldier] returned as the bearer of good news, and brought back some hostages: three Tuaregs that he adroitly led to the camp. To tell the truth, he was powerfully aided by the Lebel carbine whose triggerman he is, and which vigorously weighed on the deliberations of our hosts....¹³⁰

Nor is Conrad wrong that this feeling sometimes culminated in a freeing from European constraints and in "going native." The western branch of the three French expeditions that united their disparate columns at big Lake Chad in the center of Africa, the expedition led by Captain Paul Voulet and Captain Julien Chanoine, ended in a drama like that of Captain Kurtz.¹³¹ Short of food and money, Voulet's expedition burned so many villages, and murdered so many Africans, that the Ministry of War in Paris, alarmed by the rumors, sent a Colonel Klobb to relieve him, to face an inquiry back in France. Voulet ordered his African troops to open fire on Klobb's party, killing him. Then he convened his officers, admitted the killing, and explained. As one of his subordinates, then-lieutenant Joalland, recounted the story many years later

"Furthermore, I will give you on this subject all the justification possible." And then his calm disappeared, and with the great exaltation of an apostle, he cried

¹²⁹ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, written 1899, Part II, at <http://foa.sourceforge.net/examples/darkness/Darkness.pdf>, accessed July 4, 2014.

¹³⁰ Prosper Haller, *Sahara-Tchad (1898-1900): Carnet de route de Prosper Haller*, ed. Jean-Claude et Françoise Abadie, (Paris: l'Harmattan, 1989).

¹³¹ These events have been most completely researched by J.-F. Rolland, *Le Grand capitaine*, (Paris: Grasset, 1976).

“Moreover, I regret nothing that I have done. Now I am outside the law, I renounce my family, my country, I am no more a Frenchman, I am a black chief. Africa is big; I have a cannon, munitions, 600 men who are devoted to me body and soul. We are going to create an empire for ourselves in Africa, a strong empire that I will surround with the great bush without water; to take me it will require 10,000 men and 20 millions [of francs]. Never will one dare to attack me. When, later, France comes to negotiate with us, she will have to pay dear. In sum, what I’m going to do, it’s nothing but a coup d’etat. If I were at Paris, today I would be the master of France!”....Chanoine, who after the beginning had become frightfully pale, blanched even more and in a hollow, cracked voice cried: “For my part, I’m taking to the bush, I am with you. Long live liberty!”¹³²

The traitorous Captain Voulet justified his actions by example of Julius Caesar, which he knew well from the classical education of every nineteenth-century gentlemen. Caesar killed all the inhabitants of a town in Gaul, Avaricum; as Voulet saw it:

He was not a monster but a great general who had to make a choice.... From the Ardennes to the Loire, he burned all the villages that resisted him, all. A million dead, a million slaves. He succeeded, and a century later the Gauls boasted of the kindness of the Roman peace....They paid the price to gain a higher level of civilization....Before the arches of triumph at Orange and Arles [famous Roman monuments], do we think of the children of Avaricum?¹³³

This quotation illustrates from real events what Conrad intuited even better: the extraordinary liberation of the *imagination* by colonialism. A son of the French bourgeoisie imagines himself to be Julius Caesar from twenty centuries ago. He effortlessly deploys the resources of the nineteenth-century gentleman’s classical education and of the art-historical tourism made possible by the railroad and the steam

¹³² General Paul Joalland, *Le Drame de Dankori*, (Paris : Nouvelles Editions, 1930), quoted in Anne Hugon, *Vers Tombouctoo, L’Afrique des Explorateurs 2* : 164.

¹³³ Rolland, *Grand capitaine*, 173.

engine to reinterpret yesterday's cruelties in the midst of Africa. Joseph Conrad has a European say:

Anything -- anything can be done in this country. That's what I say; nobody here, you understand, here, can endanger your position.¹³⁴

Kurtz' subordinate recalls:

There was nothing either above or below him, and I knew it. He had kicked himself loose of the earth. Confound the man! He had kicked the very earth to pieces. He was alone, and I before him did not know whether I stood on the ground or floated in the air.

As in totalitarianism and today's jihadism, colonialism easily replaced reality by abstractions. Looking at their abstract maps of real Africa, English gentlemen conceived in their country-house drawing rooms the project of an all-red, or all-British, "Cape to Cairo" railroad: a line drawn in the mind, but which would have to pass through slimy swamps, tangled jungles and waterless wastes that were real. The all-red path from one end of Africa to the other was completely colored with the acquisition of German East Africa in 1919, but the railroad was never finished.

The European imagination reinterpreted not only the map of Africa, but the peoples of Africa. Some at some points could be seen as savage brutes, others at other times as noble echoes of something splendid in the European past. We cannot understand the idealization of Arab nomads by adventurers such as Doughty, T. E. Lawrence and Thesiger, of the Fulani and the Tuareg by British and French colonial officials, or of the Tutsi by Belgian officials, without understanding the European obsession with their own history. My own guess is that they looked for the interesting complexities missing from their own age amid the ethnology and geography of the peoples they conquered, and saw the heroic qualities vanishing from their own age reincarnated in the "warrior races" among their subjects. The notion of the Fulani and

¹³⁴ Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, Part II.

Tuaregs as anachronistic heroes was a pregnant one, full of implications for our own time. I will argue that the Boko Haram rebellion, or the Tuareg revolts against Mali and Niger, cannot be understood without appreciating these colonial attitudes in the past.

Colonialism or imperialism did make Europeans think big. And the imaginations they gave birth to were not always monstrous. The slave trade had existed for thousands of years, and been a huge commercial enterprise linking the Africa with the New World and the Muslim Middle East for hundreds of years, when some British dreamers like William Wilberforce and Zachary Macaulay decided to end it. What unprecedented presumption! By about 1880 they had essentially done so, using Britain's naval domination, helped by France and the United States, to seize slaving vessels and free the slaves. The current Prime Minister of Great Britain is not willing to lower real estate prices in central London by imposing real sanctions on Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, but these colonialists sacrificed the lives of 30,000 Royal Navy men to end the slave trade.

Slavery inside Africa was not so easy to cope with, as we will see. Big colonial projects collided with reality. As Captain Voulet put it, they often found they "had to make a choice." The reality was vague, unknown at the beginning, elusive even now. So colonial actors tended to cram puzzling aspects of that reality into categories familiar to them, unknown locally. A European admirer of Kurtz explains the severed heads surrounding his compound in this way:

I had no idea of the conditions, he said: these heads were the heads of rebels. I shocked him excessively by laughing. Rebels! What would be the next definition I was to hear? There had been enemies, criminals, workers – and these were rebels. Those rebellious heads looked very subdued to me on their sticks. 'You don't know how such a life tries a man like Kurtz,' cried Kurtz's last disciple.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, Part II.

Fraud played a big role in European colonialism. British and French officials wandered around Africa, persuading the local rulers to accept the “protection” of the British and French states, when those local authorities had no idea what a protectorate was, what international law was, or what a state was. In fact, later historians have wondered if some of the treaties that divided up Africa were simply forgeries that their alleged signers never saw. That has been argued, for example, about the first treaties with the Caliph of Sokoto.

The contradiction at the heart of colonialism

The greatest fraud involved in colonialism, which eventually destroyed it, was a contradiction between the principles at the heart of their domestic regimes and the colonial enterprise itself. The societies that were colonizing Africa, that is the modern societies of Western Europe, Great Britain and France, were increasingly based on the principle that all men are created equal, first stated by the philosopher Thomas Hobbes in 1640 and turned into a political slogan relevant to Africa with the French Declaration of Rights of the Man and the Citizen in 1789. But the colonization of Africa, whether in its crudely exploitative or its “civilizing mission” forms, had to rest on some notion of the inequality of the colonized and the colonizers. Colonization began at a time when white European Christians were still being seized and sold as slaves by Muslims, and white Muslims seized and sold by Europeans. So race was hardly the initial principle of discrimination. The domestic societies were in slow, then very rapid development from hierarchical structures in which there were many statuses forming a long gradation of superior and inferior from the serf to the duke. For these societies to become democratic, those who found themselves in these roles had to be seen as somehow equal. If there were groups utterly unequal in practice, or whose subordination was clearly required by the interests of the dominant groups, as in the case of American slaves, those groups had to be separated from the definition of the general society to maintain the principle of equality for those who could in practice participate politically. In societies that were themselves divided by ethnicity or race, like French North Africa, Kenya, South Africa or the United States, free government required some idea of the equality of individuals comprising it. So free government might be felt to require the redefinition of the group to maintain equality. Thus we might guess that what underlay

colonialism was not simply a contradiction in practice, but one in which *the egalitarian principle tended to generate its opposite*. It was easier when there was a very obvious difference like skin color (the real “observable” underlying many pseudo-scientific definitions of race) separating the dominant and subordinate groups.

So from the beginning the European colonies in West Africa were based on inequality and exploitation. In fact, from the time of the first Portuguese posts in the sixteenth century for more than two hundred years, all European holdings in West Africa were mere trading posts, commercial enterprises to sell Africans, enslaved by other Africans, in the New World. (The Muslims had their own flourishing slave trade, much older, from the Sahel to North Africa). For centuries, there was no thought of dividing up West Africa and ruling it.

Colonialism: Effects on the souls of the ruled

Up to this point we have considered the effect of colonialism on the colonizers. That subject hardly exhausts its effect on the ruled. In America, it has been assumed since World War II that colonialism was a terrible evil and its end a deliverance. What we have discussed gives some grounds for such a belief. But anyone who looked at the letters column of *West Africa* magazine in the last decades knows that this view is now being debated in Africa itself. Coming to Africa from the former Soviet Union, one encounters a refreshing admission that sub-Saharan Africa is messed up and a willingness to consider the possibility that may not be entirely someone else's fault. Again, however, it is necessary to turn to literary sources to confront the deepest reflections on the effect of colonialism. In my opinion, the deepest contemporary writer on this subject is V. S. Naipaul, deeper than West African writers like Chinua Achebe and Ben Okri. In the non-fiction *Middle Passage* (1962), the émigré Naipaul returns to the West Indies and is forced to confront his fear of Trinidad, his native land. Allowances must be made for the differences between Trinidad, depopulated and then filled by the British, first with slaves and then with Indian peons, and West African societies with their ancient cultures and thousand years of recorded history. But what Naipaul says is still extraordinarily suggestive.

I had never examined this fear of Trinidad...it is only now, in the moment of writing, that I am able to attempt to examine it. I knew Trinidad to be unimportant, uncreative, cynical...the most successful people were commission agents, bank managers and members of the distributive trades. Power was recognized, but dignity was allowed to no one. Every person of eminence was held to crooked and contemptible. We lived in a society that denied itself heroes.¹³⁶

This reminds of West Africa, where the description of political or business elites in fiction, or conversation, is often obscene or scatological. The authority that colonial powers imposed was tainted because it was foreign and cruel, the anti-colonial authority of the independence years tainted by its new cruelty, selfishness, and failure. So the present elites enjoy neither colonial nor anti-colonial legitimacy.

Everyone was an individual, fighting for his place in the community. Yet there was no community. We were of various races, religions, sets and cliques; and we had somehow found ourselves on the same small island. Nothing bound us together except this common residence.¹³⁷

Does this not somehow fit post-colonial Africa? Lines—sometimes convenient straight lines--were drawn by European diplomats between 1884 and 1899, on maps of places no European had ever trod in, maps of the kind where wide blank spaces are relieved by notations like “Dense Bush” or a squiggly dotted line that might turn out to be the course of a mighty river when someone with a compass and theodolite actually went there, or might not. The lines drawn in distant offices divided proud members of one people or religious faith and jumbled together utterly different peoples or religions under the rule of one colonial power. The former British colonies at least benefit from being separate coastal enclaves shaped by British rule over a period of 60-70 years, and separated by that experience from the former French colonies. But within the French

¹³⁶ V. S. Naipaul, *The Middle Passage: Impressions of Four Societies –British, French and Dutch—in the West Indies and South America*, (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1969), 43.

¹³⁷ Naipaul, *Middle Passage*, 45.

colonial empire the borders of the states that became independent were merely lines dividing different French officials' jurisdiction, and played much less role in anyone else's life than the borders of American states; the law was the same. Suddenly in 1958-60 they became the borders of separate and independent countries, each one supposed to possess its own patriotism. The two ethnographic maps in the Map Supplement at the end of this study, from an excellent Soviet ethnographic atlas,¹³⁸ display the relationship between ethnicity and contemporary state boundaries. We should hardly be surprised if the resulting entities lack a spirit of community and lack public spirit. The lack of public spirit is apparent in the massive theft of public money by officials. Such behavior was not unfamiliar to Naipaul.

Nationalism was impossible in Trinidad. In the colonial society every man had to be for himself; every man had to grasp whatever power and dignity he was allowed; he owed no loyalty to the island and scarcely any to his group. To understand this is to understand the squalor of the politics that came to Trinidad in 1946 when, after no popular agitation [as in most of West Africa], universal adult suffrage was declared. The privilege took the population by surprise. Old attitudes persisted: the government was something removed, the local eminence was despised. The new politics was reserved for the enterprising, who had seen the prodigious commercial possibilities. There were no parties, only individuals. Corruption, not unexpected, aroused only amusement and even mild approval: Trinidad has always admired the "sharp character" who, like the sixteenth-century picaroon of Spanish literature, survives and triumphs by his wits in a place where it is felt that all eminence is arrived at by crookedness.

If these attitudes can be observed amid the historic peoples of the former Soviet Union, they may also fit newly independent West Africa approximately.

¹³⁸ *Atlas Narodov Mira*, (Moscow: GUGK, 1964, Courtesy of Georgian National Library), 78-79. Soviet ethnographic maps do have some eccentricities, such as considering one ethnic group to be different in different states. It can be true of the dominant nationality in a state, if there is one, but rarely of minorities.

This was an ugly world, a jungle, where the picaroon hero starved unless he stole, was beaten almost to death when found out, and had therefore to get in his blows first whenever possible; where the weak were humiliated; where the powerful never appeared and were beyond reach; where no one was allowed any dignity and everyone had to impose himself....you must impose yourself whether you are in a store or a bank, whether you are crossing the road or driving a car....On the highway no one will dip his lights for you; you must blind in return, and learn the Trinidad highway game of driving into the blinding lights, to make your opponent swerve.

Just try to cross the street in post-Soviet Georgia! In Nigeria, the President's wife finally felt compelled to see the mothers protesting the kidnapping of their daughters by Boko Haram amid the indifference of the Nigerian army; two of them found themselves ordered arrested by the First Lady (!) for disrespect to her dignity.¹³⁹

The good side of the attitudes formed by colonialism, also much in evidence in West Africa, is

...a natural sophistication and tolerance which has been produced by the picaroon society. How could one wish it otherwise? To condemn the picaroon society out of hand is to ignore its important quality....For if such a society breeds cynicism, it also breeds tolerance...for every human activity and affection for every demonstration of wit and style....Everything that makes the Trinidadian an unreliable, exploitable citizen makes him a quick, civilized person whose values are always human ones, whose standards are only those of wit and style.¹⁴⁰

I am tempted to leave the account of colonialism's effects upon the society here, but the creation of artificial communities by colonialism is so important for today's jihadist movements that deserves treatment in detail.

¹³⁹ Naipaul, *Middle Passage*, 78-79.

¹⁴⁰ Naipaul, *Middle Passage*, 82-83.

Ethnicity, community, and irredentism

All modern nations, except the newly proclaimed Islamic State and perhaps the EU, are modeled on the nation-states of Western Europe, like France and Britain, forged over a thousand years by kings who tried, not always successfully, to open up a space for this new human possibility between the local community created by feudal oaths and the universal community created by the Church. Those nations were always modeled around an ethno-linguistic core whose language gradually came to be national: the Northern French around the Seine valley, the English of southern England dominated by Anglo-Norman aristocrats, the Castilians in Spain, even the Swiss Germans (there was only one French-speaking canton before traditional Switzerland was overwhelmed by the French revolution). Where there was not a single ethnic core group differentiated from the ones in neighboring states, such a group was generally created by a common experience of struggle (Switzerland again, the Netherlands), differentiated by religion from a larger group (Ireland), or split away from an empire of common language along the lines of imperial administrative units (all the American republics, North and South).¹⁴¹

Most of the newly independent countries of West Africa are nothing like the former cases, the nations with an ethnic core group. Going from West to East, in **Mauritania** the “whites” speaking Hassaniya Arabic are 80% of the population,¹⁴² and everyone is Muslim. One does hear in **Senegal** that “we are democratic because we are Wolof” (44% of the population, also serving as a *lingua franca*). The Senegalese are 90% Muslim. In **Gambia**, mostly Muslim, the Mandinke are about 45%. But most of the states to the south and east have nothing like these core ethnic groups. In **Guinea**, 90% Muslim, where the jihad state of Futa Jalon might have served as the core of a nation, the Fulani who inhabit it are only about 35%, the Mandinke added by French

¹⁴¹ Benedict Anderson points out the importance of this case: *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1991), revised edition, Ch. 4 (pp. 46-66).

¹⁴² I have used the figures in the very useful book by Jean Sellier, *Atlas des peuples d’Afrique*, (Paris: Decouvertes, 2008), which considers ethnicity the key to modern African politics. The reader should be aware, however, that it rests the much-debated differentiation of ethnic groups by French colonial scholars.

imperialism 30%. In **Guinea-Bissau** no people is more than 25%, in **Sierra Leone** and **Liberia**, long torn by strife related to ethnicity, 35% and 20% respectively.

In **Mali**, particularly important for this study, the Mande linguistic family comprises about half the population, but Malians I spoke to tend to identify themselves by the names of its constituent peoples, such as the Bambara and Soninke. Population is very unequally distributed, and the Bambara in the southwest are about a third of the overall population, and in places like the capital it is used as an inter-ethnic language. In the **Ivory Coast**, like most of the southern forest zone, there are many small tribes. Moreover, a special problem is posed by immigrants from the north, about a quarter of the population, formerly disfranchised. Their unhappiness and tension with dominant tribes played a major role in the recent Ivorian civil war.

Burkina Faso is an exception to ethnic fragmentation, because the Mossi are about half of its people, although they occupy a much smaller share of its area. There were three historical Mossi kingdoms, each with a distinctive, sometimes hostile national traditions. The country is 40% Muslim, and has some distinguished Muslim scholars. In **Ghana** as well, the Akan family of languages comprises about half the population and area of the country. But historical factors have divided it into distinct and proud groups like the Ashanti, Fante, and so forth. Only about 15% of Ghanaians are Muslim, and a similar percentage in **Togo**, where about 45% belong to the coastal Ewe group. The army, dominated by the northern Kabre people, has held power for decades. **Benin** is 25 to 40% Fon, the ruling nationality of the powerful precolonial Kingdom of Dahomey, according to Sellier. But the smaller groups jealous of Fon domination have usually controlled the Presidency, a mechanism common in Africa.

On the edge of the desert, **Niger** is thickly populated only in the valley of the river Niger and a narrow strip along the Nigerian border. The Hausa probably have a slight majority of the population, and it is widely used as a language of convenience, but the Songhai and the kindred Djerma have tended to dominate politically. Some Presidents, however, have been Hausa (Mahamane Ousmane, elected 1993) or mixed Fulani and Kanuri (Tandja Mamadou, elected 1999). The current occupant of the Prime

Minister's office is a Tuareg. But the armed forces are the real holder of power, and have repeatedly intervened to topple Presidents. "The military hierarchy has been recruited in a privileged manner among Djerma communities," though others speak of a "Songhai-Djerma military elite."¹⁴³

Chad, abutting on modern Sudan, has since independence the longest history of ethnic warfare of any West African country. Languages of the Sara family comprise about a third of the population, but they are profoundly divided by religion, an important separation in Chad. Bagirmi, which used a language of this group, was a major Muslim West African kingdom, while the southern Sara like the first President, Francois Tombalbaye, are Christians or pagans. Shuwa Arabs are 20% of the population, though the 1993 census says 12,¹⁴⁴ either would be the largest Arab percentage of any Sahel country except Mauritania. Amid many military coups and rebellions, with Libyan and some Sudanese interference, the northern Muslim peoples, present or former nomads, have come to dominate politically. Chadian soldiers retired from the current French-led intervention in the Central African Republic when they were accused of supporting the Muslims against the Christians. The current French-supported President, Idris Deby, is Muslim and Zaghawa (less than 7% of the population).¹⁴⁵ There are as many Zaghawa in Sudan or refugees from it. They fought with Arab militias supported by the Sudanese government in the Darfur conflict, another factor tending to involve Chad in international conflict with a religious dimension.

Nigeria

Nigeria is a particularly important case, because of its size as the biggest population by far in Africa, the number of its ethnic groups, and their role in political and religious conflict. Nigeria has scores of peoples, some tiny groups confined to a few villages. This particularly characterizes the "Middle Belt," a broad arc around the rivers Niger and Benue between the big ethnic groups, the Niger Delta and the southeast along

¹⁴³ Rapport Afrique de Crisis Group [International], N°208, 19 septembre 2013, 22 and 26 notes 123 and 124.

¹⁴⁴ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cd.html>, accessed July 10, 2014.

¹⁴⁵ <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/zag>, accessed July 10, 2014.

the Cameroon border. As in the southern Sudan, many peoples were pulverized and scattered by Muslim slave-raiding from the north. But three self-confident and politically active peoples in three corners of the country comprise nearly three-quarters of the total population, the Muslim Hausa in the north (about a third, with the ruling Fulani who have largely assimilated to them), the Yoruba in the southwest, and the Igbo (Ibo) in the southeast. The Hausa, who also provide a wider trading diaspora and a lingua franca for others in West Africa more widely, overlap the border of Niger in the north, the Yoruba the border of Benin in the southwest. All three peoples were favored by the British in various ways, the Hausa-Fulani being the beneficiaries of Indirect Rule through traditional dynasties that remained powerful; the economist Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, former Governor of the Bank of Nigeria and an enemy of current President Goodluck Johnson, just became Emir of Kano, to whose “royal” family he belongs. The Hausa-Fulani eventually paid a heavy price, however, for British willingness to let them maintain their traditions. Very few of them received Western education, leading to their area becoming backward and poor in comparison with the south, motivating in turn much dissatisfaction and soul-searching in the north. Even in 2009, the ratio of pupils to trained teachers in Kano State, the richest in the Muslim north, was over 100 to 1. In the worst 25% of the State’s schools, it was over 150 pupils to one trained teacher.¹⁴⁶ Under colonial rule and since, many southern Christian traders and petty officials settled in the north to fill modern jobs, generating ethnic conflict and repeated pogroms. Another, smaller, northern people, poor but with a great past, the Kanuri, seems to provide the ethnic basis of the Boko Haram terrorist movement, the topic of intense speculation as regards their possible danger to Western countries.

It was the Yoruba and particularly the Igbo who became successful, together with other southern peoples, and dominant in education, Western professions, and trade. Nigerian politics has revolved around shifting alliances between great parties dominated by the three biggest peoples, the stakes now raised by oil revenues and the opportunities for self-enrichment that it provides. As a result, Nigeria is a profoundly divided country, divided both by ethnicity and religion. The Hausa-Fulani should be seen in recent

¹⁴⁶ *Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All*, EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013/4, UNESCO, unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/00256/22565.pdf, 37.

centuries as an identity that incorporated smaller peoples through Islam. But Christianity is now competing actively for conversion of those groups; one-third of the people in Borno State, the biggest base of Boko Haram, are Christian. The Yoruba are largely divided between Muslim and Christian; the millions of Yoruba in huge Lagos have been “predominately Muslim” for a century.¹⁴⁷ A major counter-terrorism issue is whether the Yoruba might become attracted in any numbers to jihadist movements. They comprise the bulk of the Nigerian diaspora in Britain.¹⁴⁸ The Igbo and smaller peoples of southeast Nigeria are predominately Christian. Overall, Nigeria is about half Muslim, with nearly as many Christians.

The Muslim-Christian divide was bound to become a huge barrier to consolidation of a national state in Nigeria, given its history, as soon as British rule was withdrawn. In general, the British had an opportunity, as the French did in Guinea, to foster the gradual formation of real nations around an ethnic core group, in the way that Western European nation-states were formed. The three big and dominating groups, the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo, could have served as nuclei for smaller groups in their regions. As a knowledgeable Nigerian blogger remarked, there were

...northern and western minorities who accepted Hausa and Yoruba as their lingua franca (with the exception of Benue and Edo people who resisted Hausa and Yoruba respectively), [while] ethnic minorities in Nigeria's deep south resisted learning or identifying as Igbo. So the colonialists chose to construct a hitherto non-existent collective Ijaw [a Niger delta people] identity....¹⁴⁹

In the Biafran war of secession of the ‘sixties, the Igbo were able, on the whole, to achieve the cooperation of many other southern peoples, so I am not sure the writer’s claim about them is right. The failed Biafra effort might have been a path toward smaller states dominated by the major ethnic groups and able to successfully claim people’s loyalties. Instead, the British, confident of the power and endurance of their own

¹⁴⁷ J. S. Eads, *The Yoruba Today*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 129.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Virginia Comolli, IISS, London, October 2013.

¹⁴⁹ Farooq Kperogi, “Nigeria: What’s Really President Goodluck Jonathan’s Ethnic Group?,” *Daily Trust*, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201308050954.html>, accessed 9 July 2014.

domination, had cut out an artificially bounded assortment of very different and mutually hostile ethnic groups with their diplomatic cookie-cutter, then called it an independent state--and expected it to behave like a European state. The French did the same, more inevitably because, with their agenda of assimilation, real or nominal, they had, on the whole, even less desire to foster the identity of local peoples as such.

The “Americas” Option

There is, of course, another option for state formation, the options of developing states on the basis of the colonial administrative units, as was done in the North and South America. Perhaps it was possibility that the colonialists had in mind when they prepared their domains for independence. To me, it is surprising how successful it has been: only a few African states, such as Somalia, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Congo-Kinshasa have been classic failed states, and those not always. Some of the secessionist movements that contributed to weakening African states actually testify to the power of this formula: Eritrea, “Somaliland” on the Gulf of Aden, and Western Sahara show the enduring power of the separate identity given by colonial boundaries: the Eritrean boundary cuts across the Tigrean ethnic group, which now dominates neighboring Ethiopia, Somaliland is just a fraction of the Somali ethnic area, Western Sahara shares the Hassaniya Arabic language with Mauritania. Timor Leste is another striking case of nation-building by colonial boundaries. Of course the numerous African secessionist or autonomist movements are failures of this formula: Casamance in Senegal, Biafra in Nigeria, the Tuareg rebellions in Mali and Niger, the separatism of the Ewe (dominant in Togo) from Ghana, Darfur and Southern Sudan in Sudan, now Cyrenaica in Libya, and so forth.

Ethnicity across borders

Ethnicities and ethno-religious identities that straddle borders have indeed been a fertile cause of wars and rebellions in modern history. Vladimir Putin annexed Crimea using the excuse of its Russians, and Russians from Moscow are fighting right now in Southeastern Ukraine because it is somehow culturally Russian, though it is nearly divided between Russian and Ukrainian speakers. Sunni Arabs, though a minority of perhaps 20% in Iraq, dominated the area in the centuries of Ottoman rule, as a British

colony, and since independence (especially under Saddam Hussein). Their reaction against Shi'ite domination since Saddam Hussein's overthrow enabled a virulent jihadist movement, al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers, that threatened everything the American intervention had achieved. Finally defeated, Sunni Arab dissatisfaction, goaded by the Shi'ite sectarianism of the Maliki government, came back in form of the even more virulent "Islamic State," which has just erased the border between Syria and Iraq in the form of a pretentious new Caliphate, posing potentially greater dangers than al-Qaeda did in Taliban Afghanistan. As this case showed, jihadist extremism has a potential to erase ethnic or sub-ethnic differences: linguists consider Iraqi and Syrian Arabic separate languages like French and Catalan, but Islam and perhaps the closely related "Arab" identity now provide a basis for bridging this difference and proudly erasing the border in the name of the universal Muslim community. (In West Africa, almost all Muslims are Sunni and of the Maliki legal school, even if they are Salafis, otherwise often Hanbali, minimizing the problem of religious minorities across borders.) Shared ethnicity across borders can catalyze state behavior dangerous to our security interests. The common Pushtun identity on both sides of the Durand line, separating Afghanistan and Pakistan, spurred a number of Afghan governments to Pushtun irredentism, and the reaction of the Pakistani military has been to use Islam as a weapon against Pushtun secessionism, supporting Taliban against the post-communist Afghan government and now against the government we organized there. Shared ethnicity across borders does not have to be in massive numbers or across a wide area to create security problems. In weak states with inaccessible terrain a tiny group of people across borders can provide sanctuaries useful for insurgencies or terrorist operations. In Georgia the few thousand *kistebi*, in the Pankisi valley, ethnic Chechens who came across the mountains 150 years ago, provided first a refuge for Chechen refugees from the wars against Russia (1994-1996, 1999-ca. 2002) then an "R and R area" for guerrilla fighters that Chechen leaders told me was useful. Even diasporas, groups of migrants thinly scattered across another population, can pose security problems. The Iranian diaspora in Europe played a major role in the Iranian revolution, and then in Mujahidin-e-Haq terrorism against that regime. Persecuted Jews in the Russian empire provided a large fraction of the support for revolutionary movements, ca. 1875-1917. West Africa is a terrain of diasporas. Because of its long backwardness it

provided a fertile soil for Muslim missionaries who normally doubled as traders, Arabs for centuries, then the Dioula (Joola) in the Western part of the subcontinent, Hausa and Fulani in eastern West Africa. These Fulanis extend eastwards as far as the Red Sea along the pilgrim road, where they are called “Takruris.” Since the nineteen-twenties Western-style businesses have been opened throughout West Africa by Lebanese. In Mali and Niger almost all hotels, fancy restaurants, Western-style bakeries, supermarkets and so forth are owned and operated by Lebanese. They have so much money that they must enjoy political protection and play a role in politics, in spite of their commercial caution. In Sierra Leone, the Lebanese were partly Shi’ite, who were more successful, and were in 1999 affiliated with the Amal movement. It would not be surprising if they now had connections with Hezbollah.¹⁵⁰

The diaspora phenomenon can lead to abandonment of a traditional religion—the story of the Goldwater family in Arizona—but more often, especially in African conditions, to its radicalization. Hausa cattle traders in Yoruba cities (southeastern Nigeria) began, some two centuries ago, as weak Muslims but after some time in a culturally assertive, but religiously lax, Yoruba Muslim environment re-defined their Islam in a strict, militant manner by suddenly adopting en masse the Tijaniyya sufi order, brought to them by a Senegalese shaykh. Scandalized by Yoruba wives who were not in purdah, they seceded from the Yoruba Friday mosque.¹⁵¹ Such differentiation is common among diasporas threatened with assimilation to their environment. Intelligence collection should follow carefully all these diasporas for extremist turns.

So the peoples spread among states can be a serious problem. The follow two maps, based on G. P. Murdock’s widely used ethnic map of Africa, show ethnic groups partitioned by national borders and the incidence of civil wars. As is shown by the cited article, there is a statistical correlation. It would be stronger had it not been based on

¹⁵⁰ Daniel Caspar Fithin, “Diamonds and War in Sierra Leone: Cultural Strategies for Commercial Adaptation to Endemic Low-Intensity Conflict,” Ph.D. Dissertation, University College, London University, 1999, <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1317917/1/300097.pdf>, accessed August 21, 2013, 117-133, 93-100.

¹⁵¹ Abner Cohen, *Custom and Ritual in Urban Africa*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), paperback ed., 150-154.

Murdock's map, because he tends to divide groups that have a common consciousness, like the Arabs.

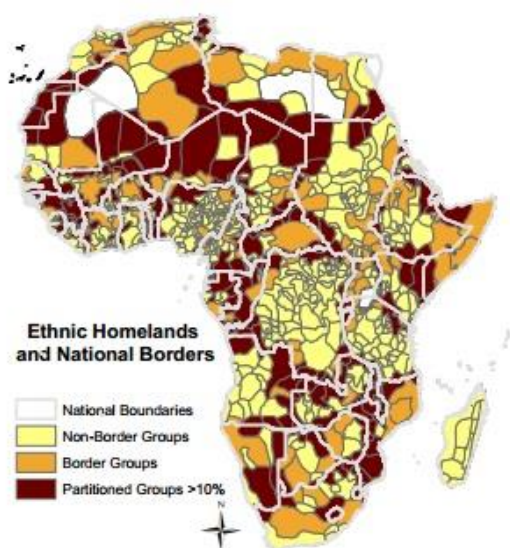


Figure 1b

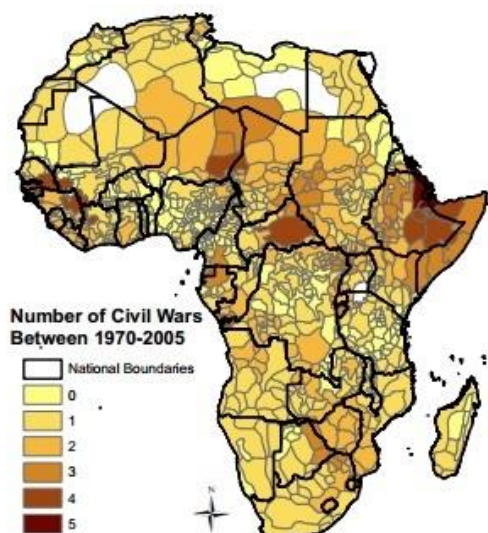


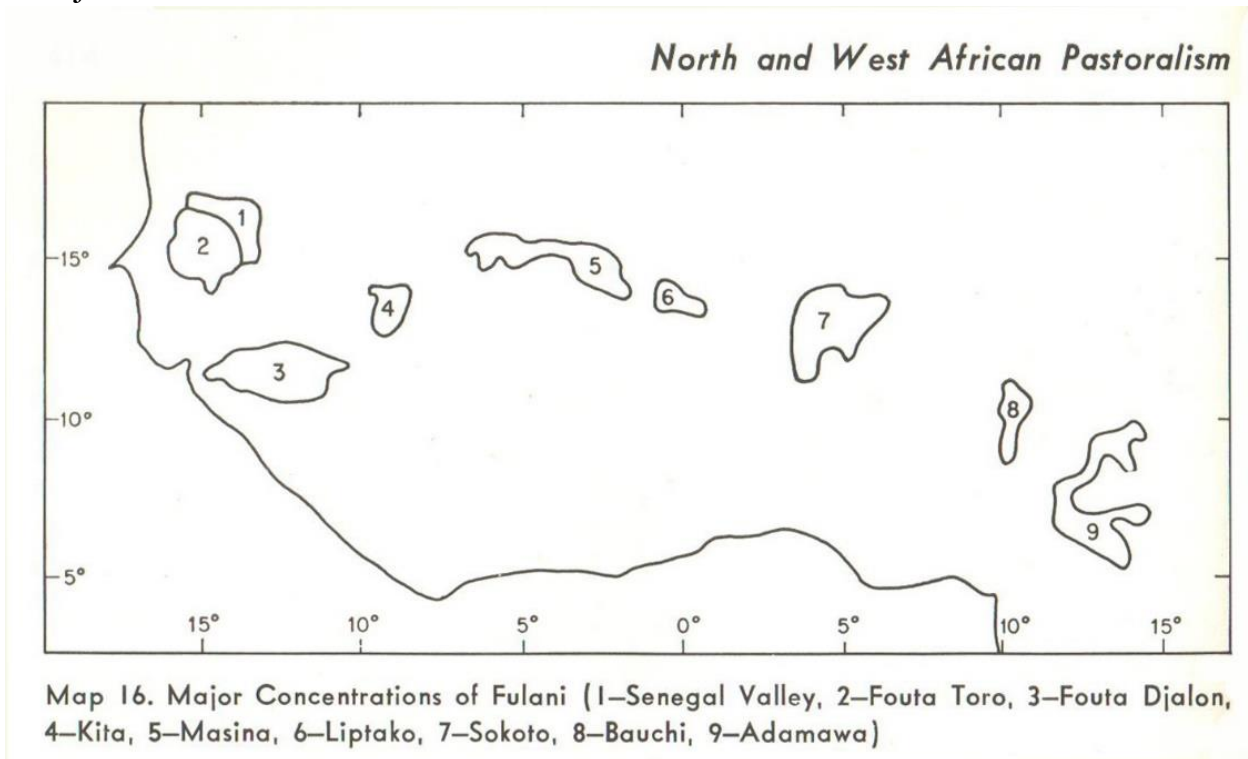
Figure 2a

Correlation of Partitioned People and Civil Wars¹⁵²

Peoples divided by borders should be the focus of special attention by American intelligence analysts and defense planners. Two in particular have played a tremendous role in jihads, either those in the eighteenth and nineteenth century or those of today. These are the Tuareg and the Fulani. For the areas occupied by both, see the colored ethnic maps at the end. The Fulani, however, are so scattered among other peoples—often people that they dominated—that a different kind of map is needed to display them adequately. The following map, from Murdock's *People's of Africa*, shows them clearly.

¹⁵² Stelios Michalopoulos, Elias Papaioannou, *THE LONG-RUN EFFECTS OF THE SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA*, (Cambridge Mass. : NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH, 2011), 11.

Major Concentrations of Fulani



The Fulani

As our historical narrative showed, the Fulani are an exceptional people. In spite of embodying very different ways of life and religions, like the Highland and Lowland Scots, they have displayed a great deal of solidarity in great crises. The sedentary Fulani, or at least their religious aristocracy, have displayed an exceptional attachment to Islam and a desire to spread it by the sword. They have showed a desire to dominate, through Islam, that made them the founders of great empires. And, perhaps like the Normans, they have exercised their rule with unusual success. Because they are so divided on the map, they do not dominate any state. From this they might feel a dissatisfaction and a desire to recover their great role. Such a turn has not yet been observed, perhaps because many Fulani in multi-ethnic states are members of the elite and have enjoyed the rewards of office. But they certainly have not done so proportionally with their splendid role in African history—as yet. The Fulani are hardly discussed in contemporary debate and analysis on security, but they should be a focus of information-gathering and potential scenario building.

Ethnic irredentist movements are not an African problem alone. There are, or have been, numerous ethnic secessionist or autonomist movements elsewhere: Quebec, Ulster, Scotland, Corsica, Flemish Belgium, the Saar, Slovakia, Catalonia, Sicily, Sardinia, Sicily, “Padania” in northern Italy, Kosovo, the Serb secessionist republics carved out of Croatia and Bosnia, Kosovo, the Ukrainian Donbass, Transdniestar, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Chechnya, Nagorno-Karabakh, many little peoples in India and Burma, Atjeh in Indonesia, and so forth. But this is just the problem: ethnic secessionism is not a problem of backwardness alone. It is a problem of *both* early state formation and post-modernity, with the greatest stability on the arc in between. The case of Quebec shows the effects of post-modernity. For two centuries Quebec was an isolated, unhappy but generally quiescent part of English Canada dominated by the Catholic Church. Its elite went to universities in France. In the ‘sixties began the liberation from the Church, greater cosmopolitanism, and Quebecois began to go to university in the United States and Singapore—and, at the same point, militant Quebecois separatism emerged. The emergence of such separatist movements is helped by three other post-modern factors. The more obvious factor is the fading of the threat of inter-state warfare; Scots can contemplate independence because, with the EU and, beyond it, the invisible umbrella of American power, they no longer need the Royal Navy to protect them from the Germans or the Soviet Union. A second, less obvious factor is the growing obsession with identity in our time and the resulting assertion of sub-national identities now recognized by multiculturalism. In Southwestern England, the Cornish language, which died out in the eighteenth century, is now being taught again to unearth true Cornish identity. We might wonder whether this factor is related to a third: to a relativism that can find no basis for community based on argument, only bases that are “given”: ethnicity and, sometimes, religion. African states will thus confront problems of national identity not only if they are failing. Those that are successful in developing on the “Western” path, as Senegal and Ghana now may hold promise of doing, may eventually find their citizens more and more concerned with their particular cultures and with asserting that identity against the state.

In any case, the “Americas” option has a limited number of real success stories. The long-enduring nations successfully formed along colonial administrative

boundaries are nearly confined to North and South America; elsewhere we could perhaps name Belgium, until recently. Latin America is notably less successful than North America, and the Latin American states that are the most disordered are often those with several major ethnic groups (for example, Mexico, Guatemala, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Paraguay). In fact, the states more successfully formed on the “Americas” model have been characterized by three factors: overwhelming dominance of one ethnic core group, at least formal republican government, and long rule by the same colonial power. As we have seen, colonial rule in Africa was very brief, democracy has been weak or altogether absent, and all West African states except Mauritania are multiethnic.

This discussion should establish that the artificiality of African states is a tremendous problem weakening the state as a focus of loyalty, opening it not only to secessionism and irredentism but to capture by selfish, predatory elites.

The Ethnic Factor

Ethnicity is a factor that obviously is important for American security. The Islamist groups that seized northern Mali in 2012, and are still fighting, were always led by Tuaregs or Arabs, and followed a series of earlier revolts by the same groups to secede from state of Mali, which is dominated by very different ethnic groups. In Nigeria, the murderous Boko Haram insurgency is said to be largely Kanuri, and publishes its videos in Hausa with a Kanuri summary, rather than the national language, English, indicating a desire to appeal to a particular constituency. Visiting West Africa, you immediately encounter people who say, “I am Soninke! Why don’t you learn Soninke?” Here, in the context of the identity of the state, I will discuss this much-disputed factor.

The European nation-states that serve as the models for African states were formed around ethnic groups that, in the nineteenth century, intellectuals began to see as “primordial,” extending far back into the past with the same definition and differentiation from other communities. “This has been Serb land for 8,000 years,” the foreign minister of the secessionist mini-state of Srpska Krajina told me as we drove

past torched Croatian and Bosnian Muslim houses. Present-day academia is in revolt against this conception, globally and in African studies. One of the most influential books on contemporary Africa, Jean-François Bayart's *State in Africa*, calls his chapter about it "The Shadow Theater of Ethnicity."¹⁵³ Instead academia favors a "constructivist" conception of ethnicity, according to which peoples are formed and re-formed by intellectuals and by those who exert power over the members of those peoples, usually exerting it in their own interest. In part contemporary academics think ethnicity is constructed because, following Nietzsche and Heidegger, they think everything is constructed, arbitrary. This view is also fed by intellectuals' powerful dislike of nationalism, be it American or European. Precisely because this view is so dominant, it needs to be questioned. It has been powerfully criticized by Anthony Smith, who points to some groups like the Armenians who have had a relatively stable and distinct identity for some 2,700 years.¹⁵⁴ The Kanuri ethnic group itself derives from the Kanembu, the core group of the Kanem-Bornu Empire over a thousand years ago. But not all groups are like the Armenians or Kanuri, and many African groups do not have the definition of European ones, or did not have until very recently.

The basic argument against the apparently decisive importance of ethnicity may be stated, in the words of Bayart, as follows:

Ethnicity cannot provide a basic reference point for the postcolonial political areas, because it is itself constantly being formed and is largely mingled within [that is, with] the phenomenon of the state, for which it is supposed to provide the explanatory key.¹⁵⁵

Bayart explains ethnic history thus:

¹⁵³ Jean-Francois Bayart, *The State in Africa: the Politics of the Belly*, tr. by Mary Harper, Christopher Harrison and Elizabeth Harrison, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), second edition, 41-59.

¹⁵⁴ Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998).

¹⁵⁵ Bayart, *State in Africa*, 49.

The functionaries of the colonial bureaucracy, half administrators and half ethnologists, gave a decisive stimulus to ethnic consciousness. They were soon supported by the missionaries, particularly the Protestants, who helped in the standardization and extension of regional languages through education, the translation of the Scriptures and the training of an indigenous learned elite....Ethnology itself, in producing ethnic monographs, took part in the invention of this fiction....

To call it a fiction seems a stretch. There was something there before they began classifying it. But there are many cases where colonial governments, used to the ethnic group in the European sense, employed it as a category to organize the very confusing African reality they had to sort out and order. As a result, they did sometimes assist the formation of ethnic groups, as the British in northern Nigeria encouraged, by their Indirect Rule through northern Hausa-Fulani emirs who encouraged Islam and used the Hausa language, the consolidation of Hausa ethnicity by the merging of many little, poorly differentiated ethnic groups with it.¹⁵⁶ By maintaining its capital in a Bambara area and allowing or assisting publishing in Bambara, the post-colonial state of Mali assists the merger of other Mandinke groups into the Bambara. The situation in pre-colonial times is more elusive. But researchers such as Jean-Loup Amselle, who opened the attack on the notion of the ethnic group in French anthropology,

...demonstrated how, in the precolonial history of the Wasolon region, where the Fulani, the Bambara and the Malinke existed, there existed neither Fulani, nor Bambara, nor Malinke in essence: a Fulani could become Bambara, then Malinke, and the other way around.¹⁵⁷

The scholars' polemic against ethnicity might lead one to think it has no importance. On the contrary, they admit that some ethnic labels (not all) are essential factors in

¹⁵⁶ Bayart, *State in Africa*, 49 Bayart, *State in Africa*, 49 Bayart, *State in Africa*, 52-53.

¹⁵⁷ Anne Duquet, « L'ethnie : fantasme occidental et réalités culturelles, » chapter in Patrick Gonin, Nathalie Kotick and Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, *La tragédie malienne*, (Paris: Vendémiaire, 2013), 161.

contemporary politics. Bayart argues that they are important because they serve as channels for the acquisition and redistribution of wealth.

French and British Colonialism: the Paths Diverge

In eighteenth-century British India as in French Senegal, it was common for British or French officials or traders to “go native,” living an Indian (Hindu or Muslim) or African life in many respects.¹⁵⁸ In both places, it was probably the native mistress that was the most potent agent of cultural mingling.¹⁵⁹ Up until the end of the French colonies in Africa, it remained common for French officers or isolated administrators to have African “wives,” a thing British administrators there were to reject with horror, by the time of the late nineteenth-century “scramble for Africa.” French men and their African mistresses or wives rapidly produced a racially mixed, Creole society in St. Louis, Senegal, as in the French West Indies. This assimilation could easily coexist with racism. Exploitation and assimilation combined were thus the natural colonial policies of both powers. By the late eighteenth century, two factors tended to divide the colonial paths of these two great powers. One was the effort of high officials such as Wellesley, Governor-General of India, to reject the cultural mingling of British and “native,” an effort born of general efforts to reform British society, and the other was the French Revolution.

French and British colonialism: divergent paths

After the French revolution of 1789, an increasing divergence between the moral basis of French and British colonialism began.¹⁶⁰ French colonialism was more explicitly pushed by egalitarian principles, though often partially or dishonestly, and those principles were often developed by a French fascination with abstract universals. The British, particularly after their reaction against the French revolution, displayed a certain penchant for working out their principles through the channels of historic

¹⁵⁸ See, for British India, the quaint and delightful book *The White Moguls...*, whose charms culminate in the wonderful photo of a British general in his Hindu clothes, carefully tailored out of his Scottish clan tartan.

¹⁵⁹ Jean-Pierre Dozon, *Freres et sujets : La France et l'Afrique en perspective*, (Paris : Flammarion, 2003), 39-40.

¹⁶⁰ For an authoritative interpretation of French colonialism in Africa, see Jean-Pierre Dozon, *Freres et sujets: la France et l'Afrique en perspective*, ([Paris]: Flammarion, 2003).

precedent and for the acknowledgment of differences among places and peoples. Accordingly, French colonial policy emphasized centralized rule from Paris by Frenchmen (as in France), the ultimate goal of French colonization at its most idealistic was the assimilation of Africans to French civilization and citizenship. From the time of the brief Second Republic in 1848, the small French settlements on the Senegal coast were intermittently acknowledged as parts of the metropole, and their inhabitants, whether black or white, could elect deputies to the National Assembly. The first creole from Africa, Durand Valentin, was elected in that year.¹⁶¹ From this point the aim, often distant or obscured, of French colonial policy was *assimilation* to French civilization and equal participation in French politics. That policy was aided by French sexual morality and the resulting presence of many mulattos from the Antilles, already very assimilated, in the early colonies in Senegal. Today, the older and more assimilated parts of the former empire, the French Antilles, French Guyana, the Indian Ocean islands of Reunion and Rodrigues, largely African populated, and many Pacific islands have the status of Overseas Departments of France. A black man from Guyana, Gaston Monnerville, became President of the Council of the Republic, and then of its successor the Senate, 1947-1968, and nearly President of France, in an incident that shows both the power and limits of French racial assimilation: twice, in 1953 and 1968, he was expected to be elected to the then-secondary position of President, but his rise was blocked, probably because of his race. African politicians such as Félix Houphouët-Boigny and Léopold Sédar Senghor served several terms as Ministers in post-war French governments. Senghor, a Senegalese Catholic, was indeed the great poster child of African assimilation. As a young man he flirted with then-prestigious monarchism, was one of the few people to pass the incredibly demanding *agrégation de grammaire* examination to become a professor of French, Latin and Ancient Greek (1935), was elected to the august Académie française, married a Frenchwoman from Normandy, and retired to Normandy after giving up the Presidency of Senegal.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Dozon, *Frères et sujets*, 42-43, 103.

¹⁶² Dozon, *Frères et sujets*, 35 note 1.

British colonial policy

Britain began the nineteenth century with a tolerance for mixed cultures and mixed liaisons like the French, though decreasing, and a Creole society in Freetown, Sierra Leone. But this direction was not pursued. British rule over subject areas tended to be unsystematic and varied with accidents of history; the Indian Princely States remained nominally independent until Indian Independence in 1947. Britain's unchallenged naval superiority, until the middle of the century, conduced to satisfaction with its "informal empire" as opposed to further enterprises of conquest. At one point the British government decided to give up the forts on the Gold Coast (now Ghana) that were its major West African possession. As in the case of France, British colonization was re-energized by great-power competition and economic interests in roughly the last fifteen years of the century. At the end of the century Lord Lugard, the conqueror and then ruler of Northern Nigeria for Britain, formalized the example of the Indian Princely states in the slogan of "Indirect Rule." In the case of Northern Nigeria it meant leaving the Caliph (demoted to "Sultan of Sokoto") and the Emirs of the former Sokoto Caliphate to rule under the guidance of British advisors. Where there were no traditional rulers, the British often created them. This difference between the two great powers' colonial policy in practice was less than it seemed. In practice, French assimilation included important elements of indirect rule, as historians began showing a half-century ago.¹⁶³ French West Africa exiled the major Muslim rulers it conquered, unlike the British, but ruled through chiefs at the local level, like the British. And British Indirect Rule was not as indirect as it claimed to be. In places like Northern Nigeria, as in India, it was British officials who more and more decided everything important, and the local rulers became more and more marginal. Nevertheless, the contrast between centralized, assimilating French colonial policy and British Indirect Rule was to have momentous consequences up to the present.

The arrival of "scientific" racism

Both British and French colonization was immensely transformed by the impact of "scientific" theories of racial inequality, which began to circulate in the 1850s, became

¹⁶³ Michael Crowder, "Indirect Rule: French and British Style," *Africa* 34: 3 (July, 1964).

immensely powerful by the 1870s, and endured in high culture until killed by the unlucky patronage of Hitler. They benefitted from the huge authority of Charles Darwin, who wrote:

At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate, and replace, the savage races throughout the world.¹⁶⁴

“Scientific” racism was less a challenge for the British, with their traditions of ad-hoc decision making and “indirect rule,” distancing the rulers from the ruled, than for the French. Lord Lugard, the patron of indirect rule, also was responsible for separating where the two races lived in Northern Nigeria, on the Indian model. On this issue he wrote:

A great native city...has no desire for municipal improvements. It neither appreciates nor desires clean water, sanitation, or good roads and streets.¹⁶⁵

It is easy to understand how such attitudes rankled Africans.

The coming of “scientific” racism was more of a problem for the French. The French were concerned about assimilation at the best, about raising competent African troops and laborers at the worst. How could inferior races assimilate to French civilization? An option that tried to evade this contradiction was developed for sub-Saharan Africa by the colonial official, general, ethnologist and politician Louis Faidherbe (1818-1889).¹⁶⁶ Faidherbe tried to articulate the distinctiveness of every ethnic group; Amselle calls him “the real inventor of the notion of ‘black Africa’” (77). He spoke in terms of many races, not just two in Europe and Africa as more frequently in Anglo-Saxon countries. He saw the Arabs and Berbers of North Africa, where he had served, as in between European whites and the blacks of sub-Saharan Africa, and the Fulani, the “red race,” as in between Berbers and blacks. The function of the intermediate races was to raise the lower to a higher grade of civilization. This could occur through “association” of the races, through racial mixing—generally anathema in

¹⁶⁴ *The Descent of Man* (1871), Volume I, Chapter VI.

¹⁶⁵ Lugard to Law, 16 August 1915, PRO/CO 583/35, quoted in Thomas S. Gale, “Segregation in British West Africa,” *Cahiers d’Etudes africaines* 80: XX-4, 495-507.

¹⁶⁶ On Faidherbe, see Dozon, 105 ff., 134 ff.; Jean-Loup Amselle, *Affirmative Exclusion: Cultural Pluralism and the Rule of Custom in France*, tr. Jane Marie Todd, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 78-99.

the Anglo-Saxon world--or through Islam. Initially the French had been more fearful of Islam than the British, and especially afraid of the Sufi orders, on the basis of the experience of North Africa where both had initially served to organize local resistance to France. The French had long since found out that many Sufi groups were willing to cooperate with them, and Faïdherbe was now willing to recognize his military enemy al-Hajj 'Umar as a noble figure who, by Islamising pagan Africans, prepared them for the further civilizing work of France.¹⁶⁷

Algeria played an important intermediary role in developing the practical form of the French style of colonization. Algeria was a land of “French” (in practice, heavily Spanish) colonization, and the colons and the Muslim Algerians lived very different lives. The Muslims were wedded to Shari’a law, and this fact helped the French develop different paths for Frenchmen (and local Jews) and Muslims. The latter were subject to Muslim law under a regime called the *Code de l’indigénat*. Exported to sub-Saharan Africa in 1887, it subjected Muslims to Shari’a, pagans to “customary law,” often made up in practice by French-appointed chiefs. But the *indigénat* also subjected Africans to various degradations like forced labor and a liability to arbitrary punishment by Frenchmen who were not even officials. As Jean-Pierre Dozon puts it, it seems to have been not just a legal matter, but “...also the general expression by which the conquering power constructed an indigenous world across [*a travers de*] these different ways and customs.” All these exceptions to the official doctrine of assimilation have led scholars like Dozon to argue that there was hardly any difference from the British kind of colonialism in practice.¹⁶⁸ This is a specialist’s view that I lack the competence to criticize, but I wondered whether it understates the power of the doctrine of assimilation which, in the vastly changed conditions after World War II, re-emerged to produce African participation in French politics and a continuing relationship much more intimate than that between Britain and its former colonies. After the war, in which French Equatorial Africa had served as the base of de Gaulle’s Free French movement and 100,000 African soldiers had participated in the Liberation, freedom was in the air, the two most powerful countries had turned against colonialism, and communism had

¹⁶⁷ Robert Delavignette, “Faïdherbe,” in Charles-Andre Julien, ed. *Les Techniciens de la colonisation (XIX-XX siècle)*, (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1947), 75-83.

¹⁶⁸ Dozon, 136-141.

become powerful in France. In 1946 a French Union was created, with the result that the Constitution-making Assembly of 1945 and subsequent National Assemblies contained up to 29 African Deputies. In 1946 a French Union was created, the *Code de l'indigénat* abolished, at least in principle, and all residents of the colonies became French citizens with the right to elect to the Chamber of Deputies, although not equally with Frenchmen of the Metropole. African votes began to matter politically and African deputies to engage in the intrigues of the political parties. As Dozon points out (203), no other European country, even assimilationist Portugal, allowed Africans to participate in its political life. Freemasonry, long aligned with the French Left, and the Communist Party were particularly important channels linking “the hexagon” and its colonies.

Meanwhile, the British colonies were becoming independent, the first in Africa to follow India being the Gold Coast, which became Ghana in 1958. In spite of the stronger links of metropolitan France and Africa, a drift towards independence was already taking place when de Gaulle, in 1958, called a referendum on the transformation of the 1946 French Union into a French Community, with independence and becoming Departments of France as the other options. Only Guinea voted for independence led by the aspiring socialist tyrant Sekou Toure, but the French Community ceased to function within two to three years, as its members became independent. De Gaulle, as insubordinate and imaginative as Captain Voulet but far more capable of a cold realism, may have realized from the beginning that the French Community was just a transitional stage between colonies and independent states, and hoped to continue French influence under the guise of independence. The death of the French African colonies was also the moment of birth of “Françafrique,” the pejorative name given in France to the hidden interdependence of these independent states and France.

Chapter Six: The Post-Colonial State

In the following section, I consider the nature of the contemporary West African state. It has existed for some fifty years, depending on the particular country, and has had time to settle into certain characteristic patterns. This might seem to be mere background. But in the complex interaction between jihadist movements and the existing governments, the governments themselves may be as important to the advent of violent jihad as the movements using violence themselves. In northern Nigeria, Boko Haram began as a preaching effort that showed a tendency to separate from society to practice its kind of Islam in all its purity. While it was clearly ready for violence, violence began when allies of the government and then the police attacked Boko Haram, killing its revered leader Muhammad Yusuf. It is arguably the corruption of the Nigerian governments, State and Federal, their hypocritical relationship with Islam, and their brutality that has kept Boko Haram supplied with recruits and keep its desire for revenge alive. Something similar is true of the Tuareg autonomist movements in northern Mali, which provided the base from which jihadism emerged there in 2012. There have been many peace deals between the government and the Tuaregs. The Tuaregs argue that all have been broken by the government, often with brutalities that left a keen eagerness for revenge. As they two cases show, the West African governments are very much part of the security problem faced by the United States and France. And any armed response to West African jihadism must, in the long run, rely primarily on the local armies. They derive their defects from the governments that raise them.

In a few years after 1957, the West African states found themselves swiftly propelled into independence. As we have seen, they lacked many of the kinds of preparation that would have enabled them to imitate Western European states, yet they were somehow expected to do so. The French at least made some efforts to rearrange borders in a way that might have allowed ethnic core groups to dominate, re-establishing Upper Volta (which had existed 1919-1932) in 1947, and establishing an “Organisation Commune des Regions Sahariennes” (O CRS) in the Saharan territories of Algeria, Mauretania, Mali, Niger and Chad.¹⁶⁹ As oil was discovered in the Algerian

¹⁶⁹ For the history of the O CRS, important for understanding the development of the Tuareg problem, see Emmanuel Gregoire, *Touaregs du Niger: le destin d'un mythe*, (Paris: Karthala, 2010), 28-32; André Salifou, *La question touarègue au Niger*, (Paris: Karthala, 1993), 35-40.

Sahara, French nuclear tests prepared there, and it came to seem more likely that the Sahel states would win their independence from France, some French officials were interested in making the OCRS an independent state. A Nigerien official, strongly against Tuareg autonomist aspirations, nevertheless records the judgment:

As we can see, in spite of the disquiet its creation had created in Niger, the OCRS could have ultimately survived a long time and consolidated itself. If that didn't happen, it is principally if not exclusively because of the war of independence carried on...by our Algerian brothers and the accelerated political evolution of francophone Africa had constrained France to more realism in the Sahara.¹⁷⁰

Whether or not some Saharan entity had potential, the episode without issue had these effects, as seen through the eyes of a Tuareg leader:

The OCRS adventure increased the distrust of the southern [Maliens] toward the people of the North and towards France, long suspected by the authorities of Bamako of plotting against Mali to recover the Sahara. In Malian newspapers, during the great Tuareg rebellion of the 1990s, one read again and again articles explaining that French agents fought on the side of the rebels. The phantoms of the OCRS always haunted memories and fed fantasies.¹⁷¹

The post-colonial states were hurried into independence for which most of them were ill-prepared. Elites were very small.

In the Ivory Coast, the orators during the 1969 'Dialogue,' who represented the dominant force of the nation, numbered 1,500. In January 1966, just before it took power, the Nigerian army was led by only 511 officers.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Salifou, *Question touarègue* 40.

¹⁷¹ Laurence Aida Ammour, Shindouk ould Najim, and Jean-Luc Peruzzi, *Je reviendrai à Tombouctou: un chef Touareg témoigne*, (Paris : Ixelles éditions, 2013), 63.

¹⁷² Bayart, *State in Africa*, 155.

For the francophone colonies, the project of independence succeeded very rapidly that of assimilation. As shown by the war in Indochina, an uphill struggle in adverse conditions from the very beginning, France did not want to accord independence even to the more “civilized” colonies. (Portugal remained defiantly unwilling until the 1974 revolution against Salazar’s “New State.”) Britain was actively preparing independence during all these French transformations, but with a much longer time horizon than eventually happened under the pressure of further erosion of great-power status, a world anti-colonial movement encouraged by the Soviet Union and the United States, and African elites’ impatience to reach independence. The result of all this haste was that the post-colonial state, at the beginning, was the colonial state with a new label.

When the Maka [tribe] of Cameroon go to the *sous-préfecture* [office of the county-level government], they say they are going to ‘the land of the white man’ to indicate in an amusing way that they are entering a universe which is quite foreign to their world of village and lineage.¹⁷³

The impoverished and skeletal colonial administrative units could, however, always turn to the resources and expertise of their colonial owners in Europe. The new post-colonial states as such could not resort to anything equivalent.

As a result, the elites—at least—were proud of being independent, but well aware of their neediness and looking for someone they might depend on without compromising their dignity. Luckily, the global competition for influence that came with the Cold War gave the former colonial powers, the United States, the Soviet Union and Communist China powerful reasons to remain, or become, interested in West African states. The relationship between the newly independent colonies and their former masters played out very differently in the French and British cases. The British colonies went their own way, and still enjoy somewhat disproportionate British investment, but British interference in their domestic politics is essentially absent and British military intervention, like the case that ended the brutal Civil War in Sierra Leone, very rare.

¹⁷³ Bayart, *State in Africa*, 265.

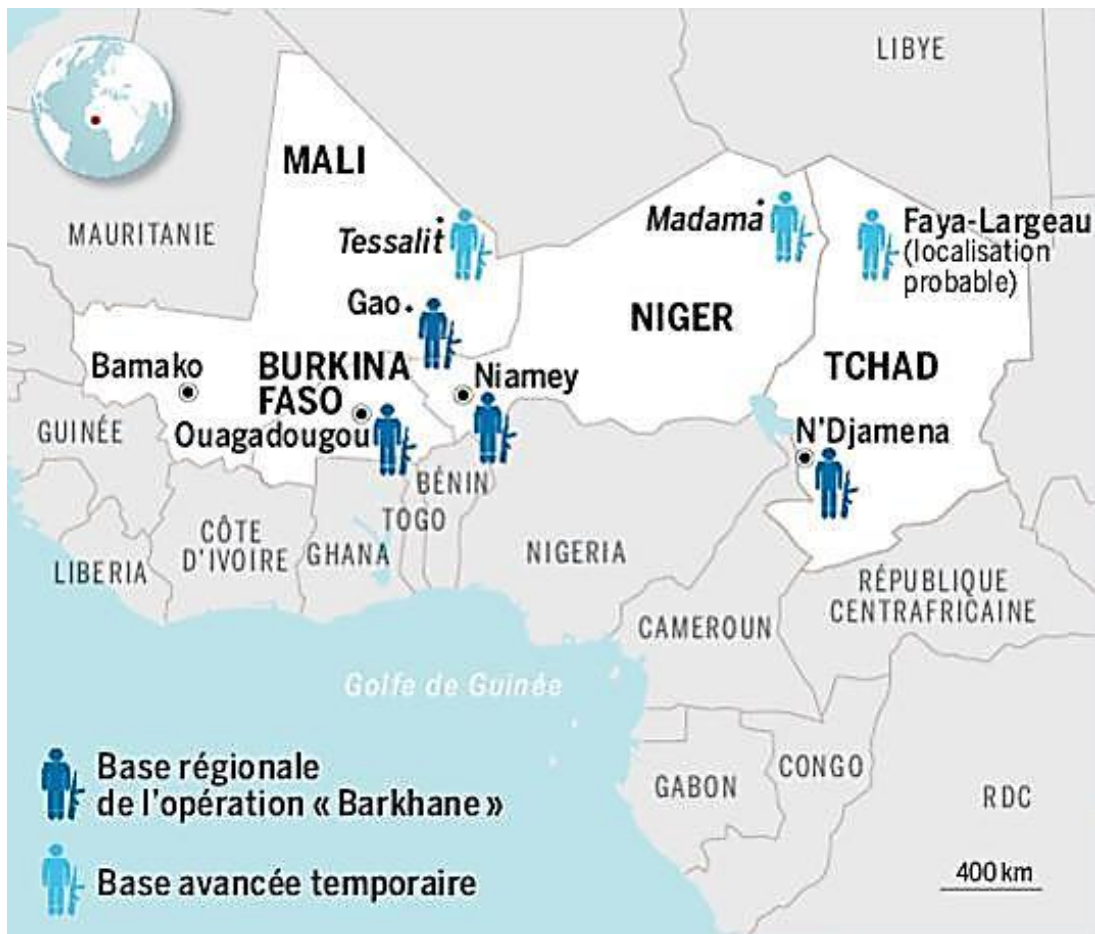
Two West African examples are telling for me. Britain did not oppose the brief and not very successful federation of Senegal and Gambia, and Nigeria had to turn to the Soviet Union for advanced jet fighters to quell the Biafran secessionist effort in the 'sixties.

In the former colonies of French West Africa, except Guinea which opted for complete independence in 1958 and was abruptly abandoned by France, there persisted the complex mutual involvement that is pejoratively nicknamed "Françafrique."¹⁷⁴ Jean-Pierre Dozon argues that African independence actually increased the influence of France in its former colonies.¹⁷⁵ From the standpoint of the American armed forces, the biggest indicator of this is the French military bases, now centered in Chad, and repeated French military interventions to protect friendly governments or repel rebels against them, most recently in Mali against the jihadists in 2013.

¹⁷⁴ François-Xavier Verschave, *La Franceafrique: le plus long scandale de la république*, (Paris: Stock, 1998) and many subsequent works by Verschave and other authors.

¹⁷⁵ Dozon, *Frères et Sujets*, 231-278.

Map of French Bases in Africa¹⁷⁶



Perhaps equally important is the French willingness, even now, to intervene in the internal politics of strife-torn former colonies. The former socialist Minister of Culture, Jack Lang, gave a speech in Abidjan defending in a moment of strife the controversial President of the Ivory Coast, Laurent Gbagbo, now facing trial before the International Criminal Court. “*Françafrique*” is much attacked in France, but quite respectable professors like Jean-Pierre Dozon have argued that it corresponds to real mutual needs of France and Africa and is important to the very definition of the contemporary French regime. *Françafrique* flourished most under Gaullist Presidents, especially the early ones, and there has been an effort to get away from it, connected with the surrender of parts of French foreign policy to the EU, as the knowledgeable

¹⁷⁶ Christophe Châtelot, Le Tchad, pivot du dispositif militaire français au Sahel, (*Le Monde*, 21.07.2014)

Paul Melly told me in London. President François Hollande demonstratively joined this renunciation of *Françafrique* early in his term. The intervention in Mali, and even more that in the Central African Republic, not linked to the international war against terrorism, show however that France remains much more involved in its former West African colonies than is the UK.

My 2013 interviews in London, Oxford and Paris gave me a strong impression of national differences in the relationship between scholars, who are opinion-makers to some extent on the areas they study, and their governments, together with the public world as a whole. These were only subjective impressions, doubtless conditioned by the particular people I saw and the context in which I fitted their views. But they were reinforced by study of the French and British academic literature on Africa in the ensuing months. For what it is worth, my impression is this. British scholars, and Americans teaching in Britain who have long been conditioned by its atmosphere, belong more to an “adversary culture” critical of the government, the state, and the public purposes that should guide government and state. Thus they tend to be more critical of alarming interpretations of Islamic movements in the Sahara and the Sahel, and of Western military intervention against such movements. Of course, there are many exceptions on both sides of the channel. But this difference corresponds to some more general differences between Anglo-Saxon and French cultures and political systems. The French are more accepting of authority and the state, seen as something with an appropriate moral code of its own different from those of individuals. The easy acceptance of a “realist” approach to international relations and war has deeper roots in a realist, or even cynical, approach to human motives and expectations from people. The Anglo-Saxons, in contrast, are shaped by the formerly Protestant culture with its emphasis on the protest of the individual conscience against established authority. As Pierre Hassner pointed out, this difference emerged most starkly during the anti-nuclear movement of the ‘eighties, where the deployment of Pershing II and cruise missiles in Europe was met by vast protests in Protestant NATO countries, while the Catholic countries were largely immune to them. France remains, 225 years after the revolution, in the custody of a meritocratic elite formed by elite schools like ENA, whose great leeway in forming policy is interrupted by periodic strikes and other outbreaks of

protests. Rebels like Sartre or Gide rapidly find themselves enveloped by this establishment, which incorporates the larger part of the Left. All academics are formal civil servants, and the state is not ashamed to enforce proper attention to national interests by delegates of the Ministry of Defense who monitor the expression of scholars in research institutes. In the particular case of Islamic studies, this came to light in 2009 when some of the scholars at the vast research organization CNRS protested against the attempts of the Ministry of Defense to censure one scholar. In contrast, the Anglo-Saxon countries display an “adversary culture” that is well-established among intellectuals. The contest between Left and Right on the political plane seems more emotional and raw. As a result, the atmosphere in which Africa’s endemic instabilities are approached is very different.

The former colonial powers did not lack competition. West African independence coincided with a vogue of communist, socialist, and “non-aligned” ideas that attracted Africans (like their mentors in the West) tremendously. In West Africa, only Guinea-Bissau and Benin were full-fledged “Afrocommunist” regimes in the classification of the Ottaways,¹⁷⁷ but at various times Guinea, Mali, Upper Volta (renamed Burkina-Faso as part of the revolution), and Ghana as well were obsessed with following Marxist ideas in a nominally Leninist form, and most of the other countries were influenced by this fad. The French Jacobin tradition of centralization gave fertile ground for it, and in the British colonies the colonial administrations were more socialist than the British government at home long before independence. West African farmers of industrial crops like cocoa, for example, had to sell their output not on the free market at market prices, but to Cocoa Marketing Boards at below-market prices. The Cocoa Marketing Boards would in turn use their profits to subsidize new import-substituting industries: Stalin’s approach to the peasantry reenacted. This entire socialist approach was very damaging, and not only to the economies. My interview subjects in Paris and in Mali said that the “socialist” regime of the first post-independence dictator, Modibo Keita, took a heavy toll on the legitimacy of the state that was still felt in the troubles of 2012-13. Nevertheless the afterglow of socialism continues to influence the shape of many African

¹⁷⁷ David and Marina Ottaway, *Afrocommunism*, (New York: Africana, 1982); first edition 1977, second 1986.

states, and it retains some legitimacy. In the Bamako telephone directory you will find among the agencies of the Malian government the Commission to Establish a Monument to Modibo Keita, which survived many dictators and periods of democracy since his overthrow. There is as yet no monument, but there is still an Avenue Kwame Nkrumah with a statue of this failed dictator, the street itself adorned with images of the first chiefs of state of all the independent African countries. I learned in Paris and in West Africa, however, that the socialist rhetoric of the early independence period was largely a sham. Rhetoric was egalitarian, but, as we see in considering the societies, the social structure remains extremely hierarchic. The end of colonialism only contributed to the creation of new privileged elites replacing the colonial officials and businessmen, and somewhat diminished pressures from Western NGOs and journalists against old-fashioned relationships like informal slavery.

Among ordinary people the reaction to the failures of this period was to begin giving the state and national independence a bad name. A Malian author still in love with socialism recalls the prelude to Modibo Keita's fall:

In 1962, the protest [*fronde*] of some merchants and opposition politicians began. It culminated in a demonstration during which were bawled the terrible words below: Down with the Malian franc [new national currency introduced by Keita], down with Modibo Keita, long live General de Gaulle!¹⁷⁸

According to our deputy Defense Attache in Mali, the streets of Bamako were filled with French flags when the first forces of Operation Serval arrived to stop the jihadists from moving south. At independence the African state enjoyed a certain degree of colonial legitimacy: people did what the government said because they were used to doing what the colonial government said. The inefficiency and, frequently, cruelty of the first independent governments damaged this sort of legitimacy. These governments also enjoyed a tremendous amount of legitimacy, at least among the educated, from the hopes invested in the post-colonial state and the new way of life it was moving towards

¹⁷⁸ Doumbi-Fakoly, *Le Mali 50 ans après: de Modibo Keita à Amadou Toumani Toure*, (N. p. : Menaibuc, 2010), 95.

with confident strides. Experience showed this rhetoric to be as false and cheating as the communist rhetoric it was largely modeled on. So, by the 1990s, African states were having increasing difficulties in drawing on either colonial or postcolonial legitimacy.

These states could still lean on external patrons who supported otherwise weak regimes because they gave the patrons support. Besides the former colonies of France, the Soviet Union supported governments that were against the United States, and the United States supported governments who opposed the Soviet Union. With the collapse of international communism, Russia no longer needed these supporters, and neither did the West (except for France.) The result was a sudden decrease in aid flows, military aid, and overall concern. At the same time, the profession of economics had ripened into considerable awareness of the faults of state-directed economic development, and made increasing demands for better management and privatization as a price for their aid. These circumstances are generally seen as having produced a crisis throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

Whatever the causes, the 'nineties and the early years of the new century were a period of civil wars and state collapses in West Africa and adjoining areas. They affected (to oversimplify) Western Sahara (1976-1991), Chad (1982-1990), Liberia (1989-2004), Senegal (1990-2001), Mali (1990), Niger (1990), Sierra Leone (1991-2001), Algeria (1992-2002), Ivory Coast (2002), and Sudan in Darfur (from 2003).¹⁷⁹ Professor Robert Bates attempted to explain African state failure in his book *When Things Fall Apart* (2008), one of the two books on the African state that are widely considered most authoritative.¹⁸⁰ Thus it worth considering at this point the argument of Bates' book about the African state.

Bates begins by talking about the relationships between things frequently suspected to cause failure of the state and the outbreak the political disorder. Earlier

¹⁷⁹ For a graph of Civil Wars in Africa 1970-1995, see Robert Bates, *When Things Fall Apart: State Failure in Twentieth-Century Africa*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008)., p. 4, figure 1.1, according to the sources from the World Bank.

¹⁸⁰ Bates, *When Things Fall Apart: State Failure in Twentieth-Century Africa*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

studies often ascribed such failure to ethnic tensions, a factor that we also argued above was important. Bates, however, argues that ethnic diversity is not the reason for conflicts that may cause state failure. “In response, I argue that ethnic diversity does not cause violence; rather, ethnicity and violence are joint products of state failure.”¹⁸¹ In this respect, Bates joins other recent authoritative works on the African state, like those of Jean-François Bayart.

Another frequently mentioned cause of state failure is the presence of easily stolen natural resources, visible in the “blood diamonds” exploitation of Sierra Leone and the corruption, environmental damage and insurgency resulting from Nigeria’s oil. Bates maintains that he can’t find a statistical relationship between the value of natural resources and the state failure: “I shall argue that...the exploitation of natural resources for war finance is a correlate rather than a cause of political disorder” (p. 10). Bates, like the researcher J. D. Fearon, does find a positive correlation, though not a strong one, between wealth in petroleum and state failure.¹⁸²

It is often noted that “petro-states” in all parts of the world tend to be marked by huge corruption, feudalization of the state machinery, despotism, low efficiency of the state and frequent state failure. Cases in point are not only Nigeria, Angola, and Equatorial Guinea but Iraq, Libya, Russia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and others. Norway is the only prominent exception. It is important, however, to assess oil wealth in relation to population. Some states like Kuwait, Qatar, the UAE and Brunei have so much oil and such small populations that the government can put the whole population on welfare, bribing the people to support the rulers. Other “petro-states” like Iran and Nigeria itself have plenty of oil but also substantial populations. As a result oil is enough to corrupt the ruling elites but not enough to bribe the populations; they often are marked, as Nigeria is, by chronic popular dissatisfaction. I was unable to find a source that made the distinctions between different kinds of petro-states on the basis of the ratio of population to “proven” oil reserves. It is difficult to establish such ratios on a consistent basis because of national differences in ways of estimating proven reserves

¹⁸¹ Bates, 2008, 9-10.

¹⁸² Bates, 2008, 135.

and especially because proven reserves is actually a concept dependent on the price of oil, as well as extractive technologies. Nevertheless, it is important to try to research this issue. Our assessment of the future of Chad, the pivot of current French security strategy in West Africa, depends partly on it. Interviews in London and Paris suggested that the army of Chad is still efficient, though brutal, in spite of the oil-induced corruption of the state there.

Sometimes instability in Africa is linked to the democratization efforts that arrived in certain places with the end of the Cold War. Bates argues, on the basis of a massive amount of statistical evidence, against democratization being a primary cause of political instability.

If we disregard the massive social science effort to prove his argument by statistics, the core of Bates' argument rests on a what he calls a "Fable," a kind of thought-experiment.¹⁸³ Here Bates talks about a scenario where there is a community peopled by administrators, who he calls "specialists in violence," and two kinds of people, those who "generate incomes by engaging in productive labor" and the same people who, in different circumstances, "can be mobilized...to seize the income of others [by joining insurgent militias, like the Revolutionary United Front or Boko Haram]—or to defend their incomes from seizure." By considering rulers as "specialists in violence," Bates, following the much followed sociologist Max Weber, considers that the essence of state sovereignty is coercive control. In other words, Bates opposes the entire argument I made above, which argued that the legitimacy of rulers and of the state is the key issue in West Africa. In cases where people pay the bills, Bates goes on to argue, specialists protect those people rather than rob them. But in case where they do not get enough income to satisfy them, they give up protection and start "predation"—a fancy word for "stealing." In these cases, people have to defend themselves and they take up arms against the government.

¹⁸³ Bates, 2008, 16-19.

When both the specialist and the citizens turn to punishment, political order breaks down. People become insecure. They also become poor; having to relocate resources to defense they have fewer resources to devote to productive activity.¹⁸⁴

It should surprise us that both Bates' book and the other most highly regarded work on the contemporary African state, Bayart's *State in Africa*, regard that state as *fundamentally acquisitive*, especially from the standpoint of officials, but also from that of the citizens. The subtitle of Bayart's book is *The Politics of the Belly*. In other words, both of these eminent political scientists assume that African states are normally "kleptocracies," countries where the rulers hold office to feed on public wealth. For Bates, the question is whether the rulers eat up public resources moderately, or try to get a great deal at once. On the ground, there seems to be much truth in understanding African politics from this perspective.

My driver in Niamey, (b) (7)(C), said while exploring one such neighborhood, "Ministers and the rich businessmen they help live here. They are all thieves." I asked whether he included the President. More quietly he said yes. Corruption and the low prestige of government are continued by the undemocratic tendencies of governing elites, in spite of turns to democracy in a number of countries over the last twenty-five years. The Sahel, as opposed to the desert areas, has a strong authoritarian tradition that goes back to pre-colonial "West African despotism," to use the phrase of the famous anthropologist George Peter Murdock, a tradition sometimes reinforced by the centralized French colonial state. My driver in Bamako, going past the Presidential Palace crowning the heights above the city, remarked "The President is up top, where a chief ought to be."

In two Prefaces to his book, Bayart explains in more detail the meaning of "the politics of the belly." African politicians have no shame in describing themselves as eaters at the public table. President Gbagbo of the Ivory Coast naively complained about the arrangements intended to end the civil war:

¹⁸⁴ Bates, 2008, 17

I have only just been elected, and I am being asked to cease playing the role I currently have. It is like having a meal: I have only just eaten the starter, and now I want the main course, the cheese, and the dessert.¹⁸⁵

“Politics of the belly” refers first to political leaders; Bayart says that “Belly also of course refers to corpulence—fashionable in men of power.”¹⁸⁶ But it likewise refers to the appetites of lower officials and of their constituents, as he explains. Of course, this aspect of politics—“constituent services”—is well known in Europe and the United States. And official corruption is also well known; not too long ago it was the norm. In his biography eulogizing his great ancestor, the first Duke of Marlborough, Winston Churchill has to admit that he promised the King of France that he would betray a British military expedition against the French, in return for money. The best he can do in Marlborough’s defense is to say he did not keep his promise. In history it is not corruption but self-abnegating discharge of official duties that is the oddity needing explanation. But states that are still trying to establish themselves, like those of West Africa, the ubiquity of official stealing undermines the legitimacy of the state, especially among those who are left out of the feeding, and these are the overwhelming majority of West Africans. As the Nobel prizewinning Nigeria writer Wole Soyinka said of Sani Abacha, perhaps the most corrupt of all Nigeria’s corrupt Presidents:

Abacha has no *idea* of Nigeria. Beyond the reality of a fiefdom that has dutifully nursed his insatiable greed and transformed him into a creature of enormous wealth, and now of power, Abacha has no *notion* of Nigeria.¹⁸⁷

This authentically African evidence supports our notion of the African state as an entity whose legitimacy in the eyes of its own citizens is deeply compromised. African governments have many foes. But they are at a particular disadvantage in contending against fanatic Muslim movements, which do enjoy many members’ self-abnegating devotion to the public good as they define it. Where their selflessness is not known,

¹⁸⁵ Bayart, *State in Africa*, xxi.

¹⁸⁶ Bayart, *State in Africa*, lxxxv.

¹⁸⁷ Wole Soyinka, *The Open Sore of a Continent*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 14-15.

Africans as well as Westerners tend to infer it from their actions. Because of Africans' general cynicism about politics, there is a general underestimation of the role that other personal motives, and their reward, glory, might play in Islamic movements' motives. The philosopher and historian David Hume asserts that Martin Luther was motivated in this way:

...being naturally of a fiery temper, and provoked by opposition, he proceeded even to decry indulgences themselves; and was thence carried, by the heat of dispute, to question the authority of the pope, from which his adversaries derived their chief arguments against him....All Saxony, all Germany, all Europe, were in a very little time filled with the voice of this daring innovator...And Luther, a man naturally inflexible, vehement, opinionative, was become incapable, either from promises of advancement, or terrors of severity, to relinquish a sect, of which he was himself the founder, and which brought him a glory, superior to all others, the glory of dictating the religious faith and principles of multitudes.¹⁸⁸

Later we will examine this factor in Abubakar Shekau, the leader of Boko Haram.

Having understood his predatory or kleptocratic interpretation of the African state, let us return to Bates' book. For Bates, rulers' behavior is always shaped by trade-offs between future and present gains. When "immediate benefits weigh more heavily than future losses... incumbents may become more predatory, provoking state failure."¹⁸⁹ Accordingly, increasingly from 1970 to the 1990's the formation of rebel militias became more common. Citizens took up arms and the state lost their monopoly over the means of violence, according to Bates.

¹⁸⁸ David Hume, *The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688*, foreword by William B. Todd, (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund 1983), vol. 3, chapter XXIX, in the *Online Library of Liberty (Liberty Fund)*, at http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=advanced_search.php, accessed July 3, 2009.

¹⁸⁹ Bates, 2008, 26.

But what triggers the change from filling one's belly slowly and gorging all at once? Bates argues that it is diminishing state revenues, that is, stealable resources, that triggers this change. There were a number of causes working at once. To begin with,

In the 1970s, a sharp increase in the price of oil triggered global recession. The increased price of energy led to higher costs of production in the advanced industrial economies, resulting in the laying off of labor and a lowering of incomes. For Africa, the result was a decrease in the demand for exports [and a concomitant decline in tax revenue].¹⁹⁰

Also democratization played a certain role, making future stealing less secure. Bates admits that rich natural resources was a factor that made stealing on a larger scale more profitable. African oil fields, and uranium in Niger, were increasingly tapped in the years after independence. At the same time, real pressures for constituent services increased public employment and budgets, so that more of a shrinking pie was taken by real needs of government.¹⁹¹

...policies served political rather than economical interests....By transforming industries and markets into political organizations, it enabled governments to spin webs of political obligations and thus forge the political machines that kept them in power.¹⁹²

To confine the feeding to their own supporters, rewarding them while controlling costs, West African governments turned to authoritarian rule or adopted a "logic of exclusion," cutting some ethnic or other groups out of the feeding.¹⁹³ Rulers attempted to increase their share of a shrinking pie by controlling the economy, a choice also suggested by the prevalent socialist ideology. Interference with the market had a ruinous effect on the economies, and then on the revenue of the state. Where the government controlled prices, goods vanished from store shelves. Those who had access to these goods, such as

¹⁹⁰ Bates, 2008, 26.

¹⁹¹ Bates, 2008, 26, 42 (Benin example).

¹⁹² Bates, 2008, 63.

¹⁹³ Bates, 2008, 51.

the managers of state-regulated import and retail businesses, would sell their imported products to those willing to pay black market as opposed to official prices.

Bates discusses the powerful example of the first military ruler of Sierra Leone:

Resisting any attempt to form an independent central bank, Siaka Stevens, [Sierra Leone's] president, pegged the national currency at an artificially high level and began rationing access on it.¹⁹⁴

Stevens and his allies took control over the most profitable businesses. One of these was the alluvial diamond industry in the northeastern Kono region, the country's only significant natural resource. Sierra Leone's diamond deposits lay in a region that supported the Sierra Leone People's Party, the political opposition, and were worked by a private corporation, the Sierra Leone Selection Trust. Under the guise of nationalization into a state corporation, Stevens got control of the diamond industry. "Stevens thus benefited financially and politically from the transformation of the diamond industry; the state lost out." But the outcome of a monopolistic state-controlled economy was disastrous. As a result tax payments fell from \$200 million in 1968 to \$100 million in 1987.

For Bates, decline in revenue, and therefore of surplus that could be privatized by the rulers, was the fundamental trigger of state failure. Sierra Leone was in the grip of a vicious circle of official theft, attempts to control the uncontrollable (markets), and economic decline. The government could no longer pay official salaries on time, except at the top, so officials began "moonlighting" in private jobs that took up most of their time. In the case of soldiers and policemen, the private "job" to which they were reduced was often directly using their weapons to prey on the citizens, setting up roadblocks where they demand money from travelers or simply rob them. (Nigerian soldiers are now doing this rather than fighting Boko Haram.) The state was collapsing. All this had further ruinous effects on the quality of life, as Bates explains:

¹⁹⁴ Bates, 2008, 101.

Teachers abandoned their classrooms, nurses left clinics untended, and offices stood empty while public servants turned to private trade in search of income. [...] In economies in which the government regulated prices, goods disappeared from the shelves; those in charge would sell the product to those willing to pay the market as opposed to the official price.¹⁹⁵

Bates' exposition of the interactive process leading to state failure is impressive. An effect that Bates does not pause to note, however, is reducing the legitimacy of the Sierra Leone state, which earlier had both exploited citizens and served them, but now seemed purely parasitic. All these circumstances are familiar to me from the early 'nineties in former Yugoslavia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. In both the ex-Soviet bloc and the African cases, the vicious circle of state failure triggered by revenue decline occurred against a background where the legitimacy of the state was already very tenuous. In the Soviet-bloc cases, the new governments were neither Communist nor democratic. In sub-Saharan Africa, they were neither colonial nor truly indigenous. The greatest defect of currently authoritative explanations of the weakness of the African state, typified by Bates and Bayart, is that they fail to pay sufficient attention to the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the state. And, in the Sahel, this was where jihadists could attack governments with the greatest advantage. It is a widespread view among Muslims that only Islamic government is legitimate and that there should be something called an "Islamic state."

In Bates' Chapter Six he summarizes the reasons why "things fell apart" in the 'nineties and the beginning of our century. Bates talks about corrupted government, "untaxed economy," authoritarian political institutions, and external shocks such as the first economic recession resulting from the rise of energy prices and then, in the 'nineties, from the geopolitical realignment at the end of the Cold War. Many authors of emphasized this shifting of the tectonic plates. William Reno, for example, notes:

For rulers of weak states, the end of the Cold War signaled the demise of old forms of politics. Creditors and aid donors quickly discovered that they could

¹⁹⁵ Bates, 2008, 104

impose a growing list of conditions in return for cash. Old external patrons either pressed for major changes in the manner of rule—demanding elections, for example—or simply disappeared, as in the case of the Soviet Union.¹⁹⁶

As a result, Bates argues, the turn of the century was a time of financial crisis for the African state. The core of his argument is here:

Changes in the global economy and economic mismanagement at home resulted in fiscal dearth. The decline in public revenues led to predation by those in positions of power and resistance by those whom they ruled.¹⁹⁷

To the fundamental fiscal source of enervated government are added numerous secondary stresses triggered by it. While Bates argues against democratization as another cause of state failure, he admits it can advance the process once begun. In the 'nineties, the demand came from both international patrons and donors, on one side, and from citizens disgusted by the degeneration of the state on the other. Both imperiled the position of the rulers.

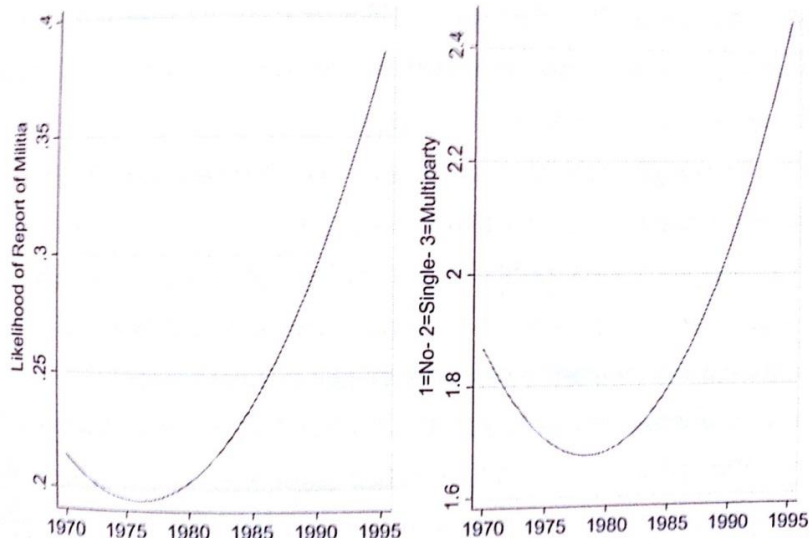
...while the reforms were designed to secure political accountability and economic prosperity, they also contributed to political disorder, by raising the level of insecurity for those in power they strengthened the incentives for them to defect, engaging in predation and thus provoking their citizens to take up arms.¹⁹⁸

Bates has an impressive comparison of graphs (his Figure 6.3), that show a striking correlation between the formation of insurgent militias and multi-party politics.

¹⁹⁶ William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1999), 46 (compare 23).

¹⁹⁷ Bates, 2008, 130.

¹⁹⁸ Bates, 2008, 109.



Towards the end of the argument Bates, while skeptical about the effect of natural resources in general, does admit that their presence encourages rulers to become more predatory after losing political monopolies and becoming less secure. Governments worried about their position felt that

Short – term benefits would readily outweigh the long-term costs, particularly at a time when governments were finding increasing reason to discount their political futures.¹⁹⁹

As fiscal problems make the state fail, regionalism and ethnic tensions also increase. Bates cites the example of Cote d'Ivoire.

Fiscal dearth also renders it more difficult to induce those who are dissatisfied to continue to participate in the political game, rather than withdraw from it; regional tensions therefore rise, and with them, threats to the integrity of the state.²⁰⁰

In the Ivory Coast, long disfranchised and dissatisfied northern migrant workers and their descendents, mainly Muslim, became more dissatisfied when President Gbagbo's

¹⁹⁹ Bates, 2008, 122.

²⁰⁰ Bates, 2008, 107.

government was no longer as able to buy them off. The outcome was a civil war in which Gbagbo was ousted by the northern Muslim Alassane Ouattara. Bates tries to deny that these tensions belong to basic ethnic differences: “Ethnic conflict is not a ‘clash of civilizations,’ but rather a struggle over the regional allocation of resources.”²⁰¹

While Bates makes an excellent case, supported by statistical correlation, that the kind of state failure he traces to revenue crises *increases* ethnic conflict, I thought he exaggerated his argument. There are cases where ethnic conflict existed from the beginning of national independence, because of one ethnic group being long privileged (the freed slaves in Liberia, for example) or because of slaving, racism and cultural differences (Arabs and southern blacks in Mauritania, Tuaregs and southern blacks in Mali). Then there are cases with many small ethnic groups where ethnic mobilization emerged only over time, such as Chad and the Central African Republic. There is a profound difference between these two cases.

Moreover, Africans’ perceived community is often religious, as well as ethnic. Muslims of nomadic origin regard themselves as the natural masters of southern blacks. The example of the Central African Republic is interesting. It has few Muslims, but politics in the last few years was structured around the opposition of Muslims and non-Muslims. That difference is now hardened by massacres and ethnic cleansing at the time of the French intervention. There seems to be a certain tendency for Muslims to gradually take over rule of non-Muslims to the south, as in Ivory Coast, Chad, and temporarily in the Central African Republic, although Cameroon provides a contrary case. Even in cases, like the Central African Republic, where the Muslim political forces are in no way jihadist, we need to be aware of the possibility that they might become so.

²⁰¹ Bates, 2008, 133.

Chapter Seven: “Boko Haram”

Jihad Revived

When the eminent scholars Murray Last, Mervyn Hiskett, J. R. Willis were entranced by the now neglected Fulani jihads of the nineteenth century, they seemed to belong to a romantic past. But now jihad has come again to West Africa. West Africa is pervaded by hopes and schemes for revival of Islam, but it is being transacted with machine guns and suicide bombings in two areas: northern Mali and northern Nigeria. The former became the focus of public opinion when the jihadist organizations AQMI, MUJAO, Ansareddin and their picturesquely named offshoots seized control of the northern half of Mali from its disintegrating army in 2012. Eventually, after imposing harsh Shari’a laws and destroying the tombs of Sufi shaykhs, the jihadists moved south toward the capital, triggering the successful French counterattack, Operation Serval. Operation Serval continues under a different name, but the potential of the jihadists in the Sahara seems limited. Whatever the complexities of the Black Islam issue, armed Wahhabi-Salafi rebellion evoked limited sympathy in the Sahel, and much of what there was was antagonized by the extreme behavior of the jihadists in the north, or by rumors about it. As argued earlier, the Sahara (except the very limited mountain areas) is not favorable country for guerrilla warfare.

There is one place in the Sahel where jihadist rebellion is already raging. This is northern Nigeria, where an extraordinary number of successful acts of violence have been committed by the jihad called “Boko Haram.” Boko Haram, whose nickname is reconsidered later, is officially called by variants of The dignified Arabic official name is “Jama’atu Ahl al Sunna li al Da’wa wa al Jihad,” which I would translate, loosely enough to be more explanatory, as “Community of Followers of the Prophetic Tradition for Missionary Work and Holy War,” though all these translations are subject to argument. Boko Haram has been highly successful, though hard pressed, a desperate struggle in the most populous state in Africa. The state is so corrupt it has features of a failed state, so this jihad would appear to represent a much bigger threat than those in Mali. What is its nature and limits?

The Coming of Pseudo-Shari'a

The ground was prepared for Boko Haram by the introduction of something called "Shari'a," Islamic Law, in northern Nigeria. A tremendous cloud of confusion envelops the issue of Shari'a both for contemporary non-Muslims and Muslims. Among non-Muslims in the West, Shari'a is often identified with harsh punishments: cutting off hands and feet for theft, stoning to death for adultery, death for abandoning Islam, and so forth. In fact, Shari'a evolved to mitigate the harshness of tyrannical rule. The first Caliphs ruled, as far as we can judge, in the manner of Bedouin Sheikhs, with the advice and consent of tribal elders. When the Caliphate grew vastly and was transferred to Damascus, then to Baghdad, the later 'Umayyad and the 'Abbasid caliphs took on the immemorial institutions of the Middle Eastern despotic empire. Readers of the 1,001 Nights will remember the Caliph followed, as he wandered the streets of Baghdad, by his executioner. To counter this tendency, those learned in Islamic matters, the 'ulama, evolved a complex legal code that limited the power of the Caliph over many areas of life, though not those involving executive action and security. As Patricia Crone presents it,

Having lost the battle against what they perceived to be repressive government, they proceeded to reject their caliphs as illegitimate and to elaborate a charter of communal organization reflecting their own view of things; and eventually even the caliphs, in order to regain their moral standing, had to acknowledge this charter as the cornerstone of Islam. The charter in question is Islamic law....[T]he elaboration, transmission and interpretation of the charter all vest in the community, not in the head of state (the latter having no say in these matters...)....

Let us compare this understanding of Shari'a with the Shariah Penal Code of Zamfara state in northwest Nigeria, the first legal answer to the widespread demand for the institution of Shari'a law that preoccupied Northern Nigeria Muslims after the restoration of a nominally democratic system of government. The Code begins: Citation and commencement.

A. This law may be cited as the Shari'ah Penal Code Law, 2000 and it shall come into operation on 27th day of January, 2000.

Establishment of Shari'ah Penal Code

B. The Provisions contained in the schedule to this Law shall be the law of the State with respect to the several matters therein dealt with and the said schedule may be cited as, and is hereby called, the Shari'ah Penal Code.

Wait a minute! Doesn't Shari'a law date not from 27th day of January, 2000, but from God's own word, written in Arabic before the creation of the universe, told to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel, and elaborated in Muhammad's sayings and example (hadith), further elaborated by a host of learned 'ulama into the science of fiqh? And is it not the law of the State of Zamfara, but of all Muslims everywhere? Nigerian Shari'a law, like most of newly restored Shari'a in Muslim countries, is statute law. It was ordained not by God, but by the State, a state that came into existence when the Muslim Caliphate of Sokoto (and Bornu) were conquered by British Christians at the beginning of the twentieth century. The very concept of the state as we acknowledge it comes from the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes, and the notion of law-making as the primary function of the state from his follower John Locke. Every one of the 409 articles of Zamfara's Shari'ah Code displays the marks of having been written by a lawyer trained in the English legal tradition. In its form it differs utterly from traditional Shari'a. So Nigerian Shari'ah law is fundamentally a fraud. It calls part of Zamfara State's Statute Law Shari'ah law, but the very essence of Islamic law is missing: its elaboration not by the Sovereign but by the independent consensus of a community of scholars. It can be called Shari'a only in the way that we call Elizabeth I and Elizabeth II both queens.

It is true that the ominous article 92 provides that

Any act or omission which is not specifically mentioned in this Shari'ah Penal Code but is otherwise declared to be an offence under the Qur'an, Sunnah [traditions about the Prophet's conduct] and Ijtihad [latitude for interpretation]

of the Maliki School of Islamic thought shall be an offence under this code and such act or omission shall be punishable:

- (a) With imprisonment for a term which may extend to 5 years,...lashes...[or a] fine.
- (b)

It is also true that certain punishments drawn from texts that played a role in the history of real Shari'a become punishments under Zamfara Shari'ah law. It uses several Arabic words for offenses, punishments, and so forth. So that Code is best understood as the insertion of certain tidbits of Shari'a into existing Nigerian statute law. In particular, most of the hadd (plural hudud) offenses named in the Qur'an (theft, highway robbery, fornication, false accusation of it, drinking alcohol, abandoning Islam) reappear in the Zamfara code. So does this make it a restoration of traditional Shari'a?

No, because these punishments were rarely applied in traditional Islamic jurisprudence. The Qur'an itself sets standards of evidence very difficult to meet; for adultery, 4 adult male Muslims must have seen the act being committed. In the absence of such proof lesser punishments can be applied at the discretion of the qadi or judge. And, as the Judaism and Roman Catholicism, the letter of the holy books can be modified by the consensus of later religious scholars.

The Message and the Leader

Whatever else Boko Haram may be, it is a religious movement that hopes to win a public. Just as the Torah, the New Testament and the Qur'an are the best starting point for analyzing Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the public statements of Boko Haram leaders, especially its founder, Muhammad Yusuf, and present head, Abubakar Shekau, are crucial for understanding it. It seems to this researcher that disproportionate effort has been devoted to track Boko Haram actions, at the expense of their self-explanation.²⁰² Muhammad Yusuf wrote a book of religious argument in Arabic. For the

²⁰² An exception is the analysis of statements to determine the danger of Boko Haram to the outside world, by Benjamin S. Eveslage, "Clarifying Boko Haram's Transnational Intentions,

present dangers and future potential of Boko Haram, however, the current leadership is most important. Its public statements consist largely of videos in Hausa in which Abubakar Shekau presents himself. In analyzing them, we should remember that a leader usually presents himself differently to different audiences. As Imam of the sect, he presumably gives sermons to his followers when he leads them in prayer; he may also teach texts, difficult it is in the conditions of guerrilla war. Though many of Shekau's videos began with the confession of faith, we do not have these materials. We must make do with what we have, and even these present many pitfalls. What we have are mainly videos, mainly by the leader of the group, Abubakar Shekau, in Hausa, sometimes with a Kanuri-language summary at the end. Even most researchers are unable to understand these in Hausa, much less Kanuri, a language learned, outside Nigeria, only by anthropologists. Almost all the translations available are from the Nigerian press. Study of them reveals that different translations differ substantially. Some claiming to be full transcripts are not nearly as long as the videos, their alleged source. The press is hostile to Boko Haram, and translations may be paraphrased or distorted to its disadvantage. Boko Haram has complained of misrepresentation, saying it attacked the offices of the publication *Thisday* partly because

...when we sent a video of our leader, Abubakar Shekau, the media houses reported things that our leader did not say, such as that in response to the president's threat to finish us in three months, we have also threatened to finish the government in three months. But the truth is, nowhere in the video did our leader said what they attributed to him.²⁰³

Because of all these difficulties, the following analysis of Boko Haram and its leader must be taken as provisional. Despite the uncertainties of translation, certain themes emerge again and again.

Using Content Analysis of Public Statements in 2012," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 7: 5, 47-76. Eveslage's attempt at scientific content analysis is very different from ours.

²⁰³ "Boko Haram Releases Video On ThisDay Bombing, Threatens To Attack VOA, Guardian, Daily Trust, SaharaReporters," Posted: May, 01 2012, 11:05AM, <http://saharareporters.com/video/updated-full-transcript-boko-haram-releases-video-thisday-bombing-threatens-attack-voa-guardian-Daily-Trust-SaharaReporters>.

The identity of the movement

Muslim identity

It has been plausibly argued that many misdeeds done by criminals, by other religions, etc., have been attached to the fearsome name of Boko Haram, and many young Nigerian males without attraction to its teaching have surely fled from the brutality of the army into its ranks, but there can be no doubt about the sincere faith of the leaders. But what is the content of their faith?

Reduction of Islam to politics and war

In his video of 25 March 2014, Shekau shouted:

Killings, killings, killings! Now our religion is killings, killings, killings!²⁰⁴

This chilling statement perfectly encapsulates the replacement of the rich complexity of medieval Islam by politics and to war, common in contemporary Islamism both Salafi and Shi'ite. The sermons and letters of the Sudanese Mahdi Muhammad Ahmad in the eighteen-eighties are full of exhortations to be virtuous, forswear common vices, celebrate weddings modestly, and so forth. The Friday sermons of Ayatollah Khamenei, in contrast, are all about politics, and concentrate on enemies domestic and foreign. It is even more true of the messages of the late bin Laden and of al-Zawahri. There remain limits to political and military action, however, and in some of his videos Shekau reminds his followers more of them than do the Islamists just named. They are set by traditional Islamic law.

²⁰⁴ "Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau's message in new video (in Hausa Language), translated into English," *Nigerian Times*, March 28, 2014. <http://nigeriantimes.ng/news/abubakar-shekaus-message-in-new-video-in-hausa-language-translated-into-english/>, accessed June 22, 2014.



Abubakar Sekau , May 2014

“You should kill and slaughter but don’t eat them. You should spare the old, women, the lunatic, and the repentant. This is the message, it is a chaotic one, a messy one. It is Shekau speaking.”²⁰⁵

It shows the difficulty of dealing with these materials that there exist translations saying to kill, slaughter *and* eat them. The former translation is more plausible, because cannibalism –one of the unorthodox practices of which Maitatsine was accused—is totally contrary to Islamic law (Shari’a). If the two Nigerian newspaper translations are correct, Islamic law remains a limit on Shekau’s murderous frenzy, a limit often forgotten by al-Qaeda or ISIS who often kill innocent women and children and never remind their followers of these stringent prohibitions. But the limit is very elastic for Boko Haram. In cases like the bus station bombing outside of Abuja, (Nyanya Motor Park, April 14, 2014) the Middle Eastern terrorist methods adopted by Boko Haram kill everyone indiscriminately who chances to be in a certain place, contrary to Shari’a. Even in cases like targeted assassinations, Boko Haram tries to kill people who do not deserve to die according to Islamic jurists. After Boko Haram attacked the newspaper *Thisday*

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

for allegedly insulting the prophet, the Boko Haram “Public Awareness Department” issued a statement saying “No one has the power to forgive this type of offence, and the judgment is for such persons to be killed.”²⁰⁶ Islamic law contains no such precept, as eminent jurists at al-Azhar and elsewhere said at the time of the Salman Rushdie fatwa.

The Name

The names of Boko Haram shed considerable light on its orientation and affinities. Boko Haram is a Hausa nickname coined by outsiders, probably by opponents. Many such names, from Whig and Tory to neoconservative, have been adopted by movements themselves, but Boko Haram has not. Much would be gained from normally using the full name, but it is long enough as to defeat the effort; I reluctantly use Boko Haram in the following. The dignified Arabic official name is “Jama’atu Ahl al Sunna li al Da’wa wa al Jihad,” which I would translate, loosely enough to be more explanatory, as “Community of Followers of the Prophetic Tradition for Missionary Work and Holy War.” The title is unremarkable, in the sense that there are hundreds of groups in the Muslim world with very similar names, yet something can be learned from it. The Sunna is the religious model conveyed by sayings handed down orally about the Prophet Muhammad’s words and deeds (as opposed to God’s own words in the Qur’an) and subsequently elaborated by religious thinkers. In a way it is analogous to the Catholic Magisterium, or the Orthodox Jewish Oral Law. But, as Robert Thurston has intelligently argued,

Recently, the translation “People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad” has spread widely. I think this translation conveys the sense of the meaning, but it misses a few nuances....First, the translation takes the word “sunna” from the second position in the phrase and moves it to the penultimate spot. What you lose then is the compound meaning of “Ahl al Sunna.” That smaller phrase is one synonym for Sunni Muslims (“sunni” being the adjectival form of “sunna”). It is a fairly common phrase used by Salafis to

²⁰⁶ “Boko Haram Releases Video On ThisDay Bombing, Threatens To Attack VOA, Guardian, Daily Trust, SaharaReporters,” Posted: May, 01 2012, 11:05AM, <http://saharareporters.com/video/updated-full-transcript-boko-haram-releases-video-thisday-bombing-threatens-attack-voa-guardian-Daily-Trust-SaharaReporters>.

describe themselves – the Salafis I met in Kano, for example, did not refer to themselves as Salafis or Wahhabis, but as “Ahl al Sunna wa al Jama’a” – “the people of the Prophetic model and the Muslim community.” But one must be careful – non-Salafi Muslims, including Sufis, can apply this phrase to themselves as well – as with, for example, a prominent Sufi militia in southern Somalia....Given its appropriation by Salafis in the Nigerian context, Boko Haram may use the phrase “Ahl al Sunna” partly to affirm its own Salafi identity....²⁰⁷

Boko Haram is of Salafi origin, as we have seen above. “Salafis” is the term actually used by “Wahhabis,” followers of the eighteenth-century Arabian religious innovator Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab, to identify themselves, but it has a wider resonance. The term *Salaf* designates the first three generations of Muhammad’s converts and their pious successors, who are seen as a special model by Salafis.²⁰⁸ The Salaf were always revered, but an orientation toward their practice of Islam was characteristic of the Wahhabis and, in a much more sophisticated way, of Muslim religious reformers beginning in the late nineteenth century, such as Rashid Rida and Muhammad Abduh. These reformers attempted to revitalize what they saw as a decadent Islam by restoring the practice of early Muslims, the Salaf, and getting rid of harmful innovations, *bid’a*. Foremost among these innovations was Sufism, which was followed by all West African Muslims before the nineteen-thirties and had energized the great jihads of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The term Ahl as-Sunna is probably even more specific, because it was used by the Salafi ‘Yan Izala subgroup, based in Kano, of Shaykh Ja‘far Mahmoud Adam that expelled Mumammad Yusuf, the founder of Boko Haram. In retaliation, Shaykh Ja‘afar

²⁰⁷ Alex Thurston, “Boko Haram: What’s in a Name? [Updated],” January 7, 2013, Sahel Blog, <http://sahelblog.wordpress.com/2013/01/07/boko-haram-whats-in-a-name/>, accessed November 19, 2013.

²⁰⁸ For a useful chart, see A. Merad, “Islah,” *Encyclopedia of Islam*, second edition.

was killed, presumably by Boko Haram. So the term is a way of claiming not to be schismatic, but to be the group that comprises the real inheritors of the Sunna.²⁰⁹

Mindful of the Salafi attack on innovations we can return to the nickname Boko Haram. *Haram*, the Arabic word that has made its way into English as “harem,” means forbidden. Access to a harem, or women’s quarters, is forbidden (in traditional urban Islamic culture) to men who are not close relatives. But *haram* has a stronger emotional pull, something like “polluted” or “tainted,” like the Hebrew and Yiddish word *treyf*, the opposite of *kosher*. In fact, it is used for food Muslims recoil from, the opposite of *halal*. *Haram* expresses tremendous aversion.

But what is Boko? The origin of the Hausa word, and whether it is related to the English “book,” is much argued. Clearly, however, it is used for Westernized things, including Western-style education, the primary reference in Boko Haram. The BBC World Service in Hausa is called “boko,” and so is the Latin script for writing Hausa as opposed to the older Arabic. But it can also mean “fraud”; *boko-boko* is fraudulent behavior.²¹⁰ According to Thurston,

The phrase “‘yan boko,” where “‘yan” means people, could be translated, “people/representatives of Western education,” i.e., people who have graduated from Western-style educational institutions. But the phrase could have a broader, cultural connotation – “people who operate within Western-style frameworks and institutions” or “representatives of Western culture” or even “Westernized people.” The idea of ‘yan boko, at least in the ways I have heard it used, *also carries a connotation that these people are elites* – that their particular credentials and experiences have placed them in positions of power because they can navigate Western-style institutions....Put that all together, then, and you have “Boko Haram” meaning something like, “Western culture is Islamically

²⁰⁹ See Andrea Brigaglia, “Ja‘far Mahmoud Adam, Mohammed Yusuf and Al-Muntada Islamic Trust : Reflections on the Genesis of the Boko Haram Phenomenon in Nigeria,” *Annual Review of Islam in Africa* 11, 35-44.

²¹⁰ Philip John Jagger, *Hausa*, (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2001), 130.

forbidden” or “the Westernized elites and their way of doing things contradict Islam.”²¹¹

So is Boko Haram a nativist, anti-Western movement, as we have seen Maitatsine was? There is some evidence of this in Shekau’s videos. Americans might consider his frequent attacks on Ban Ki-Moon, the Secretary-General of the UN, as diagnostic. Ki-Moon has far less power than the other figures attacked by Shekau, but the UN is a potent symbol of internationalism, of its breaking in on our local community and its way of life. Therefore the UN was an obsessive target of attacks by the vaguely nativist Old Right in America after World War II. Perhaps the most spectacular attack carried out by Boko Haram was against the UN headquarters in Abuja. More than once Shekau has made a point of denying that there are “Arabs” and “whites” in his ranks. He uses the word “Bature,” “Whites” in Hausa, to describe the Byzantine soldiers killed in the early Muslim conquests.²¹²

But the nativism of Boko Haram thins out beyond the attack on western education, which we will consider shortly. Boko Haram loves assault rifles, many videos beginning with alternating Arabic religious chant and automatic weapons fire, a combination that might shock some traditional Muslims. And it loves self-propelled wheeled vehicles. Many videos are shot against the background of Shekau’s captured armored cars, and some feature his soldiers attacking in pickup trucks that bound across the open country at great risk to their axles. If the nativist elements in Boko Haram have become attenuated, they remain strong enough to mark a divide from international Salafist Jihadism. As Adam Higazi of King’s College, Cambridge, points out,

²¹¹ Thurston, *op. cit.*, italics mine.

²¹² « Video de Boko Haram recue par l’AFP le 19 fevrier 2014, » www.nigeriawatch.org, a publication of IFRA-Nigeria, courtesy of Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclos.

The founding ideas of the Salafiyya movement in the early twentieth century also had a strong modernist streak encouraging educational reform and the acquisition of scientific and technological knowledge. ²¹³

Islamism is a complex phenomenon, but the typical Islamist is someone with Western-style technical education, like the engineer bin Laden or the doctor al-Zawahiri. They in no way shun Western education. The Qatari royal family is trying to turn Doha into some Gulf combination of Miami Beach and Oxford, with many Western university branches, at the same time that it is funding and arming murderous Jihadists in places such as Libya and Syria. As Olivier Roy has argued, Salafism has a particular attraction to upwardly mobile Muslims living in Western countries, who use its rejection of superstition and Sufism to shed elements of their grandmothers' culture that would complicate life as a Western urban professional, like drinking the spittle of a Sufi shaykh to imbibe his *baraka* [magical sanctity].

The Muslims as a sect

As we will see, the Boko Haram version of Islam has some wider ambitions, but it has been isolated for years and years. Early in its history, the members retired from the world in their own settlement, “Afghanistan,” in Yobe State, where they could practice their own way of life. Such behavior is typical of the sect, as defined by Ernst Troeltsch: a group that splits off from a wider community of faith in order to purify it, does not succeed in doing so, and ends by rejecting “the world” to live a holier life separately. It was the destruction of “Afghanistan” by a local militia, leading to clashes with the police, that forced Boko Haram to go on the offensive. Now it interacts with the world, in the mode of shooting and bombing, but is shut out of participation in normal social life, including the life of Islamic scholarly debate. It is isolated by the Nigerian army, increasingly confined to a small area along the northeastern border with Cameroon.

²¹³ “Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Northeast Nigeria,” CERI_
_Insurgency_and_Counter-Insurgency_in_North-East_Nigeria_-_2013-09-03.pdf, accessed 11
November 2013.

Takfir

Like many contemporary Salafi or “Wahhabi” Muslims, Shekau believes it is religiously proper to make war on Muslims outside the group because they are infidels [*kuffar*, singular *kafir*]. In the theory developed by early Islamic jurists, the world is divided into the House of Islam, the Muslims and those monotheists who have submitted to Islamic rule, and the House of War, the unbelievers who have not submitted and therefore must be fought. The issue of *takfir*, or the declaration that an apparent Muslim is an unbeliever, is a controversial one among Muslims. Throughout Islamic history, the overwhelmingly dominant position has been that differences of doctrine and conduct do not make someone an unbeliever. There is no concept like “heresy” in Islam. A famous Hadith, or reported saying of Muhammad, says that his followers will split into 73 groups and that no one will know until the day of judgment which one was correct. The most famous exceptions to this intra-Muslim coexistence (it is often far from tolerance) were the early Kharijites, who fought non-Kharijites and all sinners because they regarded them as unbelievers, and the Salafis or Wahhabis since the eighteenth century. The Saudis, in spite of their Wahhabi allegiance, always grudgingly allowed Shi’ites to leave in al-Hasa, where the oil is. It is with contemporary Islamism since the nineteen-twenties that *takfir* has really flourished; many Salafi jihadists, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, are *takfiris*, those who regard non-Salafis as infidels. Salafi *takfir* is accepted by Shekau and taken to an extreme.

The reason why I will kill you is you are infidels, you follow democracy. Whoever follows democracy is an infidel. This is Shekau, this is why I’m in enmity with you. Buhari is an infidel, Babangida is an infidel, Atiku is an infidel, late Yar’adua was an infidel, Shehu of Borno [All these were Muslim Presidents of Nigeria or other political figures] is an infidel. You are all infidels. What makes you infidels is Democracy and constitution and western education.²¹⁴

²¹⁴ Transcript of a video, ca. February 24, 2014, in “[Why Muslims are butchering Christians in Nigeria](http://theatheistconservative.com/tag/abubakar-shekau/) 3,” <http://theatheistconservative.com/tag/abubakar-shekau/>, accessed June 23, 2014.

Identity

The unsophisticated periphery defies the center.....

And you the infidels of Rivers state, Niger (Delta), the town of [Nigerian President Goodluck] Jonathan, Shekau is talking to you. Shekau is talking to you, *that small boy that has become the nightmare of infidels* is talking to you.... Niger-Delta you are in trouble. Jonathan you are in trouble. Banki Moon [Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the UN] you are in trouble. Benjamin Netanyahu you are in trouble. Queen Elizabeth, you are in trouble. ²¹⁵

It is an old thread in the discourse of the monotheistic religions: a shepherd-boy defeats and humiliates the heavily armored and well-armed Philistine general. Again:

Even if you speak the Hausa of Kano [the greatest Hausa city], even if you are born in the house of Ado Bayero [former Emir of Kano], you're going to understand me well and I'm going to make an impression on you, bastard!²¹⁶

Shekau, like Muhammad Yusuf, is a native Kanuri speaker, probably of modest birth, and born far from the big city. He displays the resentment of a provincial with big abilities and hopes. There are signs of lack of sophistication in the heavily accented English and Arabic, that Shekau uses, and in his failure to use sophisticated Islamic Law arguments. (According to Murray Last, even his Hausa has an accent.) But the small boy has taken on vast ambitions. We are reminded of the Sudanese Mahdi Muhammad Ahmad, the son of a boat-builder, who promised after his first great victory:

The Apostle of God [Muhammad] gave me good tidings ...and said to me, 'As thou didst pray in El Obeid, thou shalt pray in the mosque of Berber, then thou shalt pray in the holy House of God (Mecca), then thou shalt pray in the mosque of

²¹⁵ Transcript of a video, ca. February 24, 2014, in "[Why Muslims are butchering Christians in Nigeria](http://theatheistconservative.com/tag/abubakar-shekau/) 3," <http://theatheistconservative.com/tag/abubakar-shekau/>, accessed June 23, 2014. Italics mine.

²¹⁶ « Video de Boko Haram recue par l'AFP le 19 fevrier 2014, » www.nigeriawatch.org, a publication of IFRA-Nigeria, courtesy of Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclos.

Yathrib (Medina), then thou shalt pray in the mosque of Cairo, then thou shalt pray in Jerusalem....²¹⁷

Accordingly, Shekau displays persistent traces of defensiveness about the very localized nature of his insurgency, centered in Bornu in northeast Nigeria:

My brothers of Kano, of Abuja, of Lagos, of Cross River [a Nigerian State on the extreme southeast coast], of Niger, and all my other brothers, I call you to wake up....Don't believe that [jihad] acts only in Yobe, Borno and Adamawa [Nigerian states in the northeast].²¹⁸

Don't think we are northerners, because you are misunderstanding the whole thing. Let me make it crystal clear to you save you from unnecessary distorted newspapers and the radio analysis on issues you don't understand. We are not fighting the north, we are fighting the world. And you will see us fighting the world. This is our job.²¹⁹

Such statements provide important evidence on the issue of Boko Haram's potential for terrorism on a global scale. Boko Haram is a very localized organization, one that obviously gives priority to local enemies.²²⁰ Almost all of Shekau's statements oppose them, ridicule them, or threaten them. But it is precisely the localization of Boko Haram that gives it the ambition to widen its activities, potentially to a world scale in some way. Obviously it will be difficult to do so when they are pinned down by enemies in northeast Nigeria. And the desperate struggle against enemies in Northeast Nigeria has not allowed Shekau to develop some of the abilities that would be useful if he became a terrorist leader on a world scale. So the issue is a complex one.

²¹⁷P. M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881-1898*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958, 73.

²¹⁸ « Video de Boko Haram recue par l'AFP le 19 fevrier 2014, » www.ifra-nigeria.org, courtesy of Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclos.

²¹⁹ *Premium Times* translation, courtesy of Bayo Adeyinka's blog, posted 24 March 2014. <http://www.bayoadeyinka.com/bayoadeyinka/index.php/entry/nigeria-is-dealing-with-a-murderous-psychopath-please-read-full-text-of-abubakar-shekau-s-speech>, accessed April 9, 2014.

²²⁰ Eveslage, "Clarifying Boko Haram's Transnational Intentions," 53, and many others have argued this.

Ethnicity and Provinciality

In accord with his emphasis on widening the circle of Boko Haram's activities, Shekau speaks in his videos in Hausa, the lingua franca of northern Nigeria and Niger, widely spoken by traders and others elsewhere. But it widely reported that the bulk of his followers are ethnic Kanuri, the majority, and ruling, nationality of Borno and Yobe States²²¹ and formerly of the Bornu emirate; the figure 80% is often reported without evidence. Some of these claims might be doubted, because the Muslims of the North are blamed by southern and middle belt Christians for Boko Haram, and some Hausa answer by arguing its narrowly Kanuri nature.²²² Some Nigerians accuse the Kanuri political elite who are the apparent targets of Boko Haram of being secretly in complicity with it. So it is difficult to know. The possibility that Boko Haram is largely Kanuri is strengthened by the fact that a Boko Haram presence is reported for frontier regions of Cameroon and Niger which are indeed populated by ethnic Kanuri. Officially leaked Nigerian police reports on interrogations say that ethnic Kanuri are never sent on suicide missions, which if true would greatly strengthen the ethnic identification of the group. The police report that Abu Qaqa, a former leader and spokesman of Boko Haram, told them:

What was bad about those handpicked for the suicide mission was that all of them were non-Kanuri. They were always Chadians, Nigeriens, Camerounians [sic], Hausa, Fulani and others. No Kanuri. That was why some of us had divided opinion on it. ²²³

Spreading this story is in the interest of the Nigerian authorities, because it divides Boko Haram from those it is trying to convert. But many Western researchers, some as well-

²²¹ Eveslage, p. 51, is in error in saying Maiduguri is in a Hausa area, though Hausa serves as a lingua franca for the whole North.

²²² See, for example, Ndu Chucks, "Boko Haram Is NOT A Hausa/Fulani Phenomenon, It Is A Kanuri Thing," [airaland Forum](http://airalandforum.com), 19 June 2014 repetition of an April 2013 posting, and comments, <http://www.nairaland.com/1264667/boko-haram-not-hausa-fulani>, accessed 20 June 2014.

²²³ Yusuf Alli, "How bombers are chosen, by Boko Haram suspect," *The Nation Online* [Abuja], <http://www.thenationonlineng.net/2011/index.php/news/36248-how-bombers-are-chosen-by-boko-haram-suspect.html>.

informed as Murray Last and Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclos, endorse the report that non-Kanuris are never sent on the most dangerous missions, or on suicide missions (in different formulations).²²⁴

Why is Boko Haram Kanuri?

No one has asked, as far as I know, why Boko Haram is centered in this part of Nigeria. Yet it is an obvious question on which US government analysts need to focus. It is important to understand the preconditions giving birth to jihadism, and its potential to spread. I asked this question everywhere. In order to understand the alternative answers, we need to know some basic facts about the Bornu area of Nigeria.

Bornu lies in the extreme northeast of Nigeria, on the pilgrim road from West Africa to Mecca. In fact, it was an old center of extremist and Mahdist movements. As Murray Last told me, you expect the Mahdi in the east because he will reign from Mecca. It was an area to which Mahdist rebels, like the Sokoto Prince Hayatu ibn Sa'id. A great-grandson of Uthman dan Fodio, he was born in Sokoto Caliphate. He became the Sudanese Mahdi Muhammad Ahmad's advocate, when the later proclaimed himself the Mahdi in 1881 in the central Sudan, unrecognized by the Sokoto empire. In 1892, Hayatu was challenged by Zubeiru, the governor of Adamawa on the battlefield. Hayatu won, which made the rulers of Sokoto's other emirates more fearful of him. Hayatu then joined Rabih Zubair to conquer Bornu in 1893. The Maitatatsine movement, an earlier, much more heterodox anti-government Nigerian movement to revive Islam, seems to have been born here and recruited its main supporters in this area. Its leader Muhammad Marwa, who claimed to be the Mahdi or Messiah, came from the Marwa in northern Cameroon, an area long associated with messianic expectations.

The political history of Borno State in Nigeria is also important. Borno—there is still an Emir—is more than any other existing entity in West Africa the pale shadow of one of the great medieval empires, Kanem-Bornu. Its history goes back a thousand years under the rule of two long-lived dynasties of mais, or Kings, ruling from Birni

²²⁴ London and Paris interviews.

Gazargamu. The paradox is that the jihad is now flourishing in Nigeria only where it did not flourish in its great age. The Fulanis tried to conquer it at the end of the eighteenth century, but failed. They did devastate the capital, which was left abandoned.

Muhammed al-Amin al-Kanemi, an influential Sufi leader usually called simply “the Shaykh,” led the resistance. He gradually took over the power as “Shehu,” not Mai, from the old dynasty, and his descendents became the rulers. He founded Kukawa (80 miles north-northeast of Maiduguri, the current capital of Borno State) as a new Kanuri capital in 1814 and had completely fought off the Fulani by the the 1820s.

But in 1893, Bornu was attacked by the Sudanese warlord Rābiḥ az-Zubayr (Rabah Zubayr, or Rabeh), who had been slowly moving up western Chad along the rivers with an array of marauding adventurers of every origin, attacked Bornu. He wreaked devastation, overthrew the dynasty, destroyed the new capital Kukawa and moved his court to Dikwa (54 miles east-northeast of Maiduguri). He was killed by French in 1900, who restored the al-Kanemī dynasty in Dikwa. Then Rabih in turn was killed and his head stuck on a pole by the French army. With the final partition of Bornu among the British, the French, and the Germans, Shehu Bukar Garbai moved its headquarters from Monguno to Kukawa and finally to Yerwa in 1907 where the shehu of Bornu still resides. So, in addition to its messianic associations, Bornu has a much more troubled history than most historic emirates of northern Nigeria. The capital, tremendously significant in African monarchies, was moved six times in a hundred years. Perhaps a sense of deprivation and grievance suffuses Boko Haram’s Kanuri followers and reinforces the expectations of a climax of history that pervades northern Nigeria.

Policy Positions

What issues divide Boko Haram from the Nigerian government, and the Muslim establishment in the north? Unlike Ansaru, Boko Haram does not have a charter. The legal and theological positions elaborated at book length by Muhammad Yusuf have been eroded and simplified over time. What is left in the videos, at least, is entirely negative, the things Boko Haram is against, rather than those it is for. In fact, full transcripts of Abubakar Shekau may be startling in their immoderation and bloodthirstiness, but the endless stream of denunciations, insults and threats begins to

bore even this connoisseur of extremism. The phrase *yan zina*, bastard, or better, spawn of illicit sex, occurs constantly. But if we slog through this material, some patterns become apparent.

Rage against injustice

I was told in London, Paris and in West Africa that a big part motive for Boko Haram's violence is simple revenge. The history of Boko Haram, detailed earlier, suggests that most major escalations of the group's violence were reactions to attacks by outsiders, mainly the government or its allies, beginning with the attack on the separatist "Afghanistan" camp in Yobe state and continuing with the murder without a trial of Muhammad Yusuf, the group's revered imam. Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclos formulated it brilliantly, "A sect is like a human body, when a finger is hurt the whole body feels it." Murray Last, interviewed in London, said the police in the north are now Yoruba or from other distant tribes, which would intensify Boko Haram's sense of victimization by outsiders.

Abubakar Shekau has explicitly argued that Boko Haram attacks are defensive. ...[E]veryone has seen what the security personnel have done to us. Everyone has seen why we are fighting with them. We hardly touch anybody except security personnel and Christians and those who have betrayed us. Everyone knows what Christians did to Muslims, not once or twice. ²²⁵

Many of the major actions of Boko Haram have involved getting its members out of prison. Reading the text of Shekau's videos reinforces the impression that revenge is at work, watching them still more so.

"The Giwa Barracks attack is worth narrating....Allah gave us the courage to break into Giwa Barracks (where) we killed and we burnt. We rescued over 2,000

²²⁵ Sahara Reporters (2012, January 12). "Video: Boko Haram leader "Imam Abubakar Shekau message to President Jonathan," <http://saharareporters.com/video/video-boko-haram-leaderimam-abubakar-shekau-message-president-jonathan>, accessed November 7, 2013.

of our brethren, and most of them Commanders! ... One of them even took up a gun and started fighting there. They all got away.²²⁶

In a more sober statement, not narrated by Shekau, the Boko Haram “Public Awareness Department” asserted:

Finally, the government has now resorted to arresting our wives and children and also demolishing our houses, like they did in Biu recently, that is why we have also resolved to start attacking government schools, especially, tertiary [university level] ones. We promise to demolish 500 buildings for any one of our houses that the government destroys. We have already started with Gombe and Kano.²²⁷

Opposition to Western education

In the midst of the simplification and coarsening of the Boko Haram message that has occurred over time, one element has remained prominent: the bitter opposition to Western education. Some spokesmen of Boko Haram still repeat the point of view of Muhammad Yusuf, that not all Western education is bad but only certain parts.²²⁸ But Shekau condemns it without qualification:

And for your information, western education is forbidden. University is forbidden, you should vacate university! You should leave university, I hate university. You should quit university, I hate it, bastard. Western education is

²²⁶ “Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau’s message in new video (in Hausa Language), translated into English,”

Nigerian Times, March 28, 2014 <http://nigeriantimes.ng/news/abubakar-shekaus-message-in-new-video-in-hausa-language-translated-into-english/>, accessed June 22, 2014.

²²⁷ “Boko Haram Releases Video On ThisDay Bombing...,” May 1, 2012, <http://saharareporters.com/video/updated-full-transcript-boko-haram-releases-video-thisday-bombing-threatens-attack-voa-guardian-daily-trust-saharareporters.> ”

²²⁸ Compare the DailyTrust video with Kyari Mohammed, “The Message and Methods of Boko Haram,” in Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclos, ed., *Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*, (Leiden, Ibadan, Zaria: African Studies Center/IFRA, 2014), 17-18.

totally forbidden. Girls, you should return to your homes. In Islam it is allowed to take infidel women as slaves and in due course we will start taking women away and sell in the market.²²⁹

The opposition to Western education seems a hopelessly crude expression of hostility to progress. But there is indeed a problem between modern secular education and religion, whether Muslim or other. A great event, perhaps assessed at its proper weight only by Nietzsche, separates us from almost all of our past: the collapse of belief in a being higher than man, of faith in transcendence. The concrete manifestation of this great “revaluation of values” is the collapse of Christianity in Europe. This momentous transformation cannot be totally unrelated to the content of modern secular education, which replaced traditional education founded on a religious tradition, whether it took place in All Souls College or in a Muslim *madrassa*. In fact, the teaching of Darwinism and modern geology, identified as a problem by Muhammad Yusuf, does undermine the account of creation in the Qur’an and in the Bible. Most modern Islamists are content to use for religious ends the fruits of secular Modernity without thinking about the intellectual problem involved. As V.S. Naipaul notes, Khomeini spread his reactionary message in Iran by videocassettes without ever reflecting on the inconsistency involved.

Muhammad Yusuf thought about it. His reaction is fundamentally the same as that of American religious parents who home-school their children rather than exposing them to doubt of the revealed account of creation. Shekau repeats this response in a simplified form, without Muhammad Yusuf’s careful reasoning and his differentiation of separate elements of modern Western education.

However this may be, Shekau’s choice is supported by a widespread, diffuse distrust of Westernized education in West Africa. As Mohammed Kyari notes, the Nigerian government still struggles to enroll children in school in the North. He

²²⁹ “Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau’s message in new video (in Hausa Language), translated into English,” *Nigerian Times*, March 28, 2014. <http://nigeriantimes.ng/news/abubakar-shekaus-message-in-new-video-in-hausa-language-translated-into-english/>, accessed June 22, 2014.

plausibly argues that part of the explanation is that Westernized education is the education of the privileged northern elite, hated as inauthentic and corrupt.²³⁰ (Murray Last particularly emphasized this attitude in interviews.)

For whatever reason, there recently seems to be a renewed emphasis of Boko Haram on the evils of Western education. It has issued in bloody 2014 killings and kidnappings first in boys' schools, then in girls' schools, culminating in the spectacular kidnapping of over 200 girls from a boarding school in Chibok and Shekau's threat to sell them as slaves. This threat is another example of Shekau's literalism. Most Islamists know that the Shari'a allows slavery, with certain carefully defined conditions, but they are strangely silent about it today.

Opposition to democracy

Among the many abuses and evils existing in Nigeria, democracy looms surprisingly prominent in the Boko Haram world view.

Listen to me attentively! You yourselves say what democracy is, that it is the power of the people, by the people and for the people. You can see well that that contradicts our ideology of the power of God by God and for God. You the *mallam* [man of religious learning, mullah] who participates in democracy, you are a bad Muslim. You lie when you pronounce the profession of faith, the *shahada*. You lie when you invoke the prophet. You lie when you are going to make the pilgrimage. You lie when you pray. You lie when you give charity. Nothing of all that is valuable: the *salaf* [companions of the prophet and their early successors] wouldn't act that way.²³¹

This argument, stated here by Shekau with unusual power, has become a standard Salafist-Wahhabi position, leaving far behind compromises between democracy and Islamism like those represented by the Iranian revolution or the Egyptian Muslim

²³⁰ Kyari in Perouse de Montclos, *Islamism*, 11-12.

²³¹ « Video de Boko Haram recue par l'AFP le 19 fevrier 2014, » www.ifra-nigeria.org, courtesy of Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclos.

Brotherhood after Mubarak. Compare, for example, the slightly more complex argument of three Iraqi Sunni jihadist organizations in December 2004:

Appealing to laws which were established by men and which contradict Allah's law is polytheism and the diversion of worship to one other than Allah... Anyone who appeals to a [law] other than that of Allah, even in a single matter – he has apostatized [renounced Islam], has attributed [to other deities] partnership with Allah, and has left the fold of Islam...²³²

For serious believers such arguments are not senseless. Shekau's is ultimately the same argument that makes Jehovah's Witnesses in the United States refuse to pledge allegiance to the flag. Historically, the sovereignty of the people was first argued against divine-rights monarchy, a variant of the sovereignty of God, and strictly traditional religious leaders continued to denounce Parliamentarism in Europe as late as the Papal encyclicals of the nineteenth century. So Shekau's position has a certain logic. But does it have any tactical sense? Many Nigerians oppose, like Shekau, their government, but for its lack of real democracy, and many of its bitterest opponents have some stake in the democratic system. So Shekau would have many practical motives to compromise on democracy. His position deprives him of the first recourse of modern demagogues, the appeal to the people's welfare against their rulers' selfishness. And Islamic history can supply precedents for some forms of government by consent: Muhammad's "Constitution of Medina," the role of *shuras* or councils in electing early Caliphs, preserved in the oath of allegiance or *bay'a* given to many rulers, whose etymology derives from "sale" or "contract." These intellectual resources are not alien to Shekau's own Salafi tradition: many of these vestiges of government by consent were rediscovered by the first modern Salafists in the early twentieth century. Shekau closes his mind to all these possibilities, preferring, as so often, to be logical, literal, and strict.

²³² "The Farce of Democracy and Elections," December 30, 2004, joint statement of the Army of the Supporters of the Sunna [*Jaysh Ansar Al-Sunna*], the Jihad Warriors Army [*Jaysh Al-Mujahideen*], and the Islamic Army in Iraq [*Al-Jaysh Al-Islami*], www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/0/1308.htm, accessed September 8, 2005.

In making the argument he does, he runs the risk of falling into neo-Kharijism, viewed by Sunnis as a deviant early current in Islam. The Kharijites (Arabic *Khawarij*) were a group that joined the Caliph ‘Ali against rebels in the second Muslim civil war, but abandoned him when he agreed to an arbitration between the two sides. Very much in Shekau’s mode, they argued that only God could decide issues of political leadership, seceded from ‘Ali’s army and rose against him, eventually killing him while going to pray at the mosque. One of their arguments was that moral unfitness undermined one’s otherwise valid title to perform religious functions, or to hold an office in the Muslim community. This is precisely what Shekau argues when he says a *Mallam* [loosely, cleric] who believes in democracy “lies when he prays.” Extreme contemporary Salafis are constantly labeled by their opponents as neo-Kharijites, and Shekau invites this charge.

In fact, Muhammad Yusuf faced the charge that he was repeating the errors of the Kharijites, and he entered into a long series of scholastic arguments and counter-arguments with his more moderate Salafist opponents. Shekau no longer feels this to be necessary, nor is he reluctant to be exposed to this classic accusation of the moderates in intra-Muslim debate. The Boko Haram position has undergone tremendous simplification and coarsening over the years. The mention of the Salaf is a rare vestige of the complex Salafi foundation on which Boko Haram was built, a foundation that now lies buried in the Sahel sand.

The Umma, not the national state

Because Shekau rejects democracy, he rejects Nigeria and all national states. He says in the video explaining the Chibok kidnapping,

We are in Allah’s land and don’t know Nigeria. We don’t know Cameroon or Chad. I don’t know, I don’t have a country. Islamiyya [“the Islamic thing”] is what I have....”²³³

²³³ “Full English Transcript of Boko Haram Leader Abubakar Shekau’s Latest Video,” *CKN Nigeria*, May 7, 2014.

This apparently nihilistic position has deep roots in Islamic history, where the *umma*, Islamic community as a whole, was the focus of the deepest loyalty, and territorial states like those that formed (very slowly!) in the West lacked legitimacy. Contrary to the names that you see in historical atlases, there were no such states as Morocco, Egypt, Iran, Oman, Yemen, and so forth, whatsoever before the Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century, and few afterwards. Everyone who used the title “Commander of the Faithful,” or Caliph, like the ruler of what Westerners have re-named the “Sokoto Caliphate” in pre-colonial Nigeria, was in principle claiming rule over all Muslims, and in practice their areas of rule were vaguely delimited. This discomfort with the national state revived even in the era of Arab nationalism with the ephemeral projects to unify the Arab states: Egypt with Syria and Yemen, Iraq with Jordan, Libya with Egypt, and so forth. Today we see that same discomfort in Islamist formations such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. Many Islamist groups have proposed in the last decades the project of creating a universal Caliphate, and the Islamic State—of nowhere in particular, because it is universal—now claims to have done it.

This position is sometimes called in Muslim discourse “ummaticism.” It tends to differentiate the most radical jihadists from more moderate Islamists like Turkey’s Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who accepts the existence of Turkey and sees his mission in working within it. But unlike some Islamists, Shekau rejects the national state primarily because he rejects democracy, not the other way around.

Opposition to government service

Because Muhammad Yusuf opposed the national state and democracy, he also opposed serving the Nigerian government. This opposition was a major feature of the original Boko Haram viewpoint. It has now virtually disappeared from video statements, perhaps because Boko Haram is actively at war with the state and its members have less temptation to serve there, or because Shekau needs spies who can penetrate the state.

Opposition to poverty?

Sherlock Holmes was most struck by the dog that did not bark in the night, and the policy positions taken by Boko Haram are striking for what is simply left out. The

existence of Boko Haram is often ascribed to the poverty of northeastern Nigeria, but I have not read any complaint by Shekau about poverty, the ensuing misery, or the inequality of wealth. Nor is there any abuse of rich businessmen; denunciation of the northern elites is confined to politicians, Emirs, and religious figures. In fact, the whole of northern Nigeria is poor, and Sokoto State, the center of the former Caliphate, in the northwest is even poorer than Borno or Yobe, where Boko Haram has its nucleus of support. It must be true that the failure of an oil-rich country to improve the material condition of most northern Muslims creates a mass of dissatisfied, unemployed people that Boko Haram can draw on, but in the very materials designed to speak directly to the public, his videos, Abubakar Shekau never chooses to exploit this issue. So I agree with Proust de Montclos, who forthrightly calls the poverty explanation “bullshit.” Boko Haram is a religious movement, which challenges the Nigerian state for religious reasons.

The Leader

In a movement as isolated and hunted as Boko Haram, leadership must be tremendously influential. There are claims of factions in Boko Haram,²³⁴ and Ansaru clearly developed out of one. But the Muslim tradition over the last thousand years is generally one of one-man leadership, and Shekau enjoys a unique position as the expounder of their views in videos, in spite of the advantages of a smoother, more controlled spokesman. Who is Abubakar Shekau?

Anger

Shekau seems to be a genuinely angry man, though the odd alternation of rage with giggles in the Chibok kidnapping video, for example, suggests some of it may be heightened to inspire his followers and the public with his intensity. Like Shakespeare's Hotspur, he taunts people to make them more angry, so that he in turn can enjoy more anger. In the video glorying in the Nyanya bus station bombing, he tells President Jonathan,

²³⁴ See, for example, Jean-Philippe Rémy, « Nigeria : quatre questions sur la secte Boko Haram, » *Le Monde*, Le Monde.fr, 24.06.2014 à 08h24.

I am here very close to you. I dare you to get me, if you can....This is me, Abubakar Shekau, whose turban you don't like seeing, whose armoured shirt you so much hate. This is my usual gun with which I kill. Get more annoyed, because I am still here.²³⁵

Egomania

Shekau shows obsessive self-absorption and vanity, a concern about how he looks to others. In the video received by AFP on March 25 and centered on the attack on the Giwa barracks in Maidaguri, he tells the government militiamen (Civilian JTF):

This is Shekau speaking. It is now that you will really know Shekau. You don't know my madness, right? It is now that you will see. By Allah, I will slaughter you. I'm not happy if I don't slit your throats. I'll slaughter you, I'll slaughter you, I'll slaughter you.²³⁶

Most Islamist leaders decide on a costume appropriate to the role they seek, like the snow-white 'ulama dress with guns of bin Laden and Zawahiri. Shekau, a handsome man, sports in his videos an ever-changing array of outfits worthy of a fashion model. Assault rifles, bandoliers, and camouflage patterns are always evident, but among hats, religiously required, we see Shekau in a turban with Pushtun hanging end, a trendy Palestinian-Gulf *keffiyeh*, a weird knitted cap with a peak like a wizard's hat, and others, none of them native to Bornu Muslims.

Rejection of Moderation

The last quotation also shows Shekau's love of going further than you might expect, his immoderation. All leaders of extremist movements face dilemmas in

²³⁵ Ameh Comrade Godwin, "Jonathan is a lame duck, he's too small for us – Boko Haram leader mocks president," *Daily Post*, April 21, 2014, www.twitter.com/dailypostngr.

²³⁶ "Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau's message in new video (in Hausa Language), translated into English," *Nigerian Times*, March 28, 2014]. <http://nigeriantimes.ng/news/abubakar-shekaus-message-in-new-video-in-hausa-language-translated-into-english/>, accessed June 22, 2014.

whether to be extreme, defiantly showing that they will go all the way, at the cost of difficulties in practice, or to compromise, with the dangers of loss of the movement's vitality and, often, loss of their followers' support. There is no answer to these dilemmas except in particular cases. Shekau clearly is on the far end, glorying in his extremism. Shekau has enjoyed some real support, especially in Borno and Yobe states. He could benefit from what I have called the "secret sharer" syndrome, by which a small group of real fanatics talks closely enough to an amorphous body of more moderate opinion that their views vaguely resemble that they can mobilize it on their side. Thus Hitler was able to appeal to German conservatives, Al Qaeda to very many members of the 'Ulama. But Shekau's attitude, like that of Lenin, is that

"There are only two groups of people in the world. There are either those with us or those on the other side, which I'll kill once I spot them. This is my only focus now."²³⁷

Insanity?

Abubakar Shekau's extreme statements, and his odd behavior on some videos, the nervous giggle or compulsive tugging on his camouflage jacket or his strange knitted hat, have created the suspicion that he may be insane. Virginia Comolli of IISS entertained this possibility in our interview. Sometimes Shekau does sound mad.

I swear by Allah's holy name that I will slaughter you. I will not be happy if I don't personally put my knife on your necks and slit your throats. Yes! I'll slaughter you! I'll slaughter you! And I'll slaughter you again and again.

The impossibility of this last threat makes it sound like someone driven out of his mind. Or again, from the same video:

By Allah, I will kill you. Killing is my job. Let's kill them all, we'd rather leave this world. Let the whole world perish! May Allah curse you!²³⁸

²³⁷ Same source.

There have indeed been psychotic leaders. Hong Xiuquan, the leader of the mighty Tai Ping rebellion in nineteenth-century China, had schizophrenic hallucinations, lapsed into helplessness as he lost the civil war, and abdicated as the Manchu armies closed in on Nanjing, where he had made himself Emperor.

But it is easy sitting in the researcher's study, or an office in Washington, to ascribe madness to extreme behavior without sifting through its other possible causes. Scholars often trace exceptional deeds to neurosis or psychosis, a tendency Nietzsche called "the Jesuitism of mediocrity." Harold Lasswell thought Napoleon conquered Europe because he had a small penis, Erik Erikson that the Protestant Reformation was triggered by Luther's constipation. Washington, which regularly prefers "pragmatists" to "ideologues," has trouble believing in extremism. So does the entire modern West. The monuments to this attitude are the numerous failed or fruitless attempts to work out our differences reasonably with Hitler and Mussolini, the Soviet leaders, the Palestinians, Hamas, Taliban, the Islamic Republic in Iran, the North Koreans, Vladimir Putin, and so forth. Born anew eternally is the related idea that if others are extreme, it is because we drove them to it. Are there other causes that can produce behavior that seems to us mad?

To begin with, extremist ideas have a perennial attractiveness, and it is oddly greater in our disillusioned and rational age than in any other, witness Hitler and Stalin. And when ideas are extreme enough to be detached from reality, people can cling to them with a peculiar obstinacy. The Soviet Politburo, apparently so gray and cynical, was still advising the Ethiopian Worker's Party in the 1970s that collectivization was the answer to the problems of agriculture in that country, forty years after this policy had ruined Soviet agriculture. Extreme ideas are in fact mesmerizing partly because such ideas are not always bad. No one could have dreamed, before the eighteenth century, that the immemorial institution of slavery could be ended. Two hundred years later, only Abubakar Shekau questions its abolition.

²³⁸ *Premium Times* translation, courtesy of Bayo Adeyinka's blog, posted 24 March 2014. <http://www.bayoadeyinka.com/bayoadeyinka/index.php/entry/nigeria-is-dealing-with-a-murderous-psychopath-please-read-full-text-of-abubakar-shekau-s-speech>, accessed April 9, 2014.

Finally, the notion that Shekau is mad does not adequately allow for the way behavior is transformed by extreme situations. The most extreme phase of Soviet communism, in many respects, was War Communism (1918-21), when the Bolsheviks were alone on the planet, the shrunken area between the Baltic and the Volga they controlled was surrounded by hostile armies, joined by forces of all the allies who had just won the First World War, the cities were starving and their money losing all value because the Whites had captured the gold reserve. The desperate struggle of the revolutionaries to survive issued not in prudent compromises, but in Red Terror, stealing grain from the peasants and printing more worthless paper money, welcomed by Bolshevik financial authorities because the disappearance of their own currency's value was a giant stride toward the abolition of money, that besetting social evil. When millenarian Anabaptists controlled the German city of Muenster in the sixteenth century, their adoption of polygamy and killings of other religious groups made Europeans think their leader, John of Leiden, was mad. Contemporary scholarship is more attentive to the fact that the city was under siege and starving; polygamy was, among other things, an answer to the fact that most adult men who were not Anabaptists had fled the city. The Muenster Anabaptists were driven to unheard-of extremes by the potent combination of hope that they were the Elect ushering in the final days, and desperate fears of annihilation—which they indeed suffered in a few months when the armies of unbelievers captured their New Jerusalem.

Boko Haram enjoys the kind of immunity enjoyed by most terrorists, who circulate through the pores of society with impunity and can strike the state wherever they wish. The inefficiency and corruption of the Nigerian state must often make it seem easy. Boko Haram's extreme ideas promise them they are on the verge of restoring the triumphs of early, pure Islam. But at the same time official organizations of Christians call for "holy war" against the Muslims. Everyone even suspected of Boko Haram sympathies is ruthlessly hunted by the brutal Nigerian army, which seems to have penned most of the fighters into a corner of the country next to the Cameroon border. If they are caught they will inevitably be tortured and killed. As a group, they face annihilation.

All members of Boko Haram must experience the hope of routing the government and the fear of annihilation within a milieu of millenarian hopes widespread in Nigeria, which propel these feelings beyond our ordinary understanding of reality. As Murray Last put it in our interview, “Both Muslims and Christians in the North talk about the end times. Things can’t get much worse.” Abubakar Shekau is indeed goaded by both desperate fears and giddy hopes, goaded to frenzy.

Shari’a in northern Nigeria was a sinister parody of real Shari’a. The question is was this development simply a result of naiveté or was it a deception deliberately practiced by northern Nigerian political leaders? It is difficult to know, but many scholars and certainly the leaders of Boko Haram regarded it as a cunning, devilish manipulation. By instituting Shari’a, the westernized and very corrupt elite of northern Nigeria was able to partly satisfy, partly fend off, demands for justice and religiosity. In any case, clearly the emergence of radical jihadism in northern Nigeria was a development out of demands and priorities for Islamic rectitude posted by the Nigerian state. It reminds of the origin of the Wahabi/Salafi organization ‘Yan Izala, which was founded by a chief Kadi, who had served as Nigeria’s ambassador to Saudi Arabia. The state in Nigeria bears a huge responsibility for the emergence of Boko Haram, not only by its injustices but by its framing of the political problem.

The impact of history, current and potential

I asked (b) (7)(C) , in our first, shorter exchange, how much oriented by the great jihads of the past were the recent movements in northern Mali, Boko Haram, and Ansaru. To my surprise, he said:

... I understand your question. I, personally, was surprised that the current Jihadists don’t invoke the precedent of the great West African Jihads of the XVIII-XIX centuries. The reason for this is that these Jihadist movements have an ideology that comes from outside (al-Qa’ida, etc...). Boko Haram does not refer to the Caliphate of Sokoto, no doubt it is also because in one way or another, the political and Islamic establishment of

Northern Nigeria presents itself precisely as the heir of this caliphate. Thus, there is no continuity for [Boko Haram], but a rupture.

Although this had not been my own perception, the negative connection to the past makes sense, particularly in the case of Boko Haram—which is also a Kanuri movement, and the Fulani leaders of the Sokoto jihad tried to conquer the Kanuri. (b) (7) added, however,

At the same time, the historical Jihadist “capital” remains in this part of the Sahel more to the south, where the current Jihadism is absent nowadays (except Boko Haram). Can it be reactivated in a subsequent period and serve as a basis for the Sudano-Jihadist ideological constructions? Personally I don’t have the response, but the questions deserves to be asked.

In other words, the tradition of jihad could “come alive” at some future point in the sedentary, southern areas of the Sahel, where extremist movements are only very active in northeaster Nigeria. Triaud referred me to a young (b) (7)(C) [REDACTED], who gave a somewhat different perspective on the same issue:

In the West African populations, there is an intergenerational dimension in the conservation of the memory of Jihad; this memory continues to govern social status, attitudes and animosities. The status that the Tall clan [descendents of al-Hajj ‘Umar] have gained from it in Senegal and in Mali is well known. But in Mali, in the local memory of some regions, the Jihad of al-Hajj ‘Umar is also associated with the massacres of populations.... At the same time, the word jihad is made sacred. It is part of the memory and the culture. The memory of al-Hajj ‘Umar is very ambiguous, but it is part of the heritage, in Senegal it is “sanctified.” Culturally, the concept of jihad invites at first to the effort of purification, of self-transformation in the journey of faith (the “greater jihad”, “jihad of the heart”, jihad al-nafs). This is an operating concept for people who

are searching [pour les gens en recherche] and in suffering, and a common place in the social space.

The history makes political-military jihad more prestigious in the eastern Sahel:

It is true, that for certain Muslim intellectuals of Nigeria and Niger, the Caliphate of Sokoto is a sacred object. And the fact that it had been consecrated by academic research (also true of al Hajj ‘Umar) adds to its sacred status.

As yet the sacred object has not been restored by crude “Boko Haram.” But it retains a potential to return.

Appendix A

Centers of Scholarship in England

(b) (7)(C) explained that in colonial times “Africa was divided up” among British Universities. University College London (UCL) was the West Africa center, while the London School of Economics and Political Science had the Sudan, the School of Oriental and African Studies, which he described as having the most colonialist tradition, dealt with the Horn of Africa, the University of Edinburgh with East Africa, and the University of Durham, in the north of England, also concerned itself with the Sudan. Other places were weak in African studies, but this distribution was a long time ago. It remains the case, however, that British universities are more specialized than American universities. From my own research for this project, I observed that Oxford now is strong in Saharan and West African studies, though far less on the Francophone countries. The University of Birmingham has a specific Center of West African studies, although this largely means in practice Yoruba (partly Muslim people of southwestern Nigeria) studies. (b) (7)(C), who has researched and written extensively on Hausa and Tuareg societies in Niger, does have expertise highly relevant to this study. At Cambridge, African studies means East African studies. Only (b) (7)(C), a post-doctoral fellow from Oxford, is really interesting on Boko Haram and Nigerian extremism. In October-November he was away doing research on the Jos Plateau, so I did not travel to Cambridge. Individual scholars of interest are scattered among the other British universities.

As regards English **archives and libraries**, archives (very useful for things like religious geography, because of the high scholarly standards of many colonial officials) are at the Public Record Office in Kew, an accessible suburb of London. For books, the British Library is the most complete resource, but many of the more specialized books are far away in Yorkshire and take a couple of days to arrive after being ordered. (b) (7)(C) said that SOAS was meant to be the main repository on Africa, but is no longer buying as actively. The Bodleian Library at Oxford is very complete on Francophone Africa up until the 1930s, according to (b) (7)(C) but not afterward. As regards current scholarship, the most interesting French-language writing is often in obscure journals.

Appendix B

Centers of Scholarship in France

Because of the complexity of the French academic world and their love of acronyms, I felt it would be useful to simply list here the major French institutions that are resources for the study of West Africa, today or in history.

1. **CEAf - EHESS - Centre d'études africaines, l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales (One of the Grands Ecoles, elite universities distinctive to France, and probably the most important center in the country. Not in the nearby Maison des Sciences de l'Homme with the rest of EHESS, but in a nearby building, elevator in the back, left.)**

96 boulevard Raspail - Paris 6^{ème} 75006

Téléphone : 33 (0)1 53 63 56 50

Fax : 33 (0)1 53 63 56 48

Dernière mise à jour : 4 novembre 2013

2. **SEDET - Sociétés en développement, études transdisciplinaires**

(Originally provoked by development economics, but has scholars and hosts meetings on wider African issues.)

Postal Address :

Université Paris Diderot – Paris 7

Case courrier 7017

75205 PARIS CEDEX 13

For meetings:

Bâtiment Olympe de Gouges (A huge new building in the 13th Arrondissement near the Bibliothèque Mitterrand, in an area where many African and other academic institutions are now being located)

(8ème étage - secrétariat bureau 817)

rue Albert Einstein, 75013 Paris

(un badge doit être retiré à l'accueil, localisé au rez-de-chaussée du bâtiment)

Email (Courriel) :

laboratoire.sedet@univ-paris-diderot.fr

Téléphone :

00-33 (0)1 57 27 72 78

- 3. INALCO- Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales** (Also for African languages, etc.)

Postal Address:

65 rue des Grands Moulins

CS21351

75214-PARIS cedex 13

For meetings:

65 rue des Grands Moulins, 75013 PARIS.

Téléphone :

01 81 70 10 00

- 4. BULAC - Bibliothèque universitaire des langues et civilisations** (The specialized library for Africa.)

65 rue des Grands Moulins

F-75013 PARIS

T +33 1 81 69 18 00

- 5. CEMAf - Centre d'études des mondes africains**

Le CEMAf à Ivry-sur-Seine (This rather inaccessible suburban location is mainly devoted to theoretical anthropology.)

27 rue Paul Bert
94204 Ivry-sur-Seine cedex
3ème étage - pièce 324

Tél. +33 (0)1-49-60-40-07
Fax. +33 (0)1-46-71-84-94

Le CEMAf à Paris

Centre Malher (near the Marais)
9 rue Malher
75004 Paris
(métro Saint-Paul)
01 44 78 33 32

Le CEMAf à Aix-en-Provence (In the provinces very near Marseille, but a major center with important scholars like Tuareg expert Charles Gremont. The colonial archives, an important resource, are in Marseille.)

Maison Méditerranéenne des sciences de l'homme
5, rue du Château de l'Horloge
B.P.647, F-13094 Aix-en-Provence, cedex 2
Tél. +33 (0) 442 52 40 81 / Fax. +33 (0) 442 52 43 61

6. **CNRS - Le Centre national de la recherche scientifique (Immense government think-tank with research on many subjects and many locations.)**

3, rue Michel-Ange 75016
75794 Paris cedex 16 - France
Téléphone : +33 1 44 96 40 00