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10 Muslim Scholars Living in Three Worlds: West African Muslims and the Imposition of the European Colonial Order

Introduction

The quest to search for local narratives of colonialism stems from the post-colonial critique of Eurocentric descriptions of modernization and globalization. Such presentations have usually focused on the effects and consequences of the advancement of Western capitalism and civilization. These developments have been captured in a dominant master narrative of the expansion of the Atlantic world economy and the second wave of European imperialism and colonialism that affected societies and communities in Asia and Africa since the second half of the nineteenth century. One effect of this process was the – usually forceful – integration of non-European localities into a complex and stratified colonial order controlled by the colonial state in the colonies and the colonial metropolises in Europe. The exercise of power and the collection and dissemination of information as well as the flows of goods and ideas was hegemonic, that is to say controlled by and enabled through Western, non-local actors and technology.¹ Nevertheless, the local actors responded, adapted, transformed, or rejected in various ways to colonial cultures, which were shaped by global exchange.²

Colonialism, at times violent and traumatic for local actors, was never a one-sided process; on the contrary, it eventually created a “colonial globality” at the beginning of the twentieth century. Rather than resulting in the forceful imposition of external ideas, habits, and modes of interaction, local agents, be they Asian or African, had a long history of response and adaption to Europeans. Local rulers had not only cooperated with Europeans but also fought against them. Local middlemen had tried to adapt to changing demands by European companies and traders. None of the localities in the Atlantic, Indian, or Pacific oceans, where European trading posts had been established, remained pristine –

¹ For a critical discussion, see R. Drayton and D. Motadel, “Discussion: The Futures of Global History”, *Journal of Global History* 13 (2018) 1, pp. 1–21.

² S. Hazareesingh and H. Maat (eds.), *Local Subversions of Colonial Cultures: Commodities and Anti-commodities in Global History*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016.

untouched by external material culture, technologies, or ideas. Consequently, the “colonial globality” at the beginning of the twentieth century was as much a world of hybridization and creolization, albeit dominated by a hegemonic Eurocentric colonial space.³

The “colonial globality” of the Eurocentric colonial space is usually visualized through a dominant centre – the European colonial metropolises – and a subjugated colonial periphery. A counter reading of the “colonial globality” challenges this perception of a simple hegemonic model. Subaltern studies in India as well as investigation on local reactions and adaptations to the colonial condition in Africa have highlighted the roles and strategies of local agents and actors, be they part of the local elite or even commoners and various kinds of unfree/bonded individuals.⁴ A further challenge to the simple hegemonic model comes if one shifts the focus away from European actors and spaces and instead chooses to focus on simultaneous transnational flows of ideas and goods that involved non-European ones.⁵ The most dominant of these non-European “globalities” was (and is) the Muslim *oecumene*, or Muslim world (*ummah*), that existed parallel to the pre-modern/modern European/Western world.⁶

The objective of this chapter is to localize the global by identifying multiple histories of parallel globalities, namely a European/colonial one and a Muslim one. The focus will be the “three worlds” of Muslim scholars in the late pre-colonial and early colonial Voltaic Basin, that is to say the northern parts of present-day Ghana in West Africa. One of these scholars was al-Hājj ‘Umar ibn

3 C. Newbury, *Patrons, Clients, and Empire: Chieftaincy and Over-rule in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

4 D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000; D. R. Wright, *The World and A Very Small Place in Africa*, 2nd edn, Armonck, NY: M.E. Sharpe 2004 (1997); S. Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.

5 B. Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination*, London: Verso, 2005; C. Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007; E. Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-determination and the International Origins of Anti-colonialism*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009; S. Bose and K. Manjapra (eds.), *Cosmopolitan Thought Zones: South Asia and the Global Circulation of Ideas*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010; D. Motadel (ed.), *Islam and the European Empires*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014; K. Bystrom and J. R. Slaughter (eds.), *The Global South Atlantic*, Fordham University Press, 2017.

6 The term Islamic or Muslim *oecumene* was introduced by M. G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974. See also J. O. Voll, “Islam as a Special World System”, *Journal of World History* 5 (1994) 1, pp. 213–226; A. K. Bennisson, “Muslim Universalism and Western Globalization”, in: A. G. Hopkins (ed.), *Globalization in World History*, New York: W.W. Norton, 2002, pp. 73–98.

Abū Bakr ibn ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Alī al-Kabbawī al-Kanawī, known as Imam Umar or Alhaji Umar (Umaru/Imoru) (ca. 1858–1934). He was born in Kano in Hausaland but moved to Salaga in Gonja in 1892, where he established a *makarantar manya* (advanced school) in Islamic sciences. After the (second) Salaga Civil War in 1892, Imam Umar moved to Kete in German Togoland in 1896, where he became the imam of the Friday Mosque in 1907. During the period of German rule, he closely collaborated with the German colonial administrator and Hausa expert Adam Mischlich, who commissioned and translated Imam Umar’s texts on Hausa social and economic conditions.⁷ In 1913/14, he went to Mecca, returning in 1918. Thereafter he lived in Kete-Krachi, then British-mandated territory, until his death in 1934.⁸

Resident and itinerant Muslim scholars lived in Muslim communities in the Voltaic Basin, which were part of the Muslim *oecumene* or Muslim globality. This was the Muslim sphere and constituted the “first world” of the Muslim scholars. The “second world” included the surrounding pre-colonial non-Muslim polities and societies. Muslim settlements were established within the realms of the non-Muslim polities but were regarded as outsider communities and Muslims constituted a minority of the population of an entity. Muslim scholars established personal links with local rulers; some of them could even become members of the local courts, forming a “third estate” in local non-Muslim societies.⁹ However, although Muslim and non-Muslim communities existed side by side, their religious spheres were set apart from each other. Instead, as a Muslim community that was located within the realms of a non-Muslim African polity, members of the community tried to establish an internal religious and cultural autonomy. Also, it made little sense to challenge local political and religious conditions as the Muslim outsider communities were in a minority position in the pre-colonial Voltaic Basin. However, as will be discussed in the first part of the chapter, ideological changes in the “first world” and the dissemination of calls for religious revivalism and orthopraxis were

⁷ See further A. Mischlich, “Über Sitten und Gebräuche in Hausa, I–III”, *Mitteilungen des Seminars für orientalische Sprachen* x–xii (1907–1910); A. Mischlich, *Über die Kulturen im Mittel-Sudan*, Berlin: D. Reimer, 1942.

⁸ See further I. Abdul-Razaq, “Alhaj Umar of Kete-Krachi: A Muslim Leader, a Teacher, a Poet, and a Social Commentator of his Time”, M. Phil thesis, University of Ghana, Legon, 1996; “Umar b. Abī Bakr b. ‘Uthmān al-Salghawī al-Kabawī al Kanawī”, in: J. Hunwick (compiled), *Arabic Literature of Africa*, vol. 4, *The Writings of Western Sudanic Africa*, Leiden: Brill 2003, pp. 586–587. According to Hunwick, Imam Umar made a second pilgrimage in 1918.

⁹ J. R. Goody, “The Over-kingdom of Gonja”, in: D. Forde and P. Kaberry (eds.), *West African Kingdoms in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press for the International Africa Institute, 1967, pp. 179–205.

to challenge the cohesion of local Muslim communities in the Voltaic Basin during the late pre-colonial period. Also, frictions within the “second world” affected Muslim communities, possibly leading to its dissolution.

The second part of the chapter focuses on the establishment of colonial rule in the Voltaic Basin. Both Muslim and non-Muslim communities were affected when a new global order – the European one – forcefully attempted to integrate the region into the Atlantic world economy. On the other hand, the colonial authorities needed the collaboration of local middlemen if they wished to establish a controlled space. The colonial space was therefore to become the “third world”, where some Muslim scholars chose to interact with the colonial authorities while others rejected any accommodation with the new rulers. Imam Umar wrote several texts in Arabic and Hausa, where he critically comments and reflects upon the political and societal changes of his time. His texts on the imposition of the colonial order provides insight into a Muslim discourse on the manifestations of the “colonial globality” and how Muslim scholars tried to accommodate and adapt to it without distancing themselves from the two other worlds they were living in.

A Non-European Globality: The Muslim *Oecumene*

The Muslim *oecumene*, or *ummah*, was – and is – as much a reality as a state of mind. It consisted of a myriad of translocal linkages, networks, and flows that connected Muslim agents, notably scholars and traders, with each other.¹⁰ Muslim scholars applied a Islamocentric reading to the world as much as Europeans had applied a Western-cum-Christian one. The centre was the *Dar al-Islam*, the “Land of Islam” dominated by Muslim societies, ruled by Muslim rulers, and governed – at least in theory – through Islamic law. The mental centre of the *Dar al-Islam* were the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, in addition to the prestigious centres of Muslim learning in the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia. The pilgrimage to the holy cities and travels to the centres of learning created information networks and connected scholars both within and outside the *Dar al-Islam*.¹¹

¹⁰ R. Loimeier (ed.), *Die islamische Welt als Netzwerk. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen des Netzwerkansatzes im islamischen Kontext*, Würzburg: Ergon, 2000.

¹¹ D. F. Eickelman and J. Piscatori (eds.), *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990; G. Sood, *India and the*

The opposite to the Dar al-Islam was the *Dar al-Harb*, the “Land of War”; the *Dar al-Kufr*, the “Land of Unbelievers”; and the *Dar al-Sulh*, the “Land of Treaty”.¹² In theory, lasting peace could not exist between Muslims and non-Muslims as it was incumbent upon every Muslim to propagate the spread of Islam into the realms of unbelievers.¹³ In praxis, however, the situation was much more complicated both within the Muslim *oecumene* as well as with regard to the relationship to non-Muslim communities. The Dar al-Islam was shattered by internal friction and intra-fractional conflicts, most notably the split of the Muslim world into three major interpretations of political-cum-religious authority: the Sunni, or “traditionalists”, as well as the various branches of Shi’a and Kharijite sects. Further, Islamic mysticism, or Sufism, divided the Sunnis; Sufism and Sufi scholars were criticized by Sunni scholars for sidestepping orthopraxis and absorbing local traditions, most notably the veneration of the Prophet and Holy Men.¹⁴

The Dar al-Islam was not a fixed container or demarcated territory. Military expansion had expanded the Dar al-Islam into North Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Indian sub-continent, but the spread of Islam into sub-Saharan Africa and the Indonesian archipelago was, by and large, a peaceful process.¹⁵ The ideal model of a clear-cut duality between believers and non-believers proved a chimera, especially for Muslim traders and scholars living outside the Dar al-Islam. Islam was per se the religion of merchants and traders, a “portable religion” that was not fixed to a specific place while containing a set of

Islamic Heartlands: An Eighteenth-Century World of Circulation and Exchange, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

¹² See further G. Calasso and G. Lancioni (eds.), *Dār al-islām/dār al-harb: Territories, People, Identities*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017.

¹³ N. Levtzion (ed.), *Conversion to Islam*, New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979; M. Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1955; R. Peters, *Islam and Colonialism: The Doctrine of Jihad in Modern History*, The Hague: Mouton, 1979.

¹⁴ R. S. O’Fahey, *The Enigmatic Saint: Ahmad Ibn Idris and the Idrisi Tradition*, London: Hurst & Co, 1990; E. E. Rosander and D. Westerlund (eds.), *African Islam and Islam in Africa: Encounters between Sufis and Islamists*, Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1997; F. De Jong and B. Radtke (eds.), *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, Leiden: Brill, 1999; I. Weisman, *The Naqshbandiyya: Orthodoxy and activism in a worldwide Sufi tradition*, London: Routledge, 2007.

¹⁵ K. N. Chaudhuri, *Asia before Europe. Economy and Civilization of the Indian Ocean from the Rise of Islam to 1750*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990; N. Levtzion and R. L. Pouwels, “Patterns of Islamization and Varieties of Religious Experience among Muslims of Africa”, in: N. Levtzion and R. L. Pouwels (eds.), *The History of Islam in Africa*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000, pp. 1–18.

rules for everyday life and commercial transactions that were encapsulated in the Qur'an as well as in written interpretations of doctrine and jurisprudence. Local Muslim scholars interacted with Muslims scholars in the wider Islamic world,¹⁶ Muslim traders criss-crossed the Dar al-Islam and the lands of unbelievers, and they settled in localities ruled by non-Muslim rulers and engaged with non-Muslims. Constituting a religious (and usually also ethnic) minority in non-Muslim societies resulted in an adaptive approach to local conditions while at the same time remaining connected to the Islamic *oecumene*.¹⁷

Local religious and political conditions posed a challenge to Muslim scholars. Some of them laid stress on orthopraxis and condemned the mixing of local traditions with Islamic ones as unbelief. Their norm was dogmatic purity. In contrast, mainly Sufi scholars had a more inclusive perspective on local traditions and thus advocated integrating local cultural practices.¹⁸ As a result, the Muslim world was time and again shattered by revivalist movements that, by and large, condemned syncretism and the "disbelief" of local Muslims.¹⁹ This was also a noted feature throughout the West African Sudanic savannah, where critical Muslim reformers accused Muslim rulers of suppressing Muslims and attacked Muslim scholars at the courts who sided with the rulers. Some of the reform movements in West Africa became militant and, if victorious, ended with the establishment of Muslim political entities ruled by Muslim scholars

16 E. Simpson and K. Kresse (eds.), *Struggling with History: Islam and Cosmopolitanism in the Western Indian Ocean*, London: Hurst & Co., 2007; R. Loimeier, *Eine Zeitlandschaft in der Globalisierung: Das islamische Sansibar im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Bielefeld: Transcript, 2012; R. Loimeier, *Muslim Societies in Africa: A Historical Anthropology*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013.

17 S. Alavi, *Muslim Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Empire*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015.

18 G. E. von Grunebaum (ed.), *Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1955; L. Sanneh, *The Crown and the Turban: Muslims and West African Pluralism*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1997; J. O. Voll, "Afrikanischer localism und das islamische Weltsystem", in: R. Loimeier, D. Neubert, and C. Weißköppel (eds.), *Globalisierung im lokalen Kontext. Perspektiven und Konzepte von Handeln in Afrika*, Münster: LIT Verlag, 2005, pp. 277–310.

19 A. Dallal, "The origins and Objectives of Islamic Revivalist Thought, 1750–1850", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 113 (1993) 3, pp. 341–359; H. A. Ibrahim, "Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb and Shāh Walī Allāh: A Preliminary Comparison of Some Aspects of their Lives and Careers", *Asian Journal of Social Science* 34 (2006) 1, pp. 103–119; A. Saeed, "Salafiyya, Modernism, and Revival", *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics*, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t9001/e040#Notes> (accessed 17 October 2019).

and their descendants during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as the imamates of Futa Jallon and Futa Toro, the Sokoto and Hamdallahi caliphates, as well as the Tukolor state of Al-Hajj Umar Tal.²⁰

The intrusion of European colonial powers into the Muslim heartlands of West Africa during the latter half of the nineteenth century posed a challenge to Muslims scholars. Muslim savannah states were part of the Muslim *oecumene*, and European imperialism was regarded as an attack on the Dar al-Islam. One solution was rejection, another accommodation. Both ways integrated a variety of strategies. A Muslim scholar could openly protest with or without a call for violent rejection, such the calls for militant opposition (*jihad*) of Al-Hajj Umar Tal and Samori against the French.²¹ Others could issue verbal condemnation of the Christians as oppressors, issuing open proclamations for undertaking a collective emigration (*hijra*) to retreat into lands still controlled by Muslim rulers or for making a personal decision to deny any cooperation with the Christians as a kind of internal emigration into a self-controlled space.²² Accommodation, too, listed a wide range of strategies. Some Muslims chose to cooperate with the Christians, while others negotiated a *modus vivendi* with the colonial state whereby the cultural and religious autonomy of a Muslim community was guaranteed by the colonial state. In compensation, Muslim leaders refrained from challenging the colonial order and would, if needed, cooperate with the

20 D. Robinson, "Reflections on Legitimation and Pedagogy in the 'Islamic Revolutions' of West Africa on the Frontiers of the Islamic World", *Journal of West African History* 1 (2015) 1, pp. 119–132; P. Lovejoy, *Jihad in West Africa during the Age of Revolutions*, Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2016; R. Loimeier, *Islamic Reform in 20th Century Africa*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016.

21 Y. Person, "Guinea-Samoru", in: M. Crowder (ed.), *West African Resistance: The Military Response to Colonial Rule*, New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1970, pp. 111–143; D. Robertson, *The Holy War of Umar Tal: The Western Sudan in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985; J. R. Willis, *In the Path of Allah: The Passion of al-Hajj 'Umar. An Essay into the Nature of Charisma in Islam*, London: Frank Cass, 1989; J.-L. Triaud and D. Robinson (eds.), *La Tijāniyya: Une confrérie musulmane à la conquête de l'Afrique*, Paris: Karthala, 2000.

22 R.A. Ayande, "The Dilemma of the Wazir: The Place of the Risālat al-Wazīr 'ila ahl al-'ilm wa'l-tadabbur in the History of the Conquest of the Sokoto Caliphate", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 4 (1968) 2, pp. 285–311; D. Robinson, "The Umarian Emigration of the Late Nineteenth Century", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 20 (1987) 2, pp. 245–270; R. Loimeier, "Patterns and Peculiarities of Islamic Reform in Africa", *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33 (2003) 3, pp. 237–262.

colonial authorities and establish working relations with the colonial officials, as was the case in British, French, and German West Africa.²³

However, European imperialism also transformed the Muslim *oecumene*. European colonial empires in Asia and Africa created new spaces for Muslim scholars to interact with representatives of other religious and cultural traditions. This was a noted feature not only in India, where Muslim cosmopolitans engaged in conversations about universal religious values across cultural boundaries, but also in British West Africa, such as the Fante Muslim community and the Ahmadiyya on the Gold Coast or the Afro-Brazilian Muslim communities in Lagos and Accra. As John H. Hanson notes, the Ahmadi Muslims emerged as Muslim cosmopolitans in the Gold Coast, whereas traditional Muslim scholars of the West African savannah, such as Imam Umar of Kete-Krachi, did not participate in religious exchanges with Christians.²⁴

23 Ayande, “The Dilemma of the Wazir”; L. Villalón, *Islamic Society and State Power in Senegal*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995; A. Christelow, “In Search of One Word’s Meaning: *Zaman* in Early Twentieth-Century Kano”, *History in Africa* 24 (1997), pp. 95–115; D. Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation: Muslim Societies and French Colonial Officials in Senegal and Mauretania, 1880–1920*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000; H. Weiss, “German Images of Islam in West Africa”, *Sudanic Africa. A Journal of Historical Sources* 11 (2000), pp. 53–94; L. Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge: Religion, Power, and Schooling in a West African Muslim Society*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001; J. Reynolds, “Good and Bad Muslims: Islam and Indirect Rule in Northern Nigeria”, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 34 (2001) 3, pp. 601–618; L. Brenner, *West African Sufi: The Religious Heritage and Spiritual Search of Cerno Bokar Saalif Taal*, London: Hurst & Co., 2005; A. Hampaté Ba, *A Spirit of Tolerance: The Inspiring Life of Tierno Bokar*, Bloomington, IN: World Vision, 2008; R. Seesemann and B. Soares, “‘Being as Good Muslims as Frenchmen’: On Islam and Colonial Modernity in West Africa”, *Journal of Religion in Africa* 39 (2009) 1, pp. 91–120; S. Hanretta, *Islam and Social Change in French West Africa: History of an Emancipatory Community*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009; D.E. Skinner, “The Incorporation of Muslim Elites into the Colonial Administrative Systems of Sierra Leone, The Gambia and the Gold Coast”, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 29 (2008) 1, pp. 91–108; S. Hanretta, “Formal Care: Islam and Bureaucratic Paperwork in the Gold Coast/Ghana”, in: F. Becker, J. Cabrita, and M. Rodet (eds.), *Religion, Media, and Marginality in Modern Africa*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 2018, pp. 38–69.

24 J. H. Hanson, *The Ahmadiyya in the Gold Coast: Muslim Cosmopolitans in the British Empire*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017. On the Afro-Brazilians in West Africa, see S. Strickrodt, “The Brazilian Diaspora to West Africa in the Nineteenth Century”, in: I. Phaf-Reinberger and T. de Oliveira Pinto (eds.), *Afrika Amerika: Atlantische Konstruktionen*, Frankfurt: Vervuert, 2008, pp. 36–68.

The First and the Second World: Muslims Communities in the Late Pre-colonial Voltaic Basin

The Voltaic Basin was not part of the Dar al-Islam.²⁵ The region was known by colonial authorities as the Asante (Ashanti) hinterland and was formally integrated into British and German colonial spaces by 1900 as “The Northern Territories of the Gold Coast”, respectively northern Togoland. Muslim scholars and merchants, on the other hand, had a different mental map of the region. The region was not a hinterland of the coast but had evolved as the core area of two long-distance trade networks that linked the Sudanic and the Guinea savannah. One was the north-south trade route of Muslim Wangara, or Juula, traders, who had opened the route as part of their expansion from the Mali Empire to the Akan gold fields since about the fourteenth century.²⁶ The other one was the east-west trade route of Hausa traders, linking the Voltaic Basin with Hausaland and the Lake Chad region. The prime target of Hausa traders was Gonja, the land where they could buy kola nuts. Although the Gonja route was opened as early as the fifteenth century, the expansion of trade along this route occurred during the eighteenth and especially during nineteenth centuries.²⁷ This was, by and large, due to political-cum-religious changes in Hausaland at the turn of the nineteenth century and the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate in 1812. The Sokoto Caliphate evolved as the major Muslim empire in West Africa during the nineteenth century; kola nuts were the only stimulant allowed to be used by local Muslim, thus creating a huge market for a product that could not be locally produced.²⁸

The Juula and Hausa Muslim scholars were the custodians of a Muslim tradition that their ancestors had maintained for centuries. Organized into Muslim scholarly families, they travelled along the trade routes and crossed cultural frontiers. They spoke West African languages but were specialists in Arabic and

25 F. Zappa, “Une appartenance controversée: trois moments dans le débat autour du statut du bilād al-sūdān”, in: G-Calasso and G. Lancioni (eds.), *Dār al-islām/dār al-harb: Territories, People, Identities*, Leiden: Brill, 2017, pp. 265–291.

26 I. Wilks, “The Juula and the Expansion of Islam into the Forest”, in: N. Levtzion and R. L. Pouwels (eds.), *The History of Islam in Africa*, Athen: Ohio University Press, 2000, pp. 93–116.

27 K. Arhin, *West African Traders in Ghana in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, London: Longman, 1979.

28 P. E. Lovejoy, *Caravans of Kola: The Hausa Kola Trade 1700–1900*, Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1980; E. Abaka, *Kola is God’s Gift. Agricultural Production, Export Initiatives & the Kola Industry of Asante & the Gold Coast, c. 1820–1950*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005.

used their knowledge of the Qur'an and other Islamic texts to provide a variety of religious, pedagogical, and social services. They all followed the Maliki interpretation of sharia and shared an interest in esoteric practices. Scholarship and learning was hierarchical, students travelled to renowned scholars and established chains of religious authority in the transmission of Islamic texts.²⁹

Autonomous Muslim communities had emerged all throughout the Voltaic Basin at the end of the nineteenth century. Muslim traders were engaging with non-Muslim rulers and traders, establishing local Muslim communities amongst non-Muslim societies, especially in the savannah kingdoms of Dagbon, Nanun, Mamprugu, Wala, and Gonja. Muslim scholars soon settled in these communities. The most prominent of the Muslim communities was located at Salaga in eastern Gonja which had been established by Muslim traders at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Salaga quickly developed into the major trade hub for the Hausa Gonja trade as well as into a regional centre of Muslim learning.³⁰

The Juula as well as the Hausa settlements were outsider communities, which made few attempts to mix with the rest of the local population. Only their leaders, usually the imam and other scholars, served as a link between the Muslim community and the local court in the various kingdoms. In most cases, the relationship between the Muslim leaders and the local ruler and his court was a reciprocal one: the scholars performed religious services in exchange for the community's cultural and religious autonomy.

The Muslim communities formed culturally, legally, and religiously autonomous spaces. Juridical affairs within the Muslim community were handled by the Muslim scholars, in most cases with the imam acting as judge (*qadi*). This was also the case among the Muslim community in Kumase, the capital of the Asante Empire. However, while Islamic family law and law of contracts and transactions were at least applied in cases involving Muslims, Islamic penal law, constitutional law, and laws on taxation and warfare were certainly not

29 I. Wilks, "The Transmission of Islamic Learning in the Western Sudan", in: J. Goody (ed.), *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968, pp. 162–197; R. T. Ware III, *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge, and History in West Africa*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014.

30 J. Goody and I. Wilks, "Writing in Gonja", in: J. R. Goody (ed.), *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968, pp. 241–258; I. Wilks, N. Levtzion, and B. M. Haight (eds.), *Chronicles from Gonja: A Tradition of West African Muslim Historiography*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986; I. Wilks, J. Hunwick, and M. Sey, "Writers of the Greater Voltaic Region", in: J. O. Hunwick (comp.), *Arabic Literature in Africa*, vol. IV, *The Writings of Western Sudanic Africa*, Leiden: Brill, 2003, pp. 539–630; H. Weiss, *Between Accommodation and Revivalism: Muslims, the State and Society in Ghana from the Precolonial to the Postcolonial Era*, Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society, 2008, pp. 110–112.

applied. Thus, if Islamic law was applied, it was only in its rudimentary and community-centred form and did not necessarily involve the state or the local political authorities.³¹

The degree of Muslim influence was uneven. No doubt some local individuals converted to Islam, but Islamization as a societal process – that is to say, the transformation of a society or a state into an Islamic one – was effectively blocked in the Asante Empire as the conversion of a ruler or a member of the Asante state hierarchy was unthinkable. A different situation prevailed in the savannah kingdoms. Due to the expansion of Juula and Hausa long-distance trade and influx of Muslim traders and scholars, it is very likely that the number of Muslims in the savannah kingdoms was on the rise in the Voltaic Basin. However, although Islamization was never blocked per se, few, if any, members of the local ruling body ever converted to Islam, not to speak of the commoners.³²

Muslim scholars and leaders had a rather influential position in the northern savannah kingdoms. Although the Muslim community was separated from the local society, their leaders were included in the local court hierarchies.³³ The performance of rituals and religious services at the court and for the well-being of both the ruler and the host society made Muslim scholars visible and influential as religious experts. However, their position had to be constantly negotiated as a critical attitude of Muslim scholars towards the non-Muslim rulers could endanger the operations of long-distance Muslim traders. Therefore, Muslim scholars usually applied an accommodationist approach towards non-Muslim societies in the Voltaic Basin, as Ivor Wilks notes for Juula scholars.³⁴ Hausa scholars applied a similar approach in their relationships with the non-Muslim rulers and societies.³⁵

³¹ See further I. Wilks, “The Position of Muslims in Metropolitan Ashanti in the Early Nineteenth Century”, in: I. M. Lewis (ed.), *Islam in Tropical Africa*, London: Oxford University Press for the International Africa Institute, 1966, pp. 318–339; I. Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century: The Structure and Evolution of a Political Order*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

³² D. Owusu-Ansah, *Islamic Talismanic Tradition in Nineteenth Century Asante*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991; D. Owusu-Ansah, “Islamization Reconsidered: An Examination of Asante Responses to Muslim Influence in the Nineteenth Century”, in: T. Falola (ed.), *Ghana in Africa and the World: Essays in Honor of Adu Boahen*, Trenton: Africa World Press, 2003, pp. 249–268.

³³ P. Skalnik, “Early States in the Voltaic Basin”, in: H. J. M. Claessen and P. Skalnik (eds.), *The Early State*, The Hague, Paris, and New York: Mouton Publishers, 1978, pp. 469–494.

³⁴ I. Wilks, “‘Mallams Do Not Fight With the Heathen’: A Note on Suwarian Attitudes to Jihad”, *Ghana Studies* 5 (2002), pp. 215–230.

³⁵ Weiss, *Between Accommodation and Revivalism*, pp. 100–104.

The working relationship between the Muslim community and the non-Muslim ruler in the Voltaic Basin was challenged by militant Muslim reform movements in West Africa during the nineteenth century. The accommodation was questioned and came under attack from scholars that had been influenced by Torodbe (Fulbe) and other “radical” scholars in the Sudanic savannah who highlighted orthopraxis and condemned forbidden innovations (*bid’ah*) as well as the “mixing” of Islam and local traditions and customs (*‘urf*).³⁶ The arrival of “radical” scholars did not always lead to conflict. Scholars from the Sokoto Caliphate were the most likely to follow a strict Islamic praxis, but none of the Hausa scholars who arrived in the southern Voltaic Basin are known to have propagated a break in the relationship between the Muslims and the rulers. Instead, much of their objections concerned local Muslim practices and the low standard of Muslim knowledge and learning of the local scholars. Further, their critique was mainly directed at those scholars who allied themselves too closely with the local rulers. However, their condemnation was declared in the community, not in public. Hausa scholars, such as Imam Umar, would criticize the scholar, never the ruler.³⁷ This was the case in one of Imam Umar’s poems that he wrote after the Salaga Civil War in 1892, when he criticized those Muslims who backed the attacker.³⁸

However, most of the Muslims had little interest in changing the religious and political structures in the Voltaic Basin. Instead, the interest of Muslim merchants and traders was concentrated on the safety of the markets and trade routes and in making a good profit out of their activities. As long as the inner autonomy of the Muslim communities was not questioned by the non-Muslim society, there was little need to attack local customs or to be involved in local quarrels. This was the benefit of an outsider community: the links to the host society and its order were limited, if not minimal. As merchants and traders, they knew that it was not the religion of the ruler but his ability to promote peace and stability that counted most.

³⁶ J. R. Willis, “Jihād Fī Sabīl Allāh – Its Doctrinal Basis in Islam and Some Aspects of its Evolution in Nineteenth-Century West Africa”, *Journal of African History* 7 (1967) 3, pp. 395–415; M. Last, “Reform in West Africa: The Jihād Movements of the Nineteenth Century”, in: F. Ade Ajayi and M. Crowder (eds.), *History of West Africa*, vol. 2, 2nd edn, Harlow: Longman, 1987, pp. 1–47.

³⁷ Weiss, *Between Accommodation and Revivalism*, pp. 104–107.

³⁸ Imam ‘Umar, *Tanbih al-ikhwān fī dhikr al-ahzān* (A warning to the brethren concerning afflictions, ca. 1894), translated in: J. A. Braimah and J. R. Goody, *Salaga: The Struggle for Power*, London: Longmans, 1967, p. 201.

The Coming of the Europeans and the Muslim Scholars

The Voltaic Basin witnessed a decade of political instability and insecurity at the end of the nineteenth century. Military incursions by African and European armies put pressure on the savannah kingdoms as much as they posed a challenge for the Muslim communities. Muslim leaders and scholars had to ask themselves with whom they should side – with the local rulers or the intruders? The external African threat came from the Muslim leaders Samori and Babatu, who said they fought for a just cause and defined their military expeditions as a *jihad* against infidels. On the other hand, French, British, and German colonial powers promised to bring peace and stability but attacked Muslim leaders as well as local rulers.³⁹ Some Muslim scholars decided to side with the colonial powers. In 1898, the German expeditionary force made use of the help of a Muslim from Salaga, Yusuf Bamba. After their second arrival in Yendi in 1900, the Germans wanted Yusuf Bamba to again serve as their intermediary, but this time Yusuf declined the invitation. In fact, Yusuf was not the only (foreign) Muslim scholar who, at least officially, worked with the German colonial authorities: during German rule, several influential Hausa scholars also worked with the Germans. The Muslim community in Yendi, on the other hand, sided with the ruler of Dagbon, producing for him protective charms and prayed for his success. Their decision was a logical one: had they not been tied to the ruling elite over the last centuries and were they not (to some extent) part of the local political system? But it was all in vain: the army of the Ya Na was defeated, and Dagbon was sliced up between the imperial powers in 1900.⁴⁰

One of the few available local comments on the establishment of colonial rule in the Asante hinterland are Imam Umar's three poems on the arrival of the Europeans.⁴¹ When writing his first poem, "Mashra^c mā' al-khabar li-wārid wāriduhā bi'l-nazar" (On the comings of the Europeans), in ca. 1898/99, the

³⁹ See further M. Staniland, *The Lions of Dagbon: Political Change in Northern Ghana*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975; P. A. Ladoceur, *Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana*, London and New York: Longmans, 1979.

⁴⁰ Weiss, *Between Accommodation and Revivalism*, pp. 158–161.

⁴¹ Imam 'Umar's three poems are discussed in T. Hodgkin, "The Islamic Literacy Tradition in Ghana", in: Lewis (ed.), *Islam in Tropical Africa*, p. 455, Goody and Wilks, "Writing in Gonja", p. 251; S. Pilaszewicz, "'The Arrival of Christians': A Hausa Poem on the Colonial Conquest of West Africa by Al-Hāji 'Umaru", *Africana Bulletin* 22 (1975), p. 56, and Hunwick, *Arabic Literature of Africa*, vol. 4, p. 587. I have made use of the new critical translations of and comments to the three texts by Muhammad al-Munir Gibrill, available at Discourses of Muslim

Europeans had not yet arrived in the Voltaic Basin, but Imam ‘Umar was well informed about their advance elsewhere in West Africa. Imam Umar describes the advances of the French colonial troops from Senegal to Timbuktu and the British push on the lower river Niger and laments the subjugation of the Muslim rulers in Futa Tota, Futa Jallon, Futa Bundu, Masina, and Nupe. His advice to the Muslims is to show submission outwardly but to keep a distance to the Europeans; Muslims should not despair as “the religion of God [i.e. Islam] shall not be destroyed by them” and warned that “any apostate shall come to regret”. Imam Umar especially directs his warning at the Muslims in the Sokoto Caliphate, he himself was at a loss: “All abodes have become unsettling for us, [. . .] what was built is destroyed, and I am confused about the situation.” Still, he preferred to remain in Kete instead of deserting his community.⁴²

The commentary and description of the European advances in West Africa are much more detailed in Imam Umar’s second poem, “Nazm al-la’ālī’ bi akhbār wa tanbīh al-kirām” (Lamenting the coming of the Europeans) than in his first poem. The second poem was written in ca. 1900/01 and vividly describes the atrocities and devastations caused by the French Voulet-Chanoine Mission or Central African-Chad Mission in the Sudanic savannah.⁴³ His intention is to warn his audience and readers of the coming of the Christians: “The sun of calamity has risen in the west.” The advancing Christians turned out to be deceitful – they promised peace and to promote trade and justice but brought warfare, destruction, and injustice. In contrast to his first poem, Imam Umar had himself witnessed the thrusts of British, French, and German troops into the Voltaic Basin, defeating Muslim rulers and warlords such as Samori and Babatu and had occupied and divided the territory between themselves. “Their real intention is to fight Muslims,” he cries, “Truth has become a bitter pill in these days and propagating lies has become commendable.”⁴⁴

Scholars in Colonial Ghana homepage, African Online Digital Library, <http://aodl.org/islamicpluralism/goldcoast/documents> (accessed 22 June 2018).

⁴² English translation of al-hâjj ‘Umar b. Abî Bakr historical poem: colonial rule 1, <http://aodl.org/islamicpluralism/goldcoast/object/6F-2B5-E/b/> (accessed 22 June 2018), quotes: verses 40–41 and 52–54.

⁴³ On the Central African-Chad Mission and its devastations in the central Sudanic savannah, see further A. S. Kanya-Forstner, *The Conquest of the Western Sudan 1879–1899. A Study in French Military Imperialism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969; H. Weiss, *Babban Yunwa. Hunger und Gesellschaft in Nord-Nigeria und den Nachbarregionen in der frühen Kolonialzeit*, Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1997, pp. 155–156.

⁴⁴ English translation of al-hâjj ‘Umar b. Abî Bakr historical poem: colonial rule 2, <http://aodl.org/islamicpluralism/goldcoast/object/6F-2B5-F/b/> (accessed 22 June 2018), quotes: verses 14, 164, 175.

The background of his third poem, “Labarin Nasaru” (The story of the Christians) is different from the two earlier poems. The Sudanic savannah as well as the Voltaic Basin were under colonial control. The British had conquered the central emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate in 1902/03 while the Germans had pushed to Lake Chad and conquered the Muslim emirates (*lamidats*) in Adamawa, which had been part of the Sokoto Caliphate. The Voltaic Basin was divided among the British, French, and Germans in 1900, and Kete had come under German colonial rule. Soon, however, colonial rule was seriously challenged when Mahdist movements were reported throughout British, French, and German West Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century. Especially British colonial officials viewed Mahdism, or “Muslim fanatics”, as a kind of archenemy, especially after the traumas created by the Indian Mutiny in 1857 and the fall of Khartoum in 1885. More so, Mahdism usually challenged established authority. Therefore, Mahdists, or “radical” itinerant Muslim preachers, were closely watched by the colonial officials after the Mahdist uprisings in northern Nigeria and adjacent regions (French Niger and German Adamawa) between 1905 and 1907.⁴⁵

The arrival of itinerant Muslim preachers raised a new problem that earlier colonial officials usually had not taken into account when dealing with the Muslim population in West Africa, namely the existence of differences among Muslims in their interpretation of Islam. Although Mahdism, Panislamism, and “Islam Arabe” had been identified by European scholars as posing a threat to the colonial order, such movements and ideas were believed to be more or less absent in sub-Saharan Africa. What was noted was the “mixing” of Muslim and non-Muslim practices and traditions, which colonial French scholars called “Islam Noire”. Furthermore, both British and German scholars had noted the generally positive impact and influence of Hausa merchants and Muslims in the Voltaic Basin. However, Mahdist movements at the beginning of the twentieth century made it clear to the colonial officials that some Muslims were not in favour of the colonial order and could – as in the rest of the Muslim world – become the archenemy of the colonial state. Interestingly, the overall conclusion reached by British, German, and French colonial officials was that the negative, potentially troublemaking, element always came from abroad: “foreign”

45 P. E. Lovejoy and J. S. Hogendorn, “Revolutionary Mahdism and Resistance to Colonial Rule in the Sokoto Caliphate, 1905–1906”, *Journal of African History* 31 (1990) 2, pp. 217–244; Th. Büttner, “Die Mahdi-Erhebung 1907 in Nordkamerun im Vergleich mit antikolonialen islamischen Bewegungen in anderen Regionen West- und Zentralafrikas”, in: P. Heine and U. van der Heyden (eds.), *Studien zur Geschichte des deutschen Kolonialismus in Afrika*, Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus, 1995, pp. 147–159.

Muslims. Local, “native”, or “our” Muslims were “peace loving”, that is to say they were believed to have accommodated to the colonial order.⁴⁶

In the Northern Territories as well as northern Togo, too, Muslim itinerant preachers began to be viewed with suspicion – if not fear – by the colonial officials. At first, the arrival of Muslim itinerant preachers did not cause much anxiety among the colonial authorities. The mobility of Muslim literati was a known fact; Muslim teachers and their students would travel in search of jobs that they could perform, such as teaching the Qur’an, praying for people, divination, preparing charms, and preaching at special occasions. As long as these itinerant preachers did not cause troubles with the local political authorities or challenge local religious conditions, they would receive little attention. Such an influx of Muslim preachers (who usually combined their religious activities with trade) was already an old-established process in the Voltaic Basin at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁴⁷

However, in 1906 colonial authorities in the Voltaic Basin became increasingly anxious about the straightforward demand for renewal and repentance by these preachers. When arriving in the villages, the preachers gathered the population and revealed their message about the future coming of the Mahdi. The message was simple but, from a colonial perspective, highly critical: “[The Mahdi] would punish all non-believers, white or black and have generally conveyed the idea that the white man would be exterminated in the country.”⁴⁸ Similar reports were also handed in by German and French officials. Such reports definitively caused alarm among the colonial governments. They threatened the fabric of the existing society as well as the recently established colonial order. As a consequence, more or less drastic measures were applied to curb the threat of an imminent Mahdist rebellion.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Weiss, *Between Accommodation and Revivalism*, pp. 193–195.

⁴⁷ Mahdist movements and their impact in the Northern Territories are discussed in J. Goody, “Reform, Renewal and Resistance: A Mahdi in Northern Ghana”, in: Ch. Allen and R. W. Johnson (eds.), *African Perspectives: Papers in the History, Politics and Economics of Africa Presented to Thomas Hodgkin*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, pp. 143–156; I. Wilks, *Wa and Wala. Islam and Polity in Northwestern Ghana*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 152–157; J. Goody, “Establishing Control: Violence along the Black Volta at the Beginning of Colonial Rule”, *Cahiers d’études africaines* 38 (1998) 2–4, pp. 227–244, and Weiss, *Between Accommodation and Revivalism*, pp. 171–174, 201–210.

⁴⁸ Letter from the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories to Acting Colonial Secretary, 18 May 1906, quoted in: Weiss, *Between Accommodation and Revivalism*, p. 204.

⁴⁹ See further Goody, “Reform, Renewal and Resistance”, pp. 153–154; Weiss, *Between Accommodation and Revivalism*, pp. 207–210.

Not only the colonial authorities were troubled by the advent and agitation of the Mahdist preachers but also local Muslim scholars were critical of their message. The most well-known case was the position taken by Imam Umar. He was regarded by the German officials as one of the most influential Muslim scholars in the region and at that time had been working closely with one of the German district commissioners, Adam Mischlich. However, Imam Umar's position is somewhat unclear and gives a good picture of the complex situation the local Muslim scholars were facing. At first, he treated the itinerant preachers with great respect, but after interrogating them, he announced that the two Mahdist preachers were both lying. Like other established Muslim scholars, he resented the intrusion of outside preachers into his community. Therefore, when the Mahdist preacher Malam Musa arrived in the Salaga area, Imam Umar refused to join in his attempt to reform the locals and expel the whites. In fact, Imam Umar publicly denounced the agitation of the Mahdist preachers in a pamphlet that he wrote to his disciples. In his poem on Muslim revival, "Ya Khalilayya", he declares Malam Musa and his followers to be charlatans, distancing himself from them.⁵⁰

Imam Umar conducted his third poem on the arrival of the Christians and the establishment of colonial rule, "Labarin Nasaru", at the height of the Mahdist crisis. In 1906, the British, French, and Germans had crushed Mahdist uprisings in Niger, northern Nigeria, and northern Cameroon. The Mahdist supporters of the revolt, who wanted to restore the Dar al-Islam, were disgruntled peasants, fugitive slaves, and radical clerics who were hostile both to indigenous authorities and Muslim scholars and to the colonial regimes.⁵¹ However, Imam Umar does not make any reference to the Mahdist uprisings in "Labarin Nasaru". Instead, the poem comments upon the aggressive policy of the Europeans and the inability of local rulers to come to terms with the changing political and economic situation, especially the collapse of Asante domination of Gonja and Dagbon after the sacking of Kumasi in 1874. The main section in the first part of the poem deplores the fate of the Muslim rulers in the savannah, who one after the other had to flee: Seku Ahmadu from Masina, Sarkin Muslimin (meaning ruler of the Muslims) Attahiru from Sokoto. He asked his listeners what evil these rulers had done, but finds no answer to the question – apart from the treacherous acts and brutality of the Europeans. Whatever the Muslim rulers tried to do, their actions were wrong in the eyes of the Europeans. Resistance proved

50 See further Goody, "Reform, Renewal and Resistance", p. 143. A critical translation of Imam 'Umar's poem on Muslim revival by Muhammad al-Munir Gibrill is found at <http://aodl.org/islamicpluralism/goldcoast/object/6F-2B5-4/b/> (accessed 23 August 2018).

51 Lovejoy and Hogendorn, "Revolutionary Mahdism".

disastrous, and Imam Umar's conclusion was that open rebellion was fruitless and doomed to fail and that only destruction and suffering would follow – as the Asante rebellion in 1900 had shown him.

However, apart from being a lamentation, Imam Umar's work is also highly critical of the local rulers. In his view, local rulers engaged in warfare and slave raids and had only brought destruction and fear. Yet, the European conquest, at first, brought little comfort for the downtrodden: the destruction caused by local armies was only replaced by that of the colonial ones.

At first, European rule was a double-edged sword: for some the European expansion was a threat, and for others it provided unforeseen possibilities. The abolition of the slave trade and closure of slave markets, sometimes even the emancipation of slaves, was the most obvious case. This was a severe blow for some Muslim merchants as the slave trade had been greatly under their control. Even worse, many slaves were said to have run away from their masters.⁵² According to Imam Umar, on their liberation, the slaves in Asante rejoiced. Former slaves now became their own masters and regained their former dignity: "The slave-master will be sentenced to prison. Indeed, slaves can see the [effectiveness] of Christian authority."⁵³

However, this social transformation – if not structural change – was at full pace when Imam Umar wrote his poem. In another text, on the social and economic structures of Hausaland, which he wrote for Adam Mischlich, Imam Umar's position towards slavery is clearly outlined.⁵⁴ Slavery is not regarded as a problem or even immoral from the perspective of a Muslim scholar. On the contrary, for him slavery is part of the social order and he has little understanding of the moral arguments of the Europeans about abolition and emancipation. Other Muslim scholars, such as Shehu Na Salga in Hausaland, were even openly critical about the actions of the Europeans in this regard. In his poem "Bakandamiya" (Hippopotamus-hide whip), Shehu Na Salga complains that the liberation of slaves had led to the worsening of his living conditions. For

⁵² On the abolition of slavery and the reactions of Muslims, see further P. E. Lovejoy and J. Hogendorn, *Slow Death for Slavery: The Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria, 1897–1936*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993; W. Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery*, London: Hurst, 2006.

⁵³ English translation for al-hâjj 'Umar b. Abî Bakr poem number ISA.AR.109 (v), <http://aodl.org/islamicpluralism/goldcoast/object/6F-2B5-10/b/> (accessed 23 June 2018), quote: verse 218.

⁵⁴ Mischlich, "Über Sitten und Gebräuche in Hausa, II", pp. 45, 258–261; D. E. Ferguson, "Nineteenth-Century Hausaland. Being a Description by Imam Imoru of the Land, Economy and Society of His People", PhD thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1973, pp. 223–233.

example, because of the lack of female slaves, he had had to abandon the religious obligation of keeping his wives in seclusion (*purdah*) – instead, they had to work in the fields.⁵⁵

Whereas the first part of “Labarin Nasaru” is a lamentation, the tone in the second part of the poem changes towards a critical, sometimes sarcastic, hymn to European rule. One can read his poem as a comment directed at the critical texts of Muslim scholars in Hausaland who had criticized Muslims who cooperated with the Europeans, such as the *Wakar Zuwan Annasara* (The Coming of the Christians): “There are hypocrites among us who support the way of the Europeans.”⁵⁶ In Imam Umar’s mind, some of the changes that had been introduced through colonial rule were positive ones, such as the improvements in infrastructure for trade and transportation. For him, “[s]afety reigns here, and there is no plundering and there is no deception in what the Christians do.”⁵⁷ Imam Umar’s assessment comes as no surprise. He himself was a Muslim scholar with close connections to Muslim merchants. If the new – Christian – rulers promised to guarantee political peace and stability and the freedom of religion, then Muslims should accept the new order. Imam Umar’s decision to reach an accommodation with the new rulers was not unique. On the contrary, all Muslim scholars faced the same dilemma after the colonial conquest: should one capitulate to the “infidels” or should one emigrate as prescribed in sharia? For Imam Umar and other Muslim literati who already in the pre-colonial period had subjected themselves to non-Muslim rulers, the question was not a problematic one and they chose to stay.

Nevertheless, Imam Umar perceived the new colonial conditions as totally novel and sometimes even frightening. The world was turned upside down; the old order was being eroded:

The dog eats up the hyena, thanks to the Christians.
The female cat walks unafraid in the way of the wildcat.
She taunts him, thanks to the authority of Christians.
[. . .]
The mice also gather to celebrate

55 S. Pilaszewicz, “Literature in the Hausa Language”, in: B. W. Andrejewski, S. Pilaszewicz, and W. Tyloch (eds.), *Literatures in African Languages: Theoretical Issues and Sample Survey*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 207.

56 Muhammad Tukur Usman, “Intellectual Tradition in the Sokoto Caliphate, 1903–1960”, PhD thesis, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, 1998, p. 117.

57 English translation for al-hâjj ‘Umar b. Abî Bakr poem number ISA.AR.109 (v), <http://aodl.org/islamicpluralism/goldcoast/object/6F-2B5-10/b/> (accessed 23 June 2018), quote: verse 202.

Their wedding moment, in the Christians era.
 Their bride-washer was but the cat, imagine that!⁵⁸

Even worse, the Muslim judges were corrupt, so it was better for a Muslim to go to a Christian judge. On the other hand, the behaviour of the Europeans was presumptuous and local people were discontented. Imam Umar, critical of those who tried to please the new rulers as much as he, lamented that a person's wealth, status, or learning mattered much in the eyes of the Christians.

At the end of his poem, Imam Umar gives an account of his own relationship with the Europeans, namely the Germans in Togo. Rather surprisingly for his listeners, Imam Umar declares that he himself had nothing against the new rulers. Instead, in his view, the rule of the Christians could be forever:

For my part, I am thankful to God, in their era
 For they have treated me well, these Christians.
 As much as I am concerned, may their rule last forever!
 Because I live a life of prosperity, under Christian rule.⁵⁹

However, such a positive perception should not fool the listener. In the next line of the poem, Imam Umar declares: "Preserve us from Christian tyranny!" Thus, whereas his personal situation had improved during German rule and without any doubt he had individually benefited from his contacts with the Europeans, especially with Adam Mischlich, he was fully aware that his personal situation did not reflect the general state of affairs where colonial rule was perceived with mixed, if not negative, feelings.

Imam Umar's decision and position was not unique. In fact, one could argue that his case exemplifies that of many Muslim scholars in the Voltaic Basin: on a personal level, they would accept the new rulers and would serve as intermediaries. This was, for example, the case of two influential Hausa Muslim scholars in Dagbon: Malam Yaqub and his son Halidu⁶⁰ worked for and with the German colonial authorities in Yendi. Similar to Imam Umar, they also

⁵⁸ English translation for al-hâjj 'Umar b. Abî Bakr poem number ISA.AR.109 (v), <http://aodl.org/islamicpluralism/goldcoast/object/6F-2B5-10/b/> (accessed 23 June 2018), quote: verse 220–221, 229–230.

⁵⁹ English translation for al-hâjj 'Umar b. Abî Bakr poem number ISA.AR.109 (v), <http://aodl.org/islamicpluralism/goldcoast/object/6F-2B5-10/b/> (accessed 23 June 2018), quote: verse 254–255.

⁶⁰ Khâlid b. Ya'qûb b. Muhammad Bawa al-Kashnâwî (1871–1937).

claimed that local conditions had improved under European administration and that there was justice and material improvement.⁶¹

In a certain way, the imposition of colonial rule and the introduction of modern communication infrastructures and technologies did have a profound impact on the lives of Muslims, especially Muslim scholars. This was the case of the *hajj* (or the pilgrimage to Mecca). In West Africa, the tradition of making the *hajj* had never been a very widespread one during the pre-colonial era. This was mainly due to the very long distance to travel and the dangers encountered en route to Mecca, and in some Muslim polities, such as the Sokoto Caliphate, the *hajj* was regarded by Muslim rulers and court scholars as a sign of dissidence, if not open rebellion.⁶² The British, French, and German colonial authorities, too, contested at first the *hajj* as they identified itinerant Muslims to be potential Mahdists. Soon, however, it was clear to the colonial authorities that not every itinerant Muslim preacher was a potential troublemaker. On the contrary, the colonial authorities were overwhelmed with the sheer number of Muslims travelling east on their way to Mecca, although, at times, the colonial authorities would suspect these travellers of being both disguised slave traders and secret antagonists. On the other hand, too restrictive policies would hurt long-distance trade. Therefore, the various colonial governments were not able to come up with a common policy. Instead, they would, at times, reward cooperative Muslim leaders and scholars by providing them with assistance in performing the *hajj* but would simultaneously be extremely suspicious of “foreign” pilgrims trespassing on “their” territory.⁶³

The British policy towards the *hajj* in the Northern Territories is unclear. In fact, it seems as if the *hajj* never developed into a serious problem or a question that needed special consideration. Consequently, no records were kept on permission for Muslims to go to Mecca or matters concerning the issuing of passports for Muslims who wanted to perform the pilgrimage.⁶⁴ Notwithstanding, Muslims certainly tried to go on the *hajj* whenever possible. The common denominator was the involvement of the colonial authorities in one way or

⁶¹ P. Lubeck, “Patterns of Assimilation of Hausa Families in Dagomba”, Field Notes: Yendi Project, Report No. 4, Legon: Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana and Program of African Studies, Northwestern University, 1968, p. 51.

⁶² See further U. al-Naqar, *The Pilgrimage Tradition in West Africa*, Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1972.

⁶³ U. Ryad (ed.) *The Hajj and Europe in the Age of Empire*, Leiden: Brill, 2016. On British policies in Northern Nigeria, see Lovejoy and Hogendorn, *Slow Death for Slavery*.

⁶⁴ Therefore, one looks in vain as the information on the *hajj* from the Northern Territories in the seminal work on the topic by J. Slight, *The British Empire and the Hajj 1865–1956*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015.

another. In some cases, the permission to perform the *hajj* was seen by the colonial authorities as a kind of reward or thanks for their services. Another aspect of the *hajj* was the use of modern means of travelling – by boat – instead of walking along the savannah towards the Red Sea. What seems to have been taking place was a profound change in the opportunities for a West African Muslim to perform the *hajj*. The pre-colonial and traditional argument was no longer valid as modern means of transportation and, in fact, the *pax colonia*, transformed the pilgrimage from a decade-long journey to a one-year, if not shorter, trip. Such a development paved the way for a social transformation within the Muslim community, when an increasing number of Muslims could perform the *hajj* and return to their communities and hometowns as an Alhaji or Hajia. As during the old days, the social status and sometimes even spiritual position of being an Alhaji meant a rise in social rank and order within the community and sometimes even gaining increased influence in the affairs of the community.

Conclusion

The establishment of European colonial rule neither marked a break nor the end of the transnational connections of Muslim scholars in West Africa. Although the European colonial powers controlled the Muslim *oecumene* on the surface, old established scholarly networks and flows of information continued to exist. While the conquest phase of European imperialism posed a challenge to local Muslim scholars, they soon adapted to the new situation. Outright militant resistance proved useless and many scholars chose to accommodate to the new overlords; some even started to work with and for them.

Adaption and limited cooperation was the preferred strategy of most Muslim scholars in the Voltaic Basin. Such a strategy followed the established model by Muslim scholars in pre-colonial societies in the region when they interacted with non-Muslim rulers and lived in predominantly non-Muslim societies. By establishing a *modus vivendi* with the colonial administration, Muslim scholars were capable of continuing their model of coexistence and non-integration. On the one hand, by recognizing the colonial sphere as the new political suprastructure and declaring their wilfulness of cooperation with the new non-Muslim rulers, Muslim scholars and their communities strengthened the Muslim sphere in the Voltaic Basin. As in the pre-colonial era, the Muslim sphere was religiously and culturally autonomous and, via the networks of the Muslim scholars, a part of a Muslim globality existed parallel to the colonial Western/modern globality.

On the other hand, cultural and religious autonomy demarcated a border between the Muslim and the colonial sphere in the Voltaic Basin. Muslim traders would opt to make use of colonial peace and the modernization efforts of the colonial state, not least in terms of improvement in infrastructure and transportation. The colonial state, in turn, was in need of literate persons whom they would make use of in local administration. However, the expertise of the Muslim scholars was of restricted use for the colonial state as their educational system, the Qur'anic schools, could not provide Western-educated administrative personnel who were fluent in a European language. The colonial state, therefore, started to replace Muslim scholars with Western-educated local clerks. These clerks had been trained in either government or missionary schools and were products of the Western/modern globality. Muslim scholars rejected the Western/modern educational system; instead, Muslim parents were urged to send their children to the Qur'anic schools.

Still, cultural and religious non-integration was not equivalent to a total rejection or boycott of Western modernity. Muslim scholars would, if they could afford it, invest in modern technologies such as lorries and cars. They would make use of modern transport networks when performing the pilgrimage to Mecca.

