for teaching and research, and should appeal to a wide audience interested in a self-critical Anglocentric perspective on the history and legacy of the British colonial enterprise in Africa.

doi:10.1017/S0021853722000433

Text and Authority in Nineteenth Century Nigeria

From Rebels to Rulers: Writing Legitimacy in the Early Sokoto State

By Paul Naylor. Woodbridge: James Currey, 2021. Pp. 228. $99.00, hardcover (ISBN: 9781847012708); $24.99, paperback (ISBN: 9781800102347).

Murray Last

University College London

Keywords: Nigeria; West Africa; Islam; civil wars; archives; law; kingdoms & states

This is the most important new book on northern Nigeria's precolonial past that has come out for some years. Like Stephanie Zehnle's *A Geography of Jihad* (Berlin, 2020), it rethinks the Sokoto jihad through close readings of the protagonists' own written words, but treats them as ideas rather than as facts. Neither Paul Naylor nor Stephanie Zehnle have actually been to Nigeria, so both studies are more library than field-based. But that may be to their advantage: both studies do the necessary work of demythologising.

For his part, Naylor focuses on all the carefully written arguments used by the Shaikh 'Uthman dan Fodio and his kinsmen, as they sought to resolve their basic dilemma: how, on Islamic grounds, to justify not only that their lethal rebellion against the various existing Muslim states around where they lived was a legally proper jihad, but also that the destruction or enslavement of those states' Muslim and protected (*dhimmi*) populations was being properly carried out. The scholars, unsurprisingly, were not all in agreement about how this could be justified.

Once in power, there were subsequent dilemmas, including how the caliphate's authorities could plausibly skirt round their earlier legal arguments and promulgate new rules that befitted the pragmatic reality of governing what was the largest state in precolonial Africa. Paul Naylor vividly shows that on this there were even more sharply written disagreements within the caliphate's circle of leading scholars (and the different groups of students around each scholar), with brother arguing against brother, and nephew against uncle. The problem was that some of the *mujahidun* (wagers of jihad) had taken to behaving more like *muharibun* (brigands), and were revelling in their loot. Yet their misbehaviour had, the Shaikh decided, to be somehow legally condoned.

In doing this, the shaikh was, Naylor argues, persuaded by his more politically savvy son, Muhammad Bello, who had monopolised access to his father both during and after the fighting —a strategy that also subtly secured him succession when his father died. The reader may finish the book with a warmer appreciation of the shaikh's younger brother, 'Abdullahi, who was upset by the pragmatic legal slipperiness that now was in force in the new state. Ultimately, Paul Naylor argues, for Bello, might was right, and what Bello said, in his role as *amir al-mu'minin,* simply was the law, no matter what other scholars might say to him.

Perhaps the book's most striking lacuna is the almost total silence about the Wangarawa scholars who, as merchants, had run the pre-jihad economy of Hausaland. It is they, rather than the Hausa

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ruling class, that I think may have annoyed the shaikh most. It was their two ancient scholarly towns — 'Yandoto and Kurmin dan Ranko — that Bello destroyed when they refused to submit. And it is probably their books that the Shaikh 'Uthman borrowed, during his preaching days, when he took his young son briefly inside Alkalawa city. It is these Wangarawa, too, whose influence may have persisted in post-jihad Katsina and Kano, enabling the ancient communities of non-Muslim Maguzawa to remain legally protected there as *ahl al-dhimma* whereas in Kebbi they had been eliminated.

Paul Naylor's otherwise excellent study does have some other limitations. Naylor does not consider, for example, how most of the fighting in the jihad took the form of surprise raids: only three hard-fought 'battles' ever took place. As these raids were surprise attacks, there was never any chance to first invite, as the rules required, the targeted victims to convert to Islam or to join the jihad themselves. Most of the captives were in fact children, to be sold for subsequent export across the Sahara: there, if any of the boys were still uncircumcised, they would be put right before sale.

One problem of a library study is that it becomes much harder to identify from afar which manuscript accounts are forged. In 1950s Nigeria an author could be well rewarded for a 'useful' new historical text, whether poetry or prose; and it could be printed by the Gaskiya Corporation with no serious questions being asked. One source, a scholar in Gusau, has been identified as a producer of 'new' texts, as the late Jean Boyd discovered when researching precolonial poetry in Fulfulde. The last to come out is *Kanz al-awlad*, copies of which have been circulated (and put up for sale); but those who have read it carefully in Kano, and especially the late Ibrahim Gandi in Sokoto, are convinced it is fiction. Two poems have similarly been identified as 'fake', and I am pretty sure that the extremely odd *lamma balagtu* was an early 'fake' (though Paul Naylor uses it): it has no proper title nor the usual opening and closing formats of a Sokoto book, and it is not found in the earliest manuscript libraries, being only 'discovered' in the late 1950s. The skewed distribution of these 'fakes' in Nigeria tend to give them away — they are not to be found in either private or public collections of manuscripts that are known to be ancient.

Finally, in his Conclusions, Paul Naylor asserts 'it is unclear exactly when the idea of a "Sokoto Caliphate" was born' (150); and indeed, until that page, he avoids using the term, of which he strongly disapproves as a historically anachronistic, mid-twentieth-century neologism. He could have asked me. The answer is 1965, when Prof. H. F. C. Smith was discussing with me in Zaria what to call the title of the book that was being printed verbatim from my Ibadan thesis. The term was not used in the thesis, nor did I ever hear Prof. Smith use it. But in the heady days of the mid-1960s, we wanted a term not derived from foreign political science but one that would have local, non-colonial resonance. 'Sultanate' was no good, as it was used regularly in precolonial correspondence for the Emir of Kano. Prof. Smith, as my supervisor, suggested 'the Caliphate of Sokoto', but I preferred the sound of 'Sokoto Caliphate'; I discussed it with the *Waziri* Dr Junaidu, and the *Sarkin Musulmi* of the day permitted me to use for the book's jacket a copy of the very rare seal that his forebear the *Amir al-mu'minin* Muhammad Bello had used. The label 'Sokoto Caliphate' appealed to Nigerians then as it still does today. It is, after all, *their* history, not either Paul Naylor's or mine, and the label is now theirs too. Let it stay that way (despite Paul Naylor disliking it). Are we not lucky enough, as guests, to have free access to their remarkable manuscripts?

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