Postcolonial Borderland Legacies of Anglo–French Partition in West Africa

William F. S. Miles

Abstract: More than five decades after independence, Africa still struggles with the legacies of colonial partition. On the territorial frontiers between the postcolonial inheritors of the two major colonial powers, Great Britain and France, the continuing impact of European colonialism remains most acute. On the one hand, the splitting of erstwhile homogeneous ethnic groups into British and French camps gave rise to new national identities; on the other hand, it circumvented any possibility of sovereignty via ethnic solidarity. To date, however, there has been no comprehensive assessment of the ethnic groups that were divided between English- and French-speaking states in West Africa, let alone the African continent writ large. This article joins postcolonial ethnography to the emerging field of comparative borderland studies. It argues that, although norms of state-based identity have been internalized in the Anglophone–Francophone borderlands, indigenous bases of association and behavior continue to define life along the West African frontier in ways that undermine state sovereignty. Although social scientists tend to focus on national- and sub-national-level analyses, and increasingly on the effects of globalization on institutional change, study of the African borderlands highlights the continuing importance of colonial legacies and grassroots-derived research.

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Résumé: Plus de cinq décennies après l'indépendance, l'Afrique continue de lutter avec les héritages du partage colonial. Sur les frontières territoriales entre les héritiers postcoloniaux des deux grandes puissances coloniales, la Grande-Bretagne et la France, l'incidence du colonialisme européen se fait toujours sentir de façon aigue. Si d'une part, la séparation des groupes ethniques homogènes d'antan en camps britanniques et français a donné lieu à de nouvelles identités nationales il faut souligner que cela a contourné toute possibilité de souveraineté par le biais de solidarité ethnique. À ce jour, cependant, il n'y a pas eu d'évaluation globale des groupes ethniques qui ont été répartis entre états anglophones et états francophones en Afrique de l'Ouest, ceci sans parler du continent africain au sens large. Cet article rejoint l'ethnographie postcoloniale dans le domaine émergent des études comparatives de régions frontalières. Il fait valoir que, bien que les normes de l'identité basée sur l'état ont été intériorisées dans les régions limitrophes francophones-anglophones, des bases d'association et de comportement indigènes continuent à définir la vie le long de la frontière ouest-africaine de façons qui ébranlent la souveraineté d'etat. Bien que les chercheurs en sciences sociales ont tendance à se concentrer sur des analyses de niveau national ainsi que sous-national, et de plus en plus sur les effets de la mondialisation sur le changement institutionnel, l'étude des régions limitrophes en Afrique met en évidence l'importance continue de l'héritage colonial ainsi que des recherches générées au niveau local.

Keywords: Borders; borderlands; boundaries; colonialism; decolonization; partition; postcolonial Africa; West Africa

Colonialism, Partition, and Lingering Anglo-French Divides

In *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*, Crawford Young (1994) vividly revives the image of Bula Matari, Crusher of Rocks, as metaphor for the colonial state in Africa. Bula Matari was the local nickname given to Henry Morton Stanley, of "Dr. Livingston, I presume?" fame. But as Young soberingly shows us, the metaphorical Bula Matari did not disappear with decolonization; rather, Bula "embedded" himself in the postcolonial state. Like the sexually profligate master who sowed bastardy throughout the plantation, Bula Matari's "genetic code for the new states of Africa was already imprinted on its embryo within the womb of the African colonial state" (283). To be sure, Young acknowledges that colonial state legacies have not alone determined the process and shape of the postcolonial state: "new logics . . . became interwoven with those embedded within state behavior as colonial legacy" (284). But the "integral state" to which independent African rulers aspired was but Bula Matari in postcolonial garb. For Mahmood Mamdani, "the most important institutional legacy of colonial rule"—which is the "core legacy" of Africa—resides "in the inherited impediments to democratization" (1996:3,25). Another core legacy is the ethnic jumbling by international boundaries, which Englebert, Tarango, and Carter (2002)

associate statistically with political disorder, including civil war, instability, secessionism, and interstate conflict.

With respect to postcolonial Africa, Mamdani focuses on the afterlife of British indirect rule (whose continuity he terms “decentralized despotism”), particularly Nigeria and South Africa, but he does not consider the Francophone nations.[1] Nor does Young tell us in which language the ghost of Bula Matari continues to speak in postcolonial Africa. Perhaps, in fact, Bula Matari is bilingual, speaking English on one side of the partition while commanding in French on the other.

Debate concerning the validity of the classic distinction between British indirect and French direct rule is surprisingly enduring (see Dimier 2002, 2004; Ikime 1968; Tibenderana 1988, 1989).[2] Did the contrasting goals of a transformative and assimilationist French restructuring of society versus a British-style laissez-faire evolution respecting indigenous structures and hierarchies actually redound to the grassroots? Or did direct versus indirect rule merely reflect ideal types which, in reality, were transcended by local circumstances, available resources, and the personal proclivities of the proverbial “man-on-the-spot”?[3]

Rather than addressing the question at the high end of retroactive policy analysis, I contend that it is more useful to systematically examine the borderlands and partitioned peoples that continue to experience the aftermath of Anglo–French partition. Surprisingly, this kind of study has not been undertaken previously.[4] This article will review the literature of partitioned peoples and borderlands, particularly the case studies that have emerged over the last two decades, and suggest a middle-level conceptualization of them as a whole.[5] An overarching concern is the variable exercise of state sovereignty on respective sides of Anglo–French boundaries.

By “state sovereignty” I mean the capacity of agents of the central government (legitimate or not, colonial or independent) to substantially control, direct, and influence the actions, norms, and behavior of the population residing within the internationally recognized territorial boundaries attributed to it. That population critically includes borderlanders: subjects or citizens inhabiting space up to the territorial boundary itself, and often sharing the same culture, ethnicity, language, and religion of the people on the other side of the border.

An important finding from this study is the continuing salience of precolonial polities for the differential (Anglophone vs. Francophone) evolution of the borderlands, where the precolonial indigenous polity emerges as an indirect variable to explain contrasting influences of indigenous association and behavior. A related variable is scale of partition; in other words, whether the ethnic group that was split by colonialism is demographically large (the “mega-partitioned), medium (“meso-partitioned”), or small (“micro-partitioned.”) The larger the scale, the clearer the pattern: a greater long-term transformative role of the French institutional “model” than the British, and a vindication of the “contrast” (as opposed to the “similarity”) school of Anglo–French colonialism.

Anglo-French Borderland States and Partitioned Ethnicities

There are nine instances in West Africa of former British and French colonies sharing boundaries after independence (see figure 1).[6] Approximately fifty ethnic groups were listed in A. I. Asiwaju's compendium (1984) as being so partitioned; another dozen have subsequently been identified (see figure 2). Fewer than 10 percent of these ethnicities (Hausa, Fulani/Pular, Kanembu, Shuwa Arabs) are directly affected by more than a single international partition and by borderland partitioned ethnicities. The most prominent (at least in the scholarly literature) are the Yoruba (sectioned into Benin and Nigeria), Ewe (Ghana and Togo), and Hausa (Nigeria and Niger). Of all the indigenous African peoples partitioned by colonialism, by far the most populous are the Hausa.

Such a comprehensive accounting of Anglo–French partitions should not obscure important differences in scale. As mentioned above, some partitioned ethnic groups (the "mega-partitioned") are of such significant size that they are likely to have been governed prior to partition within an extensive precolonial empire and/or centralized chieftaincy. Included among the mega-partitioned are a people variously referred to as the Pula, Peul, Hapulaar, Fulbe, Mbororo'en, or Fulani, which colonial/postcolonial territorial divisions have located in a multiplicity of states. Partition's effect on these groups necessarily differs in degree compared to relatively smaller (meso- and micro-) ethnic groups located in narrowly circumscribed borderlands. The division into mega-, meso-, and micro-partitioned groups is thus theoretically driven. The authors of the various case studies cited here undoubtedly had their own purposes and goals, and some of them were more concerned with contemporary ethnic practice than colonial-era influence. The tripartite division of ethnic partitions according to scale thus also serves as a way of partially overcoming the variability in case study objectives and frameworks.

Colonial boundary-drawing created its own indigenous dynamics. Especially in sparsely settled frontier zones (often the battlegrounds between precolonial empires), demarcation set into motion new demographics in the freshly created borderlands. For rural agriculturalists in

Figure 1. Neighboring Anglophone and Francophone States

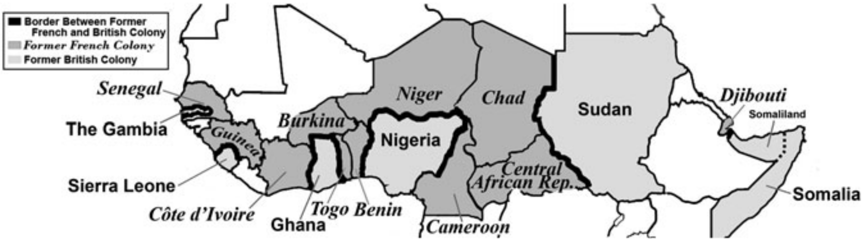

Figure 2. Anglo-French Partitioned West African Ethnic Groups

Former French colony in *italics*; former British colony in roman

Benin-Nigeria	Adja (includes Egun), Yoruba (includes Anaga), Borgu, Hausa, Fulani
Cameroon-Nigeria	Kanembu, Shuwa Arabs, Mandara, Wakura, Matakam, Gude, Veve, Adamawa, Chamba, Jibu, Ekoi, Ododop, Efik
Chad-Nigeria	Kanembu/Kanuri, Shuwa Arabs,
Gambia-*Senegal*	Wolof, Pular, Serer, Mandinka, Jola, Karoninka, Manjago, Balanta
Ghana-*Togo*	Ewe, Agotime, Akposso, Konkomba, Aufo, Moba
Ghana-*Burkina Faso*	Mossi, Dagara, Sisala, Kusasi, Dyula, Birifor, Padon, Mankana, Bissa, Aculo, Lobi, Pwa, Gan, Dian, Kasena
Ghana-*Ivory Coast*	Sanwi, Afema, Lobi
Guinea-Sierra Leone	Mende, Susu, Baga, Yenga
Niger-Nigeria	Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri

these areas, colonialism did constitute a Pax Europa that put a virtual end to indigenous warfare and slave-raiding. Borderlanders adapted to the colonial borders in various ways, appropriating them as new resources. Relatively empty areas came to be populated, and not necessarily by the ethnic peoples most proximate to the new boundaries.

Where new colonial lines of separation divided farms from borderlanders' homes, cross-border resettlement occurred. Where colonial policies on one side of a line were adjudged relatively harsh or unfair, people moved to the other. (This usually meant moving from French into British territory). Africans who suddenly became borderlanders did not necessarily remain passive objects of their fate. Nor was partition unidirectional; migratory responses to new colonial boundary realities meant that some African ethnic groups partitioned themselves.

Following independence, an almost sacrosanct principle of the Organization of African Unity was that African states would respect the territorial integrity of their fellow members as they were inherited from the colonial powers. Otherwise, it was feared, reopening questions of the injustices of colonial partition would only lead to postcolonial strife. In many instances, however, the colonial demarcation of the boundary was not as clear-cut on the ground as it appeared on paper. Binational boundary commissions (Benin–Nigeria, Niger–Nigeria, Togo–Benin) have redrawn borders by mutual agreement; other disputes (Cameroon–Nigeria, Benin–Burkina) have gone to international arbitration, with varying degrees of acceptance. As concerns borderlanders, partition is an ongoing African phenomenon, albeit at a much smaller scale than the colonial one from which it proceeds. For the borderlanders so affected, the micropartitions of independent Africa are no less significant than the macropartitions of European colonialism. As Carola Lentz (2003) compellingly shows for part of the Burkina–Ghanaian borderland, redemarcation of the boundary can have unfortunate and unforeseen consequences, particularly when borderlanders of different ethnicities continue to appropriate and subvert the process as their colonized forebears did.

It is important to emphasize that the social composition of contemporary "ethnic groups" upon whose postcolonial partition I am focusing is not the same as it was for those same groups during colonial times. Colonial territorial divisions became postcolonial state boundaries that themselves triggered sociological transformations and mutations of these same peoples (along with other systemic changes). These are not primordial ethnic objects in perpetual reaction to a historical cleavage; they are self-inventing groups whose own notions of collective identity are continually evolving in the face of political, economic, social, and borderline reality. As Frantz (1981:111) writes in the context of the Fulbe, "individuals, and even groups, can shift their ethnic identity with varying degrees of ease and with non-standardized amounts of behavioral change; alternatively, persons can give up a 'traditional' label and assume or develop a new one."

Anglo–French competition, the vagaries of partition, and internal French colonial division gave way to a notable geographical discrepancy between the neighboring four Anglophone and nine Francophone postcolonial states of West Africa. Whereas all of the former are coastal, three of the latter are landlocked (Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger). Inheriting at independence an outlet to the sea has proven a major natural advantage for postcolonial trade and economic integration. This alone constitutes a major structural difference.

The distinction between landlocked lands and coastal countries is emblematic of another geographical problem linked to colonial conquest and state inheritance: the translatitudinal nature of the colonies. The natural and human ecology of life in West Africa is a function of bandwidth parallel to the equator. Lower latitudes are characterized by rainforest and inhabited by peoples whose precolonial religions were localist and animist. The most northern latitudes of West African colonies stretched into the desert, its inhabitants strongly influenced by (if not commingled with) the culture and peoples of the Maghreb, or North Africa. While two intermediate vegetation zones—grassland and semi-desert Sahel—also lie between rainforest and Sahara, in general the most "vertical" colonies incorporated within the same polities significant proportions of two fundamentally different peoples: southern, animistic (and quasi-animistic) Bantu-language speakers; and northern, Muslim (or Islamizing) Hamito-Semitic–language speakers. During colonialism, many of the animistic peoples were missionized and became Christian (or at least they integrated Christianity within traditional practices). Postcolonial states inheriting significant north–south, Muslim–Christian populations include Francophone Benin, Togo, and Ivory

Coast, bilingual Cameroun/Cameroon, and Anglophone Ghana and Nigeria. All the West African states with preponderantly Muslim peoples were colonies of France: Mauritania, Mali, Senegal, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Niger.

Collectively, the population today of the former French West Africa (Afrique Occidental Française, or A.O.F.) is 105 million; that of Britain's erstwhile West African colonies is 207 million. If French–British colonial legacies make a difference, they therefore do so on a very large scale. Including Cameroon and Chad (not always classified within West Africa proper), Nigeria is surrounded by four countries, all of them Francophone, numbering over sixty million.

Mega-Partitioned Groups

Yoruba: Benin and Nigeria

In *Western Yorubaland under European Rule, 1889–1945* (1976), A. I. Asiwaju, whose prolific writings have made him the dean of partitioned Africans, sets a high standard for studies of Anglo–French ethnic partition. Taking a historiographical approach, he contrasts the colonial impact of Britain and France upon the Yoruba people in Nigeria and Dahomey (Benin), where differential policies toward indigenous rulers, civil obligations (taxation, conscription, forced labor), agricultural and commercial incentives, and cultural change (education, language, religion, architecture) created starkly different outcomes. This evidence leads Asiwaju to come out unambiguously on the "contrast side of the colonial legacies debate." Partisans of the "similarity" school downgrade colonial intentions and official policies in favor of a transcendent approach emphasizing the basic commonality of European administrators in alien lands who relied on indigenous elites to accomplish common imperial and administrative goals. Asiwaju concludes, in contrast, "that differing intentions and mentalities between French and British gave way to tangible differences in outcomes. The gulf between French and British rule over the Western Yoruba is unmistakable" (1976:257).

Even if the border itself is uncontested as a matter of law, processes put into place by colonial demarcation and policy are far from static. Focusing on the Shabe subgroup of Yoruba along that same boundary, Donna Flynn (1997) shows that transborder commerce—which once reinforced the separate identity of Nigerian and Béninois Yoruba even as it benefited them economically—diminished considerably from the 1970s. The subsequent trend, Flynn argues, is the emergence of a shared border culture and borderland identity. Flynn acknowledges, however, that the superimposition of a border identity does not supplant or reduce the colonial-inherited ones: "Despite the ethnic, kinship, and cultural networks that transcend the international boundary, Nigerian Shabe and Béninois Shabe have no desire to trade places with each other . . . . Nationalist loyalties, pride, and biases shape border residents' opinions of the two states"—and each other (Flynn 1997:326). Whether or not the identity of Shabes residing on the borderline has been diminished accordingly is not clear from Flynn's account, however: supplementing identities is not inherently a zero-sum game.

Hausa and Hausa–Fulani: Niger and Nigeria

The Hausa are the most numerous ethnic group in Africa to have been divided into French and British colonies: Niger and Nigeria. Like the Yoruba (Asiwaju 1970, 1976), the Hausa have been presented as an example of the differential impact of French and British colonialism and the postcolonial legacies of that partition, in terms of trade and economy (Collins 1976, 1985; Kirwin 2005), chieftaincy (Miles 1987, 2003a), gender (Cooper 1998), and religion (Miles 2003b).[7] The overall conclusion, particularly in terms of group identity, is clear: It makes no sense to conceptualize "the Hausa" as an ethnic group in the abstract; the significance of colonial and postcolonial superimposition upon lived institutional life and the shaping of worldviews has been so pervasive that a national qualifier (e.g., Nigérien, Nigerian) must be included in any such characterization. This is the most important single finding of the present study, and one that can be extrapolated to the other cases as well.

Less examined in terms of the impact of partition are the Fulani, although they span more territory that any other ethnic group. Known principally as a nomadic and seminomadic cattle- and livestock-herding people throughout the Sahel, they have assumed a significant sedentary and political role in Nigeria. The late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century jihad led by the Fulani Sheikh Usman dan Fodio resulted in the conquest of most of Hausaland and its rule by dan Fodio's family and clan. This in turn led to their assimilation into Hausa urban life (including culture and language) and the common hyphenation of "Hausa–Fulani." But this hybridization of Hausa and Fulani identities pertains only to Nigeria, not to Niger. There (as well as elsewhere throughout the Sahel), the Fulani retain a distinctive identity principally as speakers of Fulfulde (or Pulaar or Peul), residents of the countryside, and herders of ruminants. Although the chieftaincy in Nigeria has undergone many travails and much weakening since independence, British institutional recognition for "traditional authorities" (indirect rule) has carried over in a relative sense: in terms of material perquisites and social influence, the chiefs in Nigeria (including the Fulani Sultan of Sokoto) retain much greater power and authority than do their counterparts in Niger.

Sometimes the only virtue of political extremism is that it clarifies conceptual propositions. The terrorism of Boko Haram (which means "Secular Schooling Is Forbidden") is a case in point. Although increasingly linked in the press and by some security analysts to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), despite its founders' origin among the Kanuri of Borno, Boko Haram is by origin and membership identified in Nigeria (especially by southerners) with the Hausa of northern Nigeria.[8] Although Boko Haram has exploited state weakness along Nigeria's northern border (and Cameroon's northwest one) to mount attacks and seek sanctuary, as of 2015 Boko Haram has not been a Nigérien Hausa phenomenon per se.[9] Hausa on both sides of the partitioned border are defined by, and select their political causes as a result of, the colonially defined national identity that they have inherited.

The relative power (economic, political, demographic) of the state in which the partitioned find themselves is also of great significance. When situated in a colony/postcolony that is poor, marginal, and struggling—the fate of the Hausa of Niger—the partitioned group tends to have a different sense of identity from those in the better endowed colony/postcolony (e.g., Nigeria). It is in this sense that the Nigérien Hausa are comparable to the Ivoirian Ashanti, whose collective significance pales next to that of their cousins in Ghana.

Fulani: Niger and Nigeria, Senegal and Gambia, Cameroun and Nigeria

The section above discusses urban Fulani who have integrated so thoroughly into the ambient culture, society, and language in northern Nigeria that it is difficult to differentiate them from their Hausa hosts. But not all Fulani subgroups have done so, either in Nigeria or in the several other West African nations where they reside and which they traverse. Ranging from Senegal to Cameroon, with even some in Chad and Central African Republic, the Fulani are the most extensively spread ethnic group, partitioned and not, in Africa. This alone imparts to them a particular status among "partitioned" groups. Censuses from as early as the 1950s indicated fifteen countries hosting Fulanis, whether as citizens of those nations or not. In those years the numbers ranged from as low as twenty-five thousand (Benin, Gambia) to two–five million (Guinea, Nigeria). Smaller numbers ("fringes"; Mokoshy 1993:94) have been identified, inter alia, in Mauritania and Sierra Leone.

Subcultures and dialectical differences across the Fulani universe are significant. Still, as Mokoshy (1993) points out, an overarching sense of Fulanihood is expressed by the term "Pulaku," invoking virtues of honesty, modesty, patience, generosity, and humility. In terms of Anglo–French partition, the Fulani have been most affected by colonial divisions between Gambia and Senegal and, as we have seen above, Niger and Nigeria. Both the Nigérien and Nigerian Fulani people "accept that they belong to two different countries although, as ethnic groups they are not different from one another" (1993:98).

Sedentarization, a centuries-long process, resulted in the rough dichotomization of the Fulani into pastoralists and nonpastoralists, with various categories in between. The "ideal type," nomadic pastoralists, today constitutes a minority (Muhammad-Baba 1993:233). That lifestyle is more typical of Fulani economic behavior in Niger than Nigeria. Much more so than in Nigeria, Fulani pastoralists in Niger have been affected by that country's rigorous attempts to identify and protect woodlands from desertification.

Administration of rural areas in Niger has continued the French colonial designation of the *hardo*, a kind of Fulani chief, who is recognized by the government as responsible for even the most mobile of his nomadic or seminomadic constituents. The equivalent does not exist in Nigeria, whose local government area system makes no official allowance for the ethnic composition of specific local government territories. In the borderlands, traditional Fulani cultural practices (most notably *kore*, the whipping initiation of young men to demonstrative their manliness and imperviousness) flourish on the Niger side of the boundary in ways they do not on the Nigerian side.

Meso-Partitioned Groups

Kanuri: Niger and Nigeria

More than for the Hausa or Fulani, the division of the Kanuri into (southeastern) Niger and Nigeria's Borno State has been viewed as a "devastating" policy because of the Franco–British line that was cut through the former indigenous capital of Birni Gazargamo, one of the most "painful and paradoxical legacies" of colonialism (Tijani 1993:76).

Even as it developed its own Islamic emirates and hierarchy under the *Mai* (king; paramount chief), Kanem-Bornu constituted, up until the colonial era, a rival theopolitical kingdom to that of the Fulani-founded Sokoto kingdom. Simultaneous subordination to Sokoto through incorporation into colonial Nigeria and a sectioning off of its vital parts into French Niger constituted double ethnic damage. Paradoxically (given the general legacies of direct vs. indirect rule in French as opposed to British colonies), Kanuri culture and language flourish in Niger rather than Nigeria: broadcasting of the Kanuri language on state radio is a prime example, since Nigérien media authorities are more advanced on this score than their Nigerian counterparts. This has enabled the Kanuri of Niger "to maintain considerable self-identity," while "substantial portions of the present-day Niger Republic have had to look towards Borno as their ancestral home, and as a source for their cultural inspiration" (Tijani 1993:86–87). Economic dependence on Nigeria, here as elsewhere along the Niger–Nigeria border, reinforces this dynamic.

Akan: Ivory Coast and Ghana

Perhaps because of the famous ten-year wager in 1957 between Houphet-Boigny and Kwame Nkrumah (Woronoff 1972)—the former representing the moderate camp of African development, the latter a "radical" path—Ivory Coast and Ghana have been the subject of several comparisons. In an important collection compiled in 1971 by Aristide Zolberg and Philip Foster, Elliot Berg (1971) and Reginald Green (1971) contrast the two countries in terms of economic policy and performance, while Remi Clignet and Foster (1971) do so in terms of education. David Guyer (1970) focuses on the differential impacts of French and British colonialism in terms of early postcolonial outcomes, specifically Ghana's advantageous inheritance of "vigorous" precolonial leadership from Ashanti, Fanti, and other "tribes" in contrast to the "backwash" of Ivory Coast, whose heritage was bereft of any substantial indigenous kingdom or civilization. Yet it took decades for the specifically ethnic implications of French–British partition in the Ivoirian–Ghanaian borderlands to be the focus of research.[10]

Kathryn Firmin-Sellers (2000) and Lauren MacLean (2010) have done so with respect to the Akan. Firmin-Sellers focuses on how different policies toward the chieftaincy led to different outcomes with respect to land-holding patterns and property rights. In the end, her account also supports the "contrast" school of colonial historiography to the extent that French methods of governance led to outcomes at significant variance with those of the British. However, she correctly reminds us of the important role of individual agency: Akan chiefs responded to British directives in the Gold Coast and to French directives in Côte d'Ivoire in ways that the European overlords neither foresaw nor desired. And the chiefs' Ghanaian and Ivoirian subjects, in turn, reacted to the traditional rulers' strategies in ways that further deviated from colonial plans.

In Niabley, Côte d'Ivoire, the French tasked divisional chiefs with labor recruitment and tax collection, and the chiefs were allowed to keep a proportion of both. It was their productivity, rather than their efforts, that concerned the French. In contrast, in Wamfie, Gold Coast, the British relied on paramount chiefs, whom they paid a (modest) salary, to both collect and disburse (via a native treasury) funds. Akan chiefs under the British had more power (e.g., pronouncing on customary law) than under the French. But it was not their performance so much as their efforts that determined how well the British judged them.

Akan chiefs exercised choice. Those in (French) Niabley chose to protect their subjects but to satisfy the European administration: they were "stationary bandits," according to Firmin-Sellers, who captured both colonial and indigenous institutions, in contrast to the "roving bandits" of the (British) Akan chiefs of Wamfie, who subverted these institutions (2000:261). Subjects/citizens responded, in turn, based on these chiefly choices. In Wamfie, commoners took it upon themselves to extend the monitoring and control of the paramount beyond what precolonial norms allowed, pressuring their chiefs to distribute land, wealth, and property to the community at large and also participating in destoolment (forced abdication) procedures. In Niabley, by contrast, these indigenous checks and balances have become dissipated and the Francophone divisional Akan chief has come to enjoy relatively more autonomy than the Anglophone chief.

In ways not usually appreciated, differences in Ghanaian and Ivoirian economic policies (the former socialist, the latter capitalist) can be explained in terms of differential class formation stemming from the interaction between colonial and indigenous institutions. While reminding us that "the impact of colonial (and contemporary) rule will vary across regions and ethnic groups," Firmin-Sellers points out that analysis of the partitioned Akan reinforces the argument that "we cannot understand current African politics unless we pay close attention to the specific nature of colonial institutions" (2000:268,269).

MacLean focuses on citizenship and (mostly informal) institutions as they affect the contemporary mentality of members of the same precolonial Akan polity. Such modern notions as rights and reciprocity, exclusion and entitlements, liberalism and statism resonate quite differently depending on which side of the border these Akan were socialized. Again, the contrast school is vindicated.

Perhaps the most politically relevant results are the distinctive attitudes toward duties of citizenship among Ivoirian and Ghanaian Akan. Where Ivoirian Akan exhibit an individualistic understanding of their relationship to the community and country (e.g., communal labor, tax-paying), their crossborder co-ethnics in Ghana express more collective ideals. Compared with Ghanaian Akans, those in the bordering Francophone state possess "a more individually-oriented notion of entitlements from the state" (MacLean 2010:225)—a preference that will resonate among students of contemporary France.

Ewe: Togo and Ghana

According to Claude Welch, the Ewe, partitioned into Ghana and Togo, conducted the "first nationalist movement in West Africa to achieve widespread popular support in favor of self-government" (1966:41). Welch demonstrates indisputable preference for British over French colonialism among the Ewe, who voted with their feet by moving in significant numbers from French Togoland into British Togoland (incorporated into the Gold Coast in 1957). However, the irredentist movement to create a unifying polity for all Ewe fizzled after the 1940s; its postcolonial reincarnation, as a secessionist movement, dissipated in the 1970s, and "unification politics withered on the vine" (Nugent 2000:178).

Paul Nugent (1996, 2002) provides cogent reasons explaining why this continues to be the case. Superimposed colonial borders, he says, which were not as arbitrary as generally assumed, created a "theatre of opportunity" and "local sets of vested interests." In Lipke and elsewhere along the Togo–Ghana, border, smuggling became an activity of choice—and profit. Moreover, "the very act of smuggling made border peoples more aware of what made them Ghanaian rather than Togolese" (2002:8). In the long run, identification with the state—Ghana, Togo—has proved more powerful than ethnic ties, at least in terms of national politics.

Nugent captures very well the contradiction in grosser views of the impact of colonial boundaries on partitioned Africans, which tend to argue that the affected communities have "either suffered dearly from their consequences or merrily continued with life as if they did not exist" (1996:35).

Partitioned peoples, Nugent argues persuasively, are agents of their circumstances: they do not negate or reject the boundaries but exploit them for their own purposes. This response is not, however, a repudiation of the nation-state in which they find themselves.

Agotime: Ghana and Togo

Like the neighboring (but much more numerous) Ewe (from whom they strenuously disassociate themselves despite speaking their language), the warrior-tradition Agotime were partitioned into German (later French) Togoland and the British Gold Coast (later Ghana). Although most Agotimes found themselves on the French side, their head chief in Kpetoe came under British sovereignty. The French only minimally succeeded in weaning "their" Agotime away from their traditional rulership based in British Kpetoe, and Agotime identity, as Paul Nugent says, "has been defined in opposition to the border" (2005:20). After independence, the successor states of Ghana and Togo intensified central government efforts to separate the Anglophone Agotime from their Francophone counterparts politically, culturally, and psychologically. The success of these efforts, reinforcing overall contemporary reification of colonial partition, is illustrated by a tug-of-war over festivals—and "culturally correct" attire.

In the 1970s and 1980s Agotime chiefs in Togo revived a traditional festival called Avakeza, marking the end of a period of conflict. Plans to extend Avakeza to include the Agotimes of Ghana never materialized, in part because of Ghanaian–Togolese state tensions that entailed border closures. In the 1990s Agotime chieftaincy on the Ghanaian side similarly attempted to revive older festivals with a transboundary span. But Togolese Agotimes did not appreciate the redubbing and refocusing of "their" reconciliation festival into one celebrating the weaving of kente cloth (Agbamevoza)—particularly since kente had not really been an Agotime artifact per se. To which Ghanaian Agotimes retorted by invoking the Togolese penchant for dressing more like Frenchmen than like Africans: "It is the division of the border which causes that, because [on] the Togo side they are not interested in putting on cloth like we the Ghanaians. . . . But in Togo territory . . . they are fond of putting on trousers and shirt . . . even [at] funerals. . . ." Nugent's commentary on the Agotome legatees of colonial partition can be applied broadly to the Anglophone–Francophone borderlands: They "grapple with the fact that their cross-border kinsmen are simultaneously the same and culturally rather different" (2005:25–26).

Micro-Partitioned Groups

Mandara: Cameroon and Nigeria

Relative to other precolonial polities partitioned between Nigeria and Cameroon (Borno and Adamawa), the Mandara (though organized under a Muslim Sultanate) are a relatively small group. Colonial partitioners were less sensitive about maintaining the indigenous territorial integrity of such minority peoples compared to that of the larger, more powerful indigenous empires. United under colonization as part of German Kamerun, the Mandara found themselves, after the defeat of Germany in World War I and the consequent parceling of the Kaiser's colonies to the Allied victors, in both British territory (administered via Nigeria) and French Cameroon. Peoples living under or related to the Mandara—such as the Shuwa Arabs and Bornoans—were similarly divided. Most of the Mandara found themselves under French jurisdiction.

Direct rule affected the Mandara in classical form: continuous undermining of the Mandara by the French (including an attempt to depose the Sultanate), while the British shored up the traditional rulers of "their" Mandara. Bawuro M. Barkindo does note common effects upon the Mandara by both colonial powers: denigration of the local language, resistance to Christian proselytizing in their territory, and restrictions on cross-border movement. Overall, however, the colonial legacies of distinctiveness predominate: "The division has had its effect: the different administrative systems, monetary systems and economic values, and different educational systems and official languages have all left their distinctive impact on the people of Mandara" (1985:46).

Mandinka, Wolof, Jola, Karoninka, Serer, Manjago, and Balantas: Senegambia

The partition of Senegambia into Senegal and The Gambia provides a textbook case of what F. A. Renner characterizes as "parallel socialisation" (1985). Unlike early French administrators, British officials "took pains" to choose as indigenous rulers those whose family histories lent them legitimacy. *Seyfos* (traditional rulers) serving the British had considerably more autonomy than *chefs* under the French, and the effects of colonial favoritism linger on. More than indigenous chiefs, however, the major party affected by colonial partition, according to Renner, are the "assimilated élites."

Distinct Anglophone and Francophone educational policies, leading to separate voluntary organization affiliations, explain the lack of irredentism "among any ethnic group" for the reunification of Senegal with The Gambia.[11] Among the elite, "Senegalese [have] had more in common with other francophone areas than with their Gambian neighbours and *vice versa*" (Renner 1985:77,78). The elites, of course, are the individuals who reinforce patterns of institutional differentiation.

Still, on the ground, the superimposed colonial boundary continues to affect borderlanders. As late as 1985, Renner noted the uncertainty regarding the exact position of the boundary and the consequent confusion in sovereignty over certain border communities. The major postcolonial legacies, however, are linguistic, institutional, and economic: the perpetuation of French versus English as the official language; distinctive administrative, judicial, and local government systems; and parallel economic systems and currencies, which make smuggling a way of life. When Mbyes, according to Renner, invoke their identity as Gambians to deny access to their wells to kinsmen on the Senegalese side of the border, that border is far from "artificial" (1985:80).

Nugent (2005, 2007) focuses more specifically on the area of Kombo, the western borderland between The Gambia and the continuously contested Casamance region of Senegal. Here, a half-century of precolonial jihadist conflict (the Soninke–Marabout Wars) had created a political vacuum. Although partition did section the Mandinka into French and British colonies, there was no self-standing integral polity that was itself divided. British–French territorial partition and competition (following an interregnum of joint colonial pacification) set into motion processes of religious favoritism and ethnic realignment that newly populated the region. Thus the French, somewhat exceptionally, encouraged the migration of Islamic leaders from elsewhere to counter the animistic and "savage" Jolas. The latter preferred settling on British territory, in The Gambia; so did borderlanders of other ethnicities, once they perceived that French rule was harsher, more exacting of taxes, and liable to engage in forced military conscription.[12] Fear of retribution—as when a Sahelian jihadist beheaded a French customs officer in 1917—also precipitated cross-border flight.

In the 1990s this borderland again became destabilized (and the beheading contemporized) as rebels for Casamance (MFDC) violently challenged Senegalese sovereignty, killing two Senegalese customs officers in Selety (see Nugent 2007). Francophone Kombo is borderline in more ways than one, "a rather neglected corner of a marginalized region" according to Nugent (2005:18). This part of the Senegalese–Gambian border remains a site of friction, although many of the original demographic and religious dynamics have changed since—and sometimes on account of—partition. For one, the land frontier, open to immigrants on both sides of the border, has becoming increasingly subject to strictures of scarcity and fertility depletion. Second, Islamization has taken hold of the Jolas and ethnicity, rather than religion, is the major marker of social differentiation. Indigenous demography, ethnicity, and social relations have all left their own imprint on this borderland. Not all legacies of partition follow directly from colonial policies; not all British–French African borders are created equal. But, as Nugent convincingly argues, historical memory in the borderlands is strong (if "twisted"; 2007:222), and contemporary conflict is linked to partition-era politics.

Sisala, Dagara, and the Peoples of Poni: Ghana and Burkina Faso

A 1990s dispute between agricultural Sisala earth priests and pond-fishing Dagara demonstrates both the never ending legacies of Anglo–French colonial macropartition and the unfolding repercussions of inheritor postcolonial micropartitioning.

As Lentz (2003) relates, the Sisala—original founders of territory that was split by the British and French into the Gold Coast and Upper Volta—devised an ingenious strategy to retain their farming land in British territory while remaining on their "French" residential property: in the 1920s and 1930s they assigned their farmland to newly arriving Dagara immigrants. Although the location of the colonial boundary was well known, it was not locally understood to apply to land tenure arrangements. Nor was it seen to affect ritualistic sovereignty over earth-shrine areas. One of these earth-shrines was a pond over which the Sisala priests had custodianship. As one of the numerous deviations that European boundary surveyors made from the otherwise straight 11th parallel, the pond was deemed to straddle French and British territory.

In the intervening decades, boundary markers disintegrated. In 1973 the independent governments of Ghana and Burkina Faso (though this name was not adopted until 1984) proceeded to redemarcate the boundary together, using the 11th parallel as their guiding principle. With this redemarcation, the pond fell entirely within Ghanaian territory. Two decades later, Dagara fishermen for the first time repudiated the Sisala prerogative to regulate usage of the pond, evoking the international boundary and accusing the (Burkinabé) Sisala as trespassers. The dispute turned violent.

Focusing on the province of Poni in Burkina Faso, in addition to the Dagara, Madeleine Père (2000) identifies several ethnic groups (and subgroups) whose genealogies trace back across the colonial and postcolonial border in Ghana: the Dian, Gan, Pwa (or Pugula), Lobi, and Birifor. Migration occurred in phases, prompted by economic and political circumstances and spanning the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Moustapha Gomgnimbou (2000) comes to a similar conclusion with respect to the Kasena.

These case studies support the conclusion of Sten Hagberg and Alexis Tengan (2000:14–15) that the political "boundary between French and British territories changed the lives of people living on either side. . . . But the region that is crosscut by this political boundary is simultaneously a borderland or frontier," a zone in which the boundaries have become "locally appropriated." From an ethnic perspective, the Burkinabé–Ghanaian boundaries create both internal transethnic bonds and trans-state social bonds, both of which join geography to cosmology.

Yenga: Guinea and Sierra Leone

Yenga is not an ethnicity but rather a small area on the Sierra Leonian part of the triangle with Guinea and Liberia. It was occupied by troops of Guinea in 1998 in response to rebel activity that crosscut all three countries. But after the rebellion ended, Guinea remained, claiming rights based on ambiguous territorial agreements between Britain and France. Dispute over Yenga stems more from natural resources (timber, fish, diamonds) than ethnic grievances over partition; in any event, its origins lay in the French–British carving of the territory, the imprecision of which constitutes a factor in its perpetuation. Continuing conflict over the territory between former French Guinea and former British Sierra Leone is emblematic, at least in the Mano River Region, of postpartition facts that "perpetuate conditions of insecurity" (Silberfein & Conteh 2006:359).

Scaling Back Up from the Borderline: Middle-Level (and Other) Conclusions

Asiwaju (1985) identifies two relevant perspectives to the phenomenon of partition. The first is that of the states, successors to the colonies, whose vested interest is in retaining boundaries inherited at independence. The second perspective is that of the ethnic groups themselves that were split between or divided into at least two colonies: colonies that would then become, as Achille Mbembe (1992) puts it, not so much sovereign states but rather "post-colonies." Asiwaju's focus, as well as that of his followers, has been on that second perspective, the examination of partition's impact on ethnic groups at the grassroots.

This overview of African ethnicities partitioned by France and Britain points to a third level: the indigenous polity. Sometimes but not always coinciding with a more or less homogeneous ethnic group, every precolonial polity was affected, either by diminishment (the overall pattern) or enhancement (in particular cases of colonial favoritism), by French and British colonialism. Those polities whose territories were divided into French and British zones of sovereignty were especially affected. For partition did not aim or desire to control specific ethnic groups per se; rather, France and Britain coveted territory and resources and viewed indigenous polities as either facilitators or obstacles to those goals. In general, the British viewed these polities as facilitators, whereas the French saw them more as obstacles. Partitioned ethnic groups continued to identify with their respective indigenous polities, whereas colonial administrators were much less concerned with the intrinsic nature of the polity–ethnicity linkage. After independence, despite their own personal status as Africans-with-ethnicities, state elites and administrators generally preserved the respective colonial attitudes to the precolonial polities within their jurisdiction (see Young 2012).

Thus, for example, even if the last decades in Nigeria have seen a hollowing out of the Hausa–Fulani chieftaincies, the sultans and emirs there retain influence and prerogatives much beyond those of their counterparts in Niger. The same is true of the Ashanti in Ghana vis-à-vis Côte d'Ivoire. Social and political identities of partitioned ethnicities remain in large part a function of whether or not the colonial partition located them in the precolonial indigenous center of political gravity.

Nor are all precolonial polities equal in terms of their postcolonial partitioning. Mega- and meso-partitioned ethnic groups clearly exhibit the continuing stamp of the colonial experience more than the "minor" partitioned groups do.

A comparison of the postcolonial pathways of ethnic groups partitioned into French and British colonies thus crystallizes several points. The first is that indigenous bases of association and behavior continue to define life along the African frontier in ways that mitigate (without denying) state sovereignty. Cross-border ethnic networking thrives in congruence with postcolonial national identity. Life in the Anglophone–Francophone borderlands demonstrates that the relationship between ethnic and national identity is not zero-sum. While throughout Africa the long-term differential impacts of colonial partition remain palpable, daily life in the borderlands continues to transcend territorial boundaries.

Second, the randomness of the colonial partition (some borderlanders placed in *Ingilishi* [England]; other in *Faranshi* [France]) continues to mark the ethnicities so divided. African irredentism has for the most part bowed to the colonial realpolitik of partition. Borderlanders do exploit international boundaries as best they can. In the end, however, they accept their fate as members of their respective national states, even where it means belonging to states in which life is more difficult than it is for their ethnic cousins (e.g., Côte d'Ivoire and Togo rather than Ghana for Ashanti and Ewe; Benin and Niger rather than Nigeria for the Yoruba and Hausa). Centralizing, state-centric administrative policies that perpetuate colonial policies of direct rule in Francophone nations, for instance, have suppressed ethnic assertiveness more than Anglophone polities have, and thus the Ashanti, Ewe, Hausa, and Yoruba in Ghana and Nigeria have fared better than their ethnic cousins in Benin, Togo, and Niger.

Finally, this inquiry into legacies of Anglo–French ethnic partition in Africa functions as an empirical, middle-level counterweight to the abstracting trends that are so prevalent in social sciences, including area studies. Social scientists tend to favor both national-level analyses and, increasingly, analyses of the effects of globalization on institutional change, even on African borders.[13] Study of the African borderlands highlights the continuing importance of colonial legacies, the related "contrast" school of colonial historiography, and the importance of both history and ethnography for the human life sciences.

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Notes

1. "Francophone Africa," as a linguistic category, properly includes the former Belgian colonies of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi. In this article, with its binary comparative frame, and for linguistic concision, it refers only to former colonies of France. For reasons of space, the article does not discuss the otherwise compelling borderland of Djibouti–Somalia in the Horn of Africa (but see Imbert-Vier 2011 for a recent treatment) and that of Sudan with Chad and the Central African Republic in Central Africa. Although linguistically Anglophone, Liberia was not a British colony and so its borders with Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea are also not discussed.
2. Classical treatments of partition in the literature include Hargreaves (1974, 1985), Uzoigwe (1985), and Wesseling (1996).
3. A compelling reminder of how this "historical" debate was once of concern to the mainstream of academia and the U.S. government establishment is the 1937 article in *Foreign Affairs* by Derwent Wittlesey.

4. But see A. I. Asiwaju's essays (2001) on West Africa in the volume subtitled *Comparative Impacts of French and British Colonialism.*
5. It is also informed by the author's quarter-century longitudinal study of a "mega-partioned" group, the Hausa of Niger–Nigeria. A conscious effort has been made, nonetheless, to refrain from unduly extrapolating from that case to the others.
6. Elsewhere (Miles 2014) I consider maritime boundaries of former French and British colonies of greater Africa. The rest of this section closely follows the argument made there.
7. Broader treatments of the long-term influences of British versus French colonialism on the Hausa may be found in Miles (1993, 1994, 2005). See also Miles and Rochefort (1991).
8. This point became clear to me, even if through anecdote, by the reaction of one of my students in Boston when I discussed my long-standing relationship with a Hausa community in her native Nigeria. "But the Hausa are Boko Haram," the young woman, from the southeast of the country, reacted in alarm.
9. This is not to diminish in any way the stress and costs endured by Niger on account of refugees from Boko Haram action, particularly in Diffa.
10. Woronoff (1972:10) mentions that, as fellow Akans, Nkurmah and Houphet-Boigny were often depicted as "cousins or brothers." Clignet and Foster (1971:290) acknowledge, in general terms, that the influence of ethnicity on education is greater in Ghana than in Ivory Coast on account of the latter's administrative centralization. They also find that in both countries educational development is more influenced by colonial legacy than contemporary politics, economics, and social change.
11. Ethnonationalism in Casamance does not take the form of reunification demands.
12. This observation occurs elsewhere with some frequency—e.g., in the Yoruba borderland between Benin and Nigeria, in the Hausa borderland of Niger and Nigeria.
13. See Herbst (1989, 1992).