

BOOK REVIEW

Yusufu Turaki. *Tainted Legacy: Islam, Colonialism and Slavery in Northern Nigeria*. McLean, Virginia: Isaac Publishing, 2010. 210 pp. \$111.98. Paper. ISBN: 978-0982521830.

Turaki sets the tone of *Tainted Legacy: Islam, Colonialism and Slavery in Northern Nigeria* right from the introduction. Turaki's work is a classical rendition of the history, religion, and political encounters through colonialism and missions in Northern Nigeria from the late eighteenth century to the post-colonial period. Turaki writes in a way that is very different from the approach many other scholars of Nigerian history have used in the past; his is an insider's perspective. Using multiple religious and historical theories such as colonial theory, racial theory, history from the bottom up, and sub-Saharan and trans-Atlantic theories, Turaki points out that he is writing on the part of Nigerian history that is often neglected or not even mentioned at all (14). This is the history of how Muslims in northern Nigeria colonized, enslaved, and dominated other non-Muslim groups of the Middle Belt part of Nigeria from pre-colonial times to early post-colonial times. Turaki also continues to observe in the introduction that upon the arrival of the British colonialists, the legacy of domination that the northern Nigeria Muslims held over non-Muslims was upheld, emphasized, and enlarged by the western colonialists through different means (18). Turaki is the first to describe the local encounters between ethnic groups within northern Nigeria and the Middle Belt as "colonialization."

In Turaki's argument, the discourses on transatlantic slavery have swallowed the discourses on local sub-Saharan slavery before the modern colonization of Nigeria as a whole (14). Scholars prefer writing and engaging the history of trans-Atlantic slavery because it was an international event involving many Western countries and races. On this note, not everyone remembers that slavery and colonialism existed in Nigeria for many years before British colonialism and the annexation of the Sokoto and Kanuri Sultanate in 1903 (24). Turaki emphasizes the significance of engaging this sort of history to set a balance of knowledge about northern Nigeria and the Middle Belt.

Turaki acknowledges that Islam has existed in Nigeria for a long time. He traces the beginning of Islam in the northern part of Nigeria as early as the

tenth century through peaceful evangelism (36). Islam spread in the North through business relations with the people of North Africa, Arabia, and Sudan. Turaki describes the geography of the Middle Belt to include regions such as Bauch-Plateau, Benue, the Nok, and Gombe, while Hausaland mainly consists of Zaria, Gobir, Kwantagora, and Daura. Turaki notes that the Hausaland and Middle Belt regions shared boundaries/borders. Many Fulani migrated from Mali, Cameroon, Senegal, and Ghana into northern Nigeria during the decline of Ghana and the Sene-Gambian empires (37–38). Turaki notes that most of those who migrated to northern Nigeria and established a caliphate in Sokoto through jihad were educated Fulanis (44, 46). Sokoto became the Caliphate, where the number one leader of Muslims resided. The establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate marks the beginning of a new era of the spread of Islam in Nigeria.

The Fulani jihadists conquered many more territories and replaced their indigenous rulers with Fulani rulers (91). They colonized those regions by teaching them Arabic and making Shari'a the society's legal system, replacing the former traditional systems. Turaki notes that most of the theological backing of the Fulani Islamic conquest and subjugation was driven by the Qur'an (50–56). The jihadists believed that it was their responsibility and divine mandate to destroy pagan rule and establish Islamic communities by whatever means necessary (69). According to Turaki, the majority of the populace in northern Nigeria became either enslaved or potentially enslaved unless they accepted Islam (91). The Caliphate made the Middle Belt ethnic groups pay heavily as well (104). Turaki observes that in terms of language, Hausa became the *lingua franca* of northern Nigeria since most people in the North spoke Hausa by origin before the Fulani jihad and colonialization.

Turaki moves on in the later chapters of this book to examine colonial encounters between northern Nigeria and the Middle Belt ethnic groups with the West. Turaki observes that one of the goals of the British colonial presence in Nigeria was to undo the system of chattel slavery, since it had been abolished in Britain and other parts of the West so that they could start a legitimate business in commodities such as palm oil, cocoa, cotton, and grain (125). Upon their arrival, the European colonialists also established that the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group was superior to other ethnic groups because of their written record and leadership structure (121). The Hausa Fulani, through Islam, had established a strong leadership structure that was easier for colonialists to manipulate through indirect rule. This perception encouraged the British colonialists to favor the Hausa Muslims and even subjugated other non-Muslim groups to the emirs of northern Nigeria. In an attempt to establish indirect rule in the middle part of Nigeria, the British appointed emirs to rule many territories and regions in the Middle Belt. Turaki notes that this legacy is still binding in northern Nigeria, where non-Hausa Fulani people are treated with contempt and as inferior to Hausa Fulani.

Turaki's book helps to shift the usual narratives and trajectories of engaging histories. He unveils what ordinarily local and international scholars would not call "colonialism" in telling the pre-western colonial

history of Nigeria. Still, he also brilliantly brings in the discourse on the western colonization of northern Nigeria in what he tags a “tainted legacy.” There is no doubt that Turaki’s work comes from the perspective of an insider who understands the land, the people, and foreign colonial legacies of northern Nigeria.

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