Journal of Law and Religion 35, no. 1 (2020): 165–177 © Center for the Study of Law and Religion at Emory University
doi:10.1017/jlr.2020.15

REVIEW ESSAY

RELIGION AND POLITICS IN AFRICA: THREE STUDIES ON NIGERIA

MOHAMMED BASHIR SALAU
Professor of History, University of Mississippi

BOOKS REVIEWED

Shari'ah on Trial: Northern Nigeria's Islamic Revolution. By Sarah Eltantawi. Oakland: University of California Press, 2017. Pp. 253 (paper). ISBN: 9780520293786.

Religion and the Making of Nigeria. By Olufemi Vaughan. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016. Pp. 311 (paper). ISBN: 9780822362272.

Muslims Talking Politics: Framing Islam, Democracy, and Law in Northern Nigeria. By Brandon Kendhammer. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016. Pp. 302 (paper). ISBN: 9780226369037.

KEYWORDS: Islam, Christianity, Northern Nigeria, democracy, sharia law

Until the second half of the twentieth century, the role of religion in Africa was profoundly neglected. There were no university centers devoted to the study of religion in Africa; there was only a handful of scholars who focused primarily on religious studies and most of them were not historians; and there were relatively few serious empirical studies on Christianity, Islam, and African traditional religions.[1] This paucity of rigorous research began to be remedied in the 1960s and by the last decade of the twentieth century, the body of literature on religion in Africa had expanded significantly. The burgeoning research and serious coverage of the role of religion in African societies has initially drawn great impetus from university centers located in the West and in various parts of Africa that were committed to demonstrating that Africa has a rich history even before European contact.[2] Accordingly scholars associated with such university centers have since the 1960s acquired and systematically catalogued private religious manuscripts and written numerous pan-African, regional, national, and local studies on diverse topics including spirit mediumship, witchcraft, African systems of thought, African evangelists and catechists, Mahdism, Pentecostalism, slavery, conversion, African religious diasporas and their impact on host societies, and religion and politics.[3] Although the three works under review here deal with

1 Marcia Wright, "African History in the 1960's: Religion," *African Studies Review* 14, no. 3 (1971): 439–45.

2 John Ralph Willis, "The Historiography of Islam in Africa: The Last Decade (1960–1970)," *African Studies Review* 14, no. 3 (1971): 403–24, at 403–04.

3 A collection of essays that address such diverse issues is David O. Ogungbile and Akintunde E. Akinade eds., *Creativity and Change in Nigerian Christianity* (Lagos: Malthouse Press, 2010).

the role of religion in an African context, they mainly contribute to addressing three major questions in the study of religion and politics: How do Islam and other religious orientations shape public support for democracy? What is the primary cause of conflict or religious violence? What strategies should be employed to resolve such conflicts and violence?

There already exists a significant literature on law and religion in Africa. This extant literature focuses on many topics. For instance, topics considered by works on law and religion that considerably focus on Northern Nigeria include crime and punishment under Islamic law, sharia implementation, law and women, Islamic law and judicial practice, the popular perception of sharia, the impact of the introduction of sharia law on Christian-Muslim relations, and the relationship between sharia law and religious freedom in Northern Nigeria, just to mention a few topics.[4] It is interesting that in addition to contributing to addressing the three major questions in the study of religion and politics identified above, the three works under review also enrich our understanding of the theme of law and religion in Africa.

The issue of religion and politics has occupied many scholars since the 1960s. Many early works on the subject recognize that religion has a decisive role in politics. Influenced by the achievement of independence by many African states after the late 1950s and the continuing struggle against European rule in others, some scholars who worked on the theme of religion and politics in the context of non-Muslim societies gave importance to the themes of resistance and decolonization. Such scholars addressed issues such as the role of religious leaders or independent churches in organizing resistance against European domination, the interaction of modernizing elites and popular religious elements in the context of resistance during the colonial era, and the internal struggle between factions identified with Islam, Christianity, and other religions in royal or aristocratic courts.[5] Likewise, other scholars who worked on the theme of religion and politics in the context of Muslim societies have, along with giving importance to the theme of resistance and early independence, addressed other relevant issues such as the exploitation of Islam in the process of state making.[6] Overall, as in the case of early works dealing with non-Muslim societies, early works on Muslim societies focused mainly on the precolonial and colonial eras.

4 Examples of works on law and religion include J. N. D. Anderson, "Conflict of Laws in Northern Nigeria," *Journal of African Law* 1, no. 2 (1957): 87–98; Yahaya Yunusa Bambale, *Crimes and Punishments under Islamic Law*, 2nd ed. (Ikeja: Malthouse Press, 2003); Allen Christelow, *Thus Ruled Emir Abbas: Selected Cases from the Records of the Emir of Kano's Judicial Council* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994); Allen Christelow, "Islamic Law and Judicial Practice: An Historical Perspective," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 22, no. 1 (2002): 186–204; Hauwa Ibrahim and Lyman N. Princeton, *Reflections on the New Shari'a Law in Nigeria* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2004); Jibrin Ibrahim ed., *Sharia Penal and Family Laws in Nigeria and in the Muslim World: Rights Based Approach* (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 2004); Mathew Kirwin, "Popular Perceptions of Shari'a Law in Nigeria," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 20, no. 2 (2009): 137–51; Frieder Ludwig, "Christian-Muslim Relations in Northern Nigeria since the Introduction of Shari'ah in 1999," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76, no. 3 (2008): 602–37; Paul Marshall, *The Talibanisation of Nigeria: Sharia Law and Religious Freedom* (Washington, DC: Freedom House, 2002); and Jamila Nasir, "Sharia Implementation and Female Muslims in Nigeria's Sharia States," in *Sharia Implementation in Northern Nigeria 1999–2006*, ed. Philip Ostien (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2007), 76–118.

5 See, for instance, J. A. Rowe, "The Purge of Christians at Mwanga's Court: A Reassessment of this Episode in Buganda History," *Journal of African History* 5, no. 1 (1964): 55–72; Terence Ranger, "Traditional Authorities and the Rise of Modern Politics in Southern Rhodesia, 1898–1930," in *The Zambesian Past: Studies in Central African History*, ed. Eric Stokes and Richard Brown (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966), 171–93; and D. A. Low, "Converts and Martyrs in Buganda," in *Christianity in Tropical Africa*, ed. C. G. Baeta (London: Oxford University Press, 1968) 150–64.

6 See, for instance, P. M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881–1898: A Study of Its Origins, Development and Overthrow* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958); Murray Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate* (London: Longmans, 1967).

The failure of most early works on religion and politics to extend their analysis to the postcolonial era was accompanied by efforts of other early scholars who work on this particular era to keep the studies of religion and politics separate.[7] In studying conflict in postcolonial Africa, for instance, most of the early writers on the subject ignore the relationship between religion and politics while focusing narrowly on issues of ethnicity and class.[8] Similarly, even though a few other early writers on conflict in postcolonial Africa recognized the role of religion in politics, they failed to stress how religion was exploited to achieve political goals.[9]

By the 1990s, the approach of downplaying the role of religion in the postcolonial context by asserting that it was apolitical or by stressing the primacy of ethnic politics had been countered. Many scholars who helped in countering this conventional approach were influenced by contemporary events that took place outside of Africa (specifically in Iran, Afghanistan, and Nicaragua) that demonstrated that religion could be used as a tool for capturing power.[10] Given the fact that religious leaders either gained political power or clashed influentially with secular authorities as contemporary political boundaries were defined and redefined in Iran and elsewhere, it is not surprising that some of the recent revisionist scholars working on Africa concluded that religious conflict was a new phenomenon that emerged in the postcolonial context or in the case of Nigeria that emerged after the 1980s.[11] In contrast to those who conclude that conflict was a new phenomenon that emerged in the postcolonial context, some scholars have stressed the historic relationship between religion and politics.[12]

The significant wave of democratization experienced in most parts of Africa since the 1980s and the concurrent expansions of independent Christianity and reformist Islam were contributory factors that gave birth to the recent scholarly narratives about the relationship between religion and politics.[13] Some of these recent scholarly narratives have focused comprehensively on Nigeria since the society is of particular interest for a number of reasons, including its representative role as one of Africa's new democracies and its experience of the outbreak of riots/uprisings led by religious leaders like Maitatsine and Abubakar Shekau.[14] The research of scholars who focus on relevant issues of democratization and the concurrent expansions of independent Christianity and reformist Islam in Nigeria and elsewhere have been shaped by the three major questions identified above: How do Islam and other religious orientations shape public support for democracy? What is the primary cause of violence? What strategies should be employed to resolve religious violence?

Scholars are divided on these three major questions. On the question of how Islam and other religious orientations shape public support for democracy, some argue that religion and democracy

7 See, for instance, Richard L. Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties: Power in an Emergent African Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

8 See, for instance, B. J. Dudley, *Instability and Political Order: Politics and Crisis in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1973).

9 See, for instance, John N. Paden, *Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto: Values and Leadership in Nigeria* (Zaria: Hudahuda, 1986).

10 Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 1998), 10.

11 See for instance, Mathew Hassan Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1993); Iheanyi M. Enwerem, *A Dangerous Awakening: The Politicization of Religion in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Institut francais de recherche en Afrique, 1995).

12 Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*, 24–48.

13 Nicolette D. Manglos and Alexander A. Weinreb, "Religion and Interest in Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Social Forces* 92, no. 1 (2013): 195–219.

14 A good example of works on religion and politics in Nigeria is Jonathan T. Reynolds, "The Politics of History: The Legacy of the Sokoto Caliphate in Nigeria," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 32, no. 1/2 (1997): 50–65.

https://doi.org/10.1017/jlr.2020.15 Published online by Cambridge University Press

are not compatible. For instance, Samuel Huntington stresses that unlike Christianity, Islam does not have the ideological resources to support liberal democracy.[15] Similarly, Elie Kedourie argues, "There is nothing in the political traditions of the Arab World—which are the political traditions of Islam—which might make familiar, or indeed intelligible, the organizing ideas of constitutional and representative government."[16] Other writers reject the notion that religion and democracy are not compatible. For instance, Abdou Filali-Ansary rejects this notion by pointing to values of freedom and accountability in early Islam that also characterize Western democracy.[17] Similarly, Clifford Geertz and other scholars argue that neither Islam nor Christianity is wholly compatible or incompatible with democracy. They also suggest that there must be something about any given time and place that makes religion (whether Islam or Christianity or any other religion) more or less encouraging of actions and attitudes that are compatible with liberal democracy.[18]

In some accounts, the cause of conflict and violence in Nigeria and other parts of the world has been attributed to interfaith rivalry and homicidal religiosity. Such accounts often stress a global clash of culture in which Islam is pitted against the West.[19] Similar to accounts that stress interfaith rivalry, other accounts also privilege single factors in their explanation of conflict in Nigeria. For instance, some Marxist scholars have tied the development of violence to the manipulation of religion by political elites who were determined to mask their exploitation of the commoners[20] while other non-Marxist scholars argue that state actions and decisions, which have the potential of obliterating religion and other social elements, are mainly responsible for conflict/violence.[21] In contrast to scholars who advance single factor explanations, other scholars employ multi-causal approaches in their analysis of conflict. For instance, in his analysis of conflict in Nigeria, Toyin Falola stresses a more historically contingent set of factors. In particular, he stresses a long history of religious aggravation that is associated with the nineteenth century jihad in Hausaland and the spread of Christianity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He also stresses other factors including the role of religious fundamentalists who employed provocative rhetoric to promote interethnic and interreligious conflict, the role of the Nigerian state in the politicization of religion, and the role of political instability and economic decadence.[22]

Regarding the strategies that should be employed to resolve religious violence, the suggestions vary from account to account and they include promotion of tolerance, teaching ethical behavior to Nigerians, using coercion, converting people to the same religion, exploiting the important elements in the political values of each religious traditions that would allow the growth of a pluralistic

15 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

16 Elie Kedourie, *Democracy and Arab Political Culture* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1992), 5.

17 Abdou Filali-Ansary, "Muslims and Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 10, no. 3 (1999): 18–31.

18 See for instance, Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Robert A. Dowd, *Christianity, Islam, and Liberal Democracy: Lessons from Sub-Saharan Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

19 See, for instance, Don Ohadike, "Muslim-Christian Conflict and Political Instability in Nigeria," in *Religion and National Integration in Africa: Islam, Christianity, and Politics in the Sudan and Nigeria*, ed. John O. Hunwick (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1992), 101–123.

20 See, for instance, Yusuf Bala Usman, *The Manipulation of Religion in Nigeria, 1977–1987* (Kaduna: Vanguard, 1987).

21 See, for instance, Larry Diamond, "Nigeria: Pluralism, Statism, and the Struggle for Democracy," in *Democracy in Developing Countries*, vol. 2, *Africa*, ed. Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1988), 33–91.

22 Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*, 12–17.

tradition without undermining the authenticity of each religion, and embracing better political and economic management that would allow for the development of a viable nation-state. For instance, in one account C. S. Momoh advocates for the use of tolerance while in another account Falola privileges the adoption of better political and economic management that would allow for the development of a viable nation-state.[23]

The three books under review, as suggested above, test the competing visions regarding the relationship between religion and democracy, the causes of conflict, and solutions for resolving religious violence, against relevant Nigerian facts. The more general and more historical study by Olufemi Vaughan provides details on southern Nigeria and on precolonial Nigeria. Vaughan could be described as a historian and a political scientist. Brandon Kendhammer could be described as a political science scholar. Both Vaughan and Kendhammer are men. In contrast, Sarah Eltantawi, a self-identified Muslim woman, could be described as an Islamicist; and from such a perspective, her focus on women's issues and *fiqh* (opinions of Muslim scholars) is understandable. It is significant that to date there are relatively few studies on religion and politics in Africa written by women and most of the few major studies authored by women are by non-Muslims.[24] Eltantawi's work is therefore a most welcome addition to the extant literature.

Of the three works under review, Eltantawi's *Shari'ah on Trial* is the most recently published. Eltantawi employs ethnographic material, popular poetry, and other sources highlighting the influence and power of both texts and culture by addressing two questions: Why did the people of Northern Nigeria clamor into the streets in 1999 to demand reimplementation of sharia law? And why did many of them in 2001 support the death sentence by stoning of Amina Lawal for committing the crime of illegal sexual activity? To address these questions, Eltantawi, after an introduction, organizes her book into six chapters, each of which focuses on specific themes such as Islamic modernity, stoning punishment, and the trial of Amina Lawal.

The virtues of Eltantawi's book are many. It provides a rare comprehensive focus on penal law in sharia and gender issues. For instance, on gender issues, while it examines patriarchal norms it also stresses important women's issues such as lesbianism, the singling out of women by Nigerian Muslim law, and women's political empowerment. To undermine the popular notions that Islam does not advocate stoning and that stoning is unique to African Muslim societies, Eltantawi points to the existence of a classical Islamic legal document embraced throughout the Muslim majority world, including in Hausaland, that advocates stoning. She argues that despite sharia's rhetorical role, it was in fact the inability of the Nigerian government, which was plagued by corruption, to ensure the fair distribution of scarce resources that was responsible for the demand for the reimplementation of sharia law in 1999 and for subsequent violence in various parts of Northern Nigeria. She also blames the colonial legacy for the demand for the reimplementation of sharia and for violence in Northern Nigeria. According to her, the Maliki school of law was introduced to the Hausa states located in the region that became Northern Nigeria well before the nineteenth century. By the nineteenth century, however, a Muslim cleric (Usman dan Fodio, who looked back to the classical period of Islam) led a jihad that resulted in the defeat of the then "nominal" Muslim Hausa states and the establishment of a caliphal state in which a functioning Islamic legal system that included punishments existed. The caliphal state established by Usman dan Fodio existed until 1903, when it was defeated by British forces. Following British conquest, the British embraced the

23 C. S. Momoh and Tijani El-Miskin, *Nigerian Studies in Religious Tolerance*, 4 vols. (Lagos: Centre for Black and African and Civilization, 1989); and Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*.

24 See, for instance, Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

https://doi.org/10.1017/jlr.2020.15 Published online by Cambridge University Press

indirect rule system of administration. Under this administrative system, the British favored the use of native law and custom but disallowed Islamic punishments it viewed as offending natural justice. Eltantawi suggests that were it not for such legal changes introduced by the British, the contemporary desire to aggressively reach back into history to cleanse and preserve the Islamic societies of Northern Nigeria would have been insignificant.

Eltantawi shows that the governor of Zamfara state, Ahmed Sani Yerima, reintroduced sharia in his state in 1999 based on popular support and that most other governors in Northern Nigeria soon emulated him. At the early stage, popular support for the reintroduction of sharia was based on the expectation that "idealized shariah," which would help end poverty and corruption, would be implemented. However, once reintroduced, a significant proportion of Northern Nigerian Muslims realized that the actual implementation of Islamic law was politicized by government officials and that poverty would remain a serious problem. Accordingly, many disenchanted Nigerians labeled the manifestations of post-1999 sharia that did not lead to any visible improvement in their daily lives as "political shariah."

The first time sharia was put on trial in Nigeria and internationally was during the trial of Amina Lawal for committing the crime of *zina* (unlawful sexual intercourse). Eltantawi stresses the influence of the Nigerian constitution and of British colonial magistrate law in Lawal's trial. She also stresses that "the trial displayed the razor-focused ideals of the sunnaic paradigm by referring to primary texts like the Quran and *hadith* far more than it referred to Maliki jurisprudence" (Eltantawi, 201). In effect, Eltantawi makes a point of stressing that in the context of becoming postmodern in nature, the sharia or the judicial system turned away from the reductionist versions of the Maliki school of law and became Islamist and fundamentalist.

In the course of her analysis, Eltantawi provides evidence that for prominent Muslims in Northern Nigeria, Islam or "idealized shariah" is not compatible with democracy. She finds that even though the sharia is not naturally undemocratic in character, it is deemed incompatible with democracy in northern Nigeria mainly because of Nigeria's failed transition to democracy after a long period of military rule that ended in 1999. She further finds that the sharia phenomena had largely died down by 2010 for several reasons, including being politicized to win public support and mainly affecting the most vulnerable Muslims. Given the direct failures of the post-1999 sharia revolution, Eltantawi stresses, it is unsurprising that a group of Muslims increasingly turned to terrorism or violence after 2010. For her, the solution for ending violence and for improving women's rights in Northern Nigeria goes beyond simply calling for an Islamic worldwide moratorium on stoning or reforming Islamic law through global debate among Muslims. Instead, she says, it should involve a debate about how to establish an organizing body that could enforce any relevant change agreed by Muslims and a debate about how to prevent Muslim majority countries challenged by extreme social disorder from politicizing Islam. In the context of demonstrating that lessening the politicization of Islam is the solution for violence and fanaticism, Eltantawi asserts that encouraging more critical thinking is not part of the answer to these two related problems. Indeed she brings up two related arguments while explaining this position: (1) because Northern Nigeria is facing massive internal and external problems, education-based critical thinking is seen as threatening to elites and to the forces of conformity like Boko Haram and therefore has been stifled by those forces; and (2) encouraging more critical thinking could further disrupt an already weak order hence promoting more of such thinking cannot help to answer the relevant problems of violence and fanaticism.

Eltantawi's book contributes to the literature on law and religion in Northern Nigeria in several special ways. I offer just three examples of these contributions. First, it helps to confirm that a distinct Islamic legal tradition has evolved by accretion and adaptation over the centuries in Northern

Nigeria and helps to reject the notion that Islam and the Islamic legal tradition is somehow fixed in nature. As mentioned above, Eltantawi's account of the gradual evolution of the Islamic legal tradition stresses how factors like British colonial rule and postcolonial rule introduced fundamental changes in relevant legal norms, institutions, and procedures.

Second, it contributes to our understanding of the issue of women's human rights in Northern Nigeria. In this regard, Eltantawi reveals that women do not enjoy the same human rights and fundamental freedoms as men in the region because of stringent readings of Islam and Islamic law. The stringent readings of Islam and Islamic law are partly tied to the activities of nongovernmental organizations that identify with the larger Islamic civilizational complex. Those organizations advocating progressive readings of the Islamic texts are said to be mainly funded by the West. Eltantawi portrays such Western-funded nongovernmental organizations as major political players in the way sharia cases are adjudicated. For instance, she shows that Western funded nongovernmental organizations hired the lawyers who defended Amina Lawal in court. Although Eltantawi portrays these organizations as important political players in the case of Lawal, she rejects the notion that Lawal was ultimately released because of Western pressure. Instead, she shows that Lawal was ultimately acquitted mainly because the lawyers employed by Western nongovernmental organizations to defend her successfully deployed Islamic arguments instead of the human rights arguments promoted by their employers.

Third, Eltantawi engages with the debate on how to foster Islamic legal reform. Given that the politics of outrage about the oppression of Muslim women often conceal imperial and such other agendas, some scholars suggest that Western advocacy on behalf of women should omit reference to Islamic law altogether since such references work against Islamic legal reform. Unlike such scholars, Eltantawi advocates that nongovernmental organizations and Islamic scholars should continue to engage sharia and that a close collaboration between these two forces is the best strategy for developing a more contemporary form of Islamic jurisprudence.

Olufemi Vaughan's *Religion and the Making of Nigeria* draws from a rich array of sources including publications of Pentecostal churches, newspapers, family papers, colonial records, and secondary sources. It is multidisciplinary in the sense that it features methods and theories from such disciplines as history, anthropology, and political science. However, in terms of theories, Vaughan gives special attention to confirming David Laitin's theory of the hierarchical nature of power and John Peel's theory related to the impact of mission Christianity on Yoruba communities.

Vaughan examines the link between the spread of religion and the evolution of modern political structures in Nigeria. He argues that religious conflict is not a new phenomenon and traces such historical conflicts to the period before British rule. In the precolonial era (or specifically between 1804 and 1903), the founders of the Sokoto caliphate built new structures, defeated their rivals, and enhanced their domination. However, the dominance of caliphal rulers was challenged by non-Muslim communities brought under the suzerainty of the Sokoto caliphate. Vaughan stresses that by the late nineteenth century, many such non-Muslim communities used cultural, religious, social, and historical differences as justification for their autonomy. He asserts that this pattern of resistance survived after the European defeat of the Sokoto caliphate in 1903 mainly because British officials applied indirect rule policies that helped strengthen the authority of so-called Hausa-Fulani Muslim rulers over non-Muslim communities of northern and central Nigeria.

In addition to stressing the relationship between religion and state building in the Sokoto caliphate, Vaughan draws attention to the spread of Christianity in Yoruba areas of what became southern Nigeria. Vaughan, unlike Eltantawi, prefers not to study Christianity separately from Islam and Yoruba traditional religion. Thus, while drawing attention to the increasing Christian missionary activities in southern Nigeria during the nineteenth century, he stresses that Muslim conversion

https://doi.org/10.1017/jlr.2020.15 Published online by Cambridge University Press

efforts had been making inroads into the Yoruba region since the beginning of that century. In that same context, he notes that by the late nineteenth century, many Christian missionaries used dialogue and other strategies to link Christianity with indigenous Yoruba cosmology in order to undermine Muslim conversion efforts. Ultimately, Vaughan seems to suggest that although Christianity was important in Yoruba societies, it was not at the center of Yoruba culture, unlike Islam, which was at the center of so-called Hausa-Fulani culture in Northern Nigeria.

Vaughan's examination of the colonial era (1903 to 1960 for Northern Nigeria) points to a close connection between the emergence of new charismatic Christian movements and the rapid development of Yoruba ethno-national consciousness. It also emphasizes the structural imbalance that evolved between emirate Northern Nigeria and the rest of Nigeria under British rule. Moreover, Vaughan stresses that Islam and Christianity were the essential factors during decolonization (1946–1960). In particular, he notes how Islamic structures played important roles in the regionalization of state power in the Northern Nigerian Protectorate, how Christianity helped transform Yoruba ethno-national consciousness, and how Christianity provided non-Muslim minorities in the Northern emirate society with an ideology of resistance to Muslim domination.

In his analysis of the postcolonial era (since 1960), Vaughan explores diverse issues such as the policies of civilian and military governments, the significance of the new Pentecostal movements, the impact of technocratic globalization, and the major conflicts of contemporary Nigeria, including the Nigerian Civil War, the 1978 sharia debate, the dispute about Nigeria's membership in the Organization of Islamic Conference, the Maitatsine affair in the 1980s, and the Boko Haram uprisings. It is Vaughan's contention that the structural imbalances of the Nigerian state that started emerging between emirate Northern Nigeria and the rest of Nigeria in the nineteenth century is the primary factor responsible for these major conflicts. However, Vaughan does not give as much attention to the question of whether Islam is compatible with democracy and the question of the solution to religious violence. Nevertheless, on the former question, he stresses that most Muslims express dissatisfaction with state secularism and democracy primarily because they perceive assault from Christian structures and Christian movements. For instance, according to him, the modernizing effects of Christian missions in non-Muslim sections of Northern Nigeria in the period after 1960 encouraged many Muslims to express dissatisfaction with state secularism. On the latter question, Vaughan encourages the leaders of Nigeria to develop viable political and constitutional mechanisms that will undermine the existing entrenched ethno-religious and ethno-regional fault lines.

On Islamic law, Vaughan accepts, as does Eltantawi, that it can be adapted to local circumstances. However, unlike Eltantawi, he explains that because Islamic jurisprudence is informally divided between a divine half (which remains unchanged overtime) and a human half (which can change over time), "claims that Islamic law is universal and unchanging do not contradict assertions that it can be adapted to local circumstances" (Vaughan 168). In the context of offering this slightly different view on the nature of Islamic law, Vaughan ties the call for the implementation of the sharia in Northern Nigeria in part to the conviction of many Muslims that religious innovations such as Sufism and Muslim modernist reasoning for the public good should be rejected and in part to the desire of many Muslim's to reestablish the *dar-al-Islam* (territory of Islam) and assert Northern Nigeria's membership in a global Muslim community. Although Vaughan stresses the role of the political class and such other factors in drumming up public support for expanded sharia, he argues that the overwhelming Northern Muslim support was not based on blind allegiance to the political class. Instead, he stresses that the popular support for expanded sharia was tied in large part to the dissatisfaction with the Sokoto caliphate's power structure.

Apart from stressing the arguments of the supporters of the expanded sharia policies of the Northern states, Vaughan also examines the criticisms by the opponents of these same policies.

According to him, criticism of the expanded sharia policies was championed both by political elites within Southern Nigeria and the Middle Belt and by political elites within Christian minority groups in Northern Nigeria. Vaughan finds that such opponents of sharia were concerned that relevant reforms would undermine Nigeria's democratic transition, undermine the rights of Christian minorities, put undue pressure on Nigeria's already weak criminal justice system, and pose other related problems. He also finds that the intense opposition to expanded sharia based on such concerns further deepened the structural imbalance between so-called Hausa-Fulani Muslim society and other regions of Nigeria.

Brandon Kendhammer's *Muslim Talking Politics: Framing Islam, Democracy, and Law in Northern Nigeria* draws on diverse sources, including more than one thousand newspaper articles, features, editorials, and letters to editors published between 1999 and 2004; a wide range of other media locally produced in Nigeria, such as television and radio; a series of interviews with Islamic educators, sharia judges, journalists, and other local opinion leaders; a series of group interviews conducted in 2008 in Sokoto, the capital city of Sokoto State in Nigeria; and secondary sources. Even though he focuses mainly on Northern Nigeria, Kendhammer provides a lot of details on the issue of religion and politics outside of Nigeria. He borrows the idea of "framing"—showing how private attitudes are shaped by public discourse—from North American and other Western political science research. Eschewing the question of whether or not particular Islamic values, doctrines, or institutions are compatible with liberal democracy, Kendhammer mainly addresses the issue of how the relationship between Islam and democracy is constructed in practice or in the daily interactions, conversations, and conflicts that make up political life.

The book is organized into eight chapters and features an appendix that focuses on methodology. The first chapter introduces the main topics and arguments, highlighting the structure and methodological and theoretical issues. In terms of methodological issues, for instance, it is while rejecting the conventional method of arguing about whether or not particular Islamic values, doctrines, or institutions are compatible with liberal democracy in the first chapter that Kendhammer reveals that his discussion of mass support for both sharia and democracy is, as mentioned above, based on the approach that asks how the relationship between Islam and democracy is constructed in practice. While the introductory discussions offered in the first chapter are stimulating and insightful, chapters 2 through 8 are more informative and discursive. Chapter 2 focuses on the broader Islamic world as Kendhammer argues that, contrary to conventional views, most Muslims are in favor of democratic government as long as it allows for a strong state role in the defense of religious morality. In this chapter, Kendhammer also investigates the impact of Arab Spring protests on Muslim majority states; the development of new Muslim public spheres of debates in various Islamic societies; how the growing public participation in collectively interpreting the Islamic tradition ended up producing a narrower or objective version of Islamic legal traditions in the Muslim World; and the fears of many observers, especially Western observers, about whether a community committed to sharia can also commit to democracy. In addressing such issues, Kendhammer offers a comparative perspective. Thus, his comparison of Nigeria's sharia implementation saga with the Malian experience is instructive.

Chapters 3 through 5 examine the rise of sharia as a central theme in Muslim political life in Northern Nigeria. They demonstrate that the call for a strong state role in the defense of religious morality or for a state-sponsored and -administered style of Islamic governance during the 1999 Nigerian sharia debate is not atavism. Instead, they demonstrate that the sharia project represents something new in Northern Nigerian Islam in the sense that it is an effort to find a unique modern solution to recurring problems in the uncertain Nigerian democracy. Kendhammer's analysis recognizes the influence of the Sokoto caliphate and precolonial Islamic revivalism on the development

of a local language of Muslim politics. However, Kendhammer argues that it was British colonialism that "objectified sharia" (Kendhammer, 61) in Nigerian public consciousness or, more broadly, that introduced sharia statism, which was used for various purposes, including consolidating the power of Muslim political elites during the elections of the 1950s and 1960s. He also stresses how sharia courts lost their credibility and how they were eventually restricted to handling non-criminal cases after Nigeria became independent. Kendhammer ties the revival of interest in promoting sharia institutions in the 1970s and 1980s mainly to the emergence of a new political incentive structure that empowered new forms of claim making around balance and fairness in access to state resources (which encouraged ethnic and religious communities to organize along interest group lines) in Nigeria. With the emergence of this new political incentive structure, Muslim political elites and groups in the multireligious Nigerian state began to promote the idea that sharia might be a means of solving contemporary problems of governance and economics in order to press their own interests.

In chapter 5, Kendhammer discusses the expanding demands made by Muslim groups since 1999 when Yerima, the governor of Zamfara State, announced his plan to implement sharia and the relevant controversies around implementation of sharia. Thus, chapter 5 is particularly important for offering several arguments related to the theme of law and religion. First, Kendhammer argues that although the establishment of a sharia jurisdiction in Northern Nigeria began in a context of democratic transition in 1999, leading Muslim politicians and religious figures were initially reluctant to support the establishment of such a jurisdiction because of widespread sense of uncertainty about relevant political consequences. Second, he stresses that massive popular support forced most Muslim politicians to eventually embrace the idea of establishing a sharia jurisdiction in Northern Nigeria. Third, he suggests that in implementing sharia, Yerima and his supporters drew on the relative popularity of existing sharia institutions, the intellectual appeal of the Sokoto caliphate model, and the long-standing popular interest in adhering to Islamic practices. Fourth, he argues that implementing sharia in law and public policy involved many things including establishing implementation committees, crafting legal codes, creating courts, addressing numerous social ills, and tackling religious conflicts. In the context of advancing this particular argument, Kendhammer also indicates that the three main issues at the center of religious conflicts in Nigeria since 1999 are the question of sharia's constitutionality, the issue of the relationship between the new sharia provisions and human rights, and the issue of violence. Fifth, he argues that ultimately even the most fervent supporters of the sharia enacted by the governors and legislators of Nigeria's Fourth Republic became dissatisfied with the state of sharia implementation.

Chapters 6 and 7 shed some light on why Muslims support state-sponsored sharia. In both chapters, Kendhammer adopts the theory of framing, which posits that public opinion largely depends on how elites choose to frame issues (or that public opinion is strongly influenced by the language and symbolic grammar formulated by elites) to highlight attention to how Muslim attitudes toward such issues as sharia, secularism, and democracy has been shaped by familiar media effects and by elite Muslim discourse, or "framing". In adopting the theory of framing, Kendhammer draws on many sources already identified above in order to identify, describe, and analyze visible "frames" related to the connection between sharia and democracy. Chapter 6 specifically demonstrates that Muslim political elites and community leaders framed sharia implementation in terms of state-led political and ethical transformation and stressed the idea that the sharia is a valuable tool for promoting both Islamic values and democratic institutions. Kendhammer sheds light on relevant national constitutional and political conflicts that shaped the framing of sharia implementation in these terms and in other radical terms by Muslim political elites and religious leaders. Those that framed sharia in radical terms were relatively few and some of them rooted their radical

demands in globalized Islamic discourse. Kendhammer draws attention to the marginalization of such radical voices and stresses that the most dominant frames around the sharia issue worked systematically to ensure a greatly expanded role for state action and intervention in the lives of ordinary citizens.

In chapter 7, Kendhammer stresses that although commoners often drew on elite frames, they were not merely passive receptors of such frames. Thus, dissatisfied with sharia implementation, many commoners maintain the hope that Islamic activism can address such problems as unemployment and corruption. Kendhammer's analysis indicates that many of those who are dissatisfied with sharia implementation believe that democracy can serve as a vehicle for making sharia work. Overall, I found that chapters 6 and 7 undermine the argument that Islam is not compatible with democracy and provide evidence that the political reasoning of Nigerian Muslims, as the political reasoning of people in Western democratic nations, is often shaped by their political surroundings.

In chapter 8. Kendhammer emphasizes that despite the attention paid to the globalization of Islamic identity and practice, most sharia politics are local in their origins and orientations. He also stresses that sharia implementation is an unfinished story in the Nigerian context. To help promote multireligious democracy, Kendhammer's study suggests continued public political reasoning around the relationship between sharia and democracy.

Despite their contributions, each of the three works has some limitations. Readers well acquainted with the history and geography of Northern Nigeria and with the names of people and institutions in this particular part of Nigeria will note a number of unfortunate errors that cast a shadow over Eltantawi's otherwise perceptive enterprise. It is not my intention here to provide a comprehensive list of these errors. However, the reader who is unfamiliar with Northern Nigeria should be aware that the accuracy of dates, events, and processes described in her work cannot be taken for granted. For instance, when we read that "in the eighth century traders traveled north across the west African savanna and the Sahara desert to the arid plains of Hausaland—where peanut oil was gainfully produced—bringing Islam to what is now the Federal Republic of Nigeria" (Eltantawi, 42), there is cause to doubt whether the author invested enough time to check the maps. The reason to entertain such doubt is partly that a close look at any geographical map of Africa indicates that traders traveled south (not north, as Eltantawi claims) across the Sahara desert to get to Hausaland. Historical errors also abound in Eltantawi's study. For instance, Usman dan Fodio, his brother, and followers did not declare war on the Hausa bakwai in the late eighteenth century as suggested (Eltantawi, 47). In fact, the relevant war was declared in 1804. In terms of names of people and institutions, Eltantawi incorrectly refers to Ahmadu Bello University Zaria as Zaria University (Eltantawi, 98), and she unnecessarily transliterates the names of Mustapha Gwadabe and others in a manner that does not indicate their local pronunciation without any justification (Eltantawi, 100 and other pages). In addition to these issues of accuracy and unnecessary or unjustified transliterations, the book has no maps or illustrations to support the uninitiated reader. Although unexpected in such a work, most of these issues do not directly affect Eltantawi's central narrative. Eltantawi's failure to engage with the extant literature on religion and politics in Africa and even with the literature on law and religion in Northern Nigeria is more worrisome, however. Her analysis follows the extant studies that argue that the root of African conflicts or democratization problems lies with Islam and religion and that such democratization problems can only be resolved from within Islamic or religious traditions by reforming or updating or modernizing Islamic or religious law.[25] This argument is an important aspect of the book, but a closer

25 Lamin Sanneh, *Piety and Power: Muslims and Christians in West Africa* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2015).

https://doi.org/10.1017/jlr.2020.15 Published online by Cambridge University Press

look at the Nigerian context reveals the existence of many tensions—such as civilian/military tension, state/federal tension, educational tension, and tension between Muslim groups—that are not going to be resolved simply by updating Islamic law. Moreover, given that there were dissidents in the Sokoto caliphate and the colonial era who expressed their dissent in ethnic, religious, or other terms, it is not possible to assess the legacy of the Sokoto caliphate and of British colonialism by looking merely at the interaction between canon and context within a sunnaic paradigm that portrays the Sokoto caliphate simply as a model of strength and self-determination and overlooks the Islamic radicalism of the colonial era. This explains why it is logical to say that Eltantawi minimizes the legacies of both the Sokoto caliphate and British policies based on her emphasis on what she calls the sunnaic paradigm.

Eltantawi rightly notes that apart from Amina Lawal, there are many other Muslim women who have featured in sharia court cases in Northern Nigeria. There are also many women based in the region who have participated in uprisings like the Boko Haram uprising or who, as Muslims, Christians, or adherents of traditional religion, have shaped political developments as religious or political activists or in other related capacities. There is, therefore, room for more studies on relevant sharia court cases and on the influence of Muslim and non-Muslim women on politics in Northern Nigeria. Because male scholars find it difficult to interview Muslim women, in part due to the practice of seclusion and other religious factors, more Muslim women like Eltantawi need to be involved in research on religion and politics in Northern Nigeria.

In his book, Vaughan pays very little attention to gender issues, and he does not draw on oral data. If we look at the political structure of Northern Nigeria, it is not a monolithic and nonsyncretic Islamic structure that has survived since the precolonial era. For instance, as Vaughan notes, there are political structures associated not with the Sokoto caliphate but with the precolonial state of Borno. Given that the political structure of Northern Nigeria is not a monolithic structure, knowing more about the complex Islamic structure in the region or at least about the related tensions (if any) between the operators of the political structures that derive from both the Sokoto caliphate and Borno is essential for at least two reasons: to help us have a more nuanced understanding of the root of violence in northern Nigeria, and to help us comprehend how to tackle the problem. Therefore, it is striking that Vaughan did not lay out the broader Islamic structure clearly for his readers. In addition, although Vaughan did a great job in highlighting the roles of Christianity and Islam, one is left wondering how the traditional religions in Northern Nigeria are involved (or not) in instances of contemporary conflicts. There is therefore room for studies that pay closer attention to the role of traditional religion in the Northern Nigerian context. For example, the southeastern region of Nigeria, which has significantly shaped state making in Nigeria, deserves more attention. There is also room for a study based on Vaughan's model that pays greater attention to the relationship between the southeastern region and other parts of Nigeria, especially Northern Nigeria. Finally, although Vaughan's suggestion for ending the conflict in Nigeria is important, it would have been helpful if he had provided specifics on the political and constitutional mechanisms that he deems are appropriate for solving the relevant problem.

In his book, Kendhammer is less concerned than is Eltantawi about highlighting attention to female voices and to the influence of Muslim women on politics in Northern Nigeria. He is also less concerned than is Vaughan about the issue of the spread of Christianity, the development of identity in precolonial Nigeria, and the development of state structures. Given that the evidence provided by Vaughan suggests that the political structures established in the Sokoto caliphate and elsewhere in precolonial Nigeria have had strong impacts on contemporary developments, Kendhammer's assertion that the Sokoto caliphate history has little influence on relevant contemporary developments in Northern Nigeria should therefore be accepted with caution.

https://doi.org/10.1017/jlr.2020.15 Published online by Cambridge University Press

There is room for more studies that highlight attention to how Muslim attitudes toward such issues as sharia, secularism, and democracy have been shaped by familiar media effects and "framing," or to help emphasize the positive ways in which Muslims, Islam, or Islamic structures have helped shaped the development of democracy in Nigeria. Such studies would help balance the dominant historiography that emphasizes the negative aspects of Islam and Islamic structures (sometimes to the point of ignoring the positive). Any new study that employs the lens of "framing" to explain opinion formation needs to be based on interviews in other cities outside Sokoto or even in rural areas of Northern Nigeria, partly to confirm whether Kendhammer's findings are representative. There is also room for relevant studies that focus on the Muslim people based in southern Nigeria. Finally, there is need to pursue studies that employ the "frames" theory of opinion formation in non-Muslim societies. Although Kendhammer makes reference to Christians and southern Nigeria, he does not include to much extent the perception of Christians on the issue of whether or not Islam is compatible with democracy in his analysis. A careful analysis might reveal that the Christians do not have views similar to those of the Muslims of Sokoto. It might even reveal further problems with the view that the main solution to the relevant contemporary problems in Nigeria is to continue to recognize that Muslims should be free (as are members of other religious groups) to pursue a measure of state recognition and support for their values in public policy or to continue to allow public political reasoning around the relationship between sharia and democracy.

Written with elegance and clarity, the three works are important contributions to the growing literature on religion and contemporary Nigerian politics. In my opinion, they are also well suited for undergraduate and graduate courses on religion, politics, and gender in Nigeria and Africa in general.

https://doi.org/10.1017/jlr.2020.15 Published online by Cambridge University Press