

“Jihad in the South”: An Anthro-po-archaeological Critique of Jihad Narratives of the Niger-Benue Confluence Area, 1840-1897

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Abstract

This study offers a critique of pro-jihad narratives that occurred in the southern parts of Niger-Benue confluence of Nigeria from 1840-1897. It investigates the critical question of Fulani hegemony and alleged Islamization that occurred in that period. The study adopts a poly-methodic approach which combines historical, archaeological and anthropological methods for data collection. The study utilizes neo-Marxist critical anthropological paradigms as theoretical framework which provides exegetical tools for data analysis. The study identifies imperialism as the major reasons for the conquest, as it did not bequeath impactful Islamic presence in the area as the propagation of Islam, the alleged reason for the invasion was abandoned in favour of enslavement and economic exploitation. This fact is consistent with ethnographic data which identified the period as the most tragic in the annals of the people. The study shows that the enslavement activities of the Fulani made the people to reject conversion to Islam. Gradual conversion to Islam in the area resulted from peaceful proselytization. Overall, the study provides valuable anthropological insights which enhance the understanding of intergroup relations in precolonial and postcolonial Africa. The study illustrates that peaceful coexistence of diverse ethnic groups and religions in the area shows that diversity, inclusivity and tolerance are cultural traits of African traditional societies.

Keywords: Anthro-po-archaeology, critical anthropology, jihad, interethnic relations, Niger-Benue confluence

Introduction

The southern part of the Niger-Benue confluence area, Nigeria, was a theatre of numerous battles and wars launched by the new Fulani rulers of Nupe land from 1840-1897, who were acclaimed Muslims with interest in extending the frontiers of Islam to pagan territories through *jihad al-sayf*(physical combat with swords). This study contends that the invasions were imperialistic in design. Popular historical narratives

identified the invasions as “Jihad in the South” and the Fulani invaders were called jihadists (Apata, 1990; Mason, 1970; Sidi, 2014). The Jihad is a polysemous word. Islam emphasises *jihad al-nafs* (personal inner struggles) and *jihad al-sayf* (holy wars), which are enjoined on all Muslims (Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica>).

The genesis of “jihad in the south” was laid when the Fulani seized the thrones of Nupe land and became the undisputed rulers; subsequently they turned their bid for territorial expansion and conquests towards the ethnic groups living in the southern part of the Niger-Benue confluence area which are the Afenmai, Ebira, Esan and the northeastern Yoruba groups (Akoko and Okun) and their neighbours. The lands and peoples were subjected, during the so-called jihad, to intense spoliation, starvation, deprivation, death and enslavement. Among the Akoko and Okun, the war is called *ogun Tapa* (Tapa war) or *ogun Ibon* (Ibon war), which both translate to “Nupe war”, (Obahun, personal communication; Oba Igbagun, personal communication; Oaju, personal communication). It is called Nupe war because the new Fulani rulers of Nupe land adopted the language. Among the Esan it was called *egbalukpon*, meaning “the war of people who wore robes and turban”; a coded name for their mode of dressing. The end of Fulani hegemony came on January 14th 1897 after a protracted war that caused immense loss on the ruler and the ruled (Apata, 2003; Aremu and Afolabi, 2018; Jimoh, 2021; Kolapo, 2012; Idrees, 1989; Obayemi, 1978; Usman, 2003; Tubi, 2020; Vandeleur, 1898). Apata (1990) and Obayemi (1978) called to question the validity of using the term jihad for the period while Masons (1970) and Sidi (2014) identified the Fulani invaders as jihadists. The outcome of the study clearly points out that jihad never took place in the southern part of the Niger-Benue confluence area of Nigeria.

The study critiques the uncritical acceptance of *jihad al-sayf* narratives of the events which occurred in the 1800s in the Southern part of the Niger-Benue confluence and opines that the topic requires critical questioning. The study questions the accuracy of the

pro-jihad narratives by scholars (Apata, 1990; Mason, 1970; Sidi, 2014) and contends that the narratives of 57 years Fulani-led hegemony over the autochthonous communities of the Niger-Benue confluence area from 1840-1897 cannot be called jihad. The study notes that though the years of coordinated wars were led by Fulani Muslim rulers, the events did not qualify as religious wars. The study notes that scholars have not sufficiently examined the dynamics and complexities of the period in terms of inter-human implications.

The study equally notes that so far, archaeological and anthropological study of the period has not been adequately discussed. There are Colonial sources like the memoirs of British colonial soldier, Vandeleur (1898), colonial administrators Baikie (F.O 97/454) and Niven (Colonial Office, File 2339 a NAK) on the period. Also, the writings of historians and the researches of African scholars like Apata (2003), Aremu and Afolabi (2018), Aremu and Oniye (2018), Kolapo (2012), Idrees (1989), Obayemi (1978), Usman (2003 and Tubi (2020) amongst others have made substantial historiographical contributions to the discussion yet, there remains a gap regarding the archaeological data and anthropological implications of the period thus, it becomes incumbent to examine these critical aspects.

The study examines the pro-jihadist narratives of the Fulani led incursions into the Niger-Benue confluence area in the 1800s, by critically questioning whether *jihad al-sayf* actually took place. This study imposes on itself the imperative to engage in critical searching and examination of historical, ethnographic and archaeological evidences. The main aim of the study

is to critique historical narratives of Fulani hegemony in the Niger-Benue confluence area as a form of jihad. The two objectives of the study are to; (i) question the fundamental perception of the wars as extension of the jihad started in 1804 by Fulani cleric Usman Dan Fodio, which spread throughout West Africa and (ii) to understand the archaeological and anthropological data and major impacts of Fulani hegemony in the area.

Methodology

The study uses a poly-methodic approach. Data collections came from historical, archaeological and anthropological sources. Field-sourced archaeological and anthropological data were obtained by the researcher during fieldworks among the northeastern Yoruba groups from 2018-2022. Ethnographic sources were obtained from the aged whose parents witnessed the events of the period that ended in 1897. Anthropological sources involved In-depth interviews and Focus group discussions with the aged whose parents witnessed the period. Additionally, archival sources in forms of ethnographies from missionaries and colonial anthropologists as well as reports from colonial administrators, soldiers and merchants were critically utilized. The selected approaches allow for wider sourcing of data. By using these methods the study extends the frontiers of data collection and observations on the topic in order to collate, analyse, interpret and form a rational and unbiased evaluation. Furthermore, key terms in the original languages of the various groups, particularly those with anthropological significance, have been provided and explained.

Theoretical framework

The study adopts critical social theory as theoretical framework. As proposed by theoreticians, critical social theory is a neo-Marxist theory that seeks to offer freedom and liberation to all human beings from oppression. Hall (1986) sees it as the theory that questions hegemonic narratives. According to Nugent (2016) it helps to shift discussion away from stereotypes and entrenched concepts to a deeper analysis of the complex interconnectivities of relationships such as political, economic, religious and social processes. As observed by Tuscano (2007) and Wellmer (2014), the Frankfurt school of thought together with Antonio Gramsci, Jurgen Habermas, Paulo Freire and others postulated critical theory to focus on the conflict between the oppressed and oppressor, social inequality and individual freedom. According to Ritzer and Schubert (1991), it is a metatheoretical analysis that seeks for liberation. It explores concrete human relations of production, ownership, labour, domination and exploitation. It argues that socio-economic and political relations between the powerful and the weak create a dysfunctional society that is full of domination and exploitation (Wellmer, 2014). For Tuscano (2007) its usefulness is acclaimed as best suited for the critique of political issues, especially anti-imperialistic and national liberation struggles. However, Vogelmann (2021) criticizes the theory as “one step forward, two step backward”.

Critical social theory is used in this paper as the most radical theory that helps the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of anthropological issues of the period and articulates critical views of the events. In this study, it specifically focuses on examination of cultural constructs of the period under review and also

offers a critical and radical reading of historical texts of the period. According to Trickovic (1990) critical social theory in anthropology is a metacritique that reveals the true living conditions of the society which is germane to this study. It is adopted because it questions assumptions and generalizations about interconnectivities of people and events of the 1800s in the Niger-Benue confluence area.

Literature Review

The application of critical theory in the review of relevant literatures present divergent opinions on events of the 1800s in the Niger-Benue Confluence area, Nigeria. [Mohammad's \(1985\) “The Doctrine of Jihad: An Introduction”](#) was adopted as general introduction to the concept of jihad and the treatise of [Audu and Osuala \(2014\) titled “Historicising the views of Scholars on the origin of the Jihad of Shehu Uthman Dan Fodio”](#), presents a general background to Fulani led wars in West Africa in the 1800s. Available literatures on the topic show that Muslims of Fulani ethnic group led invasions of the southern part of the Niger-Benue confluence from 1840-1897. Archival colonial reports of the period that confirmed the invasions were consulted notably the writings of Baikie, (F. O 97/454) and Niven, (Colonial Office, File 2339 A NAK). The writing of Vandeleur (1898), a Scottish soldier of the Niger expedition was also used. African historians also provided numerous data on the period. These include Apata (2003), Aremu and Oniye (2018), Idrees (1989), Jimoh, (2021), Lewu (2015), Okene (2000), Yakubu (2021) and Usman (2003) amongst others. Initial anthropological researches by Tubi, Borok and Oshewolo (2021) and Tubi, Oshewolo and Borok

(2023) provided material evidences for the study. Archaeological data came from Usman (2003), and Tubi, (2020, 2021) which furnished details of massive ruins and destruction of numerous settlements during the period.

Sources (Apata, 2003; Aremu and Afolabi, 2018; Aremu and Oniye, 2018, Kolapo, 2012; Idrees, 1989; Lewu, 2015; Mason (1970), Tubi, 2021) point at the beginning to the ascendancy of the Fulani over indigenous Nupe which occurred as a result of internecine royal disputes among the indigenous princes of Nupe land. After the death of the indigenous Nupe ruler, Etsu Muhammed Kolo in 1809, the kingdom entered a long period of political instability as three princes contended for the vacant throne namely Jimada Kolo, Muhammed Majiya and Abdullahi Yikanko. The Fulani were invited as mercenaries by the contending parties and they became power brokers in 1833. They eventually ceased power under their leader Mallam Dendo in 1836 and subjugated the entire Nupe land and became the undisputed rulers in 1840/41 (Mason, 1970; Idrees, 1989, Sidi, 2015, Tubi, 2021). They subsequently parceled Nupe land into Agaie, Bida, Lafiagi, Lapai and Shonga emirates under Fulani rule. The biggest and most impactful of these emirates was Bida. From Bida, they turned their quest for conquest to the south by invading and pillaging the lands of the Afenmai, Akoko, Ebira, Etsako, Okun peoples.

Historical studies of the period have two sharp opinions on the classification of Fulani invasions of the 1800s. On the one hand, there are scholars who assert that the events of the period qualified as holy wars. And on the other hand, there are scholars who

contend that the period has not to do with Islamic proselytization. Apata's (1990), "The Jihad in the South", identifies Fulani led incursions as holy wars, though he did so with some reservations. Masons's (1970) thesis titled, "Jihad in the South: An outline of the nineteenth century Nupe hegemony in the north-eastern Yorubaland and Afenmai" gives a strong contention for the events as jihad. He supported the idea of jihad because the wars were led by Muslim rulers. However, he did not bother about the efforts put into proselytisation which was nil. Also Sidi (2014), asserts that the events were holy wars for the principal reason that Muslim rulers successfully colonized non-Islamic territories. Again the issue of conversion to Islam was not a primal point for him. These narratives which identified the Fulani invaders as jihadists become a working tool.

On the other hand, there are critics who reject the notion of jihad expeditions into the Niger-Benue confluence area. Obayemi's (1978) "The Sokoto Jihad and the O-Kun Yoruba: A Review" critiques the assertion of jihad around the Niger-Benue confluence area during the 1800s. he qualified the period as mere plundering activities by Fulani leaders. Aremu and Afolabi (2018) and Aremu and Oniye, (2018) reject the pro-jihad narratives as an afterthought because though the wars were led by Muslim rulers, they were occupied with economic exploitation rather than conversion to Islam. Kolapo, (2012), Idrees, (1989) and Lewu, (2015) assert that the events of the period did nothing to advance the cause of Islam among the conquered territories as the massive enslavement embarked upon by the Fulani made the people to hate Islam. Tubi's (2021) piece argues that to use jihad to qualify the period was a mere colouration of the most

destructive event in the lives of the conquered territories.

Archaeological and anthropological treatises on the issue have been few. Three relevant works are Usman's (2003), "The Ethnohistory and Archaeology of Warfare in Northern Yoruba", Tubi's (2020) "Anthropology and Archaeology of War and Ruins: A Case Study of Northern Yoruba land, Nigeria, in the 1800s" and Tubi's (2021), "Ogun Tapa: An Archaeological and Ethnohistorical Study of Nupe's Imperialism and Ogidi Resistance in the 1800s". These works supplied archaeological and anthropological details of the period. They presented evidences of extensive ruins, desolation of ancient settlement sites and sudden demographic changes. There was no single evidence of alleged jihad-era Mosque in the area which point inescapably to the inference that no deliberate proselytization to Islam took place in the Niger-Benue confluence area.

The Nupe and Indigenous Peoples of Southern Part of the Niger-Benue Confluence Area

The peoples covered in the study include the Fulani and Nupe speaking peoples on one hand and peoples living in the southern part of the Niger-Benue area covered namely the Afenmai, Esan, Ebira, and the northeastern Yoruba groups of Akoko and Okun.

Nupe: The Nupe are indigenous to Niger and Kwara states, Nigeria, but sizable numbers are found in Kogi state. They occupy the low basin of Rivers Niger, Gbako and Kaduna, forming the dominant group in Niger state. They are indigenous ethnic group in central Nigeria and they consist of several groups and dialects such as Kusapa, Beni, Batachi, Kedye, Lemu,

Gbedegi and Chepan. They occupy Agaie, Bida, Gbako, Mokwa, Lapai, and Wushishi Local Governments of Niger state. They are also indigenous to parts of Kwara and Kogi states, Nigeria. They had long cherished monarchical system under the Etsu. Due to internecine squabbles among the princess, Fulani mercenaries took over the reign of power. They came under Fulani rule in 1836 (Idrees, 1989; Sidi, 2015). Presently, majority are Muslims, while aspects of their traditional religion and culture persist. Sizable portion of the population are Christians.

Afemai/Afenmai: Afemai/Afenmai refers to a group of interrelated peoples that consist of diverse origins and cultures. They occupy the six Local Government Areas of northern Edo state, Nigeria. The Afemai consist of subgroups namely Akoko-Edo, Etsako, Igarra and Owan speaking peoples. They are ancient mini-kingdoms without a central political system. Their religious affiliations embrace Christianity, Islam and traditional religions. They came under Fulani domination from 1885-1897, (Jimoh, 2021).

Ebira: The Ebira consists of groups of kin known variously as Tao, Koto, Toto, and Mozum, a classification which is based on their dialects. They are indigenous peoples of several communities of central Nigeria and are specifically domiciled around the northern and southern parts of the Niger-Benue confluence area. Majority of them are located in Nasarawa and Kogi states. They came under Fulani attack from the 1840-1897. The practice of Islam and Christianity is highly prominent among them, while traditional religions is equally entrenched among the people, (Okene, 2000).

Esan: The Esan people consist of five local governments areas of central Edo State. They are made up of about 35 indigenous mini-kingdoms that were under lenient dominion of the Oba of Benin, who appointed the *enijie* (ruler) of Esan communities. They had trade contacts with the Portuguese in the 15th century AD. The land was invaded by the Fulani from 1885-1897, (Egbefo, 2007; Wesler, 1998).

Akoko: The Akoko-Yoruba are found in the northern part of Ondo state, Nigeria, with four Local Government areas namely; Akoko Northeast, Akoko Northwest, Akoko Southeast and Akoko Southwest. Their traditions of origin point to diverse sources such as Benin, Ile Ife, and Okun land. Akoko-Yoruba is made up of ten linguistic clusters namely Afa, Arigidi, Erusu, Ese, Igasi, Oge, Ojo, Oyin, Udo and Uro. Some of these are cognates while others are distinctly unrelated. They are found in about forty villages and towns. Traditional religions, Islam and Christianity are practiced among the people (Aremu and Afolabi (2018). They were subjugated to Bida rule from 1840-1897.

Okun: The Okun are Yoruba speaking peoples located in the immediate southwestern side of the confluence of Rivers Niger and Benue of central Nigeria. They are found in Ekiti, Ondo, Kwara and Kogi states, Nigeria. They occupy over 100 communities. They speak various dialects of Yoruba language which form the basis of their natural divisions into six dialectical groups namely, Abinu/Bunu, Ijumu, Kiri, Owe, Oworo, and Yagba. Majority of them are located in Kogi state where they occupy six Local Governments Areas; Ijumu, Kabba/Bunu, Mopa-Muro, Lokoja, Yagba East and

Yagba West. Islam and Christianity are firmly established among the Okun, while traditional worship and festivities are observed too, (Apata, 2003; Obayemi, 1978; Tubi 2021). Bida's hegemony was imposed from 1840-1897.

The research findings and discussion

Research findings show that Fulani rulers of Nupe land led numerous invasions into indigenous communities of the peoples living in the south of the Niger from 1840-1897. The findings of the research are presented under four headings with detailed analytical discussion. These are: (1) Fulani's conquest, (2) opposition to Fulani's hegemony, (3) motives for the invasion of South of the Niger-Benue Confluence and (4) impacts of Fulani's hegemony.

Fulani Conquest and Imperialism

In 1840, Bida forces launched full coordinated attacks on their immediate southern neighbours bordering the Niger-Benue confluence area. These were the northeastern Yoruba communities of Okun land and eventually extended their raids to the Akoko and Ebira speaking peoples. In 1885 the war extended to Esan and Afenmai territories. By 1885, the entire territories laid prostrate under Fulani-Nupe forces with the exception of Ogidi, Oka and Okene. The successes of the conquest come from multifarious factors. The basic factors that aided Fulani's conquest have been discussed variously by Akpata (2009, 2003), Aremu and Oniye (2018) Lewu (2015) and Tubi (2021), Tubi, Borok and Oshewolo (2021), Tubi, Oshewolo and Borok (2023) and Obayemi (1978) amongst others. These include:

- (i) The inability of the conquered territories to unite and confront a common enemy.

- (ii) The invader's possession of superior military organization and strategy.
- (iii) The inherent deficiency in their traditional political system, which was based on mini-kingdoms. Mini-kingdoms basically are marked by their micro-demographic structure and absence of a standing army. The various groups lacked any dominant ruler and large standing army. These deficiencies were exploited by the Nupe rulers, (Tubi, 2020).
- (iv) The Fulani rulers enjoyed active unremitting support from British merchants stationed at the confluence of the Niger and Benue. It is a fact that the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 outlawed slavery in all British colonies, yet British merchants and their constabularies in Lokoja actively supported Fulani raiders by regular supply of firearms.
- (v) The tacit support given to them by indigenes of the conquered area. The most glaring support came from Egbe (Bridel, Loko/ Prof 23/1926) and Kabba (Krapf-Askari, 1966; Lewu, 2015; Obayemi, 1978).

The Fulani established their imperialistic headquarters at Kabba and had a base at Egbe, where they planned military offensive against Okun and Akoko peoples and their neighbours. The invaders also had several war camps at Ejuku and Isanlu where they launched attacks on the people and captives were taken from these camps to Bida (Bridel, Loko/prof 231/1926). The various kings of Kabba of that period gave tacit support to the invaders. Also, many indigenes became

active collaborators of the imperialists by being appointed as resident agents and were given the title of *ogba* among the northeastern Yoruba and *azeni* among the Afenmai and Esan peoples, (Apata, 2003, Aremu and Oniye, 2018; Obayemi, 1978).

Opposition to Fulani’s Hegemony

Rebellion against Fulani domination festered rapidly among the conquered communities. The reasons for opposition to Fulani hegemony include; (i) to put a total end to their suppression and possible annihilation, (ii) fervent anti-slavery movement among the people, and (iii) high anti-Kabba sentiment among the people who blamed them for their pro-Fulani activities and the subsequent elevation of the Obaro of Kabba over other kings in the area, (Apata, 2003; Tubi 2021).

It is apposite to note that there is no single historical and ethnographic source that indicate even remotely that opposition to Fulani rule festered because of Islam. Data clearly indicate that there no proselytization into Islam.

Individual communities made efforts to wade off the invaders which ended in abysmal failure and consequently the people were visited with arson and deportation into slavery. As Fulani hegemony persisted, two opposite views prevailed among the people. First, there were those who had *fait accompli* acceptance of Fulani rule and willingly accepted it as the new reality, thus, they collaborated with the new rulers and became officials of Fulani imperialism. For example the scholar Lewu (2015), was convinced that the conquered peoples could never be able to uproot Fulani’s hegemony. However, in opposition were

those who never tolerated Fulani’s authority and therefore loathed Islam. The urgency to form joint war effort to confront Bida forces eventually won. As the opposition to Fulani’s hegemony grew rapidly among the conquered territories, there emerged a coordinated armed opposition.

From 1865 there began systematic opposition to Fulani rule with the formation of military alliances (Apata, 2003; Aremu and Oniye, 2018; Tubi 2021). This led to the formation of the Ogidi Grand Alliance (1894-97). The war leaders of Ogidi Alliance were Agaun from Erusu, Ajakaiye from Ogidi, Kudofo from Ogale, Ekundina from Ayere and Ajimba from Oji. While, the Bida forces were commandeered by Nda Jiya and Makun. At the battle fronts both forces made gains and loses. As the war raged on, the RNC constabularies approached Ogidi, then suddenly on the night of January 13, 1897 the Bida forces fled without firing a shot and so ended Fulani imperialism south of the Niger-Benue confluence area, (Akpata, 2003; Aremu and Oniye, 2018; Aremu and Afolabi, 2018; Vandeleur 2004, Tubi, 2020, 2021).

Motives for Fulani Invasion

Scholar’s diverse views on Fulani domination of the territories around the Niger-Benue confluence area have been highlighted with strong voice for jihad narratives (Mason, 1970; Sidi, 2014) and another contending against it (Aremu and Oniye, 2018; Kolapo, 2012; and Tubi, 2021). It is germane at this juncture to examine Islamic teachings on jihad. According to verifiable Islamic scholars the act of holy wars forbids aggression on civilians, destruction of property and unjust enslavement. It also forbids

poor treatment of war captives and women (Mohammad, 1985). The Encyclopedia Britannica <https://www.britannica> confirms this notion of the concept of holy wars in Islam. Scholars like Mohammad (1985), Karipek, (2020) and Hassan (2018) explain in details the tenets of jihad as involving rising up to fight aggression, cruelty and exploitation regardless of backgrounds and the defence of justice and fairness for all human beings.

The Fulani had set a record as Muslim propagators in West Africa. Research findings however, indicate that the above mentioned jihad tenets were completely sidelined by the Fulani during their hegemony over the Niger-Benue confluence area. As propagators of Islam, the Encyclopedia Britannica opines that several factors rather than islamisation are factors for the Fulani;

In modern times this was also true of the 18th and 19th centuries in Muslim Africa south of the Sahara, where religio-political conquests were seen as jihads, most notably the jihad of Usman Dan Fodio which established the Sokoto caliphate (1804) in what is now northern Nigeria (<https://www.britannica>).

Available data point to the fact that other factors rather than propagation of Islam accentuated the Fulani hegemony over the Niger-Benue confluence area from 1840-1897. The findings of the research are examined.

(i) Wuzi policy (payment of slaves as tributes to Sokoto Caliphate): This refers to payment of slaves as tributes to the caliphate. The study confirmed that the acquisition of *wuzi* (slaves) as tributes to Sokoto

caliphate was one of the primary reasons for the imposed “jihad”, (Obayemi, 1978, Salahu, 2017, Tubi, 2020). All the emirates under the caliphate were required to pay allegiance to the Caliph/Sultan by regular payment of tributes in goods, services and humans beings. Nupe land fell under the jurisdiction of Gwandu. As a sign of homage, it became necessary for the new Fulani rulers of Nupe land to cement their allegiance to the caliphate by sending slaves regularly to the emir of Gwandu. The *wuzi* policy necessarily imposed the obligation of constant warfare and military invasions against their neighbours, (Aremu and Afolabi, 2018; Idrees, 1989; Salahu, 2017, Tubi, Borok and Oshewolo 2021).

(ii) Konu/konuzi (conscription for military service):

This is the forceful conscriptions of young males captives for military service. The urgent desire of the Fulani rulers to maintain a strong force in their constant wars against the rebellious indigenous Nupe royalty on one hand and the conquered territories on the other hand, made them to embark on incessant invasion of their southern neighbours to acquire *konu* (war captive)/*konuzi* (war captives). (Aremu and Afolabi, 2018; Idrees, 1989; Lewu, 2015). Studies by Aremu and Oniye (2018), Kolapo (2012), Salahu (2017), and Yakubu, (2021), reveal that in their bid to prosecute their imperialistic war of expansion on their neighbours and to suppress the resistance of the original indigenous rulers of Nupe land, the Fulani kept on acquiring more *konu/konuzi* as fighters. Oratures obtained from northeastern Yoruba land point out that able bodied men were captured from the area and turned into janissaries of the Nupe rulers while young children were made pages and given military training (Abiola, personal communication;

Ajakaiye; personal communication, Ooju; personal communication).

(iii) *Tungazhi* (agricultural purpose): Another purpose of the invasion was for food supply. *Tungazhi* was the system of using slaves as free labour in farming activities. Mason (1973) describes it as “captive and client labour”. This referred to the deployment of massive number of slaves as free labourers in farming, fishing and craft activities, (Alaniyo, personal communication; Akande, personal communication; Joledo, personal communication). The *tungazhi* policy was necessitated by two cogent reasons. In one respect, it was necessary to produce sufficient food for the military men who were at the war fronts so as to sustain and prosecute the war efforts. On the other, it became expedient too to produce food for the elites and ruling class of Nupe land. To achieve these objectives, according to scholars like Lewu (2015), Mason (1973), Salahu (2017) and Tubi (2020), thousands of slaves were placed on farm settlements called *tungazi* (slave camps) and *esozhi* (king’s farms). Sources state that there were over one thousand labour camps in Nupe land. Mason (1973) gave account of 1,601 to 1,611 slave camps, while Lewu (2015) calculated 1,415 slave camps in all.

(iv) *Azeni/Ogba*(fiefdom policy): The desire to acquire by force the resources of the conquered territories both human and materials, was another major reason for the invasions. The conquered territories were parceled into fiefdom and placed under administrative officers called *azeni* among the Afenmai and *ogba* among the Yorubawho were appointed by Fulani rulers. These were given

maximum power to collect and appropriate cowries and farm produce from the people at their whims and to remit required quantities to Bida, (Apata, 1990; Mason, 1970; Obayemi, 1978; Yakubu, 2021). Colonial report by James (1914) points out that the people were subjected to severe serfdom. Under this system, the *azeni/ogba* demanded compulsory regular annual tributes. Later on, the system became arbitrary. Oral sources say that they also took both young and children as payments when their parents were not able to provide their imposed levies, (Abiola, personal communication; Fatimayin, personal communication; Ooju, personal communication).

The study notes that the Niger-Benue confluence area was rich in human and natural resources. The area has verdant land where assorted games roomed at large in the forest. Also, food crops and processed products like palm oil and shear butter were in abundance. All these were appropriated by force and taken to Bida. The area also, was known for traditional metallurgical technology, pottery making, weaving and dying. During the invasions persons were turned to commodities as they were valued for their economic purposes (Tubi, 2021). Thus, experts in technology were taken to Bida as blacksmiths and weavers were made to produce fabrics for Nupe rulers. All these were done in clear imperialistic fashion.

(v) *Jizya* (selling of slaves): As pointed out by Idrees (1989), Mason (1976), and Salahu (2017) slave factor played a prominent role in the development of Bida emirate. Oral sources also state that the Fulani also engaged in massive selling of captured human beings under the Islamic *jizya* policy (Ajakaiye, personal communication; Fatimayin, personal communication;

Ooju, personal communication). Captured persons were disposed as commodities to the highest bidders. They did this to gain huge financial base for their personal use and for purchase of guns from the Europeans armory fort at Lokoja. First hands sources mentioned that in 1862, about 300-4000 slaves were sold daily at Bida markets and sometimes figure rose to 800, (Baikie, 1897). Schon in 1841 reported seeing 4,000 slaves taken to Bida for sale. According to Tubi (2020: 256), people “were captured and held as cartel, mere commodities to be bought, sold and used. Captured people who were to be sold were gathered as commodities in a market square”.

(vi) Barori (serfdom and clientage policy). The Nupe rulers were interested in serfdom and clientage system. The British colonial ethnographer Harris observes that “certain Bini profess to be *barori* (clients) of Bida title holders” while Mason’s (1973:453-471) “Captive and client labour and economy of the Bida Emirate” gives a detailed account of the policy. Clientage is a policy directed towards providing direct services to the elites of Nupe land. The policy composed of two groups, captives of wars and those who voluntarily gave themselves up to the services of the elites.

(Vii) Surriyah (capturing women for sexual exploitation). As in all wars, women face intimidation, exploitation and oppression. The study revealed the Fulani and Nupe elites were engaged in these especially by subjecting them to concubinage. Though Islam clearly teaches that women who did not participate in war cannot be captured, yet the Fulani invaders jettisoned this rule. Captured women and girls taken into forced coitus relationship as

concubines, and several were subjected to sexual exploitation. The Nupe celebrate *yawo kpantsuku* which is the traditional betrothal of maidens which is different from *surriyah* meaning concubinage, a form of marriage which resulted in several abuses such as underage sex, coerced sexual acts, marital rape, and domestic violence amongst others. Sources attest that women and maidens were captured during the period like their male counterparts and turned to chattel. The invaders took sexual advantage of captured women and girls who were captured during their numerous prolonged raids into neighbouring territories. The field research of Lewu (2015: 117) attests to this fact. The Nupe conceptualized this with the term *mangizhi*, which refers to children born from forced sexual acts and into slavery. Children of such backgrounds were not given equal rights with children from free women.

Major Impacts of Fulani’s Hegemony

The study asserts that the invasion and domination of the peoples living south of the Niger by the Fulani have great impacts on the people. By examining salient anthropological impacts of the invasions on the peoples the study opines that four prominent factors are clearly discernable.

(i) End of *jihad al-sayf* in the southern part of the Niger: The decisive defeat of Bida’s forces put a total end to attempts to forcefully use Islam as a pretext for conquest among the peoples living in the southern parts of the Niger, (Obayemi, 1978; Tubi 2020, Tubi, Oshewolo and Borok, 2023). It is worthy of note that there are huge Muslim populations in the area but the massive spread of Islam among the people occurred by peaceful proselytization that occurred after the war. This has great anthropological importance as

religious beliefs eventually became issues of personal conviction among the people. The absence of religious crisis among the different ethnic and religious groups in the area attests to this fact.

(ii) Negative demographic impact: One of the first anthropological consequences of the wars was massive depopulation of communities. Massive enslavement embarked upon by the Fulani emirs drastically reduced the population of several settlements and several settlements became extinct (Tubi, 2020). The British explorer Baikie (1897) witnessed sale of 300-400 slaves daily and sometimes the figure rose to 800. The invasion caused immense demographic dislocation as several ancient and indigenous settlements completely disappeared from the map, as villages were burnt and captured inhabitants were deported to Bida. To evade enslavement, people fled and sought refuge in inaccessible places such as hilltops and deep forests. Consequently lowland settlements in the area disappeared because people made permanent residence on hilltops and deep forests as a final solution to evade the onslaughts of the invaders, (Aremu and Afolabi, 2018; Lewu, 2015; Tubi 2021). The present settlements on plain grounds in the area came with colonial government policy.

(iii) Distortion of traditional political system: Another impact on the society was minor distortion of traditional institutions in few communities. The genesis of this was imposition of Obaro of Kabba on the conquered territories in a bid to enhance their imperialistic control. As a consequence of this practice, there emerged the idea of “ruling families” in three communities namely Auchi, Arigidi, and

Ikare (Aremu and Oniye, 2018; Tubi, 2021) out of a thousand communities.

(iv) Destruction of traditional technology: One of the effects of the incursions was the destruction of traditional technology. The practices of cloth weaving and iron metallurgical prowess were of high degree in the conquered territories. The Afemai, Akoko, Ebira, Esan and Okun were experts in metals casting such as brass and iron. The invaders hoarded weavers and blacksmiths to Bida and eventually killed the knowledge of traditional ore mining and iron melting in the area (Tubi, 2021).

Summary and conclusion

In summary, this study has shown that though the Fulani-led invasions of the southern parts of the Niger-Benue confluence area were heralded as religious wars but detailed study of the period indicated that there was nothing religious about them. If the reason for the jihad of Usman dan Fodio that began in 1804 was to revive true Islam in Hausa land, however, for Fulani invaders of the southern parts of the Niger-Benue confluence, religion was far removed from their minds, as little or no proselytization was carried out. They were actually prosecuted as slave raids characterized by immense enslavement, starvation, killing and deportation. For obvious reasons, the Fulani knew the anthropological implications of their policies and therefore they did not desire serious conversion to Islam because it will impede them from enslaving the people. The social impact was minimal. There were few infiltrations of Nupe words into the various ethnic groups. However, it can be stated that Fulani rule ended with little social impacts on the various ethnic groups. There was no large scale adoption of Fulani or Nupe cultures as

communities persisted with traditional rites. The political, social, economic and religious systems were barely scratched on the surface. People continued with their traditional dress codes.

The study highlights the usefulness of peaceful proselytisation. There was no attempt to spread Islam among the peoples through jihad. What is clear from the study is that majority of the people refused to accept Islam while under Fulani rule and neither did the invaders intensify religious conversion because they were focused on enslavement. While the spread of Islam failed during Fulani hegemony, it flourished afterwards. The religion ultimately thrived through peaceful means during British colonial rule and early 1960s. The study highlights that the Fulani invaders failed to distinguish their economic and political interests from religious motives, though they carried the title of emirs and the wars were projected as jihad.

In conclusion, the study reveals archaeological data in forms of hundreds of abandoned ancient settlements, numerous ruins of defensive walls, and massive demographic dislocations around the Niger-Benue confluence area. The study also illustrates immense anthropological data on the traditional communities of the Niger-Benue confluence area: (i) It reveals the complexities of pre-colonial imperialism and resistance in traditional societies. (ii) It shows that imperialism was the main cause of Fulani invasion, as jihad, the apparent reason for the protracted warfare was not pursued by the invaders, but rather human and economic exploitation and political hegemony became the focal points of the invasions. (iii) The study reveals that the ongoing peaceful coexistence

and religious tolerance enjoyed among diverse ethnic groups in the area attest to the fact that interethnic relations can be sustained by religion, (iv) that diversity, inclusivity and tolerance which prevail in the area are cultural traits of African traditional societies.

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Oral Sources

<u>NAME</u>	<u>OCCUPATION</u>	<u>AGE</u>	<u>PLACE OF INTERVIEW</u>	<u>DATE OF INTERVIEW</u>
Abiola Andrew	community elder	<u>90</u>	<u>Ogidi</u>	<u>12/12/2024</u>
Ajakaiye, Yunusa	community elder	<u>80</u>	<u>Ogidi</u>	<u>12/12/2024</u>
Akande Ajiboye	chief priest	<u>82</u>	<u>Ogidi</u>	<u>12/12/2024</u>
Daudu, S. L	community leader	<u>95</u>	<u>Magongo</u>	<u>05/01/2025</u>
Fatimayin Gbaluju	chief priest	<u>92</u>	<u>Ogidi</u>	<u>12/12/2024</u>
Obahun Sasu	traditional chief	<u>89</u>	<u>Ayedayo</u>	<u>21/12/2024</u>
Ooju, Oloye	traditional chief	<u>90</u>	<u>Mopa</u>	<u>28/12/2024</u>
Alaniyo, Thomas	monarch of Iluke	<u>85</u>	<u>Iluke</u>	<u>26/12/2024</u>
Oba Igbagun	monarch of Igbagun	<u>80</u>	<u>Igbagun</u>	<u>26/12/2024</u>
Joledo, Julius	monarch of Mopa	<u>72</u>	<u>Mopa</u>	<u>28/12/2024</u>

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