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Jihad in West Africa during the Age of Revolutions

Paul Lovejoy

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In *Jihad in West Africa during the Age of Revolutions*, a preeminent historian of Africa argues that scholars of the Americas and the Atlantic world have not given Africa its due consideration as part of either the Atlantic world or the age of revolutions. The book examines the jihad movement in the context of the age of revolutions—commonly associated with the American and French revolutions and the erosion of European imperialist powers—and shows how West Africa, too, experienced a period of profound political change in the late eighteenth through the mid-nineteenth century. Paul Lovejoy argues that West Africa was a vital actor in the Atlantic world, and has wrongly been excluded from analyses of the period.

Among its chief contributions, the book reconceptualizes slavery. Lovejoy shows that during the decades in question, slavery not only expanded extensively in the southern United States, Cuba, and Brazil, but also in the jihad states of West Africa. In particular, this expansion occurred in the Muslim states of the Sokoto Caliphate, Fuuta Jalon, and Fuuta Toro. At the same time, he offers new information on the role antislavery activity in West Africa played in the Atlantic slave trade and the African diaspora.

Finally, *Jihad and Slavery in West Africa during the Age of Revolutions* provides unprecedented context for the political and cultural role of Islam in Africa—and of the concept of jihad in particular—from the eighteenth century into the present. Understanding that there is a long tradition of jihad in West Africa, Lovejoy argues, helps to correct the current distortion in understanding the contemporary jihad movement in the Middle East, Afganistan, Pakistan, and Africa.

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