Two main features make this book stand out. The first is its distillation of a complicated history of a thorny set of conflicts, and their multiple players, into eminently readable chapters. Executing this successfully brings the dual challenge of linking two distinct conflicts—Sudan's second civil war from 1983–2005, and South Sudan's collapse in 2013—with the institutional development of IGAD. The author achieves this while also identifying key continuities between conflicts. The second is how the author anchors the South Sudan case in the broader story of regional cooperation and peace mediation in Africa. The role of IGAD is emblematic of how, as a region, Africa has largely been delegated management of a historically disproportionate number of conflicts by an international community allergic to intervention. This is an important contribution.

While it is impossible for such a book to address every aspect of South Sudan's multiple, overlapping stories of war and peace, there is some room for some development. First, the interaction between regime politics and regional politics is not problematized to the extent it could be. To be sure, the author paints a good empirical picture of IGAD members and how they behave individually and collectively, but some more explicit theoretical assumptions about how this behavior works would have strengthened the book. Second, and in a similar vein, the book's treatment of spoilers—those whose interests are threatened by peace—in IGAD's mediation efforts would benefit from a more a solid theoretical and conceptual mooring.

That said, these are not game-changing critiques *per se*, but hopefully suggestions for potential deeper dives into the complex history of South Sudan and the regional interventions that have tried to address its conflicts. Exploring such directions would of course require more theoretical and conceptual development, which arguably falls outside the scope of the book—but it would provide a solid foundation for future work. Meanwhile, *From Sudan to South Sudan* is superbly written and provides a compelling case study that is at once a primer on IGAD's role as peacemaker, and also on subregional peace mediation in Africa more generally. As such, it would be a highly suitable companion case for any curriculum in conflict management, or an excellent addition to a course on the politics of Africa or Africa's international relations.

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Sultan, Caliph, and the Renewer of the Faith: Aḥmad Lobbo, the Tārīkh al-fattāsh and the Making of an Islamic State in West Africa. By Mauro Nobili. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xix, 262; 2 maps, 4 b/w illustrations. $99.99 cloth.

The Arabic manuscripts of West Africa are not what they seem to be. The problem is not just the tendency to use precolonial written texts as abstract evidence of the depth of a more complex, literate civilization than racist constructions of the African past allow, or

the trope of astonishment at this repeated (re)discovery of a written, textual heritage in sub-Saharan Africa. When used as sources for precolonial history, the canon of translated and edited Arabic texts are often treated uncritically, sometimes subject to interpretive projections of possible meanings from small hints in the texts but rarely scrutinized as compositions or arguments made by their authors. Paulo de Moraes Farias has encouraged us to think of the seventeenth-century chronicles of the Songhay Empire produced in Timbuktu not as objective reflections of that history, but as a genre of literature, invented at that time to help shape particular interpretations of the past for the particular ends of their authors.[1] With the publication of Mauro Nobili's remarkable new book treating the nineteenth-century production, forgery, and circulation of one of these purportedly seventeenth-century chronicles, we stand at the precipice of a significant rethinking of precolonial West African history.

Up to now, much of what we think we know about the Songhay Empire (1468–1591) comes from two Arabic chronicles written in Timbuktu during the seventeenth century, both of which were edited and published with a French translation in the early twentieth century.[2] The best known and most widely circulated of these texts was ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Saʿdī's *Tārīkh al-Sūdān* [The Chronicle of the Blacks]. The second is called the *Tārīkh al-Fattāsh* [The Chronicle of the Inquisitive Researcher], and it has been the source of confusion and debate since it was first identified by French colonial officials because of the significant differences in the three extant manuscript copies that seemed to exist of this text. The publication of Nehemia Levtzion's work on the problems of the *Tārīkh al-Fattāsh* in the early 1970s made clear that the discrepancies in the extant manuscripts were the consequence of comparing a nineteenth-century text that included forged passages that somebody had made to an older seventeenth-century text.[3] The nineteenth century version of the text supported the political claims of Aḥmad Lobbo (r.1818–45), the founder of a state in the Middle Niger region of modern-day Mali called Ḥamdallāhi. For example, nineteenth-century passages claimed to predict the arrival of a leader named Aḥmad from among the Fulbe people who would renew the world. It also made claims over groups defined as slaves on behalf of any state that ruled the area. The authority for these claims, according to the nineteenth-century text, was inherited from the famous Songhay ruler Askia Muḥammad (r.1493–1538). Much of the scholarly attention

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[1] Paulo F. de Moraes Farias, *Arabic Medieval Inscriptions from the Republic of Mali: Epigraphy, Chronicles, and Songhay-Tuāreg History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2003), lxix–lxx.

[2] *Tarikh el-fattach par Mahmoud Kati et l'un de ses petit fils ou Chronique de chercheur pour servir à l'histoire des villes, des armées et des principaux personnages du Tekrour*, Octave V. Houdas and Maurice Delafosse ed. and trans. (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1913); Abderrahman es-Sadi, *Tarikh es-Soudan: Texte Arabe Édité*, ed. Octave V. Houdas (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1898); Abderrahman es-Sadi, *Tarikh es-Soudan: Traduit de l'Arabe*, trans. Octave V. Houdas (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1900). See also John Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire: Al-Sadi's Tarikh al-sūdān down to 1613 and Other Contemporary Documents* (Leiden: Brill, 1999). A third chronicle of this history was also published in France at this time: *Tedzkiret en-nisiān fi akhbar molouk es-Soudān*, ed. And trans Ovtave V. Houdas (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1901).

[3] See especially Nehemia Levtzion, "A Seventeenth-Century Chronicle by Ibn al-Mukhtār: A Critical Study of *Tārīkh* al-Fattāsh," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 34, 3 (1971), 571–93.

and debate has focused on trying to identify the author of the "original" chronicle (referred to only as Ibn al-Mukhtār in one manuscript), and reconciling an interpretation with the improbably long life span of the author identified in the nineteenth-century pseudo-chronicle (identified as Maḥmūd Kaʿtī).

Nobili shows that much of this debate has been completely beside the point because the model of an original seventeenth-century text with some added forged material in the pseudo-chronicle is wrong. Instead, Nobili argues that the *Tārīkh al-Fattāsh* is a nineteenth-century text, configured to support a set of arguments about the role of the Songhay ruler Askia Muḥammad as a unique figure in West African history combining in his person both political and religious authority. Masterfully bringing together new Arabic material to reread the story of the *Tārīkh al-Fattāsh* altogether, Nobili shows how a Fulbe scholar named Nūḥ b. al-Ṭāhir (d.1857–58), composed the *Tārīkh al-Fattāsh* himself, inventing a detailed account of Askia Muḥammad's pilgrimage to Mecca in 1496–98, where he was invested as caliph—an Islamic idea uniting political and religious authority—by the ruler of Mecca, and was recognized as such by the famous contemporary Egyptian scholar Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d.1505), among others. Nūḥ b. al-Ṭāhir's patron, the ruler of Ḥamdallāhi Aḥmad Lobbo, is easily identified as the person meant to inherit this authority from Askia Muḥammad, according to prophesies recorded in the *Tārīkh al-Fattāsh*.

It is a complex story with many twists and turns, but in a nutshell, Nobili uses a very impressive range of Arabic manuscript sources to show how Nūḥ b. al-Ṭāhir took an obscure older chronicle, which Nobili calls the *Tārīkh Ibn al-Mukhtār*, and reshaped it to suit his political purposes, pretending that it was a seventeenth-century document. He made a largely unknown jurist named Maḥmūd Kaʿti (d.1593), whose brief biography is recorded in the *Tārīkh al-Sūdān*, into its author, and then gave him an improbably long life in order for it to be possible that he accompanied Askia Muḥammad on his pilgrimage to Mecca, and that he born witness to the investiture of Askia Muḥammad as caliph, and to the prophesies that Aḥmad Lobbo would inherit this authority. Then, in correspondence with Muslim authorities from across nineteenth-century West Africa, Nūḥ b. al-Ṭāhir quoted from his forged chronicle as evidence for his claims on behalf of Aḥmad Lobbo. Nobili argues that "it may well be that relative obscurity of the *Tārīkh Ibn al-Mukhtār* is what attracted Nūḥ b. al-Ṭāhir's attention: here was a useful and detailed seventeenth-century work recording the biographies of the Askias, the kings of the Songhay Empire, into which he could insert and disguise the narrative that he himself had invented regarding Askia Muḥammad's pilgrimage. Precisely because the *Tārīkh Ibn al-Mukhtār* was not a famous work, like its contemporary, the *Tārīkh al-Sūdān*, Nūḥ b. al-Ṭāhir was able to manipulate this text without anybody noticing the intervention, in order to construct a new chronicle, the *Tārīkh al-Fattāsh*" (p. 98–99). So the *Tārīkh al-Fattāsh* must be understood as a nineteenth-century composition of Nūḥ b. al-Ṭāhir, full stop.

The implication of Nobili's extraordinary research identifying the details of Nūḥ b. al-Ṭāhir's project is that we must read the *Tārīkh al-Fattāsh* as an important source for the nineteenth-century context of Muslim revolutionary movements in West Africa, and not as a source for the history of the Songhay Empire. The second half of the book focuses on how Nūḥ b. al-Ṭāhir and Aḥmad Lobbo used the *Tārīkh al-Fattāsh* as evidence to support

the claims he made on behalf of Ḥamdallāhi's authority. Nūḥ b. al-Ṭāhir composed and circulated many copies of a text drawing on and quoting his *Tārīkh al-Fattāsh* to claim that Aḥmad Lobbo was the predicted twelfth caliph (after the Prophet Muḥammad). He exchanged letters with other regional Muslim authorities and scholars such as the leaders of Sokoto and the Kunta scholars in Timbuktu and in the Azawad using the *Tārīkh al-Fattāsh* as the basis of his arguments. All the while, like any good forgery, the *Tārīkh al-Fattāsh* itself never circulated and it seems to have been Nūḥ b. al-Ṭāhir's intention that there only ever be the one copy that he himself had composed.

By following the "work" done by the *Tārīkh al-Fattāsh* on behalf of Aḥmad Lobbo, Nobili seeks an explanation for how the revolutionary jihadists of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in West Africa acquired their authority and how it was contested. Nobili calls these events "revolutionary" because they sought to combine religious and political authority in the same person, for the first time in Muslim West Africa. Aḥmad Lobbo and Muḥammad Bello, an important ruler of Sokoto, were scholar-rulers, and this was something new. In Nūḥ b. al-Ṭāhir's *Tārīkh al-Fattāsh*, we see how the increasing textuality of Muslim West Africa by the nineteenth century allowed for new strategies for claiming authority. Aḥmad Lobbo was not from a prestigious lineage and he never traveled outside of his home region to further his education. As such, he did not benefit initially from the symbolic capital of an association with prestigious scholar-rulers of Sokoto for example. A forged set of prophecies stood in for those other bases for claims to politico-religious authority. By focusing on the ways that these claims traveled by letters, Nobili is able to show how arguments over politico-religious authority played out in what was a highly contested space.

This is a marvelous book that will be read and admired by students of West African history for many years to come. It should force a rethinking of what we think we know about the Songhay Empire, because part of it was clearly the product of the rewriting of that history in the moment of explosive intellectual creativity that accompanied the "revolutionary" jihadist efforts in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This process that Nobili calls "hypertextuality," by which he means the transformations of older texts into something utterly new, is surely more widespread than the case of Nūḥ b. al-Ṭāhir's *Tārīkh al-Fattāsh*. The challenge of Nobili's book to the rest of us is to insist that we better read for the circumstances of the production of texts, for their stakes, and for the motives of their composition and circulation. And of course, the particular practice of forging manuscripts continues to this day. As Susana Molins-Lliteras has demonstrated, one of Timbuktu's private manuscript libraries has raised money on the basis of a more recent forgery of its manuscripts, purportedly once belonging to Maḥmūd Kaʿti, the same

pseudo-author of the *Tārīkh al-Fattāsh* invented by Nūḥ b. al-Ṭāhir.[4] Ironically, or perhaps humorously, this library of modern-day forgeries is named Fondo Kaʿti. And like Nuh b.al-Tahir's *Tārīkh al-Fattāsh*, its owner Ismael Diadié Haidara has only ever allowed the briefest glance at his otherwise hidden treasures.

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An Economic History of West Africa. Second Edition. **By A.G. Hopkins**. New York: Routledge, 2020. Pp. 400. $180.00 cloth, $76.95 paper, $76.95 E-book.

The first edition of A.G. Hopkins's *Economic History of West Africa*—published in 1973—was immediately recognized as a revolutionary work in the field. Leading scholars praised the book as an "astonishing achievement,"[1] as a "milestone in African history" that would "revolutionize African Studies,"[2] and as a contribution that would "set the standard in the field for years to come," moving African economic history "to a higher plane of academic respectability."[3] Hopkins's choice to evaluate long-run economic change in West Africa through the lens of market dynamics struck at the heart of substantivist claims that *homo economicus* had not occupied a meaningful place in (most of) African history. According to Hopkins, the "underdevelopment" of precolonial West African markets was not the result of economically "irrational" behavior by its inhabitants, but was a natural outcome of the region's high land-labor ratios and the specific nature of its external trade patterns. With low population densities and high internal transportation costs holding back demand, the development of domestic markets remained limited; a condition that neither the trans-Atlantic nor the trans-Saharan trade managed to alter.[4] It was only with the transition to "legitimate" commerce in the nineteenth century that this equilibrium broke down and that export activities started to significantly transform and expand the domestic economy. As such, Hopkins argued, while colonialism certainly *accelerated* the transition to the "modern" West African economy, the process itself had already been set in motion well before.

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[4] Susana Molins-Lliteras, "Africa Starts at the Pyrenees: The Fondo Kati between al-Andalus and Timbuktu" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2015).

[1] Graham Irwin, review of *An Economic History of West Africa*, by A.G. Hopkins, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 6, 3 (1976), 531.

[2] Paul Lovejoy, review of *An Economic History of West Africa*, by A.G. Hopkins, *African Affairs* 73, 291 (1974), 236.

[3] Jan Hogendorn review of *An Economic History of West Africa*, by A.G. Hopkins, *Journal of Economic History* 34, 4 (1974), 1046.

[4] Hopkins gives four main reasons for the limited "multiplier" effects of external trade in precolonial Africa. See *An Economic History of West Africa*, 1st ed., (London: Longman, 1973), 119–20.