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978-1-107-01654-5 - From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel: The  
Road to Nongovernmentality  
Gregory Mann  
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## From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel

This book looks beyond the familiar history of former empires and new nation-states to consider newly transnational communities of solidarity and aid, social science and activism. Shortly after independence from France in 1960, the people living along the Sahel – a long thin stretch of land bordering the Sahara – became the subjects of human rights campaigns and humanitarian interventions. Just when its states were strongest and most ambitious, the postcolonial West African Sahel became fertile terrain for the production of novel forms of governmental rationality realized through NGOs. The roots of this “nongovernmentality” lay partly in Europe and North America, but it flowered, paradoxically, in the Sahel. This book is unique in that it questions not only how West African states exercised their new sovereignty but also how and why NGOs, ranging from CARE and Amnesty International to Black internationalists, began to assume elements of it during a period in which it was so highly valued.

Gregory Mann is Professor in the history department at Columbia University, specializing in the history of francophone West Africa. Mann’s articles have appeared in the *American Historical Review*, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, the *Journal of African History*, and *Politique Africaine*.

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*The Road to Nongovernmentality*

GREGORY MANN

*Columbia University*



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## Acknowledgments

Books, like corpses, enter and leave the world in the hands of others. This book first began to enter the world more than a decade ago, and many hands brought it into being, often unwittingly. The debts that I, its author, have accumulated during that time are innumerable and impossible to discharge, but I want to acknowledge the largest and most pressing here.

In New York City, I have the absurd good fortune, at once personal and intellectual, to work alongside Fred Cooper and Mamadou Diouf, both of whom are generous senior colleagues pursuing questions not too far from my own. I continue to learn many lessons from them, as I do from the indomitable Luise White. I regret that this book cannot engage more fully with their own recently published or forthcoming work. I have also benefited greatly from the collegiality of Souleymane Bachir Diagne, Evan Haefeli, Mark Mazower, Sam Moyn, Emmanuelle Saada, and Rhiannon Stephens. Cabeiri Robinson, David Marriott, Nick Guyatt, and Nicole Coleman made my time at the Stanford Humanities Center productive and meaningful. Richard Roberts and Sean Hanretta proved to be exceedingly generous colleagues during my time in Palo Alto, but also before and after. Richard helped to find this book a home. In Paris, Danielle Haase-Duboc, Mihaela Bacou, and Brunhilde Biebuyck at Reid Hall gave me all the support anyone could ask for. Emmanuelle Sibeud opened many doors for me, and early conversations with her, Jean-Philippe Dedieu, Brian Larkin, and Julie Livingston proved precious. Sara Berry, whose guidance meant so much to my first book, contributed to this one as well, offering late in the process of rewriting an occasion for dialogue and exchange at Johns Hopkins University. There and elsewhere, the reflections of Leo Villalón proved invaluable, as did those of many other colleagues.

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Much of what takes published form here was first essayed in other venues. I benefited greatly from critiques launched at the Université de Bamako, the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Sciences Po Paris and Sciences Po Bordeaux, Paris VIII and Paris I, Stanford, the University of Florida, the University of Michigan, the University of Toronto, the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies, and various other conferences and workshops. The text was also much improved by the astute comments of the Press's anonymous readers.

This book, nearly completed, took a different turn when Mali unravelled in 2012–13. I rethought and rewrote much of it in the long grind of that crisis, during which many excellent scholars of Mali proved to be exemplary citizens as well. I was proud to be in conversation with Isaie Dougnon, Daouda Gary-Touunkara, Bruce Hall, Baz Lecocq, Johanna Siméant, Bruce Whitehouse, Ingrid Monson, and many others during that time. Baz, Brandon County, Bruce Hall, Jean-Hervé Jézéquel, and Bruce Whitehouse shared valuable documents and ideas with me, and Baz in particular put up with a lot of crap. I have been walking beside and learning from him and Isaie for more than fifteen years. I hope the road will be a long one.

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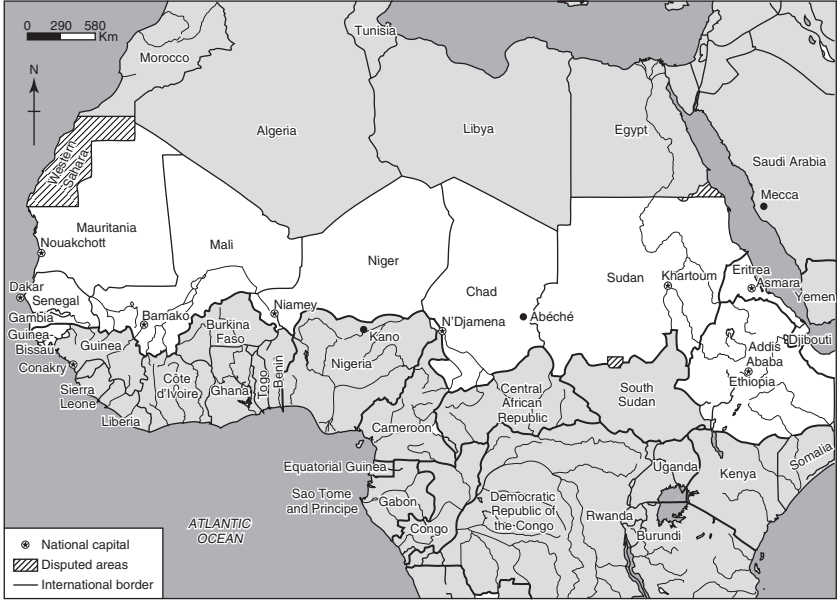
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*Acknowledgments*

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Ousmane Traore remains an exemplary *diatigi*. I owe a great deal to the family of the late Moussa Sidibe, as well as to my own parents and my sisters. No blessing is greater than this one: Oumou has been my companion on much of this road, on which *a ba togoma* has joined us. I offer this book with humility to them, and to the memory of our own Ousmane.

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## Note on Terminology

This book involves two Sudans and one Soudan. In order to avoid confusion between the region of the Sudan – from the Arabic phrase “*bilad al-sudan*,” referring to Africa south of the Sahara – and the colony and later nation-state of Sudan – that is, the Nilotic Sudan – I have systematically avoided the use of the definite article in reference to the political entity. However, when it is used in quotations, I have kept it, as the meaning is clear from the context. As much as possible, I have avoided reference to the region.

I have kept the French spelling “Soudan” to refer to the colony of Soudan Français, which briefly became the Territory of Soudan and then the Soudanese Republic before becoming the Republic of Mali. I have also kept the adjectives derived from it (thus “Soudanese” for “*Soudanais*”).

I use the term “Mande” to refer to the related languages and culture that claim the Mali Empire, founded in the thirteenth century, as part of their heritage. I use the term Mandekan (“the language of the Mande”) to indicate the closely related languages of Bambara (or Bamanankan) and Malinké.

For stylistic purposes, I have in certain passages adopted the common West African practice of referring to heads of state by their given names rather than their family names (thus Moussa Traore is Moussa, etc.). I trust that the reference is clear in context.

In the case of a female public figure known by her spouse’s family name as well as by her own, I have followed local practice and that of my sources by placing the spouse’s family name before the individual’s given name. Thus Modibo Keita’s senior wife is Mme. Keita Mariam Travélé, but Aoua Keita remains Aoua Keita.

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*Note on Terminology*

The use of the accented “é” in transcribing family names in the region is inconsistent. I have generally avoided its use unless authors employ it in writing their own names. Thus the name of former Malian head of state Moussa Traore goes unadorned, in contrast to that of author and publisher Amadou Seydou Traoré, who in this instance gets the last word.