



HAL
open science

Introduction

Xavier Bougarel, Raphaëlle Branche, Cloé Drieu

► **To cite this version:**

Xavier Bougarel, Raphaëlle Branche, Cloé Drieu. Introduction. Xavier Bougarel, Raphaëlle Branche, Cloé Drieu. *Far from Jihad. Combatants of Muslim Origin in European Armies in the 20th Century*, Bloomsbury, pp.1-23, 2017. halshs-04333708

HAL Id: halshs-04333708

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-04333708>

Submitted on 10 Dec 2023

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Xavier Bougarel, Raphaëlle Branche and Cloé Drieu, “Introduction”, in: Xavier Bougarel, Raphaëlle Branche and Cloé Drieu (eds.), *Far from Jihad. Combatants of Muslim Origin in European Armies in the 20th Century*, Bloomsbury, London, 2017, pp. 1-23.

Xavier Bougarel, Raphaëlle Branche and Cloé Drieu

In 1943, *An Nasr* (‘Victory’), a newspaper for North African combatants in the French Army, published a picture of a Saladin slicing a swastika with his sword. Between Orientalist cliché and deliberate anachronism, this image illustrates how, in the twentieth century, the European Great Powers at war sought to win the Muslim peoples over to their side. For the past few years, in the midst of the media’s sensationalist focus on jihadist movements, this historical reality has inspired several publications of varying quality about the ‘Jihad Made in Germany’ of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed V in 1914, or the pro-Nazi propaganda of the Mufti of Jerusalem Amin al-Husayni, even though these two appeals had no important impact on Muslim populations.¹ At the same time, the First World War centenary has been the occasion for numerous scientific publications and events. Breaking with the strictly national narratives of the First World War, considerable research has focused on the colonial troops, emphasized the imperial dimensions of the war, and shown that the Great War was also a multicultural experience.² Other publications have focused on the religious dimensions of the First World War, endeavouring to reconstruct the religious beliefs and practices of ordinary soldiers.³ Yet Islam has remained relatively marginal in these works. The present collective work aims to show the importance of this theme by focusing on the combatants of Muslim origin that fought in European armies in the two World Wars, and by using Islam as a prism through which to better understand how these soldiers were supervised, where their allegiances lay, and what their everyday practices were.

¹ For a critique of the concept of ‘jihad made in Germany’, see Mustafâ Aksakal, “‘Holy War Made in Germany’? Ottoman Origins of the 1914 Jihad”, *War in History* 18, no. 2 (2011): 184-99. On Amin al-Husayni’s role during the Second World War, see Gilbert Achcar, *The Arabs and the Holocaust* (London: Saqi Books, 2011).

² See *inter alia* Robert Gewarth and Erez Manela (ed.), *Empires at War 1911-1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Richard Fogarty and Andrew Jarboe (ed.), *Empires in World War One: Shifting Frontiers and Imperial Dynamics in a Global Conflict* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014), as well as the conferences *The Great War as Intercultural Moment* held in Paris in September 2013 and *Les troupes coloniales et la Grande Guerre* held in Reims in November 2013.

³ See *inter alia* Xavier Bonniface, *Histoire religieuse de la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Fayard, 2014); Michael Snape and Edward Madigan (ed.), *The Clergy in Khaki: New Perspectives on British Army Chaplaincy in the First World War* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013); Jonathan Ebel, *Faith in the Fight. Religion and the American Soldier in the Great War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010). See also two older books: Michael Snape, *God and the British Soldier: Religion in the British Army in the First and Second World Wars* (London: Routledge, 2005); and Annette Becker, *La guerre et la foi. De la mort à la mémoire 1914-1930* (Paris: Arnaud Colin, 1994).

What do we mean by ‘combatants of Muslim origin’?

In this collective work, we focus on combatants from societies with a Muslim culture. The aim is not to make any assumptions about their personal piety, but to investigate whether they were perceived as Muslims by their military commanders, and whether they viewed themselves in these terms. For example, it is equally important to know whether European leaders considered Islam to be a threat to their imperial hegemony, and whether the combatants of Muslim origin truly identified with the Umma (the community of the faithful), knowing that these two phenomena are not necessarily related. We are well aware that the term ‘Muslim’ must not overshadow the diverse geographic origins of the combatants in question, the wide range of imperial political and military frameworks that they were subject to, or the web of tribal, ethnic or regional identities that they adhered to. Moreover, we are interested in combatants of Muslim origin enrolled in armies with a non-Muslim majority of recruits, and therefore do not cover combatants of the Ottoman Army.⁴

European armies recruited combatants of Muslim origin from the time of the colonial conquest until the wars of decolonization. Indeed, the European Great Powers could not maintain their domination over vast empires without recruiting native soldiers and policemen.⁵ Combatants of Muslim origin were also involved in wars on European soil, including the Spanish civil war in 1936-1939.⁶ But rather than retracing the history of armed formations with very different statuses and destinies, we have preferred to focus on the two World Wars. During these conflicts, the number of combatants of Muslim origin in the European armies reached unparalleled heights. A substantial proportion of them fought in Europe, with all the adaptation problems caused by this transfer. In addition, the experience of these two global conflicts affected the social and political mobilizations of Muslim populations after the Second World War, as shown in particular in Daniel Owen Spence’s contribution to this volume. All these reasons explain why we have chosen these two crucial periods of twentieth century history.

⁴ On combatants in the Ottoman Army, see *inter alia* Mehmet Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War. Between Voluntarism and Resistance* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

⁵ On the imperial armies in general, see *inter alia* David Killingray and David Omissi (ed.), *Guardians of Empire: The Armed Forces of the Colonial Powers c. 1700-1964* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Gerhard Höpp and Brigitte Reinwald (ed.), *Fremdeinsätze. Afrikaner und Asiaten in europäischen Kriegen 1914-1945* (Berlin: Das arabische Buch, 2000). On the police in a colonial context, see *inter alia* David Anderson and David Killingray, *Policing the Empire: Government, Authority, and Control, 1830-1940*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991); Jean-Pierre Bat and Nicolas Courtin (ed.), *Le maintien de l’ordre en situation coloniale. Afrique et Madagascar, XIXème-XXème siècles* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012).

⁶ On the Moroccan troops in the Spanish civil war, see *inter alia* Sebastian Balfour, *Deadly Embrace. Morocco and the Road to the Spanish Civil War*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002; Maria Rosa de Madariaga, ‘Moroccan Soldiers in the Spanish Civil War’, in *Colonial Soldiers in Europe 1914-1945. “Aliens in Uniform” in Wartime Societies*, ed. Eric Storm and Ali Al Tuma (New York: Routledge, 2016), 161-81; Ali Al Tuma, “‘Moor No Easting, Moor No Sleeping, Moor Leaving’: A Story of Moroccan Soldiers, Spanish Officers and Protest in the Spanish Civil War”, in Storm and Al Tuma, *Colonial Soldiers*, 207-27.

Despite often incomplete sources and always problematic statistical categories, the number of these combatants in the two World Wars can be roughly estimated. In the First World War, more than two million combatants of Muslim origin were enrolled in the Russian Army (more than one million Tatars and Bashkirs), the Indian Army (500,000, i.e. one-third of the troops in this Hindu-majority colonial army), the French Army (450,000 Africans and North Africans) and to a lesser extent, the German and Austro-Hungarian Armies. On certain battlefields, such as the Dardanelles, Palestine or Mesopotamia, combatants of Muslim origin represented a particularly high proportion of troops on the ground. They also played a decisive role in the Second World War. By far, the Red Army had the largest number of Muslim soldiers (several million Muslims from Russia, the Caucasus and Central Asia), followed by the Indian Army (700,000), the French forces (500,000 in 1940 and 400,000 in the army raised in North Africa beginning in 1942), not to mention other smaller contingents in the Wehrmacht, the Waffen-SS and the Dutch Army. In 1944, the French Expeditionary Corps in Italy was 60% comprised of colonial soldiers, the majority of whom were Muslims.⁷

While the history of imperial armies has been considerably renewed over the past few decades, Islam's place in these armies has not been studied substantially. Historian Kaushik Roy, one of the leading specialists in the Indian Army, only addresses religion marginally, because he does not view it as an important factor of troops' morale. According to Roy, 'in the final analysis, the Commonwealth armies' morale and discipline in the battlefields depended on the supply of food, drink, sex and qualitative and quantitative superiority in military hardware. These constituted the crucial components of in-combat motivation.'⁸ In another article, Roy admits that 'a feature unique about the Indian Army was the fact that officers had to take personal care of the troops, especially their religious and cultural sensibilities',⁹ but he does not expound on this point. More generally, only a few works have focused on Islam's place in the way these soldiers were supervised, where their allegiances lay, and what their everyday practices were.

Nile Green's book, published in 2009, is particularly important. Green describes the tolerance that the Sufi Islam of the *faqirs* enjoyed in the Indian Army in the nineteenth century, until the emergence of a 'barracks Islam' that was more closely supervised, and was influenced by Muslim reformism and Protestant rigour.¹⁰ In 2008, Richard Fogarty dedicated a chapter of his book *Race and War in France* to Islam in the French colonial troops of the First World War. In this chapter, Fogarty emphasizes the ambiguities of the French authorities, aware that the main Islamic rituals had to be respected to ensure the loyalty of Muslim troops, while

⁷ On the combatants of Muslim origin in the two World Wars, see also Storm and Al Tuma (ed.), *Colonial Soldiers in Europe*; Kaushik Roy (ed.), *The Indian Army in the Two World Wars* (Leiden : Brill, 2012).

⁸ Kaushik Roy, 'Discipline and Morale of the African, British and Indian Army Units in Burma and India during World War II', *Modern Asian Studies* 44, no. 6 (November 2010): 1255-82 (here 1281).

⁹ Kaushik Roy, 'Military Loyalty in the Colonial Context: A Case Study of the Indian Army during World War II', *The Journal of Military History* 73, no. 2 (April 2009): 497-529 (here 527).

¹⁰ Nile Green, *Islam and the Army in Colonial India. Sepoy Religion in the Service of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

continuing to view Islam as a religion potentially hostile to the colonial power.¹¹ In a more recent paper, Fogarty focuses on Muslim soldiers from France's North African colonies who were held in German prisoner camps, showing the difficulties the German Empire faced in its attempts to instrumentalize Islam.¹² Lastly, in 2014, David Motadel showed how the Third Reich also attempted to use Islam to recruit combatants and maintain troop discipline, relying on imams trained in special schools, and emphasizing its respect for the main Islamic rituals in the Muslim units of the Wehrmacht and the Waffen-SS.¹³ Yet entire chapters of the religious history of these combatants have still to be written.

This book does not claim to fill this void, even though its nine chapters cover the four belligerent Great Powers that used combatants of Muslim origin on a wide scale: Great Britain, France, Germany and Russia (later the Soviet Union). In this introduction, we begin by showing how the recruitment of combatants of Muslim origin fit into the broader issue of building colonial troops. Then, we investigate the possible role that Islam may have played in maintaining the loyalty of these combatants or, conversely, in encouraging resistance to the colonial order. Lastly, we focus on the institutionalization of Islam within the European armies, and on the actual forms that the Muslim faith assumed on the battlefields of the two World Wars.

Native soldiers and imperial order

In the two World Wars, the diversity of combat troops reflected that of the populations of the empires at war. It is because these empires were multi-ethnic and multi-confessional that combatants of Muslim origin served under their flags. It is also because the empires had Muslim subjects that Muslim soldiers had this status. Before becoming an issue for the army, Islam was an issue for the political authorities. The Muslim populations were dominated and had had to accept the tutelage of empires that claimed another religion – the British and Russian Empires and, more ambiguously, the French Empire¹⁴ – or were detached from any religion, in the case of the Soviet Union explored in this volume by Kiril Feferman. For the state, religious belonging was one of the factors of diversity to which it had to adjust in order to solidify and maintain its power.

¹¹ Richard S. Fogarty, *Race and War in France. Colonial Subjects in the French Army 1914-1918* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008). See also Richard S. Fogarty, 'Islam in the French Army during the Great War: Between Accommodation and Suspicion', in Storm and Al Tuma (ed.), *Colonial Soldiers in Europe*, 23-40.

¹² Richard S. Fogarty, 'Out of North Africa: Contested Visions of French Muslim Soldiers during World War I', in *Empires in World War One*, ed. Fogarty and Jaboe, 136-58. On Muslim war prisoners of war in the First World War, see Gerhard Höpp, *Muslims in der Mark. Als Kriegsgefangene und Internierte in Wiinsdorf und Zossen* (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 1997). On Muslim prisoners of war in the Second World War, see Raffael Scheck, *French Colonial Soldiers in German Captivity during World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

¹³ David Motadel, *Islam and Nazi Germany's War* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014).

¹⁴ On this ambiguity, see Pierre-Jean Luizard (ed.), *Le Choc colonial et l'islam. Les politiques religieuses des puissances coloniales en terres d'islam* (Paris: La Découverte, 2006).

The World Wars in which the empires committed their armies thus constituted a trial not just for the men fighting, but also for the power structures that made their mobilization possible. To arm several million men from lands that had generally only belonged to the empire for a few generations, the empire had to be sure of the ties built since the colonial conquest. Giving weapons to young men from colonized populations required making sure that they would not turn those weapons against the dominant group, the colonizers, who were already in a weakened position due to the war itself. Thus, understanding how the empires were able to resort to troops of Muslim origin on a massive scale leads to the broader question of the use of colonial troops, either to enlarge the empire or to maintain order. Before seeing the effects of the two World Wars on the ‘paths of accommodation’ between the colonizers and the colonized populations, between the imperial army and the combatants of Muslim origin, we must understand how these armies were formed.¹⁵

Before the First World War, the empires had all resorted to using native men for instrumental reasons. Their aim was to save European manpower, while involving a portion of the colonized populations in the imperial undertaking. The appeal to native populations partially derived from a system of alliances with local powers in an unequal framework. The voluntary participation at the basis of this framework was a very relative concept that could overshadow multiple overlapping forms of domination. In her chapter, Tanja Bühner traces the converging interests of the German colonizers and the Arab populations of German East Africa. By developing a military force to serve and consolidate the colonial power, certain local actors were also able to gain strength and increase their social influence. Among native actors, and beyond the specific case of the notables, there was indeed a form of agency that explains why the colonized populations, including Muslims, found it in their interest to join the colonial power’s army. Apart from the fact that the military order was ultimately more egalitarian than the colonial order, as Gilbert Meynier points out for Algerians in the French Army, this engagement could be a means for the colonial subjects to escape their condition. This was notably the case for the slaves of the territories of French West Africa: during the First World War, three-quarters of the 180,000 *tirailleurs* from French West Africa were former slaves.¹⁶ After becoming soldiers, they acquired skills but especially social capital that they could use when they returned home. The military experience also enabled them to renegotiate their former status as slaves and to erode or even completely undo the former masters’ control over the former slave population.¹⁷ It allowed these combatants to escape the rules of *indigénat* and

¹⁵ The concept of accommodation emphasizes the agency of colonized subjects. See *inter alia* Julia Clancy-Smith, *Rebel and Saint. Muslim Notables, Popular Protest, Colonial Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800–1904)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); David Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation: Muslim Societies and French Colonial Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880–1920* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000).

¹⁶ Martin Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 216–9. See also Myron Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts. The Tirailleurs Sénégalais in French West Africa, 1857–1960* (Portsmouth: Heinemann Educational Books, 1991).

¹⁷ See *inter alia* Gregory Mann, *Native Sons. West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Jean-François Bayart, ‘Les chemins de traverse de l’hégémonie coloniale en Afrique de l’Ouest francophone. Anciens esclaves, anciens combattants, nouveaux musulmans’, *Politique africaine*, no. 105 (2007), 201–240.

forced labour, stakes that were even higher for the colonial powers as these soldiers were very numerous after the First World War.

Indeed, the First World War marked a turning point in the history of military conscription in the empires, given the war's length and high number of casualties. To cope with the immense need for men, the belligerent states had to recruit on a massive scale, both for the front lines and for support in the rear.¹⁸ The principle of recruiting volunteers was severely tested. Even the British had to begin drafting their own citizens in 1916. Four years earlier, France had instituted compulsory military service for all Algerians. However, it continued to present their service in the ranks as proof of their allegiance. Some native notables accepted to play this role, and the French Army (like others) was able to exploit political and religious figures such as Si Ibrahim ben el-Hadj Mohammed, a dignitary from the important Rahmaniyya brotherhood, who was invited to tour injured Muslim combatants in order to boost their morale. He was later given the Legion of Honour, which the President of the Council justified by stating that it might 'draw the sympathies of the Muslim chiefs who ask to serve us'.¹⁹ Even more symbolic was the role played by Khaled el-Hassani ben el-Hachemi, the grandson of Abd el-Kader. Whereas his grandfather had led the jihad against the French during the conquest of Algeria, Emir Khaled made his career in the French Army as one of the very few Algerians to enter the prestigious St Cyr military school. He even reached the exceptional rank of native captain, and fought in the first few months of the First World War, until the French authorities decided to use him for conferences and propaganda tours aimed at North African soldiers, as mentioned in Meynier's contribution. Before the war, Khaled was a politician and the editor-in-chief of *L'Islam*, the newspaper of the *Jeunes Algériens*. He agreed to assist the French because he sought to build a new balance of powers with the colonizer.²⁰

While using native troops was an essential component of colonial power before 1914, it was not motivated exclusively by economic or political considerations. It was also linked to a very specific conception that developed in the late nineteenth century, lasting in the ranks of the army until the Second World War: the 'martial races' theory. In the British Empire, the Punjabi Sikhs, Nepalese Gurkhas and Highland Scots were highly valued, with a very strong impact on the makeup of the Indian Army, as Daniel Owen Spence shows in his contribution about the Royal Indian Navy.²¹ In the French Empire, this kind of viewpoint also found its defenders.²² With his experience in French Sudan, General Charles Mangin would promote

¹⁸ The question of work battalions is definitely a blind spot in the historiography of the two World Wars.

¹⁹ Letter from President of the Council Aristide Briant to War Minister Joseph Gallieni, 5 November 1915, Service Historique de la Défense (SHD), 7N2103, quoted in Pascal Lepautremat, *La Politique musulmane de la France au XXe siècle* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2003), 152. On the role of religious notables in French West Africa, see Christopher Harrison, *France and Islam in West Africa 1860-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 118-36.

²⁰ On Emir Khaled, see also Ahmed Koulakssis and Gilbert Meynier, *L'Émir Khaled: premier za'im? Identité algérienne et colonialisme français* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1987).

²¹ See also Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

²² Fogarty, *Race und War in France*, 55-95.

the use of African soldiers, even on European battlefields.²³ In 1910, when his book *La Force noire* ('Black Force')²⁴ was published, nothing seemed less obvious for the empires, but a few years later, resistance to this idea disappeared. A minute assessment of the value of some categories of troops even led to specific assignments. For example, the *tirailleurs* from French Somaliland, supposedly skilled in hand-to-hand combat, were favoured as trench cleaners during the Battle of Verdun.²⁵ During the Second World War, the engagement of French colonial troops in Europe was a foregone conclusion: alongside black troops, the North Africans – and in particular the Moroccans, who had fiercely resisted the French conquest until the 1930s – were engaged and appreciated for their skill on the battlefield.²⁶

These regiments received recognition and decorations, but they were still military units marked by the colonial situation. This is chiefly what set them apart from other units. The French Army mainly relied on *tirailleurs* and, to a lesser extent, *spahis*. Thus, these were categories based on their role in the army, not their religion: light infantry for the *tirailleurs* and cavalry for the *spahis*. However, if we look more closely, we see that only troops from the empire served in these units. 'Tunisian', 'Moroccan', 'Algerian' or 'Senegalese' *tirailleurs*, these were soldiers of the empire, their units named after the territory where they were formed. Thus, the 'Senegalese' *tirailleurs* comprised troops from all of French Black Africa (West and East), but were in fact formed in Senegal in 1857 by Governor Louis Faidherbe. Only a soldier of Muslim culture who had become a full French citizen could have served in another type of regiment – but this is pure speculation because such a category of individuals was practically inexistent in the French empire in the first half of the twentieth century. The colonial regiments were the only army units in which Islam could be an issue on a group level, even if not all the soldiers were Muslims. In these regiments, special arrangements could indeed be envisaged in response to the fact that a large proportion of the men were Muslims. During the Battle of France in May and June 1940, these regiments were still being used. As for the army that liberated France alongside the Allied troops in 1943–44, it relied on other types of units: *goumiers* and *tabors*, mainly Moroccan, who had been trained during the Moroccan conquest and were being sent outside Morocco for the first time. 'Goums' and 'tabors' are derived to Arabic words and indicate the soldiers' origins, but their religion was only implied. Conversely, their colonial aspect was obvious, because the native officers could not be promoted above the rank of lieutenant and very few reached even that level. All these troops were commanded by French officers who were full citizens, as explained in the chapter written by Claire Miot.

Although soldiers of the British Empire were used in all kinds of units, unlike in the French Army, there were nevertheless many forms of discrimination, notably for promotions and pay. The army corps were organized in reference either to the territories the men came from (Indian Army, Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, etc.), or to the territory where they

²³ Marc Michel, *Les Africains et la Grande Guerre: l'appel à l'Afrique (1914-1918)* (Paris: Karthala, 2003).

²⁴ Charles Mangin, *La Force noire* (Paris: Hachette, 1910).

²⁵ Vincent Joly, *Guerres d'Afrique: 130 ans de guerres coloniales. L'expérience française*, Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2009.

²⁶ See also Julie Le Gac, *Vaincre sans Gloire. Le Corps expéditionnaire français en Italie (novembre 1942-juillet 1944)* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2013).

served (as for the Egypt Expeditionary Force). However, as in the French Army, behind these geographic denominations lay colonial social realities that implied religious issues. Hence in the Indian Army (which grouped together the largest number of soldiers of Muslim origin), one finds signs of the importance of religious belonging in recruitment methods. During the First World War, most infantry battalions in particular were organized on an ethnic and/or religious basis, conveying a strong identity to the regiments.²⁷ As Emmanuelle Cronier notes, Muslims represented around one-third of the soldiers who signed up voluntarily, i.e. probably around 500,000 men. During the Second World War, the Indian Army grew considerably to 2,500,000 men. The foundations of its organization were changed, with soldiers signing up for shorter tours of duty, and units lost their cohesion, even though there was a much higher number of Indian officers.²⁸

This crucial question of cohesion took another form in the Russian Army, where soldiers of Muslim origin comprised up to ten percent of all troops during the First World War – between 1,000,000 and 1,500,000 men, according to Salavat Iskhakov, mainly Tatars and Bashkirs, who had long been incorporated into the Russian military world, including in the officer corps. At the turn of the twentieth century, the officer corps was comprised of eighty percent Slavs (Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians) and twenty percent men of other origins, including Muslims.²⁹ Universal conscription began fairly early on, with the 1874 reforms of Minister of War Dmitry Milyutin, but struggled to take hold in the Russian imperial (and later Soviet) space.³⁰ As a result of the Bolshevik Revolution and the new Soviet nationalities policy, the populations of Central Asia and the Caucasus were granted national republics and citizenship status; national sentiments were encouraged, while being radically detached from any religious identity. The 1936 Soviet Constitution officially eliminated all restrictions related to national or class distinctions, notably with regard to conscription, and in 1939, exemptions for religious reasons were repealed.³¹ However, during the Second World War, the Soviet authorities remained distrustful of these men, notably for religious reasons. Thus, Feferman shows how the Red Army initially preferred to avoid conscription in the Central Asian republics, before being forced to change tacks given the magnitude of casualties during the first year of the war. This distrust was genuine, but it was tempered by practical

²⁷ David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj. The Indian Army, 1860-1940* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), 86-93. See also Tarak Barkawi, 'Culture and Combat in the Colonies: The Indian Army in the Second World War', *Journal of Contemporary History* 41, no. 2 (2006), 325-55.

²⁸ Kaushik Roy, 'Military Loyalty in the Colonial Context: A Case Study of the Indian Army during World War II', *The Journal of Military History* 73, no. 2 (April 2009). See also Roy, 'Discipline and Morale'.

²⁹ Mark Von Hagen, 'The Limits of Reform. The Multiethnic Imperial Army Confronts Nationalism (1874-1917)' in *Reforming the Tsarist Army*, ed. David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye and Bruce Menning (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 37.

³⁰ See von Hagen, 'The Limits of Reform'; Joshua Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation. Military Conscription, Total War and Mass Politics 1905-1925* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2012); Roger Reese, *Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers: A Social History of the Red Army, 1925-1941* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996); and the special issue 'The Integration of Non-Russian Servicemen in the Imperial, Soviet and Russian Army' of *The Journal of Power Institutions in Post-Soviet Studies*, no. 10 (2009), accessible at <http://pipss.revues.org/2292>.

³¹ Roger R. Reese, *The Soviet Military Experience* (London: Routledge, 2000), 57.

considerations. In reality, soldiers' ability to understand Russian (the language of the commanders) was the key factor for recruitment of Central Asian soldiers.

Recruitment methods were determined not only by how old the political and cultural ties were between the tutelary colonial power and the Muslim populations, which were colonized or integrated into the state to varying degrees. They were also influenced by the imaginary of the colonial authorities. For them, the disadvantages of having men whose loyalty was – often unfairly – questioned due to their confinement to a religious identity assumed to be subversive were outweighed by the advantages. Three such advantages can be identified. Firstly, grouping together men of the same religion made it possible to add forms of religious control to the military command structures, resulting in greater conformity in terms of practices and ultimately greater obedience. There were also clear efficiencies in terms of logistics – as Cronier shows regarding the food supply – but also in terms of supervision, as religious homogeneity enabled officers to be more rapidly familiar with their men. Lastly, permitting soldiers to fight alongside other soldiers of the same faith was an essential morale factor, both for the soldiers themselves and for their families back home, who could be reassured that religious obligations, particularly in the event of death, would be respected. For Muslims, these obligations notably included the need to bury the corpse within twenty-four hours of death. As early as October, the French Minister of War warned: 'Any ceremony of a potentially religious nature must be avoided unless a Muslim can conduct it.'³² In December 1914, a new circular specified:

When a Muslim is about to die, he will not fail to recite the '*shahada*', if he can, extending his right index finger. If his condition does not permit him to do so, any fellow Muslim present is obligated to recite for him this profession of the Muslim faith. Thus, on all occasions when a native soldier is in a hopeless condition, any other fellow Muslim or Muslims present in the same establishment must be alerted.³³

Islam, forms of loyalty and resistance

During the First World War, the Muslims prayed not only for their comrades fallen in battle. In 1914, the *munajats* (prayers for the Tsar said by Central Asian Muslims, and by some Christians and Jews as well) held particular importance for the Tsarist authorities: agents of the *Okhrana* (political police) serving in Russian Turkestan received orders to make sure that the *khutbas* (Friday sermons) given in mosques included this thought for the Tsar and the Russian Empire at war.³⁴ These agents then discovered that many imams were not saying this

³² Circular no. 4.695 9/11, dated 16 October 1914. Quoted in Lepautremat, *La Politique musulmane de la France*, 154.

³³ Circular dated 8 December 1914, Article 58: Burial of Muslim Soldiers, Archives of Paris and the Seine – 1326 W, quoted in Michel Renard in 'Gratitude, contrôle, accompagnement: le traitement du religieux islamique en métropole (1914-1950)', *Bulletin de l'IHTP* 83 (June 2004), accessible at <http://www.ihtp.cnrs.fr/spip.php%3Farticle328&lang=fr.html>

³⁴ Aftandil Erkinov, *Praying for and against the Tsar. Prayers and Sermons in Russian-Dominated Khiva and Tsarist Turkestan* (Berlin: Klaus Schwartz, 2004).

prayer, or claimed to do so ‘silently’. This situation prompted the imperial authorities to issue a new circular ordering the prayer for the Tsar to be said aloud. This incident shows how much the imperial authorities and ultimately the Tsar himself gave particular importance to the different forms of declarations of allegiance. The Russian example is obviously not alone. In 1914, the ulamas and leaders of Sufi brotherhoods within the French Empire also gave ever more frequent declarations of loyalty to the French authorities, while the *Reis-ul-ulema* of Bosnia-Herzegovina called for jihad in the ranks of the Austro-Hungarian Army. Likewise, in 1941, Mufti Abdurahman Rasulev of the Muslim Spiritual Directorate of Central Asia and Kazakhstan called on Muslims to support the Soviet war effort.

Hence the question of loyalty was an urgent one for all empires, faced as they were with managing particularly heterogeneous populations. As mentioned above, the way that authorities viewed their loyalty (or disloyalty) determined, to a large extent, the rules for managing these populations in various instances, notably military. The conditions for recruitment and conscription varied depending on how long these populations had been in contact with the imperial authorities. These conditions were also dependent on the colonial imaginary, which was sometimes negative with regard to Islam. For example, state agents’ subjectivity, perceptions and stereotypes affected the conscription of the Russian Empire’s Muslim populations. While Tatars had served in the army since 1722 and Bashkirs since 1737, the Muslim populations of the Caucasus and especially Central Asia were not actually conscripted until the Second World War. This step-by-step integration of Muslims into the Russian Army can be attributed to historical circumstances – the Caucasian region was not conquered until the early nineteenth century, and Central Asia in the late nineteenth century – and to the imperial authorities’ suspicion towards populations considered to lack loyalty or reliability. In addition to poor or inexistent knowledge of Russian, a fact that raised serious problems for the military command, Muslim populations were deemed to have a ‘low level of mental development’ (in the case of the Kyrgyz, for example), and considered to be unsuitable for combat if deprived of their traditional diets or due to their poor health, notably on account of syphilis.³⁵

As noted by Bühner and Owen Spence, the martial qualities attributed to Islam may have motivated some European armies to recruit Muslim soldiers, reputed to be combative. Likewise, during the First World War, military authorities were no longer afraid to use Indian or North African contingents in the campaigns of Iraq, Palestine and Syria. They showed the greatest respect for Islam,³⁶ and the Allied victories against the Ottomans were presented so as not to appear like new Crusades, as illustrated by the precautions the Allies took when entering Jerusalem.³⁷ Yet European armies also harboured other more negative perceptions. For example, combatants of Muslim origin sparked fears among the French military and medical authorities due to their possible disloyal behaviour. Given their supposed ‘primitiveness’, ‘laziness’, and tendency to lose control more quickly in stressful situations,

³⁵ von Hagen, ‘The Limits of Reform’, 42.

³⁶ Jacques Frémeaux, *La Question d’Orient* (Paris: Fayard, 2014), 251.

³⁷ See Henry Laurens, *La Question de Palestine – tome I: L’Invention de la Terre Sainte 1799-1922* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), 372–5.

these troops were subject to stricter control, as shown by Julie Le Gac. This fit into a colonial imaginary that perpetuated, at least until the Second World War, a paternalistic and infantilizing Orientalism, presented in this volume by Miot, and detectable even in the special psychiatric treatments described by Le Gac. Colonial authorities required combatants of Muslim origin to adhere to rigid religious norms (no consumption of alcohol, daily prayers, etc.), taking for granted that all of them were devout Muslims. Thus, the ‘Muslim’ category got reified, as shown by Cronier and Xavier Bougarel.

In reality, the question of supposed loyalty or disloyalty was linked to the imperial and colonial authorities’ fear of a political and potentially subversive ‘Muslim identity’.³⁸ Thus, the military authorities were stricken with panic when anonymous calls for jihad circulated amongst the *askaris* of German East Africa or the *sepoys* of the Indian Army.³⁹ However, if we adopt the combatants’ perspective, insofar as possible given the small quantity of available sources, then religion appears to be related to everyday, private practices, devoid of any political dimension. The case of Russia in 1917 is an exception to this rule. Indeed, the revolutionary context of the period and the lack of modern national identification modes – which would not emerge until the Soviet period – facilitated the politicization of a Muslim identity, precisely on the issue of conscription. As described by Iskhakov, the policy of the Russian Provisional Government formed after the February Revolution favoured the formation of Muslim battalions, often following demands from the combatants themselves. Yet setting up Muslim units amounted to laying one of the pillars for political autonomy and a nascent nation. Thus, Islam became a real political resource for the Muslims of the former Russian Empire until the 1920s, when national republics were created along ethnic lines.

The idea that Islam would provide a politically significant religious identity explains why it was instrumentalized by the belligerent European powers. The history of the First World War – and the Second World War, to a lesser extent – shows the importance of Western attempts to instrumentalize Islam and jihad among the colonized Muslim populations, but it also proves that such attempts were relatively ineffective because they overestimated the strength of pan-Islamism. The political loyalties of colonial subjects of Muslim origin – whether from British, French, German or Russian colonies – were not significantly swayed by the Ottoman call to jihad in November 1914, an important aspect of German foreign policy that was described quite early on as ‘jihad made in Germany’.⁴⁰ This call actually fit into an older Ottoman tradition of using Islam for political purposes, as a factor of resistance to European

³⁸ See, for example, Patrick Weil, ‘Le statut des musulmans en Algérie coloniale’, *Histoire de la justice*, no. 16 (2005): 93-109. See also Laure Blévis, ‘La citoyenneté française au miroir de la colonisation’, *Genèses*, no. 53 (2001): 25-47; Fogarty, ‘Out of North Africa’, 138.

³⁹ On the case of German East Africa, see Tanja Bühner’s contribution. On the Indian Army, see Gajendra Singh, *The Testimonies of Indian Soldiers and the Two World Wars. Between Self and Sepoy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 99-127.

⁴⁰ Snouck Hurgronje, *The Holy War ‘Made in Germany’* (New York and London: G.P. Putnam’s, 1915). On this question, see *inter alia* Tilman Lüdke, *Jihad Made in Germany: Ottoman and German Propaganda and Intelligence Operations in the First World War* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2005); Donald MacKale, *War by Revolution: Germany and Great Britain in the Middle East in the Era of World War One* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1998).

powers, as well as a factor for strengthening the Ottoman Empire's internal cohesion.⁴¹ The Germans, as allies of the Ottomans, translated this call to jihad into Swahili and hurriedly broadcast it in East Africa to draw the *askaris* into war. Bühner shows that this manoeuvre was a failure. Despite a certain amount of agitation in North Africa, Central Asia and India, it was not enough to cause the Muslim populations to break with their respective tutelary colonial powers. As a whole, they remained loyal, even in combat; for example, the number of desertions was low for Algerians fighting in the French Army, as Meynier reminds us.⁴² In his contribution, Iskhakov shows that in the Tatar and Bashkir regions of the Russian Empire, voices criticizing the Ottoman call to jihad could even be heard. Lastly, we could also cite the Muslim soldiers of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF), whose behaviour contradicted those who doubted their loyalty.⁴³ Attempts by Christian powers to instrumentalize Islam sometimes produced the reverse effect; exaggerated efforts, with Christians brandishing green flags or Qurans, shocked Muslims and caused them to lose respect for authority.⁴⁴ During the Second World War, the Third Reich attempted to instrumentalize Islam, but the hoped-for uprisings in the British colonies never occurred, the *Deutsch-Arabische Lehrabteilung* (German-Arab Training Department), under the leadership of the Mufti of Jerusalem Amin al-Husayni, brought together only a few hundred volunteers, and the *Ost-Legionen* made up of Soviet Muslim prisoners of war were chiefly an opportunity for these prisoners to escape probable death in German prisoner camps.⁴⁵

According to Meynier, the fact that the Ottoman call to jihad did not trigger an uprising prompted the French decision to recruit more Algerians in 1916. This explanation could also be applied – in parallel to the Russian Army's immense need for men – to the 1916 decision to requisition men from Central Asia for work battalions. These requisitions then triggered a wave of revolts in Algeria, French West Africa⁴⁶ and Central Asia, due not to a lack of loyalty

⁴¹ See *inter alia* Aksakal, “‘Holy War Made in Germany’?”; Gottfried Hagen, ‘The Prophet Muhammad as an Exemplar in War: Ottoman Views on the Eve of World War One’, *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no. 22 (Spring 2000), 145-72.

⁴² Of the 4,000 Muslim North Africans held as prisoners in German camps, only 800 were ready to join the Central Empires. See Abdel-Raouf Sinno, ‘The Role of Islam in German Propaganda in the Arab East during the First World War: Aims, Means, Results and Local Reactions’, in *The First World War as Remembered in the Countries of the Eastern Mediterranean*, ed. Olaf Farschid, Manfred Kropp and Stephan Dähne (Würzburg: Orient-Institut Beirut, 2006), 408.

⁴³ On the EEF, see *inter alia* James Kitchen, *The British Imperial Army in the Middle East. Morale and Military Identity in the Sinai and Palestine Campaigns 1916-1918* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014). On the loyalty of Muslim *sepoys* in general, see Philipp Stigger, ‘How Far Was the Loyalty of Muslim Soldiers in the Indian Army More in Doubt than Usual throughout the First World War?’, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, no. 87 (2009), 225-33; Raymond Callahan, ‘The Indian Army, Total War, and the Dog That Didn't Bark in the Night’, in *Rebellion, Repression, Reinvention. Mutiny in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Jane Hathaway (Wesport: Praeger, 2001), 119-28.

⁴⁴ Fogarty, ‘Out of North Africa’, 150.

⁴⁵ See *inter alia* Klaus Gensicke, *Der Mufti von Jerusalem und die Nationalsozialisten. Eine politische Biographie Amin el-Husseini* (Darmstadt: BWG, 2007); Joachim Hoffmann, *Die Ostlegionen 1941-1943* (Freiburg: Rombach, 1986); Patrick Von Mühlen, *Zwischen Hakenkreuz und Sowjetstern. Der Nationalismus der sowjetischen Orientvölker im 2. Weltkrieg* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1971).

⁴⁶ Mahir Şaul and Patrick Royer, *West African Challenge to Empire: Culture and History in the Volta-Bani Anticolonial War* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001).

but, at least for Central Asia, to practical issues related to the timing of the requisition, at the height of the farming season in summer 1916. The revolts targeted both the Russian and the native colonial administrations, but cannot be interpreted merely as a lack of loyalty to the empire. In the Algerian case, French Army deserters played an important role in the revolts, which were only in very rare cases led by religious leaders, who had reiterated their allegiance to the French Empire on several occasions.⁴⁷ In Central Asia and in Algeria, these revolts were led by the poorest rural populations, and they attested to deeper social transformations and the weakening of traditional aristocratic, tribal and religious bonds. In French West Africa, unprecedented unrest started with a refusal to obey the mobilization order, giving rise to a ‘supra-tribal’ revolt – to borrow Marc Michel’s expression – that united various ethnic groups with a common history and cultural features.⁴⁸

While the Ottoman call to jihad was initially launched in order to strengthen the Ottoman Empire’s internal cohesion, its instrumentalization of Islam was sometimes effective outside its borders, but only in a way that was limited in time and space, because it interacted with local political factors. The same can be said about the pro-British ‘counterjihad’ launched in 1916 by Hussayn bin ‘Ali,⁴⁹ the Sharif of Mecca, who had supported the Ottoman jihad two years earlier while in secret talks with the British. Another local jihad, this time Shiite and supported by the Germans against the British in Iraq, was also launched by *mujtaheds* (ulamas entitled to engage in *ijtihad* – reasoned interpretation of Islamic sources) in Karbala.⁵⁰ These calls had the desired effects because they corresponded to local political and military configurations: the British invasion of Iraq, the fact that the Young Turks and the Germans did not take Arab interests into account, maintaining their colonizing aims despite their pro-Muslim policy. In 1915 and especially 1916, in addition to resistance to conscription in Algeria, French West Africa and Central Asia, anti-colonial and anti-imperial revolts broke out on the margins of the Ottoman Empire and Persia (with Arab revolts in the Arabic peninsula and Shiite revolts in Najaf and Karbala). Likewise, during the Second World War, Amin al-Husayni’s appeals meet with some success in Bosnia-Herzegovina because they corresponded to a local desire for political and military protection, as explained by Bougarel. Yet in no way can we speak of Islamism or jihadism using today’s definition of these terms. During the two World Wars, Islam remained a religion deeply anchored in local cultural traditions and social practices. For combatants of Muslim origin in the various European armies, Islam referred first and foremost to certain everyday practices and a quest for individual salvation.

Islam in European armies: Between institutionalization and practice

⁴⁷ Gilbert Meynier, *L’Histoire sociale de l’Algérie, études, sources et documents* (Oran: CRIDSSH, no date), 9-10. See also Gilbert Meynier, *L’Algérie révélée. La guerre de 1914-1918 et le premier quart du vingtième siècle* (Saint-Denis: Bouchène, 2015).

⁴⁸ Michel, *Les Africains et la Grande Guerre*, 49-63.

⁴⁹ In our view, it is important to mention this possibility of a ‘counterjihad’, even though only one author has mentioned it, to the best of our knowledge. See Sinno, ‘The Role of Islam in German Propaganda’, 391-408.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 391.

Although combatants of Muslim origin were not recruited along religious criteria, European political and military leaders gave particular attention to Islam's status in the units these soldiers served in. Generally speaking, the large European empires respected the religions of conquered territories and sought to win the support of local religious notables. This was also true for Islam. The ulamas and leaders of Sufi brotherhoods were often treated well by the imperial power, although some nationalist ulamas, dissident brotherhoods or armed millenarist movements suffered brutal repression.⁵¹ In this context, the Soviet Union was an exception in its relentless determination to dismantle religious institutions, even though the Second World War caused a shift in this antireligious policy.⁵²

In the armies, military leaders thought that the application of Islamic precepts would enhance control of the troops and improve their morale, and considered any breach in this regard to be a potential factor for disorder. The British, in particular, had bitter memories of the 1857 Indian Rebellion even though its causes were not exclusively religious.⁵³ Thus, they made sure that religious precepts were respected, and provided the *sepoys* with religious books and ceremonial objects.⁵⁴ During the First World War, recognition of Islam could involve the building of temporary wooden mosques, like the one that the French Army built at Nogent sur Marne near Paris or the one that the German Army erected in the Zossen prisoner camp near Berlin. However, Islam's lack of formal hierarchy made it more difficult to institutionalize. Some armies created their own corps of specialized clerics, whereas others turned the organization of religious life over to the soldiers themselves. These differences depended in part on how the various European powers institutionalized the forms of Christianity that were practised by the majority of soldiers in their armies.

As Salavat Iskhavov shows in this volume, beginning in the nineteenth century, the Russian Army had an internal religious hierarchy organized around *akhuns*, i.e. mullahs in charge of religious life in each military district. Yet this institutionalization of Islam initially applied only to certain elite units, before being extended to the entire army during the First World War. Likewise, beginning in 1881, the Austro-Hungarian Army had two army imams serving in its Bosnian regiments,⁵⁵ and in 1943, this Austro-Hungarian tradition served as justification for the Waffen-SS to recruit imams with a twofold religious and ideological function, as explained by Bougarel. In the French Army, the institutionalization of Islam came much later and was more partial. Admittedly, some imams were recruited during the First World War, but they served mainly in hospitals behind the front lines. The French Army also called on

⁵¹ On the Muslim policy of the major European empires, see *inter alia* David Motadel, 'Islam and the European Empires', *The Historical Journal* 15, no. 3 (September 2012), 831-56; Luizard (ed.), *Le Choc colonial et l'islam*; Christopher Harrison, *France and Islam in West Africa*; Pascal Le Pautremat, *La Politique musulmane de la France*; Robert Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar. Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

⁵² See *inter alia* Shoshana Keller, *To Moscow, Not to Mecca: The Soviet Campaign against Islam in Central Asia 1917-1941* (London: Praeger, 2001).

⁵³ Streets, *Martial Races*, 18-51. See also Crispin Dates (ed.), *Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857 – Volume 5: Muslim, Dalit and Subaltern Narrative* (London: Sage, 2013).

⁵⁴ See Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*, 99-102.

⁵⁵ See Zijad Šehić, 'Vojni imami u bosanskohercegovačkim jedinicama u okviru austrougarske armije 1878-1918', *Godišnjak BZK Preporod* 6 (2006), 309-21.

outside religious figures – ulamas or leaders of Sufi brotherhoods – to visit the troops regularly, but they did not hold direct or standing authority over the troops.⁵⁶ During the Second World War, the organization of religious life was the responsibility of non-Muslims: the Muslim Military Affairs officers. Miot explores their twofold role of surveillance and mediation. It would appear that the Indian Army let Muslim *sepoys* choose their religious leaders from within their ranks, but this question is given little attention in the abundant literature about the Indian Army.⁵⁷ In general, the various people in charge of the religious lives of combatants of Muslim origin also filled surveillance or social assistance roles. Within military units, however, religious life was not very institutionalized, and the combatants often had to designate an imam from their ranks to lead prayer, take part in funeral services, or act as an intermediary with their superiors. Such informal arrangements existed not only in the British Army, but also in the French Army and the German Army in East Africa. During the Second World War, the Soviet Union re-established spiritual directorates for the Muslims of Russia, the Caucasus and Central Asia, but these directorates had no prerogatives in the Red Army, and Feferman does not mention any organized form of religious life for Soviet soldiers of Muslim origin.

Whereas the modes of institutionalization of Islam in European armies are fairly well known, the religious practices of combatants of Muslim origin are much less so, partly due to a dearth of sources, and partly on account of a lack of interest from historians. The chapters in this volume suggest that the religious lives of these combatants revolved around a few crucial practices. The issue of dietary restrictions, examined in detail by Cronier, is the most frequently mentioned. Indeed, many combatants attached great importance to these restrictions, and refused any foods suspected of being unclean. Likewise, during Ramadan, they strove to fast despite the practical difficulties that this entailed, notably in combat situations. The military hierarchies also gave great importance to the respect of dietary customs, and were thus careful to eliminate all pork from rations and to supply a certain number of traditional foodstuffs, even if this meant bringing them in from a great distance. For Ramadan, they sought instead to obtain derogations from legitimate religious authorities. Yet as Cronier and Meynier show, the combatants themselves often had to resort to finding and preparing foods that met their cultural requirements. Organizing prayers – especially Friday prayers – and celebrating religious feasts such as *Eid al-fitr* (the feast marking the end of Ramadan) or *mawlid* (the Prophet Muhammad's birthday) were another essential part of the compromises made between combatants of Muslim origin and European military hierarchies. Lastly, during war, the issue of burial rites took on considerable importance. Although the combatants of Muslim origin were not waging jihad, anyone killed in combat would often be buried as *shaheed* (a martyr of the faith), with the requisite burial rituals (corpse not washed, wearing his uniform, etc). Likewise, the presence of an imam (official or otherwise) at the funeral of the fallen combatant, and the choice of a gravestone indicating the

⁵⁶ See Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, 286-9.

⁵⁷ David Omissi makes brief reference to 'religious teachers, appointed to each unit' (Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*, 100), but to our knowledge, there is no work on Islam in the Indian Army in the twentieth century that would rival Nile Green's book about the nineteenth century.

Muslim identity of the decedent, were essential factors for ensuring the morale of his surviving comrades.

Far from the major doctrinal debates and solemn calls to jihad, the religious question rarely gave rise to open confrontation, instead resulting in pragmatic arrangements between the soldiers of Muslim origin and European military commanders, building on and sometimes reformulating the ‘paths of accommodation’ between European empires and their Muslim populations. Here again, these arrangements did not necessarily leave substantial traces in archives, and they have largely escaped the attention of historians. For the combatants, the goal was to follow the religious precepts that ensured their individual salvation, formed a link with other combatants, and symbolically connected them to their families and homelands. Religious practice thus also helped lessen feelings of being uprooted and isolated. For the military commanders, the aim was to reconcile a military rationale with a religious one, most often by dedicating specific times and spaces to religion. War, by projecting men into a radically different milieu, threatened these compromises that had been devised during times of peace. The supply of foodstuffs to the front lines became less reliable, Ramadan fasting made men weak, the pace of bombings and assaults disrupted the rhythm of prayers, the arrival of new officers and NCOs less familiar with the Muslim religion threatened earlier arrangements. In this context, military commanders sometimes stood as the guardians of religious orthodoxy. Regarding the Indian Army, for example, Tarak Barkawi writes that ‘there were appropriate holy men for each religion in the battalion, who would hold separate services for the Sikh, Hindu and Muslim companies. ... Religion was woven in the fabric of discipline, making any deviation from religious precepts difficult for individuals, while violations of military discipline became a religious matter.’⁵⁸ Indeed, isn’t a religion with well-regulated rituals easier to manage than heterodox and fluctuating practices? And doesn’t Islam also provide a means to curb alcohol consumption and control sexual behaviour? The paradox does not stop there. Hence the French Army decided to consider all its Senegalese *tirailleurs* to be ‘Muslims’ – even those that were animists – in order to simplify the issue of dietary restrictions. And the army could even become a place for wide-scale conversion to Islam, as shown by Bühner in the case of animist *askaris* from East Africa, for whom Islam was a means to gain access to ‘civilization’.

As mentioned above, not all soldiers that their military commanders considered to be Muslims regarded themselves as Muslims. By the same token, not all those who considered themselves to be Muslims, in one way or another, had the same level of religiosity, as Feferman notes in particular in his research on the Red Army. Furthermore, the intensity and the forms of Muslim combatants’ religious practice during the two World Wars remain a mystery, as this question is absent from existing literature and hard to apprehend in source materials. In the books dedicated to the religious dimensions of the First World War, the dominant view is that the war triggered a revival in piety and religiosity, albeit not necessarily expressed within the framework of religious institutions.⁵⁹ The various chapters in this volume give more an

⁵⁸ Tarak Barkawi, ‘Army, Ethnicity and Society in British India’, in Roy (ed.), *The Indian Army in the Two World Wars*, 419-43 (here 430-431).

⁵⁹ See *inter alia* Becker, *La guerre et la foi*.

impression of lukewarm, irregular religiosity. The war's impact on religious practice was not necessarily clear-cut: proximity with death could awaken a desire for religious purity or encourage various heterodox and magical practices, as described by Le Gac, but it could also lead combatants to overlook certain rituals, to consume alcohol or even, on rare occasions, to eat pork. Of the cases studied in this volume, the only one in which a clear increase in religious practice became a factor for tensions in the military is in the Royal Indian Navy, studied by Owen Spence, but this revival in religiosity was less linked to the war itself than to the rise in nationalist demands in the British Empire after the Second World War. In the same vein, some religious actors asserted their autonomy vis-à-vis the military establishment, such as certain *akhuns* of the Russian Army, mentioned in Iskhakov's chapter, or some imams of the Waffen-SS, as described by Bougarel. Other religious actors escaped the military command's control – including the members of Sufi brotherhoods mentioned by Miot or the self-proclaimed 'prophet' identified by Owen Spence – and could also relay political demands. Such reversals did not reflect a rise in religiosity, but rather the primacy of political issues, even for certain religious actors. Moreover, the post-war period did not see a rise in religious demands from veterans, but instead their focus on social rights that had been granted or that they claimed, as well as some veterans' participation in political movements demanding full citizenship within the empire or foreboding nationalist claims.⁶⁰

A Muslim experience of war?

At the end of this introduction, we must re-emphasize how much the war experiences of combatants of Muslim origin over the two World Wars were very different and distinct from one another. The European Great Powers only gave secondary importance to religious matters in the mobilization of their colonial populations, and incorporated Muslims into their armies pragmatically, while continuing to hesitate in their perceptions of Islam, seen as a source of combativeness at certain moments and a potential threat at other times. For the combatants themselves, their religious identity mingled with many other types of identification, rather than surpassing them, and never formed a single, clear-cut identity. Nor was there a single, uniform experience of the war shared by all combatants of Muslim origin. Even the jihads waged against the Entente countries during the First World War followed local rationales, and calls to global jihad were doomed to failure, even if they were made by the Ottoman Sultan or the Mufti of Jerusalem. Far from unlikely jihads, the religious experience of war for combatants of Muslim origin has to be sought in their everyday accommodations and private practices, for example by extending the paths opened up by David Omissi, Gajendra Singh and Santanu Das for the *sepoys* of the Indian Army.⁶¹ Therefore, future research should turn its sights to testimonial sources and compare these with administrative sources in order to

⁶⁰ For the French case, see *inter alia* Mann, *Native Sons*; Bayart, 'Les chemins de traverse de l'hégémonie coloniale'.

⁶¹ David Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War: Soldiers' Letters 1914-1918* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999); Singh, *The Testimonies of Indian Soldiers*; Santanu Das (ed.), *Race, Empire and First World War Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

shed light on the agency of the combatants themselves. This history from the bottom up has, in its religious dimension, not yet been written.