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The role of scholars, particularly ‘western’ scholars, in nationalist and pan-African struggles is broadly acknowledged and well documented. However, it seems to me, little is clearly said on the role of ‘eastern’ scholars- broadly referring to those versed in Islamic sciences, in the emergence and spread of nationalist and pan-African ideals. In historical context pan-African ideals had some foundations in the activities of some Islamic scholars and Sufis since the pre-colonial period. Some of these prominent scholars are known to have led intellectual movements that embodied ideals of supra-ethnic and supra-cultural identities. The most apparent socio-political consequence of these intellectual movements was the emergence of larger, heterogeneous and more cosmopolitan political communities out of which our contemporary nation states emerged.

In West Africa, an examination of the role of Sheikh Uthman bn. Fudi will empirically illustrate the historicity of the role of Islamic scholars and *Sufîs* in the spread of pan-African ideals, as well as show the contemporary relevance of Islamic scholars in the nationalist and pan-African project. The paper intends to conceptualise the relevance of Islamic scholarship in any pan-African project. This is because the Sheikh Uthman himself was a product of pan-African intellectual tradition that had flourished in western and central Sudan particularly between the 15th and 18th centuries. The intellectual movement led by the Sheikh, known to history as the Sokoto *Jihad* movement, created the Sokoto Caliphate; one of the largest political community in pre-colonial Africa. In general sense, the legacies of the Sokoto Caliphate bound together peoples and communities in Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon in some common ideals. Specifically however, the legacies of the Sokoto Caliphate had direct influence on the nationalist and pan-African ideals in personalities of Alh. Sir Abubakar Tafawa-Balewa, the first Prime Minister of Nigeria and Alh. Sir Ahmadu Bello, the first and only Premier of former Northern Nigeria and many of their contemporaries.

Today, the failure of post-independence political leaders to provided the needed framework for the sustenance of re-invigorate nationalist and pan-African project is generally acclaimed. This is further aggravated by multi-faceted political, economic and social problems that posed serious challenges to the very survival of many nation states in Africa. In this context therefore, the paper seeks to examine the basis and nature of the limitations and failures of scholars in Africa to champion broad ideals to unite the people in Africa. The purpose is to identify ways and means by which African governments can mobilize scholars in order to give content, meaning and direction to the nationalist and pan-African projects.

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