WINNING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WAR AGAINST OPPRESSION: THE CASE OF NAT TURNER AND SAMORY TOURE,

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Abstract

This article posits Nat Turner's rebellion against slavocracy and Samory Toure's resistance to French colonialism as cases of successful military strategies utilized by a subaltern group against a supposedly stronger enemy. It actually recognizes the two Black leaders as brilliant war strategists, who knew they were disadvantaged at many levels, but still faced their oppressors. By secretly plotting and killing tens of his masters while they were sleeping for instance, Turner succeeded in traumatizing the slavocracy. With his scorched earth strategy, Toure was able to terrorize the French colonial army. These methods offered both leaders psychological ascendency over the enemy. While much research is limited to the spatial and temporal paradigms of Turner's and Toure's fight against oppression, our study goes beyond and discusses the issue of the psychological impact of the two fighters' rebellions on enemies, local populations, and sociopolitical systems afterwards. Our paper aims at analyzing Turner's and Toure's military experiences from a psychological perspective and this helps us generate a new historical perspective of both leaders' efforts to dismantle oppressive systems.

Keywords: Turner, psychological, Samory, strategy, victory, war.

GAGNER LA GUERRE PSYCHOLOGIQUE CONTRE L'OPPRESSION : LE CAS DE NAT TURNER ET SAMORY TOURE.

Résumé

Cet article présente la rébellion de Nat Turner contre le système esclavagiste et la résistance de Samory Touré au colonialisme français comme des exemples de stratégies militaires réussies utilisées par un groupe subalterne contre un ennemi supposé plus fort. Il reconnaît les deux leaders noirs comme étant de brillants stratèges militaires, conscients qu'ils étaient désavantagés à de nombreux niveaux, mais qui ont cependant affronté leurs oppresseurs. En complotant secrètement et en tuant des dizaines de ses maîtres pendant leur sommeil par exemple, Turner a réussi à les traumatiser. Avec sa stratégie de la terre brûlée, Touré a pu terroriser l'armée coloniale française. Ces méthodes ont permis aux deux combattants de prendre l'ascendant psychologique sur l'ennemi. Alors que de nombreuses recherches se limitent aux paradigmes spatiaux et temporels de la lutte de Turner et de Touré contre l'oppression, notre étude va au-delà et aborde la question de l'impact psychologique des rébellions des deux leaders sur les ennemis, les populations locales et les systèmes sociopolitiques. Notre article vise à analyser les expériences militaires de Turner et de Touré d'un point de vue psychologique,

ce qui nous permet de générer une nouvelle perspective historique de leurs efforts pour le démantèlement des systèmes d'oppression.

Mots clés : Guerre, Samory, stratégie, Turner, psychologique, victoire

Introduction

In August 1831, an enslaved African American man named Nat Turner led tens of other Black men in what is historically recognized as the biggest revolt against the institution of slaveryin the United States. In just one day, Turner and his followers destroyed plantations, burned down houses, and killed tens of white people (J. W. Cromwell, 1920; P. H. Breen, 2015). This rebellion caused trauma in the white population of Southampton, Virginia, and beyond. The Black rebels were indeed determined to bring down slavocracy, the system exploiting Black people, while dehumanizing them. White people crushed Turner's rebellion, but the Black leader succeeded in staying at large for almost two months, which perpetuated the psychological trauma among the white population. Turner's ability to mobilize other Black men to confront slavocracy openly and to escape capture in a hostile environment revealshis military genius. A few decades after Turner's rebellion, another Black leaderalso waged a war against a race-based and dehumanizing system.

SamoryToure, in West Africa, fought against French colonialism. From 1881 to 1898, Toure, the emperor of Wassoulou, revealed his military capabilities by preventing the control of his territory by the French army. He mobilized an army of several thousands of soldiers called *sofas* (M. Legassick, 1966, p. 115). He defeated the French in several battles, and often resorted to the scorched earth strategy (J. M. O'Sullivan, 1983, p.124). Samory's methods terrorized both his enemies and its local collaborators. Toure's military genius awarded him the title of "*keletigui*" or army commander. (M. S. N'Daou, 2008, p.149). The African leader was captured in 1898, but he had inflicted huge losses to a more powerful army because he was a gifted military commander. In that regard, we can argue that both Turner and Toure won psychological victories over their enemies despite the unfavorable outcomes of their endeavors.

Unfortunately, researchers have focused largely on the time and geographical location of Turner's and Toure's actions (J. W. Cromwell, 1920; P. H. Breen, 2015). This approach downplays the potential outreach of their fights beyond the physical limitations of time and space. That raises the issue of the psychological impact of the two fighters' actions out of the time and space paradigm. Therefore, this paper aims at analyzing Turner's and Toure's experiences from a psychological perspective. It focuses on the impact of their rebellions on enemies, local populations, and sociopolitical systems afterwards. By looking at the impact of their rebellions, we generate a new historical perspective of both leaders' efforts to dismantle oppressive systems. Thus, we can delineate the effects of Turner's and Toure's actions beyond the time and geographical locations

currently covered in the historiography. This allows us to argue that Turner and Toure waged and won a psychological war against dehumanizing systems. The fear, the dread, and the paranoia created, and which lasted long after the events are proofs of their psychological victories over their opponents.

This article connects Turner's and Toure's fights against race-based oppression. After exploring the existing literature, we discuss both leaders'exceptional military skills. Then, we stress psychological warfare as their ultimate goal. That allows us to conclude that they won a psychological victory in the face of slavocracy and French colonialism.

1. Literature review

The most famous piece of literature on Nat Turner is *The Confessions of Nat Turner*written by T. R. Gray (1931). A proslavery lawyer, Gray (1931, p.4) referred to the Black leader using terms that hardly conceal his partiality. He treated the Black leader as a "great bandit", a "diabolic actor", and a sanguinary fanatic murderer, who was nonetheless heroically captured by a single individual. Gray who was in line with the slaveholders' logics of belittling Blacks, so clearly meant that Nat Turner miserably failed in his attempt to overthrow the slaveholding society. In the same line, a few years after Gray, L. Middleton (1938, p.235) stated that the rebellion was "nothing extraordinary", but a mere ordinary slave rebellion like the unsuccessful previous others, which did nothing to bother the slavocracy. Those pessimistic descriptions of Turner's revolt are mere denials of reality. Indeed, even though the revolt did not last long, its echo was heard and felt throughout the whole country. J. W. Cromwell (1920, p. 233) articulates the same idea of failure in his *In the Aftermath of Nat Turner's Insurrection*. For him, "Considered in the light of its immediate effect upon its participants, it was a failure, an egregious failure, a wanton crime." More recently, P. H. Breen (2015, p.1) stipulates that Turner's rebellion was a short lived conspiracy. The common point between the aforementioned views is that they negatively depict Turner's rebellion as a mere failure. Yet, beyond the defeat and the loss of his own life, we can reasonably argue that Turner and his companions took psychological ascendency over the slavocracy and that should not be disregarded and underestimated.

Fortunately, the negative perspectives of Black people's acts of resistance found contradiction in historiography. J. W. Cromwell, despite his initial argument *In the Aftermath of Nat Turner's Insurrection*, admitted that Turner's rebellion could also be considered as a "moral success and Nat Turner deserves to be ranked among the greatest reformers of his day (1938, p.235). Narrowing Turner's victory to just a moral victory is a good start. Yet, it does not highlight the military capabilities of the fighter because his victory goes beyond the simple moral satisfaction. Turner's project was much larger and it resultedinto a psychological ascendency over slavocracy.

The early writings on Samory Toure were drawn from French military reports. Indeed, the metropolitan newspapers reporting on the French colonial wars in Africa referred to Samory Toure using terms that reflected French people's belief in racial superiority. *Le Matin* (June 25, 1897, p.1) for example, called him "*un aventurier, sorte de bandit*" "*sanguinaire*" ("a rascal, sort of bandit" "bloddthirsty"). In the same vein, later sources regarded him as "an illiterate adventurer in search of personal gain" (J. D. Fage, 1969, p. 149). Even when the literature does not present Toure in negative terms, it limits itself in mere descriptions of his empire through its military, its diplomacy, and its administration (M. Legassick, 1966; B. J. Peterson, 2008). The scholarship focuses on the time and geography of Turner's and Toure's actions, which minimizes the scale and scope of their resistance to oppressive systems. This article is part of recasting Black freedom fighters in the heroic light they deserve, by showing that Turner was a fine military strategist in the same way as his African counterpart Toure. Indeed, abolitionists like W. L. Garrison (Liberator, July 13, 1838) and H.C. Wright (The Non-Resistant. January 21, 1841) shared the conviction that Turner and all black freedom fighters should have the same honors as Georges Washington and celebrated as military leaders.

Despite their military genius and the losses Turner and Toure inflicted to far stronger opponents, the literature focusing on the time and geography of their actions so far failed to capture the psychological scope and scale of their resistance. Our work fills in the gap by stressing the psychological victory that they had over slavocracy and French colonialism.

2. Warrior-born Black leaders
2.1. Nat Turner or the warlike temperament

On August 21, 1831, when slavery in the United States of America (USA) was still legal and Blacks were reduced to a state of brute, Nat Turner succeeded in orchestrating with the greatest dexterity what would prove to be the most famous slave revolt.His masters had absolutely no idea of what was going on against them.In the aftermaths of the revolt, slaveholders and a good number of scholars were only obsessed with understanding the possible reasons and factors that led this slave to organize such a rebellion against his so-called "paternalistic" masters. They were merely able to perceive and recognize the religious leadership of Nat Turner. He was for instance described by T. R. Gray (1831, p.4), the lawyer who collected his confessions as "a gloomy fanatic" with "dark, bewildered, and overwrought mind". In a similar vein, L. Middleton (1938, p.236) depicted Turner as a man who "sincerely believed himself appointed by the 'spirit' to a place of leadership over the 'negroes'". He added that Nat's rebellion failed because the spirit "failed" him (1938, p.236).

It must be recognized that, in contrast to the slaveholders and scholars like Middleton, Nat turner's leadership went beyond mere religious leadership. He used

his sense of observation, of organization, and of strategy to fight for the cause of freedom. According to a contributor to the newspaper *Liberator* named only as "L", such skills should have earned him greater fame as a military leader than George Washingtonbecause his cause was greater (February 13, 1836). The effect of surprise and the speed with which Nat Turner led his rebellion are undoubtedly some clues to his great knowledge of military strategy. Understanding this warrior-born leader requires one to read his short life, from early childhood to his death.

Fairly described as a "martyr to the freedom of his race" by W. W. Brown (1863, p.71) Nat Turner was born on October 2, 1800, on the plantation of his master and owner of his body, Benjamin Turner. Young Turner understood very quickly that slavery was perpetual alienation because his father and mother, his identity markers, were all slaves without any prospect of freedom. Nevertheless, the origins of his military skills can partly be located in his parental influences. Indeed, despite all the measures taken by his master to prevent him from doing so, Turner's father escaped from slavery and according to J. Cromwell (1920, p.208), he emigrated to Liberia in Africa "where, it is said, his grave is quite as well known as that of Franklin's, Jefferson's or Adams's is to the patriotic American". In his confessions*,* Turner acknowledged the great influence his parents had on the birth and growing of his warlike personality in the following words: "my father and mother strengthened mein this my first impression, saying in my presence, I was intended for some great purpose, which they had always thought from certain marks on my head and breast" (T. R. Gray, 1831, p.9). This same idea is furthered by W. W. Brown (1863, p.59). He informshis readers that being of unmixed African descent and rooted in the culture of superstition, Turner's parents made him understand "that he was born for a prophet, a preacher, and a deliverer of his race" (1863, p.59). Then, to be a liberator of his race, Turner had to become a fighter and a warrior. The marks on his head and chest deeply embedded in his flesh and mind were, according to his parents, palpable signs that their son was destined to fight, to get hurt, and to spill blood. They believed he was destined to face his responsibilities and even to die for the cause of the black skin on which these marks were written. Turner learned his parents' teachings well because he followed in his father's footsteps and escaped for 30 days in the woods from his cruel overseer. The art of escaping from the enemy's hands, of hiding and of surviving are undoubtedly skills good soldiers are familiar with in war. However, unlike his father, and to the general surprise of his fellow slaves, Turner returned to his master's house. He did so because in his own words, the Holy Spirit commanded him to do so (T. R. Gray, 1931, p.10). As a good soldier, Nat obeyed the orders of the highest ranking officer: the Holy Spirit. Informed readers understand that in reality, Turner's escape, hiding in the woods, and his return to his master were not acts of cowardice on the part of a nostalgic slave returning to his slave comforts, but rather, the acts of a strategist who wished to study the

enemy's reaction. Turner was in fact laying the groundwork for the revolt he was planning, because later in his confessions he stated:

I had a vision-and I saw white spirits and black spirits engaged in battle, and the sun was darkened-the thunder rolled in the Heavens, and blood flowed in streams-and I heard a voice saying, "Such is your luck, such you are called to see, and let it come rough or smooth, you must surely bare it. (T. R. Gray, 1931, p.10).

Nat turner could have escaped alone like his father. This would have been a psychological and financial victory over his masters. Actually, one of the things slaveholders dreaded most was the loss of their slaves, which they considered to be property. Turner's return heralds his willingness to build an army of revolted slaves like himself, and wage war against his oppressors, to shed blood in order to stop the bloodshed of all his people; and this is a proof of his military leadership.

Childhood incidentsalso contributed to shape Turner's warlike temperament. W. W. Brown (1863, p. 61) reported that young Turner once got flogged by two white patrolling officers for being absent from his master's plantation without a pass. Revolted, young Turner, with the help of two slave boys secretly plotted revenge against these officers. He set up a carefully orchestrated ambush for them, which resulted in serious injuries for these officers. Another day, he was violently attacked by a gang of white boys. To take his revenge, he also ambushed them and inflicted them a defeat. These incidents and Turner's reactions are palpable clues to Turner's warrior personality from childhood. Constantly driven by the desire to gain psychological advantage over his enemies, Turner always carefully planned all his offensives, and this always ensured him victory.

Additionally, Nat's military leadership can be seen through his language, especially in theword choice of his confessions. Actually, when describing the proceedings of his revolt, Turner neatly selectedand used expressions which are reminiscent of military language. Examples of these expressions are legion: "I ordered them to mount and march instantly" (T. R. Gray, 1831, p.14), "I then ordered my men to fire and rush on them" (T. R. Gray, 1831, 15), "we paraded", "I formed them in a line as soldiers" (T. R. Gray, 1831, p.13), "after carrying them through all the manoeuvres I was master of, [I]marched them off to Mr. Salathul Francis'" (T. R. Gray, 1831, p.13), "I took my station in the rear" (T. R. Gray, 1831, p.14).Turner's choice of words such as "soldiers", "manoeuvres", "station" and his use of active verbs such as "ordered", "fire", "paraded", and "marched" suggest that Turner was familiar with the military language of command. He certainly learned this military language thanks to his extraordinary ability to observe the military of the time in Southampton. It is also a testament to the fact that Turner saw himself as commander-in-chief and his men as soldiers. This surely contributed to his military standing in the eyes of his men. Such military leadership was also necessary for his successor Samory Touré if he were to carry out his resistance against the French.

2.2. Samory Toure: the birth of a war leader

Unlike Nat Turner, Samory Touré's military leadership is widely acknowledged. His leadership is recognized to such an extent that a profusion of nicknames is dedicated to him. He is for instance nicknamed the "keletigui" (the warlord) (I. Ouedraogo, 2012, p.3) by his community. Toure is also named the "African napoleaon" by scholars (V. Kubiak, 2016, "Samori Touré"). Toure is described as an intrepid fighter who, through leadership, was able to mobilize and train thousands of men to defend his empire against the French.

As Turner, the origins of Samory's military leadership can be traced to parental influences. Samory was born around 1830 to a skilled merchant father in Miniambaladougou in present-day Guinea (Ade Ajayiqtd. in I. Ouedraogo, 2012, p.2). His father was a salt and tobacco merchant in a very competitive environment marked by the presence of several other competitors. To be successful and conquer as great market shares as possible, it is obvious that Samory's father had to develop strong commercial skills. Indeed, Toure saw his father challenging his competitors, develop strategies to outdo them, negotiate, and even remove them from markets when necessary. Immersed in such an environment, and having well observed his father's commercial warfare, it is logical to see young Samory initially embracing his father's vocation and becoming a successful merchant in his turn. Just as Turner who adapted the lessons taken from his parents, Samory applied the knowledge of commercial warfare received from his father to war.

I. Ouedraogo (2012, p.2) reports an incident happening around 1848 in the life of young Samory, which precipitated his transition from commercial to military training. In that era, West Africa was plagued by numerous conflicts of royalty. Samory's mother was captured by Sory Birama, of the Cissé clan. To save his mother, Samory did not hesitate to use his knowledge of trade, negotiation, and strategy gathered from his father. Indeed, instead of attacking the enemy Sory Birama directly from the outside, Samory decided to attack him from the inside: he decided to renounce his trade and become a slave to the Cissé clan, with the hope of freeing his mother. This strategy brought Samory three advantages, which contributed in shaping his warlike leadership: he received solid military knowledge first. Then, he used this military knowledge to escape with his mother after seven years. Finally, like Turner who was endowed with strong religious knowledge, Samory received strong religious education, especially in Islam.

When he returned to his hometown in 1855, Samory started recruiting people to whom he gave Islamic education and military training. Samory's military leadership helped him build a strong empire in West Africa. The survival of his empire was however strongly threatened by the progression of the French colonial forces. Indeed, with the Berlin conference in 1884 which divided Africa, French forces began their intrusion into West Africa until they invaded the Mandika Empire. To respond to the threat posed by French forces, Samory equipped his

troops with relatively modern weaponry and expanded his empire to what is now known as Liberia. Samory is well known for daring to resist the French colonial forces which were trying to build the French colonial empire. Such an enterprise implied that the French had to destroy Samory's empire. In 1881, in a battle which opposed his troops to French forces, Samory's troops inflicted a crushing defeat to the enemy (J. M. O'Sullivan, 1983, p. 123). Winning such a victory over a far stronger enemy certainly required Toure to demonstrate exceptional military skills.

I. Ouedraogo (2012, p. 12) suggests that in his resistance against the French, Samory favored more the strategy of confrontation than alliances with the enemy. Knowing the spirit of revolt and unsubmission that Samory acquired throughout his experience as a fighter, this strategy is not surprising. Samory already proved with the liberation of his mother, captured by his former enemies, that he was committed to freedom and independence and that oppression had to be fought by all means. He could not tolerate the authority of the French on his territory. Aware that the French domination would not only be military but also religious, he was not ready to abandon his Islamic religion in favor of Christianity. Even though his war against the French was a physical one as they fought with weapons and resulted in his defeat, just like Turner, Samory's aim was more a psychological victory over his enemy than a physical one.

3. Psychological war: Hittingthe enemy's mind and emotions

Our study points out that Nat Turner and Samory Toure saw themselves more in a psychological war than in a physical oneagainst their enemies. Those two black warriors were well ahead of their time in terms of military strategy. Indeed, well aware of their military inferiority in a physical war against their enemies, Turner and Toure preferred to aim at psychological ascendancy over their enemies. The victory sought was then psychological even if this implied losing their lives. It is then relevant to clarify this notion of psychological warfare.

According to psychologists such as E. Dolev (2022, p.1), psychological warfare is primarily warfare aimed at the enemy's mind and emotions. In this scholar's words, "psychological warfare employs specialized designs, such as propaganda and threatening comments, to influence an enemy's reasoning and behavior." The battleground of this type of warfare is thus emotional and mental, with the ultimate goal of changing the enemy's reasoning and behavior. In the same vein, S. McFate (2019, p.199), former officer of the American army and professor of strategy is convinced that "If you twist your enemy's perception of reality, you can manipulate him into strategic blunders that can be exploited for victory". According to him, psychological warfare is a game of manipulation aimed at making the enemy to lose his ability to perceive reality. Historians are not left behind as for the definition of psychological war. In his definition of the expression, the historian Robert Longley agrees with those previously mentioned. Indeed, he describes psychological warfare as the use of any weapon to deceive,

intimidate or change the enemy's way of thinking (Qtd. in V. K. Ahluwalia, 2020, p.18). All these authors are unanimous on the fact that psychological warfare aims at changing the mental and emotional attitude of the enemy. This is exactly what Turner and Samory were aiming at with their respective enemies: the slavocracy and the French colonists.

Actually, in a speech to his soldiers before the attack, Turner made it clear the type of war they had to wage: "Remember that ours is not a war for robbery and to satisfy our passions; it is a struggle for freedom" (W. W. Brown, 1863, p. 64). Contrary to the slavers' version, Turner's army was not in search for material wealth but rather for an immaterial treasure: freedom. He ordered his soldiers to murder slave owners as he was certain that this would strike at their emotions and minds. The goal in fact was not merely killing slave owners but symbolically killingthe practice of slavery. When Turner further told his men that "ours must be deeds and not words" (W. W. Brown, 1863, p. 64), he expressed his desire to see his rebellion remain in memory while convincing slaveholders that slavery could not be a lasting practice. He wished his actions would psychologically traumatize slaveholders, the effects of which were more lasting.

Moreover, the targets chosen in priority by Turner and his compeers inform us that they wished to strike the emotion and spirit of the slavocracy. Most of the victims were white women and children. The female slavers were the ones who educated their children the most, and by choosing to target them, Turner was demonstrating his desire to stop the cycle of training future slavers. Since white children had already received proslavery education, Turner targeted them too in order to cut the evil at its root.

Additionally, in his confession, Turner stated that in their war, "A general destruction of property, and search for money and ammunition, always succeeded the murders." (T. R. Gray, 1831, p. 13). Informed readers will understand that this assertion does not contradict what he had told his soldiers before launching the attack. Aware that it was with weapons and ammunition that slaveholders kept slaves in chains, and knowing how powerless slaveholders would feel without material possessions (including their slaves, which they considered as their properties), Turner attacked their most valuable possessions in order to further traumatize them.

Another example supports the idea that Turner and his soldiers were waging a psychological war against the slavocracy. Indeed, again in his confessions, Turner said: "we knew we were strong enough to murder the family, if they were awaked by the noise; but reflecting that it might create an alarm in the neighborhood, we determined to enter the house secretly, and murder them whilst sleeping." (T. R. Gray, 1931, p.12). Turner and his companions' choice to kill slaveholders while they were sleeping is symbolic. It represents the explosion of these oppressed people's repressed anger against their unfair dehumanization. Their choice to kill their masters whilst sleeping fits perfectly with the

psychological warfare they chose to wage. Breaking into someone's home is already traumatic. Nonetheless, Turner and his soldiers were not only breaking into their masters' homes; their strategy consisted in killing them in their sleep. They knew they couldn't kill all of their masters. Their goal was to break into the minds of the survivors and into all the slavers' mindsin order to deeply plant their freedom drive. The same freedom for which Turner fought for in the United States seems to have been felt years later by his African successor Samory Toure.

Actually, just like Turner, Samory was aware of his inferiority if he were to engage only in physical warfare. His enemies, the French colonists, were equipped with more modern weapons, whereas Samory had only few modern weapons. Nevertheless, as a fine military strategist, Samory transposed the war onto the psychological level. First, by attacking the French who were not prepared for a resistance of this magnitude during his 10 years of resistance, Samory succeeded in demoralizing the French troops. His strategy of demoralizing the French army is more akin to his scorched earth strategy. Indeed, after their passage through an area, Samory's soldiers systematically burned all infrastructure and means of subsistence in order to prevent the French army from surviving (N. Toure, 2014, "Samory Touré [1830-1900]"). Toure was aware that doing so would undermine the morale of the French soldiers who were often unable to make supplies. It is clear that burning the means of subsistence which French troops for sure needed in their conquest was a traumatizing experience for them. In traditional African society, to give the last blow, a warrior would burn his enemy's granary. Such an act is considered as a crushing defeat to be given to an enemy, for what is a man's value if he cannot feed his wife and children? It is in this line that we can view Samory's scorched earth strategy as a psychological defeat inflicted to French troops at that time. To increase the impact of the trauma of his war on his enemies, Toure waged a nomadic war. He always moved from one place to another and this nomadic warfare, in addition to costing the French a great deal of time and money, irritated the soldiers who felt that Samory was unquenchable.

4. Victory in Defeat: Psychological victory in the aftermaths of Black revolts

Turner's victory over the slavery system in 1831 was visible through the psychosis and paranoia that followed his revolt. This paranoia and feeling of fear led slavers to massively murder slaves in retaliation and to take more restrictive laws that would deteriorate slaves' living conditions. More than 120 slaves, the majority of whom knew nothing of Turner's revolt, were violently murdered because the slavery system was looking for scapegoatsto satisfy its thirst for blood (J. W. Cromwell, 1920, p.212). With regards to the numerous slaves killed after the revolt and to the deterioration of slaves' living conditions, one could simply conclude that Turner had done more harm than good to his brethren. However, it must be recognized that the trauma and paranoia among slaveholders at that time reflected the state of psychological fear that animated them, and this was the

psychological victory Turner aimed at. Slavers' violent reaction was palpable evidence of a sense of insecurity that they did not have toward blacks before the insurrection. The trend was reversed: the hunter became the hunted. Slaveholders who were feared by their slaves now feared their slaves because they saw what they were capable of.

The echoes of Turner's revolt were heard beyond the borders of Virginia. All over the USA, news of the damage inflicted by a handful of slaves on the entire slave system spread. The psychosis was increased by the fact that almost two months after their attack, while most of his soldiers were captured or executed, Turner was still nowhere to be found. Let's remember that several years earlier, he had escaped and hidden for a month in the forest without slave hunters being able to find him. The art of concealment and evasion, which are military skills, had no secrets for Turner.

One of the most effective weapons in warfare is communication. Turner was aware of this and he took advantage of it to increase slaveholders' trauma. Indeed, as a military strategist, he knew that until he was captured, his spirit would haunt the days and nights of all Virginians and no slaveholder could sleep peacefully for fear of suffering the same fate as the more than 60 white people killed during their sleep. J. Cromwell (1920, p.214) informed us that Turner's unseizability created rumors that terrorized the entire South. In particular, there were rumors that Turner was everywhere at the same time and that other slave revolts were about to take place. In the same vein, S. Oates (1975, p. 135) argued that slaveholders "could never escape the possibility that somewhere, maybe even in their own slave quarters, another Nat Turner was plotting to rise up and slit their throats". This feeling of insecurity changed the slavers' lifestyle: they "returned home before twilight, barricaded themselves in their homes, kept watch during the night, or abandoned their homes for centers where armed force was adequate to their protection" (J. Cromwell, 1920, p.214). H. Aptheker (1966, p. 93-97) also mentioned the poor psychological state of slaveholders when he stated that "...the Turner Revolt led a number of white people to leave their homes and seek more secure abodes". He added that "…the shift in expressed ideology was simultaneous with the increased uneasiness of the slave regions" (H. Aptheker, 1966, p. 93-97). The slaveholding ideology according to which slaves were docile beings endowed with child-like personalities, incapable of thinking, and who were to be controlled with the carrot and the stick was deeply questioned with the Turner's revolt. The surprise effect, the meticulous organization, the military strategies demonstrated by Turner proved to the slavers that they were wrong about the slaves and that their plan to keep them indefinitely chained could not be sustainable.

In his confessions, Turner mentioned that "twas my object to carry terror and devastation wherever we went" (T. R. Gray, 1831, p.14). We can confirm without the slightest doubt that he succeeded in terrorizing slaveholders. Such a psychological victory was one small step for slaves, one giant leap for mankind, to

appropriate the famous quote of the astronaut Neil Armstrong when he landed on the moon in 1969. Indeed, it was a giant leap because the very spirit of Turner's rebellion managed to spread to other generations of slaves and their descendants like Frederick Douglass or Harriet Jacobs who, although using less violent means, continued the fight initiated by Turner and which led the USA to the emancipation of slaves several years later.

The psychological ascendancy that Samory had on the French colonist can be seen in the way the French treated him after his capture. Indeed, he was deported and exiled to Gabon, which according to Julie d'Andurain (2013, p. 134), is one of the "dry guillotines" where colonial Francesent its enemies to "climatic" death. By doing so, the French colonists showed their fear of what the maintenance of Samory in his kingdom could result in. Indeed, even captured and unarmed, they knew that Samory's aura could continue influencing his followers. To prevent them from reorganizing and continuing Samory's resistance, the French decision to exile Samory reflects the psychological trauma he had succeeded in instilling in their minds; and this is victory.

Conclusion

Using a psychological approach, our study provided a new reading of Nat Turner and Samory Toure's resistance against oppression. This paper went beyond the views of many scholars who considered both Black leaders' revoltsas mere defeats for the simple reason that they failed in winning the physical victory over their enemies. After demonstrating that Turner was a fine military strategist in the same way as his African successor Samory Toure, our work proved that both Black leaders' victories actually lied in their defeats, but most scholars failed to perceive this. If those two leaders seemed to their opponents to be waging a physical war, we demonstrated that they were rather waging a psychological war. Both leaders knew that hitting their enemies' minds and emotions was more effective than a physical victory because this could durably change the enemy's behavior. In view of the psychosis and paranoia among white people that followed Turner's revolt, it was concluded that he had achieved his goal of gaining psychological ascendancy over the slavers. His ultimate goal was to lay the groundwork for the fight against slavery. As for Samory Touré, his scorched earth strategy left enormous psychological scars in the minds of the French soldiers who were not prepared for such a resistance from an African. It also traumatized the local communities that sided with the French invader. Just like W. W. Brown (1863, p.72) who was convinced that Turner's legacy continued to inspire slaves during slavery, we believe the examples of Turner and Samory should inspire Africans, especially Burkinabe people who have been facing the scourge of terrorism for almost a decade. For sure, Turner and Samory represent inspiring figures in Black history. Innovative scholarship must be encouraged to generate genuine perspectives of their fights.

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