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Department of Economics
University of Copenhagen

Dear Members of the Recruiting Committee,

I am writing to apply for the position of Postdoctoral position in Economics of Religion. I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Economics at Brown University and expect to complete my Ph.D. in May 2023.

My research fields include political economy and conflict, with aspects of religion, especially Islam. For example, in my other paper “The Golden City on the Edge: Economic Geography and Jihad over Centuries”, coauthored with Masahiro Kubo, we attempt to uncover the evolution of cities and Islamist insurgencies, so called *jihad*, in the process of the reversal of fortune over the centuries. In West Africa, water access in ancient periods predicts the locations of the core cities of inland trade routes—the trans-Saharan caravan routes—founded up to the 1800s, when historical Islamic states played significant economic roles before European colonization. In contrast, ancient water access does not have a persistent influence on contemporary city formation and economic activities. After European colonization and the invention of modern trading technologies, along with the constant shrinking of water sources, landlocked pre-colonial core cities contracted or became extinct. Employing an instrumental variable strategy, we show that these deserted locations have today been replaced by battlefields for jihadist organizations. We argue that the power relations between Islamic states and the European military during the 19th century colonial era shaped the persistence of jihadist ideology as a legacy of colonization. Investigations into religious ideology related to jihadism, using individual-level surveys from Muslims, support this mechanism. Moreover, the concentration of jihadist violence in “past-core-and-present-periphery” areas in West Africa is consistent with a global-scale phenomenon. We presented this paper at a workshop organized by the Institute for the Study of Religion, Economics and Society (Chapman University).

I plan to continue to pursue my current line of research on conflicts involving violent Islamic extremism from spatial, historical, and behavioral perspectives. In addition, I am eager to expand the scope of my research to deepen our understanding of religiosity and its role in the economy and society. I will be very excited to work with the research team of the economics of religion at University of Copenhagen.

Moreover, I will be very thrilled to move to Copenhagen. Before the pandemic, I stayed in Copenhagen for an academic conference. I was impressed by the high level of research and really enjoyed discussing with many researchers there. With this background, and for personal reasons as well, Copenhagen is one of the cities that I would most like to live in. I am also passionate about actively participating in a vibrant research community in Europe.

Please feel free to access my website (<https://shunsuketsuda.com>) for additional information. Please contact me at shunsuke_tsuda@brown.edu or +1-401-999-3659 if you have any questions. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Shunsuke Tsuda