

SAHARAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

1
Volume 3, No. 2, May 1995

INTRODUCTION

The *Newsletter* is the principal organ of the Saharan Studies Association, a body of scholars with common interests, associated with the African Studies Association of the United States. The *Newsletter* will be published twice a year in the Spring and Fall and is designed to be a forum for the exchange of news about publications, projects and scholarly debates in our chosen area.

Broadly speaking, the aim of the Association is to foster collaboration and exchange of information between interested scholars in a variety of disciplines ranging through the arts, the humanities, the social sciences and the natural sciences, as they encounter new research materials, engage with local fieldwork problems and seek avenues for bringing the results of their research to a wider circle of colleagues. Given that French is the *lingua franca* of much of north Africa, the Sahara and West Africa, we shall be happy to publish communications and comments in French as well as English, though we regret that we are not in a position to publish a fully bi-lingual newsletter.

Membership in the Saharan Studies Association is open to all interested persons. The annual dues of US\$10 (or Sponsoring Membership of US\$25) entitle members to

receive the *Newsletter* and any other occasional publications, and to present papers at panels sponsored by the Saharan Studies Association at annual meetings of the African Studies Association and the Canadian Association of African Studies. The annual business meeting is held during the ASA meeting in November/December each year. As of May 1995 membership totalled approximately 70, from the USA, Canada, Denmark, Gt Britain, France, Norway, Spain, Algeria, Morocco, Japan, Senegal and Cameroon. We hope existing members will pass on information about the Association and actively recruit new members. Contributions for the Fall 1995 *Newsletter* should be sent to :

John Hunwick, Department of History,
Northwestern University, Evanston, IL
60208, USA (fax: 708 467-1393, email:
jhunwick@casbah.acns.nwu.edu), or

It would be most helpful if contributors could submit items in both paper and electronic copy preferably by email or, if on disk, formatted in Microsoft Word, though most other programs can be handled.

Membership data forms and dues should be sent to John Hunwick at the above address. Dollar cheques should be made out to "Northwestern University" with the mention "Saharan Studies Association."

MINUTES OF SAHARAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION MEETING, NOVEMBER 5, 1994, ROYAL YORK HOTEL, TORONTO (ASA ANNUAL MEETING)

The Third Annual Meeting of the Saharan Studies Association (SSA) began with introductions of those present (about 20-25 people). The main results of the meeting were as follows:

1. Organization: John Hunwick kindly offered to take the SSA under his organizational wing, making his office in the African Studies Program at Northwestern University the new information headquarters for the association. Henceforth, membership information, dues, and newsletter items should all be sent to Prof. Hunwick.

2. Status of the Organization: This year we will try to establish both non-profit status and official affiliation with the African Studies Association.

3. Newsletter: Please send information for the newsletter, and encourage graduate students to send in brief statements of their research projects. Information should be sent on diskette or by e-mail. To be included in the next newsletter, information should reach John Hunwick by April 1995. The last newsletter went out to 120 people and institutions.

4. Libraries, African Institutions: It was agreed that we should continue to send the newsletter to African institutions, and that we should also begin sending copies to SOAS and some American libraries, including the Library of Congress. If you know of an institution that should be included on this list, please notify John Hunwick.

5. Conference: the Université Ibn Zohr in Agadir has kindly offered to host a conference of the SSA in the future if we would like. A letter has been sent acknowledging this kind offer, and a committee was established to discuss the organization of such a conference: James Webb, Ann McDougall, Mohamed Lahbib Nouhi, Victoria Bomba Coifman, Michael Larue, and Knut Vikor.

6. Advisory Board: The same people charged with arranging a conference will serve as an advisory board to the SSA.

7. Panels for the next ASA: Once again, Jim Webb will oversee the organization of panels sponsored by the SSA for next year's African Studies Association Meetings. If you are interested in presenting a paper, please contact him as soon as possible at jlwebb@colby.edu.

8. Bringing African scholars to future ASA meetings: The US Information Agency helps to fund visits of foreign researchers to such meetings, and we hope that the SSA will be able to invite interested participants from overseas in the future with help from such outside sources of funding.

9. Membership: For European members, the easiest way to pay membership dues is to obtain a check in U.S. dollars from a European bank.

[Prepared by Becky Popenoe]

AFRICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
MEETING IN ORLANDO, 3-6 NOVEMBER
1995: SAHARAN STUDIES PANELS

(1) ISSUES OF GENDER SEXUALITY, AND
THE BODY IN THE SAHARAN REGION

Chair: **Heidi J. Nast**, University of Kentucky

Discussant: **Barbara Cooper**, Bryn Mawr College

Presenters: **Rebecca Popenoe**, University of Chicago: "Sex, Body and Gender in Sahelian and Saharan Ethnography".

Rudolf P. Gaudio, Stanford University, "Pilgrims Transgress: Gender, Sexuality and the New Trans-Saharan Trade".

Timothy Cleaveland, University of Florida, "Gendered Interpretations of Body and Soul in Contemporary Walata (Mauritania)".

Adeline Masquelier, Tulane University, "Housewives versus Prostitutes: the Divergent Politics of Sexuality, Sociality and Productivity in Mawri Society".

Katja Werthmann, Frankfurt (Germany): "Locked-in Women: Muslim Women's Seclusion in Northern Nigeria".

North and West Africa are considered geographically distinct regions despite the fact that both regions have long been interconnected through trade, Islamization, and hence, shared cultural and religious practices. This panel presents research on "Issues of Gender, Sexuality, and the Body" conducted by scholars in both areas as a means of opening up cross-regional, comparative debate. The first paper presents a theoretical overview of gender-sexuality-body issues in both regions. It is followed by an ethnographic study of cross-dressing Hausa men from Nigeria who garner substantial prestige and material gain through performing the *hajj* to Mecca. The paper shows the complicated nature of West Africa/North Africa religious-cultural relations and the impact of cross-regional travel on local constructions

of gender. The third paper examines how Islamic prescriptions about spiritual and bodily cleanliness are played out in an oasis in Mauritania and how such prescriptions work to encode and give meaning to the female body. The last two papers also deal with Islamicized constructions of the female body and sexuality, in Niger and Nigeria respectively. The papers thus provide data with which cross-regional comparisons can be made on social constructions of gender, sexuality, and the body—constructions that are themselves the result of social and material processes that cross-cut North and West Africa.

(2) TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE SAHARA AND SAHEL, 1850-1950

Chair: **George Michael La Rue**, Clarion University

Discussant: **Katherine P. Moseley**, American University.

Presenters: **Sydney Kanya-Forstner**, York University: "Agents of Imperialism: Algerian Interpreters and Political Agents in French West Africa, 1890-1914"

James L. Webb, Colby College: "Western Saharan International Trade in the Nineteenth Century: The Perspective From Senegambia and the Gible."

Monica Van Beusekom, SUNY-Plattsburgh: "Farmer Resistance and Colonial Development: Changing Strategies and Constraints at the Office du Niger (Mali)."

George Michael La Rue, Clarion University: "Drought, Slavery and Colonial Expansion at the Desert's Edge: The Flight of Nomadic Arabs from Ali Dinar's Dar Fur to the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1913."

This panel will discuss the transformation of Saharan and Sahelian societies in the era of European colonial expansion and the ability of those societies to evolve new strategies to face a series of remarkable political, social and economic changes. The issues to be addressed include: the strategies and goals of Africans as they negotiated the changes in

thier individual lives; the opportunities and risks which arose for groups of farmers and pastoralists as new political uncertainties were added to existing environmental challenges; and the struggles between the pre-colonial states and the expanding colonial territories for control over the lives and for the loyalty of the populations of the Sahara and Sahel. In each of the cases to be considered, African individuals and groups had to interpret the significance of the changes, and judge the benefits and risks of alternative courses of action, including assisting or resisting the extension of colonial power over African societies. The panel will also consider the interpretation and limitations of archival and oral sources which deal with this complex period of African history.

THESES IN PROGRESS

Daddi Addoun Yacine, Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, Paris; *Les communautés noires du Mzab*

Fondée sur des observations de terrain, cette étude met en évidence les rapports entre Noirs et Blancs au Mzab. Un tel sujet ne peut-être abordé sans recourir à l'histoire des uns et des autres. Bâties à partir du XI^e siècle, les villes ibādites du Mzab étaient le *refuge* de différentes populations du Sahara. Aussi vit-on vivre en bonne intelligence Arabes, Berbères, Africains noirs: sédentaires, nomades; Juifs, ibādites, mālikites . . . Notre propos est de pénétrer ce milieu et d'analyser les rapports entre ces différentes populations à partir des communautés noires. Il s'agit en effet d'anciens esclaves (*išemḡān*) et de métis (*al-ḥamriyya*) qui, quant à eux, ne se considèrent ni anciens esclaves ni originaires de la région, mais venus d'ailleurs. Malgré que la différence soit cultivée à tous les niveaux: noms de familles, traditions, rituels, musiques, il semble que les deux communautés souffrent du même sort de discrimination.

La ségrégation positive à l'encontre des Noirs et des Métis, qui se résume dans l'expression: "On leur a laissé les traditions

de leurs ancêtres", dans un milieu aussi puritain que celui du Mzab, revêt un aspect autre. Quoique tous ibādites, la différence est de taille entre ceux pour qui la musique est un héritage ancestrale (les Noirs et les Métis) et ceux qui se voient excommuniés pour avoir utilisé ne serait-ce que des percussions (*darbūka*) lors d'un mariage.

Auparavant une étude sur l'esclavage et ses particularités au Mzab s'impose. On a utilisé pour illustrer les points de vue ibādites l'ouvrage de Shaykh Aṭfayyash, *Sharḥ al-nīl wa-shifā' al-'alīl*, qui reste la référence des ibādites en matière de *fiqh*.

Durant l'époque moderne, l'accent est mis sur l'abolition de l'esclavage par la France, notamment entre 1848, date de la promulgation de décret de l'abolition de l'esclavage, et 1906, date à laquelle les autorités françaises interdirent toute vente d'esclaves en Algérie et aux Territoires du Sud.

L'intervention des Noirs dans le quotidien des Blancs et *vice versa* témoigne d'une complémentarité, voire d'une certaine complexité. On discerne cela à travers le rôle des Noirs au Mzab. L'analyse des fêtes de mariage et de certains rituels, qui se pratiquent de moins au moins de nos jours, ainsi que des occasions où intervient la musique, donc le savoir propre aux Noirs, en fournit un exemple illustre.

A la fin de cette étude, une vision de l'état actuel des choses s'impose. Aussi, traitons-nous les rapports Noirs-Blancs au Mzab actuel, avec toutes les crises qu'il traverse, conséquences du changement social dû à une modernisation à double vitesse. In importe donc de savoir si la perte des traditions engendra une détérioration ou, au contraire, une consolidation des rapports entre les deux communautés.

CONQUEST AND AUTHORITY: ANCIENT GHANA AND THE ALMORAVIDS IN WEST AFRICAN HISTORIOGRAPHY*

by
Pekka Masonen

The Almoravid conquest of Ghana in 1076 AD is certainly one of the most dramatic and controversial single events in West African historiography. It has been regarded as a crucial turning point not only for the existence of the Ghana empire, but also for the destiny of the entire area, opening the gates for triumphant Islam in sub-Saharan Africa.

Yet this alleged conquest can be understood as one of the many myths that still populate African historical writing, like the wonderful voyage of Hanno to the Bight of Biafra or the gallant Garamantes crossing the Sahara with their chariots. There are two reasons for the popularity of these stories: during the colonial period they helped in justifying European rule in Africa but afterwards they stayed alive, because many European writers have been content to rely solely on the previous secondary literature instead of examining the available primary sources. Consequently many hypothetical assumptions created by colonial historians have been transferred from one body of research into another. Finally, when their ori-

* This is a radically abridged version of a paper which was presented in the 3rd International Conference on Mande Studies, in Leiden 20.-24.3.1995 (Pekka Masonen & Humphrey J. Fisher, "Not quite Venus from the waves: the Almoravid conquest of Ghana in West African historiography"), and which will appear in full in *History in Africa*, 23 (1996). The paper itself is a part of my ongoing PhD-thesis on the literary discovery of early Sudanese history and its representation in European works. Reaction in Leiden was mixed: some regarded this kind of research as useless, others found it inspiring. All comments from members of the Saharan Studies Association are more than welcome. Please send them to me at the following address: William Goodenough House, Flat 930, Mecklenburgh Square, London WC1N 2AN, United Kingdom.

gin has been forgotten, these stories became established historical facts, after they had been repeated often enough in the authorized literature (see Henige 1987).

There is no direct evidence for the violent conquest of Ghana by the Almoravids: we know only that Islam had spread in Ghana by the time of Almoravid movement. However, we constantly speak about the Almoravid "conquest" of Ghana, or at least their "influence" in Ghana. Where does this conception come from? Originally the conquest hypothesis is a European creation and it received its final form in 1912, after gradual accumulation of misunderstandings and repetition in European works concerning early West African history. Tracing its genealogy is not mere antiquarian interest in European literature, but it reveals also the way in which the African past was comprehended by the 19th- and early 20th-century European writers, and how dangerous it is if we continue to trust them without ever asking what were their sources and methods, and for whom they wrote and why; in other words, we need always to treat the previous secondary literature with the same care with which we treat our sources.

The Almoravid conquest of Ghana appeared for the first time in the pioneering work on early West African history, *The Negroland of the Arabs*, written by William Desborough Cooley in 1841. Cooley's principal sources for the history of ancient Ghana were al-Bakrī and Ibn Khaldūn whose works were available to him as manuscripts in British Library. But Cooley made one fatal mistake, for he assumed that Awdaghost, an important trading centre on the southern edge of Sahara and vividly described by al-Bakrī, had been the capital of Ghana until it was conquered by the Almoravids in AH 449/1057-8 AD, because al-Bakrī claimed that this town "used to be the residence of the king of the Sudan who was called Ghana before the Arabs entered in Ghana". This expression is far from being clear but Almoravids are never called Arabs in the Arabic sources, although many writers approved the myth of their Himyaritic origin. Other sources used by Cooley were Luis

del Marmol Carvajal, a Spanish scholar writing in the late 16th century, and a Portuguese translation of Ibn Abī Zar's *Rawḍ al-Qirṭās* published in 1821. Marmol provided the date for the conquest, 1076, which is also found in a note attached to a French translation of al-Bakrī published by Etienne Quatremère in 1831, whereas Ibn Abī Zar's contribution was to emphasize the violent relationship of Almoravids and the pagan blacks of Western Sudan. Cooley's overall chronology for early West African history was taken from Ibn Khaldūn, according to whom Ghana had been the greatest state of Western Sudan, until it declined during the Almoravid period, being finally subdued by the Soso, another black people, who, in their part, were subdued by Mali.

Yet, according to Cooley, the Almoravid conquest and occupation did not cause any significant political changes in Ghana, and after the death of the conqueror, amir Abū Bakr b. ʿUmar, in 1087, Ghana became again independent, although it was now an Islamic state. Later there was another, more destructive conquest, by the Soso, in early 13th century, which ruined Ghana, according to Ibn Khaldūn. The distinction between these two conquests of Ghana, the first by the Almoravids and the second by the Soso, is not always quite clear in Cooley's text who constantly uses very dramatic terms when describing the final demise of Ghana. It is not surprising that some of his later readers may have misapplied remarks about the Soso to the earlier Almoravid period, too.

The next relevant statement came in 1858, in the historical appendix which Heinrich Barth provided in his *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa*. Barth did not carry the substance of the argument much further, but he changed the mood. All Cooley's hesitations about the actual impact on Ghana, were now replaced by a clear affirmation of the Almoravid conquest and of enforced conversion. With the huge popularity enjoyed by Barth, his ideas on the early West African history became soon dominant among European scholars.

After Barth there was a sequence of writers who repeated the Almoravid conquest of Ghana as an established historical fact, each altering the story a little. Common to these writers is that without exception they took the idea from Cooley and Barth, and even if they cited the primary sources (al-Bakrī, Ibn Abī Zar^c, *al-Hulal al-mawshiya*, Ibn Khaldūn), the sources were rendered following the models set by Cooley and Barth. Furthermore, the closer to the turn of the century we come, the more violent and destructive the conquest became. Finally, in 1912, Maurice Delafosse was able to offer his utterly violent picture which ruled virtually unchallenged in West African historiography until the mid-1960s:

The conquest seems to have been complete; not only did the Almoravids take the city, pillage the goods of the inhabitants, massacre a part of the Soninke population, forcing the rest either to flee or to embrace the Muslim religion, but they obliged the emperor to recognise the suzerainty of Abu Bakr and to pay him tribute, and they annexed to their political domain all the dependencies of Ghana, as far as and including the auriferous mountains of Bambuk.

What was Delafosse's evidence for this claim? This passage has no footnote, and thus it is difficult to trace his sources exactly, but according to his bibliography, he knew all the previous European texts where the conquest hypothesis appeared.

Besides the textual genealogy, there is also another, more contextual and hidden, strand in development of the Almoravid conquest of Ghana in European literature. The 19th-century writers did not work in an ideological vacuum but they were affected, at least in some degree, by the contemporary European ideas on Africa and her past. There existed, for instance, a strong and widespread idea of Muslim conquest and dominance in sub-Saharan Africa, even before the history of the Sudanese empires was properly discovered, which was inherited from Leo Africanus and reinforced by the accounts of European travellers in West African interior. Mungo Park, for example, declared that the

actual power at the desert edge rested solely in the hands of the Saharan nomads:

"The enterprising boldness of the Moors, their knowledge of the country, and, above all, the superior fleetness of their horses, make them such formidable enemies, that the petty Negro states which border upon the Desert are in continual terror while the Moorish tribes are in the vicinity and are too much awed to think of resistance."

It was certainly easy to imagine that the situation had been the same in more remote times, too: according to Cooley, and other writers, Ghana had been situated in Western Sahel, close to the desert, lying thus open to attacks by the nomads. Some French scholars saw the entire history of Western Sudan as a continuous struggle between Muslim white pastoralists and sedentary black animists (Basset, 1888). The Europeans had also learnt to respect the Saharan nomads, as they were capable to cause considerable losses to the French army.

In the works of Cooley and Barth the belief in military superiority of the nomads is not yet very strong. It received more importance with the worsening image of the Almoravids in European historiography during the latter half of the 19th century, as they were widely identified with Saharan Tuaregs. Consequently the Almoravids inherited all the vices of the Saharan nomads who were seen as barbarous, cruel and fanatic Muslims. The negative image of the Almoravids was manifested especially by Reinhard Dozy in his influential work, *Histoire des musulmans d'Espagne* (Leiden 1861). According to Dozy, Almoravid rule had meant a severe setback for the prosperous culture of Andalusia, and afterwards many scholars shared his view. Taking this stance, it was more than reasonable to suppose that the Almoravid influence had been as disastrous also in the south, too.

On the other hand, the position of Saharan nomads was elevated by the strengthening idea of racial hierarchy in European thought. After the formation of Hamitic hypothesis, the Saharan nomads

were counted among those advanced African peoples who had drops of civilizing "white" blood in their veins, being thus superior to the Sudanese blacks who owed their progress to contacts with the neighbouring Berber race, "more elevated in the normal order of development of humanity", as claimed by Alfred Le Chatelier in 1899. The Almoravid conquest fitted well in the picture, according to which all cultural progress in sub-Saharan Africa had taken place after waves of conquest from the north. It is hardly a simple coincidence that the more destructive and complete the Almoravid conquest becomes in European literature, the more fantastic ideas the same writers have on the origins of the Sudanese states.

Another element coming from outside the sources was the image of Islam in European thought. In this respect, attitudes were again very ambivalent. On the one hand, Islam, and especially what appeared as Islamic fanaticism, was seen as a barbarous and a backward force. From this point of view, the conquest and destruction of Ghana by Almoravids could be seen as an historical example of the negative impact of Islamic fanaticism (like the Almoravid conquest of Andalusia), justifying the European protection in sub-Saharan Africa: we should not forget that the French, for example, truly believed that their mission in Western Africa was to save the local black population from Muslim slavery and misery (Basset, 1888).

On the other hand, Islam was seen also as a positive force in African history, preparing the savage blacks to receive the blessings of western civilisation. This idea strengthened especially after the active colonial conquest was over and it is logical, for Islam is, after all, more understandable in European eyes than African traditional religions. Thus conversion to Islam meant a step up on the ladder of progress: from orality to literacy, from superstition to monotheism. In this context, the Almoravid conquest could be seen as a civilising act, painful, but making possible sophisticated Islamic civilization in Western Sudan.

But how do all these diverse and sometimes contradictory points of view contribute

towards the development of the conquest hypothesis in European literature? The answer is simply that they set the context: an important reason for the invention, and popularity, of the Almoravid destruction of Ghana is that the ideological atmosphere in the early 20th-century Europe favoured such explanations in African history, because they corresponded with the more general ideas on the inferiority of Africans. Another reason is the methodological decline in the research of African history during the colonial period.

The first scholar to begin to express doubts about the conquest hypothesis was Paul Semonin in 1964; or, in the same year, when Vincent Monteil was vigorously calling for a revision in early West African history, away from the Delafossean fallacies, in his *L'Islam Noir*. The primary stimulus for Semonin was the finding of a new source for the Almoravid history, Ibn 'Idharī, which required scholars to reconsider some of their earlier conceptions. But the early 1960s meant also great ideological changes in African historiography in general, as decolonisation forced Europeans to abandon their old undervaluing attitudes.

Semonin did not go so far in his criticism as to deny that any conquest had ever occurred, but he reduced its importance, noting that "the sack of Ghana is so poorly documented that it is questionable what precedents it may have set, or what real impact it may have had, beyond that of a calamitous but momentary disturbance in the Sahil with limited resources for a continuing influence upon the Islamization of the area." Semonin was soon followed by other scholars, like Jean Devisse (1970), Harry Norris (1972), Paulo de Moraes Farias (1974), Mamadou Coulibaly (1974), and Humphrey Fisher (1982), who all expressed their doubts on the inadequate evidence for the alleged event.

A new step in the discussion on the Almoravid/Ghana relationship was taken in early 1970s, when the "conquest" was modified to "influence": instead of a conquest the Almoravids were said to have caused a coup-d'état in Ghana, helping a Muslim faction to seize the power. This hypothesis, expressed

by Daniel McCall (1971) and supported by John Hunwick (1980), can be seen as an attempt to give a more reasonable explanation for the adoption of Islam in Ghana than the earlier hypothesis of a forced conversion by the Almoravids.

The reconsideration of the conquest hypothesis received its most radical expression in 1982-83, in a two-part article by David Conrad and Humphrey Fisher, who concluded that there was no Almoravid conquest of Ghana at all. Reaction to their claim has been mixed. While some scholars have been willing to accept it, some have continued to support the old hypothesis, whereas some have ignored the whole issue. The debate began again in 1992, when Sheryl Burkhalter criticised Conrad and Fisher for methodological weaknesses in their reasoning, although she nowhere indicated her own opinion concerning the actual event. Apart from this debate (was there an Almoravid conquest of Ghana or not) scholars are now arguing about Almoravid activities in the Western Sudan in a much wider context (see *Journal of African History*, XXXV, 1994).

Yet it is curious that the debate concerning the Almoravid/Ghana relationship has dealt only with English speaking world, whereas the French seem to have been unaware of it. Vincent Lagardère, for example, still repeats the words of Delafosse as a valid fact in his *Les Almoravides*, published in 1989, and according to his bibliography, he does not know—or at least he has not cited—any articles on this topic published in English during the 70s and 80s.

It is, of course, very hard to believe that the changed perception in the Almoravid/Ghana relationship is just a result of changed attitudes in African historiography; on the contrary, the debate is rather an indication of the ongoing methodological development in African historiography. What we need now is to reconsider seriously all the conceptions we have inherited from colonial historiography. Instead of arguing who is right and who is wrong in this specific issue, we should begin with asking what was the Ghana we are talking about and where was it situated, and who were the

"southern Almoravids" we are talking about (or whether there were any), using all the sources we have available now. It may mean that we have to abandon some conceptions we have held valid for decades, but it is the only way we can achieve greater understanding in early West African history.

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THE FAMINE OF 1913-14 IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

by
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University of Helsinki/IDS

The aim of this paper is to sum up some reflections on the famine in Northern Nigeria of 1913-14. The first part of this paper will focus on the famine years, the second part on the various linkages that will be connected with in my research on stress and crisis in Northern Nigeria during the first two decades in the beginning of this century.

The northern parts of today's Nigeria, the former Northern Nigeria, were conquered by the British at the beginning of this century, and were thereafter incorporated into the British empire. Before this, the western, southern and central parts of this region were known as the Sokoto Caliphate, the eastern part made up the kingdom of Bornu. The Sokoto Caliphate was an empire which came into being at the beginning of the 19th century as an outcome of a militant reform movement, the *jihād* of the followers of Usman dan Fodio. As a result of the Jihad the former Hausa city-states, such as Gobir, Kebbi, Kano, Katsina and Zaria in Hausaland were incorporated into the Caliphate as emirates by 1812. The Jihad went on further, and by the middle of the century the Sokoto Caliphate was made up by some 30 emirates and sub-emirates, stretching from Sokoto to Adamawa, from Daura to Ilorin. Only the northern parts of Hausaland, several enclaves in the Middle Belt of Nigeria and Bornu did not belong to the Caliphate.

As a result of the jihad, the old Hausa-dynasties in the various city-states lost their

power. They were accused by the Jihadists of tolerating or even supporting non-Islamic customs and beliefs; the main accusation against them was being syncretists. The new rulers of the various emirates saw themselves in the first place as Muslim revivalists. The jihad had further aspects. It was not only a Muslim reaction against paganism, but it had also ethnic, political, social and economic dimensions. The majority of the jihadists were Fulani, the core group were Fulani Muslim literati who led the critique. Around them flocked both Fulani pastoralists (both pagan and Muslim) and groups of Hausa peasants. In almost every emirate the new rulers were Fulani; the majority of the population, at least in Hausaland, were Hausas.

The society of the western and central parts of the Caliphate, i.e. Hausaland was, broadly speaking, made up by two groups: the *masu sarauta* and the *talakawa*. The former was the ruling class or the aristocracy, people with either a title or an office in the political system. This office-oriented society comprised the titleholders, their kinsmen, scholars, clients and their slaves. The *talakawa* were members of the populace, i.e. people with little or no political influence. To this non office-oriented society belonged the farmers, pastoralists, traders and the members of the various craft occupations along with their slaves. Both the *masu sarauta* and the *talakawa* were within themselves differentiated by rank and order, the society was thus highly stratified in terms of the social status of the people. Besides these groups of free people there was a huge slave population. At the end of the 19th century it is estimated that the Caliphate had a population of ca. 10 million; of this the slave population is estimated between one and 2.5 million people.¹ Slavery was thus a common feature within the Caliphate, the slaves were mainly settled in slave-villages controlled by the *masu sarauta*. Some of the slaves, on the other hand, held state offices

¹ P.E. Lovejoy and Jan S. Hogendorn, *Slow Death for Slavery. The Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria, 1897-1936*, Cambridge, 1993, 1.

and functions, through which their social status rose much over that of the ordinary *talakawa*.

Besides the lack of political power of the *talakawa*, one can list some more distinctive features of the office-oriented and the non office-oriented groups. The office-oriented were relative immobile, their rights to office and title could not be transferred to another emirate. An other feature of the *masu-sarauta* was their concern for genealogies, for dynastic marriage alliances and relatively strict rules of patrilineal inheritance. By contrast, the commoners were free to move from emirate to emirate. Also they maintained a generalized identity with a particular area or ethnic group by facial marks and distinctive traditions but they ignored the minute detail of genealogy. There was also no rigid caste-like system of occupations as elsewhere in West Africa.²

The Sokoto Caliphate can be described as a semi-feudal state with a relatively developed state administration. The ideal was the Islamic state of the "golden age" of the Abbasids, in reality it was a mix of the old Hausa system of government and Islamic ideals. Each emir was a vassal of the Caliph, the territory of the various emirates was organized in fiefs, estates and communities controlled by a hierarchy of title-holders rising from village heads and ward representatives in the towns to intermediaries or agents of the office-holder allocated to the responsibility for that section of the population. The function of the administration was primarily tax collection, but this was as much a political as an economic act; to pay was a symbolic act of submission, to refuse payment was a token of rebellion. An other part of the administration was in legal matters and in the organization of the recruitment of people for campaigns and corvée labour. Thus, the British conquered not an area of primitive people but in many cases a relatively sophisticated and developed state.

² D.M. Last, "The Sokoto caliphate and Borno", in: *UNESCO-General History of Africa*. VI., ed. J.F. Ade Ajayi, Paris/London/Berkeley, 1989, 577ff

The Sokoto Caliphate was conquered between 1897 and 1903 by the British. At the same time, at the beginning of this century, the French subdued the regions north of the Caliphate, i.e. the parts of Hausaland that did not belong to the Caliphate, and Damagaram, the former vassal of Bornu. Also the Mahdist state of Rabeh, i.e. most part of Bornu, was divided among the British, Germans and French. While the French turned to "direct rule" in the area that was to become French Colonie du Niger (part of the AOF/French West Africa), the British developed what they called "indirect rule". In theory, the British kept up the administrative system of the Caliphate, but changed the political framework. The political position of the Caliph was abolished and transferred to the British Crown and its representative, the governor. They proclaimed all land to be state land, abolished the slave-trade and (later) slavery, and proceeded to a general tax reform. The goal of the reforms was to achieve the fiscal reproduction of the colonial state. Besides the so-called Native Authorities, who were to run every day administration of the various Districts and Divisions, in (almost) every Division or District a representative of the Colonial administration was installed. These Residents were placed as supervisors of British interests, but came in several places to influence deeply the work of the NAs as they could depose emirs and other chiefs and side-step inherited political rights.

The "Roots" of a Society in Crisis

The incorporation of Northern Nigeria into the British empire, and thus also into the Atlantic world-system, led to a transition of the whole society during the first two decades of the twentieth century. It was a period of repression of Islamic resistance to imperial conquest and the sporadic emergence of local Mahdist uprisings, dislocations of territorial boundaries and political jurisdictions, large-scale forced labour for the mines and railway construction.

Incorporation into the Atlantic world-system led to an "opening-up" of the former Caliphate economy—European firms tried to

“develop” the region for their own purposes. A result of this was the emergence of the cash crops, mainly cotton and groundnuts. European firms tried to compete with the indigeous traders and manufacturers and succeeded, after colonial intervention, in making profits. In this way they literally destroyed indigeous manufactures. Most striking were their attacks against the textile manufacturers in Hausaland. One way in which they did this was by the introduction of caravan tolls in 1907. These tolls served to restrict the movement of local commodities along the trade routes, thus forcing peasants and other producers to sell their produce to agents of the trading companies. The goal seems to have been the separation of the manufacturing sector from the agricultural sector, with the intention of destroying the former and retaining the latter, but with cash crop production predominating. As tolls were only imposed on locally produced goods, an other aim that the colonial and European commercial sector wanted to achieve was the promotion of the sale of imported goods.³

Another aspect of the incorporation of Northern Nigeria into the Atlantic world-system was the overnight sensation of the groundnut trade in Hausaland after the completion of the Baro-Kano railway in 1912. The competitive prices offered by the European firms and the *talakawa*'s desperate need for specie (due to the tax reform of 1911) led to an enormous expansion of the land devoted to groundnuts. Between 1912 and 1913 there was a tenfold increase in marketed groundnut production in Kano Province—directly reflected by an underproduction of foodstuffs.⁴

The agricultural sector in Northern Nigeria was not only troubled by the colonial state but also by drought and harvest

failures previous to the drought of 1913 and the famine of 1914. The last decade of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th witnessed a general downturn in rainfall followed by poor harvests. Especially dry was the period between 1899 and 1904, the whole region between the river Niger and lake Chad suffered from drought. On top of the drought, locusts ravaged the Bauchi-Gombe-Yola area in the late 1890s, famine or food shortage was general, at least in 1904, and in many places during the whole period. Local drought, poor harvests, food shortages and local famines continued to harrass people in various provinces in 1905, 1907 and 1908. The situation worsened not only because of the ecological crisis but also because of the political upheavals due to the coming of the British and the punitive expeditions and military requisitions of the colonial state.

Alongside the upheavals in the manufacturing and agricultural sectors was the reform of the system of taxation. After the conquest of the Sokoto Caliphate, the British were faced (in their view) with a very complicated system of (Islamic based) taxation. The colonial state tried from the beginning to reform the system of taxation, and by 1911 a new farm-holding-based system of taxation referred as the “taki” was adopted. In former days the tax (among others the *zakka* = tithe) was levied on the harvest; now it became a fixed rent charge irrespective of yield or prevailing market price.⁵

Watts estimated that the cost of living rose significantly in the early days of colonialism. This was due to the repercussions of the fiscal burden, but Watts lists some other post-conquest developments which in a negative way affected every day life in Northern Nigeria. One was the (deliberate) deflation of the cowry (the former currency in the region) and the scarcity of British currency. An other was the fact that rural households were largely dependent on the sale of cereals for cash generation before the groundnut boom, as taxes were levied in kind by the British. Watts estimates that the farmers had to pay

³ Ahmed M. Mohammed, “European Trading Companies and the Underdevelopment of Northern Nigeria 1855-1939: The Case of the Royal Niger Company / United African Company”, PhD thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1985, 214-216, 236-237.

⁴ Michael Watts, *Silent Violence. Food, Famine and Peasantry in Northern Nigeria*, Berkeley, 1983, 283-284.

⁵ Watts, 1983, 282.

40 percent of their gross farm produce in taxes. The agricultural sector also suffered the impact of forced labour conscripted for the Jos minesfield and the construction of railways. This was a problem especially in Zaria Province, but the impact was felt also in the more southern and central Provinces.⁶

The Plateau tin mine economy created several problems. Although it was not developed in the Rhodesian manner using *corvée* labour force, the effect was the same. Among impoverished families in Northern Nigeria the very fact of casual work on the plateau was indicative of their economic marginality. Seasonal migration was not a colonial invention neither was the use of *corvée* labour, but the large scale and the effects of the migration to the mines were new. In time, fewer migrants returned to their villages and peasant production encountered new crises—the agricultural sector faced labour shortage in the growing and harvest seasons. As the plateau area had never been a granary, the demands for food were huge. Watts estimates that about 1910 a minimum of 10,000 tons of corn was channeled into the plateau annually.⁷

Migration also occurred in the first decade of the 20th century in other regions. The abolition of slavery led in some areas to the “opening up” and clearance of new farm plots in the bush. As a matter of fact here the Pax Britannica had in some ways a positive impact. The former insecurity and unsettled state of these marginal lands and the various border regions had previously made settlement here impossible.

The Famine of 1913-14.

The main part of Northern Nigeria lies within the Sudano-Sahelian zone, only the southern parts belong to the more wetter Guinea savanna. In the Sudano-Sahelian zone rainfall anomalies are remarkable, the idea of a “normal” rainfall is a statistical ghost. The growing season varies in the Sudan savanna between four to six months, in the Sahel it is even shorter. Ecological

stress, in this case drought, is an annual problem, as the rainfall varies in amount, time and place. Droughts have occurred several times in recent centuries, but their impact has been mostly on a local and regional level.

The period between 1890 and 1914 seems to have been a relatively dry period, according to climatological research.⁸ The year 1913 in particular was a very dry one, but signs of the drought can be seen from *ca.* 1910. The drought affected the whole northern area of Northern Nigeria, especially Gumel, Hadejia and Katagum Emirates in Kano Province and the north-eastern parts of Bornu. Even more acute was the situation in the French Colonie du Niger, where bad harvests were already a fact in 1911-12 in some areas. The drought of 1913 resulted in a bad harvest and food shortage were reported from almost all provinces in Northern Nigeria in 1913-14. By the first half of 1914 the famine was evident. Watts estimates that the entire northern region confronted the prospect of an influx of as many as 1-2 million destitute peasants from the Colonie du Niger. Within the northern Provinces migrating people en masse in search of food were reported, in particular from Hadejia and Katagum emirates and the northern parts of Bauchi and Bornu Provinces.

Still, the impact of the drought and the harvest failure were different in the various regions. The entire Colonie du Niger suffered from the drought and the harvest failure was almost complete. In Northern Nigeria the picture is more differentiated. In Sokoto Province the Argungu District close to the French border suffered most,⁹ but Zamfara

⁸ S. Nicholson, “A Climatic Chronology for Africa: Synthesis of Geological, Historical, and Meteorological Information and Data”, PhD thesis, Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison, 1976.

⁹ NAK SNP 10 476p/1914. Sokoto Province. Half Year Report, June 1914. para 105: “Food is scarce and dear owing to the bad harvest. Prices are rising and are likely to continue to do so till the next harvest”. See also Gazetteer of Sokoto Province, “this drought caused a considerable failure of crops, particularly in all the northern Districts and in the neighbouring French territories” (1920, repr. 1972).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 280.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 281.

valley had a relatively good harvest.¹⁰ In Kano Province the Northern Divisions (Daura, Kazaure and Gumel) felt the pinch of the famine, but also the Katagum Division (Katagum, Hadejia, Jama'are, but not Misau) felt much distress owing to the famine.¹¹ In Bornu Province the north-eastern Districts (Mongonu and Mobber) had a total crop failure, and poor crops were reported from the other northern and eastern Districts. Again the south-western regions did not suffer at all from the drought and had no harvest failure.¹² In Central Province the Darazo and Ganjua Districts in Bauchi Division and the northern Districts of Gombe Division suffered from the famine.¹³

The evolution of hunger during the early months of 1914 was mirrored by a highly volatile grain market. (See also Watts, 1983, 289, Figure 6.3.) At the same time the price ratio between grain and cattle fell drastically. This had severe consequences for the pastoral sector. As colonial relief effort in all its poverty failed to provide immediate and large-scale assistance, the outcome was an overall crisis. Still, one cannot speak of a total food shortage, as the trade in cereals continued during the whole crisis. Traders from both Northern Nigeria and the French Territories bought up grain at dear prices in even affected regions only to sell it at a higher price in other regions.

Northern Nigeria was during 1913-14 on the edge of a large scale catastrophe. The situation was critical after the harvest in 1913 and deteriorated during the first half of 1914 and reached its climax in June and July 1914. Had there been an other year of harvest

failure, the situation would have been catastrophic. But the rain was sufficient in 1914 and the harvest good, society turned in the eyes of the European residents back to "normal".

Hunger and Society: Stress and Crisis in Hausaland, Northern Nigeria, 1899-1919

The foregoing review pointed up various aspects of the conquest of Northern Nigeria and the incorporation of this region into the British empire. The famine of 1913/14 belongs to this period, because the outcome of the famine can only partly be explained by the drought of 1913. It seems more that the structural causes of the conquest and incorporation lay behind the event. In that case, the famine was not only a result of ecological stress, i.e. drought, but also a consequence of political, economic and social stress.

Watts in his study pointed out that the famine of 1914 was the first "capitalist" famine although it showed several aspects of previous, precolonial or traditional famines. Or, as he puts it:

1914 was a watershed in the incorporative process. Its *genesis* was clearly inseparable from the decade of gradual impoverishment instigated by the colonial state; its *effet* was to further stimulate commodity production.¹⁴

Clearly, Watts has presented several weighty arguments, but his study has at some points to be clarified. This will be one aim of my research. Watts was lacking space for a more thorough study of the events and the structures *à la longue durée* that lay behind the famine and its consequences. The other argument against Watts is that he is "victimizing" the population affected by the events of 1913-14. This critique has been put forward among others by Spittler and De Waal.¹⁵ At this point, I will only be able to point out some aspects connected with the

¹⁰ Watts, 1983: 291.

¹¹ NAK SNP 10 494p/1914. Kano Province. Half Year Report, June 1914, para 13-17. "There has been an unusual amount of thieving and cattle stealing on the French border (to Katsina Division) during this quarter. This is probably owing to the scarcity of food in the north".

¹² NAK SNP 10 732p/1913. Bornu Province. Report on August-September 1913, para 51. The report also reported a complete failure of crops in the French Territory north of Bornu Province and in the French Chad Territories.

¹³ NAK SNP 10 649p/1914. Central Province. Report for September Quarter 1914, para 33.

¹⁴ Watts, 1983: 294

¹⁵ Gerd Spittler, *Düren, Krieg und Razzien bei den Kel Ewey 1900-1985*, Stuttgart, 1989; Alexander De Waal, *Famine that Kills: Darfur, Sudan, 1984-1985*, Oxford, 1989.

famine years that need a further and deeper analysis:

1. The actual famine years 1913-1914:

It is evident from the District and Provincial reports that one has to distinguish between three aspects of the famine: the famine in Northern Nigeria, the famine in the French Colonie du Niger and the Territoire du Tchad and the famine in German Bornu. There was a total harvest failure in the French Colonie du Niger and grazing lands were few if all. This led to a "massive" migration of hungry and destitute people to Northern Nigeria. In Northern Nigeria again, the harvest failure was "only" regional. Migration occurred from the eastern parts of Kano Province and the north and north-eastern parts of Bornu province to southern regions (and German Bornu). The situation in German Bornu is still unclear (I have yet to check the German Colonial Archives), but British residents reported that the situation in some areas was even worse there than in British Bornu.

At least in Sokoto and Kano Province and maybe also in Bornu Province, the actual food shortage became critical not because of the bad harvest, but owing to the migrants from the French territories and the grain trade to these regions. Some few and quite unreliable statistics underline this fact, in Kano Province, for example, it was reported that *ca* 2/3rd of the deaths during the famine were French subjects. Besides, De Waal and others have questioned the whole discussion about "death due to starvation". The disease factor is totally lacking in Watts's study, but so is it in the colonial reports investigated so far.

Colonial states did not take any measures to organize famine relief before the second quarter of 1914, and then the first step was taken by the British followed later by the French. (German actions are not yet known). In general it was too little and too late. Watts accused the residents and the colonial state of neglecting or underestimating the crisis, but the same argument can be used against most of the NAs. One of Watts's arguments is that the colonial state as a result of the land and tax reform and the gradual abolition of slavery undermined, if not de-

molished, the foundations of the precolonial "moral economy" of the Sokoto Caliphate. Although one can identify the outlines of an individually based or centered "moral economy" in the Caliphate, there are no traces of the actual existence of an institutionalized "famine relief program" in the pre-colonial society. This is also clearly put forward by Brenner (1973) in his study of 19th century Bornu where he states that the state was lacking the institutional resources necessary for organizing any larger relief measures.¹⁶ The question is then what possibilities were left if there were no institutional measures.

The famine of 1913-14 was a "capitalist" famine more than a traditional famine. Besides the aspects underlined by Watts, one has to emphasise the migration factor as in one way a totally new situation. Due to the imposition of the Pax Britannica one, if not the main, crucial pre-colonial stress factor was eliminated—the insecurity and uncertainty in vast areas owing to political stress. In the 19th century migration was a common factor, not as an outcome of ecological stress or harvest failures but for political reasons: Mahdism and political insecurity, i.e. razzias and slave-acquisitions.

The famine of 1913-14 therefore showed a new picture: migration en masse due to ecological stress combined on several occasions with economic, social and political stress. In the 19th century people could not move en masse from areas neighboring the Caliphate into the Caliphate because of the imminent risk of being enslaved. The colonial state thus changed this situation.

Also in 1913 people were not passive. The problem of victimizing the suffering people is obvious in Watts's study. A study of the actions and different strategies to cope with the drought and harvest failure will meet huge problems, the first being the lack of material. But at least Spittler's study of the Kel Ewey Tuareg way of coping with their difficulties opens new doors. The crucial question is the understanding of hunger and suffering of the people affected

¹⁶ Louis Brenner, *The Shehus of Kukawa*, Oxford, 1973: 112.

by their own account. Spittler and De Waal say clearly that to go hungry is an option during times of shortness.

The question of the victims has to be studied deeper also in respect of who suffered. Again, not all people were affected. Some people might even have benefitted by the profits of the grain trade. Watts and Bohle's study on vulnerability¹⁷ might lead the discussion into new paths. On the other hand, given the emphasis on the various stress factors that affected the pre-colonial agricultural and pastoral sector, the conquest and incorporation of Northern Nigeria was only one among other stress factors. How much of the British reforms were actually "new" has to be studied, as tax reforms and forced labour also belonged to the pre-colonial society. It is obvious that high grain prices and the suffering of the poorer strata of society during the famine of 1913-14 was also a feature of dearth and famines during the 19th century, as I have shown in my licentiate thesis. For them at least, the situation seems not to have changed remarkably during the first two decades of this century.

2. *The wider setting: Hausaland 1899-1919*

So far the paper has only touched on the situation between 1899 and 1914. Besides the facts that have been discussed, i.e. the crisis in the agricultural, pastoral and manufacture sector due to the imposition of the colonial state, other aspects should not be forgotten. The indigenous commercial sector also faced problems, not to speak of the stress the former *masu sarauta* faced. Another question is the effects of the amalgamation of Southern and Northern Nigeria in 1914. It seems as if the northern provinces then became a periphery of Nigeria, the interests of the colonial administration turning to the southern parts.

The famine of 1913-14 ended in the eyes of the residents with the good harvest in 1914. The structural consequences of the crisis in the first decade after the colonial

conquest were on the other hand deeper. The famine was in one way the climax of this period, but the crisis did not ebb in the following years. The effects of the good harvest were partly diminished by the outbreak of World War I, and the imposed war economy between 1914 and 1918. Colonial administration suffered lack of resources and manpower to follow up the colonial reforms. The agricultural and commercial sectors suffered again, this time because of being incorporated in the (non-functioning) Atlantic world-economy (crisis in the cash-crop sector).

The situation in the Colonie du Niger continued to be very unstable. The outbreak of the Tuareg rebellion in Air in 1916 led to new migrations en masse into Northern Nigeria, although this time partly owing to the good harvests a crisis was avoided. Most of the migrants returned to French territory in 1918, after the rebellion had been put down by force.

The disease and epidemic factor has been so far quite neglected. This is amazing, because rinder-epidemics caused as great a havoc to the pastoral sector as droughts. Also unclear is the question of malnutrition and its connections with the influenza pandemic in 1918-19. Could there be connections between the famine of 1913-14 and this pandemic, which in a few months killed more people than did the famine? A clue could be the report of Acting Resident C.O. Migeod in Kano: "The District Officer Kano reports that it is noticeable that the greatest mortality was amongst the younger married women..."¹⁸ Bearing in mind that during famines young girls were to receive least food, these girls had could have reached the age of marriage by 1918.

My own research will end with the influenza pandemic of 1918-19. In 1919 the colonial state was again capable to organize itself with new strength. Also very many of the "old" residents had by this date been replaced by new men with new ideas. The majority of them had no relationship with

¹⁷ M.J. Watts and H.G. Bohle, "The Space of Vulnerability: the Causal Structure of Hunger and Famine", *Progress in Human Geography*, 17:1, 1993: 43-67.

¹⁸ NAKSNP 10/7 93p/1919. Kano Province. Annual Report 1918, para 106.

the precolonial and the indigenous society. They were merely colonial administrators specialized in various fields. The old residents somehow had a deeper relationship with the conquered society. They were on one hand kingmakers, on the other totally dependent on the NAs and in particular the emirs. Thus after 1919 there followed the second phase of the colonial state—the consolidation of it.

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