Faces North

Some peoples of Nigeria

and Pauline Ryan

Illustrations by
Martin Archdale
and Leslie Gibb

Nigeria

Few countries in the world are as interesting and as diverse in terms of people, language and culture. This book selects twelve ethnic groups from Nigeria's northern states and traces their history, legends, art and social customs. FACES NORTH offers the armchair traveller a fascinating insight into one of Africa's most colourful regions. Seventeen original illustrations show in vivid detail a cross section of the men and women of northern Nigeria. A pictorial tribute to the peoples of Africa's most populous country.

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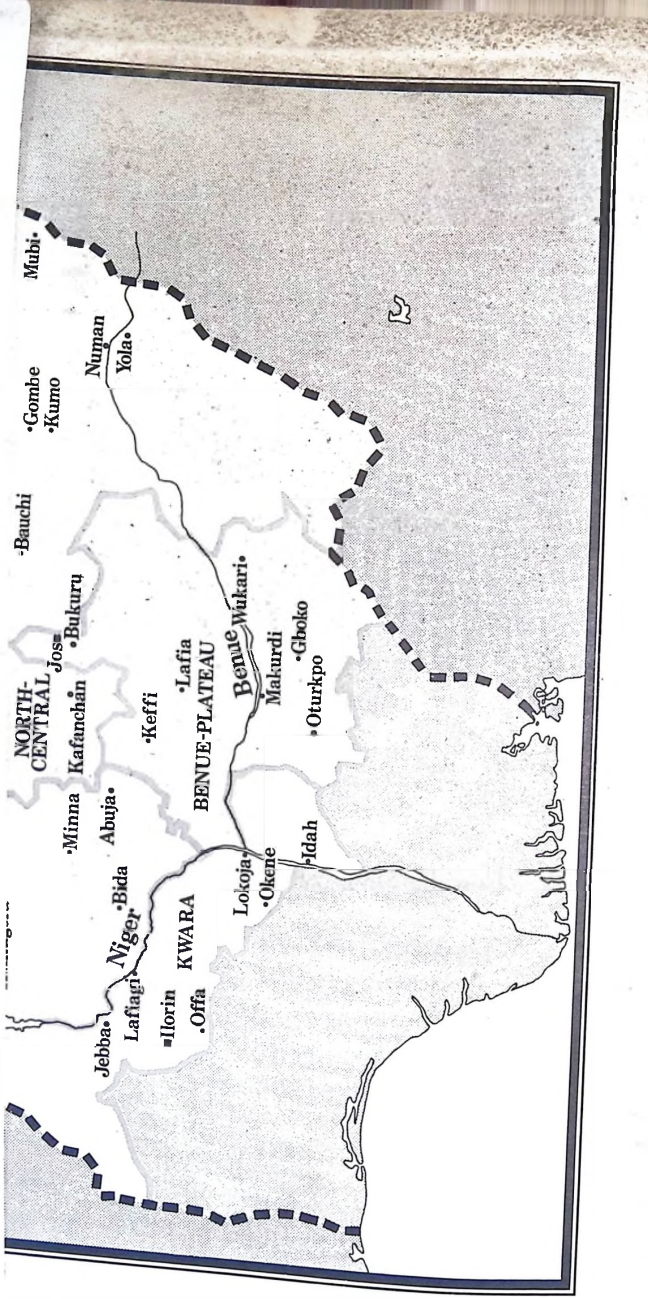

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Foreword

Few areas of the world are as complex—ethnically, linguistically or culturally—as Nigeria. This rich diversity has often prevented the foreigner from arriving at an overa appreciation of the peoples and cultures of that country, and it is to help remedy this problem that the present volume has been compiled. Together with its forthcoming companion volume, on the peoples of the southern states of Nigeria, FACES NORTH is a tribute by non-Nigerians, in words and painting, to the great ethnic and cultural wealth of Africa's most populous country.

FACES NORTH will be of interest to the armchair traveller as well as to all those who come to Nigeria from overseas—providing not only a useful introduction for those who are paying a short visit, but also a prelude to wider reading for those who have come to stay longer.

The compilers, naturally enough, have been forced to select only some of the more numerous ethnic groups, and it should be recalled that the twelve groups dealt with here are no more than a selection from the total number of peoples represented in the northern states. At the same time, the series of portraits in this volume, portraits of ordinary Nigerian men and women, are a testimony to the way in which members of so many widely differing traditions are learning to live and work together, in the cause of building one of the great nations of the future.

Dr David Dalby,
Director, International African Institute.

The Northern States: A Cultural Vignette

The six northerly states of Nigeria came into being in 1967. Between them, they comprise more than two-thirds of the country's land mass and over sixty per cent of Nigeria's fifty five million population (1963). Much of the land away from the Niger and Benue rivers system lies on a plateau two thousand feet above sea level, with the hills of the Bauchi Plateau and the peaks of the Mandara mountain range reaching four to six thousand feet. The rainfall varies from a mean fifty inches in the southerly parts to twenty inches in the extreme north, and the vegetation corresponds, with forest land giving way to orchard bush and open savannah. The principal crops are groundnuts, cotton, guinea-corn and rice, with hides, skins and tin high among export products. Such are the routine, unexciting statistics.

But, like the whole of Nigeria, these northern states are neither dull nor colourless. Ethnically, they include a hundred groups of peoples, each with its own language, culture and long history. These range from the Hausa-speaking peoples of Kano, North Central and North-West States who, numbering some twelve to fifteen millions, are matched only by the Swahili-speakers of East Africa in the spread and international stature of their culture and *lingua franca*; to the dozens of smaller communities living in the mountainous or riverain areas of the North-East, North-Central, Benue-Plateau and Kwara States, like the Bacama, Higi, Mambila, Kagoro, Sura, Igala and Igbira. In between are the 'major-minor' groups—as measured by Nigeria's generous standards of counting by the million! To name but a handful, there are the Kanuri of the North-East State, the Tiv and Idoma of the Benue-Plateau State, the Nupe of the North-West State, the Yoruba-speaking peoples of Kwara State, and the ubiquitous pastoral Fulani.

In terms of political and social organisation, the variety is no less impressive. At one extreme, the Hausa-Fulani emirates have long stamped their mark on visitors to the country by their sophisticated amalgam of traditional and titled office and popular support, their centuries of learning in Islamic law, and their practised experience of hierarchical administration. At the other, Tiv society is no less celebrated for the segmentary nature of its structure and the ultra-democratic outlook of governed and governing alike. By and large, all the States share a common basis of local administration, with the chief, at any one of a number of levels, vested with defined authority and commonly commanding genuine respect.

Historically too, the northern states enjoy a sizable common factor. In the middle ages, maybe a thousand years ago, most of the land now occupied by the North-Central, North-West and Kano States, formed part of the *Hausa Bakwai*, the original seven city-states of Hausaland. Much of the rest made up the *Banza Bakwai* or seven states where Hausa, though understood, was not the mother tongue. And a large part of the North-East State has for over five hundred years been the homelands of the Kanuri kingdom of first Kanem and later Borno. After the *jihad* or holy war of Shehu Usman dan Fodio in 1804, most of the area covered by today's six states took on an even greater sense of homogeneity, when the Shehu's Fulani empire, centred on Sokoto and Gwandu, spread its authority south

to beyond the Niger and as far east as the modern Cameroon (always excepting independent Borno). Under the new Fulani dynasties, there grew up a system of government and a predominantly Islamic way of life that gave the area a measurable uniformity.

But it was during the twentieth century that this sense of cultural unity was most strongly developed in these states. As a result of, first, a brief period of alien administration when they were known as the Northern Province, and then an era of deliberate political policy under the label of the Northern Region, local consciousness and parochial sentiments were progressively transformed into a genuine feeling of nationalism, so that by the time the country became independent in 1960, the Northern Region was able to take its place alongside the Western and Eastern Regions as three equal partners in the new Federation of Nigeria.

If these six States are rich in history and celebrated for their range of social organisation, it is at the cultural level that their variegated peoples are likely to impress themselves on the visitor as unforgettable and *sans pareil*. In such a context, it is the outward signs of culture that make the most immediate and maybe the most lasting impression: the hair styles of the graceful women; Kanuri horsemen, Tiv dancers, Hausa musicians, Idoma and Igala acrobats; the ritual of two courteous Nupe greeting each other in the street; the colour and excitement of a market in Kano or Kwara; the cadence of the Hausa language; Fulani herdboys, stick slung across the shoulders, standing on one leg as they watch over their cattle; canoes along the river, grainstores among the rocks, the imaginativeness of mural decorations; and everywhere the grace and beauty of dress. And for the visitor to any one of these States, it will likely be the memory of the natural charm, dignity and courtesy of these peoples that he will take away with him to store among the most precious souvenirs of his sojourn in this part of Nigeria – an impression lastingly symbolised in the warmth and candour of that welcome extended as he first steps into the magic of Hausaland and its neighbours, to be greeted by the age-old salutation of *Sannu, barka da zuwa*, 'Warm greetings and welcome'.

Nupe

The North-West State stretches from Baro on the River Niger to the border with the Republic of Niger. It comprises the former Sokoto and Niger Provinces. The State capital is Sokoto. Other towns of historical and cultural interest include Bida, Gusau, Minna, Abuja, Argungu and Kontagora. The State covers 65,004 square miles and the population is estimated at 6 million. Both Islam and Christianity are widely practised. In terms of history, crafts and culture the North-West State has an enormous amount to offer. Ethnic groups in the State include the Dakakari, Dukawa, Kamberi, Kamuku, Kebbawa and Zaberma besides Hausa and Fulani

The Nupe, who number nearly a million people, mostly in the North-West State but with some in Kwara State, occupy the country between the Kaduna and Gurara rivers. Because the Nupe-speaking peoples do not form a territorially united group, the various sub-groups exhibit a great variety in custom. Each of these sub-groups is a territorial and a cultural entity with its own dialect, often united by a network of kinship ties and a belief in common descent.

There are various legends which account for the origins of the Nupe state. The most prominent tradition relates how in the early fifteenth century, the son of the ruler of Igala went hunting in Nupe country, which at that time was subject to Igala. There he fell in love with a woman, and their child was named Tsoede or Edegi. When Tsoede's father returned to Igala to assume for himself the leadership upon the death of his father, he gave Tsoede a chain and a ring. Some years later, Tsoede was sent to Igala as a slave in tribute. Upon his arrival he was recognised by the chain and the ring. He was at once freed and granted favour of the court until he was forced to flee owing to the jealousy of his half-brothers. He sailed upstream back to Nupeland in a bronze canoe and established himself as the King of Nupe, the first *Etsu*. Tsoede is thus the culture hero of the Nupe people. To this day it is maintained that on a certain spot on a certain night the moonlight can be seen reflected off the bronze bows of Tsoede's sunken canoe.

Today's Etsu Nupe or Emir of Bida is a descendant from one of three dynasties founded by Malam Dendo, a Koranic scholar from Kebbi who, during the *jihad* of Usman dan Fodio, took advantage of internal political dissension to establish himself as the ruler of Nupe. The royal houses are Usman Zaki, Masaba and Umaru Majigi. These three dynasties have rotated the leadership in strict succession with only one exception during the past one hundred and fifty years. Bida, the capital, is divided into three wards, each bearing the name of one of the royal dynasties and each having its own royal palace.

The Nupe participate in a complex exchange economy which relies upon the inter-relationship between intensive shifting cultivation and dedicated craftwork. They farm yams, rice, groundnuts, and sweet potatoes. From time immemorial the Nupe have gathered the fruits of the shea tree and manufactured shea butter. Their farms are worked either individually or collectively. In addition, in some areas Nupe rely heavily upon fishing.

Above all, the Nupe are experts in a great variety of crafts. These crafts are often practised individually in the home in one's spare time, or collectively. The craftsmen are arranged in highly organised guilds. These crafts include: blacksmiths, beadworkers or *lantana*, brass and silver smiths, hat weavers, and *masaga* or glass makers. The mat makers of Kutigi enjoy a fame of their own. Women also have a number of crafts. They make pottery with clay from the swamps, tempered with powdered potsherds and blackened by shea-nut bark. They also make musical instruments including pipes, flutes, trumpets, and drums. One craft for which the Nupe are particularly noted is in the refinement of glass beads and bangles which are sent all over Nigeria.

Nupe glass bead kiln

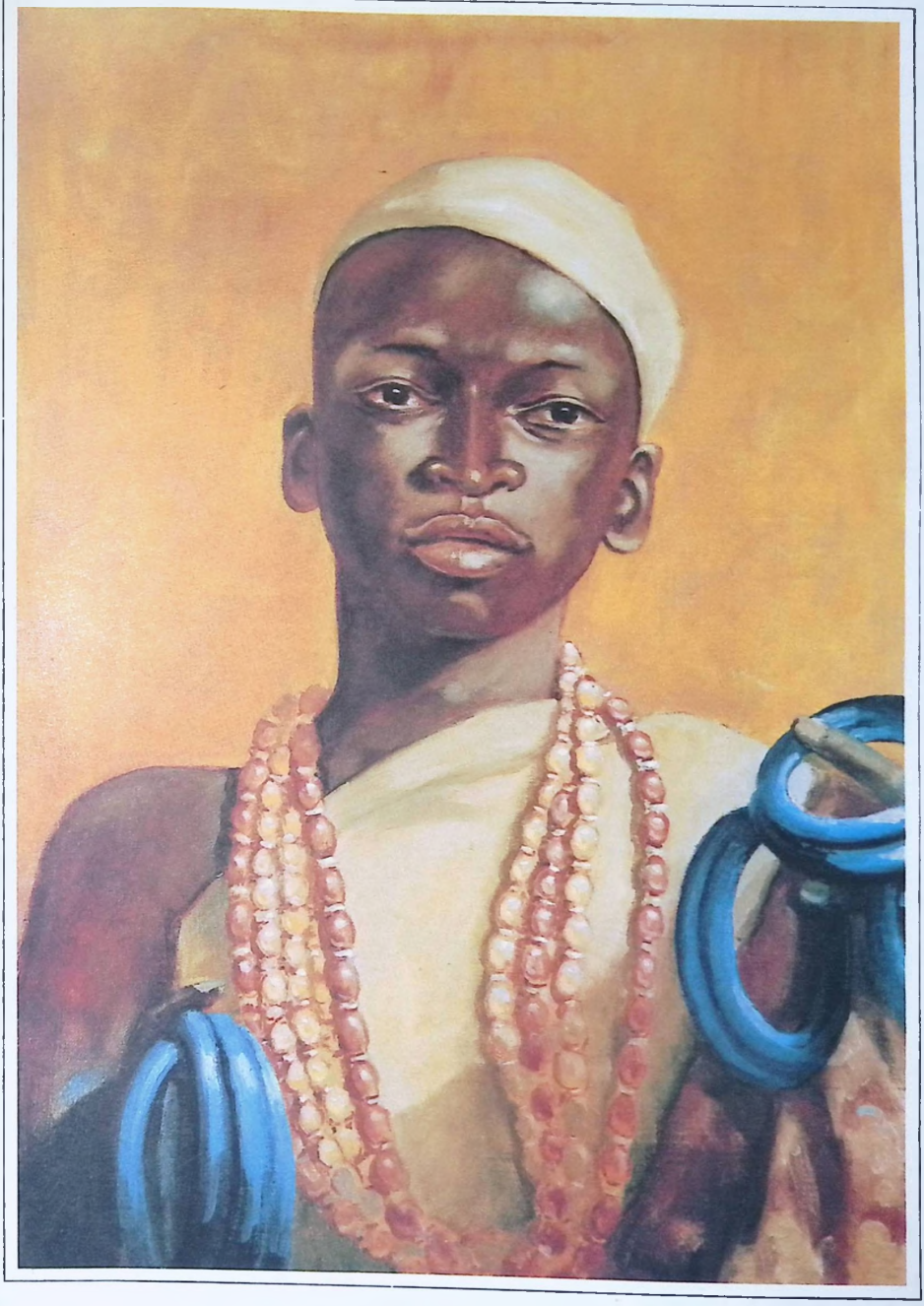
Another notable Nupe craft is the ornamentation of gourds. In Nupeland, there are three distinct techniques of producing gourds which are not found elsewhere. One method depends on an initial staining of the entire surface of the gourd with indigo. When the colouring is dry, the worker deeply carves unique geometrical patterns which stand out boldly in white on the blue background The same process is followed with gourds which are stained red before the incisions are made. A third retains the yellow surface of the gourd, on which patterns are burned.

The Nupe traditionally live either in compact villages or in towns, both of them encircled by large mud walls. Similar walls often surround the individual compounds. The round huts within each compound are decorated with ornaments worked in relief into the clay. The entrance hut to each compound is similarly decorated and is the place where the men both meet and carry out their crafts. It also serves as a guest-room. The granaries in each compound are egg-shaped and can be as tall as seven feet and as broad as four feet in diameter.

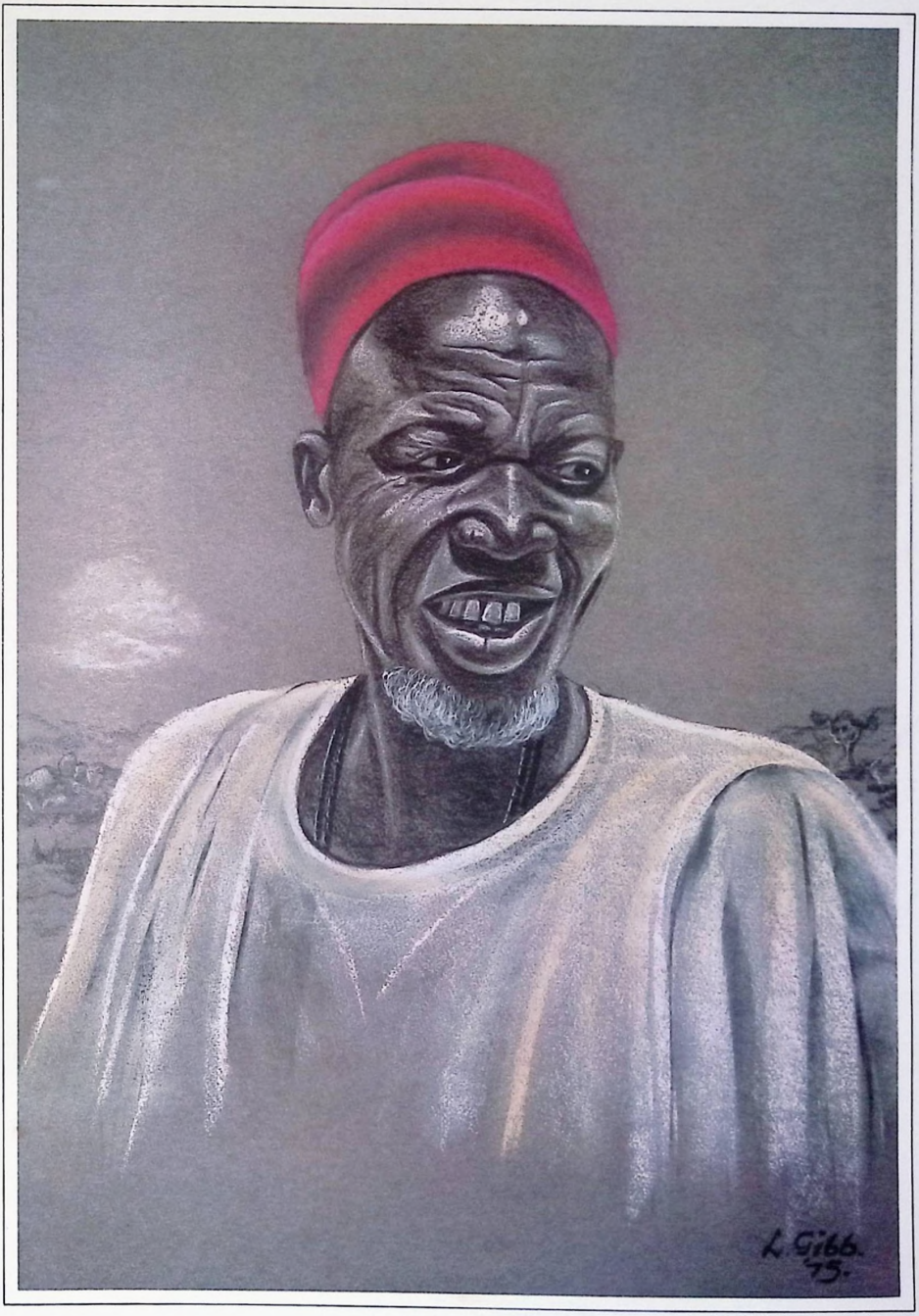
Although the Nupe have increasingly been converted to Islam, their traditional religion remains strong. It well illustrates the Nupe view of time and the universe. For example, among certain Nupe there is a tradition that every man has four existences, of which the one that he currently experiences is the second. In each new life, the bodies of men get smaller until in the last life they are dwarf-like beings. After this final life a blissful state is reached. Evil men, however, never attain the later stages, becoming instead beasts of the bush.

Status in Nupe society is both vividly defined and vigorously observed, and among the Nupe the outward forms of courtesy and salutation rituals are at their most conspicuous. Among the royal families, the *Etsu* is the head of the reigning house, the *Shaba* or heir presumptive the head of the dynasty next in succession, and the *Kpotun* the head of the third house.

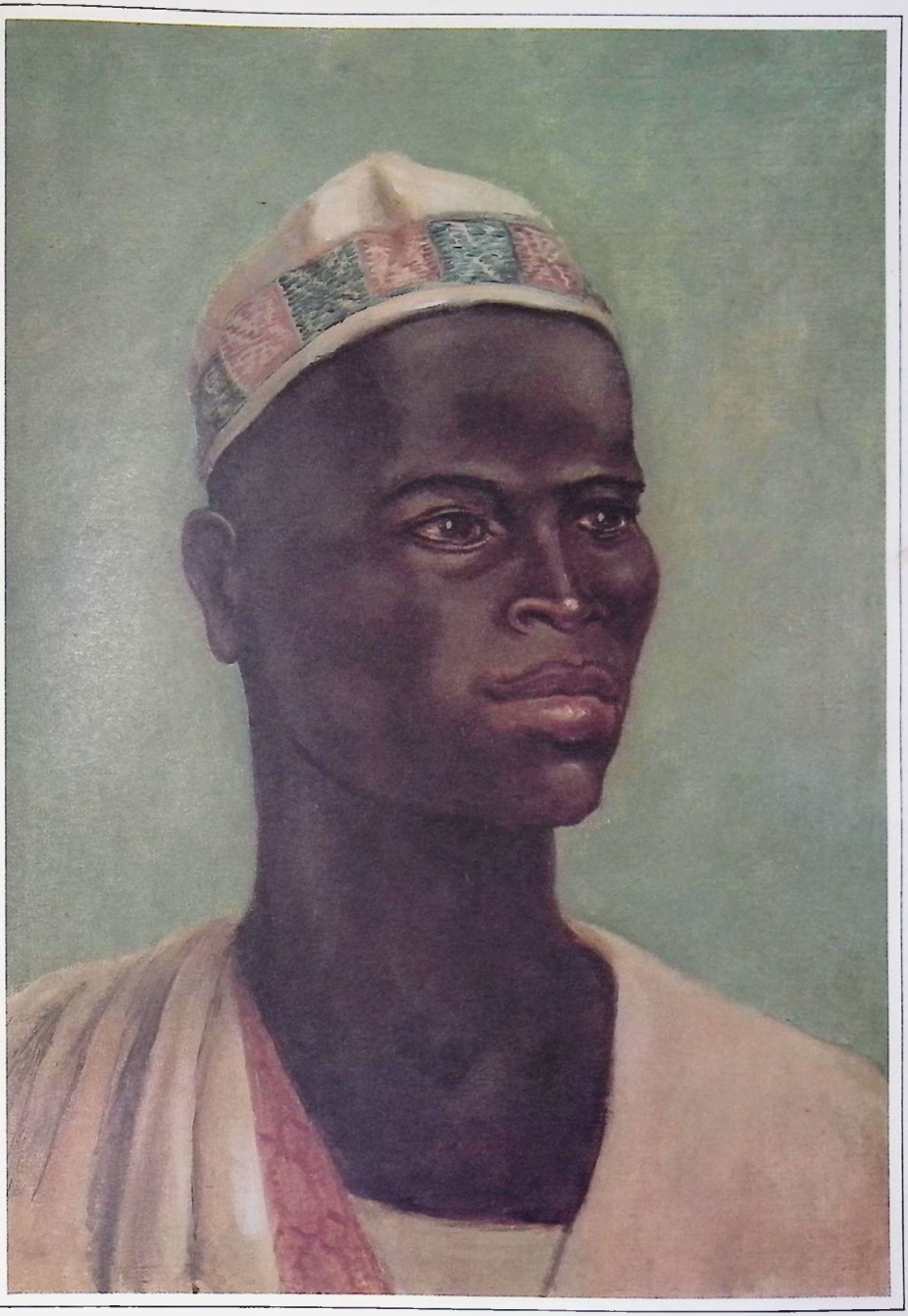
Despite being culturally diverse and territorially fragmented, the Nupe are strongly united by their common language and by a shared historical tradition focused on their culture-hero Tsoede. Today this sense of 'we are Nupe' has been strengthened by a long record of political and administrative success by the sons and daughters of the country. At Pategi, opposite the mouth of the Kaduna river, an annual regatta symbolises the spiritual and cultural unity of the Nupe people.



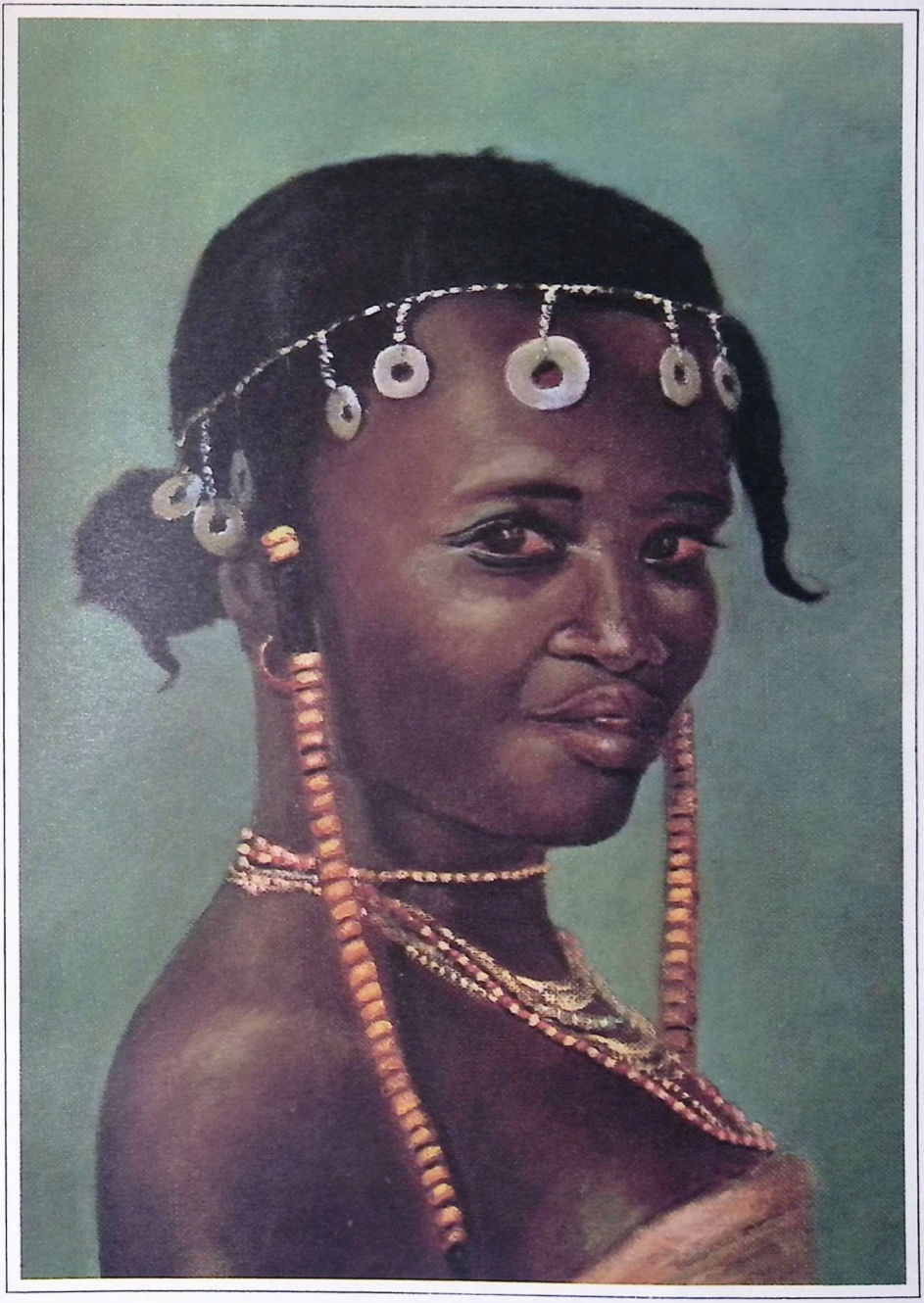
Nupe



Fulani



Hausa



Fulani

Settled Fulani

A Fulani herd boy

For all the uncertainty that attaches to the true origin of the Fulani, we know that down the centuries they have slowly migrated with their herds eastwards from Futa Jallon. During their gradual migrations, some Fulani gave up their wandering pastoral lives and, becoming scholars and divines, were welcomed by the Hausa kings as judges and tutors for the princes and sons of the court nobility. Many of them intermarried with the local populations, others maintained their identity and uniqueness by forming closely knit communities within the territory of their 'hosts'. With the wider acceptance of Islam, which enhanced their qualities of leadership and administrative capabilities, these settled Fulani often became very important political personages in the lands in which they settled. In contrast to their pastoral brothers, settled Fulani took quickly to learning and scholarship. As experts in the Muslim religion and its law, they were also to exercise a growing influence and authority in the new states.

It was in this way that the predecessors of the Shehu Usman dan Fodio arrived in what was to become, in the nineteenth century, the Fulani empire of Sokoto but which was then the Habe kingdom of Gobir. Determined to purify the kind of lax Islam that he saw the Hausa peoples were practising, Shehu Usman dan Fodio declared a holy war in 1804. This was as much an intellectual crusade as a military campaign. By 1810 most of the Hausa states had fallen to the Fulani armies. In addition, new kingdoms had been set up under Fulani rule in the emirates of Adamawa, Gombe and Muri. While the Shehu Usman dan Fodio first took the title of *Sarkin Musulmi*–'The Commander of the Faithful'–it was left to his son Muhammadu Bello to adopt the title of Sultan of Sokoto. This has remained the most senior title among the Emirs and Chiefs of the six Northern states.

Nearly every one of the ruling dynasties of the Northern emirates today traces its ancestry back to the first emir who conquered the kingdom for the Fulani at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Four exceptions are noteworthy: the Daura and Zazzau Habe who withdrew to Maradi and Abuja respectively to protect their independence, and the Kanuri of Borno and the Kebbi of Argungu who were never overcome. Today, it is only in the non-Hausa emirates of Adamawa, Gombe and Muri that Fulfulde, the language of the Fulani people, has remained the living language of daily administration in town and countryside alike. Few of the Fulani emirs can today speak their ancestral language although it continues to be the mother tongue of the pastoral Fulani.

With the increased settlement of the Fulani throughout the nineteenth century and consequent intermarriage, it is today neither easy nor necessary to distinguish the settled Fulani life-style from that of their Hausa neighbours. By the middle of the twentieth century, the two peoples had for most purposes become fused into one identity, speaking a common language, following a single religion, and sharing the same cultural values and attitudes.

Hausa

Kano State lies to the south of the international border with the Niger Republic, almost a thousand miles from Lagos. The State capital is Kano which has an international airport. Other towns of historical and cultural interest include Daura, Hadejia, Gumel, Kazaure, Dambata and Wudil. The State covers 16,630 square miles and the population is estimated at nearly 6 million. Most of the people are Hausa and Fulani speakers. The majority follow Islam. In terms of history and culture, Kano State represents the essential Hausaland.

The Hausa are the predominant inhabitants of Kano State. Five million of them live there and another seven to ten million Hausa-speakers are to be found in the neighbouring States–for the name Hausa does not denote a particular people, but refers to all those people who speak the Hausa language as their mother tongue and who live in the country known as Hausaland. In Kano State this also includes the settled Fulani who, after their conquest of the old Habe states, settled down and intermarried with these original inhabitants, and a small group of Maguzawa or non-Moslem Hausa.

The history of Kano is both long and illustrious and traces its origins back to its founder Barbushe, 'a hunter of great stature and might, a hunter who slew elephants with his stick and carried them home on his head'. He lived on Dala Hill, in the middle of Kano. At that time the central deity of Kano was known as Tsumburbura, and Barbushe carried out the necessary sacrifices to him on behalf of his followers. The people lived contentedly for some time, but Barbushe was also a seer and warned his people of the conquest of the town by an invader. His vision proved true. Kano was invaded and conquered by Bagauda, the son of Bawo, himself the son of Bayajida, conqueror of Daura and the founding father of the *Hausa Bakwai* or seven Hausa states. After conquering Kano, Bagauda became its first *Sarki* or king. From Bagauda to the present time, a period of a thousand years, Kano has been ruled by over fifty Chiefs whose names, reigns and exploits are recorded in songs still sung today by the beggar-minstrels of Kano city.

The city itself was at one time totally fortified and enclosed by a thirteen mile wall pierced by fifteen gates. These walls, made of red coloured hand-made bricks, were eighty feet thick at their base and forty to fifty feet high, and were surrounded by a deep moat. The walls were inset with holes at the appropriate points from which any enemy could be espied long before they had a chance to attack the city. When they were spotted, a drum was beaten to warn the residents to come in quickly before the gates were shut for their own safety. Much of the city walls and several gates have been preserved to this day.

It was during the reign of the celebrated king Mohammad Rumfa (1463–99) that the present Emir's palace and the South Gate were begun. Of him it is sung that, 'he can have no equal in might, from the time of the founding of Kano until it shall end'. It is said that this gate used only to be opened to allow the ruler of Kano to enter the palace on his accession to office; afterwards it was built up again until the next king was elected. The Emir's palace today covers an area of some twenty acres inside the city walls. Within the palace curtilage are the Emir's Council Chamber, the Court of Justice, and the official reception hall. The ceremonial regalia are also kept inside the palace. In addition, it contains the Emir's private apartments, his private mosque, store houses, stables, animal pens, and garages. Its decorated ceilings are a work of art.

Of all the kings of Kano, the name of Mohammad Rumfa stands high among the innovators. He is said to have introduced many new customs to the Hausa, including the royal trumpets or *kakaki*, the distinctive royal ostrich fan (*figini*), and ostrich-feather sandals. A more recent Emir

An indigo dye pit in Kano

whose name is often heard on Hausa lips is Abdullahi Bayero the Good, who reigned from 1926 to 1953. Like Rumfa, he too is remembered for innovation and modernisation.

Kano is famous not only for its historic buildings and monuments but also for its market where the variety of merchandise on sale caters for every taste. It is said that if you cannot find in the market what you are looking for, all you have to do is to tell a Hausa trader and come back an hour later.

Traditionally, each of the Hausa city states had a particular profession for which it earned a high reputation. For instance, Katsina and Daura were Hausa cities known for their trade, while Gobir was charged with defending the *Hausa Bakwai* against attack from the north. Kano has long been famed for its dyeing. The Kano dyepits are situated near the Kofar Mata Gate. Each pit is six to eight feet deep although several reach a depth of well over ten feet. The dye is mixed from lumps of indigo blended with ashes and flour from the locust bean. This mixture is placed into the pits and stirred with long narrow poles. When a pit is to be renewed with fresh dye, the residue at the bottom is preserved and used to plaster roofs, as it is impervious to water. When not in use, a pit is covered with a small conical thatched roof. Among the many customers for the deep-dyed Kano cloths are the Taureg who always wear this dark material.

Weaving is another important Hausa craft and Kano cloth is always in demand. The traditional cloth consists of narrow strips woven on a horizontal loom and then sewn together and dyed in the pits to a deep indigo. This type of cloth is only woven by men, outside the compound. Women weave a different variety of cloth, but this is woven inside the compound, on wide hand looms. When completed, the strips are sewn together and used to make clothing. Not only dyeing and weaving of cloth, but also tanning, smithing and pottery-making are carried out in Kano and the finished products displayed for sale in the market.

Farming activities provide the main occupation for the majority of Hausa and they grow a wide variety of crops. Guinea-corn is the staple, but cassava, maize, millet, sweet potatoes, rice, tomatoes and peppers are also grown. Cotton and indigo are grown for weaving and dyeing cloth. But pride of place must go to groundnuts, so widely grown in the State that groundnut pyramids in Kano have become about as famous a landmark as the minaret of the beautiful Kano mosque or the ancient city gates.

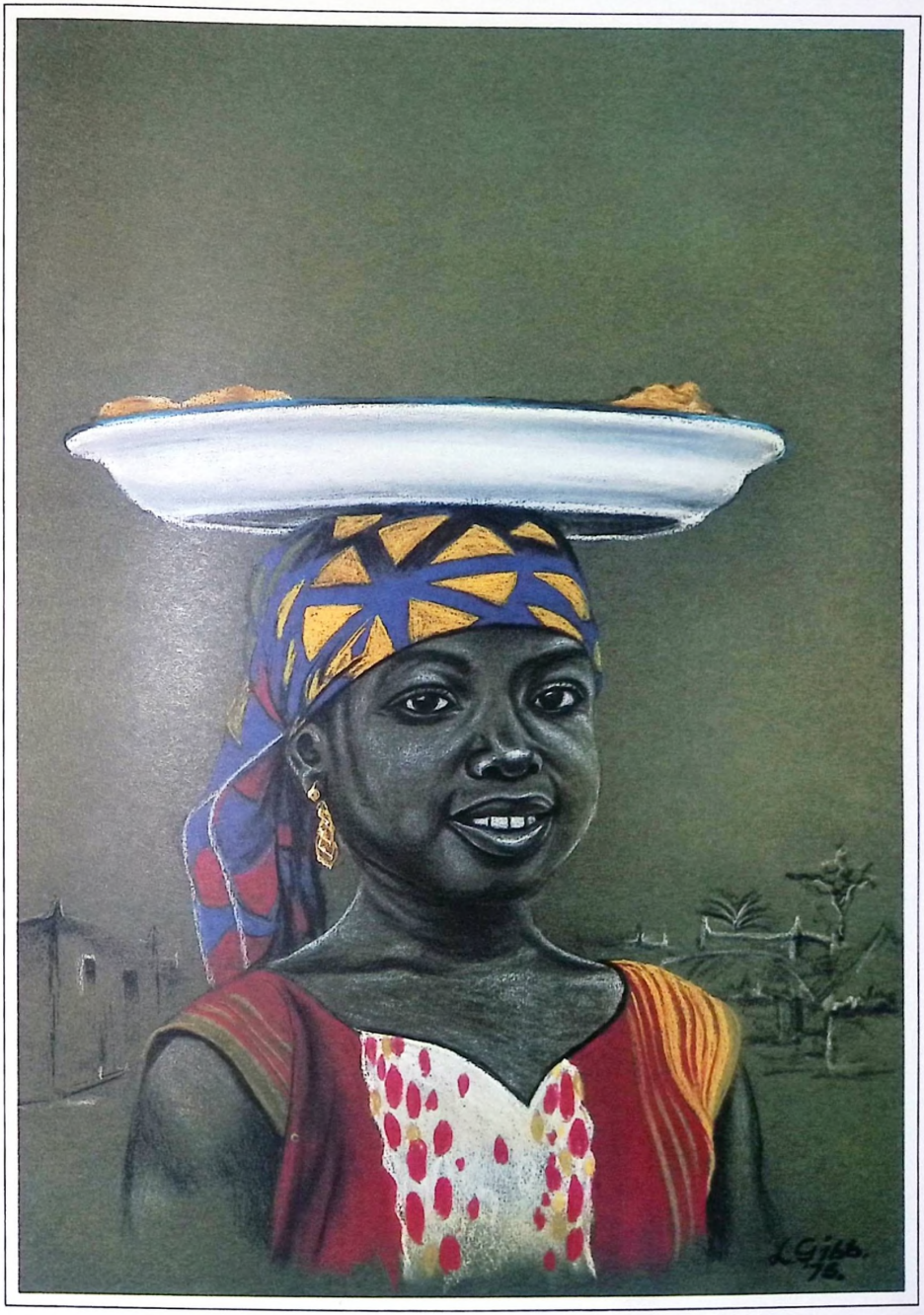
According to another Hausa legend, the original inhabitants of Kano were blacksmiths who came to Dala Hill in search of ironstone, and finding it enabled them to continue their craft there. Yet another legend tells how the Maguzawa are descended from Magaji, a chief who lived at the time of Barbushe. The Maguzawa, like the Moslem Hausa, describe themselves as descendants of Barbushe's conqueror Bagauda, the first king of Kano. Some scholars have seen in them relicts of the original Hausa even though they differ in certain religious practices and aspects of social organisation. Magaji was one of eleven famous chiefs, all heads of large non-Moslem clans. But he was particularly noted as a miner and smelter, and it is from

him that the Maguzawa derive their fame with metals.

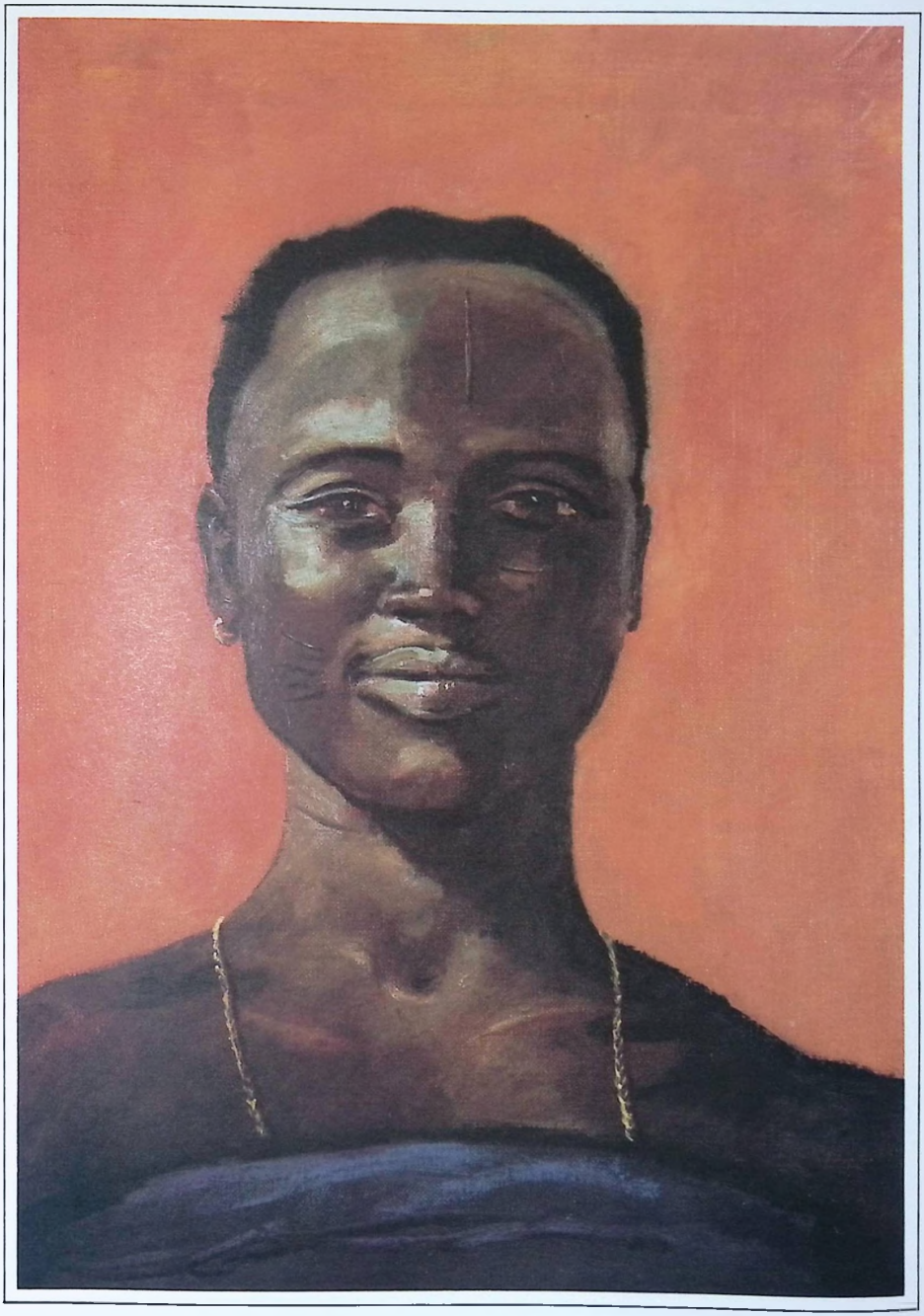
The Maguzawa compound is rectangular and marked-off by a guinea-corn stalk fence. The entrance is via a passage-way which faces east or south. Inside the compound are located the dwelling-huts and granaries. The hut belonging to the owner of the compound is located at the entrance. Directly opposite his hut are those of his wives. The children sleep with their mother until they are about five years of age. When a boy reaches about eight years of age, his father builds him his own hut. Farming land is only owned by men, and each plot of ancestral land is usually owned collectively by a number of brothers, with the eldest brother as caretaker. This land is considered a trust and it cannot be sold or divided without the consent of all who share in it. The corn obtained from this land is stored separately in a large granary until the next rainy season. Then it is divided and used to feed all those who have helped to work on the farm the previous year. Unlike Moslem Hausa women, Maguzawa women tend to be economically independent. They keep small domestic animals and sell their produce to help clothe themselves and their children. In addition to farming activities, during the dry season the men also do iron-working, weaving, dyeing, pottery, basketry and twine-making.

The Maguzawa pay great attention to their spirits, known collectively as *iskoki*. These spirits are said to be infinite in number, but certain spirits are known by name and have specific powers and personalities ascribed to them. The *iskoki* are found everywhere in the universe, but the named spirits, who have their own cult, also have a favourite haunt such as a tree or a bush.

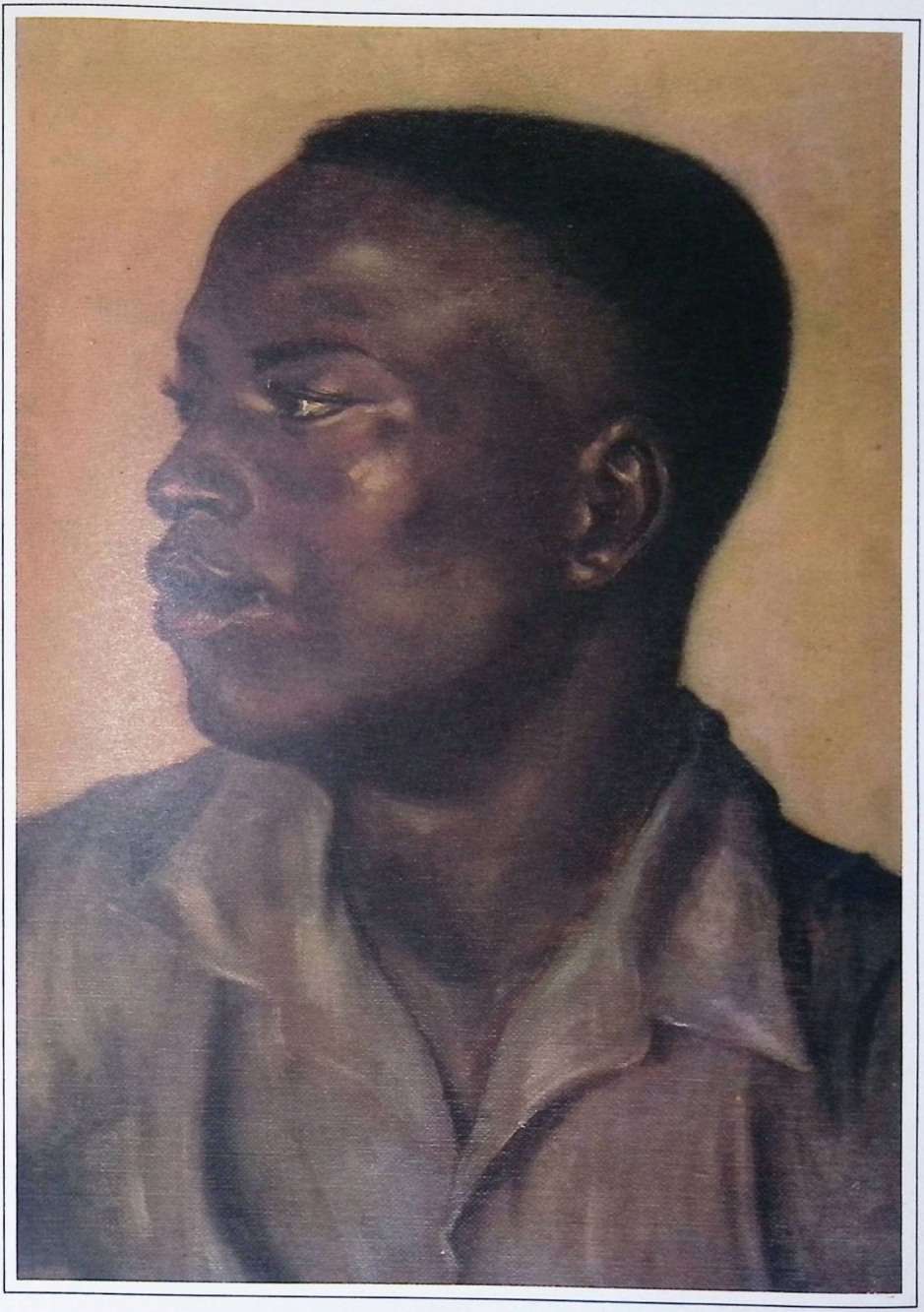
The Hausa are known throughout Africa as traders. Groups of migrant Hausa are to be found all across the continent, from Dakar in the west to Port Sudan in the east, and from Tunis in the north as far south as Kinshasa. A proverb assures us that a Hausa trader is skilled enough to sell water even to those living on the banks of the river Niger! At home, the Hausa are equally famed for their farming prowess, so that today the district round Kano city is one of the most closely farmed areas in the world. The Hausa dress is not only distinctive, it has now become a sort of national dress among the Moslem peoples of the north, with its magnificent *riga* or gown and a wide range of hats and turbans. While white is the commonest colour, every colour of the rainbow can be quickly found in a crowd of people wearing Hausa dress. As for the Hausa language, spoken today by perhaps twenty-five million people, it is rich in vocabulary, idiom and proverb, musical to the ear, and flexible enough to adjust easily to the technological demands of the twentieth century. There is little doubt that Hausa emerges as one of the great cultures of Africa today. And, like Londoners, Parisians and New Yorkers, those born and bred in the fascinating metropolis of Kano tend to think that there is nowhere quite like it in the whole world!



Hausa



Gwari



Kagoro

Hausa

Gwari

The North-Central State extends from the railway centre of Kafancan right up to Nigeria's northern boundary. It comprises the former Zaria and Katsina Provinces. The State capital is Kaduna. Other towns of historical and cultural interest include Zaria, Katsina, Funtua and Malumfashi. The State covers 26,949 square miles and the population is estimated at nearly 4 million. Hausa is the principal language of the State. Both Islam and Christianity are widely practised. In terms of history and culture, the North-Central State contains much of the heart of Hausaland.

The Gwari people number over half a million and inhabit the Middle Niger region, principally in the area lying to the west of Kaduna–including Birnin Gwari–and to the south-west as far as Minna and Paiko. They call themselves 'Gbari', and while they are often distinguished as Eastern and Western Gwari, they understand each other's dialect and share a number of cultural traits. They are a Kwa-speaking people and as such are linguistically related to such neighbouring peoples as the Nupe. Gwari are occupationally a very diverse people: some farm, others fish, while yet others pursue crafts or herd cattle, goats and sheep.

In Gwari oral tradition, references to Borno origins are recurrent. The Gwari maintain that they are Kanuri (or Beriberi) by extraction and at one time spoke Kanuri, although there is no trace of this today. In this tradition their ancestor-chief, Bwodwo, and his younger brother, Para, settled the Gwari in their present homeland. Another oral tradition, a variant of the famous Daura legend of Hausaland, relates that Abu Yazid, whose son founded Biram and whose grandsons founded the remaining Hausa states, generated a collateral line through a Gwari concubine given to him by the Queen of Daura. Gwari today still consider themselves to be cross-cousins and 'joking relations' of the people of Daura. In addition, one of the Hausa rulers of Daura who successfully led the resistance to the Fulani at the time of the *jihad* is remembered as Sarkin Gwari Abdu because of his marriage to a Gwari woman. In this version of the Daura legend, the state of Gwari emerges as one of the *Banza Bakwai*, the peripheral Hausa states.

The Gwari grow a great variety of crops, including guinea-corn, millet, cotton, groundnuts, and rice. Indigo is also cultivated. The women pound this plant in wooden mortars, dry it in the sun, and then roll it into balls with ashes and water. The Gwari are primarily hoe-cultivators who conserve their land by rotating their crops, leaving areas fallow for certain periods. In this way they can keep a tract of farmland viable for thirty years or more. After harvesting, Gwari traditionally store their crops in a common hut in the village, although the village-head as well as individual householders all have their private stores. Large bins are used for storage and the grain is covered with a protective layer of ashes.

Gwari are expert craftsmen and are widely known as itinerant traders. Women are often seen on the roads carrying heavy bundles of firewood on their shoulder (rather than on their head) and Gwari men are frequently encountered with a pack of dogs for sale. Local markets are generally held every four days. Some of the crafts in which Gwari excel are mat-weaving, tailoring, smithing, carpentry, and tanning. A craft of local significance is the carving of stout wooden bowls, decorated with a chain of beads around a thick flat lip or rim, and stained with red ochre. Another equally noted craft is the decoration of shrines, dwelling huts and corn-stores. The shrines may be decorated on the outside with paint and shells while on the inside there is a mud screen ornamented with shells, porcupine quills and facsimiles of animals, especially crocodiles, in clay. Dwelling and

entrance huts, as well as corn-stores, are similarly decorated.

Gwari villages are divided into well-defined quarters, each quarter having its own communal store-house where grain is kept and ground. Within a village each man owns a cluster of huts: one is a fowl-house, another is a stable, one is for guests, three or four are corn-stores, and the rest are ordinary living and sleeping huts. In the sleeping rooms there is commonly a raised mud platform about one foot high, on which a tortoise and other propitious emblems are drawn. The beds are protected by screens of clay which also serve as storage areas. Sometimes the floors are inlaid with pieces of pottery.

Although many Gwari are turning to Islam and Christianity, their traditional religion provides them with a detailed cosmological and ethical framework which allows the Gwari to envisage a symbiotic relationship between the natural and supernatural realms. Among their deities there is one, Sheshu or Soko, who is paramount. Another deity is Karuma, the patron of youth, courage and strength, whose votaries are young men only. Mai-Dawa is a household spirit. His shrines are found in many Gwari compounds. Gwari believe in the reincarnation of the soul provided that the life of the person was good. There are numerous festivals celebrated in Gwariland to commemorate and protect the various activities of the agricultural season as well as to mark their religious calendar.

Notable among the Gwaris' north-western neighbours are the Dakakari of Zuru. Tough and cheerful, they have long formed an important element in the Nigerian army. Many are the tales told round the evening fires of their prowess with rifle and bayonet, stretching way back to the *Yakin Kamerun* and the East African campaigns of 1914-18. To the east of the Gwari are found some of the most go-ahead people in the whole of the North-Central State, the Katab group of peoples like the Kagoro, Kajuru, Kaje, and the Jaba of Kwoi and Kachia.

The Abuja Hausa

Abuja is situated almost in the middle of Nigeria. The land is fertile, allowing a wide variety of crops to be grown. The hilly terrain is interspersed with rivers, streams, and huge granite rocks like the exceptional example at Zuma, some five miles to the south-east of Abuja. Famous, too, are the *Mayanka* waterfalls just outside the town. The region has both bush and forest, and rises to an altitude of two thousand feet above sea level.

At one time Abuja formed part of the kingdom of Zaria, one of the seven original Hausa states. Historically, Zaria had the responsibility of providing manpower for the other six kingdoms. When the Fulani came to Zaria at the time of the *jihad*, they drove out the old Habe king and he fled southwards to Abuja. Here he succeeded in holding off the Fulani. Throughout the nineteenth century, Abuja thus remained a genuine Hausa kingdom while the other Hausa states bowed to Fulani overrule.

An Abuja potter

The main activity of the people of Abuja is farming. The people grow guinea-corn, rice, maize and cereals. They also cultivate yams, groundnuts, cassava and sweet potatoes. In addition, they grow herbs and other items for flavouring their cooking, such as chillies, peppers and tomatoes. The abundance of trees in the forest provides both fruit and palm oil for domestic use. Traditionally, the oil is said to belong to the men of the compound while the women own the nuts. The men also own the locust bean trees and their pods, but by custom, the women own the yellow edible powder which lines the insides of the pods. Some small domestic animals are also kept, but the presence of tsetse fly, particularly in the south, prevents livestock being kept in large numbers.

Today, Abuja is famed for its pottery-making and it is the women who excel at this traditional craft. Sometimes the pots are decorated with animal motifs, such as chameleons, crocodiles, fish, or with other designs, both conventional and unconventional, such as drums and flags, bicycles and aeroplanes. Each motif is marked off from the next by vertical bands which divide the pot up into segments, and the designs are made with a tool fashioned from the outer shell of a palm tree branch. Sometimes the pots are glazed with a liquid made from locust bean pods. This technique has both a practical and artistic purpose since the glaze also improves the strength of the pots. The high quality of Abuja pottery has won international acclaim.

The Habe of Abuja, the original Hausa driven from Zaria, prize several items among the royal regalia snatched away from their first capital of Zaria when the Fulani stormed the city in 1804. Most precious to them is *Takobin Zazzau*, the Zaria Sword. It is said that it came with Bayajida from Baghdad and is, along with that of Daura, one of the only two to survive. Next in importance is the *Kumbu*, a complete copy of the Koran also removed from Zaria. Then there are the three royal drums, quite small and shaped like inverted cones. They are kept in a special room, called the House of the Emir's Drums, along with the skulls of the three famous war horses that Makau brought from Zaria. These were known as 'Morning Star', 'The Horned White' and 'Victory'.

Finally there is the Helmet Crown, a piece of mediaeval armour, and the five spears that the Emir used to take with him into battle. Of Makau, the sixty-first Sarkin Zazzau and first Emir at Abuja (1804-25), his praise is sung, 'Man of many spears, as peppers make the eyes run so men run before your wrath'.

Kanuri

The North-East State stretches from the Jos Plateau all the way to Lake Chad, some 400 miles to the east, and southwards as far as the Cameroon border. It comprises the former Borno, Adamawa, Bauchi and Sardauna Provinces. The State capital is Maiduguri. Other towns of historical and cultural interest include Bauchi, Potiskum, Nguru, Gombe, Numan, Yola and Mubi. The State covers 120,845 square miles and the population is estimated at over 8 million. It is thus the largest State in Nigeria. Hausa, Kanuri and Fulani are widely spoken. Adherents of Islam, Christianity and African traditional religions are found throughout the State. In terms of scenery, the North-East State has many magnificent and unsurpassed areas. Among the many ethnic groups within the State are, for example, the Babur, Bacama, Batta, Bedde, Margi, Mumuye, and Shuwa Arab, as well as Kanuri, Hausa and Fulani.

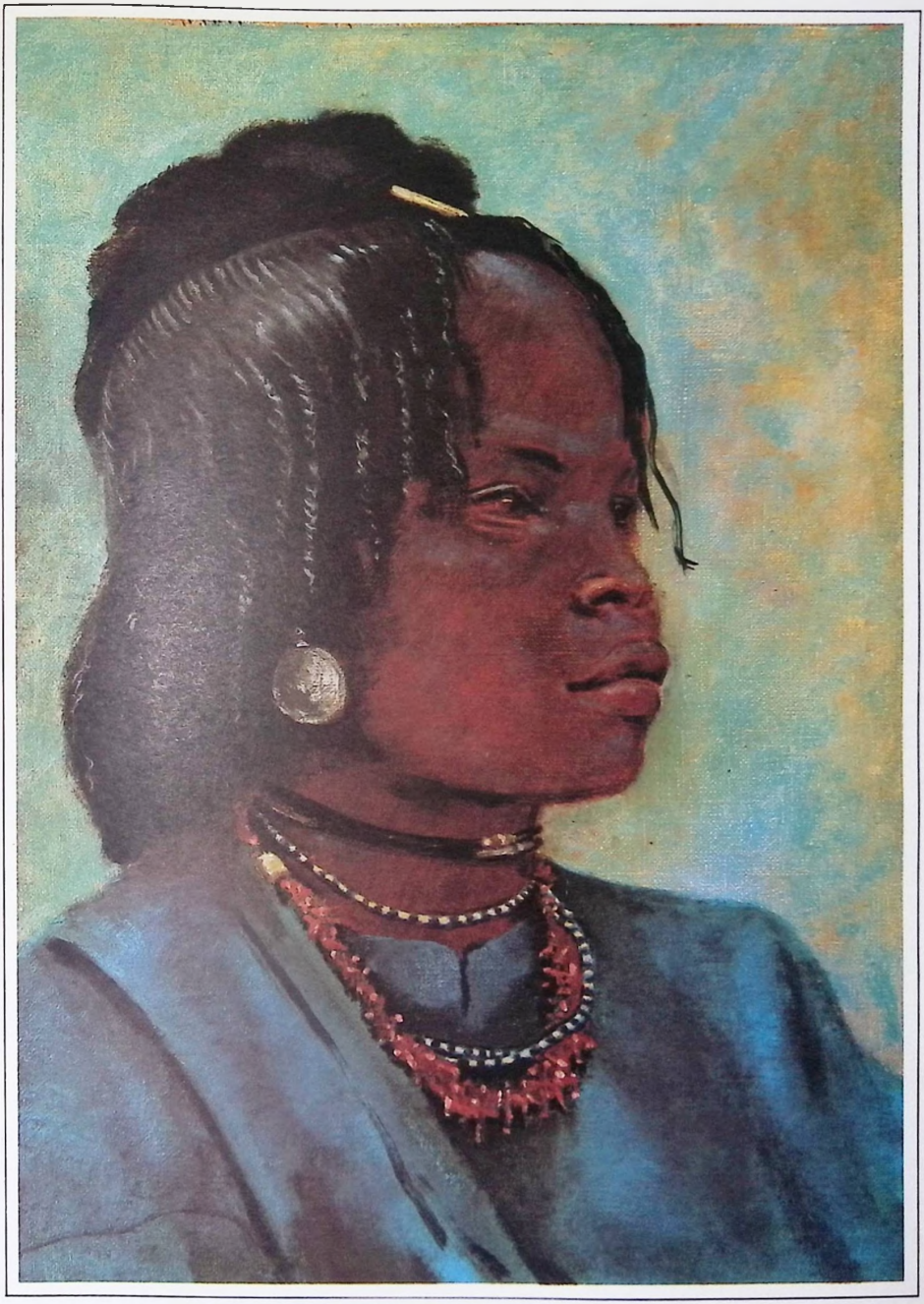
The Kanuri, whose remarkable history spans well over a millenium, number some two million people. They form the largest single entity within the North-East state and have for five centuries occupied the plains to the west of Lake Chad. They speak a language which is unconnected with other languages of Nigeria but is closely related to a large group of languages in the Central Sahara within the area bounded by the Tibesti highlands in the north and the Darfur region in the east.

Although their country is today sandy, Sahelian and dry, with the temperature rising above 100° in April and May, this was not always the case. Merchants from the Carthaginian empire who traded in the area of Lake Chad as late as 500 B.C. reported that the people there lived in a wet climate among crocodiles, hippopotami and giraffes. During the present-day shorter rainy season, the Kanuri farmers are engaged in the intensive production of millet, guinea-corn, cotton and groundnuts. A special variety of guinea-corn, *masakwa*, is cultivated in the *firki* or broad expanses of clay-laden, black cotton soil. The area has long been called the granary of the north. Distinctive, too, are the trees of the great Borno plains, especially the tamarind, baobab and acacia thorn. In the long, dry months between October and May, many Kanuri devote themselves to crafts, which include the making of fine cloth, the working of metal, and the tanning of hides. There are also potash and fish industries. All these manufactured articles are later sold in one of the famous Kanuri weekly markets, discussed in such accurate detail by the traveller Heinrich Barth a century ago.

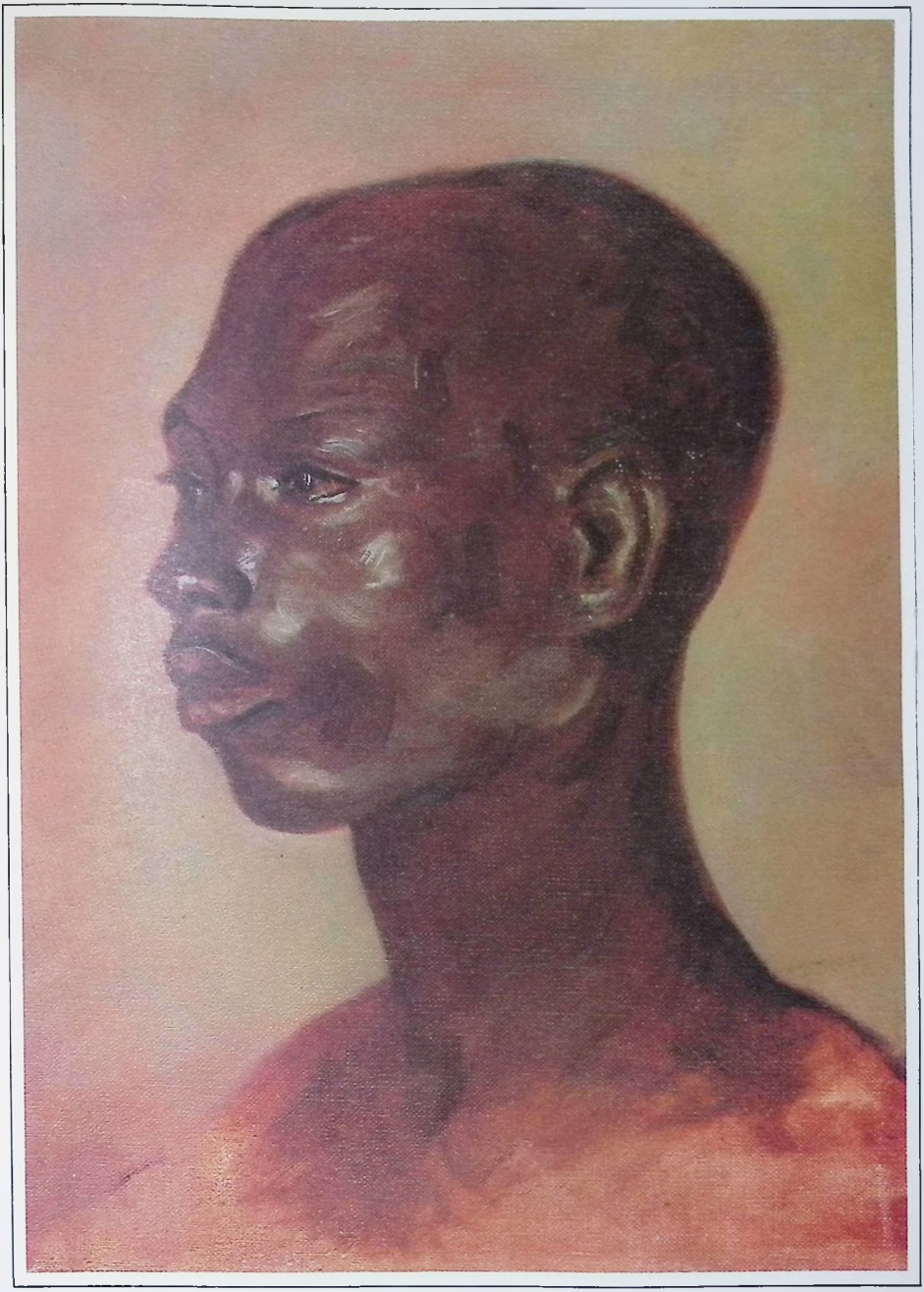
What is known of the earliest ancestors of the Kanuri people can be surmised from the rich oral traditions of the Kanuri themselves and from archaeological discoveries. The Kanuri evolved from some sort of coalition of the Teda-Daza-speaking groups in Kanem, to the east of Lake Chad, during the first millenium A.D. Their traditions maintain that a great Arab hero gained control of the Magumi nomads living to the north-east of Lake Chad. This is the origin of the Magumi hegemony, whose rulers, the *Mais* of the Sefawa dynasty, governed Borno down to the nineteenth century.

After the establishment of the Sefawa dynasty, the next important stage in the development of the Kanuri kingdom was the advent of Islam. The first *Mai* to adopt Islam was Humai, who ruled in the second half of the eleventh century. After severe internal strife caused by wars with the So and the Bulala, the Kanem area and its capital, Njimi, were abandoned and the Kanuri withdrew to the comparatively greener area of Borno on the west of Lake Chad. There they built a new capital, at Birni Gazargamu, the seat of the second Kanuri empire for the next three hundred years. From this new centre, the Kanuri empire flourished under such famous *Mais* as Idris Alooma (1569-1619), the learned, just, courageous and pious Commander of the Faithful.

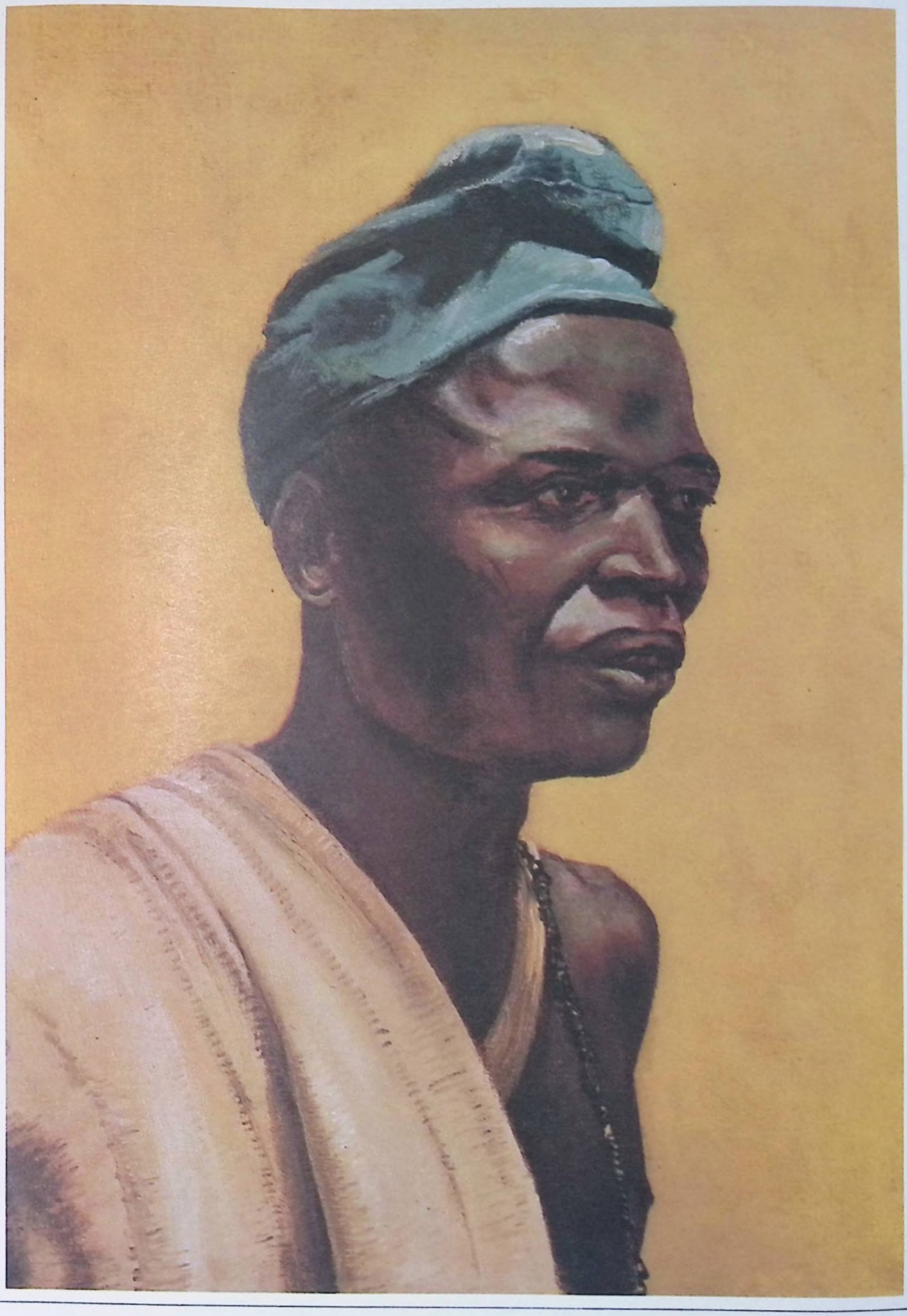
During the *jihad* of Usman dan Fodio, Borno lost its capital, Gazargamu, to the Fulani and were fighting for their lives when Muhammad al Amin al Kanemi, scholar and statesmen, appeared on the scene. Under his effective



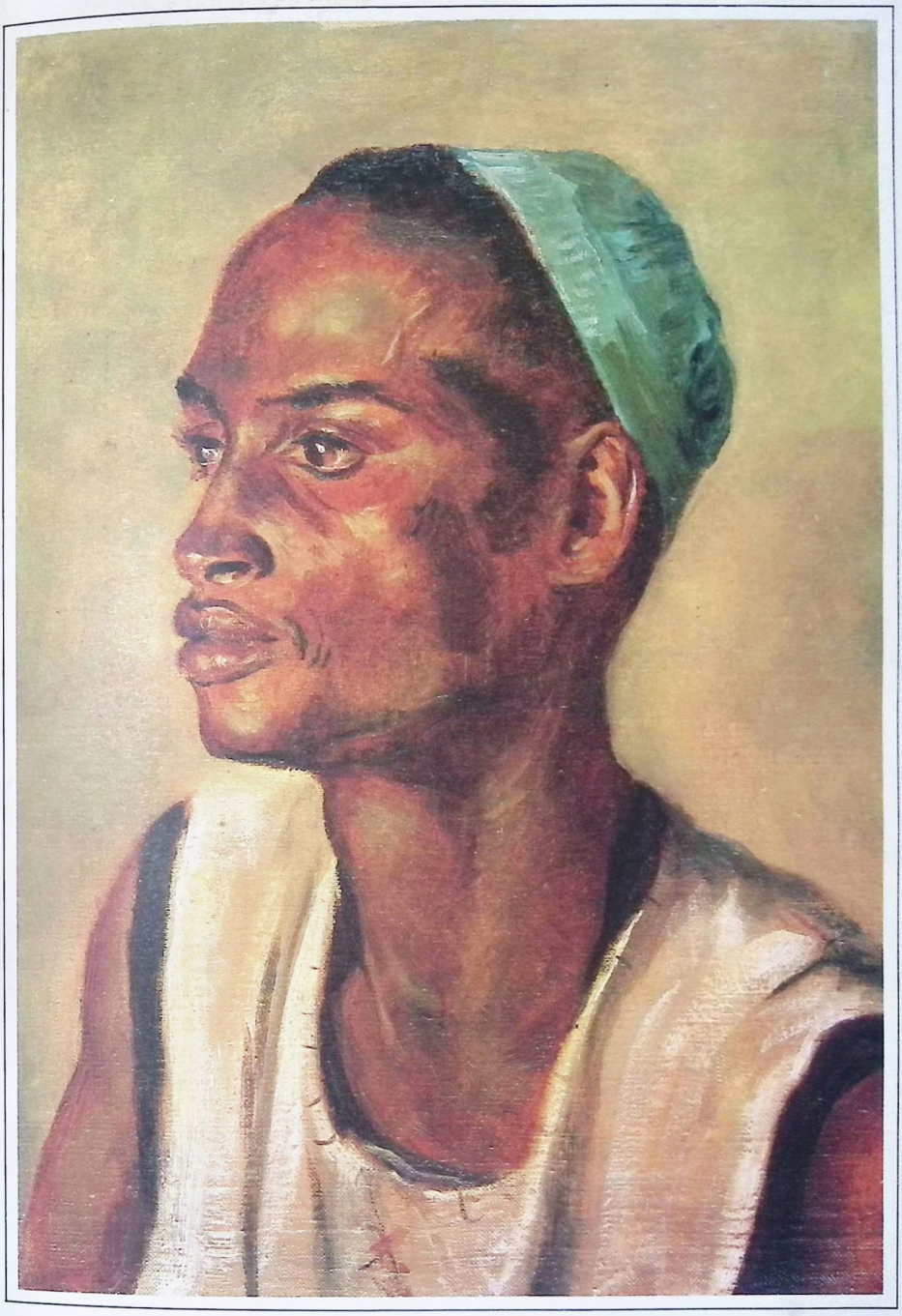
Kanuri



Bacama



Angas



Fulani

A Kanuri horseman

generalship the Fulani tide was stemmed. He built a new capital at Kukawa on the shore of Lake Chad. Despite his immense power, Al Kanemi never asserted direct control over the kingdom. It was left to his son, Umar, to erase the remaining vestiges of the thousand-year-old Sefawa dynasty and establish his own descendants on the throne. Henceforth, the Kanuri kings were known as *Shehu* instead of *Mai*. At the end of the century, the Sudanese invader Rabeh sacked Kukawa in 1897 and occupied Borno.

Traditional Kanuri settlements are composed of rectangular walled or *zana* (grassmat) compounds, inside which are built mud-walled houses with conical thatched roofs. The Kanuri have their distinct cultural features which separate them from those from the greater Sudanic area. For instance, they make their knives and carve calabashes in styles unique to Borno. The women display striking hair styles which resemble a helmet made out of an enormous braid, beginning as a crest at the front of the head and curving up over the head to end in an upward curl at the back. Kanuri dancing is also different from other dances in the Western Sudanic belt.

For those lucky enough to be there, the Borno horsemen and camel riders afford a splendid spectacle when, in gorgeous apparel straight out of the Arabian Nights, they ride in parade up the *dendal* to the Shehu's palace on such ceremonial occasions as *Maulud*, the Prophet's birthday.

Other peoples living in this cultural area of the North-East State include the inhabitants of the kingdoms of Fika, Bedde and Biu, and, among the more nomadic peoples, the Shuwa Arabs, the Koyam, and the Wodabe pastoral Fulani.

Pastoral Fulani

There are many different groups of Fulani nomads, stretching from Senegal to Lake Chad, but they all speak related dialects of Fulfulde or Fula, a language classified as belonging to the West Atlantic group of languages. In Nigeria, the principal division is between the Adamawa or Eastern dialect and the Western or Sokoto one. Although Fulani are found in many parts of the country, especially in the dry season when their herds move southwards in search of pasture lands, it is in the area north of the river Niger that they are most frequently met with. The nomadic Fulani retain a strong sense of unity in their social customs and values, which centre on their cattle and the nomadic way of life.

The pastoral Fulani or *Bororo'en* (they are also known as *Fulbe na'i* or cattle Fulani to distinguish them from *Fulbe sire* or settled, town, Fulani) rely on their cattle to provide their subsistence. It is therefore the needs of these herds which provide the focus of their daily life, seasonal migrations being determined accordingly. In addition to cattle, Fulani keep sheep and goats. It is the herds which provide the daily diet, consisting mainly of dairy produce, and surpluses of milk and butter are sold at local markets to enable the families to buy household necessities and other foodstuffs, notably the corn which nomadic herdsmen

have no time to grow for themselves.

The cattle belonging to each group of pastoralists is owned by the household heads, and their sons act as herdsmen for their fathers. The women are in charge of milking the cattle, and also of marketing the milk. It is generally only in cases of dire need that cattle are sold. They are killed and eaten on specific ceremonial occasions alone. Even then, only the male beasts are killed.

As the nomadic way of life demands constant change of pastureland according to the seasons, the Fulani travel light. Most of their property consists of items which can be easily transported on oxen or donkeys. This constant movement from one area to the next means that Fulani do not build elaborate dwelling houses. Instead they construct a temporary shelter (*bukka*) wherever they decide to pitch their camp. This cattle camp is known as *ruga*. At each stage in their migrations, it is usual for the Fulani to obtain permission to graze their herds on their neighbours' lands. Usually, the pastoralists offer payment in kind in return for grazing rights, while the farmers enjoy in return the advantage of having their land renewed with manure.

The origins of the Fulani have long been uncertain. A popular Fulani tradition tells how a woman once quarrelled with her husband, and in a fit of temper ran out of the village, taking her baby son with her. She ran into the thick, lonely 'bush' and, putting her baby down under a tree, began to wander through the bush, trying to assuage her anger. When at last she grew calm, she decided to go home and make it up with her husband. But alas! She could not remember where she had left her son. She searched everywhere but never found him. The boy grew up in the bush with the animals. One day he had a dream. A spirit told him that he would live all his life in the bush but that, if he obeyed the spirit, he would have many riches. The spirit commanded him to go down to the river, where he would see a white cow come out of the water. He must then walk away, and the cow would follow. But whatever happened, he must not look behind him. The boy did as he was told. When the white cow came out of the water, he walked away, and the cow followed. He walked for a long time until at last, unable to contain his curiosity, he decided to look around. To his surprise he saw hundreds of cows behind him, for all the time he had been walking they had been coming out of the river. As soon as the boy turned round, the cows stopped coming out of the water. The legend ends by saying that all the cows were white except the last four, which were red. This explains why there are more white than red cattle in Fulani herds.

Fulani herds spend the day grazing together, apart from other herds, and are separately watered and spend the night in their own individual corral with their own fire. This corral is part of the homestead of the male herd owner and he is responsible for its management. Extremely skilled animal husbandry is demanded of a herd owner. In particular, cattle have to be protected from attack by wild animals, disease, accidents and theft; the milk supply has to be carefully regulated; and the birth of calves has to be assisted. Calves born in the bush are thought to bring bad luck on the herd, and are often sold as soon as

they are weaned.

The arrangement of a pastoral homestead symbolises the close relationship that exists between a family and its herd. A calf rope divides the homestead into two distinct areas. The area between the back fence and the calf rope is the women's area. Women's shelters all face west and are arranged in order of seniority, the senior wife's shelter being at the north end and the other wives' lined to the south in descending order. West of the calf rope is the men's area and that of the cattle. Women do not generally enter this area, only the household head's wife or her daughters entering the corral to milk their cows. Strangers and visitors to the homestead are not admitted to the corral save by special invitation of the herd owner.

In general, the greater part of the men's work is concerned with herding, but when they are not tending the cattle, they also find time to make sandals out of cowhide, and ropes and lashings for their everyday work. These ropes are made from strips of bark gathered in the bush, or from grass fibre purchased in the market. Women's work centres on the cattle and the preparation of dairy produce for market. When not helping out with the herding or around the homestead, the youths enjoy a number of games and dances.

One such ceremony is the *sharo*. This is a really severe endurance test, generally held in the dry season, in which the youths vie with each other in public to see who can show the greatest indifference to the excruciating pain of being beaten across the back with rods. A very popular dance is the *gerewol*. The men are dressed in ostrich-plumed caps and leather belts trimmed with cowrie shells, and carry ceremonial axes. They dance in a single group to a slow, stamping rhythm, unaccompanied by drumming, and sing about the beauty of the maidens present. The girls dance in a circle nearby and sing about the handsome males, but they only make oblique references to them. Eventually, the most generally agreed handsome youths and maidens are paired off by the singers and depart together. Gradually all the others then pair off and the dance is concluded. But next morning life centres once more on the cattle.

Tiv

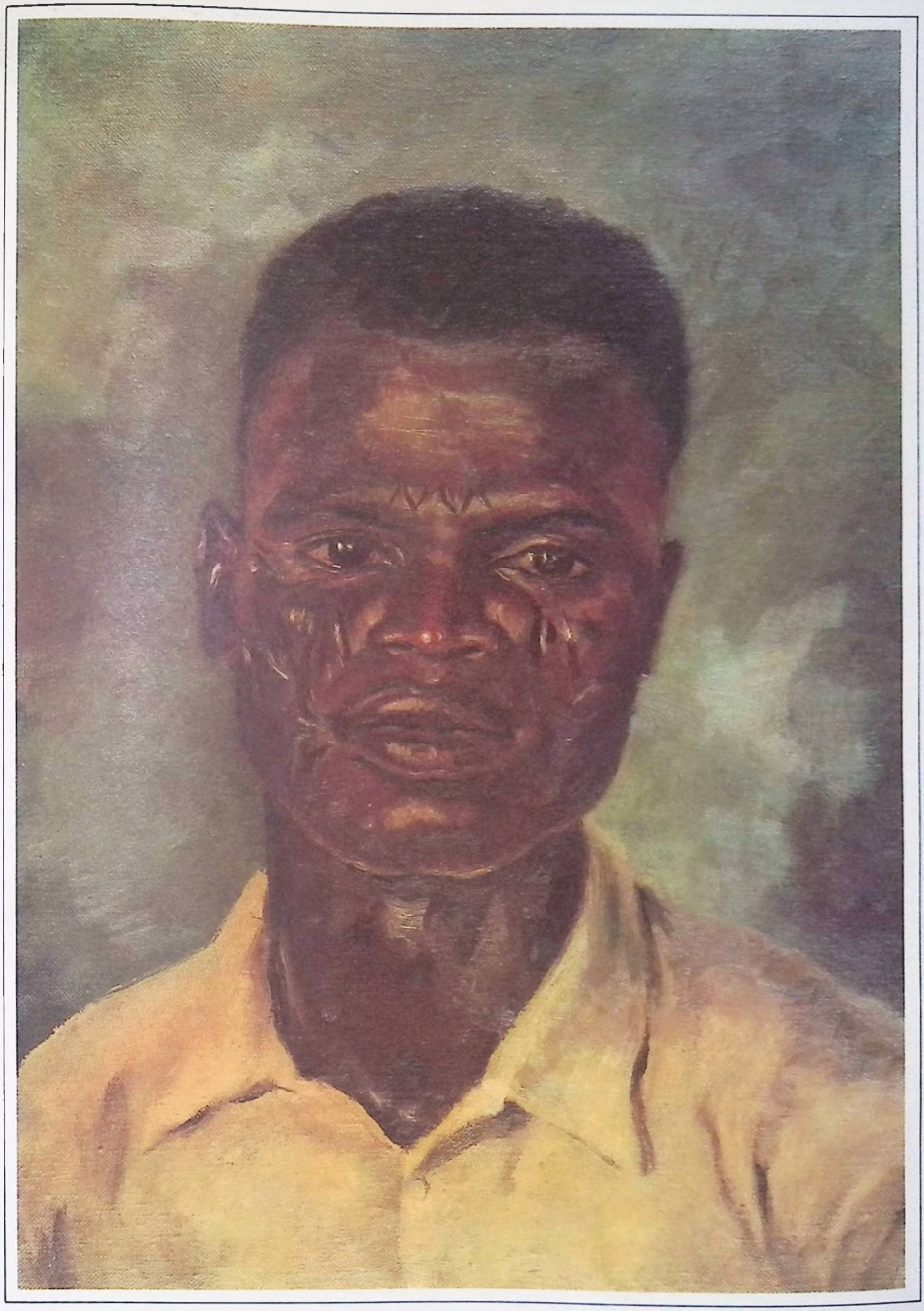
Benue-Plateau State extends on both sides of the River Benue and stretches from Jos as far south as the border with the East Central State. It comprises the former Plateau and Benue Provinces. The State capital is Jos. Other towns of historical and cultural interest include Makurdi, Oturkpo, Gboko, Bukuru, Lafia, Keffi and Wukari. The State covers 41,844 square miles and the population is estimated at over 4 million. Adherents of Christianity, Islam and African traditional religions are found throughout the State. The State is rightly famed for the breathtaking beauty of its scenery and the wide variety of its cultures.

The Tiv people are today estimated to exceed one million. They live both north and south of the Benue river. Their language belongs to the Niger-Congo family. Since their arrival into their original territory situated, according to tradition, on top of an unknown hill, probably Ibenda in modern Turan, they have been gradually migrating and expanding into the surrounding areas. Reasons for this steady migration and expansion are many, but Tiv say that basically it is their nature to move, and describe their migration as *inja*, 'it is our way of life', and *dzan twev*, 'going to look for a new site'. But the need for more land and, in the past, the need to move from unwelcome political jurisdiction, have also influenced the final decision to move to new land.

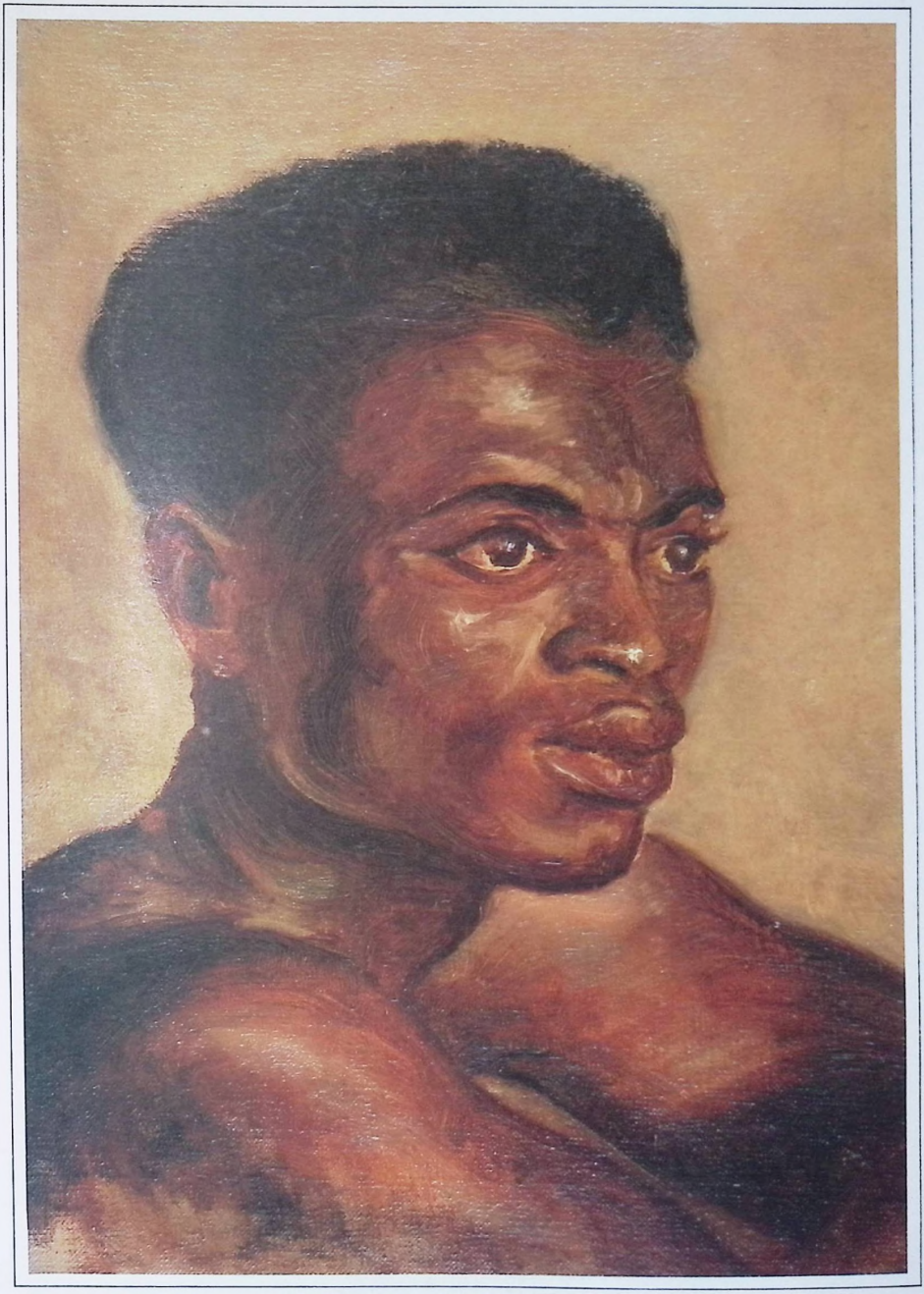
The Tiv came to their present land from the south-east. When the Jukun empire, based on Kwararafa in the area of present-day Wukari, began to collapse, some of the Tiv clans crossed the Benue river and occupied Jukun territory after the latter had been routed. One Tiv oral tradition relates how, when they came to the river, they were unable to cross it as there was no bridge. While they were deliberating on what to do, the elders saw a snake appear from one of the trees on the nearby bank and suspend itself from a branch. It then swung itself across the river, forming a live bridge for the Tiv to cross the river. Just as the last Tiv was safely across, their enemies arrived in pursuit and swarmed onto the snake bridge. When they were all on, the snake untwined its coils and the enemies fell into the river and drowned. Tiv today still look upon this variety of harmless tree snake, *ikarem*, as a friend and do not kill it.

Their traditions also trace their ancestry back to Tiv, who was one of two brothers, sons of A'ondo. Tiv had two sons, Ipusu and Ichongo, after whom today's two major divisions of Tiv clans are named. Tiv, who was born on a farm, learned farming from A'ondo, the Sky God. He gave his younger brother, Takuruku, the seeds for growing crops and showed him how to fashion a wooden hoe and how to farm. Takuruku was the first person to live on the earth. He would have had no problems in farming if he had followed his brother's advice. Unfortunately, he disputed A'ondo's instructions. His crops failed due to lack of rain. A'ondo promised to water the crops, on condition that Takuruku would remember to acknowledge his precedence. Takuruku is looked on as being responsible for the fertility of crops, animals and men on the earth, while A'ondo remains aloft but sends rain at his brother's request. It is the compound head who generally controls the magical forces and ancestors, *akombo*, which are vital for the prosperity of the people as well as the crops.

Today the Tiv earn most of their livelihood from farming, and they are fortunate in being able to grow a wide variety of crops, thanks to the fertile agricultural conditions provided by the lower Benue valley. In addition, living in a riverain region they can supplement their diet and income by fishing. Today the stirring martial traditions of the Tiv mean that they make up a significant proportion of the Nigerian army. The Tiv also weave a great deal of their own cloth, both for personal use and for sale to other local groups. Men and women have their own distinct

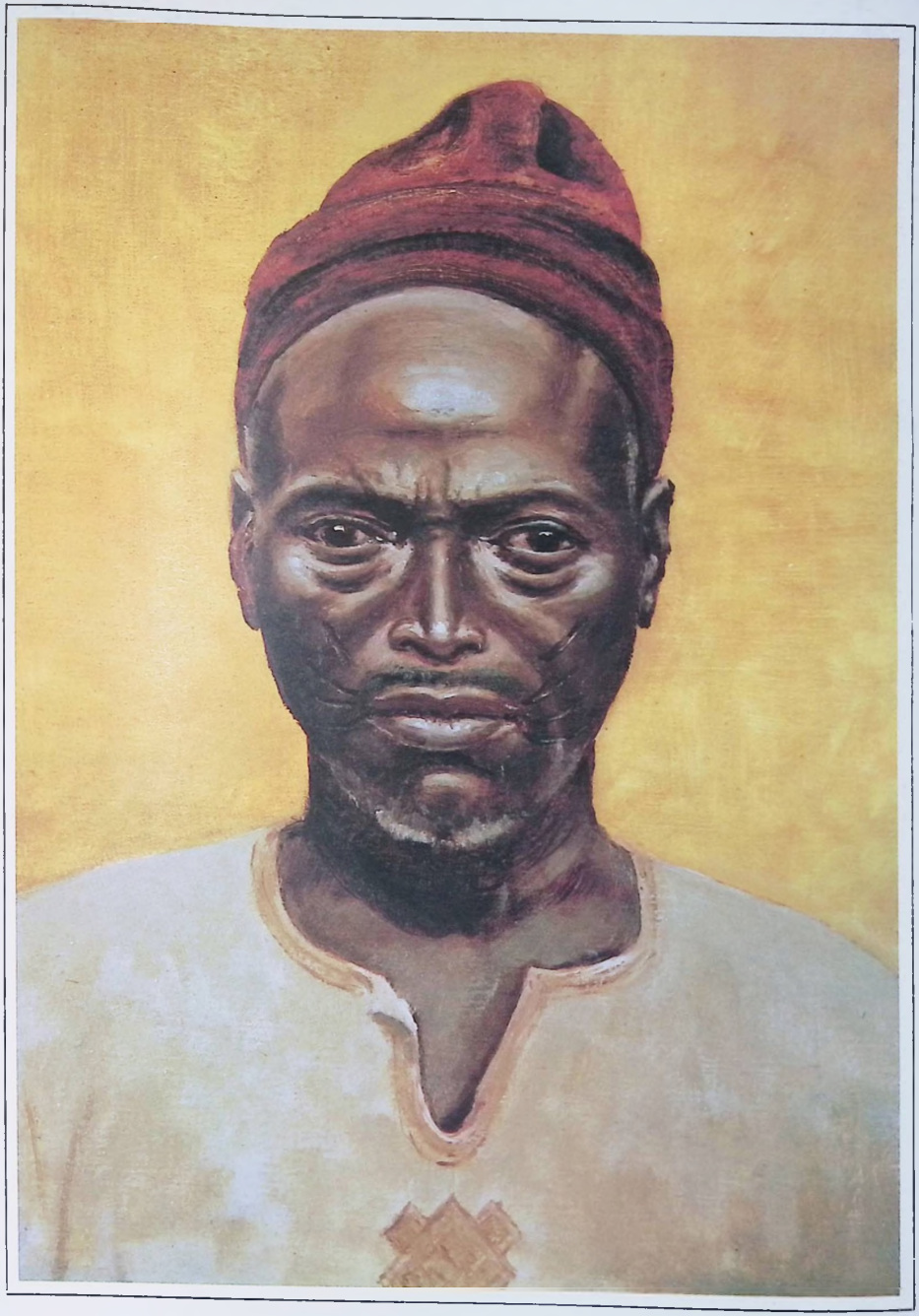


Tiv



Idoma

Igbira



Igala

designs in this woven cloth and do not wear each other's patterns. Calabashes, mats and baskets are also made, and pottery is another import craft.

Tiv dwellings are of three main types: those used exclusively for sleeping (*ayou*), those made for entertaining in (*ate*), and those made for storage, especially grain. Most buildings are made of mud and are circular-shaped with a striking conical-shaped thatched roof erected on top of the mud walls. Floors are usually made of mud, pounded to a smooth finish.

The magnificent Tiv weaving provides the waist-cloth often worn by men and women. The length of the traditional cloth varies with the age of the wearer, older people wearing it to the knee while the youths wear it much shorter. Older men also often add a larger cloth, some eight to nine feet in length, worn like a tunic, with the ends thrown over the left shoulder. Men customarily tie their cloths on the left side of the waist but women cross the ends of the cloth in front and tuck them in. Young men may also add large cloths like the old men, but in a different variety of weave and tied in a different style. Under their waist-cloths women often wear beads or long coils of perforated discs, a leather girdle, or some other smooth round object round the waist.

In addition to their clothing, women also take great trouble with their hairstyles. Braids may be worn, plaited close to the head and hanging down onto the neck, or the hair may be shaped into balls or combed over seed pods onto the top of the head. To all hairstyles may be added other decorations such as pins made of bone or metal, forks, or wooden combs, either plain or with elaborate carving.

Arm-band ornaments are very common. Some of these are made of ivory. Tiv women often wear many kinds of necklaces, and sometimes brass anklets. Men carry bags made of red leather or fur, elaborately tooled and tasselled, and a fine bag is much admired. In addition to these items, important men traditionally carry metal adzes and knives, decorated and set in leather holders. Certain men may carry sceptre-like rods or decorated tongs suspended from heavy beads and worn from the shoulder.

Occasions for displaying the fineries of dress are plentiful in Tivland. The Tiv are outstanding dancers and singers, and their dances are celebrated throughout Nigeria and beyond. A famous Tiv dance is the sinuous, haunting, *swange*. Tiv dances are usually performed in a circular pattern, to singing and drumming, and the dancers' anklets, made of dried shells or nuts, add to the accompaniment. An important song is the *Icham*; sung by a soloist and chorus, with drum and flute accompaniment. Those who have had the privilege of attending a Tiv dance have enjoyed an experience that they will not easily forget.

Angas

The Angas live in the Pankshin area of the Jos Plateau, one of the most scenic areas in the whole of Nigeria. They call themselves 'Kerang'. Their rich traditions relate that they came from Koropan (which might be Kordofan) to Borno, and then to a place which they called 'Yam', where they settled for many centuries. The remains of these settlements can be seen today. The significance of their stay at this place is still in evidence for, when the Angas sow their crops, they invoke the name of 'Yam'. Furthermore, the more traditional Angas are buried in a sitting position facing the direction of Yam. On leaving Yam, they journeyed to Jala, Baksala, and then finally on to Suwa. There they divided into three parties, each carrying a distinctive emblem. One group, led by a priest, went to Gyangyan and settled near the Wase river; the second party went to Kabwir; and the third settled at Ampier. Today the Angas administrative centre is the beautifully located Pankshin.

An Angas farming village

The Angas are magnificent agriculturalists, growing millet, guinea-corn and tobacco, but they also keep sheep, goats and cattle. Agriculturally, they are renowned for their terraced farming on their precipitous hillsides. They often build up terraces of rock three feet high just to plant a single row of guinea-corn. The soil is made into ridges and the furrows are banked across at a distance varying between two and twenty feet to form troughs to hold the rain. When these ridge crops have ripened and have been harvested, they are placed in granaries about three feet in diameter, the floor having been covered with leaves.

Traditional Angas villages consist of a series of huts, sometimes up to several hundred, placed close together in a circle. Mud and stones filled in between the huts effectively form a wall. The huts themselves are built of glazed mud and the unsupported dome-shaped roofs are made of mud and thatch. Angas are expert at a number of crafts, including the making of cloth and earthenware pots. Perhaps their most highly developed art is iron-working. This is a seasonal craft, involving considerable ceremonial which surrounds both the artisan and his work.

The Angas are especially fond of music and have bands of combined instruments, including reed pipes and drums. Among the varieties of instruments are horns of varying sizes which play together in different combinations. Another instrument is like a lyre. To a platform and sounding board, made of reeds tied together, are attached two bridges and strings arranged in groups of three. A rattle is inserted at one end.

Women take a prominent part in the dances held after the harvesting of each crop. The principal festival of the year takes place when the corn is ready for gathering. The women in each village build up an ash heap to a six foot high cone. Every hut and bin is sprinkled with beer. At night the women dance while the men play their instruments till well into the next morning. The following evening a special religious dance is held, presided over by a symbolic figure who stands apart from the rest of the gathering, disguised in stalks of guinea-corn.

The Angas possess a particularly rich cosmology. Their pantheon has three deities: Gwon, Nen, and Kum. Gwon is essentially the god of justice, to whom questions of right

and wrong are referred and who punishes misdeeds. Nen, on the other hand, is the great god who lives in the sky, remaining rather disinterested in human affairs. Finally there is Kum, the household god, to whom an upright slab of stone, symbolising fertility, is erected in the entrance to each compound. The Angas believe that hosts of spirits support the sky on bamboo poles. Their traditions say that the sun is more powerful than the moon: this is because vision by day is greater than it is by night. Moreover, the sun appears daily while the moon appears intermittently, only to be driven away by the sun in the morning. Thus the sun is seen as good and the moon as evil.

The Angas are also famous for their traditional dress. A locally made cloth wrapper, not unlike a wide shawl hung with tassels, is worn across the left shoulder, falling to knee-level. On ceremonial occasions, a leopard skin ornamented with strips of sheepskin is worn with a decorated band slung over the right shoulder. The elaborate headgear is made of cowrie shells sewn into a leather band, enhanced by grass and ostrich feathers. Important elders carry a feather fan and a buffalo horn. Such colourful dress is traditionally worn on four occasions: during the harvest time (September or October), on the installation of a new chief, to welcome a chief on his safe return from a long journey, and, accompanied by prolonged horn blowing, to mourn the death of a chief.

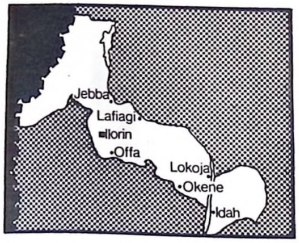
Among the many other colourful peoples of the Benue-Plateau State, such as the Ankwe, Eggon, Montol, Sura, Pyem and Yergam, two deserve special mention because of their large numbers and the Jukun because of the glory of their past history.

The Birom live in the southern area of the Bauchi Plateau. In fact, they are sometimes considered to be related to the Angas, allegedly separating from them at the beginning of the last century. Traditionally, their villages, which are similar to those of the Angas, are perched high in the hills and are composed of circular mud huts with grass roofs. These huts are arranged in a circle and are cemented together, allowing entrance to the village only through a single passage. In each compound there is a double-storeyed house, the top floor of which is used as a granary. The Birom were originally an agricultural people but in the past fifty years they have played a notable role in the development of the tin mining industry of the Plateau, *kasar kuza*, 'the land of tin ore'.

The Idoma, who live south of the Benue as neighbours to the Tiv, farm similar crops and are skilled at the same crafts. Nevertheless, they have distinct cultural traits. The Idoma are celebrated for their knowledge of medicine. They recognise many diseases, which they successfully treat and cure. The Idoma also have sophisticated techniques for dealing with snake and scorpion bites.

The Jukun, too, live beyond the Benue, their capital being Wukari. In the middle ages, their kingdom of Kwararafa held many of the northerly territories in sway, and the Jukun forces invaded Hausaland as far as Kano. Today their traditional Chief, the Aku of Wukari, is, along with the Tor Tiv and the Och'Idoma, ranked among the State's most important traditional chiefs.

Igbira



Most of Kwara State lies along the south bank of the River Niger, with an enclave to the east of it. It is the first of the six northerly states one enters when travelling up country by road or rail from Lagos. It comprises the former Ilorin and Kabba Provinces. The State capital is Ilorin. Other towns of historical and cultural interest include Lokoja, Idah, Okene, and Jebba. The State covers 28,672 square miles and the population is estimated at nearly 3 million. Most of the people are Yoruba- speakers. Other languages spoken include Igala, Igbira, Nupe and those of Borgu in the north. Both Christianity and Islam are widely practised. The Kainji Dam is located at New Bussa. Kwara State presents an immense spectrum of scenery and cultures. Ethnic groups within the State include the Ankpa, Bassa Komo, Borgu, Bussa, Ekiti, Igbomina and Yoruba.

The Igbira, who number about one hundred and fifty thousand, inhabit the low-lying thick forest and undulating savannah north and east of the confluence of the rivers Niger and Benue at Lokoja. Their language is related to Nupe. Traditions among the various Igbira sub-groups vary as to their origins but they all agree that the area in which they now inhabit was colonized from the Igala of Idah. In addition, they claim ultimate ancestry from Wukari, the capital of the ancient Jukun empire.

One tradition asserts that in about 1750 one Ohimi, the son of an *Ata* or chief of a people living south of the Benue, crossed the river and established himself as suzerain over the peoples already occupying that country. His descendants established several powerful chiefdoms, including Koton Karifi and Panda, which had been important states before Heinrich Barth visited Northern Nigeria (c. 1850). Today their principal centre is Okene, beautifully set within a circle of rocky hills.

The chief priest of the Igbira is called Ohindashi. He is the chief priest to the one Supreme God, Hinegba or Ihinegba. This Supreme Being lives in the sky and is the creator of the earth, animals and men. He is a beneficent being who controls the universe, gives rain and sunshine, but punishes evil by sickness. He cannot be approached directly but only through his intermediary, the priest who, in turn, approaches intermediary spirits. There is a place of worship in the chief's compound inhabited by a spirit to whom the people give gifts and make sacrifices in order that the spirit who lives within it may defend their towns and give them prosperity. The people making their offerings dance and sing until the spirit issues forth, concealed beneath a long red gown and horned mask. At the times of harvest of the two principal Igbira crops, yams and guinea-corn, elaborate and spectacular festivals are held which brings all the people together in celebration and gratitude to Hinegba for delivering their successful crops. At his death, Ohindashi is buried within his own house, as the ground outside is considered to be too hot for his spirit to find repose.

Igbira villages were built on high, steep hills. In the historical times of territorial insecurity, to increase the safety of the Igbira from their enemies the characteristic smooth rocks of Igbira-land were made more slippery yet by the application of palm-oil smeared over them. In modern times, the Igbira have descended into the low-lying plains to indulge in a highly productive kind of agriculture. Within each Igbira village, the space is divided in terms of quadrilateral compounds, each containing round huts surrounding an open space. A distinction is often made in Igbira traditional social affairs between 'hosts' and 'guests'. According to local tradition, the 'hosts' established walled towns and claimed rights over all the land cultivated. But as other peoples came in to settle, the descendants of the original settlers allowed the newest incoming peoples to establish dependent compounds and farm land near to them. These were the 'guests'.

Besides the attention that Igbira devote to their farming, they also make and sell their traditional crafts. These include the weaving, spinning and dyeing of cotton, and

An Igbira girl weaving Okene cloth

the making of earthenware pottery, mats and ironwork. Igbira woven cloth is particularly attractive, with its wide strips of blue and white. The much acclaimed Okene cloth has today earned a name for itself at many international trade fairs. Most of the trade carried on in the local markets is done by the women. As keen musicians, the Igbira have a unique bow, the string of which is made of palm-leaf. When this instrument is played, it is held close to the lips and tapped with a piece of guinea-corn stick held in the left hand.

Finally, a highly specialised and closed occupational craft is the mummification of the dead. This is accomplished by the infusion of gin or beer and subjecting the body to a kind of fumigation. In this way the bodies can be preserved for many years. All of these crafts, regardless of their importance or degree of specialisation required, are secondary to agriculture, hitherto the all-encompassing pursuit of the Igbira people. Today, many would say that, thanks to the high quality of the schools round Okene and the outstanding example of the royal family, education has become a primary occupation of Igbira boys and girls.

Igala

The Igala of Kwara State number nearly half a million. The capital of their ancient kingdom is Idah, situated on the east bank of the river Niger. The cliffs at Idah are a sight not to be forgotten. Although the various Igala groups are today diverse, they all speak mutually understandable dialects of the Kwa language family. Traditions as to the origin of the Igala differ widely in emphasis but all are agreed that they have a common origin with the Yoruba. One such tradition relates that the king of Yoruba made a journey to Raba, at that time the Nupe capital on the river Niger. There he asked the ruler to indicate a suitable place for him to settle. The Nupe king accordingly took a canoe and went down the river till he came to the present site of Idah where the Akpoto, the indigenous people of the area, allowed the Yoruba king to stay.

The Igala have been the possessors of a powerful kingdom for many centuries. The rulers of this kingdom consist of the *Ata*, or chief, who is chosen from one of the four royal and titled lineages. Each of these lineages is descended from the first legendary Yoruba king who came to Idah. The *Ata* is a kind of divine king. As one of them once declared, 'The river belongs to me a long way up and down on both sides, and I am king. God made me after His own image: I am the same as God and he appointed me king'. Among the valuable possessions of the *Ata'Gala* is a bronze mask, worn on ceremonial occasions. At least five hundred years old, in historic and cultural value it is second only to the world-famous Ife bronzes. In Igala, its name means 'the all-seeing eye'.

Today the Igala are primarily agriculturalists, although they also keep a few dwarf cattle, sheep, goats, and fowl. The crops which figure most prominently in their lives, for subsistence and trade, include red yams, millet, maize, guinea-corn, beans and groundnuts. Crops which are surplus to their family needs are traded in the markets

which traditionally meet once every four days. In the regulation of agricultural land, by tradition any man might take and farm any uncleared land, and though ultimately the land remained that of the *Ata*, the produce belonged to the occupant. Women share in the rights to the produce of the land but are by custom eligible for the inheritance of farmland only in the absence of male heirs.

Igala huts are round with conical thatched roofs. The compounds are not usually walled but formed in clusters of huts surrounded by open spaces. Thus the compound of the chief differs from those of other people only in that there are more huts in his compound. In addition, individual huts contain many charms to keep away leopards, thieves and such like dangers.

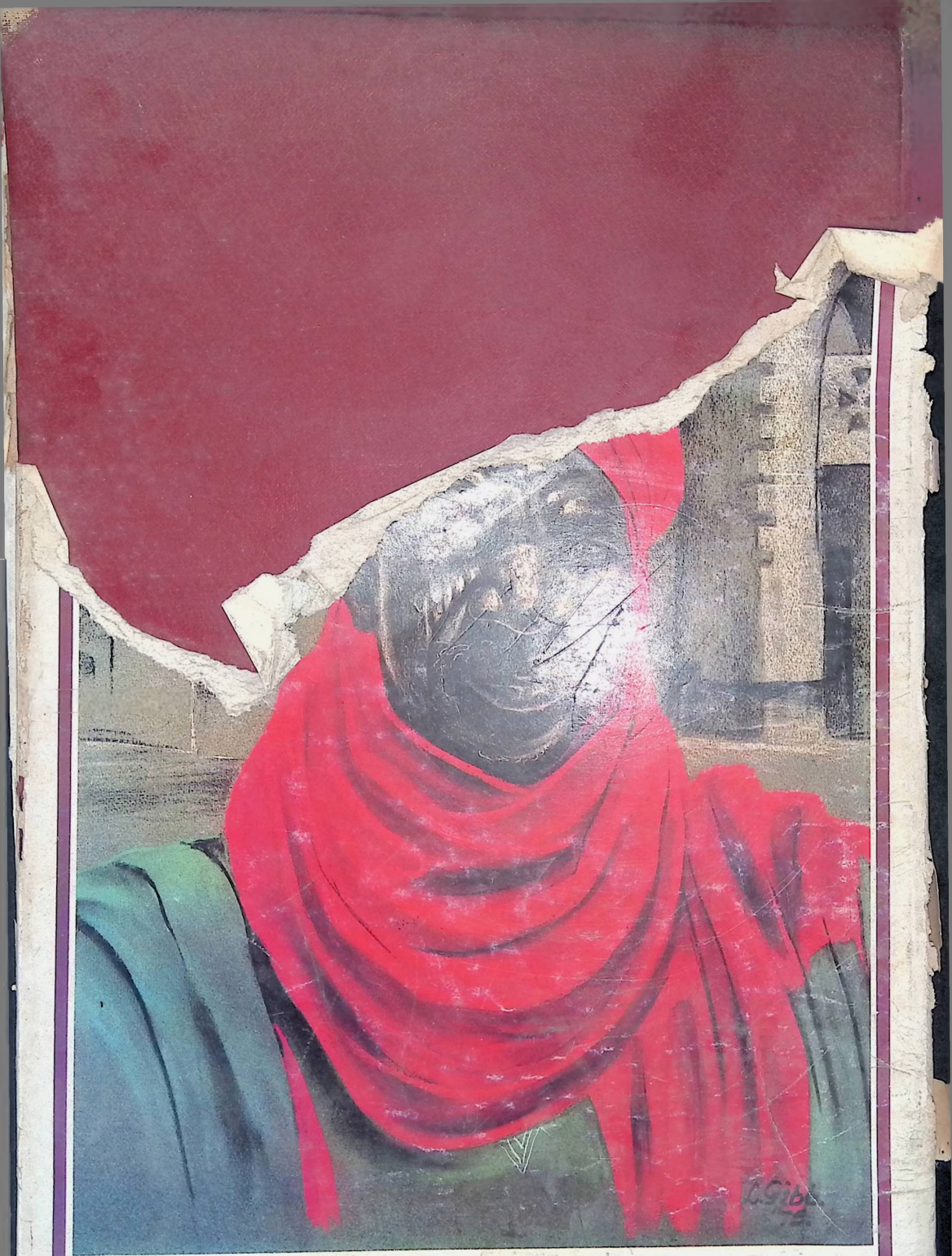
The Igala have numerous agricultural festivals designed to ensure abundant harvests. These festivals revolve around a profound reverence for the Igala ancestors. Because Igala acknowledge them as possessing the ability to exert influence over the elements, they approach their ancestors with prayers whenever there is famine, drought, or other calamities. The first and most important of these festivals is the *egu* festival, celebrated at the beginning of the yam harvest in July or August. In this festival, the *egu* or ancestral spirits are represented by a mask and costume. The costume is red and tight-fitting with many ornaments, and is surmounted by the carved headdress which serves as the mask. The mask and costume are put into the bush on the night before the ceremony to enable the ancestral spirits to enter them. Another ceremony is the *ocho* or hunting ceremony. This is celebrated when the grass is ready for burning and is accompanied by much feasting and dancing. Thirdly, there is the *ogaigainye* ceremony, which immediately follows the *ocho* ceremony. In this there is a weeklong festival after which the *Ata* publicly reminds the people of the royal prerequisites due to him. The *ogaigainye* is also a hunting festival.

Finally, there is the *enekpe* ceremony. This takes place the day after the *ogaigainye*. Enekpe was, according to tradition, the young and beautiful daughter of Ayagba who, when faced with imminent defeat at the hands of the Jukun people, was advised by a mallam to sacrifice her. He could not bring himself to do this, but when Enekpe heard of the mallam's words she insisted on offering her life to save the land. Enekpe thus became a guardian goddess, who watches over the destinies of the Igala.

It was in 1841 that the *Ata'Igala* presented Queen Victoria with land (at a cost of 700,000 cowries, say £40) at Lokoja for the founding of a school and a model farm settlement. Since then, the Igala have taken a prominent place in Nigeria's progress. In recent years the Igala youth have discovered a new outlet for their enthusiasm and talents, and have joined the army in sizeable numbers.

Like all the peoples of the Northern States, the Igala remain intensely proud of their long history and distinct cultural tradition.


Sokota
Katsina
Kazaure
Nguru
Argungu
Kaura
Namonda
Gumel
Birnin Kebbi
Dambarta
Hadejia
Jega
Gusau
Kano
Malum Fashi
Wudil
KANO
Azare
Potiskum
Maiduguri
NORTH-
WESTERN
Funtua
Zaria
Northern Nigeria
NORTH-
EASTERN
Kaduna
Kontagora
Bauchi
Gombe
Kumo
Mubi
NORTH-
CENTRAL
Jos
Minna
Kafanchan
Bukuru
Numan
Jebba
Abuja
Yola
Niger
Bida
Lafiagi
Keffi
Ilorin
Lafia
KWARA
BENUE-PLATEAU
Offa
Benue
Wukari
Lokoja
Okene
Makurdi
Gboko
Idah
Oturkpo



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