

The Fulani Empire of Sokoto

H. A. S. Johnston



The Fulani Empire of Sokoto was the last of the five great empires that rose and fell in the Sudan between the eighth and twentieth centuries. It was founded by three men of the same family, probably the most remarkable triumvirate that Africa has yet produced, and it developed a society which, in its heyday, was perhaps better governed and more highly civilized than any other that Africans had until then evolved.

The author, who for over twenty years was an Administrative Officer in Northern Nigeria, the core of the Sokoto Empire, is an accomplished Hausa scholar who has already published a volume of translations. He has therefore been able to supplement the established English and Arabic authorities by introducing new information gathered from Fulani and Hausa sources, much of which he collected himself in the course of his service. More important still, every chapter of his history is illuminated by an intimate knowledge of the country and a genuine sympathy with its people.

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THE FULANI EMPIRE OF SOKOTO



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THE FULANI EMPIRE OF SOKOTO

H. A. S. JOHNSTON

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PROPER NAMES

OVER the greater portion of the area once covered by the Fulani Empire of Sokoto, Hausa is the mother tongue and there is no part where it is neither spoken nor understood. Consequently, the general rule in this book has been to use proper names in their usual Hausa form, even when this is a corruption of the language from which the names were originally derived.

To this general rule there are of course exceptions. First, in spelling, the Italian *c* now used in Hausa has been replaced by *ch*. Second, where a name has acquired an anglicized form, this has been adopted in preference to the more correct but less familiar original. Hence Sokoto (which incidentally is pronounced to rhyme with cockatoo) rather than Sakkwato and Timbuctoo rather than Timbuktu or Tambutu.

With Moslem names, where the bearers were Africans, the general rule has been followed and the names have been given in their local form. Hence Muhammadu (or sometimes Mamman, Mamudu, or Muhamman) rather than Muhammad. But where the bearers were Arabs or Arab-speaking North Africans, the names have been preserved in their correct form but spelt in the normal English fashion, for example, Abd el-Kadir.

The first Emir of Gwandu, who plays an important part in this history, poses a special problem because he was a Fulani who wrote in Arabic. As an historical figure, therefore, he appears as Abdullahi and as an author as Abdullah.

With place names, though there is a growing measure of standardization, a number of variations still have currency. Some of them, such as Garin Gabas and Kalemmina, are incorrect and should be discarded. With others, however, where the best spelling is still an open question, a choice can legitimately be exercised. Hence Hadeija rather than Hadejia and, among proper names, Fodiyo and Jaidu rather than Fodio and Jedo.

Finally, certain usages adopted in this book must be briefly explained. The Fulani rulers, to mark their greater devotion to Islam, have been styled 'Emirs' whereas their Hausa predecessors, though nominally Moslem from the fifteenth or sixteenth century onward, have simply been termed 'Chiefs'. By the same token the Hausa States, after the *jihad*, reappear as Fulani Emirates. This procedure

Proper Names

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is perhaps a little arbitrary, but it makes for clarity. To the same end the title of 'Sultan', which, being superior to that of 'Emir' should in theory have been used to describe the rulers of Gwandu and Bornu as well as those of Sokoto, has been reserved for Sokoto while Gwandu has had to be content with 'Emir' and Bornu with 'Mai'. Similarly, the courtesy title of 'Shehu', though it subsequently became the official style of the rulers of Bornu, has been reserved for Usuman dan Fodiyo while El-Kanemi and his successors have been accorded the title in its uncorrupted form of 'Sheikh'.

Other names and titles which carry special connotations have been defined in the Glossary.

NOTES ON RARE AND UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

THE two volumes of *Labarun Hausawa da Makwabtansu*, which are frequently mentioned in the footnotes to this book, were published in 1932 and 1933 by the Zaria Translation Bureau which was later to develop into the Gaskiya Corporation. It is obvious that they were based on Arabic or Hausa MSS. as well as on oral traditions and in some chapters the original sources are revealed. In others, however, the editors remained silent on the subject. It must be admitted that this omission detracts somewhat from the value of what are otherwise excellent books of reference.

The Provincial Gazetteers, which have also been extensively drawn upon, were compiled just after the First World War and brought out as booklets. They have never been reprinted and are now difficult to obtain. Their historical sections are uneven in quality and by no means free from error but they are always worth consulting and the best of them contain some very valuable material.

The historical notes in the Sokoto, Gwandu, and Kano *District Notebooks* were compiled by the author himself during the 'fifties in the course of his ordinary administrative touring. Though there were certain drawbacks to this procedure, notably the pressure of other work, it had the great advantage of permitting inquiries to be made on the spot from old gentlemen, repositories of local history, who might otherwise never have been consulted. In both Sokoto and Gwandu it was possible to base these inquiries on the earlier work of P. G. Harris, which was embodied in his revised but unpublished version of the Provincial Gazetteer. Moreover, in Sokoto the task was usually shared with Alhaji Junaidu whose knowledge of local history and genealogy greatly eased and simplified it. The *District Notebooks*, for those who wish to consult them, are now in the possession of the respective Provincial Administrations and Native Authorities. Similarly, the unpublished MSS. of Mallam Mustafa and Alhaji Mahmud which are quoted in Chapter Eleven can be consulted through Bauchi Native Authority.

Finally, there is the major contribution made by Alhaji Junaidu which I have acknowledged elsewhere. He is himself a considerable historian and, as Waziri of Sokoto, he has access to many MSS. which have never been published or even translated. He has been good enough

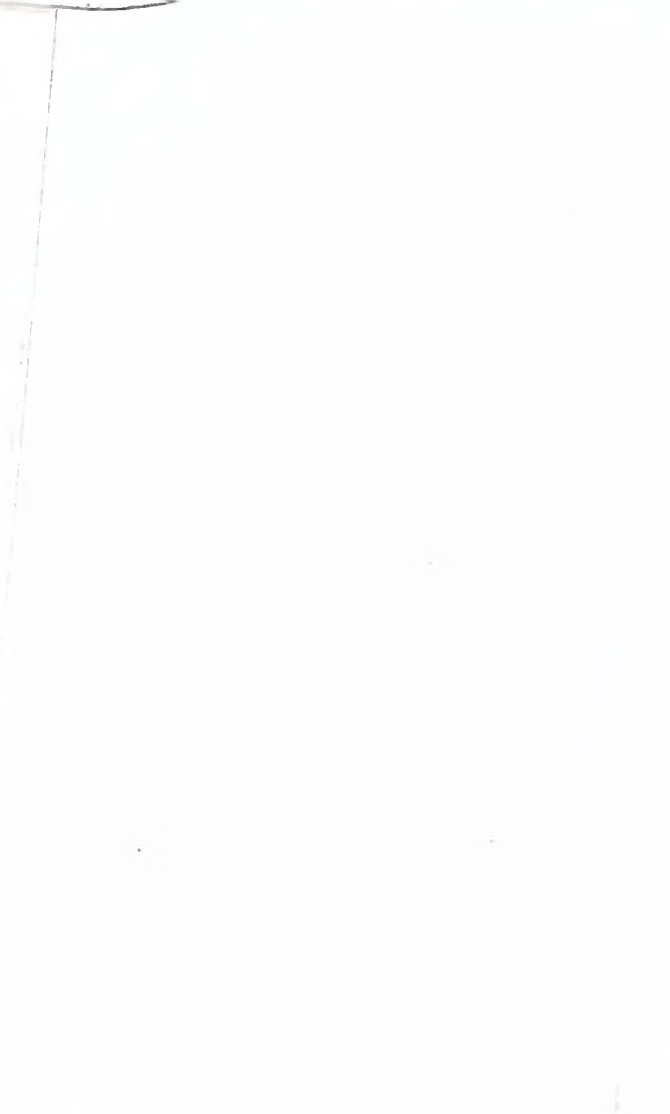
to go right through the draft and the author has since consulted him on many doubtful points. Where he has endorsed a judgement or a piece of information, therefore, it has been thought worth while to record the fact specifically in the footnotes.

ABBREVIATIONS

AITR	'An Islamic Tradition of Reform in the Western Sudan from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century' by M. Hiskett
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
Ch A	<i>A Chronicle of Abuja</i> by Mallam Hassan and Mallam Shu'aibu
DNBs	District Notebooks
IN	<i>Ida al-Nusukh</i> by Abdullah(i) b. Muhammad, first Emir of Gwandu
Inf M	<i>Infaku'l Maisuri</i> by Muhammadu Bello, first Sultan of Sokoto
JAH	<i>Journal of African History</i>
JAS	<i>Journal of the African Society</i>
K Ch	<i>The Kano Chronicle</i>
KF	<i>Kitab al-Farq</i> by Shehu Usman dan Fodiyo
LHdM	<i>Labarun Hausawa da Makwabtansu</i>
NUM	'Nasa'ih al-Ummat al-Muhammadiya' by Shehu Usman dan Fodiyo
SK	<i>Sard al-Kalam</i> by Sultan Muhammadu Bello
TI	<i>Tanbikhu'l Ikhwan</i> by Shehu Usman dan Fodiyo
TW	<i>Tazyin al-Waraqat</i> by the Emir of Gwandu Abdullah(i)
WAS	<i>Wathiqat Ahl al-Sudan</i> by Shehu Usman dan Fodiyo

Where quotations have been taken from translated works, the translator's English has normally been set down without alteration and a straightforward reference given, for example Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 57). On a number of occasions, however, the author has preferred to render the passage in his own English and these cases have been distinguished by the insertion of cf. in the reference, for example, Bello, *Inf M* (cf. Arnett, p. 57).

One other point calls for a word of explanation. Clapperton's accounts of his two journeys both have very long titles. The first, which he wrote in conjunction with Oudney and Denham, has therefore been abbreviated to *Travels* and the second to *Journal*.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I WISH, first of all, to acknowledge my debt to Alhaji Junaidu, the Waziri of Sokoto. Fifteen years ago, when I was the Resident of Sokoto Province, he used to accompany me on tour and so I have had the good fortune to visit with him almost every corner of the Sultanate which once constituted the core of the Fulani Empire. It was then that I first began to collect historical information and in this task he gave me invaluable help. Anyone who has ever sat down in Africa and tried to compile a coherent and accurate narrative out of the disjointed and discursive reminiscences of the old gentlemen who act as the repositories of local lore and legend will know that the well, at the bottom of which the truth is said to lie, can be many fathoms deep. Time and again in our sessions Alhaji Junaidu, with a timely word, was able to banish error, resolve contradictions, or fill gaps from his own compendious historical and genealogical knowledge. More recently he has been good enough to go through the whole book in manuscript in order to correct mistakes and clear up points that were still in doubt.

Next I wish to record my appreciation of the generous help that I have received from Mr. Mervyn Hiskett, who was once my colleague in Northern Nigeria and who is now on the academic staff of the School of Oriental and African Studies. He is the leading British authority on the Arabic manuscripts of the Fulani and the footnotes in this book will testify how frequently I have drawn upon his wide learning. He too has been good enough to read the manuscript of most of the first half of the book and his many constructive suggestions have helped me to remove blemishes and improve the general balance and perspective.

Among others who have assisted me, directly or indirectly, I wish to mention particularly the Emir of Yauri, the oral historians of the Kebbi ruling family, the Waziri of Kano, Mallam Nagwamatse, Mallam Muhammadu Bida, Mr. S. J. Moore, and Mr. Philip Mason.

Turning now from the text to the illustrations, I am obliged to Dr. J. C. Chartres for permission to reproduce here photograph No. 11, dating from 1903, which was taken by his father, the late Lt.-Col. E. A. Chartres, F.R.C.S.I. For the rest of the photographs, apart

from Nos. 1 (*a*), 3 (*a*), and 3 (*b*) which I took myself, I am indebted to the Northern Nigerian Ministry of Information.

To all those whom I have mentioned, as well as to others whom I have no space to name, I am most sincerely grateful.

H. A. S. J.

CHAPTER ONE

Hausaland and the Hausas

THE seat of the Empire which the Fulani created in the nineteenth century was Hausaland. To understand their achievement it is therefore first necessary to survey the geography of that country and to review briefly the origins and history of its inhabitants.

Hausaland forms part of the belt of savannah which stretches right across Africa from the Atlantic to the Red Sea. This belt is sandwiched between the desert in the north and the equatorial forests in the south. By the Arabs it was called the *Beled es-Sudan*, the land of the blacks, and the Sudan is the generic name by which it is still known. Within it, Hausaland occupies the greater part of the sector between Lake Chad in the east and the Middle Niger in the west.

Hausaland is thus part of a plain that stretches away for fifteen hundred miles to the west and two thousand to the east. It contains no mountains and possesses no natural frontiers. Essentially it is a gently undulating landscape with fertile valleys, populous and cultivated, lying between watersheds and plateaux that are often barren or waterless and therefore empty and clothed in bush. With minor variations this theme repeats itself over hundreds of miles and only occasionally does a chain of reddish hills, a wide shallow river, or a town of flat-roofed houses appear to give variety to the scene.

Climatically the year falls into two distinct parts. The rainy season starts in May or June and lasts until September or October. For the rest of the year, apart from a little irrigated farming, there is not much to be done on the land. The long dry season from November to May has therefore always been a time of opportunity when the people have been free to turn their hands to other pursuits—to their crafts, to trade, to learning, and of course to war.

The geographical position of Hausaland has also proved to be historically significant. There, at the base of the Sahara, it became the meeting place of two distinct ethnic and linguistic strains, the

indigenous Sudanic strain and the Hamitic strain¹ from North Africa which, from time to time, flowed across the desert and mingled with it.

To understand the origins of the Hausa people it is first necessary to review the history of North Africa. In the latter part of the Roman era the Mediterranean littoral was populous and civilized. Its peace and prosperity depended upon two conditions, the authority of Rome and the fact that its long southern frontier was protected by the desert. Early in the first millennium, however, this security was undermined by the introduction of the camel into the Sahara and the appearance soon afterwards of predatory, camel-riding nomads. For a time thereafter the legions were still strong enough to keep the nomads at bay, but as the power of Rome waned, unity and order began to give way to fragmentation and chaos. In the sixth century, it is true, the country was reconquered for the Eastern Emperors, but revolts soon followed and in any case the authority of Byzantium never matched the departed strength of Rome. By the seventh century, therefore, the half-Roman cities of the littoral and the petty Berber principalities of the interior were enjoying a precarious freedom that made them vulnerable to reconquest.²

It was not long before new conquerors appeared. In the middle of the seventh century the Arabs, fired by the new faith of Islam, began their westward march from Egypt and, in the space of a generation, overran the whole of North Africa. The indigenous people were unable to withstand the onslaught and had to submit. But at this period the Arabs were not sufficiently numerous to do more than impose themselves as a ruling aristocracy. They settled in the towns, but made no attempt to colonize the countryside where the Berbers remained preponderant.³

For the next four centuries the two peoples ran uneasily in this double harness. The Arabs recruited Berbers into their service and with their help conquered Spain and threatened France. They also put pressure on them to adopt the Moslem religion and the Arabic tongue. By degrees they succeeded in these objectives, but their subjects resented being treated as inferiors and so the process of assimilation was extremely slow. According to Ibn Khaldun, the

¹ These traditional classifications are no longer generally accepted, but they are familiar and well understood and they will serve for the present purpose.

² E. W. Bovill, *The Golden Trade of the Moors*, London, 1963, pp. 41-49.

³ Ibn Khaldun. See J. S. Trimingham, *A History of Islam in West Africa*, Oxford, 1962, p. 18.

Berbers fell into apostasy no fewer than twelve times⁴ and certainly they were constantly in revolt against Arab domination.⁵

Even though the Berbers were not at this stage deprived of their land, it is probable that their inferior status, the penalties suffered by those of them who did not adopt Islam, and the constant turmoil of wars and rebellions induced some of them to emigrate to the south and west. Such a movement was perfectly feasible, for by this time the principal caravan routes of the Sahara had already been established and were largely under the control of the Tuaregs who were themselves a Berber tribe.⁶

In the middle of the eleventh century, four centuries after the Arabs had first appeared in North Africa, there came the second Arab invasion. This time it was not just an army but two whole Bedouin tribes that were involved. The impact was therefore completely different because the invaders were in search of land, particularly land for pasture, and not just conquest or domination. The first of the two tribes settled for a time in Libya, but the second, the Beni Hilal, overran what is now Tunisia and thence spread westward until in due course they reached the Atlantic.⁷

The Bedouin of the Hilalian invasion had little in common with the Arabs of the original conquest. They did not settle in the cities but took possession of the countryside in a way that their predecessors had never done. Moreover, being pastoral nomads, they had no interest in settled agriculture and so they either destroyed the irrigation systems that had been preserved from Roman times or else allowed them to fall into disuse.⁸ The Berbers, for their part, did not submit tamely to being driven from their homes and their land, and the struggle between the two peoples caused further devastation. Indeed, according to Ibn Khaldun, it gradually reduced the countryside to utter ruin with the debris of monuments and buildings bearing witness to the places where towns and villages had once stood.⁹

The upheavals that accompanied this invasion caused major changes in the distribution of population in the Maghreb. Those Berbers who were not killed or enslaved were forced to withdraw from the fertile plains and either to fall back on the mountains, where the majority of their descendants are still to be found, or else to retreat southwards towards the desert.¹⁰ This point is proved beyond doubt by the fact that their language, which yielded everywhere else to Arabic,

⁴ Trimingham, *op. cit.* p. 18.

⁵ Bovill, *op. cit.* pp. 57-58.

⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 50-54.

⁷ Trimingham, *op. cit.* p. 19.

⁸ Bovill, *op. cit.* p. 58.

⁹ Trimingham, *op. cit.* p. 19.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

has survived in corners of the Atlas Mountains and in oases like Tuat and Ghadames.¹¹ Those who fell back on the mountains were hemmed in by the Arabs and had to defend and maintain themselves as best they could until at length they were more or less assimilated. But, for those who had retreated to the confines of the desert, the Saharan caravan routes provided an outlet. As the pressure of the Arabs on them, and of their population on the land, grew greater, so more and more of them must have been tempted to take this means of escape.

About Hausaland, on the other side of the Sahara, we do not know very much. The tribes inhabiting it at this period probably belonged to the Sudanic or Chadic groups and recent discoveries suggest that they were not nearly as primitive as was at one time believed. They had been smelting and working iron, for instance, for at least five hundred years and perhaps more.¹² By the eleventh century they seem to have been living in settled communities and the fact that some of these were governed by queens¹³ and probably observed matriarchy, a custom more common among Berbers than Sudanic Negroes, suggests that they had already been influenced by previous waves of Berber immigration.

There is no doubt that at some period a considerable number of Berbers crossed the Sahara, settled among these people, and intermarried with them. We do not know exactly how and when this movement took place; nevertheless, though the evidence is scanty, there are certain inferences to be drawn from it. First, for physical reasons, the migrations could hardly have occurred before the camel had appeared in sufficient numbers to open up the caravan routes of the desert. Secondly, if they had taken place later than the fifteenth century the migrants would have been Moslems,¹⁴ which they seem not to have been, and the events would surely have been recorded in the historical documents that were then beginning to be compiled in the Sudan instead of only surviving as a myth in the folk memory. Thirdly, the migrants seem to have consisted not of tribes or clans, which preserved their racial characteristics and were strong enough to fight for the land or pasture that they needed, but of small groups,

¹¹ R. Mauny, *Tableau Géographique de L'Ouest Africain au Moyen Age*, Dakar, 1961, p. 462.

¹² Mauny, *op. cit.* p. 316.

¹³ S. J. Hogben and A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, *The Emirates of Northern Nigeria*, London, 1966, p. 147.

¹⁴ Mauny asserts that by this time the assimilation of the Berbers to the Arab way of life, and therefore to Islam, was complete (*op. cit.* pp. 461-2).

mainly of men, who were glad to marry local women and settle down peaceably. This suggests that they were refugees who had lost not only their homes but very often their families as well.

This evidence indicates that the migrations cannot have occurred much earlier than A.D. 500 nor later than A.D. 1500 and increases the probability of their having been caused, or at any rate greatly stimulated, by the upheavals that accompanied the two Arab invasions of North Africa and by the long period of unrest and sporadic warfare that came between them. If this theory is correct it means that most of the movement took place between A.D. 650 and 1100. It is conceivable that it was spread more or less evenly over the whole of this period, but if that had in fact been the case its impact at any one time would have been negligible and it would have been most unlikely to have given rise to any historical legend. From the fact that there is such a legend, and a very strong one at that, it can be argued that there must have been a point of time when the momentum of the migrations reached a peak and that the impression it made was great enough to produce the legend. From a North African standpoint we should expect that point of time to coincide with the Hilalian invasion of the eleventh century which did more than any other single event to disrupt the life and economy of the Maghreb. This date, as we shall see, dovetails neatly into the probable date of the Hausa legend. Indirect though all this evidence is, there seems to be a strong probability that the crucial period of ethnic alchemy which was to produce the Hausa people and the Hausa language came between A.D. 1050 and 1100.

The legend that the Hausas cherish about their origins could well be a simplified myth based on such a chain of events. It tells how Abuyazidu,¹⁵ a prince of Baghdad, made his way to Daura, slew the monstrous snake that lived in the well and terrorized the townspeople, and was rewarded by being made the consort of the Queen. Their children and grandchildren subsequently became the founders of the seven Hausa states. It seems probable that this legend crystallized the folk memory of the union between the Berber migrants and the indigenous peoples of Hausaland who were perhaps already partly Berber in blood and custom. It also suggests that the newcomers brought a higher civilization with them and that the union came about peacefully through intermarriage and assimilation.

How long the process of fusion took we do not exactly know, but

¹⁵ The name has several variations and is sometimes given as Bayajida.

if, as seems likely, there was early intermarriage and no fighting, it is reasonable to suppose that it was completed more quickly than the contemporary fusion of Norman and Saxon in England. One of the first products of the union was probably the Hausa language—which certainly goes back to this period and which is now classified as belonging to the Chado-Hamitic¹⁶ or Chadic¹⁷ group. Though basically simple, it is nevertheless a flexible medium, with a surprisingly rich vocabulary, and with Swahili it is now one of the two most important languages of black Africa.

While the language was evolving, the Hausa city-states began to emerge as separate powers. The original seven, which are known as *Hausa Bakwai*, were Daura, Kano, Rano, Katsina, Zazzau, Gobir, and Garun Gabas.¹⁸ Together they cover an area which is about two hundred miles square and, though Hausaland has subsequently widened its frontiers, this region still forms its core.

At a later stage the Hausas extended their influence over neighbouring peoples who in some cases adopted their speech and in others merely spoke Hausa as a second language and followed a similar way of life. This group, known as the *Banza Bakwai*, which can be loosely translated as the Bogus Seven, is a heterogeneous one and comprises some peoples who are now indistinguishable from the original Hausas and others who have little in common with them. In this secondary group the States of Zamfara and Kebbi and to a lesser extent Yauri, became most closely identified with and assimilated to the Hausas.

For our knowledge of early history in Hausaland we rely partly on the lists of Chiefs that have been preserved in most of the States, partly on oral myths and traditions which have been handed down from one generation to another, and partly on the chronicles in which those myths and traditions have, at some indeterminate time in the past, been recorded.

In the seven authentic Hausa States, with the notable exception of Gobir, the lists of Chiefs begin with the appropriate son or grandson of Abuyazidu and are thereby linked to the Daura Legend. They sometimes give the number of years that each Chief reigned and thus make it possible to calculate the dates when the dynasties were

¹⁶ D. Westermann and M. A. Bryan. *The Languages of West Africa*, London, 1952, pp. 170-4.

¹⁷ J. H. Greenberg, *Languages of Africa*, The Hague, 1963, p. 46.

¹⁸ The name of the seventh state is sometimes given as Biram, but this is in fact the name of the first legendary ruler and Garun Gabas, which is what the village is still called, is preferable as the place-name.

founded. Comparisons between these lists naturally reveal serious discrepancies, particularly in the period before the year 1500. The Kano chronology, for example, gives A.D. 999 as the year when Bagauda, the grandson of Abuyazidu, became Chief,¹⁹ whereas in Katsina the date assigned to his brother Kumayo falls a hundred years later.²⁰ This is not altogether surprising, however, and what is perhaps more significant is that there is a measure of conformity to a common pattern. In Kano the number of Chiefs in the Hausa era is given as 43,²¹ in Katsina as 38,²² in Zazzau as 60,²³ in Daura as 48,²⁴ and in Rano as 40.²⁵ Among the *Banza Bakwai*, Zamfara is said to have had 42 Hausa Chiefs²⁶ and Yauri, which was probably a younger foundation, 29.²⁷

Of the early written records, much the fullest and most important is *The Kano Chronicle*.²⁸ It is written in Arabic and purports to give the history of Kano from the tenth century right down to the early twentieth century. Although several copies of it have come to light, the archetype has never been traced and is probably no longer in existence.²⁹ For this reason it is difficult to estimate when the Chronicle was first compiled, but internal evidence suggests that the date probably falls in the eighteenth century.³⁰ From then on the Chronicle was no doubt a more or less contemporary record which was probably brought up to date each time a Chief died, if not more often. So far as the preceding period is concerned, however, though

¹⁹ *The Kano Chronicle* (henceforward *K Ch* in footnotes). For an English translation see H. R. Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, Lagos, 1928, vol. III, pp. 92-132.

²⁰ F. de F. Daniel, *A History of Katsina* (bound cyclostyled copies published in Nigeria), p. 28.

²¹ *K Ch* (Palmer, pp. 99-127).

²² Daniel, *op. cit.* pp. 28-36.

²³ Mallam Hassan and Mallam Shu'aibu, *A Chronicle of Abuja*, translated and edited by Frank Heath, Ibadan, 1952, pp. 36-37. The Chronicle (henceforward *Ch A*) was written in about 1945 to record the oral legends and traditions that had been preserved in Abuja.

²⁴ Palmer, *op. cit.* vol. III, pp. 142-3.

²⁵ Kano District Notebooks (henceforward *DNBs*), History of Rano.

²⁶ Sokoto *DNB*, History of Anka. Another list published by Hogben and Kirk-Greene (*op. cit.* p. 415) gives 44 Chiefs in the Hausa era.

²⁷ *Gazetteer of Kontagora Province*, 1920, p. 20.

²⁸ In addition to Palmer's English translation there is a Hausa translation in vol. II of *Labarun Hausawa da Makwabtansu (LHdM)*, published by the C.M.S. Bookshop, Lagos, 1933, pp. 22-74.

²⁹ Apart from the risks of destruction by fire or white ants, which are ever present in Hausaland, the climate renders paper so brittle that after fifty years it begins to disintegrate.

³⁰ See Note 1 in Appendix I.

the *Chronicle* may well have embodied earlier written fragments, it must be regarded in the main simply as the first repository of Kano's oral traditions. Moreover, even if earlier fragments were in fact embodied, they are unlikely to have been written before the end of the fifteenth century when El-Maghili, a divine and jurist whom we shall soon meet again, visited Hausaland and founded the tradition of Arabic letters.³¹ It can therefore be asserted with some assurance that before the year 1475 *The Kano Chronicle* had to depend entirely on memorized traditions, that between 1475 and its compilation in the eighteenth century it probably relied partly on memorized traditions and partly on existing written fragments, and that only after the unknown date of its compilation did it become a contemporary written record. These considerations, while obliging us to approach the older history with great caution, do not mean that the early passages need be dismissed as worthless. On the contrary, there is independent evidence to show that the Hausas are capable of memorizing and transmitting historical facts with a very fair degree of accuracy over several hundred years.³²

Like many other ancient records, *The Kano Chronicle* is often lacking in continuity and historical perspective, so that on some occasions the narratives that it begins are left unfinished, while on others major events are passed over in silence but trivial episodes are set down in unnecessary detail. Nevertheless, for all its faults, it does give us a general picture of how the civilization of Hausaland developed. We see, for example, how Kano grew from a settlement to a town, from a town to a city, and from a city to a city-state. We are shown the steps by which neighbouring towns like Gaya and Karaye, which were perhaps equally ancient but happened to be less populous, were drawn into Kano's orbit. We watch the stages by which the countryside was populated, first by the voluntary movement of free men from the city to newly founded towns and villages and later by the plantation of slaves and dependents in rural settlements. We learn of

³¹ A. D. H. Bivar and M. Hiskett, 'The Arabic Literature of Nigeria to 1904', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. XXV, 1, 1962, p. 106. This judgement is in broad accord with that of the explorer Barth who, quoting the Imam Ahmed, asserted (*Travels*, vol. II, pp. 255-6) that the earliest written historical records in Bornu dated from the first half of the sixteenth century.

³² M. Hiskett, 'The Song of Bagauda', *BSOAS*, vols. XXVII, 3, and XXVIII, 1 and 2. The Song covers the same historical ground as *The Kano Chronicle*. It was not recorded until about 1920-5 but it is completely accurate both in names and dates back to 1807. Beyond that, although dates go astray, it continues to agree with *The Kano Chronicle* on names, with only one discrepancy, as far back as 1651.

an exodus of pagans in the fourteenth century and we detect in it the tensions that preceded the establishment of Islam. Finally, when Kano has already outstripped all its rivals, we see smaller city-states like Rano and Kudu being gradually swallowed and digested.

By reading between the lines we are also able to learn from the chronicles the nature of the society which developed in Hausaland. The States were ruled by Chiefs from the earliest times but these Chiefs, though they wielded the powers of life and death, were far from being unfettered autocrats. On the contrary, they stood at the apex of an elaborate bureaucracy of titled officials and of a separate hierarchy of territorial magnates whose position had much in common with that of the feudatories of medieval Europe in that they were bound, when called upon to do so, to render military service with a stipulated number of armed followers at their backs.³³ So long as a Chief retained control of this political and military machine he wielded great power. If once he lost the confidence of the courtiers and grandees, however, he could easily be deposed and many Chiefs in fact suffered this fate.³⁴

With each State disposing of its own feudal army, and with a campaigning season of seven months in every year, wars were, of course, frequent. The fighting was usually confined to the feudal armies and probably affected the life of the common people no more than did the wars of medieval Europe. The prizes for the victors were booty and prisoners who could either be ransomed or enslaved. Conversely, the penalties for the vanquished were the loss of their lives, liberties, and possessions. As a protection against the hazards of war, towns and villages took to fortifying themselves, the towns with massive walls built of sun-baked clay and the villages with wooden stockades.

Although there was no coinage, cowry shells were introduced in the early eighteenth century and thereafter served as currency.³⁵ Taxation was also levied from a very early date. In Kano, for example, a land-tax was imposed as far back as the thirteenth century and a cattle-tax from about the year 1640 onwards.³⁶

By the fourteenth century the pattern of the future had already begun to emerge. Then, as now, the States of Kano and Katsina formed the core of Hausaland, the one famous for its trade and the other for its learning. To the north, occupying the semi-desert country that is now called Air, was Gobir, noted for its warriors. To

³³ M. G. Smith, *Government in Zazzau*, London, 1960, pp. 34-72.

³⁴ *K Ch.* ³⁵ *K Ch* (Palmer, p. 123).

³⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 101 and 119.

the south was Zazzau, the main supplier of slaves. To the west was Zamfara, originally one of the *Banza Bakwai* but now well within the pale of Hausaland. These were the five leading States. In the second rank came Daura, Yauri, and Rano, the last already overshadowed by Kano and about to be absorbed. Of the original seven, only Garun Gabas had failed to grow at all and had remained an obscure village. The tally of the future was not quite complete, however, for in the west Kebbi was still only a province and had not yet been forged into a kingdom, while in the north-west the area which was later to become Gobir was also waiting for an aristocracy and a paramount chief.

The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were periods of special importance in the history of Hausaland because, thanks to the opening of new communications with the outside world, religion, learning, and commerce received a new impetus. The ruling classes of Bornu in the east and Mali in the west had been converted to Islam generations before and the fact that the Hausa States remained pagan for so much longer shows how far removed they still were from Arab influences. The first mention of Islam in *The Kano Chronicle* occurs in the region of Yaji (A.D. 1349-85) when Wangarawa or Mandingoes were said to have introduced the new faith from Mali and persuaded the Chief to adopt it.³⁷ It is doubtful, however, whether he was a very firm convert, for neither he nor his brother who succeeded him took Moslem names and later his son Kanajeji (A.D. 1390-1410) reverted to paganism.³⁸ It was, therefore, only with the accession of the fourteenth Chief, Umaru (A.D. 1410-21), that Islam can be said to have been firmly established.³⁹

Among the other States of Hausaland, Katsina was converted at about the same time as Kano and there the first Moslem Chief is identified as Muhammadu Korau who reigned from about 1380 to 1430.⁴⁰ Zazzau, however, seems to have remained pagan much longer, for no Moslem name appears in the list of Chiefs until the early sixteenth century when the eighteenth Chief, Abu, who in any case was probably installed by the invading Songhai army, succeeded to the throne.⁴¹ For Zamfara we have no date, but the first Chief to bear a Moslem name was the twenty-fourth, Aliyu,⁴² and it is therefore

³⁷ *K Ch*, pp. 104-5.

³⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 107-8.

³⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 108-9. 'The Song of Bagauda' also identifies Umaru as the first Moslem Chief. See Hiskett, *op. cit.* p. 369.

⁴⁰ Daniel, *op. cit.* p. 29.

⁴¹ *Ch A*, p. 36.

⁴² Sokoto *DNB*, History of Anka. In the slightly longer list quoted by Hogben and Kirk-Greene, Aliyu appears as the thirtieth Chief.

possible, indeed likely, that this was a forcible conversion dictated by Songhai. So too, probably, was the conversion of Gobir whose thirtieth Chief, Muhammadu, seems to have been the first to embrace Islam.⁴³ Yauri, on the other hand, which escaped the Songhai invasion, remained pagan until the accession of the eleventh Chief, Gimba, in 1578.⁴⁴

It is clear from the pages of *The Kano Chronicle* that for several generations a struggle went on between the new religion and the old pagan beliefs. The final consolidation of Islam, directly in Kano and Katsina and indirectly in the other States, was the work of the North African divine and jurist, El-Maghili, who came to Hausaland towards the end of the fifteenth century. His visit happened to coincide with the reign of Muhammadu Rumfa who was the greatest and most enlightened of all the Hausa Chiefs of Kano. El-Maghili evidently found him an apt pupil and wrote for him a treatise on the responsibilities of rulers.⁴⁵ The contrast between the brutality and callousness which characterize the early oral literature of the Hausas and the high-minded principles laid down by El-Maghili show how important a part Islam played in advancing the civilization of Hausaland.

It was no coincidence that a great expansion of trade occurred during the same period as the establishment of Islam. Both can be attributed to a series of improvements in communications which took place at this time and which had the effect of converting Hausaland from a backwater to a centre of commerce and industry. The first of these developments came in the fourteenth century, when a new caravan route linking Kano with Ghat, in the northern Sahara, was opened, with the result that trade with North Africa could flow direct instead of having to go round by Lake Chad or the Niger Bend.⁴⁶ The second development, which took place relatively soon afterwards, was that the *Darb el-Arba'in*, the old caravan route that had linked Egypt to the gold-bearing areas of Ashanti by way of the lower Nile, Chad, and Hausaland, was reopened after having been closed for the previous three centuries by the hostility of the Christian

⁴³ *Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, 1920, p. 12. In the much longer list given by Hogben and Kirk-Greene (op. cit. p. 416) Abdullah, the fifty-fourth Chief, has the first Moslem name.

⁴⁴ *Gazetteer of Kontagora Province*, p. 19.

⁴⁵ *The Obligations of Princes*, translated and edited by T. H. Baldwin, Beyrouth, 1932.

⁴⁶ Mauny. op. cit. pp. 429-37.

kingdom of Nubia.⁴⁷ The third was that with the decay of the northern route between Egypt and the Niger (initially because of the depredations of the Syrite Arabs and later perhaps because of the chaos which followed the collapse of the Songhai Empire) the southern route through Hausaland became the main artery between east and west.⁴⁸ These changes must have had the effect of transforming Kano from a place of purely local significance first into a major entrepôt of the trans-Saharan commerce and then into one of the principal meeting places for north-south and east-west trade. They thereby set the city on the road to becoming the greatest commercial and industrial centre of the Sudan and laid the foundations for the subsequent growth in the prosperity and importance of the whole of Hausaland.

As the Hausas are a virile people, it is surprising to find that they were almost always under the domination of some other power. The cause of this paradox seems to have been that, as the leading States were of roughly equal size and strength, none of them ever succeeded in establishing its predominance over the others. Another reason is perhaps to be found in the nature of the people who, though physically tough, are generally good-natured and easy-going. They can fight if they must but they are not ambitious for power and their interests lie much more in trade than war.

Of the five major empires of the Sudan, Ghana and Mali lay too far to the west for their authority ever to have reached Hausaland. At one time or another, however, the other three—Songhai, Kanem-Bornu, and Sokoto—all fought for and enjoyed the suzerainty of the Hausa States. The first of the three to impose its authority was Kanem-Bornu and the date was almost certainly the first half of the fifteenth century.⁴⁹ As the Hausa States were becoming populous and wealthy, however, they made a rich prize which Bornu was not for long allowed to enjoy in peace.

The first challenge came from Songhai in the early sixteenth century. In the western Sudan, as the authority of Mali had declined, so the power of Songhai had grown until at length the new empire had completely swallowed up the old. With its capital at Gao, on the middle Niger, Songhai's centre of gravity lay much farther to the

⁴⁷ Mauny, *op. cit.* Mauny puts this event in the fourteenth century, but *The Kano Chronicle* (Palmer, p. 109) states that it was only in the reign of Abdullahi Burja (1438-52) that the Bornu-Ashanti section of the route was opened.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ See Note 2 in Appendix I.

east than that of Mali. It was not surprising, therefore, that sooner or later the eyes of its rulers should have turned towards the Hausa States on their eastern borders.

In the year 1513 Askia Muhammad, having consolidated his possessions in the west, marched into Hausaland at the head of a powerful army. Thanks to the famous traveller, Leo Africanus, who visited Hausaland very soon afterwards, we have an independent account of this invasion and its sequel. According to him the Hausa States resisted, but failed to combine and were destroyed one by one. The Chiefs of Gobir, Katsina, and Zazzau were killed in the fighting. The Chief of Kano was captured when the city fell, but was restored to his throne on condition that he paid a third of his revenue to Songhai as tribute. The other States also became tributaries and before his departure Askia installed Residents in each of them who 'mightily oppressed and impoverished the people that were before rich'.⁵⁰ Bornu, the nominal suzerain, seems to have done nothing to defend its vassals, but this is not altogether surprising because, as we shall see later it was preoccupied at the time with troubles of its own.

In his description of Hausaland Leo mentioned the abundance of corn, rice, and cotton, the large herds of cattle, the wide range of crafts, the wealth of the merchants the thriving commerce with other nations, and the civility of the people.⁵¹ If he is to be believed, it is clear that the Hausas of the early sixteenth century had already achieved a high measure of civilization.

Apart from the shadowy Amina, a daughter of the Chief of Zazzau to whom all kinds of legendary achievements are attributed,⁵² the only Hausa in history to display imperial ambitions was Muhammadu Kanta who began his career as one of Askia's lieutenants. His paternal forbears are said to have come from the east and to have settled in Katsina a few generations earlier. His father held the title of Magaji and seems to have been a Village Head. His mother was a Katsina woman, some say the daughter of the Chief of the day. Kanta himself was a turbulent youth and when his father died he was passed over and his brother was appointed to the family title and office. Mortified by this slight, Kanta went out into the world to seek his fortune. He

⁵⁰ Leo Africanus, *The History and Description of Africa*, translated into English by John Pory, 1600, London, 1896, pp. 828-31. Leo was a Moor whose family had been expelled from Spain and who was himself captured by the Christians in the Mediterranean and carried off to Rome where he wrote his book. For an assessment of the credibility of his statements on the Songhai invasion of Hausaland see Note 3 in Appendix I.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² See Note 4 in Appendix I.

collected round him a following of kindred spirits and with them he seems to have founded a community of his own in the Lower Rima Valley, which at that time was a marcher province on the western fringe of Hausaland.⁵³ When Askia's army appeared he threw in his lot with the invaders. It is safe to assume that he took an active part in the subjugation of the Hausa States and that his prowess won him recognition. At any rate he seems to have been appointed governor of his adopted province.⁵⁴

Two years after conquering Hausaland, Askia led his army against the desert centre of Asben which he annexed after defeating and expelling its Tuareg inhabitants. Kanta was dissatisfied with the share of the booty assigned to him and therefore threw off his allegiance and proclaimed himself Chief of Kebbi.⁵⁵ It was an act of extraordinary daring as Songhai was now at the height of its power and controlled almost the whole Sudan between the Atlantic and Lake Chad. Askia's response to Kanta's revolt was to send an expedition against him, but Kanta met and defeated it.⁵⁶

During the next thirty years Kanta not only resisted all the attempts that first Songhai and then Bornu made to suppress him but went on to carve out for himself, at their expense, a not inconsiderable empire. At its height it stretched from the Sahara to the Niger,⁵⁷ but it was a personal creation and disintegrated very soon after his death. Nevertheless, Kebbi survived as one of the leading States of Hausaland and the tributary provinces of Arewa and Zaberma remained loyal.

As the power of Kebbi began to decline in the second half of the sixteenth century, so that of Kwararafa increased. The sudden rise and almost equally sudden fall of the riverain kingdoms of the Jukuns are among the strangest features of the history of the Sudan. For a hundred years, from about 1600 to 1700, they were supreme on the Middle and Lower Benue and dominated all their northern neighbours. During this period their armies captured the city of Kano, came very near to taking Katsina, and even threatened Bornu.⁵⁸ But by the beginning of the eighteenth century they were a spent force.

It was only after the decline of the Jukun power that Bornu was able to reassert its suzerainty over Hausaland. In 1734 the Mai, or Sultan, marched westward with a large army and apparently succeeded

⁵³ *LIHM*, vol. I, pp. 36-37.

⁵⁴ Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* p. 238.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 238-9.

⁵⁶ *LIHM*, vol. I, p. 37.

⁵⁷ For particulars of Kanta's Empire, see Note 5 in Appendix I.

⁵⁸ *K Ch* (Palmer, pp. 116-22) and Daniel, *op. cit.* pp. 10-11.

in overawing his former vassals without the necessity of fighting. Kano and Zazzau certainly agreed to resume the payment of tribute and we know that in Zazzau a Resident was left behind to collect and transmit it.⁵⁹ No doubt the same practice was adopted in the other States as well.

About two generations earlier, an event had taken place in the north which was to have important repercussions all over Hausaland. This was the expulsion of the Gobirawa from Air.⁶⁰ As has already been mentioned, the Hausas consider Gobir as being one of the original States and as having a common ancestry with themselves whereas the Gobirawa, or at any rate their ruling classes, repudiate both the Daura legend and the idea of a common ancestor. Almost certainly the explanation of this apparent paradox is that the origins of the ruling classes and the common people are altogether different.⁶¹ At this time the common people were probably ordinary Hausas who lived in a marcher province and who, like the Kebbawa before the rise of Kanta, happened to have no paramount chief of their own. The ruling classes, on the other hand, were probably migrants from the east who arrived in Hausaland much later than the Berbers. They themselves claim to have come from Arabia by way of Bilma and to have settled in Air,⁶² but Sultan Bello was told that they were descendants of the Copts and had come to Air from Egypt.⁶³ Be that as it may, in Air they were living in the territory of the Tuaregs and when at length they quarrelled with their hosts they were driven out. They thereupon moved south to the region which lies just north of the bend of the Rima River and there they were apparently accepted by the inhabitants as a ruling aristocracy. They were thus assimilated into Hausaland and their leader, whatever his previous status, became Chief of Gobir.

The Gobirawa soon proved themselves to be turbulent neighbours. For generations they had been accustomed to the lawlessness of the desert and even if they had wanted to take up a sedentary life, which was doubtful, the rainfall of their new home was hardly sufficient to support them. Internecine warfare was not new to the Hausas and indeed the pages of *The Kano Chronicle* are full of accounts of it.

⁵⁹ *Gazetteer of Kano Province*, 1921, p. 9, and *Ch. A*, p. 8. Both authorities agree on the date.

⁶⁰ For an estimate of the date see Note 6 in Appendix 1.

⁶¹ Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* p. 368.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Sultan Muhammadu Bello, *Infaku'l Maisuri* (*Inf. M*), translated by MUHAMMADU and edited by E. J. Arnett in *The Rise of the Sokoto Fulani*, Kano, 1922, p. 10.

But the Gobirawa seem to have brought a new aggressiveness to the fighting and in the period which elapsed between their migration and the middle of the eighteenth century they were successively engaged against Kebbi, Zaberma, Gurma, Air, Katsina, and finally Kano. Their armies ranged far afield from the borders of Bornu to the great bend of the Niger. In these battles they were generally victorious and no doubt captured many slaves and much booty. But the wars were in no way decisive and when they were over life went on much as before.⁶⁴

About the middle of the eighteenth century, however, Gobir, under its Chief, Babari, embarked on a war which was to take a very different turn. Zamfara, which straddled the fertile upper basins of the Rima, Sokoto, and Zamfara Rivers, was a rich prize which the Gobirawa had probably been eyeing for some time. At all events they went to war with Zamfara and this time they did not content themselves, as they had in the past, with slaves and booty. In about 1755 or 1760 they brought the struggle to a successful end by sacking the capital, Birnin Zamfara. After that they proceeded to occupy the whole of northern Zamfara and to build themselves a new capital at Alkalawa which was more or less in the centre of their greatly enlarged territory.⁶⁵

After its defeat, Zamfara ceased to be a coherent entity. In the unoccupied parts of the country, it is true, individual towns preserved some measure of independence, those in the east leaning on Katsina, which was now hostile to Gobir,⁶⁶ while those in the south relied for immunity on their remoteness. But the State as such had been shattered beyond repair.

In 1734 Gobir, in common with the other Hausa States, had allowed Bornu to reassert its suzerainty, but Bornu had subsequently made no attempt to curb Gobir's aggressiveness or to save Zamfara from extinction. This inactivity was interpreted as weakness and, later in the century, Gobir threw off its allegiance.⁶⁷ In this move it was certainly followed by Katsina⁶⁸ and probably by some of the other Hausa States as well.

As the end of the eighteenth century approached Gobir was again at war with Katsina. This time the cause of the hostility was Maroki, the fugitive Chief of Zamfara, who had shut himself up in the fortified town of Kiyawa near the Katsina border. While the Gobirawa besieged the place, Maroki called on the Chief of Katsina for help.

⁶⁴ *LHdM*, vol. I, pp. 6-14.

⁶⁵ *Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, pp. 10-11.

⁶⁶ Daniel, *op. cit.* p. 13.

⁶⁷ *LHdM*, vol. I, p. 14.

⁶⁸ Daniel, *op. cit.* p. 9.



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A Katsina army was sent to relieve him and at the battle of Dutsin Wake it inflicted a severe defeat on the Gobir forces.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the struggle for Kiyawa went on and it was not until 1801, when Gobir suffered another defeat and Chief Yakuba was killed, that the siege was finally abandoned.⁷⁰

These events—the failure of the Hausa States to cohere, their internecine rivalry and warfare, the decline of Bornu, the dismemberment of Zamfara, the general hostility aroused by Gobir's aggressions, and the reverses suffered by Gobir at the hands of Katsina and the Zamfara diehards—were all to play a significant part in preparing the way for the rise of the Fulani and the establishment of their empire.

CHAPTER TWO

The Fulani¹

BARTH, who was probably the most intelligent of all the African explorers, described the Fulani as the most intelligent of all the African tribes. They are certainly one of Africa's great enigmas. They have been living in the Sudan for well over a thousand years, but their physical characteristics are so different from those of other Sudanic peoples that there can be little doubt that they originated elsewhere.

Physically, except where miscegenation over several generations has blurred the image, they run remarkably true to type. It is possible, for example, to pick Fulani out of a group of other Africans with much greater certainty than, say, Scandinavians out of a group of Europeans. Typical Fulani approximate closely to their own physical ideals of light copper-coloured skin, straight hair, narrow nose, thin lips, and a slight but wiry frame.

These physical characteristics and their undoubted talents have given rise to all kinds of notions about their origins. The most romantic but least probable theories are that they are either one of the lost tribes of Israel or that they are descendants of a Roman Legion which missed its way and was engulfed in Black Africa. More

⁶⁹ Daniel, *op. cit.* pp. 13–14.

⁷⁰ *Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, pp. 11–12.

¹ The Fulani go under many names. For further information on nomenclature see Note 7 in Appendix I.

seriously it has been suggested that they may be descended from the Phoenicians or from the ancient Egyptians, whose custom of wearing chin-tufts they still follow. Other theories have sought to link them with the Berbers of North Africa, the Ethiopians, and even with Hindus and Malayo-Polynesians.²

In the task of tracing ethnic origins, the best clues are usually provided by language. To follow this line of deduction with the Fulani, however, is merely to come up against a new enigma. If Fulfulde, as their language is called, belonged to what are variously defined as the Hamitic or Afro-Asiatic Groups, it would be easy to believe that ethnically, like the Hausas, they were the products of intermarriage between North African and Negro stocks. As it is, however, modern authorities agree that there is virtually no connexion between Fulfulde and any of the languages in these groups, but that on the contrary it unquestionably belongs to the Sudanic or Niger-Congo Groups.³ It follows, therefore, that the Fulani either originated in the most westerly corner of the Sudan or else that, in the course of a long sojourn there, they abandoned an earlier language in favour of the one that they now speak. As they are prone to change their language,⁴ and as their physical characteristics are so markedly different from those of their linguistic neighbours, the second alternative is much the more likely.

The most widely accepted theory is that the Fulani came originally from the Middle East or North Africa and gradually worked their way round the bulge of the continent to the region of Senegambia. There they are believed to have made a lengthy sojourn and adopted the language which they now speak. Some of them are still there, but in historical times the majority have been drifting slowly eastward along the great corridor of the Sudan.

Like most African peoples, the Fulani cherish a myth or legend about their origins which has survived in a number of similar, though not identical, forms. One version describes the marriage of a Moslem Arab, who is usually identified as Ukuba, to a woman of the Sudan called Bajjo Mangu. One day the mother goes to the well and leaves her youngest child in the care of one of its brothers. On her return she overhears the brother comforting the child in a strange language. She tells her husband who predicts that this is a sign that the child

² D. J. Stenning, *Savannah Nomads*, London, 1959, pp. 18-19.

³ Westermann and Bryan, *op. cit.* pp. 18-19 and 24-30, and J. H. Greenberg, *op. cit.* pp. 7 and 43.

⁴ See Note 8 in Appendix I.

will be the founder of a new people who will not speak Arabic but will nevertheless be the saviours of Islam.⁵

In his history of the Fulani, Alhaji Junaidu, the Waziri of Sokoto, gives a different version of this story. He says that the Toronkawa, the branch of the Fulani people to which the Sultans of Sokoto belong, are of the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Esau. They spoke a language called Wakuru,⁶ and after leaving Palestine they traversed North Africa until they came to Futa Toro in Senegambia, the place from which they have taken their name. There they rested and multiplied. Later they were peacefully converted to Islam by Ukubatu, who married Bajjo Mangu, a daughter of their ruler. By her Ukubatu became the father of four sons: Deita, Woya, Roroba, and Nasi. These boys were the first to speak Fulfulde, which the Toronkawa also adopted, and they became the ancestors of all the Fulani tribes. Their descendants grew so numerous, however, that they had to move to Falgo and there they slipped back into paganism. This brought enmity between them and their Toronkawa cousins who had continued in the ways of Islam. In the fighting which followed many of the Fulani were dispersed, but those who remained in Senegambia, after being chastised and brought back to their faith, were finally reconciled with the Toronkawa with whom they thenceforward lived in amity.⁷

One of the interesting features of this legend is the identification of the Toronkawa with the descendants of Esau. They too, it will be remembered, were wandering pastoralists:

And Esau took his wives, and his sons, and his daughters, and all the persons of his house, and his cattle, and all his beasts, and all his substance, which he had got in the land of Canaan; and went into the country from the face of his brother Jacob. For their riches were more than that they might dwell together; and the land wherein they were strangers could not bear them because of their cattle.⁸

The Falgo of this tradition may well be Futa Jallon, where the Fulani are known to have established a State in about the tenth century. The assertion, however, that in the disputes between the backsliding Fulani and faithful Toronkawa it was the Toronkawa who

⁵ Stenning, *op. cit.* p. 19.

⁶ The explorer Barth identified this with the language of the Wangarawa or Mandingoes of the western Sudan. See *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa*, London, 1857, vol. IV, pp. 144-5.

⁷ Alhaji Junaidu, *Tarihin Fulani*, Zaria, 1957, p. 1.

⁸ Genesis xxxvi, 6-7.

prevailed is not borne out by other evidence, for both Futa Jallon and Futa Toro remained pagan States until the eighteenth century.⁹ What seems more probable is that it was the Moslems among both the Toronkawa and the Fulani who were defeated and forced to emigrate.

The Ukuba who appears in most versions of these Fulani and Toronkawa legends is Uqba b. Nafi, who led the Arab invasion of North Africa in the middle of the seventh century and founded the famous city of Kairwan.¹⁰ The retention of his name in the folk memory suggests that the Fulani were somehow caught up in the turmoil which this invasion caused. On the other hand, the ancestress who married Ukuba is usually described as coming from Palestine and this supports the view that the Fulani, though the Arab invasion may have caught them in North Africa and displaced them from there, actually had their origins somewhere in the Middle East.

So much for tradition and myth. Though we cannot be sure about where the Fulani originally came from, there is no doubt that a thousand years ago they were concentrated in the western Sudan not far from the Atlantic seaboard. In the tenth century, as already noted, they founded the pagan State of Futa Jallon.¹¹ Delafosse considers that the dispersal from Senegambia began in the eleventh century. We do not know what the cause was but it may well have been the religious wars between Moslems and pagans which seem to have broken out at this time. On the other hand, as the period coincides with the second Arab invasion of North Africa, it is possible that this upheaval brought a new influx of displaced tribes to Senegambia, as it did to Hausaland, and that the ensuing confusion and competition for land and grazing caused the Toronkawa and many of the Fulani to set off again on their travels.

Today the Fulani number well over six million and are to be found in all parts of the Sudan between the Atlantic and the Nile. By far the greatest concentration is in northern Nigeria, where over half of them are to be found. Other places where they abound are Senegambia and Futa Jallon, the Middle Niger, the Chad region, and the Cameroon uplands.¹² A few of the more adventurous have even passed beyond Chad to Baghirmi, Wadai, and the Republic of the Sudan.

⁹ Stenning, *op. cit.* p. 14.

¹⁰ Abdullah ibn Muhammad, *Tazyin al-Waraqat (TW)*, translated and edited by M. Hiskett, Ibadan, 1963, p. 97.

¹¹ Stenning, *op. cit.* p. 13.

¹² *Ibid.* p. 1 and map opposite p. 24.



1 (a) An old Hausa.



1 (b) A Hausa girl.



2 (a) A Fulani youth with staff, sword, and, in his mouth, a chewing stick.



2 (b) A Fulani girl in her finery.

They have been kept within these latitudes by the desert to the north and the presence of tsetse fly, which is fatal to their cattle, to the south. They have therefore had no choice but to settle somewhere or continue to make their way down the corridor of savannah and this is what they have been doing for the last nine hundred years. Stenning has termed their slow advance a migratory drift. To understand its true nature we must first distinguish between different types of Fulani.

In the past it has been usual to divide them into two groups, the settled Fulani and the nomadic pastoralists. It has been shown, however, that this is an over-simplification and that there are at least four different groups.¹³ First there are the true nomads whom the Fulani call *Bororo'en*. They shun settled communities as much as possible and like to lose themselves and their herds in large tracts of bush. Physically, as they have never intermarried with other peoples, they are all cast in the true Fulani mould. They are brave, tough, hardy, and independent. At the same time they are unsophisticated, shy, and suspicious of the world and its ways. Their whole life revolves round their herds and they have few thoughts for anything else, even religion. They are a survival from the past and today they have become a dwindling minority.

Next there are the semi-sedentary pastoralists who are known as *Fulbe na'i*. Their way of life has many variants, but its essential feature is that the family is no longer completely footloose but has acquired a base of some kind and engages in farming as well as raising stock. But, as most of the cattle of the Sudan have to be taken in search of water and grazing during the long dry seasons, it becomes necessary to split both herd and household for half the year. The head of the family with his wives and younger children normally stay at home with a small herd of milch cows while the young unmarried sons go off with the rest of the cattle as soon as the harvest has been gathered. In Northern Nigeria today the *Fulbe na'i*, though much more numerous than the *bororo'en*, are nevertheless only a minority among the total Fulani population.¹⁴

The third group are the *Toroobe* or the Fulani who belong to the ruling and professional classes. They may of course own a few cattle, but only as a side-line, and their real interests lie in administration, law, religion, and education.¹⁵

The fourth group are the *Fulbe siire*. These are erstwhile pastoralists who, having lost all their cattle through disease or poor husbandry,

¹³ C. E. Hopen, *The Pastoral Fulbe Family in Gwandu*, London, 1958, pp. 1-3.

¹⁴ Hopen, *op. cit.* pp. 1-3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

have been compelled to settle among the local peasantry and adopt their way of life.¹⁶

While the Fulani were drifting across North Africa towards the Atlantic seaboard it seems probable that they all led a nomadic existence similar to that of the *bororo'en* of today. Once they had reached Senegambia, however, they must have turned more and more to the other modes of life, some through choice and others through force of circumstance. Later, when they were uprooted from Senegambia, they had, of necessity, to take once more to a nomadic existence but, having once lived a sedentary or semi-sedentary life, they were probably more ready than before to try it again. Those who found places where their cattle thrived and they themselves felt at home, in the Middle Niger for example, no doubt settled there. If their cattle sickened, however, or if they themselves were persecuted or taxed too highly, then they would have no compunction in pulling up the roots which they had begun to put down and moving on. The characteristics of this migratory drift were that it was completely uncoordinated and almost imperceptibly gradual.

Not the least important of the four groups were the men of learning. The Fulani and their Toronkawa cousins are a highly intelligent people and they seem always to have had a reverence for knowledge and wisdom, especially the Moslems among them. It is noteworthy, for example, that in the religious wars between the Toronkawa and the Fulani, the Moslem Toronkawa were led not by Chiefs but by Mallams or men of learning.¹⁷ It was not until the eighteenth century that the Fulani created any Islamic States of their own, but long before then individual Fulani who were learned in religion and law were making their influence felt in many different parts of the Sudan.

Religion, law, and Arabic letters were the subjects in which the Fulani tended to specialize. Some, no doubt, possessed little learning outside these fields, but there were others who were surprisingly well informed on other topics. In 1852, for example, when the explorer Barth was in Baghirmi, he met a Fulani called Sambo, elderly and completely blind, whose family had been settled in Wadai for many generations. He himself had once held a prominent position at Court, but with a change of Sultan he had fallen from favour and been banished. Here is Barth's description of him.

I could scarcely have expected to find in this out-of-the-way place a man not only versed in all branches of Arabic literature, but who had even

¹⁶ Hopen, *op. cit.* pp. 1-3.

¹⁷ Alhaji Junaidu, *op. cit.* pp. 1-2.

read (nay, possessed a manuscript of) those portions of Aristotle and Plato which had been translated into, or rather Mohammedanised in Arabic, and who possessed the most intimate knowledge of the countries which he had visited. . . . When he was a young man, his father, who himself possessed a good deal of learning, and who had written a work on Hausa, had sent him to Egypt, where he had studied many years in the mosque of El Azhar. It had been his intention to go to the town of Zebid in Yemen, which is famous amongst the Arabs on account of the science of logarithms, or *el hesab*; but when he had reached Gunfuda, the war which was raging between the Turks and the Wahabiye had thwarted his projects, and he had returned to Dar Fur. . . . Having then returned to Waday, he had played a considerable part as courtier in that country, especially during the reign of 'Abd el 'Aziz, till the present king, Mohammad c' Sherif, on account of his intimate relations with the prince just mentioned, had driven him from his court and banished him from the country.

After having made the acquaintance of this man, I used to visit him daily; and he was always delighted to see, or rather to hear me for he had nobody with whom he could talk about the splendour and achievements of the Khalifat, from Baghdad to Andalos [Spain]—particularly of the latter country, with the history of whose towns, kings, and literary men he was intimately acquainted. He listened with delight when I once mentioned the astrolabe or sextant; and he informed me with pride that his father had been in possession of such an instrument, but that for the last twenty years he had not met a single person who knew what sort of thing an astrolabe was.

He was a very enlightened man and in his inmost soul a Wahabi. . . . I shall never forget the hours I passed in cheerful and instructive conversation with this man. . . .¹⁸

This evidence, even though it came two generations later, serves to show that the best of the men of learning among the Fulani were very far from being narrow-minded schoolmen.

It must be remembered that in Islam there is no established hierarchy like that of the Christian Church. Consequently the manifold duties, ecclesiastical and lay, which in medieval Europe were performed by the clergy, tended in Moslem countries to fall to men who established a reputation for piety and learning. They officiated at weddings, funerals, and naming ceremonies. They settled disputes by expounding the principles of Islamic law. They taught the young in Koranic schools and gave instruction to the old in Moslem dogma, ritual, history, and tradition. For these services they were rewarded by fees which, to the Moslem donor, had the quality of alms.

¹⁸ Barth, *op. cit.* vol. III, pp. 373-5.

These learned men usually belonged to one of the great sects or brotherhoods of Islam of which the two most important in the Sudan were the Kadiyya, founded in the twelfth century by Abd el-Kadir el-Jilani of Baghdad, and the Tijjaniyya, founded in the early nineteenth century by Ahmad Tijjani of Fez. The genuinely pious among them led lives of devotion and austerity, sometimes as anchorites, and strove to acquire the quality of sanctity and the supernatural powers which were thought to go with it. The more worldly, on the other hand, exploited the superstitions of the people and made their livings by fashioning charms and amulets, foretelling the future through patterns traced in the sand, or curing illnesses by means of concoctions made from the ink in which holy texts had been written. A few of the more unscrupulous even studied and practised the black arts. Pious or cynical, they were a force to be reckoned with.

In the eighteenth century the Fulani, who until then had remained divided between Islam and paganism, seem to have received a powerful new impulse towards Islam. Many of those who had not previously been converted now abandoned their pagan beliefs and those who were already Moslems became more strict and aggressive. Whatever the cause of this spiritual change, it was to have very important political results. Its first manifestation came in 1725 when Moslem Fulani began a long struggle against the pagan dynasty of Futa Jallon, the uplands where the Senegal and Gambia Rivers rise. It was not until 1776 that this movement succeeded and a Moslem régime was established, but in the same year, after a much shorter tussle, the Moslem Fulani of Futa Toro overthrew their pagan kinsmen and set up a second Islamic State in the same region.¹⁹ These developments in the western Sudan probably had an indirect bearing on the events that followed in the central Sudan a generation later, the establishment by the Moslem Fulani of Hausaland of the Empire which is the subject of this book. This in turn influenced the creation by the Fulani of the Upper Niger of two more Moslem States, Seku Ahmadu's kingdom of Hamdallahi and the short-lived empire of Haj Umar that superseded it.²⁰

It is not known for certain when the first Fulani reached Hausaland: it may have been as early as A.D. 1300²¹ and was certainly not later than the middle of the following century.²² The conditions obviously suited them and, as more and more of them arrived from the west, they halted and decided to go no farther. In this way, slowly

¹⁹ Trimmingham, *op. cit.* pp. 161-2.

²¹ Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* p. 429.

²⁰ See Note 16 in Appendix I.

²² *K Ch* (Palmer, p. 111).

and almost imperceptibly, their numbers must have grown until by the middle of the eighteenth century they had become an important minority. We have no knowledge of how large a proportion of the population they then formed, but as in modern times the ratio between them and the Hausas is about 1:3 or 1:4 it is reasonable to suppose that they were not less than a fifth or sixth of the whole.

The day-to-day relationship between the pastoral Fulani and the Hausa farmers at the end of the eighteenth century was no doubt much the same as it is now. There was, first of all, the continuous exchange of dairy products for grain and other goods. With individuals there were arrangements for kraaling cattle on farms so that the land got the benefit of the manure. With villages there were agreements about cattle tracks, grazing grounds, rainy-season laagering, and dry-season access to water. With the authorities there was bargaining over *jangali*, the official cattle-tax, which was levied from at least as early as the first half of the seventeenth century,²³ and over the unofficial tribute that all Village Heads expected to receive as one of their perquisites.²⁴

In many different ways, therefore, the semi-sedentary pastoralists were drawn into the life of the settled communities among whom they lived. For the Fulani who belonged to the professional classes or the stockless peasantry the contacts were of course even closer. There was not, it is true, much intermarriage between the two races, but Fulani of the upper classes did not spurn concubines taken from the Hausa community and those who had lost their cattle may well have had to seek their wives in the same quarter. In towns and villages the two societies probably occupied separate wards or quarters, as they sometimes do even today. In almost every other respect, however, their lives seem to have been fairly closely integrated. In language, for example, all the pastoral Fulani, save some of the *bororo'en*, could doubtless speak and understand Hausa, indeed many of them were probably bilingual, while among the two settled groups there must already have been large numbers, particularly of stockless peasants, who had begun to lose their facility in Fulfulde as the majority of their descendants long since have.

Nevertheless, even though many of the Fulani families in Hausaland had been living there for ten or fifteen generations, they did not always enjoy the same privileges as the Hausas. Traditions have survived, for example, that in Gobir their right to own slaves was

²³ *K Ch* (Palmer, p. 119).

²⁴ Stenning, *op. cit.* pp. 4-9.

curtailed and that later, when there was tension between them and the Chief, they were even forbidden to carry arms.²⁵ Such discrimination must have been a common experience for them in their centuries of wandering and was perhaps an indirect tribute to the awe in which their hosts held them.

In character the Fulani are very different people from the Hausas. Where the Hausas are usually tolerant and easy-going, the Fulani tend to be passionate and intense. This basic dissimilarity of temperament is reflected in many differences of outlook. The Fulani take life more seriously than the Hausas and are less ready to laugh at themselves. They have a greater reverence for learning. They have more highly developed powers of leadership. They throw themselves with more singleness of purpose into the causes which they adopt. They have a superior faith in their own destiny. In short, though not necessarily abler or more intelligent, they have more fire in their bellies than the genial worldly Hausas.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the time had arrived when these qualities would be put to the test.

CHAPTER THREE

Shehu Usuman dan Fodiyo

ONE of the Fulani who emigrated from Senegambia because of the troubled times was a member of the Toronkawa called Musa Jakollo. He made his way eastward and in due course arrived in Hausaland. On a calculation of known generations the date of his arrival there can be put at about 1450.¹

It is known that Musa Jakollo settled in Birnin Konni, a town in the province of Adar, and that his family stayed there for the next eleven generations.² The Fulani conquerors are sometimes thought of as being shepherd kings, that is to say nomads who entered a settled community and soon afterwards seized power. Nothing could be further from the truth. Musa Jakollo's descendants, for example, may

²⁵ Hopen, *op. cit.* pp. 11-13.

¹ Hiskett, *Introduction to TW*, p. 5.

² For the Family Tree see Table 1 in Appendix II.

have been *Fulbe na'i* when they reached Hausaland, but once they had settled in Konni they seem to have become *Toroobe*, still owning cattle, no doubt, but devoting themselves in the main to religion, law, and learning.³ They were already there when Askia's armies subdued western Hausaland, they saw the rise and fall of Muhammadu Kanta's brief empire, they heard the news that the Jukuns were at the gates of Katsina, and they witnessed the destruction of Zamfara.

What was perhaps most important of all, however, was that they had been in Birnin Konni for generations before the Gobirawa moved down from Air to the neighbouring country which is now called Gobir. This movement, as already noted, probably did not take place until the late seventeenth century. By the middle of the eighteenth century, therefore, the nomadic days of the Toronkawa lay three centuries behind them and it was the Gobirawa rather than they who were the newcomers to the district.

To this family there was born, in the year 1755, a boy whose name was Usuman dan Fodiyo but who is usually known to history as Shehu, the Hausa form of the Arabic word Sheikh. At the time of his birth messianic prophecies are said to have been made about him and he himself seems to have been conscious from an early age that a great destiny awaited him.

Shehu's father, Muhammadu Fodiyo, was a man of piety and learning. Like most of the Moslems of North Africa and the Sudan, he was a Sunni and had been brought up in the Maliki School of jurisprudence. He also belonged to the Kadiiriyya fraternity which was the oldest and most widespread of the Islamic orders.⁴ He saw to it that his sons, Shehu and a younger boy called Abdullahi, received the best schooling that was to be had. In those days education in the Sudan was based upon the study of Arabic and Islamic theology in much the same way that education in medieval Europe had been based on Latin and Christian theology. In the Moslem world, of course, theology embraced law as well as religion.

Elementary instruction in the basic subjects was to be had in the mosques and Koranic schools. There were no established centres of advanced learning, however, much less any Universities, and so those who wished to pursue their studies had to seek out the recognized masters, wherever they might be found, and enrol themselves as their

³ Confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu.

⁴ The devotion of Shehu's followers to this brotherhood can be gauged from the fact that to this day town criers in all the towns and villages of Sokoto address the people as 'Ya Kadirawa'.

pupils.⁵ The flame that El-Maghili had lit burnt low, it is true, in the Courts of the Hausa Chiefs, but among the pious and learned there were still many to tend it and keep it burning brightly.

As with all Moslem boys, Shehu's education began with the study of the Koran which was taught to him by his father. Syntax and grammar he learned from Abdur Rabman dan Hamada, poetry and other subjects from Usuman Bindawo Bakebbi. He then spent two years with an uncle, Usuman Bibnuduwu, who played a leading part in moulding his character. After that he went to Agades, in the southern Sahara, and spent another year as a pupil of Mallam Jibrilu⁶ who was then recognized as the most learned man in the central Sudan. Returning to Hausaland he next studied exegesis under Hashimu Bazamfare and another uncle, Ahmadu dan Muhammadu Aminu, and finally the Moslem Traditions under yet another uncle, Muhammadu dan Raji.⁷

Shehu was an apt pupil, with an insatiable thirst for knowledge, and he absorbed all that his instructors were able to teach him. We do not know exactly when he himself received the *ijaza*, or license to teach, but it was certainly conferred on him before he reached the age of twenty-five because by then he had become the instructor of his younger brother.⁸

Shehu grew up in a period when the Gobirawa were at the height of their power. Their victory over the Zamfarawa and their annexation of northern Zamfara took place soon after he was born. The construction of their new capital at Alkalawa went forward while he was a child. Their aggressive attacks on neighbouring States continued during his boyhood. Finally, when he was a young man, they renounced their allegiance to Bornu.

In 1777, when Shehu was twenty-two, Bawa succeeded as Chief of Gobir. He was a son of Sarkin Gobir Babari, who had defeated Zamfara, and his nickname, 'Jan Gwarzo', showed that he was a man of unusual energy and drive. By the Fulani, however, he was considered a tyrant because of the severity with which he ordered *jangali*, the tax on cattle, to be assessed and collected. Those who tried to evade it, as to a greater or lesser extent the pastoral Fulani have always tried to do, had their cattle seized.⁹ As a result, there was

⁵ Hiskett, Introduction to *TW*, p. 6.

⁶ Mallam is the title conferred in Hausaland on any man of learning.

⁷ Abdullah ibn Muhammad, *Ida al-Nusukh (IN)*, edited and translated by M. Hiskett, *BSOAS*, vol. XIX (1957) 3, pp. 563-4. See also Alhaji Junaidu, *op. cit.* pp. 9-10.

⁸ Abdullah, *IN*, p. 561.

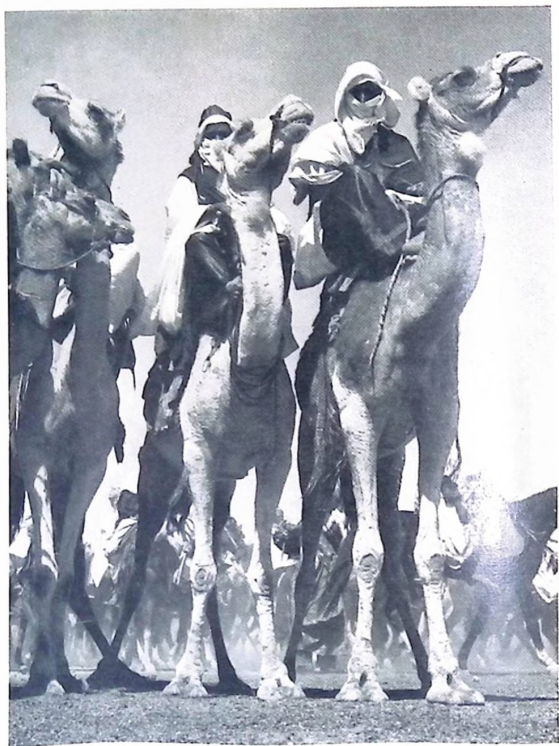
⁹ Hopen, *op. cit.* p. 10.



3 (a) Tabkin Kwatto, the lake at which the reformers drank and watered their few horses before fighting the first great battle of the *jihad*.



3 (b) Alhaji Junaidu, the present Waziri of Sokoto, saying evening prayer at the very spot near the lake where Abdullahi, Bello, and his own ancestor Gidado gave thanks for the great victory of Tabkin Kwatto.



4 Tuaregs with the lower part of their faces characteristically covered.

friction and animosity. Some of the Fulani conceived such a strong sense of grievance that they reacted in their traditional manner, that is to say they pulled up their roots and departed.¹⁰ As for the Hausa rulers, they were probably left with the feeling that the Fulani were contumacious aliens who refused to accept the established customs of the country. Thus were the first seeds of serious discord sown.

If the tension between the Fulani and the Hausas was something new, the quarrel between strict Moslems and their laxer brethren had persisted for generations. Islam, as we have already seen, had been introduced centuries earlier and the Hausa Chiefs and ruling classes were all nominally Moslems. In fact, however, the impetus which El-Maghili had given to Islam at the end of the fifteenth century had soon spent itself. Early in the sixteenth century the memory of the devout and god-fearing Muhammadu Rumfa had been eclipsed in Hausaland by the spectacular successes of the rumbustious and worldly Kanta. In the seventeenth century worse had followed when the Moslem Hausas had been repeatedly and humiliatingly defeated by the pagan Jukuns. We know from *The Kano Chronicle* that the early Hausas tended to value religions according to their efficacy in worldly affairs¹¹ and we may surmise that these were among the factors that caused the zeal engendered by El-Maghili to evaporate during the succeeding generations.

The decay of Islam during this period did not pass altogether unheeded, it is true, and the commentary¹² of at least one reformer has survived, but he was probably a Kanuri, not a Hausa, and in any case his strictures were muted and seem to have made little impact. They do, however, serve to confirm that in the allegedly Moslem society of the central Sudan ignorance was rife and observance lax.

It has often been said that Islam is not merely a religion but a whole way of life, at once pervasive and demanding. Generally speaking, therefore, the people of Africa have found it easier to embrace this faith than to live up to its often exacting standards and observe its manifold and sometimes novel injunctions. Just as in Europe certain pagan rites were perpetuated in the Christian era in covert or transmuted form, so in the Sudan many ancient customs survived the establishment of Islam even when they were in direct conflict with its commands.

¹⁰ Hopen, *op. cit.* p. 10.

¹¹ *K Ch* (Palmer, pp. 107-8).

¹² Muhammad b. Abdur Rahman's *Shurb al-Zulal*, probably written at the end of the seventeenth century. See Bivar and Hiskett, *op. cit.* pp. 118-32.

In Hausaland it was all the more natural that this should have been so because among the peasantry, who of course formed the bulk of the population, the proportion that professed to be Moslem was probably less than half.¹³ and even among them ignorance and superstition were still prevalent. For a man fired with religious zeal there were therefore two major tasks to be performed: the conversion of the heathen among the peasantry and the eradication of abuses among the nominally Moslem ruling classes.

Shehu himself, his brother Abdullahi, and his son Muhammadu Bello were all prolific writers.¹⁴ Thanks to the books and papers that they left we have a clear idea of the nature of the abuses that Shehu later set out to reform.

First, in a work entitled *Nasa'ih al-Ummat al-Muhammadiya*, which was probably written in the period preceding the outbreak of the *jihad*,¹⁵ Shehu touched, among other things, on the reprehensible customs of the common people. Here he made special mention of the mixing of the sexes at social gatherings, the practice of allowing women to go to market while the men sat at home, the moral laxity at bridal festivals where women in their finery danced before men, the custom of salutation by prostration, and various abuses and aberrations in the administration of the law of inheritance.¹⁶ His strictures were not very severe, however, and he was concerned to admonish rather than to expose or denounce.

But in the *Kitab al-Farq*, a book which was probably written as a justification for the *jihad* when the war had already begun, but which has for its subject the Hausa scene in the period leading up to it, Shehu turned on the rulers with much greater severity and gave a catalogue of over twenty charges that he made against them. These can be classified into four unequal groups under the general headings of oppression, corruption, self-indulgence, and technical offences against the Islamic code.¹⁷

¹³ Bello, *Inf AI* (Arnett, p. 21).

¹⁴ Kensdale has listed 85 of Shehu's works, 75 of Abdullahi's, and 93 of Bello's, and there are known to be more. See 'Field Notes on the Arabic Literature of the Western Sudan' in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1955, 1956, and 1958.

¹⁵ *Jihad* means, in the Moslem sense, a holy war.

¹⁶ M. Hiskett, 'An Islamic Tradition of Reform in the Western Sudan from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century' (AITR), *BSOAS*, vol. XXV (1962) 3, pp. 586-7.

¹⁷ *Kitab al-Farq* (KF), edited and translated by M. Hiskett, *BSOAS*, vol. XXIII (1960) 3, pp. 558-79.

The first group, the charges of oppression, is the largest and embraces nearly half the total. It includes accusations that the ruling classes imposed taxes not sanctioned by the *Shari'a*, or sacred law, abducted the women they wanted without offering marriage, misappropriated the possessions of women who were wards of court, made forced levies of goods and money in the markets, commandeered pack animals without paying for them, sequestered the goods of strangers who died in their territory, levied tolls on merchants and travellers, and conscripted men to their armies, allowing those who wished to buy themselves out to do so.¹⁸

One of the three taxes that Shehu singled out here for condemnation was *jangali*, the cattle-tax which had been collected in Hausaland for generations past and which in recent years had become a bone of contention between the rulers of Gobir and the pastoral Fulani. He pointed out that it was not one of the seven forms of taxation recognized by Islamic law and he therefore challenged its legality. If the Hausa authorities troubled to justify their actions, they probably argued that, as the majority of the pastoral Fulani were not Moslems, the tax was a form of *jizya*, the levy that an Islamic State is entitled to impose on non-Moslem subjects.¹⁹ To this Shehu might well have retorted that *jizya* was supposed to be a poll-tax, not a cattle-tax, and that in any case there were no grounds for imposing it on Moslems, as more and more of the pastoral Fulani were now becoming. Whatever course the argument took, the support of a scholar and jurist of Shehu's standing must have had the effect of reinforcing the pastoral Fulani in their recalcitrance. At any rate, the dispute smouldered on and in the end had significant historical consequences.

The second group of charges in the *Kitab al-Farq*, those dealing with corruption, is much shorter. It includes accusations that the Hausa rulers could only be approached through intermediaries who had been softened with presents, that in the exercise of their administrative functions they expected sweeteners²⁰ to be made to them, and that in the courts they sold justice to the highest bidder.²¹

The third group, also a small one, comprises the sins of self-indulgence and frivolity. It includes charges that the rulers lived in ornate and luxurious palaces, indulged excessively in concubinage,

¹⁸ *KF*, op. cit. pp. 558-79.

¹⁹ *The Kano Chronicle* describes *jangali* as *jizya* (Palmer, p. 119). See also Hiskett's comments on *KF*, loc. cit. pp. 574-5.

²⁰ In Hausa *gaisutwa*.

²¹ Shehu, *KF* (Hiskett, pp. 567-9).

sometimes keeping as many as a thousand women, and permitted music, drumming, and abandoned dancing.²²

The fourth and last group is another large one and embraces a variety of offences against the Islamic code. Some of these, which relate to Moslem injunctions and prohibitions on food, drink, and clothes, appear at first sight to be of minor moment, but in those days no doubt carried more significance. Others, however, clearly had great political and social as well as religious importance. One such was the charge that the Hausa rulers exercised their power arbitrarily without regard to the law. Another was that they imposed illegal taxes over and above those permitted by the law. A third was that they often set aside the obligatory punishments prescribed by the law, such as death for certain classes of murderers, mutilation for thieves, and stoning or flogging for adulterers, and commuted them for the sequestration of goods.²³ To devout Moslems these charges were of course all the more heinous in that the law which the Hausa rulers were accused of flouting was no mere man-made code but the God-given and immutable *Shari'a*.

In the *Wathiqat Ahl al-Sudan*, a manifesto which he almost certainly wrote himself and probably published on the eve of the war, Shehu drew distinctions between different types of offenders. First of all there were the backsliders and, a stage worse, the apostates. These could doubtless be found among all classes of society. Next there were the oppressors. They obviously belonged to the ruling classes and were guilty of the kind of abuses of power that had been described in the *Kitab al-Farq*. Then there were the warmongers and trouble-makers. They are more difficult to identify, but were probably all those opponents of the movement who had recourse to force in order to suppress it or persecute its adherents.²⁴

In addition there was a class of learned men whom the reformers stigmatized under the name of *ulama al-su'i* and whom we may call the compromisers or equivocators. They were the men of learning who betrayed their cloth, stilled their consciences, and supported the ruling classes in their transgressions of the law, thereby providing them with a mantle of false respectability. Though often much less learned than they professed to be, it was through self-interest rather than ignorance that they acted as they did. They were clearly a more or less permanent feature of society in the Sudan for El-Maghili had

²² Shehu, *KF* (Hiskett, pp. 567-2).

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ *Wathiqat Ahl al-Sudan (WAS)*, edited and translated by A. D. H. Bivar, *Journal of African History*, vol. II (1961) 2, pp. 235-43.

denounced them in his day and when Shehu appeared, three hundred years later, they were still there to plague him.²⁵

Among Shehu's teachers there were two who seem to have exerted a very special influence over him. One was his uncle, Usman Bibnuduwu, with whom he had spent nearly two years of his adolescence and who was evidently a man of high principle and strong conscience. We are told that he was renowned for righteousness and for the fearless manner in which he forbade the wrong and upheld the right. We know, too, that his pupil took him as a model²⁶ and it is probable that he played an important part in setting Shehu's feet on the path of militant reform.

The other teacher who made a major contribution to Shehu's evolution as a religious reformer was Mallam Jibrilu dan Umaru. He was generally recognized as the outstanding figure among the learned men of his generation in the central Sudan, but he seems to have worn his learning lightly, because he is described as being so genial that one would have thought all men were his friends.²⁷ There was another side to his character, however, and he was also the most rigid opponent of any form of compromise on religious questions.²⁸

One of the religious issues which had been sporadically debated in the Sudan for generations and which was now active again was whether disobedience, or in other words sin or backsliding, was sufficient reason for anathematizing a Moslem and casting him out altogether from the brotherhood of Islam. The problem was to determine when backsliding became apostacy and when disobedience became so blatant that it had to be treated as unbelief. These selfsame questions had been put to El-Maghili in Songhai at the beginning of the sixteenth century and the correspondence on the subject that followed between him and Askia Muhammad revealed the existence then of forms of oppression and corruption strikingly similar to those that were now troubling the reformers in Hausaland—the same oppressive rulers, venal jurists, equivocating scholars, and backsliding masses.²⁹ El-Maghili's verdict had been uncompromising. Those who claimed to be Moslems but continued to practice paganism he

²⁵ Hiskett, AITR, pp. 580-1.

²⁶ Abdullah, *IN* (Hiskett, pp. 563 and 575), and Alhaji Junaidu, *op. cit.* pp. 9-10.

²⁷ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, pp. 19-20).

²⁸ Hiskett, AITR, p. 589. Alhaji Junaidu agrees with the view that Mallam Jibrilu and Usman Bibnuduwu exerted decisive influence in shaping Shehu's thought and character.

²⁹ Hiskett, AITR, pp. 578-83.

had condemned as polytheists and infidels. The equivocators and venal jurists he had described as being more harmful to Islam than all the mischief-makers. And of the predatory rulers he had said that, while no Moslem should be anathematized merely because of sin, conduct such as imposing illegal taxes, levying tolls, and seizing the property of deceased travellers indicated not mere disobedience but rank unbelief.³⁰

In Shehu's day Mallam Jibrilu was ready to go even further and maintain that those who were guilty of such acts of disobedience as having more than four wives, allowing women to mix with men or go unveiled, or depriving orphans of their rights ought to be anathematized unconditionally.³¹ Shehu was subsequently to refute this particular doctrine and show that he himself upheld a more orthodox view.³² Nevertheless, Jibrilu's forthright assertion of these extreme views must have helped to prepare public opinion for Shehu's slightly more moderate but still advanced teaching. Furthermore, there is no doubt whatever that the later reformers, even if they were not prepared to go quite as far as Jibrilu, were profoundly influenced by him. Abdullahi wrote a panegyric in his honour.³³ Bello described him as a lamp that had dispersed the darkness and revived religion in the land.³⁴ And Shehu himself acknowledged his debt in the following lines: 'Then, by God, I know not, should we have been guided to the path of the *Sunna*, and to the abandoning of these blameworthy customs, had it not been for this blessed Sheikh?'³⁵

Another Islamic doctrine that must have influenced Shehu's evolution as a religious leader was the Messianic Tradition which taught that in every century God would send a reformer who would drive injustice from the land and renew the faith.³⁶ This belief was common throughout Islam and would in any case have been known to Shehu. Again, however, it was specifically mentioned by El-Maghili in his correspondence with Askia Muhammad.

And, accordingly, it is related that at the beginning of every century God will send a learned man to the people to renew their faith, and the characteristics of this learned man in every century must be that he commands what is right and forbids what is disapproved of, and reforms the affairs of the people and judges justly between them, and assists the truth against vanity, and the oppressed against the oppressor, in contrast to the characteristics of the (other) learned men of his age.³⁷

³⁰ Hiskett, AITR, pp. 578-83.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Abdullah, *TIV* (Hiskett, pp. 90-94).

³⁴ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 19).

³⁵ Hiskett, AITR, p. 591.

³⁶ Hiskett, AITR, pp. 583-4.

³⁷ Ibid.

There is no doubt whatever that Shehu was familiar with this correspondence, because he actually embodied it in one of his own works, the *Siraj al-Ikhwan*.³⁸ Moreover, what must have given these old precedents a much greater significance in his eyes was the fact that they had been laid down at the time when Askia, proclaiming himself to be the champion of Islam, had seized power from the sons of his lax and backsliding predecessor, Sonni Ali. The civil war that had accompanied this *coup* had been recognized by El-Maghili as a legitimate *jihad* and declared to be not only justified but meritorious.³⁹

All these were matters on which Shehu, at the turn of the century, must often have pondered.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Start of the *jihad*

SHEHU was still a young man of only twenty when, in the year 1774-5, he began his ministry.¹ Thanks to the excellence of his education, however, and to his great natural gifts, he was already an authority in his own right on theology and the law.

It was probably at about the same time that he established himself in the little town of Degel where he was to live—or rather to make his headquarters, because he was frequently on the move—for the next thirty years. Degel lies in open sandy country just north of the Rima Valley in what was then the province of Adar. Originally, Adar seems to have been tributary to Air, but by this time it had either been annexed to Gobir or was at any rate completely under Gobir's domination. From Degel it was in fact only about sixty miles to Alkalawa where the Gobirawa had recently completed their new capital.

Though Shehu made his headquarters in Degel, and was visited there by increasing numbers of pupils and followers, he spent much of his time teaching in the surrounding districts.² From time to time he also made larger tours of the neighbouring States and, apart from Zamfara and Kebbi where he was soon to become well known, we

³⁸ Hiskett, AITR, pp. 583-4.

¹ Abdullah, *TW* (Hiskett, p. 85).

³⁹ Ibid.

² Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 46).

hear of him going as far afield as Illo in the south and Daura in the east.³

The abuses which Shehu observed in Hausaland and set himself to reform have already been described. Except perhaps in Zamfara, he seems to have concentrated more on the reform of the faith of those who had already accepted Islam than on making new converts. The subjects of his discourses were five in number. The first was the necessity of following, without deviation of any kind, the path of the *Shari'a* or holy law. The second was the importance of observing the *Sunna* or orthodox practices of Islam. The third was the danger of harbouring religious doubt. The fourth was the avoidance and prevention of all evil. In his fifth and last discourse he expounded the *Shari'a* in detail and encouraged his audience to become seekers after knowledge and truth.⁴

Bello has described the manner in which Shehu used to deliver his discourses and sermons. He was, he says, at once friendly, patient, and sympathetic. When he came out on to his platform he used to smile at his audience and then greet them three times. After that he would call for silence and begin to speak. He always started with the words: 'I give thanks to God, the Lord of Creation.' He felt no shyness when speaking and feared no criticism. His faith gave him strength so that he voiced his opinions forthrightly and never compromised with the truth. Afterwards he would stay on and answer the multitude of questions which used to be put to him. According to the composition of his audience, he spoke sometimes in Fulfulde, sometimes in Hausa, and sometimes in Arabic.⁵

The main subjects of Shehu's sermons, as distinct from his discourses, were the unity of God, the foundations of faith, righteousness, sin and punishment, and paradise and eternal happiness. He also gave instructions where necessary in such matters of ritual as ablution, prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, paying tithes, giving alms, making vows, taking oaths, and contracting marriages.⁶

The first major tour that Shehu made was to Kebbi, which was still one of the leading States of Hausaland though of course it had long since lost the pre-eminence it had enjoyed in the time of Kanta. We do not know the exact date of this journey, but it was probably around the year 1780. He was accompanied by his younger brother Abdullahi, then still in early adolescence, and was apparently very successful in making converts and winning adherents.⁷

³ Abdullah, *TW* (Hiskett, pp. 86 and 96).

⁴ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, pp. 24-27).

⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 27-29.

⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 29-43.

⁷ Abdullah, *TW* (Hiskett, p. 86).

Hitherto Shehu had neither sought the patronage of Chiefs nor had any dealings with the ruling classes. News of his successes in Kebbi doubtless reached Alkalawa, however, and when he returned to Degel word seems to have been conveyed to him that he ought to present himself at Court. Shehu was not one to be overawed, even when confronted by a formidable character like Sarkin Gobir Bawa,⁸ and he is reported to have propounded in forthright terms exactly what the responsibilities of an Emir in a Moslem State were. Nevertheless, Bawa heard him out and the audience seems to have been a success. Certainly it strengthened Shehu's hand in his subsequent dealings with the common people, and no doubt with petty officials as well, because henceforward it was assumed that his teaching enjoyed the favour, or at any rate carried the assent, of the Court.⁹

Soon afterwards, probably in 1783, Shehu went to Zamfara. It was a State in which Islam had made less headway than elsewhere in Hausaland and Abdullahi, who accompanied his brother, described it as a land where the great majority of the people were still pagan and where ignorance was supreme. These were probably the very reasons which induced Shehu to spend the next five years there.¹⁰ Once again, and probably to an even greater extent than in Kebbi, he succeeded in building up a large personal following.

During this long absence Shehu seems to have maintained his home in Degel because he went back there as soon as his work in Zamfara was finished. Soon after his return, probably in the year 1788-9, he and all the other learned men of the country were summoned to celebrate one of the great Moslem festivals in the company of the Chief. After the ceremony large quantities of alms were offered to the assembled divines and jurists. At this Shehu, despite the fact that he must still have been one of the youngest among them, rose to his feet and told Bawa that he and his followers needed none of his wealth, but that he asked instead for the grant of other indulgences.¹¹ He demanded that he himself should have the right to teach and preach in Gobir, that all should be free to listen to him, that Moslems should suffer no disabilities, and that the burden of tax on the peasantry should be lightened. Bawa rather surprisingly granted all these demands.¹²

This episode seems to have marked Shehu's emergence as the leader of the reformers. Thenceforward, though there were still

⁸ *Sarki(n)* is the Hausa word for a Chief or Emir.

⁹ Abdullah, *TIV* (Hiskett, p. 86).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 88.

¹² Alhaji Junaidu, *op. cit.* p. 12.

plenty of divines and scholars outside the movement who disputed his teaching and denied his mission,¹³ there was none within it to challenge his leadership. Naturally, however, his assumption of Mallam Jibrilu's mantle marred his relations with the Court at Alkalawa. Until then he had always been treated with marked respect, so much so indeed that, on his return from his tour of Kebbi, Sarkin Gobir Bawa is said to have paid him a visit at Degel and made him a present of fifty cattle.¹⁴ Certainly, some of the young princes, including Yunfa who was later destined to become his principal adversary, seem to have studied under him for a time.¹⁵ But from that day the relationship began to deteriorate.

In 1795 Sarkin Gobir Bawa died and was succeeded by his brother Yakuba. During Yakuba's reign, which lasted six years, Shehu made his second major tour of Kebbi. He taught and preached in all the towns right down to the Niger¹⁶ and enlarged the number of his personal followers. These tours had an important effect on the course of subsequent events. First of all they gave Shehu a standing outside Gobir which enabled him to uphold the rights of Moslems, even to the point of defiance, while at the same time making it difficult for the Chief to treat him as if he was no more than a contumacious subject. Secondly, the support which he now built up in Zamfara and Kebbi enabled him to survive the critical second and third rounds of the impending struggle, whereas without it his cause would almost certainly have foundered.

In 1801 Sarkin Gobir Yakuba made a final attempt to storm the Zamfara fortress of Kiyawa and was killed. He was succeeded on the throne by his brother, Bunu Nafata. It is clear that in the twelve years that had elapsed since Sarkin Gobir Bawa had made his concessions to Shehu the relations between the reformers and the ruling classes in Gobir had greatly deteriorated. The cause of the animosity lay partly in Shehu's fearless exposure of corruption and oppression, but perhaps even more in the apprehension with which the Court had been watching the growth of his movement. By this time his adherents were known as 'The Community' (in Hausa *jama'a*) and had become

¹³ Abdullahi quoted by Shehu in *Tanbikhul Ikhwan (TI)*, translated by H. R. Palmer, *Journal of the African Society*, vol. XIV, pp. 189-92.

¹⁴ *Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, p. 21. Alhaji Junaidu confirms that at this period Shehu was treated with great deference by Bawa and his Court.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 19.

¹⁶ Abdullah, *TIW* (Hiskett, p. 96), and Alhaji Junaidu, *op. cit.* p. 13.

very numerous. Moreover, his fame had spread throughout the central Sudan so that men came from near and far to join him.¹⁷ Seeing this, the Hausa rulers naturally took alarm. 'They saw the growing number of his following and the hold that Islam had gained. . . . Men urged them on saying "If you do not disperse this concourse of people, your power will be gone; they will destroy your country by causing all the people to leave you and go to them."'¹⁸

The concern felt in Alkalawa at these developments explains the severity of the measures that Bunu now introduced. First of all he forbade any man from holding religious meetings and preaching to the people, excepting only Shehu. Secondly, he decreed that Islam might only be practised by those who had inherited the creed from their fathers. Thirdly, he prohibited the wearing of turbans by men and veils by women.¹⁹

These edicts were proclaimed in every market place in Gobir and the neighbouring parts of Adar and Zamfara which were under Gobir's domination. They were aimed directly at the Moslem reformers and the intention was obviously to curb their growing strength. Considering that Shehu was by now the undisputed leader of the movement, it seems strange that an exception should have been made in his favour. The only explanation of this apparent anomaly is that the concession was dictated by fear, not favour, and that the Hausa rulers still wished to avoid, or at any rate postpone, an open conflict with him. Taken as a whole, these were paradoxical measures for any nominally Moslem Chief to have introduced. In fact the touch of desperation about them betrayed the alarm with which Bunu and his advisers evidently viewed the strength and cohesion of the reforming party, while their severity gave the reformers a clear warning of the hostility with which they were now regarded.

As for Shehu, there is no doubt that until then he, too, had been trying to gain his ends without provoking an open conflict. According to Abdullahi one of his sayings was: 'I will not interfere between any man and his Chief: I will not be a cause of division.'²⁰ If the successive Chiefs of Gobir had been willing to play the part of Muhammadu Rumfa, he would have been content with the role of El-Maghili. Certainly, as his whole life was to prove, he was in no sense a seeker after temporal power and there is no evidence whatever to suggest that he had planned the *jihad* in advance and was now engineering a

¹⁷ Abdullah quoted by Shehu in *TI* (Palmer, *JAS*, vol. XIV, pp. 189-92).

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 190.

¹⁹ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 48).

²⁰ Shehu, *TI* (cf. Palmer, *JAS*, vol. XIV, pp. 189-90).

breach in order to bring it about.²¹ On the contrary, his aim, until very late in the day, seems to have been to enlist the support of the Hausa ruling classes either by genuine conversion or, failing that, by moral persuasion and pressure.²²

On the other hand, it is also true to say of Shehu that, while not seeking a conflict, he was equally not prepared to compromise in any way with his conscience in order to avoid one. The fact is that, having once set his course, he held to it without regard for the probability that sooner or later it would bring him into collision with the Hausa authorities. At the start of his mission he had no doubt been strengthened in his determination by the knowledge that a few years earlier, as has already been noted, two Moslem reformers in the western Sudan—Ibrahim Sori in Futa Jallon and Suliman Bal in Futa Toro—had succeeded in defying and overthrowing pagan governments.²³ The fact that both of them were Fulani, and that one of the two theocratic States which they had established was in the country from which his own ancestors had come to Hausaland, must also have influenced him. At any rate, later, when Sarkin Gobir Bunu's repressive measures suddenly brought the danger of a collision much closer, he did not flinch or hesitate. On the contrary, his answer was to permit and indeed encourage his followers to furnish themselves with arms and prepare for war.²⁴ He seems to have had no qualms about the justice of this decision, which was to prove a momentous one, and once again he was no doubt fortified by the knowledge that in similar circumstances Askia Muhammad had declared a *jihad* and had been commended by El-Maghili for having done so.

Sarkin Gobir Bunu was destined to rule for only two years and when he died in 1803 he was succeeded by his son Yunfa, Shehu's former pupil.²⁵ When Yunfa became Chief, his attitude to Shehu was ambivalent and seems to have been determined partly by the reverence of a pupil for his master and partly by the distrust of a ruler for an over-powerful subject. At first he was conciliatory, but later he summoned Shehu to his palace and made an attempt on his life. The move miscarried,²⁶ however, and Shehu's escape was naturally ascribed by his followers to divine providence. War was

²¹ M. R. Waldman, 'The Fulani Jihad: A Reassessment', *Journal of African History*, vol. VI, 3, pp. 350-5.

²² Ibid.

²³ Trimmingham, op. cit. pp. 161-2.

²⁴ Abdullah, *TW* (Hiskett, p. 105).

²⁵ *Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, p. 17.

²⁶ Abdullah, *TW* (Hiskett, p. 108).

now almost inevitable and an incident occurred soon afterwards to precipitate it.

One result of the earlier religious persecution was that a group of pious Moslems, led by a follower of Shehu's called Abdu Salami, decided to emigrate. They therefore abandoned their homes, drove off their herds, and went and settled in Gimbana, a small town in the State of Kebbi. Angry at their defection, Yunfa sent a message ordering them to return. They refused. This so incensed him that, with the concurrence of the Chief of Kebbi,²⁷ he dispatched an expedition against them. This force took Gimbana by storm and captured those of Abdu Salami's men who had not fled or been killed in the fighting.²⁸

Yunfa's next move was to send a message to Shehu saying that he intended to do to Degel what he had already done to Gimbana, and advising him to depart with his family before it was too late. Shehu returned a message saying: 'I will not leave my community, but I will leave your country, for God's earth is wide.'²⁹ At this Yunfa recanted and sent a second message, urging Shehu to stay, but he had shown his hand and the reformers no longer trusted him.

Like the Prophet Muhammad, Shehu now took refuge in flight. On 21 February 1804, accompanied by his brother Abdullahi, his son Muhammadu Bello, and all his followers, he left Degel and withdrew to the west. With them the fugitives took only their families, their cattle, their arms, their books, a little food, and a few personal possessions.

As Degel was in the west of Gobir, and Gobir in the west of Hausaland, Shehu's retreat took him to the extremity of the outer marches. The country there was an almost empty wilderness of sand, scrub, and stunted trees. There were a few oases of fertility, however, and at one of them, a place called Gudu, the reformers now established themselves. It made as good a fastness as could be found in those open plains.

At first Yunfa made no move against them. After a month or two, however, when he heard of the number of men who were flocking to Gudu to join Shehu, he put out a proclamation forbidding it. As a further deterrent he also gave orders that the goods of defectors were to be sequestered³⁰ and, as a final measure, posted patrols to intercept those who still tried to get through. Then in May, following another

²⁷ Bello, 'Sard al-Kalam' (SK), translated into Hausa in *LHdM*, vol. I, pp. 19-35.

²⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 19-20.

²⁹ Abdullah, *TW* (Hiskett, p. 108).

³⁰ Shehu, *TI* (Palmer, *JAS*, vol. XIV, p. 190).

impulse of his apparently vacillating character, he suddenly changed his tactics and offered Shehu a reconciliation if he would only return to Degel.³¹ But by now Shehu was in no mood for compromise. He told the envoy that he would not return unless Yunfa repented of his sins, purified the forms of his worship, restored all the property which he had confiscated, and turned to righteousness and the true faith.³²

When he received Shehu's answer, Yunfa summoned all his councillors and learned men and asked them whether he or Shehu was in the right. They told him that justice was on his side. He therefore sent back a message saying: 'Tell Shehu that I am preparing for war, and let him make ready against our meeting.'³³

When this declaration reached them the Fulani realized, beyond doubt, that the die was finally cast. Bello, Shehu's sons and successor, has described how they received the news.

At this we gathered together and took stock of our affairs. We decided that it was not right for men to be leaderless, without a Chief, so then and there we paid homage to Shehu. We promised to obey his commands and to follow him alike in prosperity and adversity. He accepted our allegiance and himself vowed to follow the Book and the Law. These events took place on the evening of the Wednesday. The first to do homage were his brother, the Waziri Abdullahi, then I Bello, then Umaru Mai-Alkammu, and then the whole concourse of Moslems.³⁴

It was on this day that Shehu was addressed for the first time as Commander of the Faithful. Since then this title, in its Hausa form of *Sarkin Musulmi*, has always been borne by the Sultans of Sokoto. On the following day Shehu raised his standard and the *jihad* had begun.

There is no evidence, direct or indirect, to indicate the number of men who rallied round Shehu at Gudu. By that time his adherents in Hausaland could certainly be numbered by thousands and his sympathizers probably by tens of thousands. But to accept religious direction or support demands for judicial and social reform was one thing; to join a rebellion was emphatically another. We can be sure that it was only the hard core of reformers who at the outset took this extreme step. It is unlikely that, apart from the women and children, they numbered more than a few thousand. Yunfa's counter-measures would have sufficed to hold back the half-hearted and in any case Gudu could scarcely have supported greater numbers.

³¹ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 50). ³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid. (cf. Arnett, p. 51).

³⁴ Ibid. *Waziri* is the Hausa form of Vizier.

The venture on which the reformers now embarked was an extremely hazardous one and on any rational calculation it had only the slimmest chance of succeeding. Gobir was still the most powerful of the Hausa States and could put into the field an army of thousands of horse and tens of thousands of foot. To pit against this Shehu's followers had little or nothing—no base, no money, no armour, no reserves, not much food, and not many weapons, in the decisive arm, cavalry, they could muster only twenty horses and were weakest where the Gobirawa were strongest. In fact their only assets were moral ones—belief in their cause, readiness to stake their lives upon the outcome, and above all the faith that they were the instruments of the divine will.

In all that country there was no natural fortress in which the reformers could defend themselves against the army which Sarkin Gobir was about to send against them. They knew, therefore, that before long they would have to fight a pitched battle. Moreover, instead of waiting passively to be attacked, they now seized the initiative while Sarkin Gobir was still mobilizing his feudal army.

Their first important move was against Matankari, a town whose horsemen had already been harrying them and whose continued activity in the west would threaten their rear as they faced Yunfa in the east. They therefore sallied forth from Gudu, fought the first engagements of the war at Giniga and Matankari, and won two heartening victories.³⁵

Their next move was against Birnin Konni, from whence they had also been harried, and there they first showed their metal. Their forces, under Muhammadu Gayar, left Gudu on a Wednesday evening, marched thirty miles during the night, invested Konni at dawn on the Thursday, spent the whole day breaching the great mud walls of the town, took the place by storm in the late afternoon, and then, because of an alarm (which later proved to be false) that Sarkin Gobir had slipped behind them and was attacking Shehu, made another forced march through the night to reach Gudu by dawn on the Friday. This meant that in the space of thirty-six hours, in a climate as hot as any in the world, they had covered sixty miles on foot and fought and won a protracted battle. For a force of untried irregulars, who were subject to no discipline, this was an astounding feat of arms.³⁶ 'On this day,' said Bello, 'we exerted ourselves to the limit of endurance.'

³⁵ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 52).

³⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 53-54.

It was now early June and the first rains had fallen. Though the report that the Gobirawa were attacking Gudu proved to be an exaggeration, their forces were in fact on the move. In the interval since the breach with the Fulani had become complete, Yunfa had not only been mustering his own feudal levies but had tried to persuade his neighbours to send contingents to strengthen his army. After the cavalier treatment that they had received in the past, however, his brother Chiefs in the other Hausa States were in no hurry to go to his assistance. They sent promises of help, but no troops. Even the conquered towns of Zamfara, except for Gummi, managed to evade their obligations. At any rate, apart from the Tuaregs who were always spoiling for a fight, no reinforcements arrived.³⁷

With the rains approaching, Yunfa seems to have grown impatient at the delay and to have decided that he could safely take the field without allies. After all, his courtiers must have told him, the reformers were only a band of poorly armed rebels whom they would have no difficulty in annihilating. The idea that they might be defeated was probably never seriously entertained.

When the Gobir army set out, its march was a leisurely affair, for the fighting men were encumbered with women, camp followers, and a provision train.³⁸ Yunfa's strategy, which showed how confident he was and which at the time seemed perfectly sound, was to make his way round to the rear of the Fulani in order to force them to do battle and prevent their escaping to the west.³⁹ He therefore made a wide circuit to the south, which brought him to the shores of a little lake called Tabkin Kwatto about twenty miles west of Gudu.

The Fulani had no difficulty in shadowing the Gobir army as it made its encircling movement. If they had wanted to avoid fighting they had plenty of time to extricate themselves before the enemy could penetrate to their rear. As it was, they waited at Gudu till the Gobirawa had reached the lake and then made another night march to challenge them. This was a shrewd tactical strike, because it was the last move that the Gobirawa expected and it gave them the advantage of surprise.

On the morning of 21 June 1804 the army of Gobir was encamped near the lake. It is evident from the poem which Abdullahi afterwards wrote about the battle that they were taken unawares.

³⁷ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, pp. 54-55).

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Abdullah, *TIV* (Hiskett, p. 109).

And we came upon them on Thursday
At Qurdam before midday, in the high places;
And they had spitted meats around the fire,
And gathered ready in tents
Fine vestments in a chest,
And all kinds of carpets, with cushions.⁴⁰

After their long march the Fulani did not attack at once but made their way to the lakeside to refresh themselves, perform their ceremonial ablutions, and water their horses. This gave the Gobirawa a short respite in which to prepare themselves for the coming battle.

To the north of Tabkin Kwatto are two little hills, set close together, and as the ground rises from the lake to their bases the bush thins out into fairly open ground. It was here that the Gobirawa drew up their line of battle. As they had the advantage of numbers, and needed space in which to deploy their heavy cavalry, this was tactically the right move for them to make.⁴¹ The Fulani, on the other hand, as they possessed practically no cavalry and had to rely almost entirely on their bowmen, would have been well advised to fight a defensive battle from prepared positions. They were in a mood of sober exaltation, however, like the Ironsides before Naseby, and determined to put the issue to the test. When they had refreshed themselves, therefore, they left the cover of the trees round the lake and marched out to the open, rising ground where the great host of Gobir was being marshalled into a line of battle.

Thanks to Abdullahi and Bello we have a good idea of the course which the fighting took. It began about midday with the Gobirawa discharging their muskets which, however, proved ineffective.⁴² After that, like Agincourt which it strikingly resembles, the battle developed into a contest between the shock of heavy cavalry and the attrition of lightly armed but highly skilled archers. Here is Bello's characteristically terse description of it.

The enemy made ready and took up their positions. They had donned mail and quilted armour, and with their shields they formed their line against us. We too formed our line against them and every man looked squarely into the eyes of his foe. Then we shouted our battle-cry three times, *Allah Akbar*, and charged against them. At this their drums beat loudly and they too charged against us. When the two lines met their right wing overbore our left wing and pressed it back upon our centre. Their left wing also overbore our right wing and pressed it back upon our centre. But our centre stood fast and when our right wing and our left wing came

⁴⁰ Abdullah, *TW* (Hiskett, p. 112).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

up against it they too stood fast and yielded no more. Then the two armies were locked together and the battle raged.⁴³

It is evident that at this stage of the battle the little Fulani force, having been compressed into a square and completely enveloped by the much larger Gobir army, was in imminent danger of complete annihilation. Indeed, as they had no pikes to keep the enemy cavalry at bay, it is a marvel that their square was not broken and the fragments swept from the field. For Yunfa, victory must have seemed assured. But the square did not break and, just as at Agincourt the English archers humbled the chivalry of France, so at Tabkin Kwatto the Fulani bowmen gradually mastered the Gobir cavalry.

Characteristically, and certainly without cant or affectation, Bello ascribed the glory to God.

The Lord broke the army of the godless, so that they fell back, and in their flight they were scattered. . . . We followed at their heels and slew them with great slaughter. . . . God alone knows the number of those who perished. . . . All day we pursued them and only at dusk did we return to say the evening prayer and to give thanks to God, the Lord of Creation.⁴⁴

He went on to describe it as the greatest battle of the *jihad* and compared it to the victory which the Prophet had won over the Meccans at Badr. To Shehu it was proof that he was the chosen instrument of God.

CHAPTER FIVE

The *jihad* in Sokoto

BY their victory at Tabkin Kwatto the Fulani had saved themselves from extinction, but a long, hard road still lay in front of them. Their most pressing difficulty was an acute shortage of food, a shortage which had originated in the hurried flight from their homes and which had afterwards been aggravated by the interdiction placed on them by Sarkin Gobir. The barren scrubland into which they had retreated was sparsely populated and did not lend itself to farming. With the onset of the rains Shehu therefore decided to leave Gudu

⁴³ Bello, *Inf M.*

⁴⁴ Bello, *Inf M.* The place where Bello and Abdullahi said their prayers is near the lake and can be seen in photograph No. 3 (b).

and move into an area where his followers could support themselves.

News of the defeat of the Gobirawa at Tabkin Kwatto was nowhere more welcome than in the towns of Zamfara. Nearly two generations earlier, as we have already seen, the old kingdom of Zamfara had disintegrated under the onslaught of Gobir. The capital had been sacked and never rebuilt. The whole of the northern and western part of the territory had been incorporated into Gobir and those of the people who had not fled had had to recognize Sarkin Gobir as their paramount Chief. Only in the east and more particularly the south had they retained any measure of independence. There, on the edge of the Ruma Bush and on the blurred frontier between Hausaland and the pagan territories which lay beyond, a number of their towns acknowledged the nominal suzerainty of Gobir without in fact having to submit to much control from distant Alkalawa.

These towns were elated by the news of the Fulani victory at Tabkin Kwatto and the Chiefs of two of the largest, Bukwium and Talata Mafara, immediately sent envoys to Shehu, as did Sarkin Burmi of Bakura.¹ The Fulani leaders were receptive to these overtures and an alliance was formed. As a result of it, Shehu and his followers were able to leave their retreat in July 1804 and move down into the more fertile country round the confluence of the Rima and Sokoto Rivers. In doing so they had to part company with their Fulani and Tuareg allies in the far north. To set against this disadvantage, however, was the gain of being able to join forces with Muhammadu Moyijo, a Fulani who had offered his services to Shehu at the outset and who had subsequently established himself in a strong position at Yabo.² There, in what are now the home districts of Sokoto, they spent the rainy season of 1804, recruiting their strength for the struggle which they knew they would have to renew as soon as the dry season came round again.

During the lull enforced by the rains Shehu wrote letters to all the Chiefs of Hausaland to explain why he had raised his banner against Sarkin Gobir. He was fighting for truth against falsehood, he said, and he called upon them to join him in the struggle. The other Hausa States had little cause to love Gobir and at one time it seemed as if Kano and Zazzau might respond. To a greater or lesser degree, however, they were all suspicious of Shehu's movement and so in the end they closed their ranks and spurned his overtures.

If the other Hausa Chiefs had responded to Shehu's message, the

¹ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 62).

² *Ibid.*

jihad would have taken on a different character and probably run a completely different course. As it was, their rejection of it produced a number of important consequences. First of all it meant that, at any rate in the early years, Shehu was not to find very many active supporters among the Hausas with the notable exception of the Zamfarawa. As a result the war, which Shehu himself regarded as a purely religious one, tended nevertheless to develop along ethnic lines and to become, in the main, a struggle between the Fulani and their miscellaneous allies on one side and the Hausa and later Kanuri ruling classes on the other. This in turn caused the Hausa and Kanuri Chiefs, who after all were Moslems themselves, even if not very devout ones, to regard Shehu's movement less as a *jihad* than as a Fulani insurrection. The stern measures they took against the reformers fell most of all upon the Fulani, who formed the backbone of the movement, and aggravated the tendency of the two sides to divide on racial rather than religious lines. They also had the effect of spreading the war, during the next few years, over the whole of Hausaland and western Bornu.³

The second event of importance which took place during the rains of 1804 was the attempt to patch up peace between the Fulani and Gobirawa. The intermediary was Sarkin Gummi, the Chief of a large Zamfara town which had remained loyal to Sarkin Gobir. Shehu and his advisers declared that they were ready to negotiate, but they distrusted the Court clique at Alkalawa and insisted on dealing with Yunfa himself. Yunfa, however, declined to meet them and so the move came to nothing.⁴

The failure of these two attempts at conciliation at least simplified Shehu's problems. He and his advisers now knew that they stood alone and could expect no help or encouragement of any kind from any of the other Hausa States. They also knew that with Gobir there could now be no compromise and that if their cause was to survive they had to fight it out until one or other was crushed.

It was in these circumstances that the Fulani decided, towards the end of the rains of 1804, to launch a major attack on Alkalawa, the Gobir capital. They must have been encouraged in their plans by the arrival at about this time of a strong force of their kinsmen who had been driven out of Katsina by the Hausa Chief.⁵ Since Tabkin Kwatto they had also had as allies the fierce but fickle Tuaregs of Adar and Air. Preparations for the campaign were therefore put in

³ Abdullahi, quoted by Shehu in *TI* (Palmer, *JAS*, vol. XIV, p. 191).

⁴ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, pp. 64-65).

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 66.



5 The Rima Valley between Sokoto and Alkalawa. View looking north-west in the general direction of Degel and Gudu. In the foreground a typical village set in fields from which the harvest has been gathered. In the middle-ground the flood-plain of the river, almost dry at this time of the year and here less than a mile wide. In the background more villages and bare fields and then the great plain stretching away to the Sahara. In this direction the next river is in Morocco, 1,500 miles away.



6 A typical landscape in western Sokoto. On the left, bush; in the middle, cultivated ground cleared after the harvest; on the right, dry-season farms by the lakeside; in the right middle-ground, among dark trees, the village.

hand and the command was entrusted to Shehu's younger brother Abdullahi on whom the title of Waziri or Vizier had been conferred. The plan of campaign was simply to subdue the towns and villages around Alkalawa and then, at the right moment, to launch a decisive attack and take the place by storm.

Having been founded after Gobir's defeat of Zamfara, the city of Alkalawa was at that time of comparatively recent origin. Like all the major towns of Hausaland, it was protected by a massive wall of sun-baked clay. The gates which pierced these walls were strongly fortified. The walls themselves were furnished with a parapet and the parapet with crenellations to enable the defenders to shoot without exposing themselves. The assaulting forces, on the other hand, were first of all faced with a dry moat which was planted with a dense and virtually impenetrable thorn called *sarkakkiya*.⁶ When they had cleared a way through this they still had to negotiate the almost sheer face of the wall, perhaps thirty feet in height, which was finished with a smooth mud plaster and which therefore presented no hold for hand or foot.

At this date there were very few fire-arms in the central Sudan and little if any artillery. The breaching and storming of fortified walls was therefore normally entrusted to shock troops protected by quilted armour or chain mail. At a later stage of the war, thanks to the arms and horses which they captured in their battles, the Fulani were as well equipped as their enemies. In this first year, however, they still had very few horsemen and practically no armour.

The first part of the new campaign went according to plan. In November 1804 the Fulani advanced into Gobir and invested the city. They found the wall in good repair, however, and very heavily defended. Nevertheless they tried to take the place by storm. Had they succeeded they would have saved themselves four years of hard fighting. As it was they only just failed. Bello, who played a leading part in the fighting, deals very tersely with this reverse. 'We fought a hotly-contested battle', he wrote, 'and were within an ace of gaining an entry into the city. In the fighting great numbers of the enemy were killed and many of our men also found martyrdom.'⁷

To a cause like Shehu's a repulse of this nature was bad enough, but worse was to follow. Its first fruit was the desertion of the Tuaregs. At the best of times they were fickle allies and now they seem to have concluded that the reformers were not after all going to prevail. At any rate, they not only left the besiegers in the lurch in front of

⁶ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 67).

⁷ *Ibid.*

Alkalawa but, having returned to their homes, they also started raiding isolated and defenceless Fulani settlements in the northern marches.⁸

The reaction of the Fulani to these events was swift, indeed too swift. Shehu had not accompanied the expedition against Alkalawa, but he now set out to join it, taking reinforcements with him. Without waiting for these reinforcements to arrive, the Waziri Abdullahi led a punitive expedition against the Tuaregs. Bello, meanwhile, kept watch over Alkalawa, but his forces were depleted and he himself was sick. The Gobirawa, perceiving that the Fulani were dangerously dispersed, now decided to come out of the city and fight in the open.⁹

The ensuing battle took place at Tsuntsuwa, a village just outside Alkalawa, and the result was a decisive defeat for the Fulani. Fortunately for them, Shehu and his reinforcements arrived in the nick of time to prevent a disaster. Even so, they lost two thousand of their best men. Among those killed were the Chief Justice Muhammadu Sambo, the Standard Bearer Sa'adu, and two hundred Mallams noted for their piety and learning.¹⁰

With the help of the reinforcements brought up by Shehu, the Fulani were able to counter-attack and they eventually succeeded in driving the Gobirawa back and burying their dead. They were now too weak to invest the city, however, and so they had to raise the siege and retire.¹¹

The failure to take Alkalawa put an end to all hope of an early end to the war. It also put Shehu's cause in jeopardy again. The Fulani still had no territory of their own. The Tuaregs, one of their only two allies, had abandoned them and for the next eighteen months were to be among their most dangerous enemies. The Gobirawa, on the other hand, were resurgent and could expect support from the other Hausa States. Perhaps most serious of all, the defeat at Tsuntsuwa had obliterated the moral effect of the victory at Tabkin Kwatto.

The *jihad* began and ended in what is now the northern part of Sokoto Province. Between its first and last acts, however, the scene shifted to the south and south-west.

After the reverse at Tsuntsuwa, Shehu's forces, which were again plagued by hunger and lack of supplies, returned to the territory of their Zamfara allies, which they reached early in 1805. This time they decided to make their base at Sabongari, a remote place in the upper valley of the Gawan Gulbi or Dead River. It was there that Abarshi,

⁸ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 67).

⁹ *Ibid.* p. 68.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

one of the claimants to the Chieftaincy of Zamfara, had already made his headquarters.¹²

Among the Hausas who had joined Shehu's ranks there were a number of Kebbi men. One of these was Usuman Masa, a member of the ruling family who had quarrelled with the Chief, Muhammadu Hodi, and thrown off his allegiance. He now suggested to the Fulani leaders that they should attack Kebbi.¹³

Kebbi was the most westerly of the true Hausa States. Geographically it occupied the lower valley of the Rima and its main links with the rest of Hausaland lay through Zamfara. The destruction of Zamfara by Gobir had tended to weaken these links, however, and now the appearance of the Fulani on the Gawan Gulbi and their alliance with the independent Zamfara towns had the effect of isolating Kebbi still further.

The Fulani leaders were no doubt mindful of the fact that Shehu had many adherents among the Kebbawa. They also realized that Kebbi, if they could only gain possession of it, was rich and fertile enough to provide them with the base which they needed if they were to establish their authority over the rest of Hausaland. On the other hand, although Kebbi was no longer the force it had been in Kanta's time, it was still one of the major Hausa States and the Kebbawa were well known for their fighting qualities. In the circumstances in which the Fulani then found themselves, the decision to turn their backs on Gobir while they launched a major attack on Kebbi was a bold and, as it turned out, inspired stroke of strategy.

Shehu put the expedition against Kebbi under the joint command of the Waziri Abdullahi and Aliyu Jaidu, who had been appointed Sarkin Yaki or Captain-General. They set out in March 1805, during the hot weather which precedes the rains, and first marched south to the Zamfara Valley where the town of Gummi, though of Zamfara origin, was still loyal to its new Gobir overlords. To remove the threat which it would otherwise have constituted to their rear the Fulani now attacked the Gummi forces and compelled the Chief to sue for peace.¹⁴

Heartened by this early success, and no doubt strengthened by volunteers picked up on the march, they then turned westward. By the time they entered Kebbi they had such a formidable force that

¹² Sokoto *DNBs*, History of Anka. The river is so called because in normal years its flow is underground and it appears on the surface only in years of heavy rainfall.

¹³ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 72).

¹⁴ Abdullah, *TW* (Hiskett, p. 115).

most of the enemy towns opened their gates and submitted. Those which offered resistance were quickly reduced.¹⁵

Within a short time of setting out, Abdullahi and Aliyu Jaidu were at the walls of Birnin Kebbi. The capital put up a brief resistance but on 12 April 1805 they breached the walls and took the place by storm. The booty which they captured was greater than they had ever taken before or were ever to take again.¹⁶

When Birnin Kebbi fell, the Chief of Kebbi, Muhammadu Hodi, managed to elude capture and fled to the north. To the Fulani, in the flush of victory, his escape probably seemed to be of little moment, but in fact it was to have serious consequences. In his stead Abdullahi installed Usman Masa as Chief of Kebbi. His being a member of the legitimate family did not alter the fact that he was a puppet and that Shehu, by right of conquest, was now master of the greater part of one of the major Hausa States.

The Kebbi campaign, which had been boldly conceived, was carried through with speed and decision. In the space of two months the reformers seemed to have restored their fortunes. While they had been winning their victories in the west, however, fresh trouble had been brewing in the east.

When the army of one people is quartered in the country of another there is bound to be friction between the troops and civilians. This was the difficulty which now arose between Shehu's forces, which were composed in the main of Fulani, and their Zamfara allies.

The primary cause of the trouble seems to have been the perennial problem of finding food. Shehu's followers were of course volunteers and irregulars. There was no chest from which to pay them and, apart from the spoils of war, they had to exist as best they could. During the rains of 1804 they probably grew a little food, but when that was exhausted they had to live on the country again. The foraging parties which they sent out were no doubt given orders to respect the property of allies, but hungry men do not trouble about such niceties. As a result, there were certainly instances of food being forcibly commandeered, if not of downright plundering, and at least one case of reprisals being taken.¹⁷

Another factor in the breach may well have been the attitude of the people of Zamfara themselves. At the start of the war the Zamfarawa were glad enough to have Shehu as an ally. After the reverses at *Akalewa* and *Tsuntsuwa*, however, they may well have decided, like

¹⁵ *Bello, Inf. M.* (Arnett, pp. 72-73).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 74-75.

the Tuaregs, that the reformers were not after all capable of winning the war and were therefore no longer worth backing.

Wherever the fault lay, the facts were that while Abdullahi was winning his campaign in Kebbi, relations between the Zamfarawa and the rest of Shehu's forces, which had remained behind under Bello to watch and harry the Gobirawa, went from bad to worse. Before long there was open enmity between them. In describing it, Bello was remarkably objective. 'All Zamfara rose against us', he wrote, 'because . . . our people were oppressing them. They thought that by oppression they would gain their ends but the Zamfarawa resented it and our cause was injured.'¹⁸

For a short period before the conclusion of the Kebbi campaign the Fulani found themselves in a situation where one base was beginning to crumble beneath them while they were still engaged in trying to establish another. Had they failed in Kebbi they would have been in a desperate plight with no territory of their own and Gobir, Zamfara, and Kebbi all ranged against them. As it was, however, Abdullahi's swift success secured a new and much better base in the west and enabled them to take the initiative again in the east.

As soon as it was safe to do so Bello turned his attention to the dissident Zamfara towns. 'I was ordered by Shehu to lead an expedition against Sarkin Zamfara for we had received news that he was assisting our enemies, the Gobirawa and Tuaregs. I therefore set out at the end of the month of Muharram and after a few days march halted at the gate of Garmai. . . . I sought to parley with Sarkin Zamfara but he refused. I begged him to help us and not to help our enemies. Again he refused.'¹⁹

When the terms which he had offered were rejected, Bello struck with a ferocity to which he very seldom had recourse. Garmai and fifty other towns were sacked and the whole countryside laid waste.²⁰

The Zamfara towns had proved to be false friends and were made to pay a heavy price for their defection. In a campaign which lasted through the rains of 1805 Bello broke their strength and gave warning to the rest of the Hausas that the Fulani were not to be trifled with.

The defection of the Zamfarawa and the devastation of much of their territory made Sabongari an unsuitable headquarters. Southern Kebbi, on the other hand, now lay docile under the rule of the new Chief, Usuman Masa. Shehu therefore decided to move and during

¹⁸ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 77).

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 75.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

the rainy season of 1805 he and his followers installed themselves in Gwandu.²¹

While the reformers had been engaged in subduing Kebbi and southern Zamfara the Gobirawa had not been idle. Seeing the fate of another instils the fear of God, says the Hausa proverb, and the rulers of the other States, who until then had remained indifferent or lethargic, were at last beginning to realize their danger. Where he had previously been frustrated, therefore, Sarkin Gobir now succeeded in creating a coalition dedicated to the purpose of crushing the Fulani. The northern part of Kebbi, which had not been subdued by Abdullahi, naturally entered this alliance, as no doubt did some dissidents from the Zamfara towns which Bello had scourged. The other Hausa States, besides harrying their own Fulani at home, also seem to have sent contingents to Gobir and the Tuaregs certainly rallied in considerable strength. In the autumn of 1805, when the harvest had been gathered, a great army began to muster in the north. In October or November, as soon as the floods had receded, this army set off down the Rima Valley.²² Its objective was the complete annihilation of Shehu's forces.

Hitherto the intelligence system of the Fulani had been good and they had always had some previous knowledge of their enemies' intentions. On this occasion, however, they seem either to have been caught unprepared or else to have underestimated the size of the great host which was now bearing down upon them. At any rate, their own forces were scattered and one detachment, which was laying siege to Augi right in the path of the approaching army, had to beat a hasty retreat on Gwandu.²³

In their past fighting Shehu's adherents had invariably taken the offensive, even when heavily outnumbered, and except at Alkalawa their aggressive tactics had always paid. Now one faction, led by Sarkin Yaki Aliyu Jaidu, favoured going out to meet the enemy and risking everything in a pitched battle. But another faction, whose leader was Bello, advocated a defensive strategy. After some debate, the hotheads prevailed and it was decided that the army, jointly commanded by Aliyu Jaidu and the Waziri Abdullahi, should take the field and seek battle.²⁴

It is worth noting here that Shehu himself took no part in this debate. These were mundane affairs and he was content to leave them entirely to his political and military leaders. He did intervene, how-

²¹ *Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, p. 25.

²³ *Ibid.*

²² Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 81).

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 82.

ever, when the dispute over strategy threatened the unity of his cause. Hearing that Bello had declined to march out with the rest of the army, Shehu remonstrated with him and prevailed upon him to follow. 'He said that I ought to accompany them', Bello wrote afterwards, 'lest if they were defeated it should be said that by staying behind I had caused others to hang back.'²⁵ In this episode we catch a glimpse of serious dissension in the Fulani camp and hear for the first time an admission that defeat is possible.

When Bello joined the others in the field they held another council of war. Abdullahi now supported Bello in advocating a retirement, but Aliyu Jaidu was still insistent on taking the offensive. The disagreements of the leaders were reflected in the movements of the army which advanced, fell back, and then advanced again. What was more serious was that the vacillations of the commanders affected the discipline and morale of the troops.

The men who had originally enrolled under Shehu's banner were devout Moslems obeying the summons of their consciences. Later on they were doubtless joined by others who had no strong religious feelings but who responded to the call of blood or race. It is safe to say that, until the battle of Tabkin Kwatto, the major part of Shehu's supporters belonged to one or the other of these two groups. Afterwards, however, when the prospects of ultimate victory had suddenly become much brighter, a certain number of men of a completely different stamp evidently joined the ranks. At best they were opportunists, at worst riff-raff. In Hausaland there have always been plenty of people of this kind, ever ready to drop their humdrum pursuits and join any cause, good or bad, which offers them the prospects of adventure or gain. After their appearance, Shehu's forces, as their recent conduct in Zamfara had shown, had ceased to be an army of scholars and zealots. Now, for the first and indeed only time, they were to get out of hand in the presence of the enemy.²⁶

On the eve of the battle, when the army had advanced to the little town of Kwolda, the troops suddenly threw off their discipline and ransacked the place. Here is Bello's account of the mutiny. 'Now this town was not at war with us and indeed half the inhabitants were our own people. Yet our warriors attacked them and plundered them of all they had. The Waziri Abdullahi ordered them to stop but they refused to obey him. Then I too went into the town to prevent more plundering but I came near to being killed and was forced to withdraw.'²⁷ The plundering of Kwolda has always lain heavily on the

²⁵ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 82).

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

conscience of the Fulani and many of them have attributed to it the calamities which immediately followed.

After the mutiny Bello and Abdullahi again urged a withdrawal. Aliyu Jaidu and his supporters would not hear of it, however, and so the army advanced again until it made contact with the enemy near the town of Alwasa.²⁸

By this time the Fulani forces were much better equipped than they had ever been before. They still relied heavily on their bowmen, it is true, but the spoils of many victories had given them the horses, arms, mail, and quilted armour which they had hitherto lacked. They were of course outnumbered by the great host which Sarkin Gobir had brought against them, but the odds were certainly less daunting than those they had faced at Tabkin Kwatto. Nevertheless, Alwasa proved to be a disastrous defeat for them. When the crunch came their left wing crumpled under the onslaught of the Tuaregs and their whole line of battle was rolled up. The leaders tried in vain to rally the men, but there was no holding them and they fell back in the utmost confusion on Gwandu with losses which Bello put at a thousand men killed.²⁹ This was the only battle in the campaign in which the Fulani failed to justify their reputation as resolute and stubborn fighters.

During the next five days Shehu and his followers faced the great crisis of the war. The town of Gwandu, on which the broken army now fell back, lay then, as now, in a hollow surrounded by low, flat-topped hills of bronze and purple laterite. It had no walls or fortifications of any kind³⁰ and was soon surrounded by the victorious allies. To make matters worse, the people of southern Kebbi, led by the turncoat Usuman Masa, now renounced their allegiance to Shehu and joined the enemy.³¹ For the reformers, defeated and demoralized as they were, the situation could hardly have been more desperate.

There is little doubt that if the enemy had been swift in following up their victory at Alwasa with a determined attack on Gwandu they must have captured the place. The Fulani leaders would then have had the choice of dying in battle, capitulating, or fleeing, and whichever course they might have taken their cause would have been lost. For two days, from the Saturday to the Monday, the prize was there for the taking and for three more days after that the fate of the

²⁸ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 82).

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ The walls of Gwandu were not built until the following year. See *The Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, p. 27.

³¹ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, pp. 83-85).

movement and the whole future of Hausaland still hung in the balance.

At this moment of supreme crisis it was not the redoubtable Bello nor the gifted Abdullahi nor the belligerent Aliyu Jaidu who rallied the demoralized reformers but the frail, devout, and unworldly Shehu. It is characteristic of him that even now, with his army defeated, his captains at odds with one another, and his whole cause in jeopardy, he continued to exert his authority by purely spiritual means. Instead of taking personal command, as in the circumstances almost any other leader would have done, he sought to restore the morale of his followers through prayer and exhortation. We have Bello's testimony for the remarkable success he had in communicating to them his own unshaken sense of faith and purpose: 'Shehu came out from the mosque and preached to the people. With loving-kindness he exhorted them to forsake evil-doing and turn into the paths of righteousness. He prayed for victory and his words made them eager to fight again.'³² There is no better illustration than this of the extraordinary influence which Shehu exerted over his contemporaries.

From the Sunday until the Wednesday the reformers succeeded in repelling the steadily mounting scale of attacks which the allies made upon them. By the Thursday they had recovered sufficiently from their defeat to unleash a fierce counter-attack.³³ While on the defensive, they had been hampered by Gwandu's lack of fortifications. As soon as they went over to the offensive, however, they were greatly aided by the nature of the terrain round the town. On the stony plateaux and steep escarpments of the surrounding hills the Gobir heavy cavalry and the Tuareg camel corps found movement difficult and manoeuvre impossible. The lightly armed Fulani bowmen, on the other hand, were in their element. In a day of prolonged and bitter fighting they restored their self-respect, avenged Alwasa, and turned the tide of war.

The six days which covered the battles of Alwasa and Gwandu were unquestionably the most critical of the whole war. If Alwasa brought Shehu's cause to the very verge of ruin, Gwandu certainly sealed Gobir's fate.

After the victory at Gwandu and the flight of the allied army, the Fulani had no difficulty in stamping out the rising of the Kebbawa. The south submitted without much struggle and in the north the large riverain towns of Gulma, Zazzagawa, and Sauwa, which had

³² Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 83).

³³ *Ibid.*

hitherto preserved their independence, were reduced or overawed. Before the end of the dry season, in fact, all Kebbi, except the towns of Augi and Argungu, had been subdued and the double-traitor, Usuman Masa, had been run to earth and killed.³⁴ After their unhappy experience with him the reformers did not appoint a successor or persevere with their liberal and conciliatory policy. Instead they themselves now took over the reins of government. Having consolidated their base in Kebbi, their next moves were first to reassert their authority over southern Zamfara and then to move northwards into eastern Zamfara. By doing so they were driving a wedge between Gobir and Katsina, where the Fulani had already risen against the Hausa Chief, and thus making the first move in the isolation and encirclement of Gobir.

This northward thrust brought about the last major battle in the western theatre of war. In March 1806 the Gobirawa, supported by the Tuaregs, the Burmawa, the Katsinawa of Kiyawa, and the dissident Zamfarawa under their turncoat Chief Abarshi, put a large army into the field in the upper Rima Valley near Zurmi. The Fulani, under the command of Namoda, met them at the battle of Fafara and won a crushing victory.³⁵ This battle had two important results, the one immediate and the other delayed. The hostile Zamfarawa were finally knocked out of the war and, later in the year, the Tuaregs made a separate peace with the Fulani.³⁶ These twin successes carried the isolation of Gobir two stages further.

In the autumn of 1806 the Fulani made a second attack on Alkalawa. Aliyu Jaidu was in command, but he showed himself to be much more cautious than he had been at Alwasa. In fact, he contented himself with harrying the Gobirawa and laying waste the surrounding country, but did not attempt a direct assault.³⁷

The next development in the campaign was that early in 1807 the reformers in Katsina, who had gradually been gaining the upper hand, at length captured the city and soon afterwards made themselves masters of the whole Emirate. This success completed the encirclement of Gobir. As Kano and Zazzau were already hard pressed, there was now no chance of Yunfa being saved by his neighbours. Shehu's forces could therefore afford to take their time.

In its last eighteen months the war in the west entered a phase of

³⁴ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, pp. 85-86).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-91.

³⁶ *The Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, p. 27. The Tuareg tribes mainly concerned were the Kelgeres of Air and the Itesen of Adar. See Note 9 in Appendix I.

³⁷ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, pp. 91-92).

attrition. For the remainder of 1807 and the first part of 1808 the Fulani were again content to contain Alkalawa and wear down the defenders. Meanwhile they concentrated on completing the subjugation of Kebbi and the occupation of Zamfara.³⁸ By the autumn of 1808, however, it was apparent that Alkalawa was ripe for the plucking. Bello, though still only twenty-nine years of age, was already a veteran in experience, and Shehu decided to entrust the supreme command to him.³⁹ He had often commanded before, of course, but never in an operation of such importance. Furthermore, this was the first time that he had been preferred to Abdullahi and Aliyu Jaidu for a command which they both must have coveted. Aliyu Jaidu evidently agreed to serve under him, but Abdullahi seems to have been unwilling to do so. At any rate, he was not present during the final act.⁴⁰

Early in the dry season Bello marched into Gobir with three separate columns and quickly drove the enemy back into the capital. The city was then closely invested with the Katsina Fulani, under their new Emir Umaru Dallaji, holding the ring to the south and west, the Zamfara Fulani under Namoda to the north, and Shehu's own forces under Aliyu Jaidu to the east.⁴¹

After four and a half years of fighting the strength had gone out of Gobir and the end came quickly. Bello, as terse in triumph as in disaster, described the final victory without vainglory. 'God then opened Alkalawa to us. In the twinkling of an eye, the Moslems hurled themselves on the enemy, killing them and making them captive. Yunfa was slain and all his followers by his side. Thanks be to God.'⁴²

According to a legend treasured by the Fulani, Shehu received supernatural intimation of the victory and knew of it long before Bello's straining messenger could reach him.⁴³ For him and his faithful followers it was the crowning mercy.

³⁸ *The Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, p. 27.

⁴⁰ See Note 10 in Appendix I.

⁴² *Ibid.* p. 95.

³⁹ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 94).

⁴¹ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, pp. 94-95).

⁴³ Alhaji Junaidu, *op. cit.* p. 23.

CHAPTER SIX

The *Jihad* in Katsina, Kano, and Zazzau

KATSINA

KATSINA, it will be remembered, was one of the original Hausa States and had always been in the first flight. Its capital, with walls nearly eight miles in circumference, was an important centre in the trades of both the Sahara and the Sudan and its people were renowned throughout Hausaland for their learning.

In earlier times Katsina's main rival had been Kano and wars between them had been frequent. But in the eighteenth century the Gobirawa, after their move from Air, had become the principal enemy. As a result, after Gobir had defeated Zamfara and occupied half its territory, Katsina had supported the Zamfara diehards and kept their resistance alive, particularly in the town of Kiyawa. This had led to intermittent but long-drawn-out hostilities which had weakened both sides and which had not come to an end until the Katsinawa had defeated and killed Sarkin Gobir Yakuba in 1801.

Katsina is good country for cattle and at the beginning of the nineteenth century there were undoubtedly plenty of Fulani among its people. There is no record of Shehu having made any of his tours there, but he must at least have traversed the State when he visited Daura and he was certainly well known to the local Moslems, because some of them had been his pupils.

When the *jihad* began, the Hausas of Katsina were probably not sorry to see the Gobirawa in difficulties. Certainly, although an appeal was made to them, they sent no help to Yunfa before the battle of Tabkin Kwatto. After the battle, however, they seem to have been quick to perceive that Shehu constituted a new force which might threaten them as well as Gobir. Yunfa pointed the moral in a letter which he wrote at this time to all his brother Chiefs. There had been a small fire in Gobir, he wrote, and because he had neglected to stamp it out, it had flared up and burnt him. Let them be warned by his experience.¹

¹ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 105).

Yunfa's letter probably reached the Chief of Katsina before the conciliatory message which Shehu sent at about the same time. At any rate, when Shehu's letter was brought to him he did not hesitate, as did the Chiefs of Kano and Zazzau, but simply tore it up. 'Even so', Bello wrote afterwards, 'did God tear up his kingdom and his power.'²

In Katsina, as in other Hausa States, Yunfa's message gave the signal for the outlawing of the reformers and the Fulani to begin. 'When Sarkin Katsina heard what had happened to Sarkin Gobir he commanded his Chiefs to make war upon all who were allied to Shehu. Then the Katsina Chiefs combined to kill and capture them until our people came into the open and banded themselves together in large bodies and set to work to arm themselves.'³

Two such bodies fought their way westward in the late rains of 1804 and reached Shehu when he was making his way to southern Zamfara. They were the first important reinforcements to reach him, and must have been doubly welcome.⁴

Meanwhile their comrades who had remained behind in Katsina and Daura had alarmed the Hausa Chiefs sufficiently to cause them to try to join forces with the Chief of Kano with the object of crushing the Fulani risings. Contingents led by Sarkin Katsina and Sarkin Daura actually set out for Kano, but found their way barred by strong Fulani forces under Dan Tunku, the future Emir of Kazaure, who defeated them and compelled them to turn back.⁵

Among Shehu's personal followers was a Fulani called Umaru Dallaji. He seems to have fought at Tabkin Kwatto and the other early battles of the *jihad*, but after the subjugation of Kebbi and the defection of Zamfara, that is to say in the middle of 1805, he was sent to take charge of operations in his native Katsina. His arrival fortunately coincided with the defeat of the Hausas by Dan Tunku. He was therefore able to take the offensive straight away and capture many towns in the southern part of the State.

One of the places which did not fall to Umaru Dallaji was Yandoto, a town which had long been celebrated as a seat of learning.⁶ Its Mallams had never accepted Shehu's teaching and since the start of the *jihad* they had been maintaining that he was in error and guilty of deceiving and misleading the people.⁷ In a war that was being fought on issues of religious principle such a centre of opposition was of course more dangerous than a hostile army. For the reformers it was

² Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 63).

³ *Ibid.* p. 66.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 77.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 8.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 87.

therefore imperative that this strident voice of dissent should either be won over or else stifled. And so towards the end of 1805, as soon as Kebbi had been subdued again after the rising that followed the battle of Alwasa, Bello was dispatched to Katsina Laka, the southern part of the State, to deal with Yandoto and to reinforce and direct Umaru Dallaji's operations.⁸

With him Bello took Muhammadu Ashafa, a Fulani from this part of Katsina⁹ who had himself studied in Yandoto, but who had been expelled when he had declared for Shehu. When Bello arrived before the town he sent Muhammadu to the people with a message saying that he had not come with the intention of making war on them but in the hope of settling all differences by discussion. They spurned this overture, however, and refused either to see Bello or to listen to what he had to say. This rebuff proved too much for Bello's patience and so, without further ado, he moved up his forces and took the town.¹⁰

After this, still accompanied by Umaru Dallaji and Muhammadu Ashafa and now with the support of another influential Fulani called Muhammadu dan Alhaji, Bello went on to exploit his success. He captured many other Hausa towns and subdued a group of local Fulani who had been assisting the Hausa régime.¹¹

When southern Katsina (which at this time also included the Chafe-Gusau-Kanoma area) had been secured, Bello decided that the time had come for him to return to Shehu. He therefore presented flags to Umaru Dallaji and Muhammadu dan Alhaji, as symbols of their authority, and ordered them to move north, into the centre of the State, and attack Awai and Ranko¹² while Muhammadu Ashafa remained in Katsina Laka to consolidate the territory that had already been won.¹³

Ranko and Awai soon fell. The Hausas, under the Ubandawaki, launched a counter-attack against Ranko, but this was repulsed and they were compelled to fall back on the capital.¹⁴ The way was now open for the decisive blow.

But before any attempt was made to deliver it, another powerful ally was recruited to Shehu's cause, namely Umaru Dumyawa, the Chief of the Sullubawa in Katsina. The Sullubawa, like the Toronkawa, were not pure Fulani but part Fulani and part Mandingo. They

⁸ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 87).

⁹ Sokoto *DNBs*, History of Gusau.

¹⁰ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 87). The place is deserted now, but the site, still marked by baobab trees, can be seen on the Zaria-Gusau road. See also Note 11 in Appendix I.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid. p. 78

¹³ Sokoto *DNBs*, History of Gusau.

¹⁴ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 78).

had come with the Fulani from Senegal, however, and they shared their outlook and way of life. Those settled in Gobir and Kebbi had already thrown in their lot with Shehu and now Umaru Dumiya also took up arms. As his people were settled in the north of the State, which was still in the hands of the Hausas, his accession to the cause was of particular importance. He too was therefore rewarded with a flag.¹⁵

In the dry season of 1806-7, while Muhammadu Ashafa held the south and Umaru Dumiya the north, Umaru Dallaji and Muhammadu dan Alhaji closed in on the capital.¹⁶ The siege was a long one and food became so short in the city that a lizard fetched 50 cowries and a vulture 500.¹⁷ At one point the Chief sued for terms but his overtures were referred to Bello who, suspecting treachery, rejected them.¹⁸

Soon afterwards Muhammadu dan Alhaji died. Umaru Dallaji intensified the pressure, however, and at last forced the Hausas to come out and fight in the open. In the ensuing battle the Fulani were completely victorious, the Hausa Chief being killed and his army forced to yield up the city and fall back on Dankama in the north.¹⁹

The capture of Katsina was a major success, but in neighbouring Gobir and Zamfara the war was far from over. Soon afterwards, therefore, Umaru Dallaji went off to help Namoda, the leader of the Zamfara Fulani, in the task of containing Alkalawa. It was probably during his absence that the Katsina Hausas, under their new Chief, Magajin Halidu, launched a surprise counter-attack and recaptured the city.²⁰

The Hausas, however, lacked the strength to exploit this unexpected success, or even to hold Katsina, and they fell back to Dankama. There, soon afterwards, they were attacked by Umaru Dallaji, who had come hurrying back from Alkalawa accompanied by the Zamfara Fulani under Namoda, and by a contingent sent up from Kano.²¹ This combined force defeated the Hausas and took the town. Among those who were killed was the new Chief, who either fell in the fighting or, as some say, committed suicide by jumping down a well.²²

After the victory at Dankama Shehu recognized Umaru Dallaji as the first Fulani Emir²³ of Katsina. There remained, however, the

¹⁵ Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* p. 168.

¹⁶ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 78).

¹⁷ Daniel, *op. cit.* p. 16.

¹⁸ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 78).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.* pp. 78-79.

²² Daniel, *op. cit.* p. 16.

²³ To mark their greater devotion to Islam, the title 'Emir' has been reserved in this book for the Fulani rulers while their Hausa predecessors, though nominally Moslem, have been described as 'Chiefs'.

problem of how to find suitable fiefs for the families of the other two flag-holders. It was solved by a compromise which, if it did not satisfy everyone, at least kept the peace and prevented the Emirate from being broken up. Alhaji's flag had been inherited by his son, Mamman Dikko. He was now appointed warden of the western marches and given the title of Yandakka. Furthermore, though he was expected to accept the local leadership of the new Emir, he was nevertheless allowed to do homage in Sokoto instead of Katsina and the appointment of his successors was retained in the hands of the Sultans of Sokoto and not delegated to the Emirs of Katsina. The other flag-bearer, Umaru Dumyawa, who was still alive, was given the title of Sarkin Sullubawa and accorded similar privileges.²⁴ This solution had the effect of circumscribing the power of the Emirs of Katsina and consequently their rule never became as autocratic as those of some of the other Emirs.

The early victory in Katsina played an important part in the *jihad* and particularly in the decisive struggle against Gobir. First of all it convinced waverers everywhere that Shehu's supporters were really capable of winning the war. Secondly, as already described, it isolated Gobir from the other Hausa States and cut off any prospect of help coming from them or from Bornu. Thirdly, it helped Namoda to complete the pacification of eastern Zamfara. Finally, it released important forces with the result that both the Katsina contingent under Umaru Dallaji and the Zamfara contingent under Namoda were able to take part in the final siege and storming of Alkalawa.

On the Hausa side the great mass of the peasantry had probably taken little part in the war and they now accepted the new régime without protest. For the ruling classes, however, it was a different story. It was they, with their slaves and feudal levies, who had persecuted the reformers and then taken the field against them. During the war they had first been driven back into the city and then forced to flee the country altogether. As soon as they had gone, the victors, who were mainly Fulani, were free to take possession of their houses and step into the public offices which they had occupied. This process went on all over the Emirate, in the villages and hamlets as well as the towns, and it explains why the seizure of power was so thorough and far-reaching.

As for the Hausa dichards, though defeated and driven into exile, they were by no means finished. After the death of Magajin Halidu,

²⁴ Daniel, *op. cit.* pp. 16-17.



7 Sokoto City, aerial view from the centre looking towards the north-west. The square building in the foreground is Sultan Bello's mosque, originally built of sun-baked clay but now reconstructed in durable materials. Beyond the mosque is the Palace of the Sultans, which also dates from Bello's day but has subsequently been extensively rebuilt. In the background is the Sokoto River just above its confluence with the Rima.



8 A market scene in Zamfara, with cotton being sampled by a Mallam whose giant straw hat is designed to fit over his turban.

they appointed Dan Kasuwa to be their Chief.²⁵ Under him they had at first to fall back on the neighbouring State of Damagaram, but they rallied later and established themselves round Maradi in what had previously been the northern corner of their kingdom. This foothold they managed to retain for the rest of the century and when they had recovered some of their former strength they became, as we shall see, a most painful thorn in the side of the Fulani.

KANO

Kano had always been the richest and most populous of the Hausa States and at the end of the eighteenth century its capital was probably the greatest city in the whole Sudan. In a political and military sense, however, it was not as strong as it appeared to be. Its people, perhaps even more than most Hausas, were absorbed in their own pursuits, particularly their very extensive trade, and had little time or zeal to spare for other things. Even *The Kano Chronicle*, which clearly glosses over much that was discreditable or unflattering, cannot altogether conceal the fact that their record in war was a poor one.

The country, like neighbouring Katsina, was well suited to cattle and by the beginning of the nineteenth century the Fulani had penetrated the State in some strength. Most of them indeed had been established for so many generations that they no longer thought of themselves as members of the clans to which they had originally belonged but on the contrary, as their nomenclature shows, had formed new groups based on the territories in which they had become settled or semi-settled.

In the city the most important group of Fulani were the Mundubawa. To the north-west there were the Yolawa, to the north the Dambazawa, to the south-east the Danejawa.²⁶ In addition there were the Sullubawa whom we have already encountered in Katsina, people of mixed Fulani and Mandingo origin but otherwise almost indistinguishable from the Fulani proper. In Kano their main strength lay to the west of the city.²⁷

The Kano Fulani were in touch with Shehu long before his breach with Yunfa. In fact, at least three prominent members of their leading families were studying under him at the time of his flight to Gudu.

²⁵ M. Abadie, *La Colonie du Niger*, Paris, 1927, pp. 124 and 380.

²⁶ Alhaji Abubakar, *Kano ta Daba Cigari*, Kano, 1959, pp. 48-49.

²⁷ *Gazetteer of Kano Province*, p. 11.

Soon afterwards they were sent back to Kano with orders to rally the faithful.

When Shehu's conciliatory letter, written after his victory at Tabkin Kwatto, was first brought to Alwali, the Chief of Kano, he was apparently on the point of accepting it but something caused him to change his mind.²⁸ We do not know what this was but it may either have been Yunfa's warning message or else the news that the Fulani, led by Dan Tunku, had already taken up arms and defeated the attempt of the Chiefs of Katina and Daura to join their forces to him. Whatever the reason, Alwali rejected Shehu's overtures and the war therefore spread to Kano.

After his early success, Dan Tunku went north to Daura, where he helped the Fulani to seize power,²⁹ and he seems to have taken no further part in the *jihad* in Kano. This was dominated by seven men drawn from the six territorial groups which have already been mentioned:

Sulimanu of the Mundubawa, one of Shehu's ablest and most devoted pupils;

Muhammadu Dabo of the Dambazawa, the second of Shehu's pupils;

Muhammadu Bakatsine of the Jobawa, the third of Shehu's pupils;

Jibirin of the Yolawa;

Dan Zabuwa of the Dancjawa;

Jamno and Ibrahim Dabo of the Sullubawa.

Under these leaders the Fulani formed a war camp in the bush at a place called Kwazazzabo 'Yar Kwando about thirty miles west of the city. There they recruited their strength until they were ready to strike.³⁰

Their first move, which was probably made in the dry weather of 1804-5, was to assault the neighbouring town of Karaye. This was the headquarters of the Wambai, one of the territorial magnates of the Hausa hierarchy, and their object may well have been to forestall an attack by him on their own unfortified camp. Whatever the purpose, the assault was completely successful and Karaye, though defended by a wall, was captured.³¹

Hitherto Alwali seems to have underrated the danger which the

²⁸ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 63).

²⁹ Ibid. p. 79.

³⁰ Alhaji Abubakar, *op. cit.* p. 49, and Kano *DNBs*, History of Kiru.

³¹ Kano *DNBs*, History of Karaye.

Fulani represented, but the loss of Karaye stung him into action. He collected an army and led it against the Fulani at 'Yar Kwando. According to legend, the battle lasted two days and, but for a ruse, might have gone against the Fulani. As it was, they won a heartening victory.³²

The major battle of the *jihad* in Kano was fought at Dan Yahaya, about twenty-five miles north of the city, and probably took place in the dry season of 1806-7. Sarkin Kano Alwali is said to have put ten thousand horsemen into the field as well as thousands of infantry. Although this figure may well be an exaggeration there is no doubt that the Hausas enjoyed a great preponderance in numbers. Once again, however, the skill and resolution of the Fulani bowmen turned the tide of war. They won a crushing victory and forced Alwali and the remnants of his army to fall back on the city.³³

The withdrawal of the Hausa forces behind the walls of the capital left the Fulani a free hand in the country. They put it to good use and soon eliminated, or at any rate isolated, all pockets of resistance. Having obtained control of the greater part of the State, they at length turned their attention to the city. Kano was finally captured in 1807, probably in the last quarter, that is to say about a year later than Katsina, but a year earlier than Alkalawa.³⁴

After losing his capital Alwali fled to Burumburum, a large walled town in the extreme south of his former domains. Had he been allowed to establish himself there, he would doubtless have become the focus of a Hausa resistance movement which might have plagued the new régime for the rest of the century. As it was, a Fulani force led by Mallam Jammo of the Sullubawa Clan pursued him and, after a siege of forty days, stormed the town. Alwali was killed and with his death a dynasty of forty-three Chiefs came to an end.³⁵ Hausa resistance in Kano was thus extinguished.

The choice of the first Fulani Emir and the division of the spoils of victory among the other leaders was to cause some dissension. Two years earlier Shehu had summoned them all to meet him in Zamfara so that he could appoint a leader, but in the event he had been unable to make the journey. Bello had therefore represented him at this meeting, which had taken place just before the attack on Yandoto,

³² Kano *DNBs*, History of Kiru.

³³ *Gazetteer of Kano Province*, p. 11, and Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 79).

³⁴ Kano had certainly, but apparently only recently, been taken when Abdullahi reached it in October or November 1807. See Note 10 in Appendix I.

³⁵ Kano *DNBs*, History of Tudun Wada. The visitor to Burumburum is still shown the baobab tree under which Alwali lies buried.

and acting on Shehu's instructions³⁶ had selected Sulimanu to take command. The choice was not a happy one because Sulimanu was an unworldly scholar and evidently lacked the personality that leadership demanded.³⁷

So long as the enemy was in the field, the reformers had suppressed their rivalries and remained loyal to their appointed leader. As soon as victory was won, however, their differences broke out. When Abdullahi went to Kano towards the end of 1807, soon after the capture of the city, he found the Fulani preoccupied with their worldly rivalries, and at odds with one another.³⁸ He had some success in settling their disputes, but with his departure they seem to have broken out afresh.

At any rate, in 1808 it was considered necessary to send a deputation to Shehu in Gwandu in order to get the question of the leadership decided. Reading between the lines, one cannot escape the conclusion that the purpose of this move was to have Sulimanu deposed and one of the other leaders appointed Emir in his place. If this was the case, however, the attempt failed because Shchu confirmed Bello's earlier choice and invested the unsophisticated and relatively youthful Sulimanu with the insignia of an Emir.³⁹ To consolidate his authority still further he also gave him a daughter in marriage.

Despite these marks of favour Sulimanu never succeeded in quelling the rivalries that surrounded him or establishing himself firmly on the throne of Kano. In fact, within a year he had a serious quarrel with one of his lieutenants, Muhammadu Dabo, which again required Shehu's intervention.⁴⁰

The persistence of these jealousies helps to explain why in 1809 the Kano Fulani, unlike their cousins in Katsina and Zamfara, sent no reinforcements to Shehu for the final battle at Alkalawa. The truth is that because of Sulimanu's weakness as a ruler the hold which they had established on Kano was at first a precarious one. This was revealed by the widespread Hausa revolts which broke out when Sulimanu died in 1819.

In most of the Fulani Emirates when the first ruler died the succession passed to his descendants. That events in Kano took a different course can be attributed to two factors, first, the near-equality of the

³⁶ Information from Alhaji Junaidu.

³⁷ H. A. S. Johnston, *A Selection of Hausa Stories*, Oxford, 1966, pp. 121-2.

³⁸ Abdullah, *TIV* (Hiskett, p. 121).

³⁹ Alhaji Abubakar, *op. cit.* p. 49.

⁴⁰ Kano *DNBs*, History of Dambarta.

seven families which had led the *jihad* and, second, the ineffectiveness of Sulimanu as a ruler. When he died the question of who should succeed him was referred to Sokoto. By that time Shehu too was dead and Bello had become Sultan. His choice fell on Ibrahim Dabo, the head of the Sullubawa, who was duly appointed to be the second Emir and who founded the dynasty which was to rule Kano for the rest of the century.⁴¹

ZAZZAU

Zazzau was the most southerly of the original Hausa States. Between it and the River Benue lay a belt of country which differed from the open plains of the north by being more hilly and having a denser cover of bush. This area contained no important States, apart from Nupe in the south-west, and its population was grouped into a number of petty principalities and independent pagan tribes. In the seventeenth century they were all embodied into the riverain empire of Kwararafa, while Zazzau itself was threatened and constricted, but as the Jukun power receded again, so a power-vacuum was created into which Zazzau was able to expand.

In the north the expansion of the Hausa States had already taken the form of settlement, plantation, or conquest followed by assimilation. In the south, however, the denser bush did not appeal to Hausa settlers and the more primitive tribes were not easy to assimilate. Consequently, Zazzau's expansion proceeded by conquest and the imposition of suzerainty, not by settlement or assimilation, and the pattern which emerged from it differed from the conventional one. By the end of the eighteenth century there were, in fact, five petty Chiefs on Zazzau's southern borders who ruled over congeries of Gwaris, Bassas, and other small tribes and tribal fragments. All these Chiefs owed allegiance to Zazzau and were subject to loose control by the Hausa Chief. Provided that they paid their tribute of slaves, however, they were largely left to their own devices.⁴²

In addition to these vassals, there were other tribes which had never made submission. Having refused to purchase their immunity by doing homage and paying tribute, they were regarded by the Hausas as fair game for the slave-raids by which Zazzau traditionally supported itself and provided for the needs of the rest of Hausaland.⁴³

⁴¹ Alhaji Abubakar, *op cit.* pp. 52-53. For Ibrahim Dabo's family tree see Table 4 in Appendix II.

⁴² *Ch A*, p. 6.

⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 4.

In 1802 Muhammad Makau succeeded as the sixtieth Chief of Zazzau.⁴⁴ He was a devout Moslem and when, after the *jihad* had begun, Shehu's message was brought to him, he was ready to accept it. His advisers thought otherwise, however, and he was compelled to defer to their views.⁴⁵ As Zazzau had apparently not followed Gobir and Katsina in renouncing its allegiance to Bornu, and as the suzerain's influence seems to have been stronger there than in the other Hausa States,⁴⁶ it may well be that Makau was coerced in this matter by the Kachalla, the Sultan of Bornu's Resident at his Court, or perhaps by an alliance between the Kachalla and his own Councillors. Whatever the process might have been, the outcome was that Shehu's overtures were rejected and the war spread.

The principal leader of the *jihad* in Zazzau was a Fulani called Mallam Musa who hailed originally from Mali, in the western Sudan. He had come to Hausaland some time before and, after studying under Shehu, had established himself in Zazzau as a religious teacher. He is said to have taken part in the flight from Degel to Gudu and he certainly received a flag from Shehu with a commission to lead the *jihad* in Zazzau.⁴⁷

The Fulani had been established for generations in Zazzau, as in the other Hausa States, and Musa's appointment as leader seems to have caused some jealousy among the older families. Prominent among these were another branch of the Sullubawa, whom we have already met in Katsina and Kano, and the Bornawa who, as their name shows, were Fulani who had come to Zazzau by way of Bornu. Musa was instructed by Shehu to work with their leaders, Abdu Salami and Yamusa, and this he did.⁴⁸

In the month of March, probably in the year 1805, Musa entered Zazzau from the north.⁴⁹ No doubt he had previously arranged a rendezvous there with Shehu's known adherents. In addition he received support from some of the local Hausas.⁵⁰

As soon as he heard of the invasion, Makau sent his cavalry, under the Madaki, to intercept the enemy and bar their way to the city.

⁴⁴ *Ch A*, p. 37.

⁴⁵ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 64). Confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu.

⁴⁶ Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* p. 219.

⁴⁷ M. G. Smith, *op. cit.* p. 138.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 138-9.

⁴⁹ *Ch A*, p. 5. The date given there is 1804, but this cannot be right because we know from Bello that it was not until July 1804 that Shehu wrote his letters to the Hausa Chiefs, including Zazzau, and the *jihad* did not really spread to the other States until his overtures had been rejected.

⁵⁰ M. G. Smith, *op. cit.* p. 139.

Musa either defeated this force or else gave it the slip, for very soon afterwards he was able to take the Hausas completely by surprise. It happened to be the day of the Lesser Bairam festival and the Chief, attended by his followers and accompanied by all the Moslems of the city, had ridden forth as usual to the ceremonial prayer-ground outside the walls. While there, they were surprised by Musa's cavalry and their retreat into the city cut off. Being unarmed they were unable to stand and fight and so they had no choice but to fly. The great city of Zaria, therefore, fell to the Fulani with hardly a blow having been struck.⁵¹

Having lost his capital Makau made his way south with about three thousand followers. He went first to Kauru, but the Chief, who was one of his vassals, shut the gates of the town against him. He therefore passed on to Kajuru where the Chief admitted him. The Fulani were close on his heels, however, and besieged him there for six months. In the end their pressure became so great that he was forced to move on again.⁵²

From Kajuru, Makau went on to Zuba. The Fulani continued to attack and harry him for the next fifteen months, but in the south the terrain was more hilly and less open than in the north and they failed to kill or capture him. Finally, in 1807, he repulsed them whereupon they abandoned the pursuit and went back to Zaria.⁵³

When he became a fugitive, Makau found that some of his subjects, notably the Gwari, remained loyal to him but that most of them threw off their allegiance. Having no capital or base of his own, he was forced to keep moving about in the broken country which lies between the Niger and the Benue Rivers near their confluence. In this way he preserved a precarious existence for another eighteen years. In 1825, however, while attacking the town of Lapai, he met his death.⁵⁴

Makau was succeeded by his brother, Abu Ja. It was he who founded the town of Abuja and this became the headquarters of the fugitive Hausas of Zazzau.⁵⁵ They continued to maintain their independence and, by exerting their influence over the neighbouring pagan tribes, gradually built Abuja into a Chieftdom of some importance. For the rest of the century they were to remain a thorn in the side of the Fulani, but they never developed into such a serious menace as the diehards of Gobir, Katsina, and Kebbi were soon to become.

⁵¹ *Ch A*, pp. 5-6. This disaster is still commemorated during the Moslem festivals in Abuja by the Emir's bodyguard facing to the west while he turns to the east to pray.

⁵² *Ibid.* p. 7.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 8.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p. 9.

Meanwhile, Mallam Musa had been confirmed by Shehu as the first Fulani Emir. His first task was to consolidate his authority in Zazzau proper and its vassal States. After the flight of Makau there seems to have been little resistance from the Hausas.⁵⁶ The feudatories and major office holders fled or stepped down into obscurity. Either way, the road was left open for the new Emir to install his own supporters, the great majority of whom were Fulani.

Musa was not content with consolidation, however, and was determined to extend his dominions southward. This he did by inducing the Fulani in the area, who were already fighting the local pagan tribes, to accept his leadership. The Fulani of Jema'a seem to have been glad enough to do so in return for Musa's promise of protection and support.⁵⁷ Those of Keffi, where Abdu Zanga had already established a town protected by a stockade, were at first hopeful of obtaining recognition direct from Shehu, but Musa persuaded them that Shehu had already made him suzerain of all the territory between Zaria and the Benue River. In the end, therefore, they were content to accept a flag from him and acknowledge him as their overlord.⁵⁸ In this way the two small Emirates of Jema'a and Keffi came into being in about 1810 as vassals of Zazzau. Nearly a generation later the process was repeated when Makama Dogo, a Hausa soldier of fortune who had carved out a kingdom for himself in the south, was recognized as the vassal Emir of Nassarawa.⁵⁹ In this way Zaria, as the Emirate of the Fulani now came to be called, at length reached the Benue.

When Musa, the first Emir, died in 1821 one of his sons expected to succeed him. In the event, however, the choice of the Electors fell on Yamusa, the head of the Bornawa family, who as the Madaki had been Musa's principal lieutenant. Similarly, when Yamusa died in 1834, the throne did not go to any of his sons but to Abdul Kerim, another Fulani who had played a prominent part in the *jihad*.⁶⁰ After that, apart from one aberration, the succession rotated irregularly between the houses of these first three Emirs. This meant that Zaria had three ruling families whereas in all the other Emirates, including Kano after the initial change, there was only one dynasty.

⁵⁶ M. G. Smith, *op. cit.* p. 140.

⁵⁷ *Notes on Nassarawa Province*, 1920, p. 13.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 6.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 16-17.

⁶⁰ M. G. Smith, *op. cit.* pp. 150-2.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The *Jihad* in Bornu

KANEM-BORNU has already been mentioned as one of the four great empires of the Sudan which preceded the Empire of Sokoto. As a Moslem power of long standing, which saw no need for reform, it naturally became the principal adversary of the Fulani reformers and so it has a prominent part to play in this history.

The accounts of the origins of the Kanuri (as the people of Bornu are called) and the Kanembu go back to the shadowy period of the first millennium and are more than ordinarily contradictory and confusing. There is no doubt, however, that like the Hausas they were the products of a mingling of races. The region round Lake Chad which they inhabited was connected by caravan routes to both Tripolitania and the Nile Valley from as early as the eighth century¹ and Arab strains from the east as well as Berber strains from the north seem to have entered into their make-up. In fact, there is reason to think that, like the Gobirawa, their ruling classes and common people had different origins, that the commoners evolved out of a union of Berber immigrants and Sudanic tribes, and that subsequently they absorbed another wave of immigrants, this time of Arab blood, whom they accepted as an aristocracy.²

Whatever their precise origins, the Kanembu seem to have emerged as a distinct people two or three hundred years before the Hausas. Certainly Kanem was mentioned by the historian Yakubi, writing at the end of the ninth century,³ and the people are said to have embraced Islam as early as the last decade of the eleventh century, again two or three centuries sooner than the Hausas.⁴

It was in the twelfth century that Kanem's expansion began. Under a vigorous ruler the Kanembu extended their influence southwards to obtain better control of the staples of the trans-Saharan trade—gold, ivory, and of course slaves—and northwards to prevent the nomads of the desert from plundering their caravans.⁵ In the following

¹ Mauny, *op. cit.* p. 429.

² Palmer, *op. cit.* vol. I, pp. 11-12, and Note 12 in Appendix I.

³ *Ibid.* p. 7.

⁴ Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* p. 309.

⁵ Barth, *op. cit.* vol. II, p. 279, and Stenning, *op. cit.* pp. 27-28.

century they pushed their settlements to the west until the whole northern shore of the Lake was in their grip.⁶ Next, dissident members of their ruling family, who had previously broken away to the east and founded the Bulala Dynasty in the new kingdom of Gaoga, returned to challenge their authority in Kanem. In the civil war which followed the Bulala were completely victorious and in about 1390⁷ the legitimate ruler and the loyalists were compelled to abandon the capital of Njimi and seek refuge in the new settlements to the west of the Lake. This shift marked the emergence of Bornu as a State distinct from Kanem and the Kanuri as a people distinct from the Kanembu.

During the ensuing period the Mais, as the Sultans of Bornu were called, gradually rebuilt their strength. In this they were greatly assisted by their success in winning the allegiance of the Shuwa Arabs, a fresh wave of immigrants who had poured into the central Sudan after the destruction of the Christian kingdom of Nubia, about a century earlier, and settled in fairly large numbers in the region south of the Lake.

By about A.D. 1430, little more than a generation after losing Kanem to the Bulala, the Mais of Bornu were able to establish their hegemony over the Hausa States. At about the same time the re-opening of the caravan route from Egypt to Chad, again as a result of the extinction of the Christian power in Nubia, and its extension to the gold-bearing districts of Ashanti, must have brought new trade and wealth to Bornu.⁸ This was reflected in the decision of Mai Ali Ghaji, in about A.D. 1488, to build a fine new capital at Ngazargamu.⁹

When Idris succeeded as Mai in A.D. 1503 he felt strong enough to attempt the reconquest of Kanem. Soon afterwards, therefore, he led an army round the Lake and a great battle took place at Garni Kiyala. The Bulala usurper was completely defeated and forced to retire to the east. His successor later tried to recover Kanem, but he, too, was defeated and driven back. The wheel had now come full circle and, instead of Bornu's being a province in the Empire of Kanem, Kanem had become a tributary State in the Empire of Bornu.¹⁰ But the Bulala, despite the loss of all their western possessions, refused to submit and from their original base in the east they continued to harry the Kanuri intermittently for the rest of the century.¹¹

⁶ *Gazetteer of Bornu Province*, 1929, p. 10.

⁷ Palmer, *op. cit.* vol. I, p. 17.

⁸ Mauny, *op. cit.* pp. 429-37.

⁹ *Gazetteer of Bornu Province*, p. 11.

¹⁰ Palmer, *op. cit.* vol. I, p. 17.

¹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 18-72.

Mai Idris was already embroiled in the struggle with the Bulala when the Songhai army invaded Hausaland in 1513. This probably explains why he allowed his rights as a suzerain to be wrested from him by Askia Muhammad and why he and his successors subsequently made such a poor showing against Muhammadu Kanta of Kebbi.

Bornu is usually regarded as having reached the height of its power under Mai Idris Alooma, who reigned from 1571 to 1603. But he too had to expend most of his energy in expeditions against the Bulala and he did not attempt to reconquer the Hausa States. In the century that followed his death the Kanuri, no less than the Hausas, were on the defensive against the Jukuns, and so it was not until 1734 that they re-established their sway over Hausaland. But soon afterwards, under the weak Mai Ali Ajimi, their power declined again,¹² with the result that some of the Hausa States, as has already been mentioned, were able to throw off their allegiance although others seem to have remained loyal.

In the organization of Bornu there was a wide measure of decentralization. The tributary States, as we have already seen, were left to rule themselves with only Residents stationed in their capitals to watch over imperial interests. Nearer home the marches of Bornu proper were ruled by Wardens or Constables chosen from the ruling family. Their functions were the preservation of law and order, the conduct of diplomacy with neighbouring peoples, if necessary through war or punitive expeditions, and the collection of tax and tribute. The Warden of the West, the Galadima, had his headquarters at Nguru and from there he wielded his very considerable authority.¹³

Exactly when the first Fulani reached Bornu we do not know, but it was probably at about the same time as the arrival in Birnin Konni of Shehu's ancestor, Musa Jakollo, that is to say in the middle of the fifteenth century.¹⁴ Even if the majority came much later, there is no doubt that by the beginning of the nineteenth century they had been living among the Kanuri for generations.

Such, then, was the setting of the scene in Bornu when the *jihad* began in Hausaland.

The Mai of Bornu, as ruler of the most powerful Moslem State in the central Sudan, had long been known by the Islamic title of 'Commander of the Faithful'. It was natural, therefore, that as soon

¹² Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* p. 318.

¹³ Stenning, *op. cit.* p. 28.

¹⁴ *K Ch* (Palmer, p. 111).

as the Mai of the day, Ahmed ibn Ali, heard that the reformers had conferred this style upon their leader, he should have sent a peremptory message to Shehu demanding to know by what right he had accepted the title and taken it on himself to declare a holy war.¹⁵ In his reply Shehu asserted that the Hausa Chiefs were no better than infidels and called on the Mai, as he was a good Moslem, to support the *jihad*. At the same time he sent an order to the Fulani in Bornu to stay their hand and accept a peaceful settlement if one was offered. But the Mai took offence at Shehu's message and instead of offering peace started preparing for war.¹⁶

When the fighting started in Hausaland it is unlikely that Gobir and Katsina, having previously renounced their allegiance, appealed to Bornu for help. Kano and Daura probably did so, however, for the Mai seems to have ordered the Galadima to go to their rescue. But before he could make any effective move he found that he had his own hands full.¹⁷

At that time there were a number of small principalities—Auyo, Bedde, Shira, and Tashena—lying between Bornu and Hausaland. They were under the jurisdiction of the Galadima and it was there that the reformers now rose against the authority of Bornu. First of all a pastoral Fulani called Abdure, or Abduwa, threw off his allegiance and declared for Shehu. Although he himself died very soon afterwards, his two sons, Umaru and Sambo, obtained a flag and a commission to subdue the principality of Auyo. This they very soon did. Next they took possession of the town of Hadeija, which they enlarged and strengthened, and from there they proceeded to extend their authority over the intervening and surrounding towns and villages. One of these, incidentally, was Garun Gabas, the only one of the original *Hausa Bakwai* which had failed to develop into even a principality. This territory became the nucleus of the Emirate of Hadeija.¹⁸

Meanwhile, another Fulani, Ardo Lernima, had also joined the *jihad*. He lived near Nguru and, before the war, had been the agent appointed by the Galadima to collect tax and tribute from the pastoral Fulani in the district. Although the Galadima had given him a daughter in marriage he declared for Shehu and urged the Fulani to rise. In the first clash Lernima was defeated, but later, when he had been reinforced by Sambo of Hadeija and Ibrahim Zaki of Shira, whom we shall meet again later, he was completely victorious. The

¹⁵ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 100).

¹⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 100-1.

¹⁷ Stenning, *op. cit.* p. 30.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 30-31.

Bornu forces were defeated, Nguru sacked, and the Galadima killed.¹⁹ The destruction of Nguru and the consolidation of Hadeija meant that in the northern sector of Bornu's western frontier the reformers had been completely successful.

In the central and southern sectors of the frontier operations were in the hands of three men, all of whom were Fulani. The first, Ibrahim Zaki, was the son of the Imam of Shira. His family was influential in the little principality and he himself had been given a daughter of the Chief in marriage.²⁰ The second, Gwani Muktar, also came of a family which had been settled in Bornu for many generations. He himself had studied under Shehu and indeed had been one of his most gifted pupils.²¹ The third, Buba Yero, came from the Lower Gongola, where his father had settled and taken a daughter of the local Chief in marriage. He too had studied under Shehu as a young man and ever afterwards had remained one of his most devoted and trusted followers. Unlike the other Fulani, however, he had not waited for the *jihad* to start before asserting his authority but by 1798 had already made himself master of the greater part of the valley of the Lower Gongola. When the war came, therefore, he was already a force in his own right.²²

News of the *jihad* and of the Mai of Bornu's reaction to it caused Ibrahim Zaki and Gwani Muktar to renounce their allegiance and declare for Shehu. They were not yet strong enough to risk a battle, however, and so at the start they fell back to the south and joined forces on the Gongola with Buba Yero.²³ Fortunately for them, Mai Ahmed was notoriously feeble and irresolute. Had he possessed vision and moved with speed, he could have crushed the local risings of the Fulani before they had become dangerous or had had the chance of coalescing. He might also have saved the Hausa rulers of Kano, Daura, and Zazzau. As it was, however, he did nothing to help his Hausa vassals or reinforce the Galadima. Even the fall of Nguru did not stir him out of his lethargy and he tamely permitted the numerically much weaker Fulani to seize and keep the initiative.

After the destruction of Nguru and the capture of Hadeija, the Fulani made their next move against Shira, which Ibrahim Zaki, whose adopted country it was, invaded and occupied in 1807. The three leaders then met near Damaturu and agreed upon a concerted plan of campaign.²⁴ While Ibrahim Zaki attacked Tashena and Buba

¹⁹ Stenning, *op. cit.* pp. 30-31.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Alhaji Abukar, *op. cit.* p. 49.

²² *Gazetteer of Yola Province*, pp. 12-13. Confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu.

²³ Stenning, *op. cit.* pp. 31-32.

²⁴ *Gazetteer of Bornu Province*, p. 18.

Yero operated in south-western Bornu, Gwani Muktar was to drive up through the centre and try to capture Ngazargamu, the capital.²⁵

This plan was put into effect in the dry season of 1807-8, nearly a year after the capture of Katsina and at about the same time as the final attack on Kano city. It was a complete success and, on 12 March 1808, Gwani Muktar seized the capital of the Bornu Empire.²⁶

Nineteen days previously, Mai Ahmed, who was old and blind, had abdicated in favour of his son, Muhammad Lefiami. The new Mai succeeded in escaping from the city and making his way to the east but, even so, it looked as if the Empire was shattered and as if the kingdom too might disintegrate. At that moment, however, a new figure suddenly appeared upon the scene who in his way was hardly less remarkable than the Fulani leaders and who made a worthy opponent for them. This was Sheikh Muhammad el-Amin el-Kanemi.

El-Kanemi was the son of Skeikh Ninga, a well-known scholar and divine of Kanembu origin who had settled in the Fezzan.²⁷ After visiting Egypt and making the pilgrimage to Mecca, El-Kanemi had returned to Kanem and there established a great reputation for learning and piety. It was to him that the fugitive Mai now turned for help. El-Kanemi was especially influential with his own Kanembu, who had the same reputation as pikemen as the Swiss had enjoyed in Europe a few centuries earlier, and with the Shuwa Arabs of southern Chad. By mustering these two elements as a stiffening for the Sultan's own Kanuri, he was able to turn the tide of war.²⁸

The easy triumph which the Fulani had enjoyed in occupying the whole of western Bornu and capturing the capital seems to have made them over-confident. Certainly, they were unprepared for El-Kanemi's counter-attack when it was launched in October 1809. Buba Yero and his followers were in the south, consolidating their conquests, while in the west Ibrahim Zaki was occupied in annexing Tashena and merging it with Shira. The blow therefore fell on Gwani Muktar, whose forces were inadequate to withstand it. He himself was killed in the fighting and his people were driven out of Ngazargamu, which the Kanuri under El-Kanemi then reoccupied.²⁹

Three or four years of indecisive fighting followed. In the dry

²⁵ Stenning, *op. cit.* p. 32.

²⁶ *Gazetteer of Bornu Province*, p. 18.

²⁷ Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* p. 320. Further back El-Kanemi is said to have been of Moorish descent. See Denham, Clapperton, and Oudney, *Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa*, London, 1828, vol. II, p. 179.

²⁸ *Gazetteer of Bornu Province*, p. 20.

²⁹ Stenning, *op. cit.* p. 32.

season of 1811-12 the Fulani captured Ngazargamu for the second time. After this both sides seem to have realized that the sands and swamps of western Bornu were hardly worth fighting for. The Kanuri therefore abandoned Ngazargamu for good and fell back on Lake Chad while the Fulani consolidated their gains in the south and west.³⁰

Although the Fulani had failed to crush Bornu, as before the emergence of El-Kanemi had seemed likely, they had nevertheless made substantial gains at Bornu's expense. In the north-west Sambo Digimsa had established the new Emirate of Hadeija. In the west Ibrahim Zaki had welded Shira and Tashena together to form the new Emirate of Katagum. In the south Buba Yero had carved the new Emirate of Gombe out of pagan lands over which Bornu had previously held sway. All these leaders had received flags from Shehu during the fighting and were now recognized by him as the rulers of the territory which they controlled.

By 1812, among all the Fulani who had taken the leading parts in the war against Bornu, only the family and followers of Gwani Muktar were still unrewarded. They had striven for the greatest prize of all, the whole of western Bornu, and had lost it. When Gwani Muktar had been killed in the Bornu counter-attack of 1809, the leadership had passed to his son, Mamman Manga. For a time he was able to maintain a foothold in southern Bornu in the Gujba-Damaturu area, but later he was driven out by El-Kanemi. In recognition of what he and his father had done for the cause, however, Shehu conferred the title of Sarkin Bornu upon him and later Bello, when he became Sultan, ordered the Emir of Bauchi to cede to him the town of Misau together with the country round it.³¹ The little kingdom of Misau, which was thus brought into existence, completed the quarter-circle of Fulani Emirates that now lay round the western and southern boundaries of Bornu.

After eight years of war the Kanuri were as ready for peace as the Fulani.³² Although the Mais were still the nominal rulers of Bornu, all effective power had by now passed to El-Kanemi. It was he who

³⁰ When Denham visited this area a dozen years later, he found it almost deserted but studded with the ruins of former towns. See *Travels*, vol. I, p. 348.

³¹ *Gazetteer of Kano Province*, pp. 33-34, and Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* p. 498. Confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu.

³² Apart from being exhausted by the war, the Kanuri had reason to be apprehensive of the latent enmity of Baghirmi and Wadai in their rear. This was soon to lead to war on their eastern front. See Denham, *Travels*, vol. I, p. 456 and vol. II, p. 182.

decided to abandon Ngazargamu and in the space of three years he first deposed Mai Lefiami and then restored him to the throne.³³

In 1814, after the withdrawal to the region round Lake Chad, El-Kanemi obtained two concessions from the Mai which strengthened his position still further. First he was appointed head of all the Kanembu who had settled to the west of the Lake and then he was given the land round Kukawa, or Kuka as it later came to be called, for the purpose of establishing an administrative headquarters.³⁴ As no new capital was built for the Mais, who lived at a number of different places in the neighbourhood, Kuka came to be regarded more and more as the capital of the kingdom and El-Kanemi as its real ruler.

So ended the first phase of the struggle between the new Empire and the old. The peace which came in 1812 was only an armistice, however, not a genuine reconciliation, and thirteen years later the war was to be resumed.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The *ḡihad* in Adamawa and Bauchi

THE boundaries of the Empire which the Fulani created did not stop short at the open plains of the Sudan. To the south of Bornu and the Hausa States lay a belt of much closer country with a higher rainfall and many more natural features. In the centre, between the converging Niger and Benue Rivers, was the Bauchi Plateau. To the east of it were the mountainous ranges which formed the watershed between the Atlantic and Lake Chad. To the west was the area of dense, tsetse-infested bush which separated the Lower Kaduna and Middle Niger Rivers. This country, sparsely populated by small pagan tribes, lay mostly outside the pale of Hausa and Kanuri civilization.

The peoples of the Sudan were the heirs of a common culture and, though often at feud, at least regarded each other as being more or less equals. On the other hand, they were at one in treating their neighbours to the south as inferiors. Because of this attitude there

³³ *Gazetteer of Bornu Province*, p. 21.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

had been very little intercourse between the Kanuri and Hausas on the one side and the pagans on the other, except for a little trading and a good deal of slave-raiding. With the Fulani, however, it was otherwise.

The first Fulani to reach Bornu may have appeared as early as A.D. 1300,¹ but the date when they began to arrive in significant numbers was probably, as has already been noted, the middle of the fifteenth century. Until then, in their migratory drift through the Sudan, they had moved mainly among settled agricultural peoples and had encountered few serious rivals for the pasture and water for which they were always searching. When they reached Chad, however, their east-bound tide ran into the west-bound tide of the Shuwa Arabs, who were pastoralists like themselves.² This collision, long drawn out and peaceful though it was, seems to have had the effect of halting the Shuwas, who made no further advance towards the west, and of turning the Fulani aside. A few Fulani, it is true, passed through the Shuwas and moved on eastward into Baghirmi and Wadai,³ but far greater numbers either settled in Bornu or were diverted to the south.

As it happened, the country lying south of Bornu was admirably suited to the Fulani's needs. Today it contains one of the greatest concentrations of Fulani that exists anywhere in Africa and so we can take it that the process of infiltration continued over a long period. By the end of the eighteenth century it had certainly reached an advanced stage. But the great majority of the immigrants were still semi-nomadic pastoralists and consequently, though by now numerous, they were widely scattered among the valleys and plateaux of a region in which communications were poor. Furthermore, apart from Buba Yero's recent conquests on the Lower Gongola, they possessed no territory or strongholds of their own but had to accept the authority of their hosts.

Being superior in culture and intelligence to the people among whom they settled, however, the Fulani gradually acquired influence at the Courts of the unsophisticated pagan Chiefs. Sometimes, too, they forged closer links by accepting the daughters of these Chiefs in marriage. But as they increased in numbers and influence, so the role

¹ *Gazetteer of Yola Province*, p. 10.

² It is significant that, according to *The Kano Chronicle*, Arabs and Fulani both appeared for the first time in the reign of the same Chief (Palmer, p. 111).

³ According to Barth the first Fulani reached Baghirmi in the sixteenth century. In about 1822 their descendants tried, rather belatedly, to extend the *jihad* eastwards, but their rising failed and was suppressed. See *Travels*, vol. IV, p. 339.

of subservience, which they had previously been content to accept, became increasingly irksome to them. In fact, it seems probable that, even if Shehu had never risen against Yunfa, the Fulani of Adamawa and Bauchi would still have overthrown the pagan rulers, as Buba Yero had already done, and set up some kind of State of their own. As it was, however, these movements all became part of the larger *jihad*.

It is sometimes supposed that the creation of the Emirates of Adamawa and Bauchi out of the backward tribes and petty States which had previously occupied the area was an easier task than the seizure of power in the much more advanced kingdoms of Hausaland. In fact, with the sole exception of Gobir, the reverse was true. In the open plains of the north the issue was decided by a few pitched battles and sieges. Once the Hausas had been defeated, the Fulani were able to take over the States as going concerns. The Hausa diehards, it is true, were later able to harry the conquerors by raids, but these, except for Kebbi's, had to be carried out from distant bases and never threatened the integrity of the Fulani Emirates. In Adamawa and Bauchi, on the other hand, the pagans generally managed to avoid pitched battles and instead retired to fastnesses in the hills from which it was extremely difficult to dislodge them. Consequently, the *jihad* lasted much longer in the south than it did in the north.

Another difference between the *jihad* in Adamawa and Bauchi on the one hand and in the Hausa States on the other lay in the origins of the participants. In the Hausa States the contest was in the main a straightforward one between the Fulani with their miscellaneous allies and the Hausa ruling classes. Outside Hausaland, however, where the adversaries were pagans and where there were rich prizes to be won, plenty of Hausas were to be found among the ranks of the Fulani reformers. In Adamawa, for example, volunteers from Katsina, Zamfara, Kebbi, and Gobir took part in the fighting,⁴ while in Bauchi the Fulani were reinforced by men from Kano and even Bornu.⁵ Some of these Hausas doubtless shared the reforming zeal of the Fulani leaders, but it seems likely that the majority were adventurers or young men bent on making their fortunes.⁶

⁴ *Gazetteer of Yola Province*, p. 14.

⁵ *LHdM*, vol. I, p. 47.

⁶ *Gazetteer of Yola Province*, p. 14.

ADAMAWA

In Adamawa, where the Fulani were already numerous, the latent ill-feeling between them and the Bata pagans flared up into fighting in 1803, a year before the start of the *jihad*. According to legend, the cause of the trouble was the Bata Chief's insistence on exercising the *droit de seigneur*. When this right was asked of Ardo Jobdi in respect of his daughter, he not only refused to concede it but killed first his daughter and then the Chief who had demanded her. Fighting followed and the Fulani, although they repelled the attacks of Bata, were forced to withdraw to the south of the Benue River.⁷

In the following year there returned to his people a young Fulani called Modibbo Adama, who for some time previously had been away studying under the leading teachers of the day. He had first been taught by Mallam Kiari of Bornu and had then become a pupil of Shehu at Degel. When he at length reached home it was to find that his father had been killed in the fighting with the Bata in the previous year.⁸

Adama was a man of purpose and strong character. First he induced the Fulani, who belonged to a number of different clans, to band themselves together and then he enlisted their support for Shehu's *jihad*, which by this time was under way in the west. As one of the clans was already embroiled with the Bata, perhaps the others did not need much persuading. At any rate, they agreed readily enough to ally themselves with Shehu and to seek the sanction of his authority. To this end they appointed a deputation and Adama was of course included in it.⁹

In 1805 or 1806 this deputation was received by Shehu, probably in Gwandu town, and presented with a flag. Although he was not the senior member of the party, Adama was recognized to be its staunchest and most zealous member. It was, therefore, to him that Shehu entrusted the flag and as he delivered it he spoke the following words:

When you return tell them that this is what Shehu gave you. Say also that I accept their greetings. Bid them place their hands in yours; whoever gives his hand to you, joins hands with me. Tell them I greet them. Make flags for them like this that I have given you and give them the flags with

⁷ Hogben and Kirk-Greene, op. cit. p. 431.

⁸ Ibid. *Modibbo* is the courtesy title accorded by the Fulani to a man of learning, the Fulfulde equivalent of the Hausa *Mallam*.

⁹ Ibid.

the orders I have laid upon you. You are the envoy; whatsoever they desire let them tell it to you, then do you come and tell me.¹⁰

Shehu then conferred the title of *Lamido Fombina* or Ruler of the South on Adama and allowed him to recruit volunteers from his own forces before dismissing him. By the time the deputation started for home, therefore, Adama had emerged as the undisputed leader.

Back in the east, Adama made his headquarters at Gurin, the place to which the Fulani had retired after their battle with the Bata in 1803. It lay in the angle formed by the Benue and its tributary, the Faro, and at that time was probably no more than a fortified camp. Starting from this narrow base, the Fulani set out to win a kingdom.

The struggle which followed was too protracted and intricate to allow of its being described here in detail. At the outset the Fulani established themselves in the plain of the Benue Valley and from there they gradually extended the area of their influence. Sometimes they were able to achieve their ends by peaceful means, as they did, for example, with a branch of the Bata tribe, whose Chief was persuaded to throw in his lot with them and who ever after remained a staunch ally.¹¹ Sometimes diplomacy was successful as it was with the Holma pagans where the daughter of the Chief was given in marriage to one of the Fulani leaders and the son of this alliance was later accepted by the tribe as their new Chief. Sometimes, even when pagans were never wholly subdued in their fastnesses, a satisfactory truce could be arranged with them as it was with the Kilba, who were induced to come and trade at a border market.¹²

For the most part, however, the Fulani had to resort to arms to impose their will on the untamed pagans. Though they were usually the victors, it should not be supposed that these contests were markedly one-sided. On the contrary, the pagans, fighting mainly with bows and poisoned arrows from behind natural or artificial defences in terrain where the Fulani horsemen found it difficult to operate, normally enjoyed a tactical advantage and often inflicted severe casualties on their more sophisticated enemies. How successful the pagans could be is revealed by the fact that the Bata stronghold of Bagale, which was so close to the Fulani capital that the pagans could actually look down on it from their hills across the river, was repeatedly attacked but never captured until 1853 when it was at last taken by a ruse.¹³

¹⁰ Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* p. 432.

¹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 431-2.

¹² A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, *Adamawa Past and Present*, London, 1958, p. 132.

¹³ *Ibid.* pp. 138-9.

Nor should it be thought that the aggression always came from the Fulani side. On the contrary, pagans were constantly making forays from the hills against the villages, the cattle, and the caravans in the plains. So persistent and damaging were these raids that Adama had to consolidate all his gains by building fortified towns and outposts as bulwarks against them.¹⁴

The most formidable enemy whom the Fulani had to face, however, was not one of the pagan tribes but an Emirate very similar to their own. This was Mandara, which lay to the north of them, still in the hill country, and which was in alliance with the hostile power of Bornu. In 1823 the Emir of Mandara, reinforced by a powerful contingent from Bornu and by the Tripolitanian Arabs who had accompanied the Oudney-Denham-Clapperton expedition across the Sahara, attacked the town of Masfel in the north-eastern corner of Adama's domain. Major Denham, who accompanied the expedition as an observer, watched the battle at very close quarters and afterwards wrote a vivid description of it which is the best account we have of how contemporary battles were fought and in particular of the way in which the Fulani bowmen dominated their adversaries:

We now came to a third town, in a situation capable of being defended against assailants ten times as numerous as the besiegers: this town was called Musfeia [sic]. It was built on a rising ground between two low hills at the base of others, forming part of the mass of the Mandara mountains: a dry wadey extended along the front; beyond the wadey a swamp; between this and the wood the road was crossed by a deep ravine, which was not passable for more than two or three horses at a time. The Felatahs [Fulani] had carried a very strong fence of palisades, well pointed, and fastened together with thongs of raw hide, six feet in height, from one hill to the other, and had placed their bowmen behind the palisades, and on the rising ground, with the wadey before them; their horse were all under cover of the hills and the town: this was a strong position. The Arabs, however, moved on with great gallantry, without any support or co-operation from the Bornou or Mandara troops, and notwithstanding the shower of arrows, some poisoned, which were poured on them from behind the palisades, Boo-Khaloom, with his handful of Arabs, carried them in about half an hour, and dashed on, driving the Felatahs up the sides of the hills. The women were everywhere seen supplying their protectors with fresh arrows during this struggle; and when they retreated to the hills, still shooting on their pursuers, the women assisted by rolling down huge masses of the rock, previously undermined for the purpose, which killed several of the Arabs, and wounded others. Barca Gana, and about one hundred of

¹⁴ *Gazetteer of Yola Province*, p. 14.

the Bornou spearmen, now supported Boo-Khaloom, and pierced through and through some fifty unfortunates who were left wounded near the stakes. I rode by his side as he pushed on quite into the town, and a very desperate skirmish took place between Barca Gana's people and a small body of Felatahs. These warriors throw the spear with great dexterity; and three times I saw the man transfixing to the earth who was dismounted for the purpose of firing the town, and as often were those who rushed forward for that purpose sacrificed for their temerity, by the Felatahs. Barca Gana, whose muscular arm was almost gigantic, threw eight spears, which all told, some of them at a distance of thirty or thirty-five yards, and one particularly on a Felatah chief, who with his own hand had brought four to the ground. Had either the Mandara or the Sheikh's troops now moved up boldly, notwithstanding the defence these people made, and the reinforcements which showed themselves to the south-west, they must have carried the town with the heights overlooking it, along which the Arabs were driving the Felatahs by the terror their miserable guns excited; but, instead of this, they still kept on the other side of the wadey, out of reach of the arrows.

The Felatahs seeing their backwardness, now made an attack in their turn; the arrows fell so thick that there was no standing against them, and the Arabs gave way. The Felatah horse now came on; and had not the little band round Barca Gana, and Boo-Khaloom, with a few of his mounted Arabs, given them a very spirited check, not one of us would probably have lived to see the following day; as it was, Barca Gana had three horses hit under him, two of which died almost immediately, the arrows being poisoned; and poor Boo-Khaloom's horse and himself received their death-wounds by arrows of the same description. My horse was badly wounded in the neck, just above the shoulder, and in the hind leg; an arrow had struck me in the face as it passed, merely drawing the blood, and I had two sticking in my bornouse. The Arabs had suffered terribly; most of them had two or three wounds, and one dropped near me with five sticking in his head alone; two of Boo-Khaloom's slaves were killed also, near his person.

No sooner did the Mandara and Bornou troops see the defeat of the Arabs, than they, one and all, took flight in the most dastardly manner. . . . We instantly became a flying mass.¹⁵

Although this campaign resulted in a complete victory for the Fulani, the Emir of Mandara later gained his revenge and almost completely wiped out one of the Fulani clans. This reverse prompted Adama to take a hand in the war himself and soon afterwards he defeated the Mandara army at Gider and occupied the capital. Although

¹⁵ Major Denham, *Travels*, vol. I, pp. 313-16.

not strong enough to take the place of a strong central authority. At the same time, the Hausa people were not strong enough to take the place of a strong central authority. At the same time, the Hausa people were not strong enough to take the place of a strong central authority.

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As a man, Mordike Aluma was universally respected on account of his character as much as his achievements. He combined the method and tenor of a scholar with the ardour and drive of a man of action. By nature he was soft or be mild or a fault and yet, when the occasion demanded, he could be both ruthless and inflexibly resolute.¹⁶ He came from a hardy generation and all his life he observed the true Fulani traditions of austerity and piety. He never acquired any personal wealth and when he died in 1848 he had practically nothing to bequeath save his Kaura and an Emirate, still not fully consolidated, of about thirty thousand square miles, which was called after him.

BAUCHI

In Hausa the word Bauchi means the land of slaves. Originally the term was applied generally to the whole region lying south of Hausaland, but later it came to be identified with the central massif which separates the Chad basin from the Niger-Benue River systems.

The core of this massif consists of a high plateau of grassy plains at an elevation of 3,000-4,000 feet with rocky peaks rising to 5,000 feet. From it the ground falls away in steep escarpments to a much extensive lower step, which forms an irregular outer rim of the plateau proper at an altitude of about 2,000-3,000 feet. Here the soil is thick and the country is broken by fast-flowing rivers and low-lying ranges of hills.

Before the *jihad* this region was inhabited by a large number of Hausa people.

¹⁶ *Gazetteer of Yola Province*, p. 16.

¹⁷ At least one expedition reached the sea, but it was really only a few miles from the coast. See Note 17 in Appendix I.

¹⁸ Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* pp. 129-32.

¹⁹ *Gazetteer of Yola Province*, p. 16.

small tribes. Some of their languages show affinities with Hausa and it is safe to assume that they were the descendants of the indigenous people who, at the time of the Berber migrations, chose to retreat into the hills rather than stay and intermarry with the strangers from the north.

Those inhabiting the high plateau and the southern half of the lower step which surrounded it remained as untouched by the influences of the Hausas and the Kanuri as the more remote pagans of Adamawa. If they saw one another at all, it was probably only as slave-raider and quarry. Those living in the northern half of the outer ring, however, were only just outside the pale and were not separated from the more advanced societies of Hausaland and Bornu by any physical barriers. On the contrary, the plains of the north merged imperceptibly into the foothills of the plateau and so it was inevitable that with the passage of time the tribes of the foothills should begin to absorb some of the civilization of the plains. The slave-raids and plundering forays did not cease, it is true, but neither did they prevent the growth of legitimate trade and the mingling of the races in the border markets. Such evidence as there is suggests that by the end of the eighteenth century the process of assimilation, at any rate among the more advanced and accessible tribes, had already gone a long way. Some of the pagans had abandoned their vernaculars in favour of Hausa. Others, while retaining their mother tongues, could speak Hausa as a second language. Others again had been converted to Islam.²⁰

We do not know exactly when the Fulani first reached this area, but it was probably at about the same time as their arrival in Adamawa, that is to say in the fifteenth century, when their migratory drift to the east came up against the Shuwa Arabs in the Chad Region and caused them to turn aside and seek pastures for their cattle among the hills whose blue outlines they would have seen to the south. The country was, in fact, very well suited to their needs and a movement which may have been born of necessity was certainly perpetuated by free choice.

By the end of the eighteenth century the Fulani had penetrated the whole of the region except the citadel of the high plateau. The conquest of the Lower Gongola by Buba Yero in 1798 shows that in many ways they were already strong and that they were less disposed than before to accept the rule of the petty chieftains of the country. In other parts of Bauchi, as in Gombe and Adamawa, the *jihad* came

²⁰ *Gazetteer of Bauchi Province*, 1920, p. 11.

at exactly the right moment and found the Fulani ready and indeed eager to assert themselves.

The man who was to become the creator of Bauchi Emirate was the only leader of the first rank in the *jihad* who was not himself a Fulani. His name was Yakubu and he was born into a family of the Gerawa tribe, which had been Moslem for at least two generations.²¹ His father happened to be a close friend of a learned Fulani called Mallam Isiyaku and when Yakubu was still a boy he was handed over to Isiyaku's guardianship to be brought up and educated. Later on, Isiyaku went to Degel to study under Shehu. He took Yakubu, now a young man, with him and so it came about that Yakubu also became one of Shehu's pupils.²²

At the start of the *jihad* Shehu presented a flag to his supporters from Bauchi and bade them go and rally the country to his cause. Hitherto, it has always been supposed that the flag was given to Yakubu in the first place, but Mallam Isiyaku's descendants claim that in fact he was the original recipient. According to their version, Isiyaku set off for home, but before reaching Kano, fell ill and died. The question of who should succeed him as leader was referred back to Shehu, whose choice fell on Yakubu. Isikayu's son Lawan was offended at being passed over and stayed in Kano, where he took part in the *jihad* and afterwards became the founder of the town of Gwaram. Yakubu, however, pressed on.²³

Back in Bauchi he made his headquarters not far from the site of the present city. Although his own people, the Gerawa, did not at first support him, he seems to have had no difficulty in persuading the local Fulani to accept his leadership. At any rate, he soon collected a large following, which was later strengthened by the arrival of Hausa and Kanuri volunteers and adventurers from Kano and Bornu, and created a firm base for his future operations.²⁴

As there was no state or tribe of any size to oppose him, Yakubu's task was basically similar to that of Modibbo Adama's in Adamawa. The area of his operations was smaller, however, the country less rugged, and the people with whom he had to deal less recalcitrant. Even so, there was no quick road to success and each tribe had to be subdued or overawed separately. In seven years of fighting he broke

²¹ Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* p. 454.

²² *LHdM*, vol. I, p. 45.

²³ Kano *DNBs*, History of Gwaram. Alhaji Junaidu agrees that the flag was originally given to Mallam Isiyaku.

²⁴ *LHdM*, vol. I, p. 47.

the back of the resistance and made himself master of virtually the whole region between the high plateau and the Upper Gongola. In 1811, pausing from these labours, he set about the building of his new capital, Bauchi City, on its present site.²⁵

As Yakubu of Bauchi and Buba Yero of Gombe had both carved their Emirates out of the territory of the pagan tribes there was no formal boundary between them. Consequently, in the period when they were both extending and consolidating their gains, they came into collision on the Upper Gongola. There was fighting and some Fulani blood was shed. In the end, however, the two leaders were reconciled and agreed that the river should be the boundary between the two Emirates.²⁶

Soon after this, in about 1818, Yakubu led his army right round the southern skirts of the high plateau to the town of Lafia Beriberi. Lafia, which stands in the plain between the plateau and the Benue, was a recent Kanuri settlement and its people, by subduing the surrounding pagans, had in the space of about fifteen years created a small city state. Yakubu invested the place and after a short siege accepted its submission.²⁷ The Chief was offered vassal status of the same kind as that accorded by the Emir of Zaria to the rulers of Keffi and Jema'a. In this way Lafia, as a tributary of Bauchi, was absorbed into the Empire.²⁸

In spite of this success Yakubu, at any rate in his attitude to the more recalcitrant pagans, seems to have been less venturesome than Modibbo Adama. Had Adama been in his place, it is difficult to believe that, having once subdued Bauchi, he would not have attempted to add the high plateau to his dominions. It was inhabited, it is true, by warlike pagan tribes, but the terrain was no more difficult than parts of Adamawa and the open grasslands and plentiful water made a rich prize for a pastoral people. Yakubu certainly raided the tribes living in the high plateau and its southern escarpments, for we know that he sent expeditions to Bukuru and Shendam and fought against the Montol and Yergum pagans.²⁹ These were fleeting raids, however, and he seems to have made no attempt to subjugate the tribes and annex their territories. The task was certainly a formidable one

²⁵ *LHdM*, vol. I, p. 47.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Notes on Nassarawa Province*, p. 11.

²⁸ M. G. Smith asserts that Zaria had established a prior claim to the suzerainty of Lafia, but abandoned it to Bauchi, either as an act of solidarity or in return for the suzerainty of Lere. See *Government in Zazzau*, p. 14. Voluntary cession seems very unlikely and if there was a prior claim Yakubu's army is probably what extinguished it.

²⁹ *LHdM*, vol. I, p. 47.

and he may well have been right not to have undertaken it. As no other Fulani leader attempted it, however, the high plateau was never subdued and remained to the end an unconquered pagan bastion.

Yakubu ruled his Emirate with justice and wisdom for forty years. He never wavered in his loyalty to Sokoto and in the reign of Sultan Bello, as we shall see, he was to save the Empire.

CHAPTER NINE

The Consolidation of the Empire

By the year 1810 the first phase in the creation of the Fulani Empire was complete. The former States of Gobir, Zamfara, and Kebbi had been merged into one and had become the metropolitan Sultanate. In Kano, Katsina, and Zazzau, as we have seen, the Hausa Chiefs had been driven out and supplanted by Fulani Emirs. In western Bornu the new Emirates of Hadeija and Katagum had been created. Similarly, in the south-east the Emirates of Gombe, Adamawa, and Bauchi had been forged out of formerly pagan lands and were still in the process of enlarging their territory and influence.

Meanwhile, other lesser prizes had also been acquired. In Daura, the first of the Hausa States, events had followed a course similar to those in Katsina, that is to say the Hausa Chief had been overthrown and had fled with a few diehards, while a new Fulani régime had taken over the government.¹

In the north the Emir of Air, Muhammadu Bakiri, had come to Shehu in about 1810 and done homage. When he had died soon afterwards he had been succeeded by his brother, Muhammadu Kamma, who had also come in person to pay allegiance. During this visit a treaty had been negotiated whereby the new Emir had undertaken to keep open the desert trade routes and to transfer to Shehu the suzerainty of certain northern towns which the Tuaregs had hitherto controlled. In this way the distant oasis of Air and the intervening region of Adar had become parts of the Empire.²

¹ *Gazetteer of Kano Province*, p. 29, and Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* p. 151.

² Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, pp. 95-97 and 120-1). Bello implies that Muhammadu Bakiri died a natural death, but according to Barth he was killed by some of his own people, the Kelgeres. The peculiar relationship between the Emir and the Tuareg tribes is described in Note 9 of Appendix I.

In the south the State of Yauri, one of the *Banza Bakwai*, had also submitted. On the outbreak of the *jihad* Shehu had sent an expedition against it which, though it had failed to take the capital, Bin Yauri, had succeeded in capturing a number of other towns and defeating the Yauri army in the field.³ Soon afterwards the Chief had sued for peace and, on doing homage to Shehu, had been allowed to retain his office and title. Yauri had thus become an exception to the general rule in that it had been embodied into the Empire without much bloodshed and without the wholesale substitution of Fulani for Hausa in the feudal hierarchy.

To the west of Yauri, on the other side of the Niger, was the State of Gurma, another of the *Banza Bakwai*, which resembled Yauri in having a pagan peasantry governed from a few walled towns by a Moslem ruling class. During the heyday of Songhai it had formed part of that Empire and then later it had fallen under the domination of Kebbi.⁴ When Kebbi had declined, Gurma had recovered its independence, but it had remained weak and its people had tended to slide back into paganism.⁵ In 1809 and again in 1810 Shehu had dispatched expeditions against it under the command of Mallam Abdullahi, who had first occupied the provinces of Dandi, Kamba, and Zaberma, which lay between Kebbi and Gurma, and then crossed the river and subdued Gurma itself. In the following year Bello had led a third expedition to this part of the country, conquered the little principality of Illo, and consolidated Abdullahi's gains.⁶ The Empire had thus been extended in the south-west to the Niger and beyond.

The Fulani's next move had been made against the Gwaris, a numerous people who occupied a large pocket of hitherto unsubdued country between Zamfara and Zaria in the north and Nupe in the south. The Gwaris, although usually included among the *Banza Bakwai*, had, in fact, made little or no progress with the Hausa tongue and still spoke a difficult language of their own. Politically they were organized into a loose confederation of clans rather than a state and the centre of this confederation was the walled town of Birnin Gwari. As they had made no move to submit to the Fulani, but on the contrary had continued to attack their neighbours, an expedition under Bello had been sent against them in 1810. Birnin Gwari had been stormed and sacked and the Chief, who called himself Sarkin Gwari, though his authority was, in fact, more limited than his grandiose

³ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 87).

⁵ Abdullah, *TIV* (Hiskett, p. 127).

⁴ See Note 5 in Appendix I.

⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 127-9.

title suggested, had been carried off into captivity.⁷ Having achieved their aim of subjugation, however, the Fulani had made no attempt to create a Gwari Emirate, but had simply left the scattered tribe, which now had neither head nor capital, to be governed piecemeal by the surrounding Emirs.

At the close of 1810 there was still much consolidation to be done, particularly in Adamawa, Bauchi, and southern Zaria, while in the south considerable conquests, notably in Nupe and Ilorin, had yet to be made. But in the north the war was virtually over.

In most of the Emirates the victors were eager to enter into their new kingdoms, but in the metropolitan Sultanate, Shehu showed no desire to do so. He had always concerned himself much more with spiritual than temporal matters and now, when his aims had been achieved, he withdrew more than ever from the world and gave himself up to his mystical devotions. He continued, of course, to discharge his religious responsibilities as Commander of the Faithful, but his political and military authority he delegated more and more to Abdullahi and Bello. At this stage there was no precise demarcation of spheres or allocation of duties, but Bello gradually assumed a general responsibility for the east and Abdullahi for the west, while Sarkin Yaki Aliyu Jaidu was recognized as having a special interest in the north.⁸

Shehu had always set his face against courts, hierarchies, and titles, all of which he regarded as earthly vanities,⁹ and so during his lifetime the machinery through which the Sultanate was administered and the Empire governed remained rudimentary. In fact, apart from the post of *Waziri* or Vizier, which had already been assigned jointly to Abdullahi and Bello, only six offices of state were recognized and filled, namely:

<i>Sarkin Yaki</i>	Captain-General
<i>Alkalin Alkalai</i>	Chief Justice
<i>Yari</i>	Constable
<i>Sa'i</i>	Standard Bearer
<i>Liman</i>	Imam
<i>Ma'aji</i>	Treasurer ¹⁰

Of the other titles of Hausaland and Bornu, such as Galadima and Ubandawaki, he positively disapproved, and he warned his followers

⁷ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, pp. 98-99).

⁸ Bello, SK (*LHdM*, vol. I, pp. 27-28).

⁹ Shehu, KF (Hiskett, pp. 569-70).

¹⁰ Information provided by Alhaji Junaidu.

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¹⁰ Information provided by Alhaji Junaidu.

against the system of government under which they flourished.¹¹ Consequently, at any rate in the metropolitan Sultanate, it was not until after his death that the Hausa hierarchies and titles were adopted and a Court came into being.

One secular enterprise to which Shehu did give his consent, however, was the creation of a new capital. The place that the Fulani selected for this purpose was a village called Sokoto, which was situated on high ground near the confluence of the Rima and Sokoto Rivers at the point where the Gobir-Kebbi and Adar-Zamfara trade routes intersected. The area was already familiar to them because they had moved into it for a short time after the battle of Tabkin Kwatto. Bello probably chose it because, though rather far from eastern Zamfara, it was reasonably near the centre of what had now become the metropolitan area.¹²

It was Bello who took the initiative in establishing the new city. He laid it out on a generous scale on the high ground overlooking the rivers and enclosed it with a wall. As soon as it was habitable Shehu, who in 1810 had moved from Gwandu to Sifawa,¹³ took up residence there. Bello, Atiku, and Shehu's other sons also built themselves houses, but Abdullahi, who had moved to Bodinga while Shehu was at Sifawa, did not join them.

Among the other leaders of the movement there were several who shared Shehu's belief in the corrupting qualities of worldly power. Foremost among them was Mallam Abdullahi, later to become Emir of Gwandu and heir to about a quarter of the Empire. He had already shown his distaste for temporal ambition¹⁴ and later in life he, too, was to divest himself as far as possible of secular responsibility so as to devote himself to study and scholarship.¹⁵ Similarly, in Kano there was the unworldly Sulimanu who hesitated for some time before he could even bring himself to take possession of the palace, because he was afraid lest he and his family should be corrupted by the wealth and power which it symbolized.¹⁶ Although it was in the authentic tradition of the early Caliphs, such high-mindedness was necessarily rare, however, and for the most part the victors were glad enough to take possession of their conquests.

¹¹ Shehu, *KF* (Hiskett, p. 569).

¹² *Sokoto DNBs*, History of Sokoto City. According to tradition, Shehu approved of the site because he thought that corrupting wealth would never come to such a bare and stony plateau.

¹³ Abdullah, *TH* (Hiskett, p. 127).

¹⁴ Hiskett, Introduction to *TH*, p. 22.

¹⁵ See Note 10 in Appendix I.

¹⁶ Alhaji Abubakar, *op. cit.* p. 48.

Who exactly were these victors? The question lies at the centre of a controversy which we must now pause and examine.

The general course that the *jihad* took is well established and not in dispute, but there have been disagreements about its real causes and the motives of those who took part in it. The orthodox view is that it was first and foremost a religious movement, as its leaders claimed, and that, though the Fulani provided its main driving force, tribal distinctions were of only secondary significance. But another school of thought has suggested that it was the religious manifestations that were of only superficial importance and that the real causes were ethnic, in other words that what passed as a movement to purify religion was in fact a revolution designed to give the Fulani control of the less gifted people among whom they had settled.¹⁷ More recently a third school has maintained that too much emphasis has been laid on both religious and ethnic factors and that the movement drew a large part of its strength from Shehu's social teaching and the response of the Hausa peasants and the Fulani pastoralists to his attacks on the oppression, exploitation, and injustice which were then rife.¹⁸ According to this theory, the movement was as much a peasants' revolt as a *jihad*. In seeking the truth among these divergent views it is necessary to recognize from the outset that there are two separate problems to be solved: first, to establish the identities of the reformers and then, in the light of that knowledge, to ascertain whether their governing motives were religious, racial, or social, or perhaps a mixture of all three.

To take first the question of establishing identities, there is no doubt that the Fulani played a central part in the *jihad*, but it is by no means easy to determine how large a contribution was made by the Hausas and other peoples. Abdullahi asserted that some of the ruling classes forsook their Chiefs and came to join Shehu, bringing their possessions with them.¹⁹ If the roll of prominent non-Fulani adherents is called, however, the numbers will be found surprisingly small. Among men of the first rank, apart from Yakubu of Bauchi who still had to make his way, there were only the Chief of Yauri, Usuman Masa of Kebbi, and the two Tuareg leaders, Agale and Abu

¹⁷ See, for example, C. K. Meek, *The Northern Tribes of Nigeria*, London, 1925, vol. I, p. 100.

¹⁸ D. A. Olderogge, *Feudalism in the Western Sudan from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries*, *Sovietskaya Etnografiya*, no. 4, 1957, and Thomas Hodgkin, 'Uthman dan Fodio', in the magazine *Nigeria*, October 1960.

¹⁹ Abdullah quoted by Shehu in *TI* (Palmer, *JAS*, vol. XIV, p. 189).

Hamidu. Among men of the second rank there were Abdu Salami of Gimbana and a number of subordinate chiefs from Zamfara, Kebbi, and of course Yauri, but very few, so far as we know, from the other Hausa States.²⁰ About the rank and file there is some conflict of evidence. In one of his poems about the victory of Tabkin Kwatto, Abdullahi spoke of 'our Fulani and our Hausa all united'.²¹ On the other hand, it is clear from two passages of Bello's writings that, when the reformers moved down to the Gawan Gulbi a few months later, their only Hausa supporters were the Zamfarawa and certain Keb-bawa.²²

The fact is that in the early stages of the *jihad* in Hausaland there were strong moral and material influences at work which tended to keep the Hausa population on the side of their Chiefs, or at any rate neutral, and to drive the Fulani, whether or not they were deeply religious, into the camp of the reformers. For a Hausa, joining Shehu's cause meant engaging in a rebellion, losing all his property through confiscation, and volunteering to fight against his own people. For a Fulani, by contrast, refusing to join Shehu's cause tended to land him in even more trouble than joining, because it meant that he incurred the odium of his own kith and kin without necessarily gaining the confidence or escaping the persecution of the Hausa authorities. And as for property, his cattle in the bush, which the reformers soon began to dominate, were worth more to him than his house and chattels in the town.

From the start of the war in Hausaland these polarizing forces tended to divide the contestants into the Hausas on one side and the Fulani and their miscellaneous allies on the other. Here and there we catch glimpses of them at work and elsewhere we can discern them through their effects. On the Fulani side, for example, we know that, before ever the war began, Abdullahi was active in enlisting the support of those Fulani who had not committed themselves to Shehu and that he was successful in bringing the majority of them into the fold.²³ A minority evidently remained aloof or hostile, however, because he later mentions them as serving in the army that Yunfa brought against the reformers at Tabkin Kwatto.²⁴ But, according to Bello, even some of these defected at the last moment and went over to Shehu.²⁵

²⁰ See Note 15 in Appendix I.

²¹ Abdullahi, *TW* (Hiskett, p. 116).

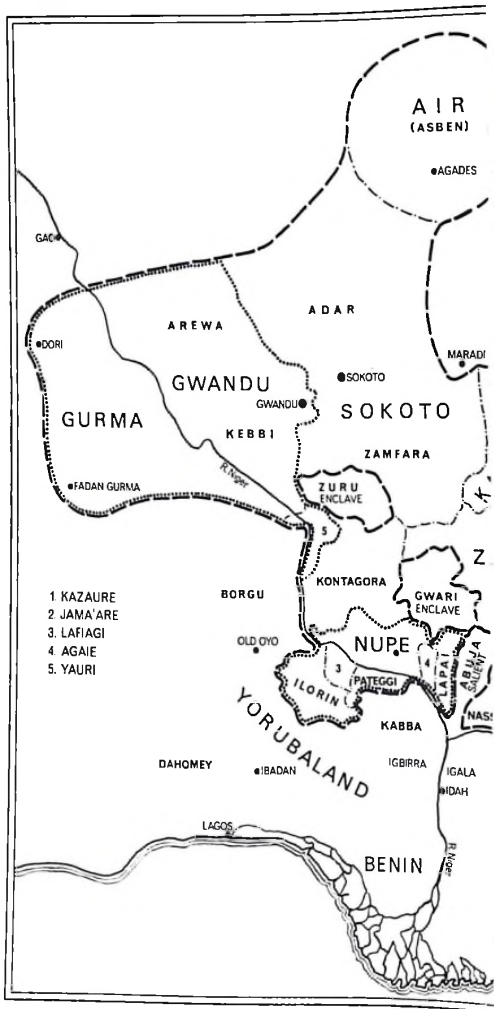
²² Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 72). See also Alhaji Junaidu, *op. cit.* p. 21.

²³ Abdullahi, *TW* (Hiskett, pp. 92-101).

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 109.

²⁵ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 55).

MAP 2



Thanks to these defectors and to Shehu's victory, the number of Fulani who still remained with the Gobirawa after the battle seems to have dwindled to a handful. Even so, Abdullahi thought it worth while to maintain the pressure by addressing a poem of veiled reproach and exhortation to them.²⁶

Elsewhere in Hausaland we hear of a few Fulani fighting with the Hausa Chiefs, for example round Yandoto in Katsina Laka²⁷ and in the Wamakko district of what was then still Kebbi,²⁸ but the instances are so few and scattered that it is clear that the number of Fulani who for long remained hostile to Shehu's cause was negligible. For this the Hausa rulers had partly themselves to blame. In an effort to nip the movement in the bud and forestall an insurrection they had recourse to very severe measures of repression.²⁹ In theory, no doubt, these measures were supposed to be aimed only at men who were known to sympathize with Shehu's teaching, but in practice they probably fell with little discrimination on the Fulani community generally. Many who were indifferent or hesitant, therefore, would have found themselves persecuted and threatened, sometimes even put in fear of their lives,³⁰ and would thus have been driven along with the real zealots into the arms of the reformers.

On the other side, the very preponderance of the Fulani among the reformers may well have deterred some of the Hausas who were attracted by Shehu's teaching from actually joining the cause. Certainly, the Hausas and the other non-Fulani people who did join seem to have found something uncongenial or unsettling in the atmosphere of the reformers' camp, because on the whole they proved much less constant than the Fulani. Their fickleness first showed itself in the treachery of Usman Masa and his Kebbawa, reached its height with the defections of the Tuaregs and Zamfarawa, and came to an end after the war, as we shall see, with the revolt of Abdu Salami and the Gimbanawa. These widespread desertions naturally had the effect of shifting the movement's ethnic centre of gravity even further towards the Fulani. As a result, the *jihad* in Hausaland became more than ever a straight contest between the Fulani on one side and the Hausa ruling classes on the other. In a later phase, however, when the war had spread beyond the old boundaries of Hausaland, this swing was balanced by another swing in the opposite direction. Having at last freed themselves from their inhibitions, the Hausas then made a

²⁶ Abdullah, *TW* (Hiskett, p. 111).

²⁷ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 87).

²⁸ Sokoto *DNBs*, History of Wamakko.

²⁹ Abdullah, *TW* (Hiskett, p. 114).

³⁰ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, pp. 77 and 79).

significant contribution to the success of the *jihad* and the creation of the new empire. We have already met their volunteers in Adamawa and Bauchi and we shall encounter them again in Nupe and Ilorin.

Having traced the complicated pattern of identities, let us now try to determine whether the private motives of the reformers were the same as those they proclaimed publicly. Here again there is an intricate pattern to be explored. At the summit, the generally accepted view of Shehu is that he was a religious reformer, pure and simple, but an unorthodox theory recently put forward has suggested that, besides being a religious fundamentalist, he was also a radical social reformer whose campaign was directed just as much against current abuses, such as fraud and ignorance, as against religious unbelief.³¹ There is some truth in this assertion, because his teaching undoubtedly had a large social element in it, but it could just as well be argued that he was a political reformer or a legal and judicial reformer, because these elements were also present in his doctrine. Where this theory becomes misleading is in suggesting, as it does when it couples Shehu's name with that of John Stuart Mill,³² that the reforms which Shehu preached were independent of, and did not derive from, his religious beliefs. In fact, if the evidence is dispassionately examined, it will be found to lead in exactly the opposite direction. His sympathy with the common people was genuine enough, but it is nevertheless true that the only abuses he condemned were the practices Islam forbade and the only reforms he demanded were those Islam required. This point is well illustrated by his attitude to taxation: what he criticized was not any excessive burden of taxation but the imposition of taxes which the *Shari'a* did not recognize. Other political, legal, judicial, economic, and social questions interested him only in so far as they were aspects of Islam, and then he judged them solely from a religious standpoint.³³ With malpractices like slavery and enslavement, provided that they had the sanction of Islam, he did not concern himself. His aim, quite simply, was to establish a theocratic state which he, as God's chosen instrument, would direct in strict accordance with the sacred law.

Compared to Shehu, Bello was much more secular in his outlook. Though devout and perfectly sincere in his faith, he was essentially a man of the world who understood power and had no qualms about exercising it. Abdullahi, on the other hand, had a more complex character than either Shehu or Bello and in these respects fell somewhere between the two: he was certainly not devoid of worldly

³¹ Hodgkin, *op. cit.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ See Hiskett, AITR, pp. 586-96.

ambitions but he was perceptive enough to recognize them for what they were and high-minded enough to despise himself for harbouring them.³⁴ Of the other early leaders only Sulimanu or Kano seems to have been cast in the same mould as Shehu. The remainder were much more like Bello, that is to say they were genuinely religious and had a sincere belief in the justice of their mission, but were nevertheless practical men of the world with material as well as moral aims.

About the motives of the rank and file we naturally know less, but even so there are certain inferences to be drawn. It seems probable, for example, that when Shehu first raised his standard he was joined only by the most devoted or fanatical of his followers. This view is borne out by the references made to the men who fell at the battle of Tsuntsuwa in 1804: Abdullahi recalled their noble qualities³⁵ and Bello asserted that two hundred of them knew the Koran by heart.³⁶ But some at least of the new recruits who took their place must have been men of an altogether different stamp, because within twelve months there followed the plundering incidents in Zamfara and the mutiny at Kwolda. In one of his poems Abdullahi contrasted the piety and devotion of the men who fought and died at Tsuntsuwa and Alwasa with the cowardice and degeneracy of those who mutinied at Kwolda and then saved themselves by flight at Alwasa. These he castigated as mutineers, cheats, hooligans, pleasure-seekers, and backsliders.³⁷ When every allowance has been made for poetic exaggeration in the description of a humiliating disaster, it is still clear that the ranks of the reformers now contained more than just saints and scholars.

As the war progressed and Shehu's prospects of winning it improved, the proportion of reformers with worldly ambitions as well as religious aims must have tended to grow. The call of blood was, of course, only one of a whole range of secular or purely selfish motives, but among the Fulani, with their pride and racial consciousness, it must have been a particularly powerful one. The horsemen who changed sides just before the battle of Tabkin Kwatto, for example, can hardly have undergone a sudden conversion and were probably responding to its call. In such ways as this it tended to divide the contestants on ethnic lines and thereby helped to make the war a racial as well as a religious conflict. But one must beware of overrating

³⁴ See Abdullah, *TW* (Hiskett, pp. 120-3), and Note 10 in Appendix I.

³⁵ Abdullah, *TW* (Hiskett, p. 114).

³⁶ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 68).

³⁷ Abdullah, *TW* (Hiskett, pp. 118-19).

its importance. When, for example, Abdullahi addressed his poem of veiled reproach to the Fulani who had remained with the Gebirawa after the outbreak of war, it was as good Moslems that he appealed to them, not as fellow tribesmen.³⁸ Such influence as the ties of blood had, therefore, seems to have remained on an instinctive or subconscious plane and was not openly exploited by the leaders of the movement.

We can now turn to the second of the unorthodox theories, namely that the underlying forces which produced the *jihad* were not religious but social and economic. It is based mainly on the emphasis placed by Shehu and the other Fulani leaders on the oppression and corruption that flourished under the Hausa Chiefs. To a people accustomed to higher standards these abuses might perhaps have acted as a spur to rebellion, but it must be remembered that the Hausas, in spite of El-Maghili, had never known any better government. Nor, perhaps, was it quite as bad as it was painted. Some of the practices that Shehu condemned, such as the levying of tolls on merchants and travellers, were then universal throughout Africa. Others, such as the sequestration by rulers of the goods of strangers who died in their territory, survived the *jihad* and were not unknown in the Fulani era.³⁹ Others again, such as administrative bribery and judicial corruption, were admittedly alleviated when the Fulani succeeded to power, but were certainly not eradicated by them or even by the British after them. The truth is that, by the standards of the Africa of that day, oppression and corruption on this scale were not out of the ordinary.

So far as the Hausas were concerned, there is no evidence to suggest that the hardships of the peasantry at this time were any worse than they had been for generations past. It is true, of course, that Shehu's teaching drew attention to them, and perhaps helped to crystallize current discontent, but it is unlikely that it did more than this because the Hausas as a people are not given to peasants' revolts and seem to be hard to rouse on such issues. In their time they have followed adventurers like Korau of Katsina⁴⁰ and Kanta of Kebbi, and occasionally they have been willing to support self-styled Mahdis.⁴¹

³⁸ Abdullah *TW* (Hiskett, p. 111).

³⁹ Barth, *op. cit.* vol. IV, p. 104.

⁴⁰ Daniel, *op. cit.* p. 3.

⁴¹ See, for example, Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* p. 479, and Johnston, *op. cit.* pp. 163-7. Shehu's movement, of course, had no connexions with or leanings towards Mahdism. Bello, it is true, once spoke as if the advent of the Mahdi was near, but this seems to have been an isolated reference and later he stated explicitly that Shehu was not to be called the Mahdi (Arnett, pp. 87 and 125).

but so far as we know they have never thrown up or fought for a Robert Kett or a John Ball. This may be one of the reasons why so few of Shehu's Hausa supporters were ready to take up arms in his cause. Another reason is probably to be found in the nature of the impact that Shehu's austere and radical teaching made upon the tolerant and easy-going Hausas. When, for example, he denounced the practice whereby the authorities made forced levies on produce and goods displayed for sale in the markets,⁴² the common people doubtless applauded him, but when he also condemned the social mixing of the sexes and the custom of allowing women to dance before men at bridal feasts, there must have been many who demurred.⁴³ Similarly, when he said that the rule of law should apply to the Chiefs, as well as to their subjects, the people would have supported him, but when they realized that this meant the full rigour of the *Shari'a* might be applied to them, without benefit of the compromises by which the Hausa Chiefs and judges had habitually softened it, there must have been many who questioned whether the change would really suit them.

But the Fulani pastoralists were made of altogether different mettle. First of all, being Fulani, they were more passionate and intense than the Hausa peasants and less willing to compromise or submit. Secondly, as has already been described, they seem to have had a major grievance, at any rate in Gobir, about the severity with which the Hausa authorities now assessed and collected *jangali*, the tax on their cattle. It is easy to imagine, therefore, that Shehu's denunciation of this tax as an illegal imposition must have won him strong support and at the same time have heightened the discontent and provided it with a focus. It is conceivable that it did more than this and that, as he was himself a Fulani, his teaching may somehow have harnessed these resentments to subconscious racial aspirations and, without his intending it, have sown in the minds of his Fulani audiences the idea that the time had at last come to put an end to the injustices that went with their subordinate status. If social and economic grievances did, in fact, play on racial aspirations in this way, they could easily have produced an explosive mixture, and their interaction may indeed explain why the pastoral Fulani rallied to Shehu's standard in far greater numbers than the Hausa peasants.

Reviewing all this evidence we can only conclude that the truth about the origin and nature of the *jihad* lies somewhere between the extremities of the three theories. It was certainly not a purely

⁴² Shehu, KF (Hiskett, p. 568).

⁴³ Shehu, NUM (Hiskett, AITR, p. 587).

prayer and the giving of tithes and fasting in Ramadan and the restoration of mosques amount to heathenism, then what, I must ask, is Islam?

I have been told that the grounds on which you accuse us of being infidels are as follows: because our chiefs are reputed to make idolatrous sacrifices, because our women go unveiled, and because our judges are said to be corrupt and oppressive. But these things do not make it lawful for you to wage war on us. They are, it is true, very great evils, and it is of course our duty to prevent their being committed, but it is not right to say that those who are guilty of them are heathens. . . . It were better to command them to mend their ways than to make war on them as you are doing.

The only result of your policy is to bring tribulation and suffering on your fellow Moslems, for your followers have been killing our men and capturing our women and children. We are astonished that you should permit such things when you claim to be reforming our religion and we perceive that your true object is the power to rule over others. Though you may conceal this aim, even in your own hearts, it is, we believe, your real ambition.

We have heard much of the character of Shehu Usuman Dan Fodiyo and we have ourselves read his books. . . . Know therefore that if Shehu is for the truth, then we are for Shehu, but if Shehu departs from the truth, then we shall leave him and follow the truth.¹⁷

In this letter El-Kanemi had raised the controversial questions of whether disobedience was tantamount to unbelief and when back-sliding became apostasy. El-Maghili, as we have seen, had condemned comparable deviations in Sonni Ali as unbelief and had pronounced Askia Muhammad's *jihad* to be justified and indeed meritorious.¹⁸ On the other hand, when Mallam Jibrilu had argued that disobedience involved unbelief and therefore justified anathematization it was Shehu himself who had refuted him and asserted that the orthodox authorities upheld the opposite view.¹⁹ Clearly, El-Kanemi had touched the weakest spot in the argument of the reformers. Bello admitted as much afterwards when he said that in the whole course of the *jihad* nothing had caused the Fulani leaders as much anxious heart-searching as El-Kanemi's questioning of their claims. This is not surprising for from the very outset their cause had been established on religious foundations. It was the belief that Shehu was God's chosen instrument and that he was destined not only to purify religion but to introduce a new order into worldly affairs that had been the source of the faith and exaltation which had carried the

¹⁷ Bello, *Inf M* (cf. Arnett, pp. 102-3).

¹⁸ Hiskett, AITR, pp. 578-86.

¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 588-9.

Fulani to victory and had seemed to justify their sweeping aside the hereditary authority of the Hausa Chiefs. The political structure of the whole Empire in fact rested upon these basic assumptions. Now El-Kanemi, a man of admitted learning and eminence, after probing and testing the foundations, had publicly pronounced them to be unsound.

Both Bello and Abdullahi wrote to El-Kanemi to refute his charges. Bello's letter, which was doubtless inspired by Shehu, or at any rate approved by him, was long and forthright. After taking El-Kanemi to task for reaching his conclusions on false or imperfect information, he went back to describe the causes which had led to the *jihad*.

Furthermore, El-Kanemi, so that you may understand the origin of this affair, let me say that we did not begin the war for the reasons that you heard. In fact our reason for fighting was simply to repel the attacks which were being made on our lives, our families and our faith. . . . Before that we had merely been following the truth which Shehu had revealed to us but for this they began to harry and persecute us. They drove us from our homes. They confiscated our property. They robbed us on the roads.²⁰

Bello then went on to describe at some length the measures which Sarkin Gobir Nafata had taken to curb the spread of Islam, Yunfa's overt hostility, the unprovoked attack on Gimbana, Yunfa's ultimatum, Shehu's flight to Gudu, the battle of Tabkin Kwatto, and the manner in which the *jihad* had spread to the other Hausa States. So far as Bornu was concerned, he admitted that the Mai had sent them a message, but contended that the responsibility for the fighting which had afterwards broken out was nevertheless his.²¹

Shehu ordered me to write to him. I explained to him all the reasons for our actions. I told him about the Hausa Chiefs and their heathen practices. I added that whoever went to their aid would be no better than they. At the same time I wrote to the Fulani in Bornu and commanded them to keep the peace. Not long afterwards, however, I heard that the Mai had had the messenger whom we had sent to him put to death.²²

Bello then ridiculed the idea that Shehu's supporters regarded the people of Bornu as pagan merely because they made sacrifices in high places, took bribes, gave unjust judgements, usurped the patrimony of orphans, and allowed their women to go unveiled. These abuses did not constitute heathenism. In fact, Bello admitted, they were common enough among his own people. He was only surprised that El-Kanemi, while acknowledging the learning of the Fulani leaders,

²⁰ Bello, *Inf M* (cf. Arnett, p. 104).

²¹ *Ibid.* pp. 105-6.

²² *Ibid.* p. 106.

should have believed them capable of such ignorance. It suggested that he was moved by malice and hatred. The Hausa Chiefs, who were in the habit of making sacrifices to sticks and stones and persecuting Moslems, were no better than heathens. That was the reason why the Fulani had gone to war with them.²³

In a second letter to El-Kanemi Bello came back to this theme:

The first cause of our fighting against your people is that they are helping the heathen Hausas against us. You must in truth know that whoever helps infidels is no better than they. The second reason is that your people are persecuting our people and driving them from their homes. . . . None of your prayers and tithes, your fasting and your founding of mosques, will help you nor stop us from fighting you, in this world or the next, so long as you support the unbelievers against us. . . . Know you, El-Kanemi, that all that you have charged us with is false. God is our help against you.²⁴

In the succeeding years Bello wrote further letters to El-Kanemi, apparently in a more conciliatory vein, but these seem to have gone astray and in any case he did not record their text. At last, however, a letter from Gidado, who was later to become Waziri of Sokoto, reached El-Kanemi and elicited from him a reply which was also conciliatory and which mentioned the desirability of making peace. Unfortunately, before this reconciliation could develop, the Fulani received an earlier letter from El-Kanemi, his third in the series, which they considered contentious and provocative. In replying to it Bello for the first time accused the Kanuri as well as the Hausas of heathen and idolatrous practices.²⁵

. . . The reason why we gave our people in Bornu authority to go to war was the full information which reached us about the character of your people. We have been told by those who have lived in the country and must know, that they make sacrifices to rocks and trees, that they practice certain observances in the river similar to those of the Egyptians on the banks of the Nile, and that there are great houses with guardians appointed over them in which these rites are carried out.

To us, whoever makes sacrifices to sticks and stones is a heathen and that is why we call the people of Bornu heathens. . . .²⁶

Nevertheless, Bello conceded that if it was true, as El-Kanemi had apparently said in his letter, that the Kanuri had mended their ways,

²³ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 107).

²⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 109-10.

²⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 108-9.

²⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 110-11.

then it was the duty of the Fulani to stop fighting them. He went on to say that Mallam Gidado was being sent to the east to assemble the Fulani leaders and suggested that El-Kanemi should dispatch an envoy to meet him and discuss calling a truce.²⁷

Later, at the time of Mallam Gidado's mission to the east, Shehu and Bello both wrote letters which were fairly conciliatory in tone.²⁸ In his reply, El-Kanemi first of all set out to refute the charges of persecution and oppression which had been made earlier and then to prove that it was the Fulani and not the Kanuri who had been the aggressors. '... They have raided our villages and plundered our property. They have killed our menfolk and enslaved our children. They have set fire to our houses. All we have done is to rise up and repel them. We have only retaken from them what they had first taken from us. . . . It was never I who began any quarrel with them. . . .' ²⁹

El-Kanemi also told Shehu bluntly that his followers did not always live up to his own high standards. '... You know that your kinsmen who live among us are ignorant people. Their ambition is to conquer and rule this country. . . . Had they been as you are, then we would not have fought them. But . . . in truth they are not men of high character. Whenever I extinguish a fire which they have lit, they immediately light another.'³⁰ Nevertheless, he ended on a note of conciliation. 'I will show no enmity to any Fulani', he wrote, 'except to him who comes against me in war.'³¹

In another letter to Bello, which seems to have been written at the same time, he said that there was no treating with the Bornu Fulani because they were intransigent, but that it would be best if the leaders made peace.³² In answer to these two letters Shehu and Bello composed a long reply in which they recapitulated all their arguments.³³ With that the correspondence came to an inconclusive end. None of these letters are dated and so we cannot relate them exactly to events in the *jihad*, but the correspondence probably began in 1810 and went on until 1812.³⁴ By that time the war in Bornu had drifted into stalemate. It is doubtful, therefore, whether these exchanges did anything to shorten it.

Though neither side can be said to have emerged as the victors from the theological debate, the whole correspondence is nevertheless of absorbing interest. It shows that, although the prize happened to

²⁷ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 111).

²⁸ Ibid. pp. 113-14.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 114.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 115.

³¹ Ibid. p. 115.

³² Ibid. p. 116.

³³ Ibid. pp. 116-20.

³⁴ *Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, pp. 28-29.

be a great territorial empire, the contest itself was basically one of ideas and that, as these letters reveal, it was fought out by men of considerable attainments.

In 1816, after this controversy had subsided, Shehu fell ill and in the following year he died. His death immediately precipitated a succession crisis between Bello and his followers on the one hand and Abdullahi and his supporters on the other. There were two questions to be decided. First, was the Empire to be divided and, if so, how? Secondly, who was to assume the title of *Sarkin Musulmi* with the spiritual leadership that went with it?

At this time Abdullahi was just over fifty years of age and Bello a little under forty. Their claims to succeed were so even that it was difficult to decide between them. Abdullahi had been the first to swear allegiance to Shehu at Gudu and had commanded the Fulani forces both at Tabkin Kwatto and at the capture of Birnin Kebbi. Bello, on the other hand, had knocked Zamfara out of the war and held the supreme command when Alkalawa had been taken. Both were men of exemplary character, high religious principles, great learning, and strong personality.

At the time of his death Shehu was living in the new city of Sokoto. Bello was there with him, but Abdullahi was at Bodinga, fifteen miles away.³⁵ As soon as Abdullahi heard that Shehu was dead he collected his followers and rode to the city. He was too late, however, for by the time he arrived Bello, in accordance with his father's known wishes, had already been proclaimed *Sarkin Musulmi*.³⁶

There was a good reason why the election had been held in such haste. The Fulani leaders felt that if Abdullahi were present it would be difficult for them to appoint anyone except him, but that if he became Sultan his descendants rather than Shehu's might subsequently succeed and that therein lay the seeds of future civil war.³⁷ To avert this danger and comply with Shehu's wishes they therefore elected Bello before Abdullahi could stake his claim.

Soon afterwards, when Abdullahi and his party reached the city, they found the great gates shut and barred against them. No doubt this was a wise precaution on the part of Bello's supporters, for if the two factions had been allowed to mingle, fighting might easily have flared up between them. Nevertheless, to Abdullahi the manner of his

³⁵ *Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, p. 37.

³⁶ Alhaji Junaidu, *op. cit.* p. 25.

³⁷ Hiskett, Introduction to *TW*, p. 20. Confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu.

rejection must have come as a cruel blow. Certainly, he took it hard because he at once withdrew to Gwandu and for several years thereafter he and Bello were estranged.

When Bello succeeded as *Sarkin Musulmi* he acquiesced in Abdullahi's retaining the territories which, during the latter part of Shehu's lifetime, he had been mainly responsible for administering. The core of the Empire was therefore divided into two unequal parts and Kebbi became Abdullahi's Emirate of Gwandu. Abdullahi was also acknowledged to be the ruler of Arewa, Dandi, Kamba, and Zaberma, which were former provinces of Kebbi. In addition it was recognized that Yauri and Gurma, which had already been brought within the Empire, and Nupe and Ilorin, which had not yet been won but in which the Fulani were already active, should fall within the sphere of influence of Gwandu, not of Sokoto.

The result of these dispositions was that, while Abdullahi was endowed with rank and possessions which made him almost the equal of his nephew, at any rate in theory, and which certainly raised him to a higher level than any of the other Emirs, the lion's share of the Empire still fell to Bello. As his Sultanate, Bello had the former territories of Gobir and Zamfara and he became the acknowledged suzerain of Kano, Katsina, Zaria, Bauchi, Adamawa Daura, Hadeija, Air, and Gwari.³⁸ What was no less important was that, with the title of *Sarkin Musulmi*, he also inherited Shehu's immense spiritual authority.

Shehu Usman dan Fodiyo, the creator of the Empire which was now being divided between his son and his brother, was buried in his new capital of Sokoto. Judged by any standards he was a most remarkable leader. Though a man of peace, he sustained a lengthy war and, though an unworldly mystic, he created a great territorial empire. He found Islam in the central Sudan corrupt and persecuted; he left it purified and supreme. He found the Fulani landless and insecure; he left them a ruling aristocracy.

One of the greatest of his many gifts was his spiritual magnetism. From the time when he was still quite a young man, he had the power to draw others to him. Moreover, once they had become his pupils or followers, they remained devoted to him for life. Another characteristic was the moral courage with which he stood on his principles. He showed this trait at Gudu, immediately after he had raised his

³⁸ At this time certain younger Emirates, namely Misau, Kazaure, Jama'are, Nassarawa, Muri, and Kontagora, had not yet come into being.

standard against Yunfa, when some of his followers got out of hand and without provocation attacked the Hausa people living in the district. In circumstances as desperate as his, even the most upright and high-minded of leaders might well have turned a blind eye or at any rate have waited until after the impending battle before asserting his authority. But not Shehu. 'On the Thursday our people fell upon the Hausas who were in the district and slew and plundered and enslaved them. But on the Friday Shehu rose up and preached to them and commanded them to release those whom they had captured and to restore that which they had taken. At this they set free their prisoners and gave back their booty.'³⁹

Another characteristic which distinguished Shehu was his faith in his own destiny. So intensely did it burn that it fired all those who came into contact with him. There is no better illustration of its power than the effect it had at the supreme crisis of the *jihad*, when his defeated and half-mutinous army was surrounded in the unwalled town of Gwandu. His intervention then not only rallied his demoralized followers but inspired them to win a victory which proved to be decisive.

The last and in many ways most characteristic of Shehu's traits was his unworldliness. Unlike the Mahdi Muhammad Ahmed, no breath of scandal ever touched him. Furthermore, Shehu was never dazzled by success and remained as unspoilt in triumph as he had been unshaken in disaster. To the very end, in fact, he led a life of pious and ascetic simplicity and the most significant feature of his whole career is that no sooner had he achieved all his worldly aims than he virtually renounced the world.

On his achievements alone he deserves to be ranked among the greatest men whom Africa has produced. If his character and achievements are taken together, however, his place is unique.

³⁹ Bello, *Inf M* (cf. Arnett, p. 52).

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Sultan Bello—the First Ten Years

ON Shehu's death in 1817 the Empire, which for some time had, in effect, been divided into two parts and governed separately by Bello and Abdullahi, was formally partitioned between Sokoto and Gwandu. In Sokoto, therefore, Bello succeeded as the second *Sarkin Musulmi* and the first Sultan.

The accounts of Bello that have survived give us a fair idea of his appearance and bearing. The explorer Clapperton, when he met him eight years later, described him as a noble-looking man, forty-four years of age although much younger in appearance, five feet ten inches high, portly in person, with a short curling beard, a small mouth, a Grecian nose, and large black eyes.¹ Another eye-witness, who was probably speaking of him in a later period of life, said that, though beginning to go bald, he had a thick beard and a ruddy complexion and that when he appeared in public he was always veiled, in the Tuareg manner, with a fold of his turban drawn across the lower part of his face.²

To the office of Waziri, or chief minister, Bello appointed Usman Gidado, a man appreciably older than himself who had become his brother-in-law when Shehu's daughter Nana, who incidentally was the outstanding woman of her day, had been given to him in marriage. Gidado also belonged to the Toronkawa Clan and from the start had been one of Shehu's most devoted adherents. The picture of him which emerged from Clapperton's journal is of a civilized and kindly man with whom the explorer was able to strike up a real friendship. His wisdom and mature judgement certainly formed the perfect foil for Bello's zest and vigour and together they made a formidable combination.

The heritage into which Bello now entered was a troubled one. First of all there was the difficulty of his estrangement from his uncle

¹ Clapperton, *Travels*, vol. II, pp. 332-3.

² Hajji Said, *An Arab History of Sokoto* translated by C. E. J. Whitting, *Journal of the Royal African Society*, no. 188. The term 'ruddy complexion' probably meant the reddish copper colour which is common among the Fulani.

Abdullahi who retired in hurt silence to Gwandu. Shortly after this there came news that many of the Zamfara and Burmi towns, on hearing of Shehu's death, had renounced their allegiance.³ And finally, most disturbing of all, there were soon to be signs of disloyalty, perhaps even treason, among some of his own closest followers.

It will be recalled that the episode which precipitated the *jihad* was Yunfa's attack on Abdu Salami and his followers in the town of Gimbana. Abdu Salami, as has already been mentioned, was one of the few men among the more prominent of Shehu's original supporters who was not himself a Fulani. His paternal forbears had, in fact, been Arabs who had settled among the Arewa people and he himself was therefore of mixed blood.⁴

When Shehu had fled to Gudu and raised his standard, Abdu Salami had gone with him and his followers had played a significant part in the subsequent fighting. When victory was won he had been rewarded for his services by being given the fief of Kwarre, a town of some size and importance fifteen miles north of Sokoto, and he had thereupon taken up residence there as its feudal lord.⁵

Though the fief of Kwarre was far from negligible, Abdu Salami was dissatisfied with it and felt that it was not commensurate either with his previous standing or with the services which he had rendered in the *jihad*. 'And I, Abdu Salami,' he wrote to Bello, 'where then is my portion? It seems to me that what I rule now is no greater than what I ruled before, that is to say a place to farm and a place to be buried in.'⁶ His dissatisfaction led him into intrigue and mischief-making and even while Shehu was still alive he was guilty of disloyalty, if not worse. For this he was summoned to Sokoto and admonished.⁷

It was only after Shehu's death, however, that the resentment which he felt against the Fulani leaders showed itself in open insubordination. When Bello became Sultan, he alone among the great feudatories failed to go to Sokoto to do homage. Ignoring the insult, Bello sent him a conciliatory message inviting him to come and repair his omission which he eventually did. A brush was thus averted, at any rate for the time being, but his hostility persisted.⁸

This quarrel would have been much less serious if it had not been for widespread revolts in the east of the Sultanate where dissident

³ Alhaji Junaidu, *op. cit.* p. 26.

⁵ Bello, *SK (LHM, vol. I, p. 21).*

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 29.

⁴ Gwandu *DNBs, History of Jega.*

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 28.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 22.

Zamfarawa, Katsinawa, and Burmawa, under the leadership of Banaga dan Bature, had risen against the Fulani.⁹ Despite warnings from Sokoto, Abdu Salami persisted in trading and having other dealings with the rebels. Bello continued to show him great forbearance, but it was all in vain. The recent division of the Empire between Sokoto and Gwandu probably led him to believe that it was going to break up and encouraged him to think that he could assert his independence. This at any rate is what he now tried to do.¹⁰

Bello wrote further letters to him in the hope of bringing him back to his duty, but these were ignored. It was then discovered that he was in treasonable correspondence with the Zamfara rebels and so Bello at last decided that he would have to use force. Kwarre was invested and early in the year 1818, after a siege of five months, taken by storm. Abdu Salami succeeded in escaping, but he had been wounded in the fighting and he died of his wounds soon afterwards.¹¹

Having disposed of Abdu Salami, Bello next turned on his ally, Banaga dan Bature, who in the meantime had sacked Gusau and other towns in the eastern part of the Sultanate. First, Banaga's own town of Morai, near Talata Mafara, was captured; then the Katsinawa of Kanoma were overcome and their hill-fortress occupied; finally, Banaga himself was defeated and killed near Bungudu.¹²

After Abdu Salami's death some of his followers dispersed, but the hard core, under the leadership of his son Buhari, migrated to the south where, after a period of wandering, they took possession of the fortified town of Kalemabaina in Gwandu. As Abdullahi was unable to dislodge them from there, he appealed to his nephew for help. Bello responded at once and himself led a column against the rebels. He joined forces with Abdullahi in front of Kalemabaina and together they stormed the place.¹³

Although, as we shall see, Bello and Abdullahi disagreed about the nature of the offence which Abdu Salami and his followers had committed, the joint action at Kalemabaina was the occasion of their formal reconciliation. When they met outside the town, Bello as the younger man prepared to dismount and go over to greet his uncle, but Abdullahi motioned to him to remain in the saddle and himself leant

⁹ Sokoto *DNBs*, Histories of Bakura, Maru, and Gusau.

¹⁰ Bello, SK (*LHdM*, vol. I, pp. 22-23).

¹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 23-35.

¹² Sokoto *DNBs*, Histories of Maru and Gusau. Muhammadu Dadi, a Fulani who played a prominent part in these events, was rewarded with the title of Banaga.

¹³ Hiskett, Introduction to *TW*, pp. 18-20.

forward and greeted his nephew as *Sarkin Musulmi*.¹⁴ This magnanimity was characteristic of both men and it healed the breach which had opened between them after Shehu's death.

While these events were taking place in the central Sudan, arrangements were being made in Europe that were to result in the first breach being made in the physical barriers which had hitherto prevented any direct intercourse.

In the history of geography there has always been a tendency to concentrate on one problem at a time. In the latter part of the eighteenth century, Cook's voyage to the South Seas had cleared up the mystery of Australia and the interest of the civilized world had then switched to Africa. To promote the exploration of the interior of the continent, about which little or nothing was known, the African Association was formed in London and a series of expeditions were launched.

Attention at this time was focused not on the Nile, whose source Bruce was thought to have discovered, but on the more mysterious Niger. The first two expeditions ended in failure and the death of the explorers. In the third expedition a resolute young Scotsman called Mungo Park reached the Upper Niger and established the fact, which had previously been in doubt, that it flowed from west to east. But when Park went back early in the nineteenth century, to try to sail down the river to its mouth, he too perished.

After the end of the Napoleonic wars the African Association resumed its attempts to explore West Africa and solve the riddle of where the Niger flowed into the sea. In this task it received the encouragement of the British Government, which was concerned to find new outlets for trade generally and particularly for the manufactured goods which, thanks to the industrial revolution, Great Britain was now producing in ever-increasing quantities. After further failures, an expedition set out from Tripolitania in 1822, which was to be at least partially successful. It was led by a naval surgeon called Oudney and its members were two other half-pay officers, Clapperton and Denham, and a shipwright named Hillman, who was supposed to build a boat when the party reached its destination.

This expedition, escorted by a force of Arabs provided by the Pasha of Tripoli, crossed the Sahara and reached Bornu in safety. There they split up and Oudney, accompanied by Clapperton, set off for Hausaland. Oudney died on the way, but Clapperton pushed on

¹⁴ Hiskett, Introduction to *TIV*, pp. 18-20.

alone and at length, on 16 March 1824, reached the city of Sokoto. He was the first European ever to do so and a great multitude turned out to see him.

Hugh Clapperton, the son of a good family from the Scottish border, was a born adventurer. At the age of thirteen he had gone to sea in a merchantman and soon afterwards had transferred to the Royal Navy. During the Napoleonic wars he had served in three different theatres and at one time or another had been wounded in Spain, almost captured by the Americans on the Canadian Lakes, and very nearly drowned in the Atlantic. He was now in the prime of life, tough, daring, and remarkably handsome. As an explorer he may have lacked Barth's inquiring mind and tireless attention to detail, but he possessed other qualities, namely an observant eye, a sardonic sense of humour, and a ready pen.

Clapperton was lodged in the house of Gidado, the Waziri, and on the following day he was taken to the palace for his first audience with the Sultan. Bello made Clapperton heartily welcome and the two men took to one another from the start.

On this first visit Clapperton spent seven weeks in Sokoto and in all was received in audience thirteen times. The main business discussed at these meetings was how to open a channel of communication to Hausaland and, arising out of that, the possibility of a British Consul and a European physician being stationed in Sokoto. The Sultan came back to the subject over and over again and it is clear that his desire to establish links with the outside world was both strong and perfectly genuine.¹⁵

The record of these interviews shows that Bello was a man of great intellectual curiosity and, considering how completely the central Sudan was then sealed off by desert and forest from the western world, that he was also very well informed on a surprisingly wide range of subjects. He confounded Clapperton, for example, by inquiring whether the British were Nestorians or Socinians and then went on to ask such probing questions on other theological subjects that the honest explorer had to confess that he was out of his depth. Similarly, among the presents which Clapperton brought it was the telescope and compass that aroused his greatest interest and later he asked for a special demonstration of how a sextant worked. In the course of this he showed that he knew many of the stars by their Arabic names and some of the constellations as well. At another audience he asked about the ancient Greeks and later taxed Clapperton

¹⁵ Clapperton, *Travels*, vol. II, pp. 330-76.

with the fact that the British had conquered India and recently been at war with Algiers. He had heard about European newspapers and made Clapperton bring one which he had in his baggage so that he could read extracts from it.¹⁶

From Clapperton's narrative we catch a few glimpses of life at the Sultan's court and it is evident that it still retained much of the simplicity of Shehu's day. Bello himself was plainly dressed in a blue cotton gown and white muslin turban. The palace was only lightly guarded and on one occasion the usher who conducted Clapperton to the Sultan's inner apartment was no courtier but an old slave-woman. The apartment itself, which consisted of a square room with a vaulted ceiling supported on eight ornamental arches, was handsome but far from luxurious. As for the Waziri Gidado, his interest seemed to be mainly centred upon his family and the new mosque that he was building.¹⁷

When Clapperton and Denham returned to England in 1825, the account of their discoveries caused something of a sensation. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the British had been more heavily engaged in the maritime slave-trade than any other nation. At the turn of the nineteenth century, however, they had undergone a change of heart and were by this time as active in trying to prevent the traffic as they had been earlier in promoting it.

When the British Government studied the reports of Clapperton and Denham, they thought they saw a golden opportunity of pursuing in the central Sudan their now thoroughly respectable policy of suppressing the slave-trade and replacing it by legitimate commerce. For once, therefore, they moved with unusual speed and decision. A new expedition, with Clapperton as its leader, was quickly fitted out and dispatched. Among its members were the Consul and the physician for whom Bello had specifically asked.

Clapperton's second expedition followed a different route from the first and, after landing in the Bight of Benin, they planned to march north to Hausaland. Within three months, however, five of the seven Europeans, including the Consul and the physician, had succumbed to the climate. Only Clapperton and his servant, a young Cornishman called Richard Lander, struggled through to Sokoto, which they reached towards the end of 1826.

At the time of Clapperton's earlier visit, relations between Bornu and Sokoto had been good and Bello, in conversation, had gone out

¹⁶ *Travels*, vol. II, Clapperton, pp. 330-76.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

of his way to refer to El-Kanemi as his friend.¹⁸ In 1825, however, war had broken out again and by the time that Clapperton returned to Hausaland the whole political climate had changed. It was now El-Kanemi who had become the aggressor and it was the turn of the Fulani to await in some trepidation the invasion that he was known to be preparing.¹⁹

Early in the year 1827 El-Kanemi, at the head of a great army, at length crossed the border and began advancing on Kano. Katagum, the first of the Fulani Emirates to be invaded, was unable to offer any effective resistance. The common people no doubt fled from the path of the invaders and the men who could bear arms probably fell back on Kano. In Kano Emirate an attempt was made to stem the invasion, but the forces which had been collected for the purpose did not make a very determined stand and were easily brushed aside. If El-Kanemi had now pressed on with speed and determination he might well have captured the city before the Emir of Kano had had time to make another stand. As it was, however, he may have been conscious of the fact that by advancing to the west he was creating a long southern flank and exposing it to counter-attack from Bauchi and Adamawa. At any rate, instead of advancing rapidly he seems to have dallied in the Dutse area of eastern Kano.

On the other side the Fulani had no illusions about the magnitude of the threat which faced them. When the news of El-Kanemi's advance into Kano reached Sokoto, the Sultan showed the greatest concern and immediately ordered the Waziri to go to the front and take supreme command. What the Fulani particularly feared was that the invasion would bring the Tuaregs out against them and that the Hausa population would rise and join the diehards who were already in open rebellion.²⁰ The crisis was easily the greatest that they had had to face since the end of the *jihad* and in Sokoto the next three weeks were a time of the most acute anxiety.

Bello had already sent letters to all the Emirs in the east ordering them to mobilize their forces and oppose El-Kanemi's advance. When

¹⁸ Clapperton, *Travels*, vol. II, p. 351.

¹⁹ On 28 March 1824 the Bornu army won a crushing victory at Ngala and so put an end to the war with Baghirmi, which had been going on since about 1817. With the removal of this threat to his rear, El-Kanemi seems to have decided to take the offensive against the Fulani with the object of recovering the suzerainty of Hausaland. Certainly, he told Denham a few months later that he expected his influence in Hausaland to increase shortly and extend to Nupe. See Denham, *Travels*, vol. II, pp. 37-39 and 85.

²⁰ Clapperton, *Journal of a Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa*, London, 1829, p. 243.

this message reached Yakubu, Emir of Bauchi, he happened to have an army in the field against the pagans. Although he could muster no more than 2,500 horsemen, far less than the great host of Bornu, he immediately led his forces north to intercept El-Kanemi in Kano.²¹

When Yakubu made contact with the Bornu army, the Waziri of Sokoto had not yet arrived in the east to co-ordinate and take command of the Fulani forces. Yakubu therefore had to decide for himself whether to risk a battle or to wait with the object of joining up with contingents from other Emirates. He consulted his chief advisers, but they would not commit themselves. Yakubu's inclination, however, was obviously to attack. 'I know not how to defeat El-Kanemi,' he said, 'neither do I know how to slay him, but one thing I do know. I know that he has no power to raise the dead; that he has no power, if rain be lacking, to make it fall; that he has no power, if the grass does not spring up, to cause it to grow.' To this Yakubu's followers replied by saying that these were things which only God could do. 'As you know this,' said Yakubu, 'we shall take courage and fight with El-Kanemi and we shall defeat him and kill him, for all power resides in God.'²²

The ensuing battle took place in the second week of February 1827, and was fought at Fake in eastern Kano. Although the Bauchi army was greatly inferior in cavalry, it was very strong in archers. The archers, moreover, had a secret poison for putting on their arrow-heads which was so potent that it was known as *Kare Dangi*, a name that implied that it did not just kill individuals but destroyed whole families. As at Tabkin Kwatto, therefore, the battle resolved itself into a struggle between heavy cavalry and lightly armed archers.

In the first clash the Bornu cavalry had the better of it and the Madaki Hassan, who had been in operational command, was killed. The Kanuri believed that they had killed Yakubu himself and were elated at their success while the Fulani were equally dismayed. When Yakubu heard this he determined to take command himself and so, surrounded by his bodyguard, he hurled himself into the fight.²³

The battle was fought in the middle of the dry season and all accounts of it speak of the great cloud of dust which rose up and enveloped the combatants. Yakubu was quick to see that it gave his

²¹ Unpublished MS. about the Emirs of Bauchi written by Mallam Mustafa who was tutor to Yakubu's sons.

²² Ibid.

²³ Alhaji Mahmud, *A Light for Learners and a Lamp for the Blind*, an unpublished MS. written about 1950 and based on older material.

archers a tactical advantage and his exploitation of this opportunity proved decisive.

When the two armies met, nothing could be heard but the clash of arms. The battle grew fierce and the dust rose up so high that none could see his neighbour. The day waxed dark. At this Yakubu gave orders to his bowmen, saying 'Shoot into the murk—shoot into the murk.' So the Fulani kept shooting into the murk until the enemy gave way.²⁴

Seeing the day beginning to go against him, El-Kanemi ordered a retirement. His object was probably to extricate his troops from an unfavourable position and then return to the attack. The retirement turned into a retreat, however, and the retreat soon became a rout. The Fulani were not only left in possession of the field but captured the enemy camp and with it a mass of booty. The Kanuri lost over two hundred horses, all their baggage, and even their flag and drums.²⁵ So severe was the defeat at Fake that El-Kanemi marched back to Bornu and abandoned his plan of recovering the lost provinces of Hausaland.

It was Clapperton's misfortune that his second expedition became embroiled in these events. When he returned to Sokoto in the autumn of 1826 he found the Fulani leaders preoccupied with the Bornu war and worried by the attacks of the Gobir and Kebbi die-hards which the war had provoked. At first his relations with Bello were as cordial as ever, but as soon as Bello heard that he intended to go on from Sokoto and visit Bornu a shadow came over them. The Sultan said that such a visit would give aid and comfort to his enemies and absolutely refused to permit it. The explorer, on the other hand, insisted that he must pay the visit because he had been commissioned to do so and refused to acknowledge that the Sultan had any right to stop him. Both parties remained adamant and the differences between them, which their Arab intermediaries may well have fomented, quickly developed into a serious quarrel.²⁶

The truth is that there was right on both sides. Clapperton, whose health was rapidly deteriorating, felt that as he had only returned to Sokoto on Bello's own pressing invitation, he was the victim of a breach of faith in not being allowed to fulfil his commission. He refused to accept Bello's assessment of the effect that it would have on public opinion if he were to leave Sokoto at such a critical phase of the

²⁴ Alhaji Mahmud, *op. cit.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Clapperton, *Journal*, pp. 192-252.

war and make his way to Bornu. As for Bello, although he may have allowed the Arabs to play too much on his fears, he was obviously perfectly sincere in believing that to allow Clapperton to go to Bornu might help the enemy and jeopardize the Fulani cause.²⁷

While the war lasted neither Bello nor Clapperton would budge and relations between them became very strained. Yakubu's victory at Fake, however, and the collapse of El-Kanemi's invasion, immediately produced a change for the better. Clapperton's journal records the intense relief with which the news was greeted in Sokoto.²⁸ Some of the spoils of war were put on show in the city, including a copper vessel which had belonged to El-Kanemi himself, and the celebrations lasted right through the night. In this new atmosphere Bello and Clapperton were reconciled. Unhappily, however, Clapperton collapsed on the very next day and a month later he was dead.²⁹

In Europe, if not in Africa, the death of Clapperton has cast a shadow on the estimation in which Bello has hitherto been held. This is less than just, for Bello never detained Clapperton, as has sometimes been supposed, but always made it clear that he was free to go home by any other route provided that he abandoned the idea of visiting Bornu.³⁰ In the face of a supreme crisis in the affairs of the Empire this condition was not unreasonable and Bello can be acquitted of blame for imposing it.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Sultan Bello—The Second Ten Years

IT will be remembered that when the Fulani overran the State of Kebbi during the *jihad* they allowed the Chief, Muhammadu Hodi, to slip through their fingers. They seem to have thought that he no longer had any political significance, for they made little or no effort to pursue and capture him. He and his followers were therefore able to withdraw to the south of the Zamfara River and establish

²⁷ Clapperton, *Journal*, pp. 192-252.

²⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 252-76.

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 252.

³⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 192-252.

themselves in the town of Gindi,¹ where for the next fifteen years they lay low and gave no trouble.

Meanwhile, in about 1820, the followers of Abdu Salami, having made their submission to the Fulani after their defeat at Kalemabaina, had been allowed to return to the Zamfara Valley where their previous settlement of Gimbana had been. There they proceeded to found the new town of Jega which soon began to grow in size and commercial importance. Among their former adversaries, Abdullahi had all along taken a more lenient view of their defection than either Shehu or Bello and had maintained, contrary to the views of the others, that by supporting infidels in disobedience, as distinct from supporting them in unbelief, they had not themselves become infidels.² For this reason, perhaps, he succeeded in winning their loyalty where Shehu and Bello had failed.

As Gindi and Jega face each other across the Zamfara Valley, it was not long before hostilities broke out between the reclaimed followers of Abdu Salami on the north bank and the still rebellious Kebbawa on the south bank. The Kebbawa suffered an early reverse when they lost their base at Gindi, but they recovered promptly by occupying the neighbouring town of Kimba.³ After that the fighting became indecisive. Nevertheless, in 1824 it was still sufficiently serious for Bello to have told Clapperton that an army was ravaging the country through which the direct road between Sokoto and Yauri ran and that, consequently, it would be impossible for him to take it.⁴

In the following year, when Bornu again declared war on the Empire and El-Kanemi launched his invasion, the Fulani leaders were nervous that the Hausas might rise against them in sympathetic rebellion. This anxiety no doubt brought home to them how dangerous it was to allow a man like Muhammadu Hodi, who still styled himself Sarkin Kebbi, to go on living on the very frontier of the Empire.

In the dry season of 1826-7, therefore, a combined force drawn from Gwandu, Jega, and Sokoto besieged Hodi in Kimba. Though the assault failed, the attackers managed to fire the town by shooting flaming arrows into the thatch of the houses. Later the inhabitants, fearing for their lives and property if there should be a second assault, turned Hodi and his followers out of the town. Soon afterwards he

¹ Sokoto *DNBs*, History of Kebbe.

² Gwandu *DNBs*, History of Jega.

³ Hiskett, Introduction to *TW*, pp. 13-20.

⁴ Clapperton, *Travels*, vol. II, p. 342.

was run down by the Fulani and killed.⁵ If Usuman Masa is counted as the first (though in fact the Kebbawa have never recognized him as a legitimate Chief), Hodi thus became the second of five successive Chiefs of Kebbi to fall in battle.

Even then, however, the resistance of the Kebbawa was not extinguished. A year or two after Hodi's death, his younger brother Karari was proclaimed Sarkin Kebbi in Argungu and was supported not only by the neighbouring towns of Kebbi but also by the Arewa and Zabermawa in the west.⁶ Three times he was called upon to submit, but each time he returned a defiant answer.

The Fulani, recognizing that they had a serious rebellion on their hands, at last bestirred themselves. In 1831 Bello mustered an army in Sokoto and himself led it down the Rima Valley to support the Gwandu force which was already in the field. One by one the Fulani reduced the Kebbi towns on the east bank until only Argungu remained. For a time Karari succeeded in holding out but, as at Kimba, the Fulani at length managed to set fire to the houses and at this the inhabitants, led by the women, insisted on capitulation. The gates were thrown open and so to avoid capture Karari and his followers had to flee.⁷

After this success Bello returned to Sokoto and left it to the Gwandu forces to stamp out the last embers of the rebellion. Meanwhile, after escaping from Argungu, Karari had crossed the river and taken refuge in the town of Zazzagawa.⁸ Before long he was again closely invested. Despairing of withstanding another siege, he and his son Yakubu Nabame now decided to make a dash for safety in the hope of escaping to the west beyond the reach of their enemies. They were spotted, however, and the hunt was up.

Karari was no longer a young man and when he saw that he could not escape he commanded Yakubu to save himself in order to preserve their posterity. He himself then dismounted and seated himself on his shield in the posture of prayer to await his pursuers. By sacrificing himself in this way he enabled his son to escape.⁹

⁵ *Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, p. 16, and Sokoto DNBs, History of Kebbe. For his share in this exploit Buhari dan Abdu Salami was given the title *Sarkin Kebbi*, which the Chiefs of Jega still bear.

⁶ *Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, p. 17. For the family tree, see Table 6 in Appendix II.

⁷ *Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, p. 17.

⁸ This was the town which Muhammadu Kanta had founded three hundred years earlier as a settlement for prisoners captured in his wars with Zazzau.

⁹ Johnston, *op. cit.* pp. 127-8. In the Moslem tradition his gesture signified that he refused to surrender but was ready to die.

For a year or two Yakubu Nabame remained in hiding in the west among the faithful Arewa who concealed him from his enemies. In the end, however, he decided to throw himself on the mercy of the Gwandu Fulani. After some debate they agreed to spare his life, but, fearing that he might again lead the Kabbawa into rebellion, they banished him to Sokoto.¹⁰ There we shall meet him again.

In the latter part of this campaign the Gwandu forces were led by the new Emir Muhamman,¹¹ for the great Abdullahi had died in 1828. In age, Abdullahi stood half-way between Shehu and Bello. In character and outlook, no less than in years, he also occupied a position between them. He shared with Shehu a distrust of worldly affairs and a bent towards mysticism. Equally, however, when the occasion demanded it, he could show talents as a soldier and administrator which did not fall far short of Bello's. If Shehu and Bello were the complements of one another, then Abdullahi was supplementary to both of them. Moreover, being a poet and a jurist as well as a mystic and a man of action, he was the most versatile of the three and incidentally the most complex in character.¹²

The major events in Abdullahi's career, such as his victory at Tabkin Kwatto and his capture of Birnin Kebbi, are so familiar that they hardly need recapitulating. It may be, however, that the greatest service which he rendered to the Fulani cause was his unspectacular but painstaking work as a jurist. His three main legal works¹³ became standard textbooks for later generations on the conduct of the state and the duties of the ruler. If Shehu inspired the *jihād*, and Bello became the architect of the Empire, Abdullahi's great though less spectacular contribution was to build up the body of theoretical knowledge necessary for the conduct of government based on principle and precept.¹⁴ Possessing as he did a marked strain of humility and self-abnegation, this is the tribute which he himself would probably have appreciated more than any other as his epitaph.

While Abdullahi was still alive, his great personal authority and prestige helped to balance the preponderance of Sokoto over Gwandu and preserve the conception of a dual Empire. After his death,

¹⁰ Johnston, *op. cit.* pp. 128–9.

¹¹ For the family tree, see Table 3 in Appendix II.

¹² See Note 10 in Appendix I.

¹³ *Diya' al-Hukkam*, *Diya' al-Sultan*, and *Diya' al-Siyasat*. See Hiskett, Introduction and Appendices to *TW*, pp. 22 and 134.

¹⁴ Hiskett, Introduction and Appendices to *TW*, pp. 22 and 134.

however, even though his successors were very active in Nupe and Ilorin, as we shall see in the next chapter, the primacy of Sokoto became more marked, particularly as Bello still had nine years of life ahead of him.

Though Bello was a successful general and a prolific author, his fame rests mainly on his ability as an administrator. Shehu, as we have seen, had aspired to create a theocratic community and had always been deeply mistrustful of worldly power, its essential bureaucratic framework hardly less than its pomp and trappings. It had therefore been left to Bello to create the machinery for administering the Sultanate and governing the Empire. To do so he had to abandon Shehu's ideal of simplicity.

As we shall see in a later chapter, the Fulani in other parts of Hausaland were able to take over a feudal system that was already in existence and adapt it, without many changes, to their own needs. For Bello, however, the task was more complicated because the metropolitan Sultanate was made up not of a single state but of two—Gobir and Zamfara—with part of a third—the Chafe-Gusau-Kanoma area of Katsina—added on to them. Geographically, moreover, the task was rendered more difficult by the fact that the almost waterless Gundumi Bush, in the passage of which Clapperton and afterwards Barth suffered so much, tended to divide the eastern and western parts of the Sultanate from one another. Nor was this all. While Shehu had still been alive, his authority and prestige had been so great that there had been little or no disposition on the part of the conquered Hausas to rebel, while the Fulani and their allies, in their disputes among themselves, had been ready to accept his judgements. With Shehu's death, however, as the revolt of Banaga dan Bature, the defection of Abdu Salami, and the rising of the Kebbawa had shown, this complaisance had disappeared. For most of his reign, therefore, Bello had to carry out his difficult administrative reforms with only one hand, as it were, in order to keep the other one free for military action.

He began straight away in the capital. Having first made Gidado his Waziri, he went on to create other posts and, in spite of what Shehu had said to the contrary, to dignify them with titles. The most important of the new offices, in their order of precedence, were those of Magajin Gari, Galadima, Magajin Rafi, and Ubandoma.¹⁵ At the same time, with the death of the second of the two Chief Justices

¹⁵ Sokoto *DNBs*, History of Durbawa.

appointed by Shehu, this office also fell vacant and Bello was therefore able to make a fresh appointment.¹⁶

All the men chosen to fill these posts were Fulani. One of them, Muhammadu Ali, who now became the Ubandoma, was the son of Shehu's elder brother Ali and therefore Bello's first cousin.¹⁷ The others were not related by blood but were all connected to Bello or Gidado by marriage. Although they possessed fiefs in the home districts, they habitually lived in the capital and indeed wards of the city grew up round their town houses. They were never formally appointed as Councillors but, as they were always on hand to advise the Sultan or receive his instructions, they gradually came to constitute the Council of both the Sultanate and the Empire.¹⁸

The only non-Fulani who occupied a major post in Sokoto at this time was Sarkin Adar Ahamat. He seems to have been the younger brother of the Agale, whom we have already met, and was certainly the leader of the only group of Tuaregs who had remained staunch throughout the *jihad*. They were already semi-sedentary and, as a reward for their loyalty, they had been allowed to settle in Sokoto where they had populated the northern quarter of the city. By virtue of this background, Sarkin Adar seems to have been admitted to the Sultan's confidence, though not to the innermost Council.¹⁹

During Shehu's lifetime there had been no Court, but now, with these Councillors as its nucleus, a Court came into being. Most of the Fulani, coming as they did from very different backgrounds, were unschooled in these matters and ignorant of how they should comport themselves. But one of them, the new Galadima Muhammadu Deshiru, had in his earlier days attended the Gobir Court at Alkalawa. He therefore became a kind of Court Chamberlain and gave his less sophisticated colleagues instruction in protocol and punctilio.²⁰

In the districts of the Sultanate, Bello's first problem, as Abdu Salami's defection had revealed, was to win and hold the loyalty of the great feudatories. His second task was to establish between them and the capital an efficient channel of communication which

¹⁶ Sokoto *DNBs*, Historical Note on the Chief Alkalis.

¹⁷ More than thirty years later he was to receive with great kindness the explorer Barth, who described him as a cheerful old man of about seventy-five with pure features and a noble demeanour (*Travels*, vol. IV, pp. 173-4). He must therefore have been about forty when first appointed.

¹⁸ Sokoto *DNBs*, Histories of Hamma'ali and Durbawa Districts and of Sokoto City.

¹⁹ Ibid. Histories of Dundaye District and Sokoto City.

²⁰ Ibid. History of Durbawa.

would bring to him the information and revenue that he required and take to them the specific orders or general instructions that he would need to give. The achievement of the first end depended in the last analysis on the Sultan's personality, prestige, and wisdom. Bello was strong in all these qualities, but he nevertheless deemed it prudent to reinforce the ties that bound the great territorial magnates to him by conferring honours upon them. The titles were often, though by no means always, taken from the vanquished Hausas. Muhammadu Moyijo, for example, whose early conquests round Yabo had provided Shehu with his first base when hunger had compelled him to abandon Gudu, was honoured with the style of Sarkin Kebbi.²¹ Similarly, although Namoda himself had been killed in 1810 while besieging the stubborn fortress of Kiyawa, Bello now conferred the titles of Sarkin Zamfara on the senior branch of his family and of Sarkin Kiyawa on his brother Mamudu, who had finally succeeded in capturing the place.²² Within a short time of Bello's accession, therefore, titles had become as common among the Fulani as they had previously been among the Hausas.

The second problem, that of maintaining an effective channel of communications between the centre and the periphery, Bello solved by adopting the *kofa* system which had probably been evolved in earlier times. The word in Hausa means 'gateway' and the 'Kofas' were the intermediaries at Court through whom the Sultan dealt with his vassals-in-chief. Their role was part-political, part-administrative. They were responsible for keeping themselves informed about the affairs of the fiefs concerned and for advising the Sultan on them. The Sultan's orders and instructions were transmitted by them and conversely any favours that the vassals wished to beg or representations that they thought to make had to pass through the 'Kofa'. One of their main duties was to collect and check the tribute from the fiefs for which they were responsible and they were rewarded by being given a share of the revenue.

Under this system the Ubandoma in Sokoto served as the 'Kofa' for two of the great feudatories mentioned earlier, namely Sarkin Zamfara of Zurmi and Sarkin Kiyawa of Kaura Namoda, while the Galadima was responsible, among others, for Gusau and Chafe.²³ The system had its drawbacks, particularly the ease with which it could be abused, but it possessed certain solid advantages. In the

²¹ Sokoto DNBs, History of Yabo.

²² Ibid. Histories of Zurmi and Kaura Namoda.

²³ Ibid. Histories of Hamma'ali and Durbawa.

districts it gave the vassal a friend at Court whom he could consult and on whose influence he could rely. At headquarters it provided the Sultan with a source of information and advice on each of his fiefs and an officer of state to whom all matters of routine could safely be delegated. In a land where distances were great and communications poor, it was probably as effective a link as could then have been devised. Certainly, it worked satisfactorily and indeed, as we shall see in a later chapter, it was soon extended to cover the Emirates of the Empire as well as the fiefs of the Sultanate.

In the Sultanate and Empire alike, Bello proved himself to be a strong ruler. Near home, his suppression of the local revolts of Abdu Salami, Banaga dan Bature, and Karari have already been described. Further afield, when the Emir of Kano Sulimanu had died in 1819, he had not hesitated to change the dynasty by recognizing Ibrahim Dabo as his successor. Likewise, in Zaria, first in 1821 and again in 1834, he passed over the sons of the Emirs who had died and appointed men without hereditary claims. Again, in order that the family of the conqueror of Ngazargamu should not remain unrewarded, he insisted in 1831 on the Emirs of Bauchi and Katagum surrendering in favour of Gwani Muktar's son, Mamman Manga, their conflicting claims to a town and its surrounding districts.²⁴ In this way he created the new Emirate of Misau. Similarly, in 1835, in order to reward a Fulani called Sambolei who had distinguished himself in battle, he brought the new Emirate of Jama'are into being.²⁵ From his Emirs, in short, he expected and indeed received unquestioning obedience. It will be remembered, for example, that at the time of El-Kanemi's invasion he sent the Waziri Gidado to take supreme command over all their heads. Later, as we shall see, when he needed their support for another major enterprise, he did not hesitate to call them and their feudal armies out again.

In every sector but one Bello's statesmanship, which was compounded of firmness, patience, and magnanimity, proved successful. Even the Kebbawa were quiescent and the Empire as a whole enjoyed a period of tranquillity and good government. In spite of all his efforts, however, which included some liberal and imaginative measures, Bello achieved no lasting success with the Hausa diehards in the north.

It will be recalled that, after the defeat of Katsina and Gobir in the *jihad*, the great bulk of the common people had submitted but that

²⁴ *Gazetteer of Kano Province*, p. 33.

²⁵ Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* pp. 492-3.

many of the ruling classes had fled north to the borders of the desert. Since then these irreconcilables had been maintaining a precarious existence round Maradi, their new capital, but as the rainfall was sparse and the soil sandy, it was hardly possible for them to support themselves there. Necessity as well as inclination therefore prompted them to live by raiding across the borders of the Empire.

Bello's policy was to contain these raids and prevent them from reaching the populous parts of the Sultanate. To protect the home districts of Sokoto he first set up the war-camp of Magariya, which Clapperton often mentioned, and then in about 1828 replaced it by the fortified town of Wurno, which he founded in the same part of the Rima Valley.²⁶ Later, by building Gandi in the neighbouring valley of the Sokoto River and installing his brother Atiku with a garrison in the Burmi town of Bakura, he created a chain of fortresses facing north-east.²⁷

In the east he pursued the same policy and, to protect Zamfara, founded the town of Lajinge in the Valley of the Upper Rima. The command of this fortress he gave to a young man called Fodiyo, his own son by a woman of the Gobir ruling family called Katambale, who had become his concubine after the capture of Alkalawa.²⁸ If Fodiyo had not turned out to be a libertine,²⁹ this imaginative move, with its strong hint of conciliation, might have been more successful.

As for the Gobirawa who had remained within the borders of the Sultanate, Bello sought by another liberal gesture to reconcile them too. Ali, a member of the old ruling family, was appointed to be their Chief. Moreover, he was made directly subordinate to the Sultan, paying his allegiance in Sokoto, and was permitted to retain the title of Sarkin Gobir.³⁰

For ten or fifteen years Bello's experiment in Indirect Rule worked satisfactorily. Sarkin Gobir Ali remained loyal and the submissive Gobirawa acted as a buffer between the Fulani and their unreconciled cousins over the border. Ali, however, was under constant pressure from the diehards to throw off the yoke of Sokoto. For a time he ignored their threats and taunts, but in 1835 they at last succeeded in goading him into rebellion by sending him, it is said, a set of butcher's knives to signify that he was no better than a Fulani slave.³¹ Certainly,

²⁶ Sokoto *DNBs*, History of Wurno.

²⁷ Ibid. Histories of Gandi and Bakura.

²⁸ Ibid. Histories of Sabon Birni and Isa. Confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu.

²⁹ Hajji Said, loc. cit.

³⁰ Sokoto *DNBs*, History of Sabon Birni.

³¹ Ibid. The Fulani, being devoted to their cattle, always left butchering to their slaves.

in that year he renounced his allegiance and joined a coalition which had been formed by his kinsmen in exile with the Tuaregs and the diehard Katsinawa.

After eight years of comparative peace Bello now suddenly found himself facing another dangerous crisis. He reacted with all his old vigour. First he sent messages to his Emirs, calling on them to join him in a military expedition, and then he collected his own forces and led them to the rendezvous which he had appointed. The majority of the Emirs also commanded their contingents in person and the host which gathered at Isa was probably the greatest that the Fulani ever assembled for any campaign.³² Moreover, before setting out, they all swore a solemn oath to conquer or die.³³

Bello now marched this army northward in search of the enemy. They left the Rima Valley at the top of its great bend and entered the featureless semi-desert which lay beyond. Here, before long, they were painfully afflicted by thirst, and the shortage of water was so great that it seemed doubtful whether they could go on. Go on they did, however, until they reached a place called Bulechi. After staying there for two days they pressed on with a double forced-march. While they were resting between these marches, Bello forbade the kindling of camp-fires, because he wanted to take the enemy by surprise,³⁴ and in this he seems to have been completely successful.

The result of the battle which now took place at Gawakuke³⁵ was an overwhelming victory for the Fulani. Ibra, the Tuareg chieftain, made his escape, but the leaders of the two diehard factions, Sarkin Katsina Rauda and the turncoat Sarkin Gobir Ali, were both killed with thousands of their followers. Bello was usually generous in victory, but on this occasion he had no mercy and, while women and children were spared, about a thousand combatant prisoners were put to death.³⁶ In its completeness, as well as in its sequel, Gawakuke was a Cromwellian victory.

After this disastrous defeat those of the Gobir diehards who had

³² Alhaji Junaidu, *op. cit.* p. 28.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 29.

³⁵ Earlier historians often confused it, quite wrongly, with the village of the same name near Sokoto.

³⁶ Alhaji Junaidu, *op. cit.* p. 29. In 1903 a British officer was shown a mound about twenty feet high and was told that it contained the remains of the 20,000 men who had fallen in this battle. The figure is probably an exaggeration, but the size of the mound shows that the casualties must have been extremely heavy. Major-General C. H. Foulkes, article in the *Royal Engineers' Journal*, vol. LXXIII, no. 4, 1959, pp. 429-37.

survived fell back to the north-east on the Maradi area where the Katsina diehards were already concentrated. There they founded a new town, Tsibiri, which was to be their headquarters for the rest of the century.³⁷ When he heard of this, Bello decided to lead another joint expedition against both places with the object of finally subjugating the diehards and pacifying his northern frontier. Had he had time to carry this plan into effect he would have crowned his life-work and bequeathed to his successors a realm that was united within and unchallenged without. Before he could do so, however, he suddenly fell mortally ill.

During his last illness Bello sent for his eldest son Aliyu and warned him not to attempt to make himself Sultan by unconstitutional means. Later the Waziri invited him to nominate his successor by saying: 'In whose hands do you leave us?' But Bello refused to make any choice. 'I leave you', he said, 'in the hands of God.'³⁸ On the following day he died. By his own wish he was buried in the town of Wurno, which he himself had founded and made his capital.

The nature of Bello's qualities and achievements have already been described. He was exceptionally well endowed with a wide variety of talents—a good brain, a strong personality, and a sound and uncomplicated character. These assets were fostered by the kindly influence of his father and uncle and at the same time fortified by his rigorous education and austere upbringing. The *jihad* gave him his opportunity and, though he was not Shehu's eldest son, he soon came to the forefront. At the start he was a young man fighting hand-to-hand under the walls of Alkalawa. At the end he was in supreme command of the combined forces that took the place and so brought the war to an end.

As a soldier, Bello took part in forty-seven battles and sieges.³⁹ As a writer, he produced over eighty works in prose and verse⁴⁰ and, though he lacked Abdullahi's sense of style, he wrote in *Infaku'l Maisuri* the best account we have of the *jihad*. As a religious leader, he made a worthy successor to his father. Finally, as a secular ruler, he was easily the greatest of all the Sultans of Sokoto.

There was only one other man of this generation in the central Sudan whose stature and attainments approached those of Bello. That was El-Kanemi. In intellect, learning, ability, and strength of character these two towered over the rest of their contemporaries. They were born at about the same time, they died within a year or

³⁷ Sokoto DNBs, History of Sabon Birni.

³⁸ Hajji Said, loc. cit.

³⁹ Alhaji Junaidu, op. cit. p. 30.

⁴⁰ Hogben and Kirk-Greene, op. cit. p. 397.

two of one another, and during much of their lives they were destined to be in conflict.

Bello, though devout, had none of Shehu's mysticism and never experienced Abdullahi's revulsion from the world and its ways. On the contrary, he obviously had a taste for power and enjoyed wielding it. Nevertheless, he never allowed it to cloud his vision or tarnish his standards. That for twenty years he was the most powerful man in the whole Sudan, and yet remained completely uncorrupted, must be counted among the greatest of all his achievements.

As a man, he could sometimes be inflexible, as he was with Clapperton, and occasionally ruthless. These were but the defects of his virtues, however, for the hall-mark of his character was magnanimity. In his career we encounter this magnanimity again and again—in the objectivity of his historical works, in his forbearance under Abdu Salami's provocation, in his reconciliation with Abdullahi, in his avoidance of bigotry,⁴¹ in the great sweep of his own achievements, and in the sense of personal humility before God which, in the moment of his greatest triumph at the taking of Alkalawa no less than on his death-bed, never deserted him. It is well illustrated in the words which he himself wrote at the height of the theological conflict with El-Kanemi: 'May God be gracious to us in our end and to El-Kanemi in his end. May He keep us both upon the straight way and show us mercy.'

In company with his father Shehu, though in a wholly different way, he proved himself to be one of the most remarkable men whom Africa has ever produced. As a Sultan, Sokoto was not to look upon his like again.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The *Jihad* in Nupe and Ilorin

IN the Hausa States, as we have already seen, the Fulani were able to establish their authority by rapidly overthrowing the old ruling classes and then taking over from them the established machinery of government. Among the pagan tribes of Adamawa and Bauchi they

⁴¹ A comparison of Denham's account of life in Kuka and Clapperton's account of life in Sokoto suggests that El-Kanemi's rule was stricter, and his punishments more severe, than Bello's.

faced a different problem which took a longer time to solve. In Nupe and Ilorin the problems were different again and their solution even more protracted. The acquisition of these areas, which fell in the period following the death of Shehu, therefore represented the third phase in the expansion of the Empire. It was one, moreover, which was associated much more closely with Gwandu than with Sokoto.

NUPE

The Nupes are quite distinct from the Hausas and it is not clear why they were ever grouped among the *Banza Bakwai*. They speak a language of their own¹ and have never been much penetrated by emigration from Hausaland. Their links with the Hausa States in fact consisted in little more than proximity and a similar system of government by a Chief and aristocracy.

So far as is known the Nupes have always lived around the confluence of the Niger and Kaduna Rivers. Before the fifteenth century, however, they had no state of their own but were vassals of the Igalas, who were themselves subject to Benin and whose capital, Idah, was a hundred and fifty miles farther down the Niger. Like the Hausas, they have preserved a legend which attributes the creation of their kingdom to a half-mythical, half-historical founder or culture-hero.²

According to this legend a son of the Atta or Chief of Igala went on a hunting expedition to the country of the Nupes. There he fell in love with the daughter of a local chieftain and lived with her for a time. She was pregnant when he left her to return to Idah and he presented her with a charm and a ring to give to their child when it was born. The child proved to be a boy and was called Tsoede or, in the Hausa version, Edegi. When he grew up he was sent to Igala as a slave, part of the tribute which the Nupes had to pay every year, and there, because of his ring, he was recognized by his father who in the meantime had himself become Atta.³

The Atta, the legend goes on, took Tsoede into his household and showed him the same favour as his other sons. This evoked the jealousy of his Igala half-brothers. At length, when the Atta had grown old and felt the approach of death, he bestowed the chieftaincy

¹ Greenberg classifies it with Ibo and Yoruba in a section of the Niger-Congo group of his Congo-Kordofanian family (op. cit. p. 8).

² S. F. Nadel, *A Black Byzantium*, London, 1942, pp. 72-74.

³ Ibid.

of Nupe on Tsoede and presented him with all the insignia of office. When his half-brothers got wind of this, they pursued him, meaning to kill him, but he eluded them and reached home in safety. There he assumed the title of *Etsu Nupe* and in about 1530, having subdued the whole country and repudiated his allegiance to Idah, he became the founder of an independent dynasty. Later he built the town of Gbara, on the Kaduna River, which was to remain the capital until the advent of the Fulani three centuries later.⁴

While the legend has probably been embellished with the passage of time, as such myths usually are, the external evidence shows that there is nothing inherently improbable in it. There was certainly contact between Nupe and Igala, and it is significant that the legend of Tsoede has survived in Igala as well as in Nupe. As for the date, there is a good measure of agreement between different genealogies on the early sixteenth century.

In any case, whatever its content of historical truth, the legend was of social significance because it was treasured by the Nupe people and the general knowledge and acceptance of it was one of the foundations of the political and cultural unity which they gradually evolved.⁵

There is some uncertainty about when Islam first became established in Nupe. One tradition is that the fifteenth Etsu, Jibirin, who lived in the eighteenth century, was the first Moslem of his line.⁶ Against this, however, is the fact that a number of Jibirin's predecessors bore Moslem names.⁷ On balance it seems probable that, even if it did not at first gain much ground, Islam took root at some time during the seventeenth century.

The date when the Fulani first reached Nupe is also unknown. As the country provides good grazing in the dry season but is unhealthy for cattle during the rains because of the prevalence at that season of the tsetse fly, the probability is that semi-nomadic pastoralists made their appearance at a very early stage, but that settlement did not take place till much later and then only on a small scale. Even by the time of the *jihad*, one estimate puts the total number of Fulani as low as 1,000-1,500.⁸

Towards the end of the eighteenth century there appeared on the scene a Fulani called Mallam Dendo. He was a member of the Toronkawa Clan and until then his home had been in Kebbi. He was a scholar, not a pastoralist, and he seems to have gone to Nupe as a

⁴ Nadel, *op. cit.*

⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 75-76.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 76.

⁷ *Gazetteer of Nupe Province*, 1920, p. 8.

⁸ Nadel, *op. cit.* p. 77.

preacher and missionary of Islam and to have established himself, even before the *jihad*, as a man of influence.

It so happened that at this time the Nupe were divided into two camps by a dispute about the succession. One pretender, Jimada, ruled the eastern part of the kingdom from the old capital at Gbara on the Kaduna River, while the other, Majiya, ruled the west from the new town of Raba which he had built for himself on the Niger. This schism gave the Fulani, despite their small numbers, an opportunity of playing a decisive part.⁹

At the start, probably around the turn of the century and before the outbreak of the *jihad*, Mallam Dendo and his supporters allied themselves to Majiya in Raba. With the help of his Fulani allies Majiya defeated and killed Jimada and soon afterwards made himself master of all Nupe.¹⁰

With Majiya's triumph Mallam Dendo became more influential than ever and a fresh wave of Fulani came to Raba to enter his service. After a time, however, Majiya seems to have grown jealous of Mallam Dendo's growing authority. At any rate there was a serious quarrel and all the Fulani were forced to flee.¹¹

After being driven out of Raba, Mallam Dendo crossed the Niger and took refuge with another Fulani, Mallam Alimi, who had become influential in Ilorin. From there he espoused the cause of the Nupe faction which he had earlier helped to defeat. Its leader was now Idirisu, the son of Majiya's dead rival Jimada. Majiya reacted to this move by taking an army against Mallam Dendo and Idirisu, but in the ensuing battle, which took place near Ilorin, he was decisively defeated, and compelled to fall back upon Raba.¹²

There is little doubt that Mallam Dendo now sought and received reinforcements from Shehu. We know, at any rate, that in 1810, when the war with Gobir was over and the city of Sokoto was being built, an expedition was sent to Nupe under Aliyu Jaidu and that it captured many towns.¹³ This force seems to have helped Mallam Dendo to drive Majiya out of Raba and install himself there as *Sarkin Fillani*.

From then until his death Mallam Dendo, though not an Emir or even the acknowledged ruler of a unified state, was the most powerful man in Nupe. His new ally Idirisu assumed the title of *Etsu Nupe*, it is true, but continued to live on the south bank of the Niger and was, in fact, no more than a puppet ruler. As for Majiya, he had to retire

⁹ Nadel, *op. cit.* p. 77.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 77-78.

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 78.

¹² *Ibid.* pp. 78-79.

¹³ Bello, *Inf M* (Arnett, p. 99).

into banishment in the north. From Raba, Mallam Dendo was able to play them off against one another and so dominate them both.¹⁴

This balance of power lasted for twenty years, but in the end, in about 1830, Idirisu tired of his impotence and rebelled against Mallam Dendo's authority. He was defeated and killed, however, and Mallam Dendo then made Majiya the puppet ruler of Nupe in his place while retaining the real power in his own hands.¹⁵

Before he died Mallam Dendo is said to have advised his sons to follow in his own footsteps and to be content with the reality of power without hankering after its trappings. On his death in 1833 he was succeeded as *Sarkin Fillani* by his son Usuman Zaki, whose mother had been a Fulani and who therefore had no Nupe blood in him. Soon afterwards Majiya also died and was similarly succeeded by his son Tsado. Two years later Tsado rose against the Fulani, but was defeated and forced to flee.¹⁶

After this victory Usuman Zaki, oblivious of his father's advice, took over the regalia of the kingdom and himself assumed the title of *Etsu Nupe*. These events, which took place in 1836, marked the extinction of the old Nupe dynasty and the birth of a new Emirate in the Fulani Empire.

To rule his Emirate, Usuman Zaki introduced the *Ajele* system and tried to govern the Nupes through Fulani and Hausa deputies. This alien régime proved so unpopular, however, that it soon provoked a new revolt and at the same time introduced a fresh complication into the already tangled skein of Nupe affairs.¹⁷

Among Usuman Zaki's brothers there was one, Masaba, who had a Nupe mother. Masaba had quarrelled with Usuman Zaki soon after their father's death and had left the capital for the countryside. There he had begun to intrigue against his brother and to propagate the idea that, as he himself was half Nupe by birth and furthermore had been brought up as a Nupe, he was the one who should be Emir rather than the alien Usuman Zaki.¹⁸

Masaba and Tsado, the deposed puppet, were companions in mischief and natural allies. Moreover, the unpopularity of Usuman Zaki's deputies and the unrest that they provoked gave them the chance which they had been looking for. In about 1840, therefore, they organized a rising of the Nupe population against the *Ajeles*. This revolt was so successful that Usuman Zaki's power collapsed

¹⁴ Nadel, *op. cit.* p. 79.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 80.

¹⁷ *Gazetteer of Nupe Province*, p. 11.

¹⁸ Nadel, *op. cit.* p. 80.

completely and he and his courtiers were compelled to abandon their capital, Raba, and flee to Agaie in the north-east.¹⁹

It will be remembered that Mallam Dendo had originally come from Kebbi and that, when the Empire had been divided on the death of Shehu, Nupe had been included in Abdullahi's sphere of influence. By this time Halilu, Abdullahi's second son, had succeeded as Emir of Gwandu, and the news of the revolt brought him hurrying down to Nupe with a large force behind him. He soon restored peace and his first inclination was to put Usuman Zaki back on the throne. In the end, however, he listened to the pleas of his Nupe subjects, who assured him that the peace would not last unless Masaba became their ruler. He therefore installed Masaba as Emir and carried Usuman Zaki off into banishment in Gwandu.²⁰ At first this move seemed to achieve its object, but in the long term it meant that the Emirate was to be torn by the quarrels of two Fulani factions as well as two Nupe factions.

During the 1840s the new Emir Masaba greatly enlarged the boundaries of the Emirate. He conquered the Kamuku tribe in the north, the riverain Kakandas in the south, and part of the Gwari people in the east. Moreover, though he retained Raba as his capital, he established his power firmly along the south bank of the Niger.²¹ In the early 1850s the explorer Barth heard reports in Hausaland about the great warlike kingdom of Nupe which lay to the south.

In about 1854 Nupe was once again rent by civil war when Umar Bahausha, a mercenary captain who had been employed by the Fulani, revolted against them. For a time he carried everything before him, drove Masaba out of Raba, and made himself master of the Emirate. He failed to gain the support of the Nupe population, however, and succeeded only in uniting the two Fulani factions against him. With the help of reinforcements from Gwandu, therefore, he was at length defeated in 1857 and drowned in a river while trying to escape.²²

After the suppression of Umar's rebellion the Emir of Gwandu restored Usuman Zaki to the position of Emir and told him to make his capital at Bida which was nearer the centre of the Emirate than Raba. Two or three years later, however, in about 1860, Usuman Zaki died. He was again succeeded by Masaba, who ruled Nupe until he too died in 1873.²³

But for their internal dissensions it is doubtful whether the Nupe people would ever have been brought within the Fulani Empire.

¹⁹ *Gazetteer of Nupe Province*, p. 11.

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 12.

²¹ Nadel, *op. cit.* p. 80.

²² *Ibid.* pp. 80-82.

²³ *Gazetteer of Nupe Province*, pp. 14-17.

The Fulani living among them were certainly too few to seize power as they had been able to do in the Hausa States while forces dispatched from the north, which would have had to fight in conditions unsuited to Fulani methods, would probably have been no more successful than those sent against Borgu if they had met an equally united and resolute opposition. As it was, however, the Nupes by their feuds and rivalries first allowed the far less numerous Fulani to dominate their affairs and then to seize and retain power.

In the Hausa States the *jihad* had the virtue that it led to a clean-cut victory and resulted, for the most part, in the rapid restoration of peace. In Adamawa and Bauchi, religious considerations apart, it could be justified as a step in the process of taming the wild and predatory tribes who inhabited the hills. But in Nupe the war brought neither of these benefits. On the contrary, what had been a simple schism between two Nupe Pretenders became a complex pattern of intrigue and shifting alliances between two Nupe and two Fulani factions. The result was two generations of turbulence and fratricidal strife.

It was not until these feuds had worked themselves out that Nupe was able to take its proper place as one of the richer and more powerful States in the Empire. From the time of Masaba's succession its new régime, represented by an Emir who had a Nupe mother and who called himself by a Nupe title, took on a character of its own which was recognizably different from that of the other vassals. In its devotion to Islam, however, and its loyalty to Gwandu, and through Gwandu to Sokoto, Nupe was no different from any of the other Emirates.

ILORIN

There are many similarities between the processes by which the Fulani established their power in Nupe and those which led to the creation of the Ilorin Emirate. The only important difference is that the Nupes, being much less numerous than the Yorubas, were completely absorbed into the Empire, whereas in Ilorin the Fulani succeeded in detaching and assimilating only one of the many States of Yorubaland.

The Yorubas, like the Nupes and indeed the Hausas, look back to a mythical founder or culture-hero. This is Oduduwa, who is supposed to have been the son of the ruler of Mecca, in pre-Islamic days, and to have migrated to the west because of a quarrel with his

father. After many wanderings he is said to have reached Yorubaland and settled down at Ife. Later, his descendants spread out and founded the other Yoruba city-states. In the meantime, according to this legend, two of his brothers, who had left Arabia at the same time, had become the rulers of the Kanuri and Gobirawa.²⁴

There is a marked resemblance between this tradition and the Daura legend, but the histories of Bornu and Gobir provide even closer parallels. They, too, preserve the tradition of an origin in Arabia, as has already been mentioned, and they also recognize a cousinly relationship between the three peoples. As in Bornu and Gobir the strangers from the east were apparently sufficiently numerous to have been accepted as an aristocracy by the people of Yorubaland among whom they settled. Moreover, the arts and skills that they brought with them probably made a significant contribution to the advanced culture and complex structure of society that the Yorubas were later to develop. On the other hand, the immigrants do not seem to have been numerous enough to have left any significant ethnic traces behind them because physically the Arabs and Yorubas are very different types. Certainly linguistically they made no mark at all, for the evidence shows Yoruba to be a purely African language.²⁵ Whatever the precise course of these early events may have been, the Yorubas undoubtedly multiplied and developed so that in historical times they emerged as a power to be reckoned with.

Our knowledge of Yorubaland before the eighteenth century derives more from legend than history. It is generally agreed, however, that Oyo, which was to become the more powerful of the Yoruba States, had come into existence by the year 1400 and that its first capital, Old Oyo, was founded at about that time. The Chief held the title of Alafin and the dynasty claimed that the founder of their line was the grandson of the mythical Oduduwa.

Oyo gradually grew in strength and authority until it had extended its sway over the whole of Yorubaland and had become the suzerain of the petty States which surrounded it. By 1700, when it had just conquered the neighbouring kingdom of Dahomey, its power was at its zenith and, with the formerly powerful kingdom of Benin already in decline, it now dominated the whole region south and west of the Lower Niger.

In the eighteenth century, however, Oyo began to show signs of

²⁴ Samuel Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*, London, 1921, pp. 3-4.

²⁵ Greenberg classifies it in the same section of the Niger-Congo group as Nupe. (Op. cit. p. 8.)

waning. Its military power was based on its cavalry and its prosperity on the overland trade with the Hausa States. With the growth of maritime commerce, the overland trade declined in importance while with the importation of firearms the hitherto dominant role of cavalry began to diminish. The result of these changes was that the States on the seaboard grew in stature while in Old Oyo, situated in the savannah country of the north-east and far removed from the Atlantic, the Alafins found it increasingly difficult to control them. It was therefore a sign of the times when, towards the end of the century, Dahomey refused to pay its tribute and Egba, another vassal State, threw off its allegiance altogether.

The Yorubas at this time still adhered to a complex religion of their own and, although Moslem teachers and missionaries had already appeared among them, Islam had as yet taken no real root. Furthermore, because the prevalence of the tsetse fly had kept the pastoralists at a distance, the Fulani had not penetrated into the country in any significant numbers. If the way had not been opened to them, therefore, it is inconceivable that the Fulani could ever have established themselves as the dominant power in any part of Yorubaland. As it was, however, the dissensions of the Yorubas among themselves was to enable them to do just this.

To the south-east of Old Oyo lay the city and district of Ilorin, an important bastion which was governed by a military commander called Afonja. It will be remembered that when Mallam Dendo, the leader of the *jihad* in Nupe, had been driven out of Raba it was in Ilorin that he had taken refuge, probably because Afonja by this time had already come under the influence of another Fulani teacher, Mallam Alimi. Be that as it may, the insight that Afonja then gained into the fighting qualities of the Fulani seems to have given him the idea of using them himself to further the designs which he was already harbouring.

From his close association with Mallam Alimi we can assume that by this time Afonja had already become a convert to Islam.²⁶ This in itself would be enough to weaken his loyalty to the Alafin of Oyo who still worshipped other gods. In addition he was an ambitious man who chafed at his vassal status and was eager to become a Chief in his own right. We know at any rate that, soon after Afonja had helped the Nupe Fulani to repel their pursuers, he made a compact with Mallam Alimi for the recruitment from the north of Fulani and Hausa volunteers.²⁷ He no doubt persuaded Mallam Alimi to believe that his aims

²⁶ Confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu.

²⁷ *Gazetteer of Ilorin Province*, 1921, p. 15.

were to declare a *jihad* and establish a Moslem Emirate in Ilorin which would owe allegiance to Gwandu and Sokoto, but it seems likely that he was in fact playing a deeper game.

Whether Mallam Alimi had any doubts about Afonja's real motives we do not know, but there was no question about the success of his recruiting, for he attracted to Ilorin large numbers of Fulani and Hausa volunteers. By 1817, the year of Shehu's death, Afonja felt himself to be ready. He therefore threw off his allegiance to the Alafin and declared Ilorin to be independent of Oyo. The Alafin immediately reacted by sending a punitive expedition against him, but, with the help of his Moslem allies, Afonja defeated it and drove it back.²⁸

The rebellion of Afonja in Ilorin was the signal for other vassals to throw off their allegiance and the rickety Empire of Oyo began to break up. By 1821 the Alafin had lost most of his temporal authority over the metropolitan Oyo and was no longer strong enough to bring Ilorin or the other rebels to heel. In Yoruba history this was a development of the greatest significance, for the removal of Oyo's authority was to lead to seventy years of civil war.

In Ilorin Afonja kept on good terms with his Fulani and Hausa allies for just as long as Oyo remained a suzerain to be feared. When Oyo's power collapsed, however, and the threat of conquest was removed, he soon fell out with them. There are two conflicting versions of how this came about. According to the first, the Fulani and Hausas recruited by Mallam Alimi, who were known as the *jama'a* as the early reformers had been, got out of hand after their victory and started plundering friendly towns and villages.²⁹ But according to the second, the fault lay on the other side and it was the Yorubas who, as soon as the threat from Oyo had been removed, tried to deny their allies the fruits of victory and drive them out of the kingdom which they had helped to create.³⁰

There is probably truth in both these accounts. Among the Fulani and Hausa volunteers there must have been many adventurers and warriors of fortune and it would not be surprising if they were guilty of some looting and pillage. On the other hand, Afonja's ruling motive seems to have been personal ambition rather than devotion to Islam and it would have been in character if, when the Fulani and Hausas had served their purpose, he had tried to get rid of them.

²⁸ *Gazetteer of Ilorin Province*, p. 16.

²⁹ Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* p. 287.

³⁰ *Gazetteer of Ilorin Province*, p. 16.

Mallam Alimi himself was a soldier and teacher whose aims were religious rather than political. While he lived he did his best to keep his followers under control and his restraining influence on them, combined with the modesty of his personal aims, seems to have prevented an open breach. When he died in 1831, however, he was succeeded as leader of the Moslem group by his son, Abdu Salami dan Alimi, who was a man of much greater worldly ambition.³¹

The succession of Abdu Salami at once precipitated the crisis which had long been developing in Ilorin. Afonja no doubt knew what sort of a man he would now have to deal with and made up his mind to attack the Fulani and Hausa immigrants and drive them out of the kingdom altogether. To that end he secretly enlisted the support of neighbouring Yoruba towns. They failed to provide the help on which he was counting, however, and the result was that, when he struck, Abdu Salami was able to turn the tables on him. Afonja was killed in the fighting which followed and the Yoruba cause collapsed.³²

By this victory Abdu Salami made himself master of Ilorin. Like his father before him, he had always looked to Gwandu for leadership and protection. In return he was now presented with a flag and invested with the rank and regalia of an Emir. The Emirate of Ilorin thus came into being in 1831 as part of the Dual Empire.

Abdu Salami did not rest content with the modest domain which he had wrested from Afonja but at once set about enlarging it by making war on his neighbours. He was generally successful and, though unable to hold all his gains, won many notable victories against the crumbling power of Oyo and its warring satellites.³³

The reverses which he suffered at Abdu Salami's hands at length stirred the Alafin to action and he determined to make a supreme effort to crush what he still regarded as the rebellion in Ilorin. To this end he not only summoned to arms his subjects and such vassals as were still loyal but also enlisted the aid of the neighbouring people of Borgu, who had shown in the past that they were capable of withstanding the Fulani. In Ilorin, Abdu Salami got wind of these moves and appealed to Gwandu for help. Halilu, who in 1835 had succeeded his brother as Emir, responded by obtaining reinforcements from Sokoto and dispatching a strong combined force to Abdu Salami's assistance.³⁴

In the struggle which followed, the Yorubas and their Borgu allies won some early successes. They were gradually forced back, however,

³¹ Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* pp. 287-8.

³² *Gazetteer of Ilorin Province*, p. 16.

³³ *Ibid.* p. 289.

³⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 38-39.

and the decisive battle took place near the capital, Old Oyo, in 1837. Its result was an overwhelming victory for the Fulani. The city was captured, the Alafin killed, and the allied armies routed. The Borgawa fared no better than the Yorubas and lost their commander as well as the Chiefs of Kaiama and Wawa.³⁵

With this defeat the ancient kingdom of Oyo, which had already lost its Empire, more or less disintegrated. The old capital was never rebuilt nor did the Alafins ever recover their paramountcy. Thereafter, Oyo was hardly more than one of the city-states into which Yorubaland now broke up.

Had the Fulani of the day been as bold and aggressive as those of a previous generation they would probably have gone on to subdue these city-states piecemeal and add them to the Empire. By this time, however, their ambitions were largely satisfied and the tide of their expansion was almost spent. The year 1837, moreover, was the one in which Sultan Bello died. They were therefore content to consolidate their power in Ilorin and did not attempt to exploit their victory by making further conquests.

One of the results of the defeat of Oyo and the flight of the Yorubas from the old capital was the founding of Ibadan. The city grew very rapidly in size and importance and for much of the rest of the century it was to be at war with Ilorin, barring the way to any further advance by the Fulani and counter-attacking them whenever the opportunity offered.

Considering what a small minority the Fulani were, the surprising fact was not so much that they let pass the opportunity of annexing the rest of Yorubaland to the Empire but that they managed to establish themselves in even a corner of it. No less surprising was the fact that they were afterwards able to maintain their position among a predominantly Yoruba population when they were all the time being subjected to heavy pressure from the great mass of the Yoruba people beyond their borders. This, however, is what they succeeded in doing. In the process they, too, acquired certain characteristics which distinguished them from their kinsmen in other parts of the Empire. But, as with the Nupe Fulani, their local colouring did not diminish either their devotion to Islam or their loyalty to Gwandu and through Gwandu to Sokoto.

³⁵ Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* p. 291.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Middle Years

By the time that Bello died it had come to be recognized that any legitimate male descendant of Shehu was eligible to succeed as Sultan of Sokoto and Commander of the Faithful. Furthermore, to regulate the succession and to make the final choice between those who put themselves forward as candidates, an Electoral College had been evolved. It was presided over by the Waziri Gidado, who was to live for another fourteen years, and one of its most prominent members was Sarkin Yaki Aliyu Jaidu, who was also still alive and active. The Chief Justice was of course a member too, as were the four Councillors whom we have already met—the Magajin Gari, the Galadima, the Magajin Rafi, and the Ubandoma. The remaining members, who may not have been admitted to the college until a later date, were Sarkin Kebbi of Yabo and three other territorial magnates from the home districts. While all were Fulani, none belonged to the ruling family.

When Bello died there were three serious contenders for the succession. The first two were his younger brothers—Abubakr Atiku and Muhammadu Buhari—and the third was his eldest son, Aliyu Babba. Among them Atiku, who was then about fifty-three, was the most senior. He was a full brother of Bello,¹ which should have been an advantage to his candidature, but against this was the fact that neither Shehu nor Bello had ever confided to him an important command or a major post. It must have been known to many that Bello had distrusted him² and it was rumoured that he had a streak of avarice and cruelty. Indeed, there were some who prophesied that, if ever he became Sultan, heads would roll.³ In the event, as we shall see, the prophecy was fulfilled not in him but in his son, Abdur Rahman.

Buhari, by contrast, was a strong candidate. Not only was he highly respected but possession of the great fief of Tambawal in the

¹ Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* p. 401. For the family tree, see Table 2 in Appendix II.

² Clapperton, on his first visit to Sokoto, had been advised by the Waziri Gidado to avoid calling on Atiku during Bello's absence from the city lest his visit should be misconstrued. See *Travels*, vol. II, pp. 355-7.

³ Clapperton, *Travels*, vol. II, pp. 355-7.

south-west of the Sultanate gave him a firm base.⁴ Another factor that must have weighed in his favour was his fine record as a commander. Ten years previously he had led the Sokoto contingent in the suppression of the rising of Sarkin Kebbi Muhammadu Hodi, whom he had finally run down and killed.⁵ More important perhaps, because much more recent, he had again commanded the Sokoto forces in the war in Borgu and Yorubaland that had led to the destruction of Old Oyo and the consolidation of Ilorin as an Emirate in the Dual Empire, albeit under Gwandu's suzerainty.⁶ However, strong though his claims undoubtedly were, the awkward fact remained that he could only be appointed if Atiku were first passed over.

The genial Aliyu Babba was probably the most popular of the three candidates and when the Waziri Gidado had asked the dying Bello to designate his successor he may well have been hoping that Aliyu would be nominated. But Bello's refusal to do so doubtless reminded the Electors that at thirty Aliyu was still comparatively young and inexperienced. In effect, therefore, the field was narrowed to Atiku and Buhari. After seven days' deliberation the Electors at length chose Atiku, who was thereupon proclaimed as the new Sultan and Commander of the Faithful.

In appearance, Atiku was small of stature and slight of build. His face was full, his complexion reddish, and his voice soft. He used to keep his eyes lowered and, even in conversation, did not look his companion in the eye. One of his eccentricities was always to go about armed and he was seldom seen without a sword at his hip or a spear or a bow in his hand.⁷

On becoming Sultan, Atiku immediately started making changes. He began by abandoning Wurno, which during the last ten years of Bello's reign had virtually become the capital, and returning to Sokoto. In Sokoto, moreover, he did not install himself in the house that Bello had built for himself, which was of course regarded as the Sultan's Palace, but preferred to convert his own town-house into a new Palace.⁸ At the same time he recalled his eldest son Ahmadu Zaria, whom Bello had sent to Bakura as commander of one of the fortresses in the defensive chain set up against the Gobirawa, and

⁴ This land was subsequently split up into the Districts of Tambawal, Dogondaji, and Idahwa.

⁵ *Waziri, Introduction to TW*, pp. 20-21.

⁶ *Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, pp. 38-39.

⁷ *Waziri*, *loc. cit.*

⁸ *Waziri, DTH*, History of Sokoto City.

restored to him, under the important title of Sarkin Zamfara, the office of Governor of the City which he had previously enjoyed.⁹

Atiku was much narrower in his outlook than Bello and had in his character a touch of puritanism and bigotry. He next set himself to stamp out the music, drumming, and dancing which Bello had tolerated but which he regarded as vicious and immoral. He did this by having a drummer arbitrarily put to death in the middle of his performance.¹⁰ The capricious ruthlessness of this action seems to have been characteristic and helps to explain the doubts that had previously been entertained about his suitability to be Sultan.

In reversing so many of Bello's measures Atiku was not only giving expression to a different character and outlook but probably also trying to assert himself against the weight of his brother's memory. But in fact his changes were less momentous than they may have seemed at the time and only affected matters of secondary importance. On the major issues he had no choice but to continue to pursue Bello's policies. The problems, after all, were unchanged and the standpoint from which he judged them, that of a devout Moslem and of a Fulani who intended to preserve his heritage, was exactly the same as Bello's. In any case, radical changes would not have been easy to institute because the Council was by this time firmly established and among those whom Bello had originally appointed, apart from the Waziri and Sarkin Yaki, the Galadima Muhammadu Deshiru and the Ubandoma Muhammadu were still alive and now had twenty years of authority behind them.¹¹

Atiku's first military expedition was against a league of Zamfara and Burmi rebels who were defying him from Birnin Damri on the upper Gawan Gulbi.¹² Having subdued them, he next turned his attention to the resurgent Gobir and Katsina diehards. Like Bello, he realized that to break their power it would be necessary to strike a decisive blow against their twin capitals in the north, Tsibiri and Maradi.

In about 1840 he therefore summoned the eastern Emirs to assist him in another expedition. The diehards got wind of what was afoot, however, and called on the help of Damagaram, a kingdom which was tributary to Bornu, and of those Tuaregs who had not thrown in their lot with the Fulani. When Atiku marched north at the head of his army, therefore, he found himself opposed by strong forces. A battle

⁹ Sokoto *DNBs*, History of Sokoto City.

¹⁰ Hajji Said, loc. cit.

¹¹ Sokoto *DNBs*, Histories of Durbawa and Hamma'ali.

¹² Alhaji Junaidu, op. cit. p. 31.

was fought near Tsibiri, but it was indecisive, and the Fulani had to fall back without capturing either of their objectives.¹³

After repulsing the Fulani, the Gobirawa seem to have counter-attacked. Certainly, at about this date they drove Bello's son Fodiyo out of the fortress of Lajinge and again made themselves masters of the northernmost segment of the bend of the Rima Valley. Fodiyo was compelled to fall back to another fortress on a site near the present town of Isa.¹⁴ His death soon afterwards marked the final failure of the attempts that the Fulani made between about 1820 and 1840 to conciliate the Gobirawa by giving them a measure of autonomy.

In the dry season of 1841-2 Atiku again summoned his Emirs and mounted another expedition against Tsibiri. But the Fulani had now been fighting for nearly forty years and the zest for battle had gone out of them. Already in Clapperton's day an Arab had said that their leaders no longer fought with the same disregard of danger and death as they had displayed in the *jihad*.¹⁵ At Gawakuke, it is true, Bello had succeeded in rousing them to one last supreme effort, but Atiku was unable to kindle the same spark. When he realized that his army had no stomach for the fight, he abandoned the enterprise and turned his face towards home. He fell ill on the way, however, and died at Katuru, in Zamfara, in the year 1842.¹⁶

As a man, Atiku lacked the qualities of intellect and personality that had distinguished Bello. He had character, certainly, but its foundations were narrow and it had obvious flaws. The most charitable verdict, passed by Hajji Said some time after his death, was that he was a staunch upholder of the right.¹⁷ As a Sultan, his reign of five years was really too short for him to be judged either a success or a failure. The most that can be said is that, though he was clear-headed enough to perceive what his problems were and incisive enough to tackle them, he yet lacked the powers of organization and the spark of leadership to achieve any real success.

As Muhammadu Buhari had died during Atiku's reign, Aliyu Babba was left as the only candidate from the previous election still alive. He had no serious rivals and the Electoral College seems to have had little difficulty in deciding in his favour. He was now about thirty-five, of medium height, stout in build, dark in complexion, and having good features and a fine black beard which, unlike his father, he did not conceal with a veil.¹⁸

¹³ Alhaji Junaidu, op. cit. p. 32.

¹⁴ Clapperton, *Travels*, vol. II, p. 239.

¹⁵ Hajji Said, loc. cit.

¹⁶ Sokoto DNBs, History of Isa.

¹⁷ Alhaji Junaidu, op. cit. p. 32.

¹⁸ Ibid.

As a man, Aliyu was intelligent and very well informed about current affairs. In religious matters he was so learned and eloquent that no one could match him in argument and disputation.¹⁹ But with all this he was genial, good-natured, and fond of laughter. He treated all men alike, from the greatest to the lowest, and had a happy gift of remembering the names of those whom he had previously met.

As a ruler, too, Aliyu had many good points. He did not allow criticism to deflect him from the right course and he ignored those who denigrated him. He was devoid of malice and he remained uncorrupted by power. He did not stand on ceremony and he was always accessible to his subjects. In a violent age he was unusually ready to show mercy. As an example of his aversion to violence it is related that, when a renegade Fulani who had been fighting with the Gobirawa was captured, he overruled his advisers and spared the man's life.²⁰ Nevertheless, his love of justice was stronger than his impulse to be merciful and on another occasion, when a slave had allowed some of the young princes to commit acts of injustice and oppression in the market, he had the man executed on the spot.²¹

Because of Aliyu's rare personal qualities Fulani historians have dealt kindly with his memory. The truth is, however, that as a Sultan he was not a success. He ruled the Empire for seventeen years and in that time he might have completed all the tasks that his father and his uncle had left unfinished. Instead, because of some want of steel in his character, he allowed the grip of the Fulani on their turbulent subjects to weaken and slip.

In the early years of his reign, Aliyu was faced with a number of scattered revolts, mainly in Zamfara. These were no more than bush-fires, however, and he extinguished them without much difficulty. He then led an expedition against the Gobir capital of Tsibiri, but was unable to take the place or achieve any decisive success.²²

Aliyu's first great mistake was his failure to appreciate that the presence of the unsubdued diehards on his northern frontier, who kept up an incessant guerilla war on Zamfara and Katsina, was the cause of most of the internal and external troubles that he afterwards encountered. He should have returned to the fray, mobilized all his forces, including those of the Eastern Emirates, and crushed them as Bello and Atiku had both planned to do. Instead, after the first failure, he feebly abandoned the task. This must have been interpreted as a sign of weakness. At any rate, it put heart into his enemies, who

¹⁹ Hajji Said, *loc. cit.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Barth, *op. cit.* vol. V, p. 340.

²² Alhaji Junaidu, *op. cit.* pp. 34-35.

grew much more daring, and encouraged some of the Zamfara towns to side with them. By about 1852 his authority in Zamfara had become so diminished that even the pagan villages of Kotorkoshi revolted against him.²³

In the following year the explorer Barth made the journey to Sokoto and followed more or less the same road that Clapperton had used almost a generation earlier. By comparing their narratives it is possible to gauge the extent to which the supremacy of the Fulani had declined during the interval. In Clapperton's day the danger that they had had to guard against was no more than an ambush or a tip-and-run raid in which a caravan might have become dispersed and suffered some casualties.²⁴ But a generation later the perils of the road had obviously grown much more menacing. On leaving Katsina, for example, Barth's caravan, for the first part of its journey, was escorted by the Emir in person and, instead of heading west on the direct road, was first obliged to make a detour to the south. What the Gobirawa now had in the field was not just a few parties of raiders but a force capable of holding up even the most important and well-guarded convoys.

The hostile army of the Gobirawa being in this neighbourhood, the danger of the road further on was very considerable; and the Kanawa and Zazzawa, of whom the latter carried 2,000,000 shells, 500 tobes,²⁵ and 30 horses as tribute, were too much afraid of their property to accompany us.²⁶

It is, in fact, clear from Barth's narrative that the whole of the eastern part of the Sultanate was in a state of turmoil.

Zurmi is an important town even at present but, being under the dominion of the Fulani, it is only capable of preserving its existence by a constant struggle with Gobir and Maradi. . . . It is difficult to know which towns are still dependent upon the dominion of Sokoto, and which adhere to their enemies the Gobirawa.²⁷

The countryside was no longer safe in this part of the Sultanate and the population had been compelled by the constant raids to seek the protection of walled towns.

Thus we reached, a little past noon, the town Sansanin Isa²⁸ which was originally a mere fortified encampment or 'Sansani'. But its advanced and

²³ Alhaji Junaidu, *op. cit.* p. 30. See also Barth, *op. cit.* vol. IV, pp. 183-4.

²⁴ Clapperton, *Travels*, vol. II, pp. 324-7.

²⁵ Gowns.

²⁶ Barth, *op. cit.*, vol. IV, pp. 116-17.

²⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 120-1.

²⁸ This town is now known simply as Isa.

in some respects isolated position, as an out-lying post against the Gobirawa and Maradiyawa, rendered it essential that it should be strong enough by its own resources to offer a long resistance; and it has in consequence become a walled town of considerable importance.²⁹

Barth's account shows that eighteen years after Gawakuke all the advantages of Bello's great victory had been lost and that the Fulani were on the defensive again.

In 1853 Aliyu did, it is true, suppress the revolt in Kotorkoshi. He has been remembered for the subjugation of its ninety villages, but it was a hollow victory, for their inhabitants were no more than refractory pagans. With the real enemy, the Gobirawa, he did not again try conclusions. Barth put his finger on this failure when he wrote: 'As long as the Fulani do not defeat the host of the Gobirawa, who take the field every year and offer them battle, the state of this empire will become daily worse and worse.' Another comment of Barth's shows how demoralized the Fulani had now become. 'In scarcely any place in Negroland', he wrote, 'did I observe so little true military spirit as in Wurno; and almost all the leading men seem to be imbued with the melancholy conviction that their rule in these quarters is drawing to an end.'³⁰

Disinclination to get to grips with his enemies in the north was Aliyu's first great failing. The second, which was to have equally serious consequences, must be attributed to his easy-going nature. The surrender of Yakubu Nabame, the Pretender to the throne of Kebbi, and the reason why it was thought necessary to banish him to Sokoto, have already been related. Since 1832 Yakubu had been living at the Sultan's Court as a prince in exile and Kebbi had enjoyed fifteen years of peace. But in 1847, in circumstances which will be described in a later chapter, Aliyu relented and gave Yakubu permission to return to his native land.

This act of clemency was to have disastrous consequences, because two years later Yakubu renounced his allegiance and raised Kebbi and Zaberma against the Fulani. Aliyu now did his best to extinguish the fire that he had permitted Yakubu to kindle, but he was no more successful against the Kebbi rebels than he had been previously against the Gobir dichards. The result of his generous but misguided gesture was that for the whole of the second half of the century, except for one period of truce, the Sokoto Fulani had to contend with a guerrilla war on their western as well as on their northern frontier.

²⁹ Barth, *op. cit.* vol. IV, pp. 128-9.

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 162.

The inability of the Sultan to master the enemies at his own gates inevitably undermined his prestige in the Empire. Furthermore, the disruption of his communications with the north and east hampered him in his attempts to deal with other troubles which arose. In Hadeija, for example, as will be described later, the deposed Emir Buhari usurped the throne in 1851, provoked a civil war, and afterwards caused havoc in the whole north-east of the Empire by raiding the neighbouring Emirates of Katagum and Kano. In Air a similar palace revolution took place at about the same time. In this the Emir Abdul Kadir, apparently without Sokoto's consent, was driven out and supplanted by Ahmadu Rufa'i.³¹ These two episodes reveal the extent to which the Sultan's grip on the Empire was slipping.

Like Bello, Aliyu preferred Wurno to Sokoto and during his long reign Wurno again became the capital of the Empire. He died there in 1859, his troubles still thick about him, and was buried near his father.

The key to Aliyu's character lies perhaps in the fact that his mother was a Hausa concubine³² and that in certain important respects he seems to have taken after her rather than after his father. He possessed many virtues and in times of peace, or in almost any other walk of life, he would have earned success as well as respect. Unfortunately, however, his easy-going amiability did not befit him to carry the very heavy burdens which he had inherited. As a Sultan, though not as a man, he must be counted a failure.

On Aliyu's death, Ahmadu Zaruku, the son of Atiku, was elected Sultan. This appointment established a pattern because, with one exception, all subsequent Sultans were selected from the houses of Bello and Atiku. The exception was Ahmadu Rufa'i who, as we shall see, was made Sultan in the 'sixties when he had become the elder of Shehu's only two surviving sons.

Although in his younger days he had governed Sokoto city for nearly twenty-five years,³³ Ahmadu seems to have had no love for the place because when he became Sultan he removed the Court to a town called Chimmola, which was situated in the Rima Valley a few miles west of Wurno. During his reign, therefore, Chimmola became the seat of government just as Wurno had been during the latter part of Bello's reign and the whole of Aliyu Babba's.

³¹ Barth, *op. cit.* vol. IV, pp. 185-6. Barth found Abdul Kadir living in Wurno and hoping that the Sultan would restore him.

³² *Ibid.* p. 154.

³³ Sokoto *DNBs*, *History of Sokoto City*.

Ahmadu's original intention in making this move was probably to establish an advanced headquarters from which he could watch the Gobirawa. In the early 'sixties, however, there was a development which greatly reduced the menace from this quarter. Sarkin Gobir Bawa na Gwanki, who was recognized as their Chief by all the diehard Gobirawa living beyond the frontier of the Empire, accused one of his kinsmen, the Dan Galadima Dan Halima, of trying to encompass his death by deliberately leaving him in the lurch in battle. Finding himself banished, Dan Halima made his peace with the Fulani. Ahmadu for his part was glad to give him permission to found a new town, Sabon Birni, near the ruins of Alkalawa and to recognize him as the Chief of all the Gobirawa in that part of the Sultanate.³⁴ The arrangement that had been destroyed in 1835 by the treachery of Sarkin Gobir Ali was thus restored, and a buffer State of Gobirawa loyal to the Sultan was again interposed between the Sultanate and the diehards of Tsibiri. From then on, though the diehards continued to harry the south and east, their raiding of the western districts of the Sultanate virtually ceased.

This respite enabled the new Sultan to concentrate his attention on a different objective altogether. At that time the sandy plains that stretched away northward from the Rima Valley round Wurno and Chimmola to Birnin Konni were only sparsely inhabited. Ahmadu Zaruku realized that they were capable of supporting a large population and set about peopling them. This he did by encouraging Hausas from the south in search of land and Adarawa from the north in search of rainfall to settle there.³⁵ In this way he laid the foundations of Gwadamawa which, a generation later, was to rival Zurmi and Tambawal as one of the great fiefs of the Sultanate and to provide the backing of wealth and men that was to help two of his sons to succeed as Sultan.

Apart from the partial settlement that he achieved with the Gobirawa, Ahmadu Zaruku did not attempt to tackle the major problems of the Empire. In the west he was content to try to contain the Kebbawa and in the east he simply waited for death to remove the rebellious Buhari from Hadeija. Within his limitations, however, he was a good Sultan and his reign is remembered as a period when roads and markets were safe for travellers and trade flourished.³⁶

When Ahmadu died in 1866, the electors went back to the house

³⁴ Sokoto *DNBs*, History of Sabon Birni.

³⁵ Ibid. Histories of Gwadamawa and Gada.

³⁶ Alhaji Junaidu, op. cit. p. 55 and *Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, p. 35.

of Bello and appointed Aliyu Karami, the younger brother of Aliyu Babba. He gave promise of developing into a just and merciful Sultan, but in the following year he fell ill and died.

The succession had now alternated four times between the houses of Bello and Atiku and, if the pattern was to be maintained, it had again become the turn of the Atikawa. But among them the next in line was Abdur Rahman, generally called Abdu, who at this time was only thirty-eight years of age. Had he been a man of outstanding personality this would have been no bar, for both Bello and Aliyu Babba had been younger when appointed. As it was, however, the electors were rightly dubious about Abdu's suitability for the highest responsibilities. There was, therefore, a strong movement in favour of breaking the tradition of alternation and of appointing Abubakr na Rabah, the younger brother of the two Aliyus, who was a more mature man of fifty-one and an eminently suitable choice. But the Atiku faction, naturally enough, were opposed to this move and tried to block Abubakr's appointment. To resolve this difficulty the electors turned to Shehu's surviving sons and chose the senior of the two, Ahmadu Rufa'i, to be the new Sultan.³⁷

As a man, Ahmadu Rufa'i resembled his father Shehu. He was modest, soft-spoken, accessible to people, sympathetic to their troubles, and generous to rich and poor alike. If he lacked the administrative gifts and strength of personality that the office of Sultan demanded, he was at least a man of compassion, humility, and good sense.³⁸ He seems to have realized that it was not in him to lead the Empire to victory over the Kebbawa, who were now the worst thorn in the sides of the Fulani, and so he did the next best thing and made peace with them.

Thanks to this peace, which lasted till after his death, the reign of Ahmadu Rufa'i was probably the golden age of the Fulani era. The inherited troubles of the past had at last been largely overcome. Within the boundaries of the Empire the Hausas were now reconciled to Fulani rule and no longer broke out in sporadic revolts as from the time of Bello's accession they had been inclined to do. In the north, thanks to Ahmadu Zaruku's settlement, the Gobir and Katsina die-hards were less troublesome than they had been. In the west the Kebbawa were observing the terms of the truce. In the east, Hadeija had been brought back into the fold. In the south even Nupe was at

³⁷ Sokoto *DNBs*, History of Gandi, and verbal information given to the author by Mallam Sa'id b. Hayatu.

³⁸ Alhaji Junaidu, *op. cit.* pp. 56-57.

last enjoying peace. At home the Sultanate was tranquil and relations with Gwandu were close and friendly.

In the world beyond Hausaland, moreover, the influences which were to present the Empire with a new set of problems in the last two decades of its existence had not yet taken shape. Rabeh was a name which was still unknown and the Royal Niger Company had not yet been formed. In Europe the powers were preoccupied with the Franco-Prussian War and had not begun to concern themselves with Africa.

In this period, then, when the great conquests of the early years had at last been assimilated and before the pressure of external events had become acute, the Empire of the Fulani reached its zenith.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Trade and the Economy

THANKS to the inquiring mind and observant eye of the explorer Barth we have a very clear picture of the Empire in the middle of the century. Between the beginning of 1851 and the end of 1854 he spent many months within its borders, and in the course of his travels visited Air, Katsina, Kano, Adamawa, Sokoto, and Gwandu. Though an emissary of the British Government, he was a German by birth and training and he recorded all that he saw with extraordinary fidelity and attention to detail.

Some of the scenes of urban and rural life which Barth depicted are not unlike those of today. Here is his description of a corner of Kano city:

In another part were to be seen all the necessities of life, the wealthy buying the most palatable things for his table, the poor stopping and looking greedily at a handful of grain; here a rich governor dressed in silk and gaudy clothes, mounted upon a spirited and richly caparisoned horse, and followed by a host of idle, insolent slaves, there a poor blind man groping his way through the multitude, and fearing at every step to be trodden down; here a yard neatly fenced with mats of reed, and provided with all the comforts which the country affords—a clean, snug-looking cottage, the clay walls nicely polished, a shutter of reeds placed against the low, well-rounded door, and forbidding intrusion on the privacy of life, a cool shed for the daily household work—a fine spreading alleluba-tree offering a

pleasant shade during the hottest hours of the day . . . the matron in a clean black cotton gown wound round her waist . . . busy preparing the meal for her absent husband, or spinning cotton, and at the same time urging the female slaves to pound the corn, the children naked and merry, playing about in the sand . . . or chasing a struggling stubborn goat; earthenware pots and wooden bowls, all cleanly washed, standing in order. . . .¹

Slavery (which, it must be remembered, had still not been abolished in the United States) was accepted everywhere as a perfectly natural phenomenon and slaves formed a high proportion of the population of the Emirates. In Kano city Barth found that, while the wealthy owned many slaves, the poor had few or none. His conclusion, on balance, was that in numbers the slaves might equal but certainly did not exceed the free men. Taking the Emirate of Kano as a whole, he reckoned that the numbers of bond and free were also about equal.²

What the proportions in other Emirates were we do not know. Katsina, however, being basically similar to Kano, probably had a comparable ratio. In Zaria, Bauchi, and Adamawa the proportion of slaves may well have been even higher. In Adamawa, for example, Barth heard of many wealthy men who were said to own 1,000 or more,³ while in Zaria the Emir Mamman Sani, when he died in 1860, was reputed to have left 9,000 to be divided with his estate.⁴ As for Sokoto and Gwandu, since they received tribute from all the others, much of which was paid in slaves, they were unlikely to have had fewer slaves, relatively or absolutely, than their vassals.

In what he described as the quiet course of domestic slavery, Barth saw very little to offend or distress him. The Fulani and Hausa owners he found to be much more humane than the Arabs. Slaves were seldom overworked, but on the contrary were usually well treated and often accepted almost as members of the family. In Adamawa, for example, Barth saw slave girls on their way to work on their master's farm who were neatly dressed in white aprons and adorned with strings of glass beads.

The population of Kano city was estimated by Barth to be 30,000 and that of the Emirate at 500,000. All the towns, he said, were protected by mud walls, pierced by narrow fortified gates, and the larger villages by wooden stockades. Unprotected villages were usually sited within easy reach of walled towns so that the inhabitants could take refuge whenever danger threatened. The villagers earned their right

¹ Barth, *op. cit.* vol. II, pp. 108-9.

² *Ibid.* vol. II, pp. 124-5 and 143-4.

³ *Ibid.* vol. II, pp. 502-3.

⁴ M. G. Smith, *op. cit.* p. 158.

to sanctuary by helping the townsfolk in the arduous task of building and maintaining these immense walls.

To accommodate such refugees, and to enclose farmland which could be cultivated in the event of a long siege, the town walls normally enclosed an area two or three times as large as the town itself and, consequently, were often five or seven miles in circumference. The walls of Kano, the greatest of them all, had a perimeter of eleven miles with thirteen gates.⁵ To protect farmers working in the fields outside the walls some towns also had an outer earthwork known as a *tara mahara* encircling the whole cultivated area. These outer defences were not intended to keep raiders out altogether but simply to delay them enough to give the farmers time to run to safety. Similarly, the purpose of the tall silk-cotton trees which Barth noticed growing near every town gate was to provide a look-out point from which the watch could give the alarm as soon as raiders appeared upon the scene.⁶

In Kano, Barth found that in the richer quarters the majority of the houses were built in the Nubian or North African style, being flat-roofed, laid out round a courtyard, and entirely constructed of sun-baked clay. He described them as being inferior to those of Agades and Timbuctoo in that their courtyards were very cramped and privacy, rather than light and air, seemed to be the prime consideration. On the other hand, the architecture of the Emir's palace impressed him very favourably. The audience chamber, also built of sun-baked clay and reinforced internally with the termite-resistant timber of the fan-palm, had a very high ceiling supported on two lofty and neatly ornamented arches.⁷

Barth found the Fulani Empire a land of plenty compared with most of the other countries through which he travelled. Indeed, water was scarce more often than food. Wells, for example, were often forty fathoms deep and in Wurno, though the wells were shallow, water was so hard to get that it fetched five cowries a pot. Only in Gwandu, where the war with Kebbi had made it impossible for the people to plant their crops, was there any real shortage of food. Almost everywhere else Barth found a thriving agriculture and a good variety of all kinds of produce. Guinea-corn and millet he saw everywhere, rice wherever conditions permitted of its being grown, and milk and meat in plenty except in certain parts of Adamawa.

Among vegetables and tubers, onions seem to have been the

⁵ *Annual Reports, Northern Nigeria, 1900-11*, plan opposite p. 165.

⁶ Information confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu.

⁷ Barth, *op. cit.* vol. II, p. 105.

cheapest and most plentiful, but beans, ground-nuts, sweet-potatoes cassava, yams, and coco-yams were also fairly common. Irrigation was practised in the dry season, the water being raised by shadoofs, and in this way a little wheat was grown, though the main crop was onions. Sugar-cane was also cultivated and Barth was informed that the owner of a farm he saw near Sokoto knew how to make jaggery, or coarse sugar.⁸

Garden fruits were less plentiful than vegetables, but then, as now, pawpaw trees were to be seen in many compounds. Dates and bananas were also grown where the conditions suited them. In addition trees such as the locust-bean and the shea-butter tree were prized for their fruits. Honey, too, was collected wherever found.⁹

The main cash crops were cotton and indigo. They must have been grown in substantial quantities, for they not only sufficed for most local needs but also, as we shall see, supported a profitable trade in dyed cloth. Tobacco, too, was widely cultivated for sale as well as consumption.

The crafts of the country Barth found very unevenly distributed. The most important of them were spinning, weaving, dyeing, tailoring, smithing, pottery, and leather-working. The women did the spinning and some of the pottery, but the rest of the work was performed by the men.

The cloth trade, which was mainly centred upon Kano but whose ramifications spread far and wide, was very highly developed. Locally woven materials, particularly when dyed and embroidered, were in great demand all over the central and western Sudan, the Sahara, and even parts of North Africa. Indeed, the skill of the Kano craftsmen was so highly prized that a re-export trade developed, coarse European cloth being imported across the Sahara and then, after being prepared for the African market, sent on to new destinations.¹⁰

The smiths were also skilled craftsmen and worked silver, copper, and alloys, as well as iron. Apart from agricultural implements, there was a brisk demand all over the Sudan for weapons, bits, stirrups, and women's ornaments.

For smelting there was plenty of iron-bearing rock to be found in Hausaland, but the quality varied appreciably. Barth reported, for example, that the iron smelted round Kano was much inferior to that

⁸ Oral tradition in Sokoto, endorsed by Alhaji Junaidu, asserts that sugar-cane was first introduced by Sultan Bello.

⁹ Barth, *op. cit.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.* vol. II, p. 136.

of Sokoto. No doubt that is why many sword blades were imported from Europe. Even so, the Kano blacksmiths retained a share in the trade, for they set the blades and re-exported them at a profit.¹¹

On the other hand, there were no deposits of copper and metal had to be imported from Darfur.¹² As for tin, though Northern Nigeria is now one of the leading producers in the world, there seems to have been little trade in it during the nineteenth century, probably because the Plateau where it is found was then still dominated by suspicious and intractable pagan tribes.

Of the other towns in the Empire, only Bida in Nupe could rival Kano for the skill of its craftsmen. In the cloth trade, though the Bida weavers could not equal the glossy navy turbans produced in Kano, their men's gowns and women's wraps were held in equal esteem and were indeed exported through Kano, Katsina, and Jega to the other great markets of the Sudan.¹³ In addition to cloth, Bida was famous for its silver, brass, glass, and beads.¹⁴

The main products of the brass and silver smiths of Bida were sword and dagger hilts, horse trappings, bowls, jugs, dishes, ladles, anklets, bangles, necklaces, and rings. Artistic decoration, as well as superior workmanship, helped to give these articles their special value. For the manufacture of some of them a form of *cire perdue* casting was employed which was probably introduced from Benin.¹⁵

The glass-workers of Bida, who always seem to have been a self-contained group, cherish a tradition that they came originally from Egypt. They passed through many cities in the course of their travels, but did not stop until they found a spot where the soil was suitable for the pursuit of their craft. The place, they say, was Nupe and the time the reign of the first Chief Tsoede.¹⁶ Whatever their origins, they brought to Bida a craft which was practised nowhere else in the central Sudan. Their main products, bangles and beads, were consequently in great demand.

Sokoto, the capital of the Empire, was a centre of religious learning rather than crafts. Apart from its superior iron, it was noted only for its leather-work. In this, however, it was pre-eminent. The red goats of Sokoto yield a soft leather which has no superior anywhere and for which there has long existed a world-wide demand. Even in medieval times it was exported to North Africa and from thence, under the name of Morocco leather, much of it went on to Europe.

¹¹ Barth, *op. cit.* vol. II, pp. 138-9.

¹² *Ibid.* vol. II, p. 128.

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 271.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* vol. II, p. 141.

¹⁵ Nadel, *op. cit.* pp. 269-85.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 274.

Barth described it as being soft and beautifully dressed and noted that the principal goods displayed for sale were cushions, bags, and the ornamental horse trappings which were famous throughout Hausaland.¹⁷

Of the other centres of the Empire, Gwandu was renowned for nothing but its cloth. This, though only indifferently dyed, nevertheless commanded a market extending far to the west. Yola, on the other hand, relied so heavily on the trade in slaves that it had no legitimate crafts at all.¹⁸

The pattern of continental, as distinct from regional, trade was of course determined more by the basic facts of geography and the gradual improvement of communications than by any combination of local factors. Until the Portuguese had pioneered the sea-route round Africa in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Sudan had had no other links with the outer world than the caravan routes which crossed or skirted the Sahara. By the fifteenth century these had therefore been built up into a fairly close network which served not only the Sudan but the rest of West Africa as well. The opening of the sea-routes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had revolutionized the external communications of the whole coastal belt, but had not yet had very much effect on the hinterland. In the first half of the nineteenth century, therefore, as the experiences of Clapperton and Lander showed, the desert passage was still a safer and easier route to the Fulani Emirates than the approach from the coast. The only exceptions to this rule were Nupe and Ilorin which, with the development of navigation on the Niger, were being brought within the ambit of maritime trade. But all the other Emirates still faced towards the north and had their backs firmly turned on the sea.

In the Sahara, however, a significant change in the relative importance of the main caravan routes took place during the first half of the nineteenth century. The oldest route from North Africa to the central Sudan was the one which ran from Tripolitania through the Fezzan to Lake Chad. For centuries it had retained its primacy and as late as the 1820s it was the one preferred by the Oudney-Clapperton-Denham expedition. But in the following decades it became increasingly unsafe for caravans, with the result that by the middle of the century it had been eclipsed by the more westerly route that ran through Ghadames, Ghat, and Zinder to Kano.¹⁹ This change probably reflected the waning of the authority of Bornu, which was no longer capable of controlling the desert tribes along its route and the

¹⁷ Barth, *op. cit.* vol. II, p. 180. ¹⁸ *Ibid.* vol. II, p. 501. ¹⁹ *Ibid.* vol. IV, p. 79.

Isena



oYuli

anam



oDonga

ikum



corresponding rise in the power of the Hausa States now that they had been welded together by the Fulani. Whatever the cause, the change certainly had the effect of enhancing the prosperity of Hausaland, and particularly that of Kano, now unquestionably the commercial and industrial centre of the Empire, at the expense of Bornu's.

From Kano a web of trade routes spread out in all directions. To the north the caravan trail to Agades led on, by various branches, to Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Tripolitania, and Cyrenaica. To the east another route, which had been closed during the two Bornu wars but which was now open again, led to Bornu and thence to Wadai, Darfur, the Nile, and finally Egypt. To the south-east a third route led to Bauchi and Adamawa, the two main sources of slaves. To the south a fourth route led to Bida, Ilorin, and Yorubaland. To the south-west a fifth route led to Ashanti. To the north-west a sixth route led to Gao and Timbuctoo. Important as they undoubtedly were, however, it must not be imagined that these trade routes were in any sense highways. On the contrary, Barth observed with some surprise that the one which led from Kano to Bornu was little more than a path leading from one town to another.²⁰

At this time the main imports from Europe and North Africa were cottons and calicoes from Lancashire, cottons and sugar-loaves from France, red cloth from Saxony, beads from Venice, needles, mirrors, and paper from Nuremberg, sword-blades from Solingen, razors from Styria, fine silks from Lyons, coarse silks from Trieste and Tripoli, red fezzes from Leghorn, and all kinds of Arab dress from North Africa.²¹

Other vital imports from the north and north-east were salt and natron. These did not have to be brought from so far, however, as they were found in ample quantities in the Sahara at Bilma, north of Lake Chad.²² Barth actually arrived in Hausaland in the company of the salt caravan from Bilma which he estimated as consisting of three thousand camel loads. The annual imports of natron he put at not less than 20,000 loads. Much of this went on to Bida where it was used in the process of glass-making.²³

From the south-east, Bauchi and Adamawa, came slaves and a little ivory. Such were the workings of the law of supply and demand and the difficulties of transport that the material for four women's gowns, which in Kano was worth no more than four dollars in all, would

²⁰ Barth, *op. cit.* vol. II, pp. 182-3.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 135.

²² Mauny, *op. cit.* p. 322.

²³ Barth, *op. cit.* vol. II, p. 132.

suffice in Yola to purchase either a slave or four elephant's tusks of tolerable size.²⁴

From the south there came to Kano, partly for local use and partly for distribution through Kano's superior mercantile network, the manufactures of Bida—cottons, brass vessels, silver ornaments, and glass bangles and beads.

From the south-west, along the very important Ashanti-Kano caravan trail which features in many Hausa folk tales and proverbs, came two most important commodities, gold and cola-nuts. Much of the gold went on, through Bornu and Wadai, to the Nile Valley and Cairo, but Barth reported that it was always on sale in Kano market and that one hundred *mithqals* could easily be bought at any time. As for colas, the demand for them seems to have been even keener than it is today and Barth reported that, while an onion or a needle could often be bought for as little as one cowry, a cola-nut from the new season's crop had been known to fetch as much as 120 cowries.²⁵

The main commodities which the Empire exported to balance its trade with the outside world were cottons, goatskins, leather goods, and slaves. There was also a small trade in ivory, but it was of much less importance.

The heavy cotton cloth that was woven and dyed in the Hausa States was exported along all the trade routes radiating from Kano. It went to Bornu in the east, to Igbirra and Iboland in the south, to Timbuctoo and Senegal in the west, and in the north to all the oases of the Sahara and even as far as the Mediterranean seaboard. In Barth's day the demand was so great in the west that, even though the direct route was closed by the revolt of Kebbi, Kano cloth was carried as far north as Ghat and Ghadames so that it could be switched back from there to Timbuctoo.²⁶

After his visit to Timbuctoo, Barth pointed out that the bulk of the fine cotton cloth which earlier explorers had noticed and praised was not manufactured locally but imported from Kano. The same point might well have been made about the so-called Morocco leather. As already mentioned, most of it originated not in Morocco but in Hausaland, from where it was exported by way of Agades and Tuat to Fez and the Moroccan ports.

Finally, there was the slave-trade. Barth estimated that the number of slaves exported annually from Kano did not exceed 5,000 and he

²⁴ Barth, *op. cit.* vol. II, p. 502.

²⁵ *Ibid.* vol. IV, p. 162.

²⁶ *Ibid.* vol. II, pp. 126-7.

reckoned that the value of this traffic was slightly less than that derived from the cloth trade.²⁷

Throughout the greater part of the Empire the main currency for all commercial transactions was cowry shells (*Cyproea moneta*). These are found in the Indian Ocean and for many centuries they served the people of the Sudan as a coinage. In Barth's day the rate of exchange was 2,500 cowries to the Spanish or Austrian silver dollar and 12,500 to the English gold sovereign.²⁸

The value of all money, including the pound sterling, has changed so much in the interval that it is difficult to translate these values into modern terms. The simplest and most realistic way of illustrating the purchasing power of cowries in the middle of the nineteenth century, therefore, is to quote some of the prices which Barth mentions in his narrative.

A needle	1 cowry
A small onion	1 cowry
A good razor	1,000 cowries
A sword blade	1,000 cowries
A bull	7,000 cowries
A pack-ox	9,000 cowries
A pony	30,000 cowries
A slave-lad	33,000 cowries

As a currency, cowries had the disadvantage that they were bulky and only 100,000 of them went to the load of a normal camel. Consequently, they were ill-suited to major transactions and payments for big deals were usually made in slaves rather than in shells. This was a source of strength as well as weakness, however, for it meant that there was little profit to be made from importing them. Over the centuries, it is true, their value gradually declined in relation to gold, but the process was such a gradual one that it can have caused no dislocation and on the whole they provided the Sudan with a remarkably stable currency.²⁹

In Kano, Barth reported that, while cowries were the normal currency, most tradesmen were ready to accept payment in dollars. In Wurno, on the other hand, he was grateful for the present of 100,000 cowries from the Sultan because he found the people unwilling to take

²⁷ Barth, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 131-2.

²⁸ *Ibid.* vol. II, pp. 28 and 142-3.

²⁹ See Note 13 in Appendix I.

dollars. In parts of Adamawa neither cowries nor dollars were accepted and woven strips of cloth served as the medium of exchange.³⁰

In the big towns the merchants were prosperous and the use of credit was well understood. The Islamic ban on usury was circumvented by the expedient of bargains which stipulated that the amount to be repaid should be much greater than the amount to be advanced. Indeed, according to Barth the normal profit on such transactions was 100 per cent,³¹ a rate so high that it not only indicates the hazards of the times but also suggests that there was a chronic shortage of capital and credit.

Markets have always been a greater feature of life in West Africa than in other parts of the continent. In the mid-nineteenth century, despite the troubled times, it is clear from Barth's narrative what an important part they played in promoting the trade and wealth of the country. According to his estimate, for example, the market of Badarawa, a Zamfara town of no particular importance, was attended by 10,000 people even though the Gobir moss-troopers were known to be in the field. Similarly, in Gumel, near the Kano-Bornu border, he counted about 300 stalls and saw at least 1,000 loads of natron.³²

The market of Sokoto was in decline at this time, not only because of the Gobir and Kebbi wars but equally because the Sultan Aliyu had removed the Court to Wurno. Nevertheless, when Barth visited it he saw displayed for sale 30 horses, 300 cattle, 50 pack-oxen, a good many slaves, and a great quantity of ironware and leather goods, including over 100 bridles. Evidently this was nothing out of the ordinary, for he described the market as being only tolerably well attended and supplied.³³

The pattern of trade under the Fulani was much the same as it had been under the Hausa dynasties. The two Bornu wars had, of course, cut communications between Kano and Lake Chad. For a time this interruption no doubt pushed up the price of salt, natron, and the manufactured goods of North Africa, but before long the merchants probably found alternative routes for their caravans. The troubles in Nupe, on the other hand, seem to have caused little interruption in the trade between Bida and the northern Emirates.³⁴

The most radical change which took place in the nineteenth century was the decline of Katsina as a trading centre. Katsina had

³⁰ Barth, *op. cit.* vol. II, p. 446.

³² *Ibid.* vol. II, p. 169.

³⁴ See, for example, Barth, vol. IV, p. 99.

³¹ *Ibid.* vol. V, pp. 367-8.

³² *Ibid.* vol. IV, pp. 179-80.

certain natural advantages³⁵ and in 1740 the Arab merchants, frightened off by high taxation, had actually abandoned Kano and moved to Katsina. It had seemed then that Katsina might one day eclipse Kano. Early in the Fulani era, however, the advantage had swung right back to Kano. The reason was that Katsina, lying farther to the north, was much more exposed to the raids of the Hausa exiles. These raids sometimes reached Kano Emirate, it is true, but they never threatened Kano city. Katsina, on the other hand, was so menaced that the Emir at one time contemplated abandoning it and building a new capital farther to the south. The Sultan prevented him from doing so, but the danger remained and Katsina never recovered its former commercial importance.

After the revolt of Kebbi, Sokoto and Gwandu suffered the same kind of commercial eclipse as Katsina. The Arabs, for example, whom Clapperton had found living in Sokoto, had all departed by the time that Barth arrived a generation later.³⁶

By and large, however, despite the many troubles which beset it, the Fulani Empire, particularly the former Hausa States, was busy and prosperous compared with the rest of the Sudan. There is no mistaking the relief which Barth felt when he returned to the well-stocked markets of Hausaland and found himself once more among its friendly, tolerant people.³⁷

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Machinery of Government

IN the *jihad* in Hausaland it had been the Hausa ruling classes rather than the Hausa people who had suffered defeat. Some of them had fled with their Chiefs and become the *dichards* of Maradi, Tsbiri, Argungu, and Abuja. Others, without going into exile, had moved away and begun new lives elsewhere. Others again had stayed in their towns and villages and simply retired into private life. Except for those who had adhered to Shehu's cause, therefore, and outside Zamfara they were a small and unimportant minority, the feudal rulers of the Hausa States, when they had lost the war, had also abandoned or forfeited all their titles and offices.

³⁵ See Note 14 in Appendix I.

³⁶ Barth, *op. cit.* vol. IV, p. 174.

³⁷ *Ibid.* vol. V, p. 280.

The Fulani leaders had fought the war to purify religion, not to reform the social or economic structure of society. When they emerged as the victors, therefore, they did little to change the feudal system which they had inherited from the departed Hausa rulers. They simply took it over. Those who had distinguished themselves in the war obtained for themselves and their families the spoils of victory in the shape of the posts which the defeated Hausas had vacated and the privileges which went with them.

It is not easy to describe in summary form the feudal system which the Fulani inherited from the Hausas and themselves elaborated, firstly, because it varied from Emirate to Emirate and, secondly, because it did not stand still but developed as the century wore on. If due allowance is made for these difficulties, however, a description in broad and general terms can be attempted.

The first point to be emphasized is that the society which the Fulani ruled was a complex one, not only because the people who made it up were separated by differences of race, religion, and language but equally because the Emirates which comprised the Empire were diverse in size and heterogeneous in structure and composition. Even the Emirates that had previously been Hausa States normally embodied older chiefdoms and principalities, swallowed at an earlier date but still only half-digested, and to these the *jihad* often added fresh conquests.

The Emirate of Zaria provides a good example of this diversity. In Hausa times it already contained the petty principalities of Kajuru, Kauru, and Fatika. To these the Fulani later added Kagarko, Lere, and Durum. In addition, however, the *jihad* and the period of expansion that followed it brought four satellites into Zaria's orbit, namely Jema'a, Keffi, Nassarawa, and Doma. By the end of the Fulani conquests, therefore, Zaria was made up of three separate components—the fiefs into which the main body of the Emirate was subdivided, its six minor vassals, and its four larger satellites.¹

The relationship between the Emir of Zaria and each of the three components of the Emirate was different. The four satellites naturally enjoyed the greatest measure of independence. Originally, as already described, the founders of three of them had intended going to Shehu in the hope of receiving flags direct from him, but they had been told by Mallam Musa, the first Fulani Emir, that they were too late because Shehu had already conferred upon him possession of the whole territory as far south as the Benue. They had therefore been content

¹ M. G. Smith, *op. cit.* pp. 73-136.

to receive their flags from Zaria instead of from Sokoto. As for the fourth of these founding fathers, Makama Dogo of Nassarawa, he had been encouraged by the Emir of Zaria to carve a new Emirate out of the decaying Igbirra kingdom of Panda and there had therefore never been any question of his paying homage elsewhere than in Zaria.

These Chieftaincies were recognized from the start as being hereditary in the families of their founders. Each had its own Electoral College and the role of the Emir of Zaria at this stage was only to confirm the choices made by the electors and install the new Emirs. These Emirs enjoyed considerable latitude. They had their own administrative hierarchies and judiciaries. They wielded powers of life and death. They imposed what taxes they pleased. Although, of course, forbidden from fighting among themselves, they did not require their overlord's permission to make war on the Hausa diehards of Abuja or to raid and harry their pagan neighbours. The main symbol of their subordinate standing was the annual tribute that they had to pay to Zaria. This consisted of 100 slaves from each of them together with horses, gowns, corn, salt, locust-beans, palm-oil, cola-nuts, mats, and cowries.²

The authority of the six vassals, as one would expect, was not as great as that of the satellites. True, their dynasties were hereditary, they had their own administrative hierarchies, and they enjoyed full discretion in assessing and collecting tax. On the other hand, they themselves were denied powers of life and death and the jurisdiction of their courts was limited to minor cases. Similarly, in military matters they were not free to go to war or even to undertake a raid without their overlord's permission. Moreover, the Emir of Zaria had the authority to depose as well as to appoint them.³

Even more restricted, of course, were the powers of the *hakimai* or fief-holders in the main body of the Emirate. Their fiefs were sometimes hereditary or quasi-hereditary, especially the major ones which might be vested in some branch of the ruling family or in some noble house whose founder had played a prominent part in the *jihad*, but the majority were not tied to any particular family and were freely in the gift of the Emir. Similarly, while the major fief-holders might have large enough responsibilities for their personal followers to be organized into a proper hierarchy, the remainder commanded little more than a set of henchmen who served them, whenever the occasion demanded, as troopers, constables, gaolers, bailiffs, tax-gatherers,

² M. G. Smith, *op. cit.* p. 77.

³ *Ibid.* pp. 78-79.

and messengers, in short, as men-at-arms in war and factotums in peace.

These fief-holders, great and small, though their powers were circumscribed, nevertheless occupied positions of basic importance in the feudal system of the Empire. Their duties were partly civil, partly military, and partly judicial, and they were the first of the vital links which connected the Emirs and their Courts to the peasants in their villages. In peace they were responsible for the maintenance of law and order, for the collection of tax and tribute, for the execution of any orders that the Emir might from time to time give, and for carrying out such local tasks as clearing tracks, repairing town walls, and supervising markets. In the judicial sphere they were required to leave cases covered by the *Shari'a* to the courts, but they were empowered to deal with *Siyasa*⁴ cases if they were not grave enough to send to the Emir. Land disputes were also regarded as coming within their purview. In addition, of course, as they were vassals of a Moslem Sultan, they were bound to do all in their power to uphold Islam. Finally, as the eyes and ears of their overlords, they were expected to know all that was going on in their fiefs and to report to the Emir anything that might endanger the state or the dynasty.⁵

In return for the position of privilege which these offices conferred, their holders were required to render military service when called upon to do so and to bring with them a recognized number of men-at-arms whom they had to equip. In this respect the system closely resembled the feudal structure of medieval Europe. A summons to serve was naturally answered with more eagerness if there were chances of capturing prisoners or taking booty but, however hard the prospect, it could never be ignored. To do so would be tantamount to rebelling.

Fief-holders had two sources of remuneration, one official and regulated, the other largely unregulated but nevertheless officially condoned. The official source was a share, generally one fifth, of all the tax and tribute that the fief-holder collected. As there was no census, however, the Emir had only a general idea, based on his own observation and the yield of earlier years, of the return to expect from any particular fief. This lack of precise information gave an unscrupulous *hakimi* some latitude to enrich himself by under-declaration

⁴ In Moslem jurisprudence there are many offences which do not come within the scope of the *Shari'a*. Normally these are not tried in the ordinary courts but dealt with by the Emir or, at a lower level, by executive officials like District Heads who represent him.

⁵ M. G. Smith, *op. cit.* pp. 73-136.

or over-collection. The other source of revenue was perquisites. The scale on which these could be exploited was to some extent governed by tradition and by the operation of public opinion, but generally speaking fief-holders had a free hand to accept what they considered fair or to demand as much as they thought they could get.

Although the fief-holders could and indeed often did abuse the system for their private gain, it would be wrong to think of them, as a class, simply as parasites on society and oppressors of the poor. Their positions in the hierarchy were only intermediate ones and much of what they received from their inferiors as presents they had to pass on to their superiors. From what they kept, moreover, they had to feed, clothe, house, arm, and sometimes pay the staff with which they administered their fiefs.

Some of the great fiefs, such as Gwadabawa in Sokoto or Dutse in Kano, were geographically compact and not dissimilar to English counties. But this was the exception, not the rule, and fiefs generally tended to be scattered, having at the most a core in one part of the Emirate and outlying towns and villages in other parts. In Sokoto itself this fragmentation went so far that it took the first British Resident about two years of hard work to trace the ramifications of the fiefs and regroup them into self-contained districts.⁶

Although many *hakimai* lived in their fiefs and administered them personally, there were others who did not do so, either because the towns and villages entrusted to them were too scattered to make local administration possible or else because they were councillors or courtiers and had to live in the capital. In such cases local administration was entrusted to Village Heads and a confidential messenger, called a *jekada*, served as the link between them and their overlord. Naturally, this indirect form of administration was more open to abuse than the system whereby the fief-holder ruled his domain personally and was accessible to complaints and appeals from his people.⁷

Judged by modern standards, this whole system of administration through the feudal hierarchy was rough and ready. On the other hand,

⁶ Monthly and Quarterly Reports from Sokoto Province, 1903-6, now in the National Archives, Kaduna.

⁷ In *Government in Zazzau*, M. G. Smith gives a map of the fiefs of Zaria in the nineteenth century. This shows the extent of the fragmentation and gives an indication of the large proportion of fiefs held by the Galadima, Madaki, Alkali, Imam, and other high officials of the Emirate who, in the nature of things, must have been absentees.

it was probably more advanced than any other system in black Africa at that time. What was more important was that it worked and that at its best it provided a benevolent if paternalistic form of local government.

A feature of the feudal system of the Empire was that authority was first centralized and then extensively delegated. The role of the Emir was consequently of vital importance, for on him everything turned.

The general rule, to which Zaria was an exception, was that there was only one ruling family although within it the choice might lie between several of its houses. In theory, any legitimate male descendant of the founder was eligible for election, but in practice the candidates were narrowed down to a small number by the elimination of all those who lacked the requisite strength of personality, experience of public affairs, and popular support.

When an election became necessary it was usual for each dynasty or house of the ruling family to agree upon the candidate which it intended to back and, consequently, elections sometimes became contests between dynasties or houses rather than individuals. The desirability of preserving a rotation among dynasties or houses was also taken into account but could not always be met. The final choice, as in the metropolitan Sultanate, was made by an Electoral College consisting of the leading men of the Emirate who were not members of the ruling family and, consequently, not themselves eligible to stand for election.

Once elected the Emir found himself in a position of great, but certainly not unbounded, authority. The first limit to his power lay in the fact that he was a vassal of the Sultan of Sokoto or Emir of Gwandu, as the case might be, and had to retain the confidence of his overlord if he was not to incur the risk of being deposed. The Sultans and Emirs of Gwandu did not often take this extreme step, it is true, but cases occurred from time to time. For example, in 1840 the Emir of Gwandu Halilu deposed Usuman Zaki of Nupe, as has already been related, while the Sultan Aliyu Babba deposed Sarkin Katsina Sidiku in 1844,⁸ and Sarkin Hadeija Buhari in 1850.⁹ It was only in Zaria, however, that depositions became at all common. There Sidi Abdul Kadir was deposed in 1853, Abdullahi in 1871 and again in 1881, and Sambo in 1888.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the knowledge that the

⁸ Daniel, *op. cit.* p. 20.

⁹ *Gazetteer of Kano Province*, p. 22.

¹⁰ *Gazetteer of Zaria Province*, 1920, pp. 10-11.

power was there and might be used against them was enough to put a curb on the conduct of all but the most headstrong Emirs.

The second limitation to the authority of the Emirs was to be found in the working of Islamic Law. Under it, and especially under the doctrine of *siyasa*, they admittedly possessed very wide powers. These were clearly defined, however, and could not be exceeded. Nor was there any conception of *droit administratif* which conferred exemption or legal privileges on members of the ruling classes or even on the Emirs themselves. Indeed, as the law was considered to be God-given and not man-made, the subordination to it of even the highest in the land was accepted as being perfectly natural. The Empire can therefore be said to have enjoyed the rule of law. Moreover, in every Emirate this was safeguarded by groups of divines and jurists who regarded themselves as being the guardians of the true faith. Only men like Buhari of Hadeija, who were completely ruthless and cared nothing for public opinion, could ever hope to intimidate and silence these fearless and outspoken men. Ordinary Emirs had to be careful not to lay themselves open to their strictures.

Another limiting factor which certainly could not be ignored, though it was perhaps less potent than Islamic Law, was local tradition and convention. It was particularly effective in curbing nepotism and preventing Emirs from going too far in dismissing the officials appointed by their predecessors and filling their posts with their own nominees. The watchdogs here were the supporters of the rival dynasties or houses. The later history of Kano provides a good example of what Emirs could and could not achieve. When Muhammadu Bello was Emir in the 'eighties he dismissed Yusufu, the son of his predecessor, from the post of Galadima and appointed his own son Tukur instead.¹¹ In doing this he had two aims, first to strengthen his own régime by placing a man he could trust in a key post and second to groom Tukur to follow him as Emir. Up to a point his manoeuvre was successful, for during his life he enjoyed his son's support and after his death Tukur was nominated by the Sultan to succeed him. In fact, however, he had overreached himself and by going further than convention permitted had alienated public opinion and aroused the bitter hostility of the rival house of the dynasty. The sequel, as we shall see, was the Kano civil war.

Another very important counterpoise to the power of the Emirs was the vested interests of the Fulani nobility. Though there were certain important differences, their standing was broadly similar to

¹¹ Alhaji Abubakar, *op. cit.* pp. 58 and 61.

that of the nobility of medieval Europe, that is to say they enjoyed a privileged position and in return were obliged to render military service whenever they might be called upon to do so. They not only filled most of the posts in which their families had hereditary interests but, thanks to the advantages which birth and education gave them, they also secured most of the appointments that were theoretically open to all. In this way they obtained the same grip of the machinery of government, and became almost as much of a power in the land as the aristocracy in eighteenth-century England. This was as true of the central governments as of the administration of the country districts. The Councils of the Emirates, for example, were not formally constituted bodies with any fixed allocation of seats. In theory, therefore, the Emirs needed to summon to them only their own personal supporters.¹² In practice, however, it was almost impossible for them to exclude the leading representatives of the great families such as the Sullubawa in Katsina or the Yolawa and Dambazawa in Kano.

All these factors, while they combined to place real limitations on the authority of the Emirs, still left them in positions of great potential strength. In the last analysis, therefore, the amount of power that they wielded depended mainly on the force of their personalities, their skill in playing the political game, and the length of their reigns. Some, like Abdullahi who ruled Kano from 1855 to 1883, became complete autocrats. Others, like Ahmadu of Hadeija, lacked the personality and standing to assert themselves and always remained ciphers.

The administrations over which the Emirs presided were partly bureaucratic, partly feudal, in nature. To sustain them, therefore, public funds were required and these, for the most part, were raised by means of taxes. Taxation, as we have already seen, had been introduced into Hausaland at a very early date. The system which the Fulani took over and developed was by no means uniform but everywhere it fell into four broad categories. First of all there was the *haraji*, or *kuridin kasa*, which was a poll-tax or general tax on the farming community. Next there was *jangali*, the tax on cattle, which the Fulani rather surprisingly did not remit when they came to power. Then there were death-duties which were levied according to Moslem Law. Finally, there was a miscellaneous group of impositions on crafts and trade. In addition to all these there was *zakka*, the equivalent of the tithe of Christendom, but this was not so much a secular

¹² M. G. Smith, *op. cit.* pp. 118-20.

tax as a more or less voluntary contribution to funds devoted to religious or charitable purposes.

The method of assessing *haraji* varied from Emirate to Emirate. In Katsina, for example, the head of every household had to pay a flat rate of 2,500 cowries with an additional 500 cowries for every household slave. The total revenue from this source was estimated by Barth in the middle of the century at 20-30 million cowries. In Kano the rate was the same but the revenue much higher, probably about 90 million. In Zaria, on the other hand, instead of a flat rate, free men paid 500 cowries in respect of every member of the household, slave or free, who was capable of wielding a hoe.¹³ In 1860 there was a change to a flat rate of 2,000 cowries per family and this gradually rose until by 1900 it had become 6,000 cowries.¹⁴

There is no doubt that before the *jihad* this tax was also levied at comparable rates in Gobir, Kebbi, and Zamfara. Under the Fulani, however, the territory of these three States became the metropolitan region of the Dual Empire and therefore the repository of the tribute paid by all the other Emirates. This sufficed to keep the two Treasuries reasonably full. The inhabitants of the Sultanate and the Emirate of Gwandu were therefore excused from the payment of *haraji*.¹⁵ This concession was one of the more important reforms in the Hausa system which the Fulani made when they came to power.

Among the miscellaneous impositions some, such as caravan tolls, dated back to the Hausa era and were in any case practised all over black Africa. Others were innovations introduced by the Fulani. By the end of the century, one way or another, duties were being levied on a wide variety of objects such as canoes, market-gardens, date-palms, and dye-vats. Occupational taxes were also imposed on such craftsmen and traders as blacksmiths, butchers, tanners, leather-workers, honey-gatherers, snuff-makers, entertainers, and brokers.¹⁶ The collection of these taxes was entrusted to the heads of the craft guilds, almost invariably Hausas, who were recognized by the Emir and given such titles as *Sarkin Makera* and *Sarkin Fawa*.¹⁷

¹³ Barth, op. cit. vol. II, p. 144.

¹⁴ M. G. Smith, op. cit. p. 94.

¹⁵ See the Monthly and Quarterly Reports from Sokoto Province, 1903-6. When Burdon, the Resident, reported to Lugard, the High Commissioner, that no *haraji* had hitherto been paid in Sokoto and Gwandu, he was reprimanded for allowing the wool to be pulled over his eyes. Nevertheless, he was right and Lugard was wrong.

¹⁶ M. G. Smith, op. cit. pp. 157-8 and the *Gazetteer of Zaria Province*, pp. 16-17.

¹⁷ M. G. Smith, op. cit. pp. 85-86.

In these hierarchical societies, indeed, titles played a most prominent part. The tradition had of course come down from the Hausa era, but the Fulani, forgetting Shehu's teaching, perpetuated it with gusto. Each Emirate had its own set of titles and among them the styles of Galadima, Madaki, Makama, Magajin Gari, Turaki, Chirama, and Dan Galadima were usually to be found together with others which were peculiar to the locality. Nor was the practice confined to the capitals. Satellites and vassals had their own separate hierarchies and even fief-holders and Village Heads often dignified the standing of their henchmen and servitors by conferring on them, in their humbler sphere, one of the great titles of the State.

In Sokoto the metropolitan Sultanate was administered on much the same lines as the Emirates of the Empire. As the States of Gobir and Zamfara, which composed the greater part of it, had been broken up in the wars, there was no difficulty in embodying them in the new structure. Had their people not deserted Shehu's cause during the *jihad*, the larger fragments of Zamfara might indeed have been accorded the same degree of autonomy as the satellites of Zaria. But as it was, Anka, Talata, Mafara, and Gummi were given a lower status similar to that of the Zaria vassals, that is to say the hereditary claims of their dynasties were recognized and they were allowed a measure of administrative, judicial, and fiscal control of their own affairs, but in all matters of major importance their powers were strictly circumscribed. The Burmawa of Bakura and Tureta were treated in the same way. So too, when they returned to the fold, were the Gobirawa of Sabon Birni.

Among the vassals of the Sultanate, former Hausa Chiefs were only a small minority and the vast majority of the feudatories were Fulani whose forbears had distinguished themselves in the *jihad*. So far as the greater ones were concerned the practice of Sokoto differed in an important respect from that of Zaria. There, as we have seen, the growth of hereditary and quasi-hereditary rights was held in check and most of the major fiefs remained in the Emir's gift. In Sokoto, however, events were allowed to develop in just the opposite way and hereditary succession became the general rule.

Mention has already been made of the great fiefs of Tambawal and Zurmi which were conferred on Buhari dan Shehu and the heirs of Namoda. After two generations their families were now unassailably established in possession of them. In addition, there were many others of only slightly less importance in which the hereditary rights

of the families concerned had become just as securely entrenched. For example, the descendants of Muhammadu Moyijo and Muhammadu Ashafa, whom we have already met, established similar liens on the fiefs of Yabo and Gusau.¹⁸ Likewise, the descendants of Shehu's youngest son Isa, who had been installed in Kwarre after the defeat and flight of Abdu Salami, had soon been recognized as having hereditary rights to the succession, while the family of Muhammadu Dadi, who at about the same time had helped Bello to subdue Abdu Salami's rebellious ally Banaga dan Bature, had acquired a no less enduring stake in the fief of Maru.¹⁹ This process, moreover, was by no means confined to the period of the *jihad* and its aftermath. In the early 'sixties, as has already been described, the Sultan Ahmadu Zaruku created the great fief of Gwadabawa and subsequently his heirs lost no time in consolidating their title to it. Later, though by different methods, the Sultans Aliyu Karami and Ahmadu Rufa'i used their influence to establish hereditary rights for their families in the fiefs of Isa and Silame which they had themselves ruled before their elevation.²⁰

The proliferation of hereditary rights probably went further in the Sultanate of Sokoto than in any other part of the Empire except perhaps Gwandu. Moreover, it was not limited to the territorial hierarchy and before long the great offices of the Council and Court, including that of the Waziri, had also come to be regarded as hereditary. Even the dignity of Chief Justice became a monopoly and was enjoyed by the family of Mallam Mustafa, whom Bello had appointed in 1817, right down to the year 1898.²¹ This entrenchment of privilege carried with it the germs of future decay, but the process was to be a slow one and in the meantime the administration of the Sultanate still seemed perfectly healthy.

As the government of the Empire rested largely in the same hands as the administration of the Sultanate, it was of course exposed to the same dangers. On the surface, however, it too seemed sound enough. It was still based on the *kofa* system that Bello had introduced nearly two generations earlier. No Councillor had been assigned special responsibility for imperial affairs and so the brunt of the work fell on the Waziri who had in his portfolio the Emirates of Kano, Zaria, Adamawa, Gombe, Hadeija, Katagum, Misau, Jama'are, and

¹⁸ Sokoto *DNBs*, Histories of Yabo and Gusau.

¹⁹ Ibid. History of Maru.

²⁰ Ibid. History of Isa and Silame.

²¹ Ibid. Historical Note on the Chief Alkalis.

Air.²² To help him sustain this burden, which involved a good deal of travelling, he was allowed to appoint a deputy who, needless to say, was drawn from the same family and given the title of Dan Galadiman Waziri. Responsibility for the remaining Emirates was shared by some of the other great families. Bauchi fell to the Magajin Rafi and Katsina, Daura, and Kazaure to the Galadima,²³ while Muri and Kontagora, two of the more recent Emirates whose creation will be described in the next chapter, were assigned respectively to Sarkin Rabah and the Ubandoma.²⁴

Being the imperial power Sokoto was entitled to collect tribute from its vassals. This was levied at the Islamic rate of one-fifth and fell equally on revenue collected in peace and booty taken in war. As the yield from booty was very volatile, the amounts remitted tended to vary from Emirate to Emirate and from year to year. This explains the large divergences in the accounts which have come down to us. In 1853, for example, Barth was told that there were 30 horses, 500 gowns, and 2,000,000 cowries in the caravan bearing Zaria's tribute to Sokoto and that similar instalments were dispatched every second month. On the other hand, he learned that in the whole of the previous year Katsina, from which similar contributions might have been expected, had been able to scrape together only 800,000 cowries and a single stallion.²⁵ The discrepancy between these two sets of figures reflects the difference in the situation of the two Emirates at that time, Zaria being free to raid its weaker neighbours to the south while Katsina was preoccupied in defending itself from the attacks of the Hausa diehards in the north.

Forty years later another European traveller was informed that Kano was the only Emirate rich enough to pay its way without having recourse to slaves and that its tribute amounted to 100 horses, 15,000 gowns, and 10,000 turbans. Katsina apparently made a mixed contribution of 100 slaves supplemented by horses and currency. Bauchi and Adamawa, on the other hand, paid entirely in slaves, 500 and 2,000 respectively.²⁶ According to still later sources, Muri's tribute at the end of the century consisted of 100 slaves and 100 horses,²⁷ while Kano's, after the civil war, was reduced to 100 horses and 1,000 gowns.²⁸

²² Information furnished by Alhaji Junaidu.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Sokoto *DNBs*, Histories of Rabah and Hamma'ali.

²⁵ Barth, *op. cit.* vol. IV, p. 127.

²⁶ C. H. Robinson, *Hausaland*, London, 1896, p. 105.

²⁷ Sokoto *DNBs*, History of Rabah.

²⁸ Monthly and Quarterly Reports from Sokoto Province, 1903-6.

Whatever the precise amounts may have been, there is no doubt that the flow of tribute into Sokoto, and to a lesser extent Gwandu, was very considerable. At the time it was regarded as a source of strength. In the perspective of history, however, we can see that, like the gold that poured into Spain from the Americas, it served only to soften the fibre of the people and hasten the decay which soon began to attack the heart of the Empire.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Cracks in the Edifice

GIVEN the circumstances in which Shehu's supporters seized power, it was inevitable that, once their enemies had been overcome, some of them should start quarrelling over the spoils. In the early days there were strong Sultans to settle these disputes and so they did little harm to a movement that was still vigorous. As time went by, however, the vigour evaporated and the Sultans became less incisive. It was then that the same inherent weaknesses that had undermined the other great States of the Sudan began to make themselves felt and threatened the unity and cohesion of the Empire.

The first of these weaknesses was the combination of great distances and bad communications. From Sokoto city, which lay far to the west of the geographical centre of the Empire, the distance to the remoter parts of Adamawa was well over a thousand miles. At the best of times this span, as great as that which separated Britain from Imperial Rome, was uncomfortably long for the exercise of a suzerain's authority. What made the task much more difficult in Africa than in Europe was the nature of the climate. The concentration of all the rainfall into the space of a few months had the effect, as Clapperton and Lander discovered to their cost,¹ of making the roads virtually impassable during part of the year. This in turn, by giving people living near the periphery a sense of isolation from the centre, sometimes tempted them into disloyalty and rebellion.

The Empire's second great weakness was the want of a standing army. To fight his wars the Sultan had to rely on his own feudatories and vassals and, if the emergency justified calling them out, the feudal levies of his Emirs. In the early days, as we have already seen,

¹ Clapperton, *Journal*, ch. V.

Bello and his successors did not hesitate to summon the Emirs to the major expeditions that they mounted. Adama, for example, the first Emir of Adamawa, is said to have made the long journey to Sokoto on no fewer than eleven occasions.² But as time went by the Fulani grew weary of fighting and it became more difficult for Sultans to mobilize their full strength, particularly when the enemy was not an external one but merely a rebellious vassal.

The third weakness was moral, not material. It was the corruption brought about by worldly success, the loss of early ideals, the ebb of zeal, the decay of resolution, and the general decline in standards of conduct. It would be an exaggeration to say that by the second and third generation the Fulani had become decadent, but they had unquestionably lost their early fire.

Furthermore, as the century wore on, the stature of the succeeding Sultans tended to diminish and the inherent weaknesses of their position seemed increasingly to inhibit them from dealing vigorously with the internal crises that arose. Bello, it will be remembered, had quickly scotched the first of them, the revolt of Abdu Salami and Banaga dan Bature. Later in his reign, as we shall now look back and see, he showed equal firmness in quelling potentially serious trouble in Kazaure and Muri. But when his successors faced similar problems in Hadeija and Kontagora, they flinched from hard decisions and either acquiesced in the defiance of their vassals or else took refuge in inglorious compromises.

DAN TUNKU AND KAZAURE EMIRATE

It will be remembered that Dan Tunku was the Fulani leader who, early in the *jihad*, had prevented a coalition between the forces of the Hausa Chiefs of Kano, Katsina, and Daura. For this feat he had received a flag from Shehu.³ Later he had helped to establish a Fulani régime in Daura, but thereafter he had not played a particularly active part in the *jihad* and had made little contribution to the victory of the reformers in Kano.

By the end of the war his position in northern Kano was strong but ill-defined. As a flag-bearer he had the right of doing homage direct to Shehu, and subsequently to Bello, but in spite of this it seems to have been recognized that he was to some extent under the tutelage of Kano. So long as the unworldly Sulimanu was Emir of Kano this loose arrangement apparently worked satisfactorily, but when the

² *Gazetteer of Yola Province*, p. 18.

³ *Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, p. 30.

much more forceful Ibrahim Dabo succeeded in 1819 it broke down. Ibrahim demanded Dan Tunku's allegiance and was refused. He thereupon conferred on one of his own vassals, Sarkin Bai of the Dambazawa family, a fief embracing all the territories that Dan Tunku and his followers had acquired in the *jihad*. This move led to open hostilities.⁴

The fighting, though intermittent, lasted about five years. At first Dan Tunku had the best of it and raided right up to the walls of the city. Gradually, however, Kano's weight began to tell and he was pressed back. Nevertheless, he still continued to harry all the northern part of Kano Emirate. When Clapperton passed through the country in 1824 he found the Emir Ibrahim in his war-camp, preparing for the annual campaign, and in many ruined and deserted villages he saw evidence of Dan Tunku's past ravages.

Later in the same year Ibrahim made a determined attempt to bring Dan Tunku to heel. He took an army up to the Kazaure hills and occupied the fortified camp where Dan Tunku had made his headquarters. Soon afterwards, however, Dan Tunku made a surprise counter-attack and drove the Kano forces out again.⁵

As the fighting had ended in stalemate both sides agreed that the dispute should be referred to the arbitration of the Sultan. When the case was brought to him, Bello found in favour of Dan Tunku and reaffirmed his independence of the Emir of Kano. Kazaure was thereby recognized to be a separate Emirate and its boundaries were demarcated.⁶

This decision brought the hostilities to an end and after that Kano and Kazaure lived together as good neighbours. But the fact remained that, even in Sultan Bello's day, Fulani had begun fighting against Fulani. Unfortunately, as the century advanced, this phenomenon was to become more common.

GOMBE AND MURI

It will be recalled that one of the leaders of the *jihad* in the east had been Buba Yero, who had made himself master of the area enclosed

⁴ Kazaure Emirate Notebook, Historical Note.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid. Dan Tunku did not live long to enjoy his success. Soon afterwards, while repairing a flintlock, he accidentally set fire to some loose gunpowder. He was a man of the old school, however, and even though his clothes and the roof of the building caught fire he refused to move, saying that he was a Fulani and would show no fear. He was dragged out of the flames, but died of his burns two months later.

in the bend of the Gongola River, previously tributary to Bornu, and had created out of it the new Emirate of Gombe.

During the next phase, after the Kanuri had broken off the war in western and southern Bornu and fallen back on Lake Chad, Buba Yero had proceeded to round off and consolidate his new acquisitions. In the process, he had attempted to extend his jurisdiction beyond the Gongola to the north and west, but in doing so had come into sharp collision with Yakubu of Bauchi, who regarded this territory as his own. There had therefore been some fighting and Fulani blood had been shed on both sides. In the end, however, Buba Yero had withdrawn his forces, which in any case had got the worst of the encounter, and had agreed to accept the river as the boundary between the two Emirates. On this basis, peace between him and Yakubu had been patched up.

While Buba Yero had been thus occupied in the north, he had entrusted to his brother, Hamman Ruwa, the task of extending his boundaries into the Benue Valley in the south. In this Hamman Ruwa had been conspicuously successful. It is true that, apart from some remnants of Jukuns, the indigenous people were backward and were organized only into small principalities and tribes. But even if they were not very formidable individually, they were collectively numerous and the terrain suited their style of fighting much better than that which the Fulani had now adopted. Their subjection had therefore been a considerable feat of arms.

As a result of these conquests, Gombe by 1825 had become a sprawling Emirate like Zaria. Muri, the territory in the Benue Valley, was remote from the capital, Old Gombe, which Buba Yero had recently built on the Upper Gongola. Moreover, because of the hilly country and still untamed tribes that intervened, communications between them were unusually difficult. Buba Yero therefore recognized his brother as the ruler of Muri and gave him a free hand. At first this arrangement worked perfectly well: Hamman Ruwa continued to acknowledge Buba Yero as his overlord and always rode in his train whenever they were summoned to attend the Court or camp of the Sultan.

As old age came over him, however, Buba Yero became obsessed by suspicions about Hamman Ruwa's loyalty. He seems to have feared either that Hamman Ruwa would secede and declare himself independent of Gombe or, worse still, that when he himself died the Electoral College might appoint Hamman Ruwa as Emir and so exclude his own sons. Whether he had any justification for these

suspensions we shall never know. What is certain is that in 1833 he summoned Hamman Ruwa and his eldest son Bose to Gombe and then, on the pretext that they were scheming secession, had them both executed.⁷

This treacherous and arbitrary act, which was completely out of keeping with the god-fearing character of the first generation of Fulani rulers to which Buba Yero belonged, caused consternation. Hamman Ruwa's people at once appealed to Sokoto for justice and Bello was so incensed by what had happened that he then and there severed the link between Gombe and Muri and presented Hamman Ruwa's sons with a flag to mark their independence.⁸

Thanks to the Sultan's firm and prompt intervention, this conflict had no damaging repercussions. Nevertheless, it represented an early and ugly crack in the edifice of Fulani unity.

BUHARI OF HADEIJA

The Emirate of Hadeija, it will be remembered, was one of the first to be created when the *jihad* spread eastward to the Bornu marches. Sambo, the third Emir, had played a leading part in its formation and it was he who, in the course of a long reign, had enlarged and consolidated it.

In 1845, when he was approaching the age of eighty, Sambo decided to retire in favour of his sons. The eldest, Garko, succeeded as Emir, but lived for only two years. He was followed by the second son, but after a short and stormy reign of only seven months he too died.

The death in rapid succession of his two eldest sons brought Sambo back from retirement and for a short time in 1848 he resumed power, but then he too fell mortally ill. His third son, Buhari, was known to be cruel and unscrupulous and Sambo now tried to procure the succession of the fourth son, Ahmadu. Like Jacob, however, Buhari is said to have impersonated his brother and in this way to have obtained his father's death-bed blessing. Certainly, when Sambo died it was he who was chosen to succeed.⁹

About a year after becoming Emir, Buhari began to grow apprehensive of the influence and popularity of his cousin, Sarkin Auyo Nalara, and to fear that he might develop into a dangerous rival for the throne. To prevent his ever doing so, Buhari had him assassinated.¹⁰

Aliyu Babba was Sultan at this time. No doubt he already knew

⁷ *Gazetteer of Muri Province*, 1922, p. 17.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Gazetteer of Kano Province*, p. 22.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

that Buhari had a reputation for ruthlessness and so he summoned him to Sokoto to answer the charges made against him. Buhari refused to go. Aliyu therefore sent Abdul Kadir, who had succeeded his father Gidado as Waziri, to deal with him.¹¹

The Waziri Abdul Kadir made his way to Katagum, assembled a mixed force drawn from the eastern Emirates, and marched on Hadeija. Buhari, on this occasion, put up little resistance but gave up the town and withdrew to the north. The Waziri thereupon invested as Emir the younger brother, Ahmadu, whom their old father had always preferred to Buhari. Having done this he dismissed the troops who had been furnished to him and returned to Sokoto.

Buhari, cast out by his own people, retired to the north-east and sought the succour and alliance of the enemies of the Empire. The Chief of Matsena allowed him to make his headquarters in the town of Yarimari and from Bornu, Matsena's suzerain, he received help in the form of arms and men. With this help he soon became strong again and pressed on with his preparations for recovering the throne that he had lost.¹²

In 1851, just after Barth had passed through that part of the country on his outward journey, Buhari launched his attack on Hadeija. Although he must have had news of Buhari's warlike preparations, the Sultan had apparently done nothing to strengthen the hand of his nominee Ahmadu. Buhari was therefore able to retake Hadeija without much difficulty. Furthermore, having captured Ahmadu, he emphasized the fact that he no longer acknowledged the Sultan's authority by putting him to death.¹³

This was the most flagrant act of rebellion that any Emir had yet committed. Seven years earlier, it is true, the Emir of Katsina, Sidiku, had gone over to the Hausa diehards after the Sultan had deposed him¹⁴ but he had not resisted his deposition, as Buhari had done, much less recaptured his throne and killed his supplanter. To maintain his authority and prestige the Sultan now had to take some drastic action. It was characteristic of Aliyu, however, that his measures were half-hearted and inadequate. Instead of taking the field himself, or at least sending the Waziri, he at first entrusted the operations to the Waziri's younger brother, Ahmadu dan Gidado, who held the relatively minor title of Dan Galadiman Waziri.¹⁵ Later,

¹¹ Alhaji Junaidu, op. cit. pp. 35-36. For the family tree, see Table 7 in Appendix II.

¹² Barth, op. cit. vol. II, pp. 175-6.

¹³ *Gazetteer of Kano Province*, p. 22.

¹⁴ Daniel, op. cit. p. 20. In 1853 Barth met Sidiku among the Hausa diehards.

¹⁵ Alhaji Junaidu, op. cit. p. 36.

it is true, he dispatched the Waziri to take over the command, but the campaign never recovered from this false start.

The Waziri now again put himself at the head of the mixed force, assembled by his brother the Dan Galadima and drawn mainly from Katagum and Jama'are Emirates, and marched on Hadeija. To reach the town they had to cross the river, whose broad valley was hereabouts cut up by small lakes and covered with a dense growth of thorn trees.¹⁶ In this difficult terrain Buhari ambushed and routed them. The Waziri thereupon abandoned the enterprise and returned to Sokoto. The Sultan also acquiesced in the defeat and so Buhari was left in undisputed possession of Hadeija.

If the damage to the Empire had been confined to the loss of one Emirate it would not have been felt too badly. Unfortunately, however, Buhari was not the man to let bygones be bygones and he now embarked on a deliberate policy of harrying his Fulani neighbours and enriching himself by plundering them. Katagum, Jama'are, and the whole of the north-eastern part of Kano Emirate had to suffer his depredations. Success emboldened him and his raids took him as far afield as Misau, Dutse,¹⁷ and even to the vicinity of Kano.¹⁸ When Barth passed through this area again in 1855 he remarked upon the extraordinary change which, during the space of less than four years, Buhari had wrought in what had previously been a populous and flourishing countryside.

Buhari was never subdued and to the day of his death in 1863 he remained the scourge of his fellow Fulani. When he died Hadeija was, it is true, brought back into the Empire and reconciled to Sokoto. But the damage that he had done lived on after him. The solidarity of the Empire, especially in the north-east, was shattered. Worse still, his evil genius had proved how easy it was for a determined ruler to defy the distant suzerain. Worst of all, he showed the Sultans how to turn a blind eye to the distress signals of their people and he taught the people to doubt the willingness and ability of the Sultans to protect them.

NAGWAMATSE AND KONTAGORA

In Umaru Nagwamatse the ruling family of Sokoto produced a man who had the same combination of audacity, courage, and ruthlessness as Buhari.

¹⁶ Author's personal knowledge.

¹⁷ Kano *DNBs*, History of Dutse.

¹⁸ Barth, *op. cit.* vol. V, pp. 370-2.

Nagwamatse was the son of Sultan Atiku and the younger brother of Sultan Ahmadu Zaruku.¹⁹ From his youth he proved to be rebellious and turbulent. As a young man the first responsibility assigned to him was the headship of the town of Gwamatse, which stands in the Rima Valley about a day's march west of Sokoto. At that time it did not form part of any fief but was in the gift of the Sultan to whom its ruler paid allegiance direct. It was his early association with this place that later caused him to be called Nagwamatse.²⁰

During the reign of Sultan Aliyu Babba, Nagwamatse was given command of the garrison town of Katuru in the eastern part of the Sultanate. With Isa and Zurmi, this was one of the fortresses in the upper Rima Valley by means of which the Fulani were trying to contain the Gobir and Katsina diehards, who were then rapidly recovering their strength. The responsibility was therefore a much greater one than he had borne in Gwamatse. While he was there Nagwamatse attracted a large personal following with the result, apparently, that he aroused the jealousy of his own elder brother, Ahmadu Zaruku, who perhaps feared that he might be displaced as heir apparent when the Sultanate next fell vacant. He was therefore relieved of his command and recalled to Sokoto.²¹

After this Nagwamatse was sent to Talata Mafara. This was a Zamfara town, the most populous and important in central Sokoto, and Nagwamatse's role was not to rule it himself but to act as a Fulani Resident and keep an eye on the Sultan's vassal, Sarkin Mafara Agwaregi, whose loyalty was suspect. But the Sultan and Ahmadu again became apprehensive about his growing power and so, in about 1851, he was once more recalled.²²

These snubs seem to have convinced Nagwamatse that there was no advancement to be had at home, for soon afterwards he shook off the dust of Sokoto and went out into the world to seek his fortune. He made his way to the south because there, on the still fluid frontiers of the Empire, the opportunities were greatest for a man of his stamp. It happened that Makama Dogo, who later became first Emir of Nassarawa but who was then still only a soldier of fortune employed by the Emir of Zaria, was at that time conducting his campaign in

¹⁹ For his place in the family tree, see Table 2 in Appendix II.

²⁰ Information confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu. The belief that Nagwamatse means 'the destroyer', which has survived to this day, is incorrect.

²¹ *Gazetteer of Kontagora Province*, p. 8.

²² *Ibid.* pp. 8-9. Confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu.

the Lower Benue Valley against the Igbirra Kingdom of Panda.²³ For a time Nagwamatse served with him as a mercenary captain and helped him to take the important town of Toto.²⁴ After about two years, however, they parted company and Nagwamatse went westward to Nupe.

His arrival there in the year 1857 coincided with the suppression of Umar Bahaushé's insurrection. Umar himself was dead, but most of his defeated and leaderless troops were still at large. Nagwamatse enrolled many of them among his own followers and thereby enhanced his stature as a mercenary leader. Moreover, he succeeded in getting on good terms with both the Fulani leaders, Usuman Zaki and Masaba, and he supported them in expeditions against the pagan Gwaris.²⁵

When Usuman Zaki died in 1859 he was succeeded as Emir of Nupe by Masaba. Although Masaba was still friendly with Nagwamatse, he probably regarded him as an uncomfortably powerful subject. At any rate, he encouraged him to leave Nupe and carve out a new kingdom for himself in the no-man's-land to the north, which lay between Yauri, Sokoto, Zaria, and Nupe. First he allowed him to set up a war-camp at a place called Bogi and later he agreed to give him a free hand north of the River Kurmin Kada.²⁶

The territory into which Nagwamatse now moved lay outside the borders of Hausaland and had never been effectively subdued or occupied by the Fulani. It was very extensive, at least ten thousand square miles, and inhabited in the north by the Dakkakeri, in the east by the Gwaris, and elsewhere by a mixture of tribes and tribal fragments. Being covered in thick bush and heavily infested by tsetse fly, it did not lend itself to the cavalry warfare which the Fulani now favoured. Nevertheless, to an able and unscrupulous adventurer like Nagwamatse, its scattered pagan population promised rich hauls of slaves and booty.

Nagwamatse began his operations in the east against the Gwaris. Though they received some help from the unsubdued Hausas of Abuja, they were unable to withstand him and he soon overran the southern and western part of their territory.²⁷ His operations had been undertaken without the sanction of the Sultan or Emir of Gwandu, however, and they were therefore regarded with disfavour. Indeed, Sultan Aliyu Babba placed an interdiction on him,²⁸ but died

²³ Panda is the Fundah which Sultan Bello mentioned to Clapperton.

²⁴ *Ch A*, p. 12.

²⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 9-10.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Gazetteer of Kontagora Province*, p. 9.

²⁸ *Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, p. 33.

soon afterwards and was succeeded as Sultan by Ahmadu Zaruku, Nagwamatse's elder brother. Nagwamatse not only managed to mollify him but later, under the title of Sarkin Sudan, obtained recognition as a paramount ruler in his own right.²⁹

In 1863 the Gwaris rose against Nagwamatse, but after nearly a year of hard fighting he subdued them again. The insurrection brought famine in its train and food became so scarce that a single *dunya* or wild plum could be sold for five cowries.³⁰

Having secured his position in the east, Nagwamatse next turned his attention to the west. There he found a situation which he was quick to exploit to his advantage. Yauri, it will be remembered, was one of the *Banza Bakwai* and its population consisted of Hausa ruling and middle classes living in the towns, and a mainly pagan peasantry who had not adopted the Hausa language or been assimilated to the Hausa way of life. During the *jihad* the Chief had made voluntary submission to Shehu and had been confirmed in office. Yauri had thereby become part of the Empire and after Shehu's death had paid allegiance to Gwandu.

Since 1844, however, Yauri had been torn by a dynastic clash, which soon afterwards had led to civil war. The two factions were led by Jibrilu Gajere and Abubakr Jatau. In 1848 Gajere, who had previously been deposed, returned and defeated his rival. Jatau was killed in the fighting and Gajere regained the throne for a year before he in turn was defeated and killed. His son, Yakuba dan Gajere, thereupon had himself proclaimed Emir. Except among the Kamberawa, however, he enjoyed little support and the rest of the Yauri people preferred to follow his cousin Sulimanu. Under these two leaders, the civil strife continued.³¹

Nagwamatse, for reasons of his own, espoused the cause of Yakuba dan Gajere and soon had him completely within his power. Under the pretext of helping him, he extended his sway over what had been eastern Yauri, right up to the Molendo River, and forced the Emir Sulimanu back on to the islands in the Niger and a comparatively narrow strip of the mainland.³² Sulimanu repeatedly appealed for help to his suzerain, the Emir of Gwandu, but without success.

The truth is that the Emir of Gwandu was in an embarrassing predicament. Not only was he preoccupied with the Kebbi war, as we shall see, but he must have been mindful of the fact that

²⁹ *Gazetteer of Kontagora Province*, p. 9.

³¹ *Ibid.* pp. 16-22.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

Nagwamatse was the younger brother as well as the vassal of the Sultan. The easiest course was, therefore, to ignore the appeal from Yauri and do nothing. In 1866, however, Sultan Ahmadu Zaruku died and in the following year the Fulani patched up a temporary peace with Kebbi. This freed the Emir of Gwandu's hands and he warned Nagwamatse not to encroach further on his preserves.³³ But the damage had already been done and he had to recognize that eastern Yauri had been lost.

Having established his authority in both west and east, Nagwamatse built himself a capital at Kontagora in the centre of his territory. There, in 1876, death at length brought his turbulent career to an end. In his favour it can be said that in the space of seventeen years he created a new Emirate out of what had previously been a no-man's-land and added it to the Empire. But to his discredit it must be added that throughout his life he followed a course of unscrupulous acquisitiveness that was completely contrary to all that was best in the Fulani tradition.

In retrospect we can see how sharp a difference there was between the way in which the earlier and the later of these four episodes were handled. Bello showed firmness and wisdom in coping with the problems raised by Dan Tunku and Buba Yero. Aliyu Babba and Ahmadu Zaruku, in contrast, displayed weakness and nepotism in their dealings with Buhari and Nagwamatse. The difference was an indication of the extent to which the grip of the Sultans on the Empire was beginning to relax. In the next generation, as we shall see, it was to slip further still.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Kebbi Wars

IN the first half of the century it was the diehards of Gobir and Katsina who caused the Sultans the greatest trouble and anxiety, but in the second half, with the submission of Dan Halima and the founding of Sabon Birni, the pattern changed. Thereafter, as already mentioned, raids from the north fell increasingly on Katsina, Kano, and Zaria Emirates, while the pressure on Zamfara and Sokoto was eased. But so far as Sokoto was concerned, this shift was

³³ *Gazetteer of Kontagora Province*, p. 10.

counterbalanced by the resurgence of Kebbi. By 1875, in fact, the Kebbawa and their allies, the Arewa and Zabermawa, had become a major threat to the strength and stability of the Empire.

In the early days of the *jihad*, it will be recalled, the Fulani had invaded Kebbi, sacked the capital, and driven out the Chief, Muhammadu Hodi. In his place they had installed their puppet, Usuman Masa, but in the crisis following the defeat at Alwasa he had proved false and had turned against them. After the victory of Gwandu, therefore, they had hunted him down and killed him.

Before the defection of Usuman Masa the Fulani had been disposed to treat the Kebbawa in the same way as the Zamfarawa, assuming that they were friendly unless they showed hostility and ruling them through their own Chiefs. Betrayal had brought disillusionment, however, and Usuman Masa's treachery had caused them to reverse this policy. Thenceforward Kebbi was no longer regarded as an ally but treated instead as a defeated enemy. The towns that resisted were reduced and the Hausa ruling classes, if they had not already fled, were deprived of their offices and titles and replaced by Fulani whose loyalty to the régime could be relied upon.¹

The resistance put up by Muhammadu Hodi in the Zamfara Valley and then by Karari in Argungu and Zazzagawa has already been described in an earlier chapter. It will be recalled that after Karari's death his son Yakubu Nabame had thrown himself on the mercy of the Fulani, that his life had been spared, and that for sixteen years he had lived as an exile at the Court in Sokoto and Wurno. Bello, magnanimous by nature, accorded to him the privileges that befitted his birth and breeding. With the passage of time, moreover, he gradually won the trust of the Fulani so that, when the easy-going and genial Aliyu Babba succeeded as Sultan, he seems to have been treated almost as if he were a member of the family.²

It was the special trust which Aliyu reposed in him that led in the end to the termination of his banishment. In about the year 1847 the Gobirawa diehards raided the town of Gora in central Sokoto. A Fulani expedition was quickly dispatched to intercept them and with it the Sultan sent his eldest son Umaru, entrusting him, as he was still young and inexperienced, to the special care of Yakubu. In the fighting that followed Yakubu saved Umaru's life and the Sultan, in gratitude, told him to seek whatever favour he pleased. Yakubu

¹ Information confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu.

² Oral tradition preserved in the Kebbi ruling family and confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu.

begged to be allowed to return to his own country and his wish was granted.³

Once back among his own people Yakubu, it seems, began to ponder a taunt that had been hurled at him by the Gobirawa at Gora. He should be fighting with them, they had cried, not by the side of his father's murderers. These words gradually became an obsession with him and at length drove him to rebellion.⁴ In 1849, like his father before him, he suddenly renounced his allegiance and proclaimed himself to be Chief of Kebbi. So ended eighteen years of peace, the longest truce that there was to be in this war.

Yakubu had prepared the ground with care and, as soon as he raised his standard, men from Kebbi, Arewa, and Zaberma thronged to join it. Sokoto and Gwandu were caught unprepared and before their forces could be concentrated they had suffered a number of sharp reverses. The worst blow of all was the sack of the Fulani stronghold of Silame, which guarded the western approach to Sokoto.⁵ As soon as the news reached the Sultan he gave orders for his army to be mustered.

When the army had assembled Aliyu himself led it down the Rima Valley. By this time Halilu had succeeded Muhammad as Emir of Gwandu and he joined Aliyu to lay siege to Argungu just as Bello and Muhammad had done eighteen years earlier.⁶ There the parallel ended, however, for the results of the two expeditions were to be very different.

There is no better example than this of what an ineffective Sultan Aliyu was. Because of the excessive trust that he had reposed in Yakubu he had brought about a serious rebellion in the west at a time when he was barely holding his own with the Gobir and Katsina dichards in the north. It was obvious that he must move heaven and earth to scotch this revolt before it gained strength and momentum. To do this he only needed to storm Argungu and recapture Yakubu. But instead his patience gave out or his resolution wavered and, after sustaining the siege for some time, he raised it and marched away.⁷ In doing so he was acquiescing in the revival of the Hausa State of Kebbi and making the first important surrender of territory that had taken place anywhere except in Bornu since the original conquests. He was also condemning his successors in Sokoto and Gwandu to fifty years of hard and unprofitable fighting.

³ Oral tradition preserved in the Kebbi ruling family and confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

The resurgent State of Kebbi now bore the shape of a wedge driven into the flank of the Fulani Empire. In the west Arewa, Dandi, and Zaberma formed the broad base of this wedge. In the centre it narrowed down to the four walled towns of Augi, Zazzagawa, Gulma, and Sauwa. And in the east its heavily armoured tip, the town of Argungu, was inserted into the vulnerable joint between Sokoto and Gwandu. During the five decades of fighting that was to take place along these frontiers each part of the Kebbi wedge was to play its part. Arewa and Zaberma were to supply a steady stream of new recruits. The walled towns in the centre were to provide the necessary defensive stiffening. And Argungu was to serve as the bridgehead for the raids and forays with which the Kebbawa now started harrying the Fulani.

In the course of one of these raids Yakubu Nabame was mortally wounded and thus became the fourth successive Chief of Kebbi to perish in this contest. To the Fulani, who remembered only the young man spared by Muhamman and befriended by Bello and Aliyu, he was a rebel and a double-dyed traitor. To the Kebbawa, on the other hand, he was an heroic figure, like Wallace or Bruce, who snapped the fetters of servitude and led his people back to dignity and freedom.

Yakubu was succeeded by his brother, Yusufu Mainasara, and the war went on.⁸ The main battlefield was the flood-plain of the Rima River, which hereabout is three or four miles wide. During the height of the rains it becomes a broad sheet of water, but in the dry season, when the floods have gone, it dries out into a flat, treeless expanse of clay, clothed in coarse grass or thorn-scrub and cut up at intervals by the shifting channels of the river. The Kebbi fortresses of Augi, Gulma, and Sauwa were all situated on the edge of this flood-plain and looked across it to Fulani fortresses on the other side. During the campaigning season it became a no-man's land across which the war was fought.

Here, in 1859, the Kebbawa suffered yet another set-back. Mainasara was in Argungu when a message was brought to him saying that the Fulani had launched a surprise attack on Gulma. He immediately sprang to arms and, accompanied by such men as he had been able to collect, set out to ride across the valley, but on the way he and his party were ambushed by a superior Gwandu force and he was killed. His head was cut off and taken back to Gwandu town,

⁸ For the family tree, see Table 6 in Appendix II.

where it was fixed over the main gate.⁹ He thus became the last of the five Chiefs of Kebbi who fell in this war.

Haliru had recently succeeded his elder brother Halilu as Emir of Gwandu and for him this was a great triumph. In the following year, however, he was to suffer an identical fate. For a reason which has never been clearly explained, he then decided to by-pass the Kebbi towns that stood in the front line and attack a remote place of secondary importance called Karakara, which lay far to the west. The Kebbawa, however, seem to have got wind of this plan. At any rate, they had time to prepare an ambush and Haliru, falling into their trap, was surrounded and killed. His head, like his victim's, was then cut off and borne back to Argungu.¹⁰

The new Chief of Kebbi, Muhammadu Ba'are, did not live long to enjoy his triumph. On his early death he was succeeded by Abdullahi Toga, another son of Karari. At first this change made little difference, but in 1867, when Ahmadu Rufa'i became Sultan in Sokoto, the political scene was suddenly transformed.

Ahmadu Rufa'i, who was a son of Shehu, was an elderly man when he was elected. Being pious and retiring by nature, he had already been passed over three times when Aliyu Babba, Ahmadu Zaruku, and Aliyu Karami, who all belonged to the next generation, had been made Sultan before him. During their reigns he had lived at Silame and had only just escaped when the place had been sacked by the Kebbawa. Indeed, if tradition is to be believed, he had lost members of his family and household during the fighting.¹¹

These experiences, in other men, might have engendered a thirst for revenge. In Ahmadu Rufa'i, however, they had the opposite effect. As has already been mentioned, he had the perception to see that there were only two ways of dealing with the rebellion in Kebbi: either to crush it or else to accept it as a fact. Being a man of peace, he chose the second course.

In 1867, therefore, Ahmadu Rufa'i and Abdullahi Toga made a treaty of peace. Under its terms the Fulani recognized the independence

⁹ Oral tradition preserved in the Kebbi ruling family. For the family tree, see Table 6 in Appendix II.

¹⁰ According to a tradition preserved in the Kebbi ruling family, a black magician called Mallam Muhamman encompassed the deaths of both Mainasara and Haliru. He first lured Mainasara to destruction with his spells and then, having been bribed by the Kebbawa to change sides, did the same to Haliru. See Johnston, *op. cit.* pp. 131-3.

¹¹ Oral tradition preserved in the Kebbi ruling family. Confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu.

of Kebbi and agreed that all the territory that the Kebbawa had recovered was to remain in their hands.¹² This treaty, though it represented an important success for the Kebbawa, was by no means a triumph for them. While confirming them in the possession of Argungu and most of the territory beyond the river, it nevertheless left the Fulani as masters of much more than half of their erstwhile State.

The peace, which is known to history as the Peace of Toga, lasted from 1867 to 1875. It marked the end of another stage in the war and, apart from the eighteen years when Yakubu Nabame was either a fugitive or an exile, was the only period during the whole century when there was a real pause in this bitter struggle.

The Peace of Toga came to an end in 1875 because the people of the Kebbi town of Fanna in the Lower Rima Valley, on account of some now forgotten quarrel with Argungu, decided to transfer their allegiance to Gwandu. The Emir agreed to their doing so, but the Kebbawa construed the action as a breach of the treaty and by way of reprisal seized ten thousand head of Fulani cattle. This naturally provoked retaliation from the Fulani and hostilities began again.¹³

In the early stages of its resumption the war centred upon the town of Giru, which stood opposite Fanna on the east side of the Lower Rima Valley. Sarkin Shiko, its ruler, declared for Argungu and defied the Emir of Gwandu, now Mustafa, to do his worst. The Fulani's first attack failed and so Mustafa summoned reinforcements from Nupe. When these arrived Giru was invested and, after a four-month siege, captured.¹⁴

The fact that the Gwandu Fulani were unable to take a small town like Giru without the help of their vassals showed how far their power had already declined. The truth was that, ever since Abdullahi's death, the theory of their status being equal to Sokoto's had been little more than a polite fiction. The resurgence of Kebbi exposed the limitations to Gwandu's power and at the same time drastically reduced the base from which it was exercised.¹⁵

After the fall of Giru the focus of the war moved north to the Argungu-Gwandu sector. The Kebbawa launched a major assault on Ambursa, but failed to take it and the Fulani were no more successful when they attacked Gulma.

In the main, however, it was a war of forays and ambushes rather than sieges and pitched battles. It threw up its own champions, such

¹² *Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, p. 17.

¹³ *Ibid.* pp. 41-42.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 42.

¹⁵ Compare Gwandu Emirate in Maps 2 and 6.



9 The Rima River, near Argungu. In the background is the flat, almost treeless flood-plain, which here is about four miles wide. In the border wars this was the no-man's-land between the Kebbawa and the Fulani.



10 The ornamental entrance to the Emir of Yauri's Palace. The building is constructed of sun-baked clay in the traditional Hausa style. In this the roof is supported on arches which are internally reinforced with scantlings cut from fan-palms, the only timber that is not attacked by white ants.

as the Zarumin Kola of Gwandu, the Galadima Dan Waje of Kebbi, and the Magaji Jan Borodo, who fought first for one side and then for the other.¹⁶ Being constantly engaged on a relatively narrow front, the contestants came to know the methods and tactics of their adversaries and were always striving to outwit and overreach one another.

It was, in fact, a moss trooper's war and it bears many striking resemblances to the border warfare of the English and Scots. If anything, however, it was even more bloody and relentless. The rank and file might surrender and hope to purchase their lives with their liberty, but for men of quality there was no question of quarter or ransom. Those who were unhorsed settled themselves on their outspread shields in the posture of prayer, as Karari and Mainasara had done, and with their rosaries in their hands stoically waited for their enemies to dispatch them.

The last phase of this struggle between the Fulani and Kebbawa was dominated by Sama'ila, the son of Yakubu Nabame. He was born in 1842 at the time when his father was an exile in Sokoto. As a small boy of seven or eight he must have been present at the siege of Argungu and he grew up in a soldier's world of patrols and raids.

In stature Sama'ila was not unusually tall, but his frame, with broad shoulders and deep chest, was exceptionally lithe and powerful. He took great pride in the profession of arms and from his youth he trained himself in the use of every weapon, being especially deadly, it is said, with the javelin. Moreover, he studied to harden himself so that he never betrayed pain or fear. As a soldier, in fact, he matched great natural gifts with ruthlessness and dedication. But there was more to him than just this. He also had a strong personality, which was made more formidable by the fact that he was by nature rather taciturn and morose, and as he matured he showed outstanding gifts of leadership.¹⁷ Most important of all, he possessed a flair for guerilla warfare that amounted almost to genius.

In Sokoto, in the meantime, the peace-loving Sultan Ahmadu Rufa'i had died in 1873. According to the tradition of alternation, it had still been the turn of the house of Atiku to provide a successor, but again they had failed to produce a suitable candidate. The succession had therefore gone in turn to two sons of Bello, first to Abubakr na Rabah and then, on his death in 1877, to Mu'azu. When he in turn had died in 1881, the claims of the Atikawa had again been

¹⁶ Oral traditions preserved in Gwandu and Kebbi. See Johnston, *op. cit.* pp. 134-6.

¹⁷ Oral tradition preserved in the Kebbi ruling family.

passed over and Umaru, the eldest of Bello's grandsons, had been appointed Sultan.

This Umaru, now a man of fifty-seven, was the same son of Aliyu Babba whose life had been saved by Yakubu Nabame thirty-three years earlier in the fight at Gora. He had not forgotten his debt and when he succeeded he at once sent an embassy to Argungu, where Toga was still Chief, proposing peace. But unfortunately the war party, led by the renegade Fulani, Jan Borodo, was in the ascendant there and so the Fulani overtures were rejected.¹⁸

Having failed to make peace, the new Sultan decided to mount an expedition against Argungu, which was now the recognized capital of Kebbi as well as being its bridgehead on the east bank of the Rima. Command was entrusted to an experienced but ageing freedman called Sarkin Lifidi Lefau.¹⁹ This time the Kebbawa did not shut themselves up in the town, as they had on both previous occasions, but decided to risk a battle in the open. For the first time command of the whole Kebbi army was given to Sama'ila. It was a great opportunity, which he seized with both hands. The Fulani forces were intercepted near Argungu and, according to tradition, it was a javelin hurled by Sama'ila himself that brought the Fulani commander down and turned the tide of the battle. Certainly, Lefau was killed and his army routed.²⁰

For Sama'ila this victory came at a most opportune moment. In the following year the old Chief Toga died and he was elected to succeed. Endowed now with supreme military and political power, he soon began to display his genius for this kind of warfare.

The remarkable run of successes that Sama'ila achieved between 1883 and 1903 was based on accurate intelligence and good tactics. In the collection of intelligence, to which he devoted infinite pains, he was far ahead of any of his contemporaries. In his tactics he relied mainly on surprise and shock. By riding out of Argungu at nightfall he could get into position by first light on the following day for an attack on almost any town in northern Gwandu or south-western Sokoto, and this is what he normally did.

As Sama'ila's list of victories grew, so the superstitions that clustered about him multiplied. His famous bay was said to be no horse but a jinn and he himself was reputed to be able to change himself at will into an animal so that he could reconnoitre the towns

¹⁸ Oral tradition preserved in the Kebbi ruling family. Confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

which he proposed to attack. As a shrewd commander he played on the fears that his name inspired and often intimidated his enemies into flight or surrender. If a town opened its gates he contented himself with carrying off the booty and captives that he wanted and forbore from sacking or burning it. If it resisted, however, he delivered it up to fire and the sword.²¹

In the space of twenty years Sama'ila is said to have captured ninety Fulani towns and villages.²² Probably, a majority of these were small places protected only by stockades, but many must have been walled towns and among them there were certainly a few real fortresses such as Gande, Shagari, Kajiji, and Aliero.²³ All the countryside lying within reach of Argungu was ravaged by him and when the British arrived in 1903 they were appalled at the havoc that he had wrought. Here is the report of Burdon, the first Resident of Sokoto Province: 'Throughout the whole distance from Shagari to Ambursa, all round Gwandu and north-east to within twenty miles of Sokoto, I was much impressed by the devastation wrought by the Kebbawa, much of it within the last eight years. The country is strewn with the ruins of towns.'²⁴

There is no doubt that during the last two decades of the century the Kebbawa, under the inspired leadership of Sama'ila, not only held their own but took the war to the Fulani. Gwandu suffered most, but Sokoto, too, was distracted and weakened. Moreover, these events took place at the very time when, as we shall see in the next chapter, the approach of Rabeh from the east and the British from the south made it imperative for the Sultans to be strong and vigilant. For this reason, even though the Kebbi wars were fought in a restricted theatre and on a limited scale, they nevertheless played an important part in determining the fate of the Empire.

²¹ Oral tradition preserved in the Kebbi ruling family.

²² This claim is made on his gravestone.

²³ Information confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu.

²⁴ *Annual Reports, Northern Nigeria, 1900-II*, p. 175.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Gathering Clouds

WHEN the first Fulani Empire came into existence it was largely insulated from the world by the desert to the north and the rain-forests to the south. True, religious and cultural currents flowed through the corridor of the Sudan and a certain amount of trade crossed the Sahara, but these contacts were limited and with the western world there was no direct communication at all. Indeed, the only Europeans who had even penetrated to Hausaland were Mungo Park and his companions and they had only reached its south-west corner when they had perished in the rapids near Bussa. In the early days, therefore, the Fulani had known no external threat beyond that of their neighbours. Among them only the Kanuri had been strong enough to challenge their hegemony and they, as we have already seen, had twice been decisively defeated.

After the second defeat in 1827, the power of Bornu had entered a slow decline. El-Kanemi's authority, it is true, had survived the failure of his projected invasion of the Empire so that, on his death in 1835, his power had passed to his son Umar. And for another decade after that the government had been conducted in the same way as before, with the Mai, or Sultan, acting as the titular ruler and the Sheikh wielding all the real power, but then there had come a sudden crisis. In 1846, while Sheikh Umar had been away in Zinder, the Mai of the day, Ibrahim, had tried to seize power. Despite the backing of the Emir of Wadai, however, he had soon been captured and executed. His son, Ali Dalatumi, had then been proclaimed Mai in his place, but within six weeks, after being deserted by his Wadai allies, he too had been defeated by Umar and killed. With him had been extinguished a dynasty that had ruled Bornu for centuries past.¹

After the death of Ibrahim and Ali, Sheikh Umar had made himself the titular as well as the real ruler of Bornu. Apart from a short period in 1854, when his younger brother had succeeded in usurping the throne, he had ruled Bornu until his death in 1880. He had then been succeeded, in fairly quick succession, by his three sons.²

¹ *Gazetteer of Bornu Province*, p. 10.

² For the family tree, see Table 5 in Appendix II.

But, though peace had been restored there was no doubt that in the second half of the century Bornu's power was on the wane.

THE RISE OF DAMAGARAM AND NINGI

The Fulani did not gain much respite from the decline of Bornu because it was matched by the rise of Damagaram. The Emirate of Damagaram, which was a vassal State of Bornu's, was of comparatively recent origin. Its founder was a pious Moslem of the Daguerra tribe called Mallam. Originally, he seems to have come from the Chad region, but as a boy he went to study in one of the oases of the southern Sahara. There he made a name for himself as a scholar and divine and built up a large personal following. Later, the pressure of the Tuaregs compelled him and his people to move south and in 1736 he was proclaimed Emir of Damagaram.³

This new Emirate occupied the indeterminate area between Agades in the north and Kano and Katsina in the south. It was not quite desert and yet its rainfall was for the most part too light to support an ordinary agricultural economy. Its population was very mixed and included Tuaregs, Kanuri, Hausas, Fulani, and displaced tribes or tribal fragments like the Daguerra from whom the ruling family traced their descent.⁴

The new Emirate seems to have been tributary to Bornu from the outset, but at the time of the *jihad* it was still too weak to assist the Kanuri or arouse the animosity of the Fulani. The war more or less passed it by, therefore, and left it subordinate as before to Bornu. Its capital, Zinder, was not founded until a decade later and even then was built as an unfortified town.⁵ At this stage its main importance was that it provided a refuge in the north in which the Hausa diehards of Gobir and Katsina were able to seek sanctuary after their defeat by the Fulani.

The rise of Damagaram dates from the accession of the Emir Tanimu in 1841. Although deposed two years later, he recovered his throne in 1851 and then ruled the country until his death in 1884. He was a man of vision as well as ambition. He grasped the importance of fire-arms much earlier than any other Chief in the central Sudan and by building up an armoury of 6,000 rifles or muskets and 40 cannon he created a force that came to be feared even by his more powerful neighbours.⁶

In the second half of the nineteenth century Damagaram's fealty

³ Abadie, *op. cit.* p. 125.

⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 125-8.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

to Bornu became increasingly perfunctory but was never thrown off. During this period the Emirs concentrated mainly on harrying their Fulani neighbours to the south and in this they were always able to count on the support of the Hausa diehards of Maradi and Tsibiri. The diehards, for their part, were stiffened in their intransigence by the knowledge that they now had a powerful ally standing behind them.

In 1857 Tanimu felt strong enough to mount an expedition against Kano. He failed in his main objective, which was to take the city, and he lost a large part of his cavalry in the attempt.⁷ It was a sign of the times, however, that he could embark on such an ambitious enterprise at all and the fact that he was able to defeat the Kazaure forces, kill the Emir, and sack the town showed that Damagaram had now become a force to be reckoned with.⁸

In the succeeding decades Kano and to a less extent Zaria found themselves under pressure from a different quarter, namely from Ningi. In the first half of the century the Ningi people were no more than a tribe inhabiting an area between Kano, Zaria, and Bauchi Emirates that was sufficiently hilly and inaccessible for them to have preserved a precarious independence from Fulani rule. In about 1850, however, some renegade Hausa Mallams, who had fallen foul of the Fulani authorities in Kano, took refuge there.⁹ It is said that one of them was an accomplished conjurer and that it was through his tricks, which the simple pagans accepted as evidence of magical powers, that the Hausas first established their ascendancy.¹⁰ Be that as it may, they gradually extended their authority over the Ningawa until they had become the rulers of the tribe. Once established they began leading raiding expeditions against the towns in the plains which they found ripe for plundering.

At first the Ningawa conducted their forays at short range and attacked only the adjacent districts of Kano¹¹ and Bauchi Emirates. But, with the confidence born of success, they gradually grew bolder and in the latter part of the century they were going as far afield as south-western Kano and the home districts of Zaria.¹²

In 1868 the Emir Abdullahi of Kano made a determined attempt to crush Ningi by sending a powerful force against it. At Fajewa, however, they suffered a severe defeat in which some of their leading

⁷ Abadie, *op. cit.*

⁸ Kazaure Emirate Notebook, Historical Note.

⁹ *Gazetteer of Bauchi Province*, pp. 15-16.

¹⁰ Alhaji Abubakar, *op. cit.* p. 57.

¹¹ Kano *DNB*, *Histories of Birnin Kudu and Rano*.

¹² M. G. Smith, *op. cit.* p. 183.

commanders, including the Madaki Ismailu and Sarkin Dutse Sulimanu, were killed.¹³ After this reverse, Kano fell back on purely defensive strategy. The Ningi raids were fleeting, it is true, and inflicted no permanent damage. Nevertheless, they distracted the attention of the Fulani from the more serious dangers in the north and provided further evidence of the decline of their fighting power.

Towards the close of the century, as will be related later, Damagaram was again to declare war and invade the Empire. But what in the interim was equally important was the fact that its backing made the Hausa dichards very bold and active. In particular, Sarkin Katsina Dan Baskore, who ruled the unreconciled Katsinawa from 1857 to 1879 and who afterwards came to be regarded as the greatest of their Chiefs, was a most audacious and successful leader.¹⁴ From Maradi he and his successors were constantly swooping down on places in Katsina and Daura Emirates and they even raided as far south as western Kano¹⁵ and northern Zaria.¹⁶

THE ADVENT OF RABEH

While these events were taking place in Hausaland, a new figure, Rabeh, was rising to power and prominence in the eastern Sudan.

Rabeh was a native of Darfur, but, having been captured and enslaved in his youth, his early life had been bound up with the Egyptian rulers of the Sudan. To understand the background of his career, therefore, we must go back to Zubeir Pasha, the Egyptian adventurer and slave-trader, who earlier in the century had made himself master of the Bahr al-Ghazal region of the Upper Nile and then gone on to conquer for the Khedive the ancient Sultanate of Darfur. Rabeh had first made a name for himself as a captain in Zubeir's private army and had continued to serve his son Suliman when the latter had succeeded his father as Governor of Bahr al-Ghazal. But before long Suliman had defied the Government in Khartoum and declared his independence. At this Gordon, who by this time had become Governor-General, had dispatched an expedition against him and in 1878-9, after several battles, this force had broken his strength. Suliman and Zubeir's other surviving captains had thereupon surrendered in the hope of obtaining clemency.

¹³ Kano *DNBs*, History of Dutse.

¹⁴ Abadie, *op. cit.* p. 380.

¹⁵ Kano *DNBs*, History of Gwarzo.

¹⁶ Mary Smith, *Baba of Kano*, London, 1954, pp. 46-47.

But not so Rabeh. He had always set his face against capitulation and so, when the others had given themselves up, he had rallied the survivors of his company, who are said then to have numbered about four hundred, and led them away to the south and west beyond Gordon's long reach. There, in the very heart of the continent, they had continued to maintain their independence and to support themselves by slave-raiding and preying upon the neighbouring tribes.¹⁷

Five years after Rabeh's flight the Mahdi Muhammad Ahmed emerged and proceeded to raise the Sudan against the Egyptians, storm Khartoum, kill Gordon, and establish his own régime. He is said to have invited Rabeh to enlist under him, but Rabeh declined the offer.¹⁸ His refusal is hardly surprising, for Rabeh was a man of strong will and by this time he had grown used to being his own master. Nevertheless, he identified himself to some extent with the Mahdi by joining the Mahdiyya sect of Islam and accepting its ritual. Moreover, he also adopted for his own troops the patched tunics that had become the uniform of the Mahdists.

Over the years Rabeh gradually built up his strength. It was his practice when he was on the move, as he often was, to spare the towns and villages that opened their gates to him and to content himself with the exaction of tribute. If the inhabitants fled, he permitted looting, and of course if they resisted they were put to fire and the sword.

Rabeh allowed his troops to keep any chattels that they took, but if they captured slaves, horses, or cattle they had to yield up a half share. From this revenue he was able to give them regular pay amounting to seven dollars a month. With the balance he bought the fire-arms on which he relied to maintain his superiority over the feudal forces which from time to time challenged him.¹⁹

Rabeh's army was organized into Standards or Companies. These were not of uniform size but depended upon the authority and ability of the Captains who commanded them. Of these two-thirds were Furians, like himself, and the rest Arabs.²⁰ He kept them under strict control and they in turn maintained a stern discipline. Latterly, the average number in each Company seems to have been about 200. Rabeh maintained his strength by offering the prisoners whom he took their lives and freedom if they entered his service. In this way he gradually built up his power until, at the climax of his career, he had

¹⁷ E. Gentil, *La Chute de l'Empire de Rabeh*, Paris, 1902.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Herbert Alexander, *Boyd Alexander's Last Journey*, London, 1912, pp. 185-90.

²⁰ *Gazetteer of Bornu Province*, pp. 108-10.

5,000 men, 3,000 fire-arms, 44 small pieces of artillery, 1,000 horses, and a baggage and ammunition train comprising hundreds of camels, mules, and pack-asses.²¹ By the standards of contemporary Africa this was a formidable force.

In the early 'nineties Rabeh at length felt strong enough to emerge from the remote fastness in which he had until then been content to lurk. Moving north he came into collision with the warlike people of Wadai, who gave as good as they got. At any rate, he was unable to conquer the Emirate and therefore turned westward.²² His eyes already seem to have been fixed on the Chad region, for although he defeated the Baghirmi forces, he did not stop there or attempt to occupy the country. On the contrary, he pressed on westward and in 1893 entered Bornu.

The Sheikh of Bornu at this time was Hashim, who had never been of a warlike disposition and who was now growing old. When Rabeh invaded his territory, Hashim underestimated the danger and merely sent one of his generals with a force of about 3,000 men to bar the way. Rabeh brushed him aside without difficulty and continued his advance. Two more battles were fought, one at Ngala and the other in front of Kuka, but each time the Kanuri were overwhelmed. Hashim was therefore compelled to abandon his capital and fall back to the north-west on the River Yobe.²³

Among the Bornu ruling family there was one who thought that Hashim had disgraced his house and lost his patrimony through his want of courage and resolution. This was Muhammad el-Amin, usually known as Kiari, who was a nephew of Hashim's.²⁴ Feeling that a desperate situation called for a desperate remedy, he had his uncle assassinated and himself proclaimed Sheikh in his stead. He then started collecting an army and announced that he would drive Rabeh from Bornu or perish in the attempt.²⁵

When Kiari advanced on Kuka to recapture it he found Rabeh barring his way at Dumurwa. In the battle that ensued the Kanuri seemed at first to have won a sweeping victory. They relaxed their vigilance, however, and this gave Rabeh the chance to rally his forces, counter-attack, and rout them. Kiari was captured alive. Though wounded, he refused to plead for his life but defied Rabeh to do his worst and went bravely to his death.²⁶

²¹ *Gazetteer of Bornu Province*, pp. 108-10.

²² Alexander, *op. cit.* p. 186.

²³ *Gazetteer of Bornu Province*, pp. 23-24.

²⁴ For the family tree, see Table 5 in Appendix II.

²⁵ *Gazetteer of Bornu Province*, pp. 24-25.

²⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 25-26.

When Rabeh had first occupied Kuka he had spared the place. Now, to teach the Kanuri a lesson, he resolved to destroy it. He therefore let his troops loose and for two days they indulged in an orgy of murder, rapine, and pillage. Over three thousand people are said to have been slaughtered and the city was so thoroughly devastated that it was never rebuilt. In the districts Rabeh's troops were given the same license and these acts of calculated brutality had the effect that Rabeh desired. Bornu was not only defeated, but, for the time being, completely cowed.²⁷

Having made himself master of Bornu, Rabeh retired to Dikwa, south of the Lake, where he built himself a new capital and concerned himself with reorganizing the government of the kingdom that he had won. This he did simply by installing his own followers alongside the main Kanuri feudatories and delegating to them the responsibility for maintaining the new régime and collecting tribute and tax. But, because of the rigid discipline which he maintained, Rabeh's system was more highly centralized than the loose feudal organization that it replaced.²⁸

Among Rabeh's Captains there was by now a recent recruit called Hayatu, who was not only a Fulani but also a member of the ruling family of Sokoto. In 1867, when the Sultan Aliyu Karami had died and there had been a movement in favour of electing his younger brother Abubakr na Rabah, Hayatu had intervened with the suggestion that Ahmadu Rufa'i, as a surviving son of Shchu, had the better claim. As a result, Ahmadu Rufa'i had in fact been appointed. When he in turn had died, however, Abubakr na Rabah had succeeded. There is no evidence that he had shown Hayatu any ill-will for having previously wrecked his hopes. Nevertheless, Hayatu's own people had turned against him and driven him out of his fief.²⁹

In about 1874 Hayatu had therefore shaken the dust of Sokoto from his feet and turned his face to the east. Ten years later, when the Mahdi had emerged in the Sudan, Hayatu had joined the Mahdiyya sect. Certain letters that he wrote at this time suggested that he was in direct correspondence with the Mahdi, for he hinted that when the Mahdi had reduced Khartoum he would subdue the Fulani Empire as well and that he would then install Hayatu as Sultan.³⁰

Hayatu's expectations of help from this quarter were disappointed

²⁷ *Gazetteer of Bornu Province*, pp. 26-27.

²⁸ Gentil, *op. cit.*

²⁹ Information given to the author by Hayatu's son, Mallam Sa'id. Confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu.

³⁰ Information from Alhaji Junaidu.

by the Mahdi's early death. We next hear of him in the late 'eighties when he installed himself in the town of Balda in eastern Adamawa, where he seems to have built up a large following. Certainly, by the early 'nineties he was strong enough to defy the Emir and then, when the Emir tried to bring him to book, to rout him in battle.³¹

As soon as Rabeh appeared on the horizon in the Chad region, Hayatu made overtures to him. No doubt he felt that Rabeh might fulfil the hopes that the Mahdi had disappointed. Rabeh for his part saw in Hayatu not only a valuable ally but a man whose birth might one day make him useful if he should ever mount an enterprise against the Fulani Empire.³² Moreover, the fact that both men professed devotion to the Mahdiyya sect made an alliance between them seem a natural move.

When Hayatu joined Rabeh in 1893 he brought with him a force of at least 400 horsemen.³³ For Rabeh, about to undertake the conquest of Bornu, this must have been a useful accession of strength, but it hardly explains the warmth of the welcome that Rabeh gave him. Not only was he immediately elevated to the position of one of Rabeh's principal lieutenants but the alliance between them was cemented by Rabeh giving Hayatu his daughter, Hauwa, in marriage. As Rabeh was not a man who ever made sentimental gestures, it is safe to deduce from this move that he had assigned an important part to Hayatu in whatever plans he was making for the future.

When Rabeh had consolidated his hold on Bornu itself he turned his attention to Bornu's neighbours. First he moved against Mandara, where some of the Kanuri ruling family had taken refuge.³⁴ Next, in about 1896, he sent an expedition under his son, Fadr Allah, against Bedde. The objective this time was to subdue or overawe a Chief who had previously been subject to Bornu but who, since the conquest, had failed to send in tribute or acknowledge Rabeh as the rightful overlord. Such was the terror that his name now inspired that the people of Bedde, after attempting to resist, preferred flight to submission and either dispersed into the surrounding bush or crossed the boundary into Hadeija Emirate.³⁵ Fadr Allah refrained from pursuing the refugees and from this we may infer that Rabeh did not yet feel ready to challenge the Fulani Empire.

Nevertheless, this sudden lunge of Rabeh's to the north-west,

³¹ Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* p. 441.

³² H. F. Backwell, *The Occupation of Hausaland, 1900-04*, Lagos, 1927, p. 9.

³³ *Gazetteer of Bornu Province*, p. 109.

³⁴ Backwell, *op. cit.* p. 9.

³⁵ *Ibid.* Letter, no. 97.

which was accompanied by a similar expedition to the south-west, caused consternation in the Fulani camp. Letters poured into Sokoto and Kano with news of what had happened and rumours about what was said to be afoot. The Emir of Hadeija sent a message to inform the Emir of Kano that Rabeh intended to move west. According to some, he wrote, Rabeh intended to advance on Kano through Hadeija, according to others through Katagum. Others again said that his intention was to subdue Zinder first and then descend on Kano.³⁶

The Emir of Hadeija wrote in a similar vein to the Waziri of Sokoto, now Buhari, for the information of the Sultan. 'Rabeh's intention is to come west. This news our spies have brought us. It is true and I have sent it to you in order that you may pass it urgently to the Sultan and pray that the evil of Rabeh may not enter among us in the dominions of Usuman dan Fodiyo.'³⁷

The alliance between Rabeh and Hayatu, which of course was well known to the Fulani, added point and weight to these warnings.

What Rabeh's plans actually were will never be known because he did not confide them to anyone and the appearance soon afterwards of the spearheads of the approaching French forces distracted his attention and prevented him from pursuing them. It was popularly believed, however, that his ambition was to create an Empire stretching from Kano in the west to Wadai in the east.³⁸ Such was the awe with which he was now regarded that none thought that this plan was beyond his compass.

MALLAM JIBRILLA

One other development of this period must be recorded. Compared to the advent of Rabeh it was of only minor importance, but it was to have some influence in shaping the future. Apart from this, it was a significant portent showing how the grip of the Sultans on the Empire was weakening.

In the 'eighties a certain Mallam Jibrilla settled in Gombe Emirate and founded the town of Burmi near the top of the loop of the Gongola River. He was reputed to possess supernatural powers and he soon collected a large following. It is not known exactly when he first became a member of the Mahdiyya sect, but it seems probable that

³⁶ Backwell, *op. cit.* Letters, nos. 93-99.

³⁷ *Ibid.* Cf. Letter, no. 94.

³⁸ Alexander, *op. cit.* pp. 189-90. Gentil mentions his desire to revenge himself on Wadai and the *Gazetteer of Bornu Province*, p. 110, his designs on Kano.

it was before 1888. What is certain is that in that year he suddenly threw off his allegiance to the Emir of Gombe³⁹ and it seems unlikely that he would have taken so extreme a step unless he had what he regarded as a good religious reason for his action.

Whatever the motive, the Emir Zailani was not willing to tolerate insurrection and mounted an expedition against Burmi. He failed to capture the place, however, and was himself mortally wounded in the assault.⁴⁰ This success added greatly to Jibrilla's prestige and made him much more dangerous than before.

The new Emir of Gombe, Hassan, was determined to avenge his predecessor and persuaded the neighbouring Emirs of Bauchi, Katagum, Misau, and even Hadeija to send contingents to reinforce him. Their efforts were in vain, however, and by defying them all Jibrilla further enhanced his reputation.⁴¹

During the next few years Jibrilla made himself master of all the northern part of Gombe Emirate. He did not claim to be the Mahdi himself⁴² but merely styled himself *Barden Mahadi* or the Mahdi's trooper.⁴³ Whether he ever acknowledged any allegiance to the Mahdi's successor in Khartoum, the Khalifa, we do not know, but he certainly did not recognize the Sultan of Sokoto or Rabeh or any other local ruler as his overlord.⁴⁴ On the other hand, he does not seem to have been a bigoted Mahdist, because when the Tijjanis from the Upper Niger appeared around the turn of the century, having moved on under their new leader Basheru after a few years sojourn in Sokoto, he allowed them to settle in Burmi. Their extreme views on religious questions apparently commended them to him and sufficed to procure an entry for them.

Jibrilla and the people of Burmi seem first and foremost to have been fanatical Moslems. This was the characteristic which led them to create a society of their own. As Jibrilla's reputation grew, it doubtless acted as a magnet and drew to him like-minded men not only from all over the Empire but also, as in the case of the Tijjani fugitives, from further afield. This fanaticism, allied to their growing strength, enabled them first to repulse the Emirs and next to subdue their neighbours.

³⁹ *Gazetteer of Bauchi Province*, pp. 13-14. Confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 14. Confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu.

⁴¹ *Gazetteer of Bauchi Province*.

⁴² The Annual Report on Northern Nigeria for 1902 is wrong in asserting that he did.

⁴³ Information given to the author by one of Jibrilla's former followers.

⁴⁴ Confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu.

Burmi, though not of prime importance, was significant in a number of ways. The Emir of Gombé showed that he was unable to suppress a rebel and an upstart. His overlord, the Sultan, made no attempt to help him. As a result this upstart rebel was able to defy the military power of the one, spurn the religious leadership of the other, and carve a Province out of the body of the Empire. That such things were possible showed how far the religious and political authority of the Sultans had now declined.

CHAPTER TWENTY

The Royal Niger Company

WHILE Rabeh, like a rogue elephant, was moving slowly westward towards Lake Chad, another more serious threat to the integrity and independence of the Fulani Empire was beginning to build up in the south.

In medieval times West Africa was almost completely cut off from Europe by the double barrier of the Sahara and the Moslem powers of North Africa and Spain. In the fifteenth century, however, the seamen of Portugal turned the flank of these obstacles by sailing their ships down to the Gulf of Guinea.

Next, at the end of the eighteenth century, the geographers, fascinated by the mysteries of the still unknown continent, suddenly conceived and imparted to the public a new interest in Africa. This was soon enlarged by the humanitarians who at about the same time launched the campaign for the abolition of the slave trade. In accordance with the theory that the best way of eradicating the traffic in slaves was to supplant it by legitimate trade, this in turn led to a new commercial interest in Africa as a source of raw materials and as a market for manufactured goods.

Even so, however, because of the difficulties of geography and climate, progress was extremely slow. After the death of Clapperton, Richard Lander returned to Africa and in 1830, by sailing down the Niger from Bussa to the sea, established the fact that the river flowed into the Bight of Benin. Two years later some Liverpool merchants, under the leadership of MacGregor Laird and with the backing of the

British Government, sought to use this discovery to open up trade with the hinterland. The two ships which they commissioned succeeded in steaming 500 miles up the river, but the climate killed three-quarters of the European company and so the project was abandoned.

In 1841 the British Government made another attempt to penetrate into the interior. This time a naval expedition was sent up the river with instructions to suppress the slave trade, make treaties with friendly Chiefs, and establish a model farm. Once again, however, there was very heavy mortality among the Europeans—over a third in the space of two months—and the scheme was abandoned without achieving anything except the founding of the town of Lokoja.

It was not until 1854, by which time the prophylactic use of quinine as a safeguard against malaria had been introduced, that the British had any success with their riverain ventures. In that year another expedition organized by MacGregor Laird and led by Baikie was completely successful. Not only did all its members survive but the trading that they were able to do paid all expenses and still yielded a profit. This proved to be the turning-point.

During the next few years MacGregor Laird and Baikie succeeded in developing the riverain trade. In doing so, however, they aroused the hostility of the other Liverpool merchants and their allies on the coast, the Brassmen, who found themselves losing the profitable *entrepôt* trade with the interior that they had hitherto enjoyed. Indeed, in the late 'sixties, by which time Laird was dead and Baikie had been compelled by ill health to retire, their opposition almost strangled the new line of communications with the interior. But once again the British Government, faithful to their belief that fostering legitimate commerce was the best means of stamping out the slave trade, decided to intervene. In 1871 they therefore sent an envoy to the Emir of Nupe to enlist his support and protection for the river traffic against those who were trying to kill it. The Emir, Masaba, was quick to see the advantages which such an arrangement would have for himself and his people and so he accepted the proposals on condition that Nupe, in return for its protection, should become the sole channel for trade between the British companies and the Fulani Empire. The British, who were anxious to withdraw their naval patrols from the river, accepted this stipulation.¹

Up to this point there had been little or no rivalry in Africa between the European nations. The curiosity shown had been scientific and the interest either humanitarian or commercial. The absence of any

¹ J. E. Flint, *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria*, London, 1960, p. 25.

atmosphere of competition along national lines was illustrated by the fact that, as late as the 'fifties, the British Government was employing Germans to undertake its exploring. In 1861, it is true, Lagos was declared a Colony, but this move was made in the interest of suppressing the maritime slave trade and not for the purpose of territorial aggrandizement. Indeed, a few years later a Select Committee of the House of Commons, reflecting the political indifference of the day to colonial expansion, recommended not only that there should be no more acquisitions in Africa but that Britain should consider freeing itself from some of its commitments.

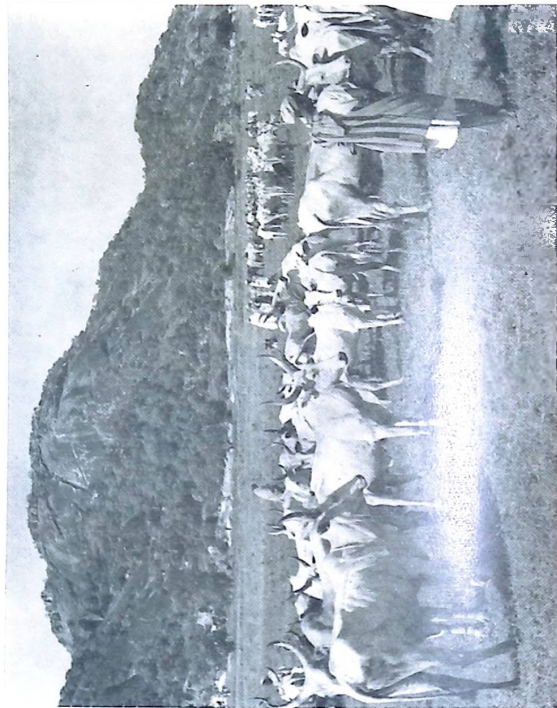
In the next decade the attitude of the principal European powers towards Africa suddenly underwent a radical change. It was perhaps inevitable that the bitter rivalries that divided them at home would sooner or later affect their activities abroad. The indirect cause of the change was the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1. After her defeat France sought to assuage her wounded pride by a policy of expansion overseas. Before long Germany, fearful lest France might be stealing a march on her, also entered the race and soon became the pace-maker. Last of all, encouraged by one faction and restrained by another, now thrustful, now hesitant, came Great Britain. The principal consequence of the sharpening and extension of these rivalries was the so-called 'Scramble for Africa' which occupied the European Powers during the last two decades of the century and several times brought them to the brink of war.

At this point there appeared upon the scene a remarkable man, Sir George Goldie, whose vision and determination were to be the main factors in deciding the course that events were to take in this part of Africa. Coming of a good family and possessing a considerable private fortune, he had had a short and chequered career in the Army before resigning his commission to take over a small firm in which his family had an interest. This firm was engaged in the Niger trade and had recently run into difficulties. In 1876 Goldie went to West Africa to find out for himself exactly what was amiss. Having diagnosed the trouble as excessive competition between companies that were individually weak, he next persuaded his competitors to agree to a series of mergers which led to the formation of a single British group called the United African Company, later renamed the National African Company.² Then in 1881, having emerged as Chairman and undisputed leader of the new Company, he applied for a Royal Charter, but with this request he was unsuccessful.

² Flint, *op. cit.* pp. 30-33 and 44-46.



11 The inside of the Kano city wall in 1903. The break in the wall is a re-entrant in which one of the thirteen gates, the Kofar Mata, was set. The outer face of the wall was much steeper, almost sheer, and was protected by a double ditch which was choked, over much of its length, with an impenetrable growth of thorn.



12 Fulani with their cattle in the dry season. The granite Inselberg in the background is Kotorkoshi Rock. The pagan villages round its base were the objective of the campaign of Sultan Aliyu Baba in 1853, while the battle of 1853 between Lugard's Mounted Infantry and the Kano forces under the Waziri Ahmadu took place a few miles to the west.

At this time the political situation in the *High of Benue* was highly confused. The French had established themselves in *Lozangui* and the Germans in the Cameroons. Between them the British had set up the Colony of Lagos and the Niger Coast Protectorate, but these were not contiguous and in any case did not cover the hinterland in which all three powers were laying conflicting claims.

To resolve these disputes the Germans called the *Berlin Conference* of 1884. This proved to be Goldie's great opportunity. First of all he persuaded the British Government that they had no chance of getting their claims to the Niger-Benue hinterland recognised unless they accepted the National African Company as their chosen instrument and based their arguments on the monopoly which the Company had established on the rivers and the numerous treaties which it had concluded with neighbouring Chiefs. At the eleventh hour Goldie's scheme was almost upset by the appearance of two French firms to challenge his monopoly. By engaging in a ruthless price-war, however, he broke them both just before the Conference began. His plan was therefore adopted by the British Government and the French Government's claims to a sphere of influence over the whole area were in turn accepted by France and Germany.³

In 1885 Goldie consolidated the position of the Company still further by engaging the explorer Joseph Thomson and sending him up to Sokoto to make treaties with the Sultan and the Emir of Gwandu.⁴ A year later the British Government acknowledged the commanding position that Goldie had thus built up by granting the Charter which they had previously refused. In this way the Royal Niger Company came into being.⁵

The ambivalent attitude of Britain to colonial affairs has already been mentioned. On the one side there were men like Rhodes and Goldie, with their supporters at home, who fervently and sincerely believed that the country had an imperial mission to perform and who were determined to do everything in their power to extend British influence in the world. On the other there were men who, with equal sincerity and fervour, questioned Britain's right to interfere in the affairs of other people and deplored the expense of colonial entanglements. The ordinary British voter, pulled this way and that between the two factions, probably shared both the pride of the imperialists in the achievements of their countrymen in distant parts of the world and the dismay of the Little Englanders at the expense

³ Flint, *op. cit.* pp. 62-70.

⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 82-90.

⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 70-87.

that these achievements involved. Chartered Companies, though they were Elizabethan anachronisms, were therefore resuscitated with the idea that they would resolve this contradiction and, by combining government and trade, would enlarge the British Empire without adding to the burdens of the British Exchequer.

When the British Government gave the Royal Niger Company its charter they conferred upon it the right to govern as well as to trade. Armed with the Charter, the Company immediately began to create the machinery of government that it needed to discharge these responsibilities. The Board of Directors became the Council and were invested with supreme legislative, executive, and judicial powers. As a legislature they enacted the laws of the territory, as an executive they were the source of all policy decisions, and as a judiciary they were the final court of appeal. The Chairman, now styled Governor, was a figure-head and Goldie, as Deputy Governor and Political Administrator, continued to keep all the reins of power in his own hands.⁶

The Council now proceeded to set up a civil service and a judiciary. For the most part this simply meant endowing the Company's District Agents with administrative and judicial powers, but a few new posts were created at the top of the staff pyramid and a number of fresh appointments were made to fill them. The major innovation, however, was the creation of a Constabulary. At first its strength was 150 African rank and file under three European officers, but the numbers were later increased to nearly 500. The name Constabulary was misleading for it was, in fact, a small army, equipped with modern rifles, supported by machine-guns and artillery, and kept concentrated for use as a striking force.⁷

The Company's whole commercial and administrative organization was based upon the river systems of the Lower Niger and Benue. Its administrative headquarters were at Asaba, opposite Onitsha, and its depots and workshops were in the Delta. Its fleet consisted of twenty to twenty-five river steamers of which, however, only one-third were large vessels.⁸ They were employed as circumstances dictated, for taking trade goods up river, evacuating the produce of the country, moving staff from one station to another, or transporting the Constabulary on punitive expeditions. Within its limitations this system of communication served the Company fairly well, but it had two great weaknesses. The first was that a series of rapids above Jebba prevented navigation much beyond that point. The second was that,

⁶ Flint, *op. cit.* pp. 91-92.

⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 93 and 142-4.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 142.

above the confluence at Lokoja, the drop in the water-level of the Niger and to an even greater extent the Benue made navigation impossible, at any rate for the larger ships, during much of the long dry season.

The Company's dependence on water transport was revealed by the distribution of its stations. Of the forty which it had in 1889, all were situated on the river system and over half were on the Lower Niger below Lokoja. On the Niger above Lokoja there were seven and along the whole length of the Benue only ten. In these two sectors the principal stations were Lokoja, Eggan, Loko, and Ibi.⁹

In deploying its administrative and trading stations along the Niger and Benue, the Company was brought into touch with all the southern Emirates of the Fulani Empire and particularly with Nupe, Ilorin, Muri, and Adamawa. Through the town of Wase, with which it had trouble, it also made contact with Bauchi, whose Emir consented to sign a treaty.

In addition to the Emirates, however, many of the petty pagan Chiefdoms that lay outside the borders of the Empire also came within the Company's purview. As the two sides were often at war with one another, the Company, which was bound to both sides by treaty, was constantly in danger of becoming embroiled in their disputes. Furthermore, as the main cause of the fighting was the slave-raiding of the Emirs and the reprisals of the Chiefs, the difficulties of the Company's staff were aggravated by the fact that, whereas the treaties entered into by the Emirs did not bind them to desist from slave-raiding, those of the Chiefs entitled them to call upon the protection of the Company if they were raided.¹⁰ In these circumstances it was inevitable that the Company was often faced with the choice between failing one side or coming into collision with the other.

All the expenses of the administration, Constabulary, and judiciary had to be borne on the trading revenues of the Company. To meet them Goldie used the Company's legislative powers first to set up tariff barriers and then to preserve a rigid commercial monopoly within those barriers. In this way he managed to pay his way, but his actions provoked such bitter protests, including some which the German Government took up, combined with so many allegations of maladministration and abuse of power, that the British Government was compelled to set up a commission of inquiry.¹¹

The Commissioner, Major C. M. Macdonald, completed his inquiry in 1889 and his findings throw an interesting light on the

⁹ Flint, *op. cit.* pp. 144-5.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 129-55.

¹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 98-119.

contemporary scene. It is clear, for example that the Emirs who had signed treaties or concluded agreements with the Company did not consider that they had made over any of their sovereignty. The Emir of Nassarawa, it is true, had sold a strip of land covering the north bank of the Benue throughout his territory, but had entered into no other commitments. The Emirs of Muri and Keffi had signed treaties, but had conceded no political rights. Indeed, in the Muri Treaty, so far from the Company's obtaining concessions in return for a guarantee of protection, it was the Emir who was required to protect the Company. In Nupe, likewise, the Emir had always considered himself as the protector of the Company and consequently, when offered a treaty in which the roles were to be reversed, he refused to sign it and would do no more than make an ordinary commercial agreement.¹²

Difficulties of language probably lay at the root of many of the misunderstandings that now came to light. Nearly all the treaties had been concluded through the medium of interpreters. Being men of humble position, they perhaps did not themselves fully understand the affairs of state that they were called upon to discuss. In any case, they would have been anxious to please their employers without offending the Emirs and so there was a constant temptation to skate over difficulties and leave misunderstandings unresolved.

Of course, the treaties between the Company and the vassal Emirates were to some extent overridden by, and therefore of much less importance than, the treaties between the Company and the two overlords. Thanks to the explorer Thomson, Goldie had secured these as early as 1885, even before he had gained his Charter. The Sultan at that time had been Umaru and he, no doubt recalling that it had always been the desire of his grandfather Bello to make an alliance with Great Britain and open a channel for maritime trade, had signed a treaty, as had the Emir of Gwandu, Maliki, soon afterwards.

Under the terms of the Sokoto Treaty the Sultan had first of all granted to the Directors of the Company 'my entire rights to the country on both sides of the River Benue and rivers flowing into it throughout my dominions for such distance from its and their banks as they may desire'.¹³ Secondly, he had recognized that 'among foreigners' the Company should have the sole right to trade and to extract minerals. Thirdly, he had acknowledged the Company to be the sole channel for all communications between him and foreigners 'coming from the rivers'. Fourthly, he had agreed that the grant of these rights was irrevocable. In return for these concessions the

¹² Flint, *op. cit.* pp. 129-55.

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 89.

Company had undertaken to pay him an annual subsidy of 3,000 bags of cowries, then valued at about £1,500.¹⁴

The terms of the treaty with Gwandu had been similar, except that the cession of land had related to the banks of the Niger and its tributaries as well as to the Benue and had been more definite, specifying a distance of ten hours' journey inland, or such other distance as the Company might desire, from each bank.¹⁵

It is regrettable that Macdonald did not visit Sokoto and Gwandu and therefore never had the opportunity of questioning the Sultan and the Emir about their understanding of these treaties. We know, however, that when he revealed to the Nupe Council the terms of the Gwandu Treaty, and particularly the clause about the cession of land along the banks of the Niger, they were frankly incredulous and stoutly maintained that the Emir of Gwandu would never have signed such an agreement.¹⁶ It is therefore difficult to escape the conclusion that in these two major treaties, as in many of the minor ones, the contracting parties had different ideas about what had been agreed upon. It is in any case certain that, whatever Goldie and later Lugard chose to read into the agreements, neither the Sultan nor the Emir of Gwandu supposed for a moment that they had bargained away any of their own sovereignty or their inherited authority over their vassals.

Macdonald's general conclusions were that, while the Company had gone too far in establishing a monopoly, the graver charges of abuse of office that had been brought against it were unfounded. But on the political side he had to report that, despite its treaties, which in any case were often ambiguous, its practical jurisdiction was limited, even along the rivers, and that its writ hardly ran at all beyond their banks.¹⁷ To the British Government the Company's lack of real authority came as disturbing news, because in international affairs the importance of effective occupation was now beginning to outweigh the mere possession of treaties. Similarly, Macdonald's criticisms of the Company's monopolistic practices placed them in a dilemma, because they knew that it was only by exploiting a commercial monopoly that the Company could afford to carry its administrative and military expenses.

¹⁴ For the texts of the treaties see *The Map of Africa by Treaty* by Sir E. Hertslet, London, 1909, vol. I, pp. 122-56. The fact that the Sultan agreed to accept a subsidy does not mean that he regarded himself as in any way dependent on the Company. On the contrary, it is significant that Alhaji Junaidu (op. cit. p. 69) uses the word *gaisuwa* to describe it, a term that denotes either a sweetener or else the gift offered by an inferior to a superior.

¹⁵ Flint, op. cit. p. 89.

¹⁶ Ibid. pp. 140-1.

¹⁷ Ibid. pp. 151-2.

The Liberal Government which was then in office was unwilling either to assume direct responsibility for the Niger Territories or yet to surrender them to another European power. It therefore took the line of least resistance and did nothing.

It is now recognized that Goldie was one of the originators of the system of colonial administration which later came to be termed Indirect Rule. From the start he insisted that it was not the Company's business to establish a system of government in the Niger Territories. The policy which he laid down, therefore, was that the Company would interfere as little as possible in the internal affairs of local States or tribes but would leave government to the traditional feudal or tribal authorities.¹⁸ He held these views from conviction, not out of necessity, but the pattern of events proved to be a good deal more complicated than he had expected and in the end he was compelled to modify his policy.

Indeed, at this period the political situation along the Niger and Benue Rivers was highly unstable. The fact that some of the States belonged to the Fulani Empire and that others did not was only one of the causes of the turmoil in which they all lived. Other reasons, apart from the constant slave-raiding of the Fulani and the periodic reprisals of the pagans, were risings such as those of the Tiv in 1885-6, dynastic disputes such as those of Muri Emirate in the 'nineties, land piracy such as that of the Takum renegade Kachalla on the Benue caravans,¹⁹ and, finally, the intrigues of the agents of other European powers such as Hoenigsberg in Nupe and Mizon in Muri and Adamawa.²⁰

It was all very well to say in theory that the Company would not interfere in such matters, but in practice, as Goldie discovered, it was drawn into them by its treaties and by the need to defend its allies and uphold its prestige. In any case, if trade was to flourish and the Company pay its way, it was imperative to establish a measure of order. Punitive expeditions became fairly common, therefore, and these sometimes culminated in fighting.

A further complication was that international tension, which had been relieved by the Berlin settlement of 1884, now started to mount again. The agreement of 1890 between Britain and France had fixed the northern boundary of the British sphere of influence and that of

¹⁸ Flit, *op. cit.* pp. 94-95.

¹⁹ *Gazetteer of Muri Province*, pp. 6-28.

²⁰ Flit, *op. cit.* pp. 144 ff. and 168 ff.

1893 between Britain and Germany had settled the eastern boundary. But only half the western boundary had been determined and so, as the principle of effective occupation was coming to be generally accepted, the French felt free to press their claims to the Nikki-Bussa-Kaïama area which had hitherto been regarded as part of the Company's territories. These moves caused consternation in London and Goldie was called on by the Government to forestall the French.

At the same time, now that the British Protectorate over the Yoruba States was becoming more of a reality, the war between Ilorin and Ibadan, which had been going on intermittently ever since Ibadan had been founded after the destruction of Old Oyo, was beginning to cause concern. In London it was assumed that Ilorin was the aggressor simply because the Fulani had started the war two generations earlier and because they had subsequently earned a bad name as slave-raiders. As Ilorin fell within the Company's sphere of influence, the British Government now began to press Goldie to bring the Emir to heel, if necessary by the use of force.²¹

Goldie at the time was too preoccupied with the Company's internal problems, especially Nupe, to care much about these external difficulties. Nupe had never made a political treaty with the Company and the differences between them were now coming to a head. In the 'sixties the Emir Masaba had overrun the small tribes—Yagbas, Bunus, Kakandas, Kupas, and Eggas—who inhabited Kabba and ever since then the Nupes had regarded Kabba as one of their preserves.²² In recent years, however, their raids had been carried out on a scale that had brought trade to a standstill and threatened to depopulate the whole country. Even Lokoja, the headquarters of the Company's northern region, had been threatened and so the Company, in defence of its vital interests but in contradiction of its avowed policy of non-intervention, had been compelled to warn the Nupes to keep their distance.²³ This had led to great tension.

Towards the end of 1891 Goldie decided to go to Bida himself in the hope of reaching a settlement. When he met the Emir Abubakr there he assured him that the Company had no intention of attacking and occupying Nupe and he promised that its servants would not interfere in the internal affairs of the Emirate. In return he demanded that the Nupes should stop raiding for slaves in the Company's territories outside the Emirate. If they persisted, he threatened to

²¹ Flint, *op cit.* pp. 232 ff.

²² *Gazetteer of Ilorin Province*, p. 19.

²³ Flint, *op. cit.* pp. 234-5.

declare war, blockade them, and divert their trade to other Emirates. Although the Emir professed himself satisfied with these terms, Goldie left Bida with the feeling that war would not be long delayed.²⁴

In fact, the Emir did not keep his bargain. Before long his men were operating in Kabba again and a clash between them and the Constabulary became almost inevitable. It came when the Nupe forces surrounded one of the Company's patrols and took prisoner two British officers and forty-five African rank and file. Although they were all subsequently released, this episode seems to have convinced Goldie that the time had come for a showdown with Nupe. As he had already undertaken to send an expedition against Ilorin, he determined to combine the two operations and to mount them in the forthcoming dry season.²⁵

Goldie did not make the mistake of underrating his opponents. He determined to command the expedition himself and he saw to it that his troops, who numbered only 500 under 30 British officers, were given every possible advantage of modern science and technology. Their equipment included searchlights and wire to foil night attacks and they were supported by artillery and six machine-guns.²⁶

In the Nupe campaign Goldie exploited two weaknesses in the Emir's position, the presence of half his army on the south side of the Niger and the fact that to recall these troops to the defence of his capital he had to rely on the canoes of the river tribes, who were neither Moslems nor particularly loyal to the Fulani régime. While Goldie and the troops marched against the Nupe contingent in Kabba, Wallace with the river steamers raised the river people in revolt against them and so cut their line of retreat. When they fell back, therefore, they were unable to get across the water and took no further part in the campaign.

The expedition, coming up behind them, was soon ferried across the river and continued its march on Bida. The main Nupe army, massed in considerable strength in front of the capital and nearly all mounted, put up a stout resistance. On the first day they charged the column with such dash and determination that for a time, while the troops were forming square, the issue of the battle hung in the balance. Though they failed to break the square, they did succeed in forcing Goldie to fall back on his camp.

On the following day the troops advanced again, this time in square formation from the start, and the volleys of the riflemen, supported by the fire of the machine-guns, beat off all the attacks of the Nupe

²⁴ Flint, *op. cit.* p. 235.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 240.

²⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 243-63.

cavalry. A mile and a half from the city they halted while the artillery cleared the defenders from the walls. After this they advanced again until they were within range of the centre of the city. An artillery bombardment was then begun, which set the town ablaze and scattered the remaining defenders.²⁷ And so, on 27 January 1897, Bida fell to the troops of the Royal Niger Company and Nupe capitulated.

After a few days rest Goldie returned to the Niger and, with about half the original forces, was transported upstream to Jebba. From there he marched south on Ilorin. The battle for Ilorin was a repetition of the battle for Bida except that the opposition was less stiff. The Ilorin cavalry charged courageously against the square but could make no headway against the rifle and machine-gun fire. When Goldie called for a surrender his demand was refused. The city was therefore shelled, set on fire, and finally occupied.²⁸

In this campaign Goldie had employed most of his military resources and risked the Company's very existence. In a military sense he had been brilliantly successful, but his victories had left him with political and administrative problems to solve. In Ilorin his solution was to reappoint the defeated Emir Sulimanu, in Bida to depose the Emir Abubakr and appoint another member of the ruling family, Muhammadu, in his place. Both Emirs on appointment had to acknowledge the Company as their new suzerain and to agree to conform to such directions as the representatives of the Company might from time to time give.²⁹

The handicap from which Goldie now suffered was that, at a time when he needed the backing of a great nation to exploit his success and carry out his ideas, he could call only upon the resources of a medium-sized company. They were not enough for the task and the settlement that he had imposed by force was soon to crumble away.

²⁷ Flint, *op. cit.* pp. 250-3.

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 255.

²⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 254 and 256.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Sultan Abdu

It will be remembered that, when Ahmadu Rufa'i had become Sultan in 1867, his choice had broken the tradition that appointments should alternate between the House of Bello and the House of Atiku. On his death in 1873 the succession had gone back to the House of Bello with the election of Abubakr na Rabah. When he in turn had died in 1877 the House of Atiku had again been passed over and he had been succeeded by his younger brother Mu'azu. Then, when Mu'azu had died in 1881, the claims of the Atikawa had again been ignored and the choice had fallen on Bello's senior grandson, Umaru.

During most of this period the leading contender from the House of Atiku, whose hopes had been so frequently blighted, had been Abdur Rahman. Abdu, as he was generally called, was a son of Sultan Atiku and a younger brother of Sultan Ahmadu Zaruku. He was also the elder brother of Umaru Nagwamatse of Kontagora, but this connexion was more of a handicap than an advantage and only served to heighten the suspicion, which already existed, that he had similar flaws in his character.¹

Though belonging to an earlier generation, Abdu was younger than Sultan Umaru² and outlived him. In 1891, when Umaru died, he was, in fact, in his early sixties. His maturity probably helped him, because during the second half of the century the Electoral College seemed to be inclining more and more to the simple principle of seniority. In considering their decision this time they no doubt also took into consideration the fact that the House of Bello had provided the last three Sultans and that it was twenty-five years since the House of Atiku had had its last turn. Ignoring the portents, therefore, they chose Abdu to succeed. At any period their choice would have been a bad one. At this particular point, however, when the Empire was for the first time being drawn into the main current of world events, it was to prove absolutely calamitous.

Abdu's reign began inauspiciously. On his accession he found a dispute going on between two of his principal vassals over the little town of Birnin Tudu. He handled it so ineptly that one of them, the

¹ Oral tradition preserved in Sokoto.

² Alhaji Junaidu, *op. cit.* pp. 59 and 70.

Chief of Talata Mafara, went into open revolt. Talata Mafara was one of the larger fragments of the old Zamfara kingdom and its defection caused risings in some of the other Zamfara towns, notably Anka.³

The rebellion was not a very formidable one and had Abdu moved with speed and decision he could quickly have stamped it out. As it was, however, he gave the rebels time to take the initiative. This they did by summoning the Gobir and Katsina diehards to their aid and sacking the loyal town of Tureta, which lay about half-way between Talata Mafara and Sokoto.⁴

After this disaster, which was all the more humiliating because many of the women and children of Tureta were carried off into slavery,⁵ Abdu bestirred himself, drove the diehards back beyond the frontiers of the Empire, and brought the rebels to heel. The indemnity of 1,000 slaves that he imposed on them gave warning of the cupidity and vindictiveness for which he was later to become notorious.⁶

By the time Abdu succeeded as Sultan the war with Kebbi had already begun to go against the Fulani. Sama'ila was now at the height of his powers and by his genius for guerrilla fighting was inflicting one painful reverse after another on Sokoto and Gwandu. Abdu, for all his other faults, was not wanting in vision or resolution. He seems to have realized at once that the defensive strategy on which the Fulani had fallen back left the initiative with the Kebbawa and that to end the war it would be necessary to bring them to a decisive battle. He therefore resolved at all costs to capture Argungu, which was not only their capital but the sally-port for most of their raids, and made a vow that he would not shave his head until he had done so.⁷

The last two Fulani expeditions against Argungu had both been failures. Abdu did not repeat the earlier mistake of underrating the enemy but, having decided to mount an offensive, he sent out a summons to all his Emirs ordering them to bring half their total forces to Sokoto for an expedition against Kebbi. The strategy was unquestionably sound but, unfortunately for the Fulani, Abdu possessed none of the qualities of leadership that were needed to see it through.

³ Sokoto *DNBs*, History of Talata Mafara.

⁴ Ibid. Histories of Talata Mafara and Tureta.

⁵ Sarkin Burmi Abdulbaki, *Abdulbaki Tanimuddarin Tureta*, Zaria, 1954, vol. I, pp. 3-7.

⁶ Alhaji Junaidu, *op. cit.* p. 61.

⁷ P. L. Monteil, *De St. Louis à Tripoli par le Lac Tchad*, Paris, 1894.

Although he had been Sultan for only a short time he had already acquired a reputation of being a tyrant. When his summons reached the Emirs, therefore, they only obeyed it with reluctance. Their unspoken thoughts were that it would be a mistake to rid such a man of his external enemies, for then he would be free to do as he pleased within the Empire. For this reason many of those who joined the expedition were secretly hoping that it would fail.⁸

The Fulani army mustered slowly in the dry weather of 1892-3. The Emirs of Katsina and Bauchi came in person with their troops while the Emir of Kano and the Lamido of Adamawa were represented by their sons. The Zaria contingent was commanded by the Madaki.⁹ It was late in the season when, with Abdu at their head, they finally got on the move. Such a mighty host were they that, according to tradition, they drank all the wells dry and raised a dust that hung over them like a cloud.

In Argungu, Sama'ila had long had wind of their coming. He had therefore had time to strengthen the defences of the town and summon to his aid his faithful Arewa and Zaberma vassals. Though he must have realized that the crisis of his career was approaching, he showed no dismay when told that Abdu had set off from Sokoto but simply said: 'Let him come; I'm waiting for him.'¹⁰

As Abdu approached Argungu he was joined by the Gwandu contingent. Together they improvised a fortified camp for the non-combatants and baggage and made their final preparations for the impending struggle. Because the weight of numbers was so overwhelmingly in their favour they assumed that Sama'ila would not risk a pitched battle but would shut himself up in the town as all his predecessors had done. This assumption, and the over-confidence that lay behind it, was to prove a fatal blunder. When Abdu ordered the advance on the following day he neglected to have a proper reconnaissance made and took it for granted that all the enemy's forces were in the town. Consequently, when his army reached Argungu, he did not scent any danger but allowed the troops to disperse round the walls so that each contingent could take up the siege station to which it had already been assigned.

On the other side Sama'ila had three possible courses open to him. He could either retire with all his men behind the walls of Argungu in the hope of being able to withstand a siege, or he could bar the

⁸ Information given to the author by a Katsina man who took part in the expedition.

⁹ Oral tradition preserved in Argungu and confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu.

¹⁰ Oral tradition preserved in the Kebbi ruling family.

Sultan's way with all his forces and risk everything on the result of a single pitched battle, or again he could divide his forces and leave his foot in Argungu while keeping his horse outside as an independent striking force. Given the Sultan's great numerical superiority the first alternative was the safest and the third the most hazardous. Sama'ila, who was highly superstitious, first consulted his augurs and then chose the third.¹¹

Having taken this decision he sent all his cavalry out of the town before the Fulani came on the scene and ordered them to conceal themselves in the bush beyond the cultivated area. At the last possible moment he too slipped out and put himself at their head. From this vantage point the Kebbawa watched the Fulani army arrive and flow round the walls like an advancing tide until they had completely encircled the town. When he saw them thus dispersed and off their guard to the real danger, which lay behind them, Sama'ila knew that his gamble had succeeded. 'The Lord be praised,' he cried. 'I Sama'ila give thanks to God and His Prophet.' At this his famous bay charger, which was believed by the superstitious to be no horse but a jinn or familiar spirit, is said to have whinnied three times and so convinced every man that victory was assured.¹²

When he judged the moment to be right Sama'ila led his cavalry out of the bush and fell like a thunderbolt on the rear of the Fulani army, whose attention was focused on the town. The sector where he first struck was occupied by the Kano contingent under the Emir's eldest son Tukur. Though Tukur strove to rally his men, the weight of the Kebbi charge swept them aside. Having broken the enemy ring Sama'ila proceeded to roll it up. The Fulani now found themselves in a hopeless position and before long their whole army was in flight, pursued by the triumphant Kebbi horse.¹³

On this disastrous day it was left to one of the Sultan's nephews, the Marafa Maiturare, to strike the only effective blow for the Fulani and save their honour. When the Kebbi cavalry galloped off in pursuit of the main body of the army, they in turn exposed themselves. By keeping his own contingent of Tuaregs and Adarawa under firm control, the Marafa was therefore able to take them in the flank and rear. But the counter-attack, though it exacted some retribution, came too late to save the day.¹⁴

¹¹ Oral tradition preserved in the Kebbi ruling family.

¹² F. Edgar, *Tatsuniyoyi na Hausa*, Edinburgh, 1911, vol. II, pp. 337-40.

¹³ Oral tradition preserved in the Kebbi ruling family.

¹⁴ Alhaji Junaidu, oral tradition.

This victory saved Kebbi from possible extinction. When every allowance has been made for Abdu's negligence, for the disloyalty to their commander of many of the Fulani, and for the part played by luck, it is still possible to discern a touch of genius about Sama'ila's tactics. For him it was the crowning victory of a brilliant military career.

For Abdu, on the other hand, it was only the beginning of a series of blunders and disasters.

THE KANO CIVIL WAR

Later in the year 1893 the Emir Bello of Kano died and with his death there began a fierce struggle for the succession between his branch of the family and the far more numerous clan of his predecessor, the Emir Abdullahi. The two candidates for the title were the heads of these two houses, Tukur and Yusufu.

In the recent expedition against Argungu, Tukur had been the only captain to show any enthusiasm or determination. His zeal must have stood out when so many others were hanging back and it did not pass unnoticed by the Sultan. In fact, tradition has it that Abdu then and there promised him the succession to Kano with the words: '*Goronka Kano in ta fadi*.'¹⁵ As Abdu did not know what the wishes of the people of Kano were, it was a rash promise to have made and it was to cause him endless trouble. In fact, Yusufu's following, both in the city and in the Emirate, was far stronger than Tukur's and was determined to make him Emir at any cost. There was, therefore, a real danger that if he was not constitutionally appointed there would be civil war.

It so happened that when the Emir of Kano died the Waziri of Sokoto, Buhari, a grandson of Clapperton's old friend the Waziri Gidado, was passing through Kano on his way to the east. On the death of the ruler in one of the greater Emirates it was traditionally the task of the Waziri to summon the Electors to the choice of a new Emir and to convey their recommendations to the Sultan for his confirmation. This Buhari now proceeded to do. The Kano Electors were unanimous in choosing Yusufu¹⁶ and they added a rider saying that if he was not appointed they were convinced that blood would flow. The Waziri accordingly sent a message to Sokoto, which contained both the recommendation and the warning.

¹⁵ Oral tradition preserved in Kano and Sokoto. The phrase means 'Your reward [literally cola-nut] shall be Kano when it falls.'

¹⁶ For the family tree, see Table 4 in Appendix II.

In Sokoto, Abdu now found himself in an awkward predicament. He had gone a long way, both morally and publicly, to committing himself to Tukur's cause, but now the Electors of Kano, unanimously and in the strongest terms, had rejected him. With the Kebbawa unsubdued in the west, Damagaram and the Hausa diehards still very active in the north, the British becoming more assertive in the south, and Rabeh contemplating fresh conquests in the east, every canon of statecraft called out for prudence and caution in dealing with such an obviously explosive problem. But Abdu was determined not to be thwarted and sent a message back to the Waziri saying that he did not mind if entrails ran in Kano, much less blood, but that at all costs Tukur must be made Emir.¹⁷

When the news of the Sultan's decision spread abroad in Kano city there was consternation. Abdullahi's whole clan, together with their henchmen, at once congregated at Yusufu's house to take counsel with one another. They decided that once Tukur had become Emir he would not rest until he had broken them, perhaps put them to death, and that the only safety lay in flight. And so, while the Waziri was investing the new Emir with the regalia of Kano in an almost empty mosque, Yusufu and all his supporters were clattering out of the Nassarawa Gate and turning their faces towards the east.¹⁸ It was tantamount to a declaration of war.

Yusufu now made his headquarters at Takai, a large town about fifty miles south-east of the capital, and at once began soliciting the support of the territorial magnates of the Empire. Some joined him; others remained loyal to Tukur. His next move was to send embassies to the neighbouring Emirates to enlist their help. At first it seemed as if Hadeija would back him, but when the Emir Muhammadu met the Waziri of Sokoto, he realized that to do so would mean plain defiance of the Sultan. Being unwilling to reopen the old breach, which had now healed, the Emir therefore withdrew his support.¹⁹

Hadeija's neighbour to the north-west was Gumel, a small but war-like Emirate which owed loose allegiance to Damagaram and Bornu and had never formed part of the Sokoto Empire. The Mangawa of Gumel, though they had adopted the Hausa language, were kin to the Kanuri and for the greater part of the century had been engaged in sporadic fighting with their Fulani neighbours, particularly those of Hadeija. For them there was no clash of loyalties, simply the prospect of some rich pickings, and so when Yusufu's envoy reached them

¹⁷ Oral tradition preserved in Kano and Sokoto.

¹⁸ Alhaji Abubakar, *op. cit.* p. 62.

¹⁹ Alhaji Junaidu, *op. cit.* pp. 62-63.

they willingly promised their support.²⁰ By calling them in, the insurgents acquired a powerful ally, but at the same time they dealt another blow at the cause of Fulani unity.

When he felt himself strong enough, Yusufu marched on Kano and attempted to take it by storm. He had no artillery, however, and the mud walls and heavy ironclad gates gave the defenders an overwhelming advantage. In spite of this the attackers succeeded in breaking in at one point, but they were at once counter-attacked and thrown out. With the failure of this assault, Yusufu withdrew again to Takai, leaving the prisoners who had been taken in the battle to be executed by Tukur.

For the next three months the rebels consolidated their strength in the south and east of the Emirate. One after another the larger towns that had not already joined their cause were either intimidated into adherence or subdued by force of arms. With the capture of Gaya, Garko, and Kura, the Pretender's forces crept forward to within twenty miles of the city and it was obvious that another assault on the capital was imminent.

As the decisive moment approached, however, Yusufu suddenly fell mortally ill and his unexpected death placed his whole movement in jeopardy. None of his brothers possessed the same ascendancy as he and there was a danger that the cause would be rent by a struggle for the succession. Yusufu realized this and from his death-bed designated Aliyu Babba, one of his younger brothers, as his successor. He chose Aliyu for two reasons, partly because he possessed the necessary powers of leadership and partly because Aliyu, through his mother, was related by blood to the Sultan's family. Yusufu judged that this tie would one day lead to a reconciliation with Sokoto.²¹ In this he was ultimately to be proved right.

The strangest part of the interlude between the first and second attacks on Kano was the inaction of Tukur, who left the initiative entirely to his adversaries. He simply shut himself up in the capital and remained passive while Yusufu and Aliyu, by prising away one town after another, gradually undermined his authority and power. No doubt he felt too weak to risk a pitched battle, but his failure to make even sallies against his enemies, or to take any reprisals against those who deserted his cause, gave men the impression that he was wanting in courage and resolution. In any case, if he did not feel

²⁰ Gumel Emirate Notebook, Historical Note.

²¹ Alhaji Abubakar, *op. cit.* p. 63. Aliyu's mother was a daughter of Sultan Aliyu Babba.

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strong enough to tackle the rebels unaided, he should have appealed for help to his overlord. Similarly, in Sokoto the Sultan did nothing to assist his vassal until it was too late. Had he ordered Katsina, Zaria, Bauchi, and Katagum to reinforce Kano, Tukur could have taken the field with a powerful army and would in all probability have crushed the Pretender. We do not know why Abdu remained supine when his richest province was being riven by civil war, but it seems probable that he was inhibited by the memory of that disastrous day at Argungu and that he did not feel sure enough of the loyalty of his Emirs to call them out again for the purpose of repairing the blunder over the succession which they all knew to be his.

Early in 1894 Aliyu again advanced on Kano city. The Emir, who had missed all his opportunities of harrying the rebels when they were weak and vulnerable, now committed another tactical error by leaving his defences and challenging them in the open. Not surprisingly, his outnumbered forces were defeated and driven back behind the walls. This reverse seems to have broken the morale of his army, for they offered little further resistance. Soon afterwards the rebels made a breach in the wall and overran the defences. Then, as Aliyu made a triumphant entry into the city from the south-east, Tukur with a few dispirited followers slipped out of it to the north-west.²²

Only now, when a manageable fire had become an ungovernable conflagration, did the Sultan suddenly begin to take all the measures which he should have put in hand months earlier. The Emir of Katsina was bidden to give Tukur asylum and repel the Kano forces if they should pursue him. The other Emirs were ordered to provide troops and the Waziri was sent to Katsina to take command of the army which was to restore Tukur to his throne.²³ But it was all in vain. Abdu's orders were either ignored or at best obeyed with a dilatory reluctance that stultified them. No troops arrived for the Waziri to command and the Emir of Katsina shut himself up in his capital on the pretext that he had received news that the Hausa die-hards were planning another raid.²⁴ Tukur was therefore left in an exposed and vulnerable position on the Katsina-Kano boundary. When Aliyu finally came up with him at Tafashiya he made a desperate but hopeless last stand and went bravely to his death.

So ended the Kano civil war. No principles had been at stake and the struggle had really been nothing more than a dynastic contest for a vacant throne. Nevertheless, it had disrupted the life of the

²² Alhaji Abubakar, *op. cit.* p. 65.

²³ Alhaji Junaidu, *op. cit.* pp. 67-68.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Emirate for the best part of a year. Indirectly, too, it was to have other no less damaging results.

Soon after the end of the civil war Kano again became embroiled with Damagaram. Ostensibly the bone of contention was the suzerainty of Gumel, whose traditional fealty to Damagaram had begun to waver from the time that its support of the Pretender had drawn it into Kano's orbit, but actually the underlying cause was probably the opportunism and cupidity of the Emir of Damagaram. While Kano's strength had been sapped by internal strife, his had recently been reinforced by fugitives from the Bornu army which had been defeated by Rabeh.²⁵ Hoping no doubt to profit by these changes of fortune, the Emir Ahmadu now mustered an expedition and led it southward.

Advancing through Gumel the Damagaram forces encountered little opposition and soon reached the town of Gezawa, only twenty miles from the capital, and sacked it. From there the van pushed on and actually came in sight of the walls of the city. In doing so, however, they over-extended themselves and this gave the Kano force, which was waiting on the southern flanks of their march, an opportunity of interposing itself between their van and their rear. Moreover, when the van fell back, it failed to take proper military precautions and was lured into an ambush by a Kano drummer imitating its own rallying tattoo. The result was an unexpected victory for Kano and the discomfiture of the Damagaram army, which retreated northward in disorder.²⁶

In spite of his defeat the Emir of Damagaram returned in 1898 with a new army at his back, this time taking a more westerly route through Dambarta.²⁷ The Kano forces marched out to bar his way and a pitched battle was fought near Tattarawa. In this the cannon and muskets of Damagaram proved to be too much for the Kano cavalry, which fled from the field. The Emir Aliyu was left exposed and, to evade capture, was forced to disguise himself as a Tuareg. Even then he barely escaped and indeed lost a number of his personal bodyguard.²⁸

The Damagaram army now advanced right up to the walls of Kano,

²⁵ Y. Urvoy, *Histoire de l'Empire de Bornou*, Paris, 1947, p. 127.

²⁶ C. G. B. Gidley, *Mantanfas—A Study in Oral Tradition*, African Languages Studies, vol. VI, 1965, pp. 34-35.

²⁷ The Emir Ahmadu apparently convinced himself that he owed his defeat entirely to a Kano astrologer. Having induced this man to change sides, he launched his second attempt. Gidley, loc. cit. p. 35.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 36.

pillaging and looting as they went. Inside the city, which was thronged with refugees from the surrounding towns and villages²⁹ as well as survivors from the battle, there was confusion and despondency. From the outside, however, the fortifications must have looked immensely strong. Moreover, the assailants knew that, since the days of the Jukuns, the place had never been taken. The Emir of Damagaram did not attempt an assault, therefore, but raised the siege and marched home with his booty.³⁰

The Damagaram invasions were not the only baneful consequences to flow from the Kano civil war. Hardly less serious, in its wider context, was the damage that it did to the prestige and authority of the Sultan. When soon afterwards Abdu allowed himself to be reconciled to Aliyu and acknowledged him as the lawful Emir of Kano, he was only bowing to necessity. Nevertheless his action, coming so soon after Tukur's death, destroyed the last vestige of trust that his subjects bore him. Henceforth he was seldom called by his real name or accorded his title of Commander of the Faithful. Instead he was derisively referred to as *Abdu d'anyen Kasko* or Abdu the Unbaked Pot.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

It will be recalled that in 1885 the Sultan Umaru and the Royal Niger Company had signed a treaty, which incidentally had been reaffirmed five years later and slightly widened in scope, and that in 1891 Goldie had paid a visit to the Emir of Nupe in an effort to reach an understanding with him.

After Goldie's visit to Bida, the Emir evidently referred to his overlord in Gwandu the demand that he should desist from slave-raiding in Kabba and the Emir of Gwandu must in turn have consulted the Sultan about it. For once Abdu seems to have counselled patience and conciliation, for the Emir of Gwandu, in acknowledging his instructions, wrote to him as follows:

After greetings, I have seen your letter about the Christians and have sent to Sarkin Nupe telling him to watch his step, leave them alone, keep faith with them, and bring about a reconciliation between them and us provided that they do not break their agreement and stir up strife or show deceit. I too have written to them in a spirit of conciliation.

²⁹ Gidley, op. cit. p. 36.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 37. This time, according to tradition, it was the Kano wizards who prevailed and, having been ordered to cast a spell on Ahmadu, succeeded in making him ill.

May God help us and grant us increase.
This with peace.³¹

The next development was that in 1894 William Wallace, one of the Company's senior officials, was sent up to Sokoto by Goldie to negotiate fresh treaties with the Sultan and the Emir of Gwandu. The new texts, while consolidating the earlier versions, were more explicit and again slightly wider in scope. They declared that the Company had acted honourably during the nine years that had elapsed since the first treaties had been made and confirmed it in the full possession of all mineral rights and in its jurisdiction over non-natives. Moreover, by a new clause, the Sultan and the Emir were to acknowledge the Company as the representative of the British Government and to agree not to recognize any other white nation.³²

At first sight it may seem surprising that Abdu, who later was to prove so intractable and truculent, should even have contemplated going further than his predecessor in making concessions to the Company. The reasons, however, are not far to seek. In the previous year his expedition against Argungu had been a calamitous failure. In Kano the civil war had only just come to an end. These in themselves were good reasons for renewing the treaty, but the considerations that probably swayed Abdu more than any others were the emergence in the east of Rabeh and Rabeh's alliance with Hayatu, who was known to be ambitious to succeed as Sultan. At that time the Company, whose main interests seemed to lie in trade, minerals, and the jurisdiction over foreigners, must have looked much less menacing than the new master of Bornu.

If the Sultan had good ulterior motives for maintaining the treaty, Goldie and the Company had even stronger reasons for wishing to extend its scope. They were not only under heavy pressure from the French but were being constantly sniped at by their critics at home. Hence, of course, the inclusion of the new clause which bound the Sultan not to recognize any other European power. In the event, however, Wallace's mission seems to have been only partially successful. He certainly persuaded the Emir of Gwandu to sign the new treaty, but it is very doubtful whether he was equally successful with the Sultan.³³ But if Abdu did not enter into a new agreement neither

³¹ Backwell, *op. cit.* cf. Letter, no. 111.

³² Hertslet, *op. cit.*

³³ Alhaji Junaidu asserts that Abdu never signed it and this seems to be borne out by Hertslet, who quotes the Gwandu treaty but makes no mention of any treaty with Sokoto in 1894.

did he at this stage denounce the Treaty of 1890, which therefore remained in force.

The fact that both sides were primarily concerned to strengthen their hands *vis-à-vis* their rivals rather than to improve relations with one another no doubt explains why these treaties turned out to be such unsatisfactory instruments of diplomacy. The most pressing problems of the day, which were soon to lead to war, were the suppression of slave-raiding, particularly the Nupe raids in Kabba, and the ending of the war between Ilorin and Ibadan. But they found no place in the treaties and Wallace does not seem to have raised them either in Sokoto or Gwandu. It must be conceded that the Company's failure even to attempt to settle these questions by negotiation when it had the chance to do so largely stultified the explanations that it gave only two and a half years later for its attack on Nupe and Ilorin.

To understand Abdu's behaviour after 1894 we must consider the events of the next few years from his point of view. In preserving the old treaty with the Company, even if he did not enter into a new one, he no doubt thought that he had secured his southern flank and that if Rabeh attacked from the east he would be ready to meet him. In the event, however, it was not Rabeh who attacked in 1897 but the Company. There is no doubt that Abdu was taken completely by surprise. Understandably, he regarded Goldie's actions against Nupe and Ilorin as a breach of faith which put an end to the treaties and from then on he refused to accept the Company's annual subsidy.³⁴

Very soon afterwards, moreover, certain developments in the east convinced Abdu that he no longer had anything to fear from that quarter. The French, moving northwards from the Congo, appeared on the River Shari in 1897 and were welcomed by the Emir of Baghirmi. Rabeh, who was quick to see the danger which they represented, at once abandoned the tentative moves that he had previously made against the Fulani Empire and swung round to meet them. Thereafter he was completely preoccupied in defending his kingdom against the growing pressure of the French. Although the letters have not been preserved, it is nevertheless certain that about this time Rabeh and Abdu were in correspondence³⁵ and it seems probable that they made a non-aggression pact with one another so

³⁴ Alhaji Junaidu, *op. cit.* p. 69. On the other hand, Lugard's reports suggest that the subsidy was paid in 1900. See *Annual Reports, Northern Nigeria, 1900-11*, p. 82.

³⁵ A letter written in Zaria by the Waziri Buhari to Sultan Abdu has survived saying that he is sending Rabeh's messenger on to Sokoto with an escort. See Letter, no. 99 in *The Occupation of Hausaland*.

that they could concentrate on resisting the encroachments of the French and British respectively. We know at any rate that in 1897 Abdu wrote to the Emir of Adamawa to announce that he had made an alliance with Rabeh.³⁶

The Company's attack on Bida and Ilorin and his own pact with Rabeh therefore combined to bring about a complete reversal in Abdu's foreign policy. In the first half of his reign, having been apprehensive of Rabeh, he had been fairly conciliatory towards the British. But in the second half, once the danger that Rabeh represented had been scotched, his attitude towards the British changed abruptly.

A factor that must have influenced Abdu's policy towards the European powers was the arrival at about this time of a large party of Fulani and Tukolor refugees from the Upper Niger, where their power had recently been broken by the French.³⁷ They were led by Haj Umar's son, Ahmadu, and, with their women and children, numbered about 10,000.³⁸ The fact that they were militant Tijjanis cannot have commended them to the Sultan and his advisers, who of course were still faithful to the Kadiriyya sect, but they were nevertheless allowed to settle in the western part of the Sultanate. They remained there for some years, during which time Ahmadu died, but so hostile were they to the Christian powers that at the turn of the century, when the British sent troops up the Niger to Illo, and later to Argungu, they decided to pull up their roots and move further east where we shall encounter them again.

As for Abdu, he was probably not altogether sorry to see them go. Nevertheless, the accounts he had heard of their clashes with the French must have hardened him in his new resolve to have no truck with the British. Certainly, from then on he became completely intransigent.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

A Year of Disasters

DESPITE the fact that Goldie's gamble in attacking Nupe and Ilorin had apparently been a complete success, opinion in London was hardening against him. It was at last beginning to be realized that a commercial company, whose first duty was to make profits for its

³⁶ Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* p. 49.

³⁷ See the second part of Note 16 in Appendix I.

³⁸ *Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, pp. 34-35.

shareholders, was not a suitable instrument for the execution of imperial policy, and that in any case the Royal Niger Company simply did not possess the resources in men and materials to occupy a territory of hundreds of thousands of square miles and administer a population of many millions. Furthermore Goldie, who was self-willed and secretive, was coming to be regarded by politicians and civil servants alike with growing distrust.

With the Tories back in power the British Government's attitude to imperial responsibilities had in any case undergone a marked change. Its policy was no longer the purely negative one of keeping the French and Germans out of British spheres of influence with the least possible expense to the Exchequer. Now, with Chamberlain at the Colonial Office, there was a new drive towards the effective occupation of British Protectorates as a necessary preliminary to the suppression of abuses like slave-raiding and the development of potential wealth.

The days of the Royal Niger Company were therefore numbered. In 1897 the British Government, tired of having to rely on the Company's Constabulary to withstand the heavy pressure of the French in the Borgu area, decided to create the West African Frontier Force. In the following year they went further and made up their minds to revoke the Company's Charter and assume direct responsibility for the whole of the Niger Territories. These decisions were duly put into effect and on 1 January 1900 the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria was brought into being. Sir Frederick Lugard, who had previously been Commandant of the Frontier Force, was appointed to the new post of High Commissioner.

On the surface Lugard appeared to be a typical product of his class and age, but in fact he was a most unusual man. He had been educated at a public school and then, after passing through Sandhurst, had gone into the army. Having spent his childhood in India, he had returned there as a young soldier and had fought in three frontier campaigns. Until he was thirty, in fact, his career had been completely conventional. At that point, however, a tempestuous love affair with a married woman had driven him off this safe course and, after carrying him dangerously close to the shores of insanity, had cast him up, an emotional wreck, on the shores of Africa.¹ There his first service had been in Nyasaland and Uganda. Then in 1894 he had been brought to West Africa to lead the Nikki Expedition and three years later had been appointed Commissioner and Commandant of the West African Frontier Force.

¹ Margery Perham, *Lugard: The Years of Adventure*, London, 1956, pp. 59-73.

When Lugard became High Commissioner he was still only forty-two. For the past twelve years he had been trying to obliterate his unhappy memories by hard work and alleviate his earlier frustration through new achievements. At this period, therefore, he was a dynamic and ambitious man and a hard-driving and often ungracious master. Nevertheless, even when he was trying to exorcize his own private devils, he believed passionately in the importance of what he was doing and, at any rate in his lonely dedication to duty, was a man of the same stamp as Livingstone and Gordon.

The territory which Lugard took over in 1900 was a Protectorate only in name. Except in the neighbourhood of the two great rivers, there was no effective occupation or control. And even there Nupe had reasserted its independence when the Emir Abubakr had returned to his capital and ousted Goldie's nominee, while in Ilorin the Emir had resumed his attacks on the Yorubas and was disregarding all protests. In the north-west, Sultan Abdu had never asked for protection and had now become so hostile that he could not be expected either to submit or negotiate. In the north-east, Rabeh was equally determined to resist any further extension of European power.

A few months after the new Protectorate had been declared, war broke out in Ashanti. At this Lugard had to agree to half the Frontier Force, which now numbered about 2,500, being sent to the Gold Coast as reinforcements. Their absence not only compelled him to hold up the plans that he was maturing but also encouraged the Emirs of Nupe and Kontagora to resume slave-raiding in Kabba and Gwari. Although, as we shall see, there was urgent need for British intervention in Bornu, the audacity that the two Emirs were now showing convinced Lugard that his first action must be against them.²

As soon as the troops returned from Ashanti, therefore, Lugard gave orders for an expedition to be prepared against Bida and Kontagora. Before taking this drastic step he made no attempt to get in touch with the Sultan or the Emir of Gwandu to find out whether they, as the suzerains, were willing or able to restrain their turbulent vassals. For this omission he is open to exactly the same criticism as Goldie in 1896-7.

In Kontagora the first Emir, Umaru Nagwamatse, had died in 1876 and been succeeded first by his eldest son and then, when he in turn had died in 1880, by another son called Ibrahim.³ This Ibrahim,

² *Annual Reports, Northern Nigeria, 1900-11*, p. 11.

³ *Gazetteer of Kontagora Province*, p. 11. Ibrahim is often referred to as Nagwamatse, but this is incorrect as the nickname was his father's, not his.

a chip off the old block, had pursued the same policy as his father, continually harrying the pagans, particularly the Gwaris, and always looking for excuses to encroach upon the territory of his neighbour Yauri.

In the 'eighties, when Umaru of the Bello House had been Sultan, Ibrahim had had to keep his depredations within bounds, but when his uncle Abdu had succeeded in Sokoto, he seems to have thrown off all restraint. He now divided his time between his capital, Kontagora, and the military camp which he had established on the Kano-Bida trade route. From this base he levied tribute on passing caravans and undertook slave-raids whenever it pleased him to do so. One of his major successes was the sack of Birnin Gwari and by 1894 he had already devastated the country for miles around and so disrupted and depopulated it that even food was unobtainable.⁴ 'In the course of our march from Kano to Bida', wrote a European traveller, 'we passed towns and villages, literally without number, which had been recently destroyed and their inhabitants sold as slaves.'⁵ This description shows that under Abdu's disastrous rule parts of the Empire were sliding towards anarchy and it perhaps helps to explain why Lugard did not trouble to seek his help before taking military action.

Early in 1901 a column of the West African Frontier Force moved against Kontagora. Ibrahim barred its passage in front of his capital, but he was easily defeated and forced to flee. After his flight Lugard wrote to the Sultan to explain the action he had seen fit to take and to invite the Sultan to nominate a successor. But to this letter he received no reply.

From Kontagora the column marched on to Bida. The Emir Abubakr, Goldie's old adversary, offered no resistance but fled when the British approached. The town was therefore occupied with very little fighting. Without waiting to consult Sokoto or Gwandu about the succession, Lugard restored the Emir Muhammadu to the throne on which Goldie had placed him four years earlier. At the same time he presented him with a letter of appointment setting out the conditions on which he held his office.

When Lugard returned to his capital at Lokoja he left British Residents behind in both Bida and Kontagora, which thus became the headquarters of two new Provinces in the Protectorate. To all intents and purposes, therefore, they had ceased to be parts of the Fulani Empire.

⁴ Robinson, *op. cit.* pp. 232-42.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 131.

Although the problems of Bornu still demanded urgent attention, Lugard now began to think that he must settle accounts with Adamawa before sending an expedition to Chad. In this he was influenced by the fact that river transport provided easily the best means of reaching Yola and that September was the only time of the year when the larger steamers could operate so far up-stream. Consequently, if he did not catch the flood of 1901, it would mean waiting another year.

Relations between the British and the Fulani of Adamawa had never been good. As early as 1885 a wooden hulk had been towed up to Yola to serve as a base for the Company's operations, but in the face of opposition from Sanda, who was then Emir, the venture had withered and been abandoned. In 1890 Sanda had died and been succeeded by Zubeiru, who had soon allowed the trading-hulk to return to Yola. Moreover, in 1893 he had entered into a treaty with the Company, agreeing to accept a subsidy, and four years later this agreement had been reaffirmed and slightly amplified.⁶

In spite of these treaties, however, relations between the Company and the Fulani had not improved. To some extent they had been wilfully damaged by the intrigues of the French adventurer Mizon, but the main cause of the trouble had lain in the character of Zubeiru himself who, though a man of great courage and considerable ability, was proud, suspicious, and bigoted.⁷

In 1897, soon after renewing the treaty with the Company, Zubeiru had received letters from the Sultan calling on him to expel the Company's agents from Adamawa as a reprisal for the attacks on Bida and Ilorin.⁸ Although he had not complied with the order at the time, Zubeiru had afterwards become more suspicious and intolerant than ever. Faced by this intransigence, and fortified in his resolve by reports about Zubeiru's raids against his pagan neighbours and his continued dealings in slaves, Lugard came to the conclusion that he must settle accounts with Adamawa without further delay. In reaching this decision he was no doubt influenced by the thought that a hostile and unsubdued Adamawa would constitute a serious threat to the long lines of communications of any expeditions which might be sent against Bornu.

The Yola Expedition was fitted out in the rainy season of 1901. Wallace of the Niger Company, who had become Lugard's Deputy,

⁶ Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* p. 49.

⁷ *Gazetteer of Yola Province*, pp. 20-22.

⁸ Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* p. 49.

sailed with it to take charge of political negotiations. The steamers reached Yola in early September and, as Zubeiru refused to parley, the troops were put ashore. They occupied the town without much difficulty, but were challenged in front of the Emir's palace. This was protected by a high wall and was defended by Zubeiru's personal bodyguard, who were reinforced by sixty veterans of Rabeh's army and supported by the two cannon which Mizon had presented to the Emir some years before.⁹ After a stiff fight, in which the British forces suffered about 40 casualties and the Fulani 150, the palace was taken by storm.¹⁰

When Yola fell Zubeiru succeeded in making his escape and fled across the border to Marua in the German Cameroons. On his way there he wrote this letter to the Sultan.

I write to tell you of the terrible disaster which has befallen us. The Christians have made war on us. We were warned but paid no heed . . . and now we have been brought down by them. They have seized Yola but have not occupied the districts. Nor have they taken me because I made good my escape. I am now three days march from Yola, seeking a dry place in which to rest until the rains cease. . . .

I shall not stoop to double-dealing between you and the Christians. By God and the Prophet, my allegiance is to you. . . . Even if all my towns are taken from me I shall never submit to the Unbelievers. The Prophet declared that he who dwelt with the Unbeliever should be numbered among them. . . . Peace be on him who adheres to the faith.¹¹

At about the same time Zubeiru sent the following message to the people of Yola and two other towns.

I shall return and we shall drive out the Unbelievers. But if they prove too strong for us you must leave Yola and follow me to a new country. The Koran forbids you to consort with Unbelievers. . . . They wish to take our country. Have no dealings with them.¹²

These letters show the stern, uncompromising stuff that Zubeiru was made of. The exhortation to abandon house and home rather than submit to Christian domination is particularly interesting and we shall encounter it again. Among the bulk of the people of Adamawa, however, it evoked no response.

⁹ *Gazetteer of Yola Province*, pp. 21-22.

¹⁰ Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* pp. 57-58.

¹¹ Backwell, *op. cit.* cf. Letter, no. 112.

¹² Cf. Kirk-Greene, *op. cit.* p. 59.

Even so, Zubeiru was not yet finished. Across the border he roused the Fulani to an attack on the German force which had occupied Garua. They were heavily defeated, however, and soon afterwards the Germans launched a counter-attack on Zubeiru's followers in Marua. There the Fulani showed that the fanatical courage they had displayed in the *jihad* was not by any means dead. Though opposed by machine-guns, some 400 of Zubeiru's *Sikirri*, who had vowed to conquer or die, fought to the last man round his standard.¹³

After this disaster Zubeiru, who had again evaded capture, managed to preserve his liberty for another year in the hilly country along the border between Northern Nigeria and the Cameroons. In the end, however, early in 1903, he succumbed to the poisoned arrows of the pagans whom he had so long harried.¹⁴

Meanwhile, in Yola the British had installed Zubeiru's younger brother, Bobbo Ahmadu, as the new Emir. At the same time Adamawa had been proclaimed a Province in the Protectorate and a Resident had been appointed to take charge of it. One more Emirate had thus been lost to the Empire.

While these events were taking place along the Niger and Benue Rivers, there had been important developments in the Chad region.

Just before the end of the century the French, in pursuit of a grand design to stake out claims to the whole of the interior of West Africa, had launched three separate expeditions from North Africa, the Congo, and Senegal with orders to march on Lake Chad and join forces there. Early in 1900 these three columns had duly made their rendezvous. Soon afterwards they had brought Rabeh to battle at Kusseri, on the River Logone, and won a crushing victory in which Rabeh had been killed.¹⁵

When Rabeh had marched out to meet the French he had left his son, Fadr Allah, in charge of Dikwa with Hayatu as his second-in-command. By this time Hayatu had lost faith in Rabeh and he now planned to desert, but his wife, Hauwa, betrayed the plot to her brother, Fadr Allah. When Hayatu and his followers slipped away, therefore, they were pursued and overtaken by Fadr Allah with a superior force of cavalry. In the battle that followed Hayatu was soon killed. Once again, however, the Fulani displayed their courage and devotion, for they refused to abandon the body of their leader and one hundred of them fought round him and perished to the last man.¹⁶

¹³ *Gazetteer of Yola Province*, p. 22.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Gentil, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ Alexander, *op. cit.* pp. 203-4.

As for Fadr Allah, when Rabeh was defeated and killed at Kusseri, he abandoned Dikwa and led the garrison and the remnants of the army westward into Bornu. As he was now in the British sphere of influence, the French were precluded from following him. Nevertheless, to be on the safe side, he sent a message to Lugard asking to be taken under British protection.

These events put Lugard in a dilemma. He was loath to recognize a man who had so recently been at war with another European nation, but he was not sure whether there was anyone else capable of ruling Bornu. Moreover, he was afraid that if the whole region dissolved into chaos, as it might easily do, the French would use the danger of anarchy as an excuse for stepping in and occupying Bornu themselves.¹⁷

But Lugard, as we have seen, could not move into Bornu in 1900, because half the troops were in Ashanti, nor yet in 1901 because of the necessity of securing his base and southern flank by first subduing Kontagora, Nupe, and Adamawa. During the interval Fadr Allah, after recruiting his strength, began to raid and harry the French across the border. This provoked them into retaliation and, late in 1901, a French column pursued him into British territory and killed him at Gujba.

The French intervention made the effective occupation of Bornu absolutely imperative. A strong force had already been assembled at Ibi, on the Benue, in anticipation of this need, and early in 1902 Lugard dispatched it to Chad with orders to march through Bauchi and deal with that Emirate on the way.

In Bauchi the Emir Umaru had planned to fight, but when he saw the strength of the British column his discretion overcame his valour and he took to flight. Wallace, who was representing Lugard, thereupon consulted the Electors and, on their advice, appointed Umaru's cousin Muhammadu to succeed him.¹⁸ But once again there was no consultation with the Sultan either about the deposition of one Emir or the appointment of the other.

After leaving Bauchi, Wallace's column crossed the Upper Gongola and entered what had previously been the northern part of Gombe Emirate but was now the independent territory of Mallam Jibrilla. Near Tongo it was almost ambushed by Jibrilla's force, which consisted of 100 horse and about 600 foot, but the attack was beaten off and the enemy routed. In the ensuing

¹⁷ *Annual Reports, Northern Nigeria, 1900-11*, pp. 63-68.

¹⁸ *Gazetteer of Bauchi Province*, pp. 11-12.

pursuit Jibrilla, now an elderly man, was captured and sent down to Lokoja.¹⁹

The Emir of Gombe, Umaru, who had already made submission to the British and who was in fact riding with the column,²⁰ was then formally recognized as the ruler of the Emirate and had his lost domains, including the town of Burmi, restored to him. Because Jibrilla had been captured, it was mistakenly assumed that Burmi was no longer a danger and so no further action was taken against its inhabitants. This was an omission that the British were soon to regret.

Having dealt with Jibrilla and settled Gombe, the column marched on into Bornu. After nearly ten years of war the Kanuri people were so impoverished and exhausted that they welcomed the prospect of security and peace which the British brought with them. Bukar Garbai, a great-grandson of El-Kanemi, was formally installed and accepted the conditions of his appointment without demur. Because of the accidents of history, therefore, the ancient kingdom of Bornu, which in other circumstances might have been expected to resist European domination as vigorously as Sokoto, now submitted itself willingly to the yoke.

It was to be expected that the Emirs who had been ousted by the British would sooner or later make their way to Sokoto. Zubeiru of Adamawa would probably have done so if he had not been killed, but Nupe and Bauchi seem to have taken refuge in Kano²¹ and to have made no effort to go any farther. This was bad enough, but Kontagora's conduct was positively disruptive.

After the loss of his Emirate, Sarkin Sudan Ibrahim established himself near Fatika in Zaria Emirate. It happened that at that time the Emir of Zaria, Kwasau, was not only on bad terms with the Sultan, who had not favoured his election in the first place,²² but was also at feud with Sarkin Zamfara Umaru dan Mamudu, the ruler of the great fief of Zurmi in eastern Sokoto. Now this Umaru was an old ally of Sarkin Sudan's in expeditions against the Gwari²³ and so Sarkin Sudan took his side against the Emir of Zaria, or at any rate used his ally's feud as a licence for indiscriminate attacks on Zaria's neighbouring towns and villages. The result was that in the

¹⁹ *Annual Reports, Northern Nigeria, 1900-11*, pp. 65-66.

²⁰ *Gazetteer of Bauchi Province*, p. 14.

²¹ Confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu.

²² M. G. Smith, *op. cit.* pp. 193-4.

²³ *Gazetteer of Kontagora Province*, p. 11. Confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu.

latter part of 1901 a minor civil war developed in Zaria Emirate between the forces of the Emir on one side and those of Sarkin Sudan and Sarkin Zamfara on the other. The Emir succeeded in shifting Sarkin Sudan from Fatika to Kaya but failed to drive him out altogether.²⁴ In the meantime his people were suffering so severely that early in 1902 he determined to call for help.

In Sokoto, Abdu was now in his seventy-third year and nearing the end of his life. Senility seems to have overtaken him because, while his Empire was disintegrating around him, he sat in his capital and concerned himself chiefly in keeping out local traders, particularly Yorubas, whom he imagined to be agents sent by the British to spy out the land.²⁵ Apart from some rather ineffective remonstrances, however, he had done nothing to restrain his nephew Ibrahim and Umaru dan Mamudu from ravaging northern Zaria. It was therefore natural for the Emir of Zaria to conclude that there was no help to be had from him. Instead he appealed to Lugard who, having moved his headquarters from Lokoja to Jebba and then from Jebba to Zungeru, was by this time in a much better position than before to help him.

Early in 1902, in response to this appeal, Lugard sent a company of Mounted Infantry against Sarkin Sudan. They advanced so rapidly that they took him completely by surprise. Although he was surrounded by his own people in his war-camp, he offered little resistance and was hauled off into captivity. At the same time a garrison was established near Zaria city and a Resident was appointed to take charge of this new Province of the Protectorate.

For Sokoto and Gwandu the past twelve months had brought one disaster after another, each more damaging than the last. First Kontagora and Nupe had been vanquished and their Emirs driven into exile. Next Adamawa had been occupied and the Lamido had become a hunted fugitive. After that Bauchi had capitulated without a struggle and had supinely accepted the new Emir appointed by the High Commissioner. Then, worse still, the Emir of Gombe had allied himself to the British and accepted at their hands the restoration of the lost provinces which, in the previous decade, his rightful suzerains had made no effort to recover for him. And finally, worst of all, the Emir of Zaria had ignored the Sultan and voluntarily delivered up his Emirate to the occupation of the British.

When Lugard had sent a message to Sokoto after the capture of Kontagora and the occupation of Bida, Abdu had not deigned to

²⁴ Edgar, *op. cit.* vol. I, pp. 191-4.

²⁵ *Ibid.* vol. II, part II, no. 15.

answer. But in May 1902, moved no doubt by the series of disasters for which he considered the British responsible, he at last brought himself to reply.²⁶ Unlike his other acts of intransigence, this message had a certain defiant grandeur:

From us to you. Know that I do not consent to any of your people dwelling among us. I myself shall never be reconciled to you, nor shall I permit any further dealings with you. Henceforth there shall be no exchanges between us save those between Moslems and Unbelievers—Holy War as the Almighty has enjoined on us. There is neither authority nor power save in God on high.²⁷

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

The Fall of Sokoto

THE events of 1901-2 had produced a decisive shift in the balance of power between the Fulani and the British.

On the Fulani side the loss or defection of all the southern Emirates meant that the Empire had now been reduced to little more than Sokoto, Gwandu, Kano, Katsina, Hadeija, Katagum, Daura, Kazaure, and Yauri. Given strong leadership their forces could still have been welded into a powerful combination. It was the misfortune of the Fulani, however, that at a time when they sorely needed another Bello to lead them out of their difficulties they were saddled instead with an incompetent and now senile tyrant.

On the British side Lugard, in the summer of 1902, was faced with the most serious decision that he had yet had to take, whether to treat with the Sultan as before or to force the issue. The whole problem was bedevilled by the vagueness of the treaties. When the Protectorate had been declared, Lugard had written to Abdu saying that the Government had assumed all the Company's obligations under the treaties and would honour them. This letter had never been answered, however, and so it was not even certain that the Sultan still recognized them.¹

²⁶ *Annual Reports, Northern Nigeria, 1900-11*, pp. 82 and 159.

²⁷ As the original of this letter has not been preserved, its authenticity has been called in question. See D. J. M. Muffett, *Concerning Brave Captains*, London, 1964, pp. 42-51. This possibility and Lugard's dealings with Sultan Abdu and his successor are examined more closely in Appendix III.

¹ *Annual Reports, Northern Nigeria, 1900-11*, p. 81.

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In 1902 Lugard sought the advice of his Chief Justice on the validity and scope of the treaties. He was advised that under the third treaty the Sultan had surrendered his independence and that, having once done so, he had also surrendered his power to repudiate the treaty which was therefore still valid and binding.² As it was very doubtful whether Abdu had ever signed the treaty, which in any case made no mention of sovereignty or its surrender, this advice appears today to be astonishingly tendentious. Lugard himself seems to have recognized that there was too much casuistry in the argument and that he could place little reliance on the treaties in persuading the Sultan to accept British protection and guidance.

For Lugard the need to reach a satisfactory settlement was becoming increasingly urgent. First of all there was the awkward fact that an Anglo-French Boundary Commission was about to demarcate the international frontier between the Niger and Lake Chad; as things were, he could not guarantee their safety and yet if he asked for the work to be deferred it would be a public admission that the British were not in control of the territory which they had so insistently claimed.

In addition to this, however, there were other considerations that probably weighed more heavily with Lugard. He was a man of principle and he held strong views about the moral obligation of Great Britain to bring peace, order, and good government to the Protectorate. Being a creative idealist as well, he was also understandably impatient to settle the political and military problems so that he could buckle down to the tasks of reconstruction and development which interested him most.

All these factors doubtless played their part in persuading Lugard that he would have to send an expeditionary force against Kano and Sokoto to overawe and if necessary subjugate them. Abdu's defiant letter of May 1902 seems to have finally convinced him that this was the only possible course. He was still doubtful whether the British Government would agree with him, however, and so he pressed on with his arrangements without divulging his intentions to the Colonial Office. Nevertheless, by mid-summer it was common knowledge among the officers who were closest to him that in the coming dry season he intended to march against Sokoto.

As the year wore on the Fulani leaders got plenty of warning that the British were preparing for a fresh move. The Emir of Kano, for example, received the following letter from a correspondent in Zaria.

² Colonial Office File, no. CO 446/30, p. 9.

The purpose of my letter is to inform you of the coming of the Christians. They have increased in numbers and established themselves more firmly than before. As for the others, they have come to Kwaba and are busy collecting stores for war. They declare that when they have finished what they are doing they will go on to Kano. It is to give you this news that I am writing.³

In a second letter he informed Aliyu that the British had started work on improving the road, or rather track, from Zaria to Kano and that they were expecting reinforcements from Bauchi.⁴ In a third and final letter he wrote with a plain note of urgency. 'This is to let you know that the Christians who were said to be coming from Bauchi have now arrived. . . . They are mustering here and intend to go on to Kano. May God remember and protect us. . . .'⁵ The gist of this and similar intelligence reaching the Emir of Kano was passed on by him to Sokoto.⁶ In addition, though the letters have not survived, it can be taken as certain that the Sultan and the Waziri were kept informed by other correspondents of Lugard's preparations.

There is no doubt, therefore, that by the late summer or early autumn of 1902 the Fulani leaders were fully aware of the danger that threatened them. Unfortunately for their cause, however, they could not agree on how they should meet it. To Lugard there seemed to be but two alternatives—to fight or to negotiate—but to them there were three: to fight, to negotiate, or to emigrate *en masse*.⁷

To the Fulani, who had only ceased to be nomads in comparatively recent times, the idea of a mass migration was perfectly feasible. Indeed, a belief was current that Shehu himself had foretold that one day such a migration would take them to the Hejaz and the holy places of Islam.⁸ After the defeat at Yola, this was the course that the Emir had called on his people to adopt. Now the policy found a new advocate in the Emir of Kano, who wrote to the Waziri Buhari in the following terms:

I have received your letter and I understand from it that my advice commends itself to you. Both of us are seeking what will serve our religion best in the long run. As I said in my last letter, I still believe that, as these dogs have surrounded us and now threaten to overwhelm us, the best plan is for all true Moslems to abandon this country. That is my firm conviction and I pray that your eyes too may be opened to this reality. May God help us and lighten our burdens.⁹

³ Backwell, op. cit. cf. Letter, no. 119.

⁴ Ibid. cf. Letter, no. 121.

⁵ Alhaji Junaidu, op. cit. p. 70.

⁶ Backwell, op. cit. cf. Letter, no. 125.

⁴ Ibid. Letter, no. 120.

⁵ Ibid. Letter, no. 124.

⁸ Muffett, op. cit. p. 147.

There were others, however, who considered that it would be calamitous for the Fulani cause if the Hausa population ever got an inkling that the possibility of migration was so much as being considered. Later in the year, for example, the Marafa Maiturare, the hero of the Fulani counter-attack at the battle of Argungu, wrote to the Sultan in the following terms:

I earnestly beseech you, in God's name, let no-one in this land hear from your lips any hint of our departure for this would mean the ruin of our cause. On hearing such news the people would certainly throw off their allegiance to us and we should get none of the help which they have promised. Let us therefore wait and see how things turn out. Help lies with God alone. . . .¹⁰

In the Fulani camp this debate continued throughout the rest of the year 1902 and into the early part of 1903. It was one of the factors that brought about the paralysis of will which now seemed to afflict them when their whole future was in jeopardy.

As the dry season approached, tension between the Fulani and the British gradually mounted until early in October when there were two important developments which affected the future course of events.

The little Emirate of Keffi, lying south-west of the Plateau and only fifty miles from the Benue, has already been mentioned. It belonged to the second generation of the Fulani family of States and owed allegiance through Zaria to Sokoto. During the latter part of the century the Emirs of Zaria had adopted the practice of maintaining one of their own officials at the Court of Keffi to watch their interests.¹¹ This post was now occupied by the Magaji Dan Yamusa, an intrepid warrior, a redoubtable slave-raider, and a man of dynamic personality. Though in theory he was only the power behind the throne, he was in fact more powerful than the Emir himself.¹²

Keffi, however, was also one of the Emirates that had made treaties with the Royal Niger Company¹³ and on the strength of these treaties, when the Protectorate came into being, the Emirate was embodied into Nassarawa Province. Furthermore, in July 1902, after the Emir of Zaria, Kwasau, had made submission to the High Commissioner, the headquarters of the Province were moved to Keffi

¹⁰ Backwell, *op. cit.* cf. Letter, no. 128.

¹¹ *Notes on Nassarawa Province*, p. 7.

¹² Muffett, *op. cit.* p. 64.

¹³ Flint, *op. cit.* p. 139.

town and the Resident, Captain Moloney, took up his post there with a detachment of troops to support him.¹⁴

As the Magaji was not withdrawn when Moloney arrived, there were now in effect two Residents in Keffi, one Fulani and the other British. So long as relations between the High Commissioner and the Emir of Zaria remained cordial, all went well. In September, however, Lugard found it necessary to have Kwasau put under detention and removed from his capital.¹⁵ When news of this action reached Keffi it naturally produced extreme tension between Moloney and the Magaji.

Though he had troops on call Moloney was reluctant to use them and tried to assert his authority by peaceful means without recourse to force. But he had misjudged his man and, on 3 October 1902, he was suddenly set upon by the Magaji and his armed followers in the middle of the town and killed. His political agent, Audu Tintin, was also hunted down and dispatched.¹⁶

After committing this deed (which had little enough to excuse it because Moloney was unarmed at the time and, being lame from an earlier wound, was unable either to defend himself or escape) the Magaji and his followers fled north. They avoided Zaria, where there was now a British garrison, and made their way straight to Kano. There they were well received by the Emir Aliyu.¹⁶

When news of Moloney's death reached Lugard it strengthened his resolve to force the issue with Kano and Sokoto.

If the life of a European can be taken with impunity the prestige of the Government would be gone, and prestige is another word for self-preservation in a country where millions are ruled by a few score. In my opinion the Government owes it to every British Officer called upon to serve in distant districts among turbulent people to take prompt and effective measures in such a case or the lives of its servants would not be safe. . . . I felt that I had no option but to attempt the arrest of the Magaji to the uttermost limits of the Protectorate. . . .¹⁷

Lugard's plans for sending an expedition against Kano and Sokoto were already well advanced and now the death of Moloney and the sanctuary given to the Magaji in Kano had provided him with what he had previously lacked, namely a good pretext for resorting to force. Just then, however, another event of radical

¹⁴ *Notes on Nassarawa Province*, p. 7.

¹⁵ *Gazetteer of Zaria Province*, p. 14.

¹⁶ Muffett, *op. cit.* pp. 62-68.

¹⁷ *Annual Reports, Northern Nigeria, 1900-11*, pp. 75-6.

importance occurred which opened up the possibility of a peaceful settlement and which should therefore have given him pause.

On 9 October, less than a week after the assassination of Moloney, Sultan Abdu died in Wurno and three days later his nephew, Muhammadu Attahiru, was appointed to succeed him.¹⁸ News of the old tyrant's death reverberated round Hausaland and must have reached Lugard's ears within a matter of days. The new Sultan, though a devout Moslem, was a reasonable and open-minded man and it would in fact have been possible to negotiate with him.¹⁹ Lugard could not be expected to know this, of course, but equally he had no right to assume that Attahiru would prove to be as bigoted and intransigent as Abdu. Unfortunately, however, his mind was now made up and he was not prepared to postpone the projected expedition to see whether negotiation with the new Sultan would lead to a peaceful settlement. For this precipitancy he cannot escape the censure of history.

If Abdu's death came too late to deflect Lugard from his purpose, it at least had a salutary effect on the cohesion of the Fulani. Although after the termination of the Kano civil war the old Sultan had accorded formal recognition to Aliyu as Emir of Kano, there had nevertheless remained a legacy of distrust between them. As a result of it, Aliyu had never made the journey to Sokoto, as tradition and courtesy demanded, to pay homage to his overlord.

When Attahiru succeeded as Sultan, Aliyu evidently thought that it was time to repair this omission. He probably also felt that a visit would provide him with a good opportunity for improving relations between Kano and Sokoto and for pressing his view that a mass migration was preferable either to submission or war. At the beginning of January 1903 he therefore set out for Sokoto at the head of about half his fighting men.²⁰ If the object of this move had been to form a military concentration in Sokoto, in preparation for a decisive battle, the strategy would have been sound. As this was not the purpose, however, it was rash to the point of folly, for it divided the Kano forces at a critical moment and left the city, which after Sokoto itself was the most valuable prize in the Empire, exposed and vulnerable.

Although among the Fulani and the British in Nigeria it had been common knowledge for some time that an expedition was being prepared against Kano and Sokoto, Lugard had still not brought himself

¹⁸ Alhaji Junaidu, *op. cit.* p. 70.

¹⁹ Muffett, *op. cit.* pp. 143-4.

²⁰ Alhaji Abubakar, *op. cit.* p. 70.

to divulge his plans to the Colonial Secretary. This omission was not inadvertent but unquestionably deliberate. He knew that in England the bloodshed and waste of the Boer War had produced a change of mood in the public and because of it the Government were now loath to allow any moves which might be condemned as fresh colonial adventures.

Fearing that timid politicians advised by cautious civil servants would veto his plans if he revealed them prematurely, he resorted to various subterfuges to keep them masked until the point-of-no-return had been reached and passed. In this way he succeeded in forcing the hand of the British Government and obtaining approval for a plan which, if it had been submitted at the right time and in the proper way, would in all probability have been turned down.²¹

If the methods which Lugard employed to get his way were questionable, his motives, to give him his due, were purely altruistic. He was impatient to stamp out slave-raiding and other abuses. He wanted a free hand to introduce the reforms that were later to make him famous. He was convinced that he could transform the lives of the people for whose welfare he regarded himself responsible. These were worthy aspirations which he was later to fulfil in ample measure. The fact remains, however, that by refusing to delay his military operations in order to negotiate with the new Sultan he precipitated a war which it might have been possible to avoid.

The Kano-Sokoto Expedition set off from Zaria at the end of January 1903 under the command of Colonel Morland. Its strength was 40 British officers and N.C.O.s and 800 African rank and file. Apart from a company of mounted infantry and a few gunners, the whole force consisted of infantry. They were supported, however, by four 75-mm. mountain guns, which could if necessary be dismantled and transported by porters, and by six machine-guns.

The majority of the troops were Hausas. They were returning to their own country purely as mercenaries, not because they had any thoughts of revenging themselves upon the Fulani. Though mercenaries, they made fine soldiers and were brave, loyal, stoical, cheerful, and tough.²² Furthermore, being veterans of other campaigns, they were seasoned and confident.

²¹ See Appendix III.

²² Vandeleur, who saw service in both East and West Africa, thought that the Hausas made the best soldiers in Africa. See S. Vandeleur, *Campaigning on the Upper Nile and Niger*, London, 1898.

The distance from Zaria to Kano is just under a hundred miles. The troops were opposed at only one place, Bebeji, and covered the ground in five days. When they reached the city, however, they found the newly repaired walls manned and the massive gates closed against them.

It has been customary in the past to describe the capture of Kano as if it was a great feat of arms. The truth is that, with the Emir and half his army away in Sokoto, the defenders had a hopeless task. As the Hausa population remained passive, neither helping nor hindering the Fulani, there were not nearly enough troops to man the eleven miles of fortifications and defend the thirteen gates. All that the British needed to do, therefore, was to blow in one of the gates and put a storming party through it before the defence could rally and counter-attack. This they accomplished with negligible casualties. Before long the city was theirs.

In a military sense, Kano was an empty shell and its capture a hollow victory. Nevertheless, it was still the greatest city of Hausaland and its fall shook the Empire.

Lugard's original orders to his commander were that he should first take Kano and then, after sending the Sultan a message to explain his motives for having done so, march on Sokoto. After the fall of Kano, however, he became convinced that the Sultan would capitulate and so he sent a message to Brigadier-General Kemball, who had now taken over command from Colonel Morland, cancelling these orders and instructing him instead to make Kano impregnable and the Kano-Zaria line of communications absolutely secure. Kemball was free to defend himself in case he was jeopardized by superior forces but was to take no unnecessary offensive action. The responsibility for making any further move against Sokoto would rest solely on him.²³

By this time Lugard had moved up to Zaria, where he was just as well placed as Kemball in Kano for communicating with the Sultan. It was therefore extraordinary that he, of all people, should have delegated the task of making this decision, which was essentially political, to a soldier. It was all the more extraordinary in that he was out of sympathy with Kemball and had only reluctantly agreed, at the insistence of London, to his taking over the command of the expedition from Morland.²⁴ What was most extraordinary of all was that, although the letters that he wrote to his wife at this time show that he was very critical of the action which Kemball decided to

²³ Muffett, *op. cit.* p. 106.

²⁴ Perham, *Lugard: The Years of Authority*, London, 1960, p. 100.

take,²⁵ he made no attempt to halt him or resume the authority that he had delegated. Indeed, his conduct at this time was so strange and uncharacteristic that it suggests that he had to some extent lost his nerve and was ensuring, in case of failure, that Kemball, whom the Secretary of State had forced on him, should carry at least part of the blame.²⁶ Whatever his motives, his abrogation of his responsibilities during this critical period had the effect of leaving control in the hands of the soldiers, who were primarily concerned with forcing a quick military decision, and so materially reduced the chance of a peaceful settlement with Sokoto.

Meanwhile, in Kano reports were beginning to reach Kemball and Morland that the fugitives from the city's defenders had joined up in Zamfara with the Kano army which was returning from Sokoto. The move that the British had most cause to fear was the building up of a hostile coalition. Believing that this process might be beginning, Kemball now decided that he must at all costs forestall it. And so on 16 February, leaving a small garrison in Kano, he took the field again.

The reports which had reached the British in Kano, though exaggerated, were basically correct. The Emir of Kano had in fact left Sokoto at about the time that the British had captured his capital. He was in Zamfara when the news reached him, brought by fugitives, and he was flabbergasted by it.

After a few days' indecision he determined that he at any rate would carry out the plan that he had unsuccessfully urged on the Sultan. One night, therefore, accompanied only by a small party of women and slaves, he slipped away from his camp—again in disguise—with the intention of emigrating to Arabia. But his road lay through the territory of the Gobir diehards, who penetrated his disguise, took him prisoner, and later handed him over to the British.²⁷

On the morning after the Emir's flight, when news of his disappearance spread abroad, the Kano forces fell into complete confusion. Some of the leaders favoured one course, some another, but none possessed the stature to impose his will on the others. The army therefore broke up into two main groups. The larger body, avoiding Kemball's advancing column, made their way to Kano, where they submitted to the British authorities and laid down their arms. Their

²⁵ Perham, *Lugard: The Years of Authority*, p. 120.

²⁶ For a more detailed account of these events, see Appendix III.

²⁷ Foulkes, loc. cit. pp. 429–37. The General, then a subaltern, rode 175 miles in three days and two nights in order to collect the Emir from the Gobirawa, an extraordinary feat of endurance in the Sahara heat.

leader, the Wambai Abbas, having been chosen by the Electors, was soon afterwards installed by Lugard as the new Emir of Kano.

Meanwhile, the other group, which was led by the Waziri Ahmadu,²⁸ continued its eastward march with the intention not of avoiding but of seeking battle. It was too far south to meet the main British column, but near Kotorkoshi it ran into a half-company of Mounted Infantry, which was reconnoitring and covering the flank of Kembball's advance. The engagement that followed was a classic of its kind, a contest between modern weapons and disciplined staunchness on the one hand and superior numbers and reckless courage on the other. The Mounted Infantry formed a little square, which had only eleven men on each face, and during the next two hours withstood twelve separate charges. By the narrowest of margins the square held out and when the fighting was over the victors counted sixty-five bodies scattered round it. Among them was the Waziri Ahmadu, who thus found the death which he had deliberately set out to seek.

While these events were taking place in Zamfara, the Sultan had still not made up his mind whether to fight or negotiate. Earlier in the month he had received from Colonel Morland a letter written on Lugard's instructions to explain that the British had moved against Kano because the Emir had received the Magaji of Keffi with honour and had shown that he wanted war. The letter went on to say that the British were now coming to Sokoto and that they intended to install a Resident and a garrison. Nevertheless, they did not wish for war unless the Fulani themselves sought it and if they were received in peace the Sultan would retain his position and no harm would come to any of his people. If he wished to show his friendship, however, he must co-operate in bringing the Magaji to justice.

The moderate tone of Morland's letter did not disguise the fact that it contained an ultimatum. What the British were offering was a straight choice between peace on their terms, which were not ungenerous, and war.

This message put Attahiru in a position of extraordinary difficulty. As he was Commander of the Faithful as well as Sultan of Sokoto, the problem was as much religious as political or military. His own inclination was towards the solution of a mass migration,²⁹ but as no

²⁸ In Kano the title of Waziri had less importance than in Sokoto and the holder was not the chief minister. Ahmadu was actually a younger brother of the Emir Aliyu Babba. See Table 4 in Appendix II.

²⁹ Alhaji Junaidu, *op. cit.* p. 70.

decision in favour of this course had been reached during the Emir of Kano's visit, it is safe to assume that opposition to it was still strong and opinion divided. Having been in office for less than six months, Attahiru was unwilling to take so fateful a decision by himself. As his Councillors also seem to have been uncertain in their views, he made up his mind to consult the learned men of the Sultanate, who in any case regarded themselves as the spiritual heirs of the *jihad* and the keepers of the public conscience, and to abide by their decision.³⁰

While he was waiting for this parliament of divines to assemble, Attahiru sent the following letter to Morland, who by this time had already set out from Kano:

Salutations. Know that your messenger has arrived here and that I understand the purport of your letter. To consider it I have summoned all my advisers but, as they will take some time to assemble, I am sending this message back to you without delay. Later, when we have agreed upon our policy, I shall write again to inform you what course my counsellors have enjoined upon me.³¹

When this letter reached Morland and Kemball they probably assumed that Attahiru was playing for time while he mobilized his army. At any rate, they did not delay their march but pressed on towards Sokoto.

Time was already running out when the learned men of Sokoto at length assembled to consider what the Sultan's decision should be. The majority of them were not practical men of affairs but scholars and jurists. Consequently, they took little account of the fact that no help was to be expected from the rest of the Empire, that the city wall of Sokoto was crumbling,³² that the Sultan's forces had not yet been concentrated, and that in any case they possessed no answer to the modern arms of the British. Their verdict was that it was unthinkable for the Commander of the Faithful to submit voluntarily to a Christian power and that he must fight and if necessary die. Greatly to his credit, as he disagreed with it, Attahiru accepted their judgement.

During the next few days the Sultan was able to call up his troops from all the districts of western Sokoto, but there was no time to bring men in from Zamfara or further afield. Nor had any help

³⁰ Oral tradition preserved in Sokoto.

³¹ *Annual Reports, Northern Nigeria, 1900-11*, Appendix I, cf. Letter, no. 7.

³² Confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu. Fifty years earlier Barth had described the wall as being only twelve feet high (*Travels*, vol. IV, p. 178).

arrived from Gwandu or Katsina. For the last decisive battle, therefore, the Empire was able to deploy only a fraction of what had once been its total strength.

The British force approached Sokoto from the south and appeared before the city at about noon. After pitching camp, they made a reconnaissance in force in the afternoon to examine the ground over which they would have to fight and to study the positions which the Fulani intended to take up. In the course of this reconnaissance they were attacked by a few fanatics, who went bravely to their deaths, but there was no other fighting.³³

By daybreak on the following day, Sunday, 15 March 1903, the Sokoto army was drawn up in three divisions on the common south of the city. In the centre was the Sultan himself. He took up his position at the foot of a fan-palm and his flag was set up beside him. The right wing, which covered the Atiku Gate, was commanded by the Marafa Maiturare, the left by Sarkin Rabah Ibrahim.³⁴

The British force marched out of camp at six o'clock in the morning and about an hour later reached the ridge from which Morland had made his reconnaissance on the previous evening. Being separated from the Sokoto army by only a shallow valley, the infantry now formed a square and the Mounted Infantry took up positions on the flanks. When all was ready they advanced cautiously across the valley. As soon as they had crossed it the four machine-guns were set up in positions where, at a range of six to eight hundred yards, they covered the serried ranks in which the Sultan's army was drawn up.

As for the Fulani, just as they were preparing to deliver their cavalry charge across the open ground of the common, they found themselves being raked by a merciless fire from the machine-guns. At the same time 75-mm. shells from the guns also started dropping among them. Some who tried to charge the British position found that their horses would not face the racket but swerved away to left and right.³⁵ Others, who remained in the line of battle waiting for orders which were drowned in the din of battle, saw great swathes being cut through their ranks. The truth was that warfare of two different ages of history had come into collision and there was never any question of which of them would prevail.

As soon as he realized that there was no hope of coming to grips with the British, the Marafa Maiturare galloped over from his position

³³ Johnston, *op. cit.* pp. 158-9.

³⁴ Information given to the author by survivors of the battle.

³⁵ Account of the battle given to the author by a survivor.

on the right to urge the Sultan to abandon the battle. 'Beware,' he said, 'lest the fire be extinguished while you hold it.' By this he meant that if the Sultan persisted in a hopeless struggle he might be guilty of destroying the whole heritage and posterity of the Fulani. But the Sultan was made of sterner stuff than his brother. 'Do you think,' he demanded angrily, 'that this is my first battle?'³⁶

The Marafa, who had already had two horses hit under him, was now wounded in the shoulder, and the Majasirdi, one of the household slaves, was killed. At this the Waziri Buhari intervened and told the Sultan that from then on the blood of all those who fell in the battle would be on his head.³⁷

Sa'i Umaru, the hereditary standard-bearer and the grandson of Ibrahim Mai-Tuta, who had been one of Shehu's standard-bearers, courageously upheld the flag as a rallying point for the Fulani forces. They became the target of the machine-gunners, however, and were mown down to the last man.³⁸

At this the Fulani forces began to melt away and the Sultan at last allowed his horse to be led from the field. It was the end not only of a battle but virtually of an epoch. There remained only the last act in which the unhappy Attahiru had to play out the tragic part that fate had assigned to him.

Epilogue

AFTER the battle of Sokoto the defeated Fulani galloped away in small groups heading north and east. Before they dispersed, the Sultan Attahiru absolved his Councillors and closest followers from their allegiance and left to each of them the decision whether to accompany him into exile or return and seek the indulgence of the British.¹ The majority, when they found that the conquerors were behaving magnanimously, went back and made their peace. Among them were the Waziri Buhari, the Marafa Maiturare, and most of the Fulani aristocracy.

³⁶ Information given to the author by the Majasirdi, a survivor of the battle and the son and successor of the Majasirdi who was killed at the Sultan's side. See Johnston, *op. cit.* pp. 159-62.

³⁷ Information given to the author by the Majasirdi, Mallam Nagwamatse, and others.

³⁸ Sokoto *DNBs*, History of Kilgori.

¹ Source: Mallam Nagwamatse, confirmed by Alhaji Junaidu.

The Sultan, however, evidently felt that it was impossible for him to submit. Accompanied by his personal followers he therefore turned towards the east and, having shaken off the pursuit, which in any case was only half-hearted, made his way to Gandi. After sleeping there he traversed the Gundumi Bush and on the third day reached the Upper Rima Valley at Shinkafe.²

Finding that the British were preoccupied with their own affairs in Sokoto, Katsina, and Zaria, Attahiru was able to spend about three weeks in Zamfara without being molested. At this time his force was reported to number several hundred horse and foot and about two thousand camp followers.³ But the demonstrations of loyalty which his presence evoked in Zamfara came to the ears of the British and alarmed them sufficiently to send out flying columns from Sokoto and Zaria. By this time, however, he was on the move again and he managed to out-distance one column and elude the other.

From Zamfara he and his followers headed east again, passing north of Zaria and keeping well to the south of Kano. A third column under Captain Sword, which had been sent out from Kano, failed to capture them but pressed them very hard and engaged them in a number of minor actions.⁴

During this period, which lasted from mid-March to mid-May, Attahiru seems to have had no clear objective. It is probable that he was receiving conflicting advice from his adherents and that he himself was still undecided about submitting, emigrating, or continuing to defy the British. With the Europeans firmly established round Lake Chad, the door to the east was no longer open. As for the north, the fugitive Emir of Kano's recent humiliating experience must have discouraged any attempt to escape in that direction. Consequently, when he reached the north-eastern boundary of the Empire at Misau and found the gates of the town shut against him,⁵ he made no attempt to break out but instead turned southward.

Still harried by Sword he crossed the Gongola River near the top of its bend and found himself near Mallam Jibrilla's town of Burmi. Although Jibrilla himself had already been defeated by the British and carried off into exile, the place was still full of his fanatical

² Muffett, *op. cit.* p. 150.

³ *Ibid.* p. 151.

⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 163-70.

⁵ Misau at this time was torn by a dynastic dispute. In January 1903 the sixth Emir, Ahmadu, had accompanied the Emir of Kano to Sokoto in order to pay his respects to the new Sultan. During his absence his brother Alhaji Tafida had seized power and been proclaimed seventh Emir. Ahmadu had thereupon returned and laid siege to the town. When Attahiru appeared on the scene Ahmadu abandoned the siege and followed him to Burmi. See Muffett, *op. cit.* p. 168.

followers, who were now led by a new Imam called Musa. They accorded the former Sultan a respectful greeting⁶ and if at that time he had been determined to fight on at all costs he would doubtless have joined them without further ado. As it was, however, he seems still to have been in two minds for he passed on to Bima Hill.

Bima, a long saddleback, lies east of and parallel to the Gongola River in the reach where it turns south towards the Benue Valley. Over the years apocalyptic legends had gathered about it and one of these foretold that one day the Fulani would rally there before migrating *en masse* to the holy cities of the Hejaz. It seems to have been these legends that attracted Attahiru and his followers, for in the middle of May they encamped at the foot of the hill.⁷

In the meantime the British, who at first had underrated Attahiru and made little effort to capture him, had now become thoroughly alarmed by the reports that were reaching them. These spoke of the peasantry deserting their villages in thousands in order to follow the fugitive Sultan. Up to a point these reports were true and there is no doubt that large numbers of country people, particularly Fulani, did set out with this intention. But the majority, finding that the pace of his retreat before Sword's pursuit was too hot for them, were forced to give up and go home. In addition there were doubtless many others who abandoned their villages not with the object of following him but simply in order to hide themselves and their families in the bush until the trouble had passed. In fact, as Attahiru moved eastward, he seems to have lost as many adherents as he gained so that the number of his supporters remained fairly constant at a few hundred and showed no real tendency to increase. Not knowing this, however, and believing that he might undo their conquests by raising a new *jihad* against them, the British decided that he must be captured or crushed.

The implementation of this policy became the more urgent when, on 13 May, Captain Sword tried to force an entry into Burmi, believing incorrectly that the Sultan was in the town, and was repulsed. This was the first reverse that British arms had suffered in Northern Nigeria and the moral effect was very great. Wallace, who was acting as High Commissioner during Lugard's absence on leave, now realized rather tardily that he was facing a major crisis and set about concentrating a large force to deal with it.

Two days after Sword's repulse at Burmi, another British column under Captain Hamilton-Browne located Attahiru's camp on Bima

⁶ Muffett, *op. cit.* p. 194.

⁷ Oral traditions confirmed by Alhaji Junsaidu.

Hill and delivered a surprise attack, which forced the Sultan and his followers to cross the Gongola again. Having no other haven to make for, they fell back once more on Burmi, which they re-entered on 16 May.

It is clear from his subsequent actions that, in returning to Burmi, Attahiru had not finally resolved to throw in his lot with the fanatics. On the contrary, he seems to have decided on emigration, for a few days later he wrote to Temple, the Resident of Bauchi Province, saying that he did not want to fight and asking only for a safe conduct to enable him to leave the country.⁸ Temple replied saying that if he wished to avoid violent measures being taken against him he must give himself up. Without making any promises he implied that if Attahiru did so his life would be spared.⁹ Given the fact that the British were trying to subdue an immense country with exiguous forces and were fearful of a *jihad*, this demand was not an unreasonable one.

In early June Attahiru wrote another letter to Temple in the same vein as before.¹⁰ By this time, however, the military preparations of the British were well advanced and no reply seems to have been returned to him. Even so, he must have known that he would have come to no great harm if he had accepted the earlier terms and given himself up. Why then did he not do so? We shall probably never know the answer to this question, but there are two possible explanations. The first is that, when he returned to Burmi, Attahiru became the virtual prisoner of the fanatics who were determined to fight to the last. These included not only the survivors of Mallam Jibrilla's forces and the xenophobic Tijjanis from the Upper Niger but also diehards from many other parts of the Empire. Prominent among them were the twice deposed Emir of Nupe Abubakr, the recently dispossessed Emir of Misau, Ahmadu, and the notorious Magajin Keffi Dan Yamusa. According to a report which reached the British in June, Ahmadu of Misau had by this time become the real ring-leader and was preventing Attahiru from giving himself up.¹¹

The second possible explanation of Attahiru's reluctance to accept the terms offered to him lies in his own character. Though no fanatic, he was a man of integrity and pride who took his responsibilities seriously. Surrounded as he was by men who revered him as Commander of the Faithful, he may well have felt that to ask for a safe

⁸ Muffett, *op cit.* p. 181. Attahiru had probably made two earlier requests of the same kind.

⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 181-2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 185.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

conduct was as far as he could honourably go and that to surrender to a Christian power would amount to a breach of faith. It is conceivable that both factors were at work and that Attahiru's own reluctance to give himself up was fortified by the knowledge that his diehard followers would never allow him to do so.¹² Whatever the reason, his unwillingness or inability to compromise meant that the tragedy had to be played out to the bitter end.

Since the beginning of June the British had had a force watching and partly containing Burmi while they brought up their reinforcements together with a piece of artillery. The movement of their columns was hampered by the rains which had now set in, but by the last week of July they had succeeded in concentrating a formidable striking force. This consisted of twenty-one British officers and N.C.O.s and over 500 African rank and file, including 60 mounted infantry, supported by four machine-guns and one 75-mm. field-gun.

On 27 July 1903, a little before noon, the British force appeared under the walls of Burmi and the final battle began. It was to prove easily the toughest and bloodiest of the whole campaign. The diehards of Burmi fought with fanatical courage and devotion against the infinitely superior weapons of their enemies. Some deliberately courted death. Others lashed themselves together so that they should not be tempted to try to escape but would die together.¹³

When the fighting began Attahiru went to the mosque. He remained there praying until he heard that the gates had been breached and then he emerged and went down to the walls. He was on foot, unarmed, and his intention was not to fight but to go out to meet his fate.¹⁴ It was a gesture not less noble than Gordon's at Khartoum. Death came to him with merciful swiftness, for when he was within a stone's throw of the southern wall he was shot through the head.¹⁵ Two of his sons died by his side and ninety of his followers, showing the same devotion as the bodyguards of Hayatu and the Emir Zubeiru, chose to perish with him rather than save themselves in flight.

When the sun set that day on the smoking ruins of Burmi, with

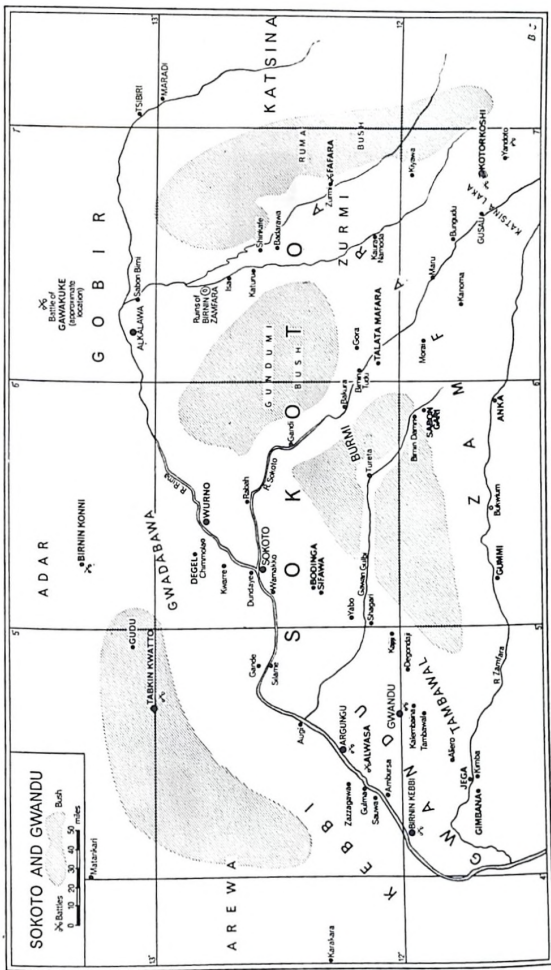
¹² Alhaji Junaidu endorses this view.

¹³ Muffett, *op. cit.* p. 201.

¹⁴ Oral tradition endorsed by Alhaji Junaidu.

¹⁵ Muffett, *op. cit.* p. 200. It was the irony of fate that the Sultan, who had wished to avoid the final conflict, was killed whereas the real irreconcilables—Ahmadu of Misau, Abubakr of Nupe, and Dan Yamusa of Keffi—all made good their escape. The British Commanding Officer, Major Marsh, also fell in the battle. He and Attahiru now lie buried a short distance from one another.

MAP 6



the dead lying thick in the trenches, on the ramparts, and among the houses, the Fulani Empire came to an end. An old prophecy¹⁶ had foretold that it would endure for exactly a century and so it came to pass: Attahiru's death took place in the hundredth year after Shehu had first been proclaimed Sarkin Musulmi.

In reviewing the history of the Sokoto Empire, one must make due allowance for the governing facts of geography and climate. The State came into being at a time when the Sudan was still completely insulated by the desert to the north and the forests to the south from all the main currents of the western world. The only global influence that penetrated to it, therefore, was Islam. From the other forces that were then changing the course of history—the discoveries of science, the advance of technology, and in the humanitarian field such movements as that directed towards the suppression of slavery and the slave trade—it remained almost wholly isolated. Consequently, although it flourished in modern times, its setting was more akin to that of Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the great armies and walled cities, and it is by the standards of those days that it should be judged.

When every allowance had been made for these facts, the historian must still admit that the Empire had fundamental weaknesses. It depended too much for its prosperity on slave-raiding; peace was too often disturbed by rebellions. Its later rulers were far short of the high ideals of its founding fathers. Its people were divided against themselves. At every level there was strife, oppression and corruption. These failings have already been described and they must be taken into account when the Empire is judged. And yet they are dramatically outweighed by its achievements. The Fulani gave Hausaland a greater peace than it had ever previously enjoyed. To this can be added that their government was based on principle and not on power. No man, however mighty, was above the law. Every man, however lowly, was beneath it. Every man had rights that were protected. In a continent still largely dominated by war, the gift of peace and justice was no small thing.

Secondly, it can be said that the structure of the Empire was integrated and not inhumane. At the base of

¹⁶ W. F. Gowers, the compiler of the *Gazetteer of Kano* in 1903, met an old Fulani who told him of this prophecy. It is now in a MS. of Sultan Bello.

there were the slaves, but even they had their rights. In fact, they were generally better treated than slaves in other parts of the world including the United States, and for the most part they led tolerable lives. Next came the peasants. As they were free men, enjoying rights in the soil of which no one could deprive them, their standing was higher than that of the serfs who were still to be found in many parts of Europe. Then there were the craftsmen and traders of the towns: they were sufficiently numerous and affluent to constitute the beginnings of that most important component in any society—a middle class. Finally, there was the ruling caste. Its members, though authoritarian, were generally just and beneficent. In short, though tyranny and injustice were not unknown, they were probably less prevalent than in many countries of Europe and the Americas which had greater pretensions to being considered as civilized.

Thirdly, it can be said that the society of the Empire was a reasonably cultivated one. Trade and agriculture flourished so that the majority of the people were able to enjoy some simple luxuries over and above the bare necessities of life. Similarly, education was not the monopoly of the ruling caste but was common among the middle class and not unknown among the peasantry and slaves. Among all classes, moreover, scholars and divines were held in the very highest esteem. Finally, there was the all-pervading influence of religion. Its disciplines were the cement of society, its teachings gave purpose and dignity to life, and its consolations reconciled men to the injustices of an imperfect world.

The civilization of the Sokoto Empire was the product of the union between two very different strains, the Fulani and the Hausa. The contribution of the Fulani lay mainly in the arts of government, scholarship, and religion, that of the Hausas in the fields of agriculture, industry, and trade. The two peoples were complementary to one another and between them they evolved a society which was probably more advanced than any other hitherto produced in black Africa. At the turn of the century that society was engulfed by world forces that were too strong for it. Now, fittingly enough, it has been reborn as the nucleus of a new and powerful nation.

APPENDIX I

1. *Date of The Kano Chronicle*

The style of the *Chronicle* is unlike that of the Fulani historians of the nineteenth century and it almost certainly goes back to an earlier period. On the other hand, the chronicler, when describing two reigns in the middle of the seventeenth century, admits that there is doubt about how one Chief met his death and why the other was deposed. These two clues point to compilation at some indeterminate date in the eighteenth century.

2. *Date of Bornu's Suzerainty over Hausaland*

The Kano Chronicle (Palmer, p. 109) relates that in the reign of Dauda (A.D. 1421-38) an official from Bornu took up residence in Kano. It seems probable that he was, in fact, a Resident, in the imperial sense, and that his advent marked the beginning of Bornu's suzerainty. There is an old house in Kano city known as Gidan Shettima and, as Shettima is a Bornu title, it is possible that this in its day was the Residency.

3. *Leo Africanus and the Songhai Invasion of Hausaland*

Leo's credibility as a witness is sometimes questioned because his account of his African travels was written many years after the event and because his famous mistake about the direction of the Niger's flow showed how deep into error he could fall.

For the Songhai annexation of Agades there is independent evidence, but the supposed invasion of Hausaland in A.D. 1513 rests almost entirely on his evidence. Most historians have accepted it, but some have remained sceptical and have pointed out that *The Kano Chronicle* makes no mention of the invasion. This is perfectly true, but the *Chronicle* does state (Palmer, p. 112) that the Sultan of Bornu brought an army against the city in the time of Abdullahi (A.D. 1499-1509) who was compelled to go out and humble himself. As the slight discrepancy in dates is within the tolerance of historical error, this may well be a garbled account of the Songhai invasion. On balance, this explanation certainly seems more probable than the alternative theory that Leo's account of the Songhai invasion, which goes into some detail, was all an invention.

4. *Amina of Zazzau*

Amina, or to give her her full name Aminatu, is described in *The Kano Chronicle* (Palmer, p. 109) as a Chieftainess who lived in the first half of the fifteenth century and pursued a career of conquest over a period of thirty-four years. She does not, however, appear in either of the lists of Zazzau Chiefs that have come down to us (Heath, Appendix I and *LHdM*, vol. I, pp. 43-44). The *Abuja Chronicle* describes her as the daughter of Bakwa Turunku, who was Chief or Chieftainess of Zazzau a hundred years later than the date given by *The Kano Chronicle* and who in any case reigned for only three years. The *Labarun Hausawa da Makwabtansu* list does not mention Amina at all and clouds the issue by describing the *Abuja Chronicle*'s Bakwa Turunku as Bako Turunku (thereby suggesting that he was a man and not a woman) and giving him a reign of thirty years instead of only three. Sultan Bello follows the *Abuja Chronicle* in describing Amina as the daughter of a Chieftain and not as a Chieftainess in her own right (Arnett, p. 12).

It is just conceivable that the *Abuja Chronicle* and Sultan Bello were right and that Amina was an Amazon of the ruling house who flourished about A.D. 1540, but for a number of reasons it is very unlikely. First, as already mentioned, *The Kano Chronicle* places her a century earlier. Secondly, if she had in fact lived about 1540 she would have overlapped Kanta in time, whereas we know that some of her reputed conquests, such as Nupe and most probably Zazzau itself, formed part of his Empire. (See Note 5 below.) Thirdly, her fame rests partly on her activities in fortifying towns with walls, but *The Kano Chronicle* (Palmer, p. 100) gives the early twelfth century as the period when walls were first built and by 1540 the art was certainly already several hundred years old.

For these reasons it is very difficult to believe that Amina lived as late as the sixteenth century and this doubt is reinforced by the shadowy nature of her legend. Even *The Kano Chronicle* may have placed her too late and, if wall-building is the key to her period, we may guess that it was the twelfth or thirteenth century. Alternatively, she may never have existed but simply be a myth with its roots in an earlier matriarchal era.

5. *The Empire of Muhammadu Kanta*

Kanta is known to have led his army as far east as Bornu and as far west as Songhai (*LHdM*, vol. I, pp. 36-37), but at this distance of

time it is difficult to tell which countries he actually subjugated and which he merely raided or marched across. There is no doubt, however, about his having subdued the provinces of Arewa and Dandi and the principality of Zaberma: they remained loyal when the rest of the Empire had disintegrated and were still giving Kebbi active support when the British arrived nearly four centuries later. Similarly, it is almost certain that Zamfara, Zazzau, Yauri, Gurma, Nupe, and southern Air became tributaries (Hogben and Kirk-Greene, p. 246). Sultan Bello says that the Empire also embraced Gobir, Katsina, and Kano (Arnett, p. 13). Gobir at that time was still a province without a paramount Chief (see Note 6 below) and its subjection by Kanta along with Adar and southern Air is likely enough. Similarly, it is difficult to believe that Kanta, with his Katsina origins, did not make a point of conquering or at least overawing that State. On a balance of probability, therefore, this too can be accepted. On the other hand, *The Kano Chronicle* makes no mention of his ever challenging Kano, nor of any incident that might be a garbled account of an invasion by his army. Indeed, the only mention of Kano's involvement comes from the historian of Kebbi quoted in *Labarun Hausawa da Makwabtansu* (vol. I, p. 37), who speaks of the Kano forces helping to drive back Kanta's attempted invasion of Daura. It therefore seems unlikely that Kano and Daura ever formed part of his Empire.

6. *Date of the Expulsion of the Gobirawa from Air*

Bovill puts the date of the expulsion of the Gobirawa from Air in the early fifteenth century (p. 107, n. 1) but it almost certainly took place much later. We know that this move was made in the reign of Chiroma (*Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, p. 12) and that his son Muhammadu dan Chiroma became Chief in about 1715 (Hogben and Kirk-Greene, p. 416). The correct date therefore seems to be the late seventeenth century.

7. *Nomenclature of the Fulani*

The Fulani go under so many different names that nomenclature presents a difficulty. They refer to themselves as *Fulbe* and to their language as *Fulfulde*. To the Wolof and many French authors they are *Peuls*, to the Bambara *Fula*, to the Kanuri *Felaata*, and to the Hausas *Fillani* in the plural and *Ba-Fillace* in the singular. In Nigeria they are generally called 'Fulani', the anglicized version of the Hausa plural. In this book 'Fulani' has been used to describe them (in both the singular and the plural) and 'Fulfulde' their language.

Similarly, the Hausa 'Toronkawa' has been preferred to the Fulfulde *Torodobi*.

8. *The Fulani and their Language*

Today there are more Fulani living in Northern Nigeria and the Hausa-speaking areas of the Niger Republic than in all the rest of Africa. Among them the majority have already abandoned Fulfulde for Hausa and the remainder, as they already speak Hausa as a second language, are likely to follow suit in the foreseeable future. Moreover, it is not only for Hausa that the Fulani have exchanged their own language; Barth (vol. V, pp. 222-3) encountered a group on the Niger who had abandoned Fulfulde for Songhai. On this evidence, despite the doubt of some modern authorities, it is not difficult to believe that Fulfulde is simply a language that the Fulani picked up during a long sojourn in Senegal and that their original language, which would have given a clue to their real origin, was then discarded and lost. This theory is supported not only by the Fulani's own legends but also by the fact that in their writings Bello and Abdullahi sometimes refer to the Hausas and other indigenous people as Sudanese or Nubians (see, for example, Arnett, p. 53, and Hiskett, p. 109), thus implying that the Fulani belonged to an entirely different grouping. Mungo Park noted the same habit among the Fulani of Senegambia and remarked that, when speaking of different peoples, they always classified themselves as being among the whites.

9. *The Tuaregs*

The Tuaregs were Berbers by origin and from a very early date they dominated the whole region of the central Sahara. They made their living partly by rearing stock, partly by trade, and partly by banditry and raiding their more peaceable neighbours. Their way of life was semi-nomadic, that is to say they were loosely anchored to oases like Agades but roamed far afield from these bases, either with their flocks in search of pasture or with their pack-camels in search of trade or else with their allies in search of booty. Among the peoples of the Sudan they had the reputation of being false friends and predatory enemies.

Their organization was tribal and the desert north of Sokoto was dominated by the Kelgeres of Air and the Itesen of Adar. Both owed nominal allegiance to the Emir of Agades, but the arrangement was a curious one because the Emirs were not Tuaregs themselves and did not wield much authority over the tribes who did not hesitate to

depose and even kill those that displeased them. (See chapters XVII-XVIII of Barth's *Travels*.) In fact, the status of these so-called Emirs was hardly higher than that of the Commandant of a military base from which mobile and very badly disciplined troops were operating under independent command. The *Chronicle of the Sultanate of Air* (Palmer, op. cit. vol. III, pp. 48-50) reveals how very precarious their tenure of office was.

Among the Tuaregs the real power resided with the Tambaris or military leaders. At the time of the *jihad* the Kelgeres were led by Tambari Agumbulu and the Itesen by Abu Hamidu. At the start of the war both were friendly to the reformers (Bello, *Inf M*—Arnett, pp. 51 and 70) but later they changed sides and fought with the Gobirawa at Alwasa, Gwandu, and Fafara (ibid. pp. 81-85 and 88-91). The Fulani have never really forgiven their treachery and to this day passers-by will dishonour the grave of one of the Tuareg leaders who fell near Gwandu by casting a fresh stone on the great cairn which already covers it.

10. *Abdullahi's Spiritual Crisis*

In the *Tazyin Al-Waraqat*, Abdullahi has described the spiritual crisis which overtook him in October 1807.

Then there came to me from God the sudden thought to shun the homelands, and my brothers, and to turn towards the best of God's creation, in order to seek approval, because of what I had seen of the changing times, and [my] brothers, and their inclination towards the world, and their squabbling over its possession, and its wealth, and its regard. . . . I considered flight incumbent upon me and I left the army . . . and faced towards the East, towards the Chosen One . . . and I entered the wilderness with five of my companions, and we passed three nights without seeing anyone, nor the traces of anything other than the tracks of many elephants in the wilderness . . . (Hiskett, pp. 120-1).

Having traversed what was probably the Gundumi or Ruma Bush, Abdullahi and his little party came at length to Kano. At the time he evidently intended to travel on eastwards, probably with the idea of going to Medina, but in Kano he found that the reformers, who had recently driven out the Hausa Chief and seized power, were at odds with one another in their struggle for precedence. He recognized in this worldly discord the very thing from which he had himself been fleeing and he was persuaded to stop in Kano until harmony had been restored.

The *qasida* that he wrote at the time displays a mood of disillusionment with the world and of longing to escape to a more spiritual life. He does not reveal what provoked the crisis, but it may be that Shehu had already informed him of his decision that Bello should be in supreme command when the time came to make the final assault on Alkalawa and so bring the war to a triumphant conclusion. From this Abdullahi may have divined that Bello would gradually supplant him and that he himself would never become Commander of the Faithful.

If these were indeed the causes of Abdullahi's spiritual crisis we should be doing him an injustice if we supposed that he simply rode off in dudgeon when he heard that Bello was to supersede him. On the contrary, it is clear that disgust with himself and a desire to purge himself of worldly ambitions which he was unable to banish were uppermost in his mind. 'I knew', he wrote, 'that I was the worst of them.'

Whatever the original cause of the crisis, Abdullahi seems to have cured himself by the work he did in Kano. But although he returned to his own people just before the final overthrow of Gobir, he took no further part in the war but left Bello to play the leading role (Hiskett, pp. 120-3).

11. *Bello and the Sack of Yandoto*

In the controversy that arose later between the Fulani leaders and Sheikh El-Kanemi, one of the accusations made by El-Kanemi was that the Fulani had been guilty of destroying religious books (Arnett, p. 103). From Bello's answer it is clear that he recognized the incident referred to and that it occurred during the capture of a town which was almost certainly Yandoto. This place, incidentally, seems to have had special ties with Bornu (*ibid.* p. 8) which helps to account for its hostility to Shehu's cause. In his reply Bello indignantly rebutted the charge, ascribed the scattering of the books to the accidents of looting, and recounted how he had himself laboured to recover the papers and identify and punish the looters (*ibid.* p. 107). This denial is worth repeating because in the past some historians have accepted El-Kanemi's allegation as true.

12. *Origins of the Kanuri*

The Kanuri, or at any rate their ruling class, cherish a legend that they are descended from an Arab called Saif Dhi Yazan, an historical personage who ruled the Yemen as the Persian viceroy in the century before the rise of the Prophet Muhammad. On the other hand, the

historian Yakubi described the Kanuri as Zaghawa and Leo Africanus as Libyans (Palmer, op. cit. p. 6): both definitions, if correct, place them among the Berbers and are in accord with the Hausa name for them, *Barebari*, which of course has the same meaning. Unfortunately, the linguistic evidence does not provide a clear lead in the direction of either of these alternatives, because the latest classification places the Kanuri language not in the Afro-Asiatic Group with Hausa, much less in the Semitic Group with Arabic, but in the Nilo-Saharan Group (Greenberg, op. cit. p. 130). The only supposition that fits all these apparently conflicting facts and legends is that the Kanuri at some state in the past changed their language (as the Fulani almost certainly did—see Note 8) and that their ruling classes and common people, like those of the Gobirawa, had different origins. Palmer seems to support this theory (op. cit. vol. I, pp. 11–12), and, certainly, the fact that the Tripoli–Chad and Egypt–Nile–Chad caravan routes were open from as early as the eighth century (Mauny, op. cit. p. 429) makes it inherently probable that there would have been immigration on a significant scale from both North Africa and the Middle East.

13. Cowry Shells as a Currency

In the middle of the fourteenth century Ibn Batuta reported that the rate of exchange in the western Sudan was 1,500 cowries for one *mithqal* (approximately $\frac{1}{8}$ oz.) of gold. By the end of the sixteenth century the rate in Timbuctoo had risen to 3,000 cowries (Bovill, p. 141, n. 1), but in Ashanti in 1820 it was still no more than 3,500 cowries (I. Dupuis, *Journal of a Residence in Ashantee*, London, 1824, vol. II, p. 145). The change in the rate of exchange may have been due to the appreciation in the value of gold, which was getting worked out, rather than the depreciation in the value of cowries. In any case the pace of devaluation—less than 60 per cent in nearly 500 years—was very gradual.

14. Katsina as a Trading Centre

The first of Katsina's two natural advantages over Kano as a trading centre was the fact that it lay farther north and was to that extent a more suitable terminal for trans-Saharan trade. The second was that, whereas the Kano–Bida trade route had to cross many rivers, the Katsina–Bida route mainly followed the watershed between the Niger and Chad basins. It could therefore be negotiated by caravans, particularly camel caravans, during much more of the year

than the Kano route. Apart from the fact that Bida was a centre of considerable commercial and industrial importance in its own right, it also acted as the main entrepôt between the canoe-borne trade of the south and the caravan-borne trade of the north. The superiority of Katsina's link with it was therefore an important factor in Katsina's commercial rivalry with Kano.

15. *Hausa Participation in the Jihad in Hausaland*

Direct evidence of the extent to which Hausa feudatories and Village Heads joined Shehu's cause in the early stages of the *jihad* is scanty. Where we hear of their doing so, like the Village Head of Durum in Zaria, for example, their actions seem to have been the exception rather than the rule and were normally rewarded by their being confirmed in their posts (M. G. Smith, op. cit. p. 78). On the other hand, where they remained hostile to the reformers, as did the Chief of Kajuru, for example, they normally had to flee, or at any rate step down, when the war went against them and make way for Fulani successors (ibid, p. 160). It is therefore significant that in Hausaland today, except in Yauri and parts of Zamfara, the great majority of Village Heads are of Fulani descent. When due allowance has been made for subsequent changes, this fact confirms the impression that, in the Hausa States, not many Hausas played prominent enough roles in the *jihad* to have been rewarded with the sweets of office.

16. *The Fulani States of the Upper Niger*

The early history of Hamdallahi, the first of the two States that the Fulani established in the Upper Niger, ran closely parallel to that of the Sokoto Empire. There was a concentration of Fulani in Massina, a province in the pagan kingdom of Segu, and in about 1810 Seku Ahmadu, who was himself a Fulani and who had previously been a pupil of Shehu, succeeded in raising them in a *jihad*. So successful was he that, within the space of a few years, he had carved out for himself a State that stretched from Timbuctoo to the Volta. Though much smaller than the Sokoto Empire, it was organized on broadly similar lines. Despite its theocratic character, Ahmadu was succeeded by his son and in due course the succession became hereditary in his family (see Hogben and Kirk-Greene, pp. 125-6, and Trimingham, pp. 177-81).

According to the information given to Barth, Ahmadu had received a flag from Shehu at the start of his *jihad*. The fact that he subsequently terminated this relationship by proclaiming himself

Commander of the Faithful, thereby asserting his equality, no doubt accounts for the marked coolness that Barth observed between Sokoto and Gwandu on the one hand and Hamdallahi on the other. Another cause for dissension possibly lay in the fact that, as Barth also testified, a much more bigoted and less tolerant form of Islam was practised in Hamdallahi than in the Sokoto Empire (see Barth, chapters LVII, LXVI, and LXXXII).

The founder of the second Fulani State on the Upper Niger, which was to crush and absorb the first, was Haj Umar. He was born in Futa Toro towards the end of the eighteenth century and as a young man went on the pilgrimage. After a long sojourn in the Hejaz he returned by way of Sokoto towards the end of Sultan Bello's reign. Some reports say that Bello gave him a daughter in marriage, but Alhaji Junaidu asserts that there is no record of any such alliance. From Sokoto he went on through Hamdallahi and Segu to Futa Jallon where he settled. He had already become a member of the Tijjaniyya sect and he spent the next decade building up a strong and fanatical following, mainly among the Fulani and the Tukolors. In 1854 he in his turn proclaimed a *jihad*. His first objective was the conquest of his native Futa Toro, but this move brought him into collision with the French. After suffering some reverses he withdrew eastward, and in the early 'sixties conquered Segu, Hamdallahi, and Timbuctoo. At its height, the State that he thus created was considerably larger than Hamdallahi. When he was killed in 1864, his son Ahmadu tried to hold his conquests together but was plagued by tribal rivalries and by dissension between the two rival sects, the Kadiriyya and the Tijjaniyya. In the end the French, who had gradually penetrated this region between 1879 and 1893, destroyed the remnants of his power and forced him to flee.

The fact that Haj Umar and Ahmadu were militant Tijjanis did not commend them to successive Sultans of Sokoto who remained faithful to the Kadiriyya sect. While they were in power, therefore, there seem to have been no dealings between the two capitals. But in the 'nineties, after their defeat by the French, Ahmadu and a large following appeared in Sokoto as refugees and were allowed to settle (*Gazetteer of Sokoto Province*, pp. 34-35). Later, as Chapter Nineteen and the Epilogue describe, they moved on to Burmi.

17. *The Fulani Drive to the Sea*

The Adamawa Fulani made some daring expeditions and there is no doubt that at least one of them, under the command of Amba (or

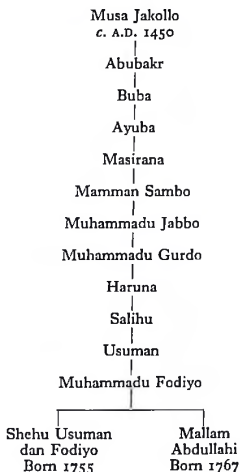
Hama) Sambo, reached the sea. As the ruler of Chamba, Amba Sambo owed fealty to the Emir of Adamawa, but his position was such a powerful one that in 1842 he made a bid, which only narrowly failed, to cast off this allegiance and pay homage direct to Sokoto (Hogben and Kirk-Greene, pp. 436-7). A few years later he won great fame by leading an expedition southwards to the sea. Barth, in 1851, kept hearing of this feat and indeed met two men who had participated in it. Both his informants spoke of Iboland as having been their destination but, while one mentioned it in the context of the Niger Delta, the other said that the expedition's route had passed through Bafut in the Cameroon highlands (Barth, chapters XXX, XXXVI, and XLII).

As the men were apparently mounted, it is difficult to believe that they penetrated into the creeks and equatorial forests of the Niger Delta and it seems much more likely that they followed the high ground down through Bafut towards Calabar and operated at the mouth of the Cross River rather than in the Niger Delta. There is no doubt, however, that they reached the sea. The second of Barth's two informants said that his party, which was not the main one, had sailed along a rocky coast and he convinced Barth that he had seen an ocean-going vessel.

The expedition was only an isolated raid, of course, and did nothing to extend the boundaries of the Empire. Nevertheless, as it involved making a round trip of seven or eight hundred miles through broken country and operating in unfavourable terrain, it was a bold venture and shows how hardy and confident the Fulani then were.

APPENDIX II

Table 1. DESCENT OF SHEHU USUMAN DAN FODIYO AND
MALLAM ABDULLAHI FROM MUSA JAKOLLO¹



¹ This Table has been drawn up by Alhaji Junaidu and is based on information contained in the writings of Mallam Abdullahi. It differs from the one given by Hiskett in his Introduction to Abdullah's *TW* in two respects, first in having two more generations, namely Abubakr and Buba, and second in placing Ayuba before instead of after Masirana.

Table 3. DESCENT OF THE EMIRS OF GWANDU FROM MALLAM ABDULLAHI

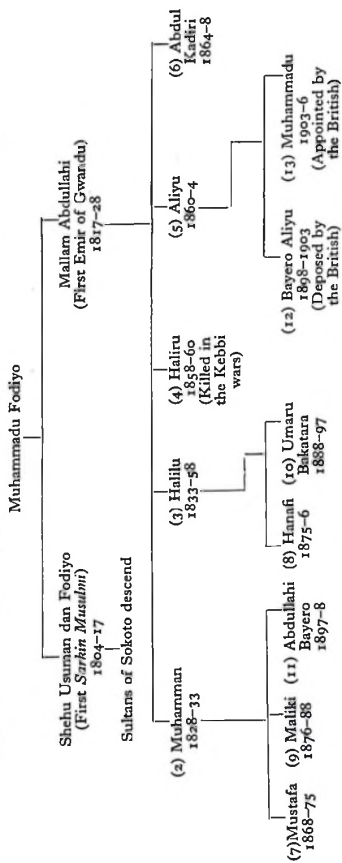


Table 4. DESCENT OF THE EMIRS OF KANO FROM IBRAHIM DABO

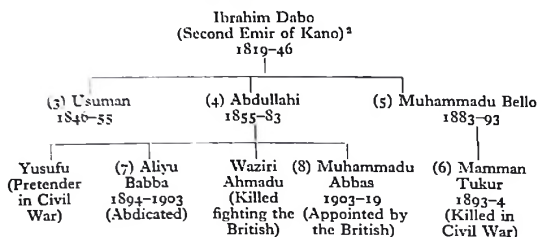
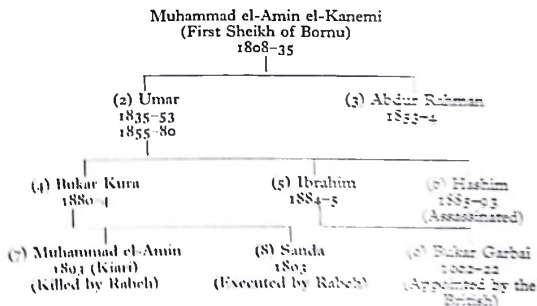


Table 5. DESCENT OF THE SHEIKHS OF BORNU FROM EL-KANEMI



Note: From 1893 to 1902 Bornu was ruled by the usurper Rabeh.

² The first Emir, Bulmanni, came from a different family and did not found a dynasty.

Table 6. DESCENT OF THE CHIEFS OF KEBBI FROM
MUHAMMADU KANTA
(Abridged)

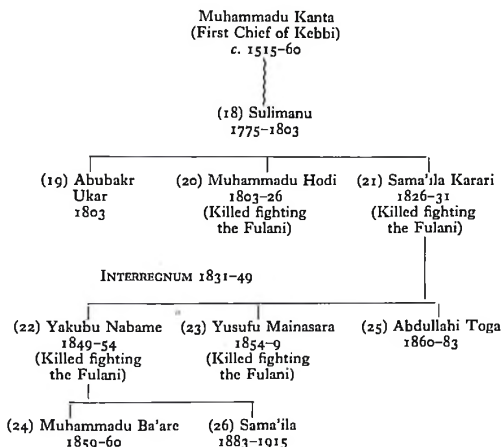
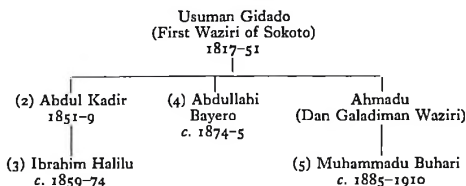


Table 7. DESCENT OF THE WAZIRIS OF SOKOTO FROM
USUMAN GIDADO³



³ Source: Alhaji Junaidu and D. M. Last. The dates between 1851 and 1910 are approximations based on the best evidence at present available.

APPENDIX III

SIR FRANCIS LUGARD AND THE KANO-SOKOTO EXPEDITION OF 1903

HITHERTO, it has not been easy to form a just appraisal of the events that led up to the Kano-Sokoto Expedition of 1903. Not only has almost all the readily available evidence come from the British side but most of it can be traced back to Sir Frederick Lugard, the High Commissioner. Eminent as he was, he cannot be considered a disinterested witness because, before the event, he was trying to convince a sceptical British Government that it was necessary while afterwards he was at pains to prove that it had been justified. Until recently little account has been taken of the views of British officers who differed from Lugard on this issue and no attempt has been made to check his assertions against such evidence as there is from the other side. As a result, certain anomalies in the accepted version of events have long remained unchallenged. Now, however, when fresh facts have been brought to light on the British side¹ and more is known of the reactions of the Fulani to the British threat, the time has come to attempt a fresh appraisal.

The first subject for scrutiny is the abortive correspondence which was exchanged between Lugard and Sultan Abdu. Describing the circumstances afterwards Lugard made the most of a case which looks less convincing now than it did at the time. He laid great stress on the two letters which he actually did write, covered up the other occasions when he should have written but failed to do so, harped on the difficulty of coming to terms with a potentate who did not reply, and finally built up the Sultan's letter of May 1902 into a virtual declaration of war. To see whether this is a true picture we must run over the course of events afresh.

In 1900 Lugard had the Proclamation establishing the Protectorate translated into Hausa and sent a copy of it to Sokoto. It was not well received by the Sultan, who declined to acknowledge it.² On his return, Lugard's messenger reported that, when the Sultan had read the proclamation, he had turned to his Court and, speaking in Fulfulde, a language which he wrongly believed the messenger did not

¹ Muffett, *op. cit.*

² *Annual Reports, Northern Nigeria, 1900-11*, p. 81.

understand, had said, 'No letters ever brought fear like this one—I'll read no more letters from these white men.'³

It was supposed at the time that clumsy translation must have given offence where none was intended. This may well have been a contributory factor, but the Sultan's use of the word 'fear' suggests that his reaction was one of dismay rather than umbrage. Now the Fulani, even in Bello's day, had known all about the British conquest of India⁴ and, more recently, must have heard of British activities on the Gold Coast, in Ashanti, and in Southern Nigeria. They certainly knew of the French drive to the Upper Niger, which had led to the destruction of the Fulani Kingdom created by Haj Umar.⁵ This being so, it seems likely that what disconcerted the Sultan was not so much the wording of the proclamation as the realization that in future he would be dealing not with a mere trading company but with a world power which he knew to have acquisitive instincts.

Whatever the cause of the Sultan's displeasure, he made it plain to the messenger, first by telling him that if the Europeans came, he was ready to fight them, and then by having him hastily conducted out of the town. From private sources the messenger subsequently gathered that the underlying cause of this hostility was fear that the British determination to suppress the slave trade would ruin Sokoto's agriculture,⁶ which of course was unusually dependent on slave labour.

When the messenger returned empty-handed to Lokoja and told his story, it was Lugard's turn to be angry. The Sultan's action, he said later, was a deliberate insult.⁷ From this unhappy start the relations between the two men never recovered.

At the beginning of the following year, 1901, Lugard was apparently still piqued because, when he dispatched a column against Kontagora and Nupe, he took no steps to acquaint the Sultan beforehand with his reasons for doing so. Only in March, when the operation was complete, did he write to explain his motives and invite the Sultan to nominate a new Emir of Kontagora in place of Sarkin Sudan Ibrahim, whom he had defeated and driven out. And even then he went on to inform the Sultan that in Nupe he had deposed Abubakr and reinstated Goldie's nominee, Muhammadu.⁸ Yet, in making this gesture, Lugard seems to have believed that he had fulfilled all his obligations towards the Sultan. 'This was a very significant act', he

³ Muffett, *op. cit.* p. 30.

⁴ Clapperton, *Travels*, vol. II, 352.

⁵ Appendix I, Note 16.

⁶ Muffett, *op. cit.* p. 28, n. 4.

⁷ Confidential Dispatch of 23 January 1903 in CO 446/30.

⁸ *Annual Reports, 1900-11*, pp. 157-8.

wrote afterwards, 'and equivalent to a recognition of all his ancient prerogatives.'⁹ Consequently, when this letter too remained unanswered, he again felt aggrieved. It is evident that, through want of imagination, he never realized that his action in Nupe might have spoken louder than his gesture in Kontagora and that even in Kontagora the only choice he was offering was between capitulation (because acceptance of his invitation to nominate a new Emir meant an acknowledgement by the Sultan of the British right to depose his predecessor) and defiance.

Lugard's next move was made in the late summer of 1901 when the Yola Expedition was launched. He himself was on leave at the time, but the action was of course taken on his instructions. It led to more fighting and the flight of another Emir. For the Sultan the fall of Adamawa was a more severe blow than the loss of Kontagora, a much more recent acquisition, or of Nupe, which was tributary to Gwandu and not to Sokoto. But neither beforehand nor afterwards was any word of explanation vouchsafed to him. Nor, apparently, did Lugard realize the bitter resentment he had engendered.

Early in 1902, soon after his return from leave, Lugard embarked on a new series of moves. First he launched the Bauchi-Bornu Expedition. Next, in response to an appeal for help from the Emir of Zaria, he dispatched a small force against Sarkin Sudan Ibrahim, the fugitive but still troublesome Emir of Kontagora, which resulted in his capture and removal into captivity. Finally, on the pretext that by appealing to him for help the Emir of Zaria had acknowledged British suzerainty, he posted a Resident to Zaria with a garrison to support his authority. To the Sultan he gave no prior information about any of these moves, although in March 1902, when the first had been initiated and the second completed, he did at length write to explain his actions.¹⁰ But even then he said nothing of his third move. News of it must have reached the Sultan at about the same time as the letter and ruined any chance that there might have been of Lugard's message being received in a conciliatory spirit.

The messenger who took this second letter of Lugard's to Sokoto was treated coldly and kept waiting for some time for a reply, but he met with no abuse, threats, ill-treatment, or even discourtesy.¹¹ Eventually he was given the following answer from the Sultan to take back to Zungeru:

To Governor Lugard. Be it known to you that I did not call on you to

⁹ *Annual Reports, 1900-11*, p. 82. ¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 158. ¹¹ Muffett, *op. cit.* p. 45.

enter on the pacification of Bauchi or any other place whatever, nor that you should enter on the pacification of towns or territories—I seek help from no one except from God. You have your faith, we have ours—God is our defence and our sure refuge: there is no strength or power except in God on high, the Almighty—This with salutations.¹²

In the circumstances the tone of this letter was surprisingly moderate and even Lugard, when he saw it, admitted that it was inoffensive.

The Sultan's reply did not reach Zungeru until June 1902. In the previous month, however, apparently out of the blue, Lugard had received from him a much more hostile and provocative letter (quoted at the end of Chapter Twenty-two) saying that henceforth there could be no exchanges between them save those between Moslems and Unbelievers—war. This letter is of considerable historical importance, because it seems finally to have convinced Lugard that conciliation would never succeed and that Kano and Sokoto would have to be subdued by force of arms before the Protectorate became a reality. At any rate, he said later that it was tantamount to a denunciation of the Treaties and even referred to it as a declaration of war.¹³ In addition, when he had to convince the British Government that there was no alternative to his policy, he made its implacable tone one of the main foundations of his case.

About this letter there has always been a slight aura of mystery. It apparently bore no relation to earlier correspondence but seemed, rather improbably, to have been written spontaneously by a man who, for the previous two years, had remained obstinately silent. Moreover, despite the crucial significance afterwards attached to it, the Secretary of State was not even informed of its existence until eight months after it had been received. Suspicions aroused by these curious circumstances have been sharpened by the disappearance of the original, the lack of any evidence of how it came into British hands, and the fact that Captain Abadie, the principal advocate of a military rather than a peaceful solution, was the translator. They have even prompted one historian of the period to suggest that the letter may either have been a mistranslation, probably deliberate, of an earlier letter from the Sultan to the Royal Niger Company or else a fabrication planted on Lugard by Abadie.¹⁴ The evidence hardly supports so sweeping a conclusion, but the mysteries remain and deserve to be re-examined.

¹² Muffett, *op. cit.* The translation is Burdon's and differs slightly from the version given by Lugard in his Annual Report for 1902.

¹³ *Annual Reports, 1900-11*, pp. 82-83.

¹⁴ Muffett, *op. cit.* pp. 43-51.

The key to the mystery of what evoked the letter seems to lie in the very first sentence in which the Sultan wrote: 'Know that I do not consent to any of your people dwelling among us.' Who had made such a request? Certainly not Lugard himself. But in the summer of 1901, while Lugard was on leave, his Deputy, Wallace, had written to the Sultan saying that the British wished to place a Resident in his capital and urging him to accept the appointment.¹⁵ Against Wallace's better judgement this letter was sent up the Niger to the officer in charge of the detachment at Illo, who was to arrange for its transmission. From another of Wallace's letters, however, we know that at the end of October, either because the messenger from Illo was turned back or because the Sultan refused to receive his message, the letter had still not been delivered. In mentioning this delay, Wallace observed testily that, if he had employed his own channels, he could have sent a dozen messages and got answers.¹⁶ Soon afterwards, apparently assuming that the letter would never reach its destination, he told Morland that if Lugard would allow him, it was his intention to go to Sokoto himself. 'I think it is only fair', he wrote, 'that the Sultan should have the chance to refuse to a white man this Government's friendly advances.'¹⁷ Nothing came of this proposal and so we must assume that, when Lugard returned from leave soon afterwards, he vetoed it. Nevertheless, it is perfectly possible that the Illo letter was eventually delivered to the Sultan or alternatively that, being barred by Lugard from going to Sokoto himself, Wallace wrote again in the same vein and had the letter conveyed to the Sultan by a messenger of his own. If such a message reached Sokoto in the spring of 1902, which from the date of the reply seems the most probable time, the coincidence of its arrival with the move against Bauchi and the capture of Sarkin Sudan Ibrahim would account for the acerbity of the answer. Significant, too, is the fact that, whereas the Sultan's next letter was addressed to Lugard by name, this one was not. It is also noteworthy that in May 1902, when the Sultan's letter reached the British, Wallace had just gone on leave: in his absence it would naturally have found its way to Lugard.

The explanation to the second mystery—why Lugard said nothing about the letter for eight months—emerges quite clearly in the light of his conduct during the rest of the year 1902. Briefly, the reason for the delay was that, while preparing a military expedition, Lugard was at pains to conceal the fact from the British Government. He therefore

¹⁵ Muffett, *op. cit.* p. 53.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 55.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

chose to hold back this particular card until he judged that the right moment had come to play it.

Unless fresh evidence comes to light it is unlikely that the doubts surrounding this famous letter will ever be resolved. All we can say now is that it was probably neither addressed to Lugard nor written spontaneously, as has hitherto been supposed, but that, as the text suggests, it was a reply to an earlier letter from Wallace urging him to bow to the inevitable and accept a British Resident. If this was indeed the case, it is possible that the true facts were not disclosed even to Lugard. They were certainly withheld from the British Government.

Whatever the precise truth about the Sultan's letter, it is clear from other papers which have survived that, in the spring and summer of 1902, Lugard was hardening his heart against Sokoto and paying less and less attention to conciliators like Burdon (who as Resident Bida was in touch, through the Emir of Nupe, with the Emir of Gwandu) and listening more and more to men like Abadie who were pressing for action. We know, for example, that in April 1902 Burdon wrote a long letter to inform Lugard that Fulani opinion had been shocked because the captive Emir of Kontagora had been sent to Lokoja in irons and that he ended it by asserting his conviction that the intransigence of the Sultan was based less on hostility than on misunderstandings which diplomacy could resolve. This advice Lugard brusquely rejected. 'Diplomacy ceases', he wrote, 'when either party refuses to receive the agent of the other, to read his letters, or to reply.'¹⁸ Similarly, Temple, the Resident of Bauchi Province, whose attitude to the Fulani was much less conciliatory than Burdon's, informed Lugard at about the same time that, according to information which had reached him, the Sultan did not wish to fight.¹⁹ This advice was also ignored.

On the other hand Lugard seems to have fallen increasingly under the influence of Abadie, whom he described at about this time as being extremely able and, through such sources as spies and traders, closely in touch with the African world.²⁰ In judging Abadie, we must first of all admit that his task in Zaria was particularly difficult in that the Emir had not been defeated in battle and clearly resented being saddled with a British Resident. Nevertheless, from what we know of Abadie's character, we can infer that he simply did not possess the fund of sympathy and patience which might have enabled him to get

¹⁸ Muffett, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-42.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 42.

²⁰ Confidential Dispatch of 12 December 1902 in CO 446/26.

on friendly terms with the Emir. The result was that in Zaria no effective links were established with the Fulani ruling classes and Abadie had to rely for all his information on his agents and paid informers. Not surprisingly, this information was consistently hostile to the Fulani and harped constantly on the menace of Kano. Much of it, as we shall see, was either inaccurate or greatly exaggerated. Nevertheless, it was all passed on to Zungeru, where Lugard seems to have taken it at its face value.

Whether Lugard and Abadie, in accepting these tendentious reports as valid, were acting disingenuously, or merely being naïve, it is now impossible to tell. All that we know for certain is that during the summer of 1902 Abadie sent in a series of reports alleging that the Emir of Zaria, Kwasau, was the worst kind of Fulani ruler, that he was still raiding for slaves, that he was perpetrating outrages and extortions in the name of the Resident, that he was intriguing with Kano, and that he was contemplating an attack on the British force. In September Lugard at length responded by giving instructions for the garrison in Zaria to be doubled.²¹ Soon afterwards Abadie, on his own initiative, arrested the Emir and took him to Zungeru on charges of oppression and tyranny. Apart from the earlier accusations, these included allegations that under his rule people were mutilated for petty offences and buried alive for more serious crimes, that influential men were being done to death and buried in the palace, and that he had even tried to have the Resident poisoned.²² Lugard accepted the charges without further inquiry, detained the Emir in Zungeru, and authorized Abadie to entrust the government of Zaria to a compliant councillor, the Galadima.

The deposition of the Emir of Zaria, as related in Chapter Twenty-three, inflamed the hot temper of his representative in the tributary Emirate of Keffi, the Magaji Dan Yamusa, and precipitated a fresh crisis which culminated in the Magaji's assassinating the British Resident, Captain Moloney, and seeking refuge in Kano. These events reinforced Lugard in the belief that there would have to be a military confrontation with Kano and Sokoto and at the same time presented him with the perfect *casus belli*. But, just when the way ahead seemed plain and clear, an important new development occurred which introduced fresh uncertainties and threatened further delays.

Within a week of Moloney's assassination, Sultan Abdu died in Wurno. For more than a decade he had held the Empire in his

²¹ *Annual Reports, 1900-11*, p. 71.

²² *Ibid.*

tyrannical grasp and determined its policy according to his unpredictable whims. His disappearance from the scene at this juncture was therefore an event of major political importance, because it presented Lugard with the opportunity of reopening negotiations with a new Sultan who had suffered none of Abdu's humiliating reverses and was in no way committed to resisting the British rather than coming to terms with them. If Lugard's mind had not already been made up, his first action should have been to send a conciliatory message to the new Sultan, Attahiru, and his second to inform the Secretary of State of this important new development. In fact, he did neither of these things. As a result, Attahiru was driven, against his own better judgement, to hopeless resistance while Whitehall remained ignorant that the chance of a negotiated settlement was slipping away.²³

On the British side there was as sharp a division of opinion about the intentions of the Emir of Kano as there had been about Sultan Abdu's. In April 1902 Burdon reported to Lugard that an emissary of the Emir who was in Bida insisted that he wanted peace and that the Emir of Nupe supported this view.²⁴ Abadie, on the other hand, kept reporting that there was real and imminent danger of the Kano forces making an unprovoked attack on the British garrison in Zaria. Any chance that there might have been of Lugard's believing Burdon rather than Abadie disappeared for good, of course, when the Magajin Keffi and his followers, having eluded their pursuers and reached Kano, were warmly received by the Emir.²⁵

Soon after this Abadie reported to Lugard that, on 28 October, the Emir of Kano had actually advanced on Zaria with the intention of attacking the British garrison and had only turned back because he had been overtaken by news of Sultan Abdu's death.²⁶ No historical evidence whatever has come to light to support this story or Abadie's earlier reports that the Emir of Kano was planning an attack. On the contrary, we know from his letter to the Waziri of Sokoto that he had come to the conclusion that resistance to the British was hopeless and that the best course for the Fulani was to emigrate *en masse*.²⁷ Nevertheless, Abadie's reports caused Lugard to dispatch more troops to

²³ Lugard said nothing to the Colonial Office about Sultan Abdu's death until, in his confidential dispatch of 12 December 1902, he mentioned it parenthetically. Even then he gave no hint that it was an event of any importance and of course his dispatch did not reach London until 19 January 1903. See CO 446/26.

²⁴ Muffett, *op. cit.* p. 71.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 68.

²⁶ Lugard's confidential dispatch of 12 December 1902 in CO 446/26.

²⁷ Backwell, *op. cit.* Letter, no. 125.

Zaria, to have a supply route cleared, and to send up reserves of food and ammunition.²⁸

These activities on the British side were in turn reported to the Emir of Kano as evidence that an expedition was being mounted against him. 'They declare', wrote one of the Emir's correspondents in Zaria, 'that when they have finished what they are doing among us, they will . . . come to you.' In the autumn of 1902, therefore, similar reports were reaching Lugard and the Emir of Kano, both affirming that the other was preparing to attack. It is a strange paradox that on the Fulani side, while the reports were basically true, they failed to stir the Emir into effective action; whereas on the British side, while the reports were basically false, they caused Lugard to redouble his efforts.

Since the summer it had been an open secret among the senior British officers that the High Commissioner was soon going to march against Kano and Sokoto.²⁹ By the autumn it was clear that the move was to be made during the forthcoming dry season (October–April) and that an expeditionary force was being mustered in Zaria. But Lugard had still given the Secretary of State virtually no information about his plans or preparations, nor indeed did he do so until much later and then only because an explanation was demanded of him. He did, however, drop some hints, perhaps with the object of providing himself with a defence if he was afterwards accused of failing to keep the British Government informed of his intentions. For example, in a dispatch of 7 October 1902 about the International Boundary Commission, he wrote: 'I may have to visit Sokoto with a strong force at the same time and put an end to the present unsatisfactory state with regard to that town.'³⁰ He also made provision in his financial estimates for the following year for the new Provinces of Sokoto, Kano, and Katsina; in the accompanying dispatch, dated 21 November, he added a brief note explaining that these new items had been included because it would be impossible to postpone much longer the impending crisis with the Sultan.³¹ Lugard knew perfectly well that these dispatches would take well over a month to reach London and, from the way he presented the information, it is fair to assume that he hoped that even then it would pass unnoticed. Of the telegraph, by means of which he could convey clear or code messages to London in the space of a day or two, he made no use. It is impossible to believe that, in a man of such competence and experience, these lapses were the result of inadvertence or lack of *savoir faire*. It must be concluded,

²⁸ Perham, *Lugard: The Years of Authority*, op. cit. p. 94.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ CO 446/26.

³¹ Ibid.

therefore, that they were deliberate and that, doubting his ability to convince the British Government of the necessity for the Kano-Sokoto Expedition, he had decided to force their hand by going past the point-of-no-return.

Lugard's tactics were for a time successful. His dispatch of 7 October reached the Colonial Office and excited no notice. But on 5 December his plans were upset when the London press published a report from Reuter describing the military preparations that were being made in Zaria for an attack on Kano. Chamberlain, the Secretary of State, was away in Natal at the time and his responsibilities were being discharged by his Under Secretary, the Earl of Onslow. He and the officials of the Colonial Office thought that there must have been a misunderstanding, but they were uneasy and so on 10 December they telegraphed to Zungeru saying that they presumed that Reuter's report referred to an expedition which was intended to support the Anglo-French Boundary Commission, not to attack Kano, but that in any case the High Commissioner was to state in outline what his plans were.³²

Even then Lugard played for more time. He telegraphed back on 12 December saying that he had received information that Kano had completed preparations for provoking war and that the safety of the Zaria garrison, the delimitation of the international boundary, and the prestige of the British Government depended on energetic action. But, instead of summarizing his plans as instructed, he referred the Secretary of State to the three dispatches, including those of 7 October and 21 November mentioned above, in which he had dropped his hints, implying that all the information required was given in them.³³ It did not take the Colonial Office long to establish that two of the three dispatches contained very little that was relevant. As the third had not arrived, however, it was assumed that it must embody a full account. Judgement was therefore suspended and Lugard gained his respite.

But at least one of the civil servants in the Colonial Office was suspicious. Commenting on Lugard's telegram of 12 December, he wrote: 'I am inclined to think that Sir F. Lugard has tried to follow his favourite policy of keeping silence until the coup has been made.'³⁴ After digesting this and other minutes Onslow decided on 19 December to send a telegram to Lugard, which began as follows: 'As you are aware, His Majesty's Government are anxious to avoid military operations in West Africa. We have full confidence that you

³² CO 446/26.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

will not engage in them unless they are absolutely necessary for defensive purposes but if in your judgement they are necessary we leave you full discretionary powers. . . .'³⁵ As Lugard's third dispatch had still not arrived, the telegram went on to demand a definite statement of his plans. Five days later Onslow followed this up with another telegram, which stated bluntly that the British Government must have the information before any expedition started for Kano.³⁶

In response to the first of these telegrams, Lugard telegraphed back on 23 December and at last admitted that he was planning to march on Kano. To emphasize the imminence of the supposed threat from that quarter he quoted Abadie's report that towards the end of October the Emir had actually started marching on Zaria.³⁷ He went on to say: 'Reports have been spread through all the Protectorate concerning the movement of troops. Consequently protected States quite certain imminence of fighting and therefore hesitation would be ascribed to fear, endangering other allegiance.'³⁸ In other words, Lugard was now saying that he had passed the point-of-no-return and must be allowed to go on.

In the meantime, however, Sir Charles Dilke had made a speech in the House of Commons condemning the proposed expedition and the *Manchester Guardian* was fulminating about it. On receiving Lugard's telegram of 23 December, Onslow therefore prepared a paper for the information of the Cabinet and sent a cable to Chamberlain in Natal asking whether he authorized Lugard's plan. On 28 December Chamberlain replied giving qualified assent: 'I approve of the expedition assuming that you are satisfied that the force is equal to any emergency and that the High Commissioner has good grounds for anticipating attack. Unless clearly called for by the attitude of the Sultan, I should deprecate aggressive action.'³⁹

Evidently, Abadie's story of the Emir of Kano marching against Zaria had convinced Onslow that there were good grounds for anticipating an attack because, though Lugard was asked for an assurance on the first of Chamberlain's points, no mention was made of the second. And so on 8 January 1903, after Lugard had replied confirming that his forces were equal to any emergency, another telegram was sent to him which began as follows:

His Majesty's Government have carefully considered your telegram No. 4, 4th January, and the previous correspondence on subject of Kano. They desire to impress on you that there is strong feeling in this country amongst those most deeply interested in Northern Nigeria that military

³⁵ CO 446/26.³⁶ Ibid.³⁷ Ibid.³⁸ Ibid.³⁹ Ibid.

operations should be avoided if possible. The information in possession of His Majesty's Government is not so complete as they could have wished but they understand that it is, in your opinion, absolutely necessary as a defensive measure and in the interests of protected native States, as well as for safety of Boundary Commissions, that Kano should be occupied by you in anticipation of attack on Zaria which Emir is preparing to make, that you have exhausted all means of arriving at a peaceful settlement, and that you consider force at your disposal ample for your purpose and are satisfied that reserves of men now proposed are sufficient for any probable contingency. In these circumstances His Majesty's Government will not withhold their consent to despatch of expeditionary force. . . .⁴⁰

Onslow went on to say that the British Government considered that the command should be given to Brigadier-General Kembell, the Inspector-General of the West African Frontier Force, and that other troops in West Africa should stand by in case of need.

The point in this telegram which should have given Lugard pause was the British Government's insistence that they considered a military move justified only if all possibility of negotiation had been exhausted and then only as a defensive measure in anticipation of an attack by Kano on Zaria. In fact, he ignored these stipulations completely but took up the cudgels on the question of whether Kembell or Morland should be in command and whether it was necessary to mobilize reserves in other parts of West Africa. These wrangles served to distract attention from the fundamental question of whether or not the Expedition was necessary. They also led to further delays and so it was not until 19 January that Onslow at length sent a telegram authorizing an advance and not until 29 January that the expeditionary force actually marched.⁴¹

We know now that on 2 January, nearly four weeks earlier, the Emir of Kano, accompanied by half his fighting men, had set out from his capital, not with the object of attacking the British in Zaria but in order to go to Sokoto and pay his respects to the new Sultan.⁴² It may be that the underlying object of this strangely timed journey was to urge on the new Sultan the policy that the Fulani, rather than submit to a Christian power or fight a war they could not hope to win, should emigrate *en masse*. Be that as it may, when the British expeditionary force set out to nip in the bud the threat that the Emir of Kano was supposed to represent, he was, in fact, two hundred and fifty miles away. As he was accompanied by a force of not merely hundreds but thousands, it is astonishing that the British did not get accurate

⁴⁰ CO 446/30.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² *Annual Reports, 1900-II*, p. 88.

information about his movements. In Lugard's dispatches and telegrams, however, there is no mention of them until 23 January when he at length quoted a report that the Emir had moved out to a war-camp twenty-four miles west of the city.⁴³ So much for Abadie's intelligence system: there could be no more striking proof than this of how misplaced was Lugard's faith in the accuracy and objectivity of the reports that he received from this quarter.

What verdict should be passed on Lugard's conduct in this episode? The first accusation against him must be that, by choosing to believe in Abadie, whom he liked, and to ignore Burdon, who irritated him,⁴⁴ he formed a badly distorted conception of the problem which confronted him. In the light of the facts related here, particularly the complete untrustworthiness of Abadie's reports, it is impossible to acquit him of this charge. The verdict against him, incidentally, serves to confirm the judgement of his biographer that two of his greatest failings were tendencies to cultivate favourites and to allow private feelings to influence official decisions.⁴⁵

The second charge, which arises out of the first, is that, by withholding information about Sultan Abdu's death and pursuing his own preparations in secret, Lugard forced the British Government into authorizing an enterprise which, if they had been properly consulted, they would probably never have sanctioned. Or, in other words, that he deliberately precipitated a campaign which could certainly have been postponed and might possibly have been avoided altogether. On this charge, too, the verdict must be that he was guilty. In his defence, however, let it be said that he acted as he did because he thought the end justified the means and that for him the great objective was not winning minor battles in an obscure campaign but clearing the site for the new country that he was impatient to build.⁴⁶ 'The advocates of conciliation at any price', he wrote at about this time, 'appear to forget that their nation has assumed before God and the civilized world the responsibility of maintaining peace and good order in the area declared as a British Protectorate.'⁴⁷

Whether the end he sought can be held to justify the dubious means he employed is a question which must be left to individual judgement.

⁴³ CO 446/30.

⁴⁴ Perham, *op. cit.* p. 181. See also Monthly and Quarterly Reports from Sokoto Province, 1903-6.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 179-82.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p. 148

⁴⁷ Dispatch of 15 January 1903 in CO 446/30.

GLOSSARY

Ajele: an executive official (literally 'Deputy') in Nupe.

Alhaji: courtesy title accorded to any man who has made the Pilgrimage to Mecca. The Hausa form of Hajji.

Alkali: a judge in a Moslem court.

Alkalin Alkalai: Moslem Chief Justice.

'Ardo: a Fulani title, often accorded to the head of a clan or sub-clan.

Askia: the title of the rulers of the Songhai Empire after Muhammad Askia.

Atikawa: the members of the Atiku branch of the Sokoto ruling family.

-awa: suffix meaning 'the people of', e.g. *Gobirawa*, the people of Gobir.

Ba-: a prefix which, if followed by a place name, means 'a man of', e.g. *Bagobiri*, a man of Gobir.

Banza Bakwai: a pejorative term, meaning roughly 'the Bogus Seven', used to describe the States in or adjoining Hausaland which did not belong to the authentic seven.

Barebari: Berber.

Birni(n): a walled town, hence a city.

Chief: this title has been used to describe the rulers of the Hausa States in distinction to 'Emir', which has been reserved for their Fulani successors.

Chiroma: a title originating in Bornu but later widely adopted by the Hausas and the Fulani. Normally reserved for members of the ruling family.

Dagachi: another title originating in Bornu but adopted in Hausaland, particularly in the eastern Emirates, and retained by the Fulani.

Dan: son of, equivalent of Arabic *bin* or *ibn*.

Dan Galadima: a title.

Danyen Kasko: opprobrious nickname bestowed on Sultan Abdu, literally 'the unbaked pot'.

Darb el-Arba'in: name given to the Egypt-Chad caravan route.

Emir: this title has been reserved to describe the Fulani rulers in distinction to 'Chief', which has been used for their Hausa predecessors.

Etsu: title of the ruler of Nupe.

Fillani: Hausa name for the Fulani.

Fulbe: the Fulani's name for themselves.

Fulfulde: the Fulani language.

Gaisuwa: literally 'greetings' but often meaning the gifts or sweeteners given by inferiors to superiors or intermediaries.

Galadima: a title originating in Bornu but adopted later throughout Hausaland.

Gawan Gulbi: the Dead River.

Gida(n): the house (of).

Haŋe: a word used by the Fulani to describe the indigenous peoples of the Sudan.

Haj: the Pilgrimage to Mecca.

Hajji: courtesy title accorded to any man who has made the Pilgrimage. Sometimes simply Haj.

Hakimi (plural *-ai*): a major vassal or fief-holder, a territorial magnate or District Head.

Haraji: poll-tax or general tax on the farming community.

Hausa Bakwai: the seven authentic States of Hausaland.

Ijaza: the licence to teach.

Jama'a: the Moslem Community, hence Shehu's followers.

Jangali: the tax on cattle.

Jekada: the confidential messenger who acted as an intermediary between an absent fief-holder and his fief.

Jihad: holy war in the Islamic sense.

Jizya: the levy that an Islamic State is entitled to impose on non-Moslem subjects.

Kadiriyya: one of the great sects or brotherhoods of Islam, the followers of Abd el-Kadir el-Jilani of Baghdad.

Kachalla: a Bornu title.

Kanemna: (plural *Kanembu*), a native of Kanem.

Kofa: a Councillor or Courtier who acted as an intermediary (literally doorway) for an out-lying Emirate or fief and thus acquired special responsibility for it.

Kurɗin Kasa: general tax on the farming community.

Lamido: title of the Emir of Adamawa.

Madaki or *Madawaki*: a Hausa title, literally 'Master of the Horse'.

Magaji: a Hausa title.

Maghreb: Moslem North Africa.

Mahdiyya: the Islamic sect composed of followers of the Mahdi Muhammad Ahmed.

Mai: in Kanuri the word represents the title of the Sultans of Bornu down to 1846. In Hausa it is a prefix meaning the possessor of something, e.g. *Mai-Tuta*, the flag-bearer.

Makama: a Hausa title.

Mallam: courtesy title accorded by the Hausas to any man of learning.

Marafa: a Hausa title.

Mithqal: a measure of gold, about $\frac{1}{8}$ oz.

Modibbo: courtesy title accorded by the Fulani to any man of learning, the equivalent of the Hausa *Mallam*.

Muharram: a month in the Moslem year.

Qasida: Arabic ode.

Sabo(n): new, e.g. *Sabongari* meaning Newtown.

Sa'i: a title.

Sansani: a war-camp or military outpost.

Sarki(n): Chief or Emir (of).

Sarkin Musulmi: Commander of the Faithful, the Hausa form of the title of the Sultans of Sokoto.

Sarkin Yaki: Captain-General.

Seku: a corrupt form of the Arabic word *Sheikh*, used in the western Sudan and adopted as their title by the rulers of Hamdallahi.

Shari'a: Islamic Law.

Shehu: the Hausa and Kanuri version of the Arabic word *Sheikh*, reserved in this book as the title of Usuman dan Fodiyo.

Sheikh: the title of El-Kanemi and his successors, first as the administrative rulers of Bornu and after 1846 as the usurping but accepted Sultans.

Siyasa: the discretionary authority, complementary to that defined in the *Shari'a*, with which Moslem rulers were endowed.

Sudan: the belt of Africa lying between the Sahara to the north and the equatorial rain-forests to the south. Where the term 'central Sudan' has been used it is intended to indicate broadly the sector lying between Lake Chad and the Niger.

Sultan: this title has been reserved for the rulers of Sokoto to whom the other Emirs owed allegiance. In theory it should also be accorded to the rulers of Gwandu, who were paramount in their part of the Dual Empire, but since the advent of the British they have always been known as Emirs of Gwandu and this practice has been followed. Similarly, to avoid confusion, the paramount rulers of Bornu have not been styled Sultan but, before 1846, *Mai* and, after that date, *Sheikh*.

Sunna: the approved customs of Islam.

Sunni: orthodox Moslems.

Tafida: a title.

Tambari: a Tuareg title.

Tijjani: a member of the Tijjaniyya sect of Islam, the followers of Ahmad Tijjani of Fez.

Sullubawa: a branch of the Fulani people who played a prominent part in the *jihad* in Sokoto, Katsina, and Kano.

Toronkawa: the branch of the Fulani people to which the ruling families of Sokoto and Gwandu belong.

Ubandawaki: a Hausa title.

Ubandoma: a Hausa title.

Wali: a Moslem saint.

Wambai: a title.

Waziri: Vizier.

Yarima: a title of Bornu origin widely adopted in Hausaland.

Zakka: the Islamic tithe.

Zaria and *Zazzau*: in the Hausa era, Zazzau was the name of the State and Zaria the name of the capital. In the Fulani and British periods, however, the use of Zazzau began to die out and Zaria was employed increasingly to describe the Emirate as well as the city. In this book, therefore, Zazzau has been used to denote the Hausa State and Zaria the Fulani Emirate.

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