

Berichte des Sonderforschungsbereichs 268, Band 8, Frankfurt a. M. 1996: 231-254

MERCHANTS OF COLONIAL BORNO: MEN, MEANS AND METHODS

Yakubu Mukhtar

... Except for the heat, many hours can be pleasantly spent surveying the ever-changing scene with its mixture of colours and sounds, and studying the various types and the mingling interests of the men and women who here meet to buy and sell. In the busy throng are to be seen the wandering Shuas standing by their tethered oxen which have brought in sacks of grain; the Fulani by his sheep and goats in stall; the Kanembu merchant from Kowa with piled slabs of potash and dried fish that he has bought from the Budumas of Lake Chad, and the big balls of blue dye for the dyeing of cloth. Here come Hausas from many parts, some from far-off Kano to buy the renowned cattle of Bornu; others, who are weavers and plaiters, to sell their wares of cloth and straw, bernouses and hats...¹

Introduction

This paper examines Borno's colonial economy with particular reference to the activity of indigenous traders.² Stress is laid on trade within Borno and between the province and other markets in Nigeria and the adjoining colonies of Cameroon, Chad and Niger. An analysis of the involvement of traders, ranging from Kanuri, Hausa, Tubu, Fulani, Shuwa Arabs, Yoruba to Igbo, in items such as livestock, indigenous cloths of Hausaland manufacture (especially *turkudi*), kolanuts, local salt, natron, dried fish, imported cotton materials and salt is also attempted. Although Maiduguri (or Yerwa³), Nguru,

¹ ALEXANDER 1907, p. 270. This statement on the Maiduguri market by Alexander in 1904 (barely two years after the arrival of the British colonial Resident in the area) gives a glimpse of traders and goods in what was to become Borno's leading commercial centre.

² In the context of this paper, this term refers to Nigerian traders as well as those from other West and Central African countries.

³ As reported by TEGETMEIER (NAK, Maiprof. 117/1925), the Shehu's capital was at its formation known as *Shehuri* (meaning "the Shehu's place" or "the place where the Shehu lives") but with the emergence of new wards the name was changed to Yerwa. At its founding, the new capital of Yerwa was about one mile from the Government Station (i.e. the site where the British officials were based) at the time situated at the village of Mafoni. According to Tegetmeier, the station itself was named Maiduguri "after the large market village of that name situated 2 miles to the north-east of Yerwa". Tegetmeier further explained that, "the Government Station, Yerwa town, and Maiduguri village are often referred to collectively by Europeans as Maiduguri but the natives confine the term entirely to the village" (NAK, Maiprof. 117/1925). The detailed

Potiskum, Bama, Goniri, Monguno, Geidam, Abadam and Biu were the main market centres in the province during much of the period under review, the activity of traders in Maiduguri is chosen for consideration in the paper. Apart from being the provincial and Shehu's capital, the emphasis on Maiduguri is informed by the town's commercial importance, especially in the overland trade between the rest of Nigeria and the neighbouring colonies of Cameroon, Chad and Niger.

The internal and overland trade engaged in by the indigenous merchants of colonial Borno was characterized by both elements of continuity and change. This is not merely implying the survival of a few merchants who had been operating since the pre-colonial period but also certain practices and methods of commercial transactions prevailing in the pre-colonial era (such as brokerage and credit system) survived the imposition of colonial rule. But new factors such as improved security along the trade routes, the development of up-to-date system of transportation, the attitude of some British colonial administrators, whereby Borno's paramount chief, the *Shehu*, and his leading men were encouraged to engage in trade, a rise in earnings resulting from the production and sale of overseas exports and the emergence of new urban centres combined to produce significant changes in the nature and size of trade in a range of indigenous items. For the most part, these factors stimulated commercial activity especially by increasing the pace at which regional and international commercial linkages were opened or reopened.

As the title indicates, the paper is divided into three main sections. Section one discusses the identity and composition of the leading indigenous traders, with a sub-section on the careers of some of them as an illustration. Section two analyses the means of the traders in terms of the transactions they engaged in and the markets covered, with a sub-section on effects of some colonial policies as indication of limits to the traders' scope of operations. Section three treats methods, as well as practices, involved in indigenous trade, with a sub-section on native administration and trade providing a further elaboration on the network in place in the commerce of Borno during the period in question.

Identity and composition of principal indigenous traders

The pace of commercial activity was slowed down by the instability that marked the beginning of the present century in Borno.⁴ Traders in particular, and the general population as well, were largely wary of travelling long

information provided by Capt. Tegetmeier on various aspects of Maiduguri's life in the 1920s has to a considerable extent influenced me to use his report extensively both in this paper and in my doctoral thesis (MUKTHAR 1992).

⁴ The struggle for the Chad basin region (with Borno as one focus) had led the three major imperial powers - Britain, France and Germany - to converge on the region at the turn of the century. The partition resulted in the division of the former Borno Kingdom among the three powers, with the greater part of metropolitan Borno going to Britain.

distances for fear of being attacked and having their merchandise plundered.⁵ Besides, the vast majority of the Borno people were at the time too impoverished to afford trade items brought from other areas. The turbulence that characterized the last years of Rabih's rule and the transition to British rule necessitated the restoration of some confidence among the people.⁶

No sooner was Borno brought under British rule than the colonial authorities began to consider internal and overland trade as a potential source of revenue through the collection of duties and tolls. In November 1902, barely months after the establishment of the British Residency in Maiduguri, the Borno Resident reported that indigenous cloths of Hausa manufacture, kolanuts and North African goods were conveyed eastwards through the province in exchange for a variety of items such as cattle, natron, slaves and ostrich feathers.⁷ The volume and value of trade in most of these items, especially kolanuts, cattle and natron, increased gradually as the colonial years progressed.

The expansion of trade went hand in hand with the development of Borno's key towns and the emergence of new ones. For instance, in 1924, out of Maiduguri's (or Yerwa's) estimated 15,000 inhabitants, 223 were traders. Of this number, thirty-five were regarded as the leading indigenous traders, living in four of the five wards of the township. Of these thirty-five leading traders, more than half (nineteen) were residing in Shehuri ward; about one-quarter (eight) were staying in Hausari; four were living in Mafoni; one (and apparently the wealthiest, Kyari Karda) was based in Fezzan; the domicile of the remaining three could not be identified. Interestingly, while the Zongo ward (together with Hausari) accommodated a great many of the visiting traders to Yerwa, none of the leading indigenous traders is reported to be residing in the ward.

As would be expected (principally because of their long-standing involvement in commerce as well as their numerical strength), the Kanuri/Kanembu had the highest representation with nearly twenty-one out of the thirty-five leading traders.⁸ The Hausa, with six or seven traders of the

⁵ NAK, SNP 15, Acc. No. 19: "Bornu Province, General Reports for 1902", especially those of June and August.

⁶ For instance, see SEIDENSTICKER 1983, p. 5. The disruption in 19th-century Borno, which contributed to the reduction of commercial activity, was also responsible for the ruin of many outstanding foreign and indigenous merchants before the turn of the present century. This disruption largely accounts for the paucity of information on certain merchants who are believed to have played important roles in the commercial life of 19th-century Borno or on their descendants. On the state of affairs in Borno by the turn of the century, see: NAK, SNP 7, Acc. No. 1271/1910: "Bornu Province, Annual Report for 1909".

⁷ NAK, SNP 15, Acc. No. 19: "Bornu Province, Report No. 2 for November 1902"; also NAK, Maiprof. 117/1925, "Yerwa Town".

⁸ Among these were Kyari Karda, Abba Kaza, Bukar Gambobe, Alhaji Lawan, Murima Gana, Abba Kime, Ari Zarami, Shettima Barma and Sheriff Bura.

total, constituted the second dominant group.⁹ Then came the Tubu, with three or four among the leading indigenous merchants. One of the leading merchants (Bulama Marghi) was a Marghi. The identity of the remaining three or five could not be determined with any certainty.¹⁰

As demonstrated by Works, Kanuri dominance of much of the trade between the colonies of Nigeria and Chad began as early as 1907. Following the French occupation of Wadai's capital, Abeshe, in 1909, demand for goods coming from the west greatly increased. Kolanuts and indigenous cloths were particularly mentioned to be expensive and in great demand. On the other hand, local products in Wadai such as cattle are reported to have been very cheap.¹¹

While the Kanuri and the Hausa people continued to enjoy some eminence in the commercial life of Maiduguri and Borno's other leading towns up the end of our period and beyond, other newcomers were beginning to make their influence felt commercially. The extent to which these stranger groups constituted an important element of the commercial life of Maiduguri and other key trading towns could be seen in the case of Hausari ward. The ethnic composition of Hausari ward in Yerwa, mainly brought about by the tendency of the stranger or "floating" population to stay in the various hostels scattered across the quarters, is very instructive. By 1924 the ward contained thirty-one different ethnic groups from within and outside Nigeria. The southern part and Middle Belt of Nigeria were represented by the Yoruba and Nupe respectively. The Bambara and Zaberma represented the elements outside Nigeria from the West. As reported by Tegetmeier, the ward's inhabitants were mainly engaged in trade or industry and as the ward was (and still is) near the market there was a general activity not found in the other quarters.¹²

By 1960, the number of Maiduguri's wards had increased to eleven with an estimated population of over 60,000. The old Shehuri ward had been divided into two: north and south. The other new quarters include Bulabulin, Gamboru, Gwange, Lamisula and Limanti.¹³

With the exception of Limanti and a section of Lamisula, the greater part of the residents of Bulabulin, Gamboru and Gwange were newcomers. Gamboru and Bulabulin mostly accommodated people from the neighbouring French colonies of Chad and Cameroon, who moved into Borno in increasing

⁹ These included Usman Maidawa, Babandi, Ahmed Nguji and Adamu Ciroman Bunkure.

¹⁰ NAK, Maiprof. 117/1925, "Yerwa Town".

¹¹ WORKS 1976, p. 205. There are indications that during the Rabih interlude the little trade that existed between Borno and the region to its east was dominated by the Jallaba merchants from the central and northern Nilotic Sudan.

¹² NAK, Maiprof. 117/1925, "Yerwa Town"; also NAK, SNP 10, Acc. No. 69p/1921: "Bornu Province (Bornu Emirate), Special Report on Uje District by Mr. J.R. Patterson, A.D.O.".

¹³ See SEIDENSTICKER 1983, p.11.

numbers in search of employment and other opportunities during and after the Second World War.¹⁴

On the basis of the tax register of 1958/59, the number of leading men and women of some means in the town had reached 397 (including native liquor sellers in Gamboru and Bulabulin wards). For example, half (5 out of 10) of the richest individuals in Gamboru ward during the 1958/59 tax year were from the southern part of Nigeria. As a matter of fact, the two richest, or at least those who paid the highest amount of tax, one G.C.S. Mbonu and a certain B.N. Igwanowo, appear to have been Igbo-speaking men.¹⁵

Another feature of the Gamboru ward was the high proportion of female traders, mainly engaged in the native liquor business: 9 out of 14 native liquor sellers in the ward in 1958/59 were women. Most of them came from neighbouring Chad and Cameroon.

Besides Maiduguri, centres such as Nguru and Potiskum attracted a large number of stranger elements in the course of their expansion during the colonial period.

Before the railway was extended to Nguru in 1930, the market of Maja Kawuri was the principal focus of trade in the Nguru area and probably the whole of western Borno. The advent of the railway in Nguru led to the removal of the Kawuri market to Nguru, and with that a great many of the traders operating in Kawuri had to transfer to the new market town. Apart from the presence of the railway, which greatly stimulated the growth of the town, Nguru's proximity to Kano and being about 43 kilometres south of the French territory of Niger served also to increase the rate of the development of the town in the years immediately after the arrival of the railway. For instance, with the coming of the railway, the Yoruba people from south-western Nigeria started to play an important role in the trade in kolanuts, dried (or smoked) fish and meat. Interestingly, just as the trade in cattle and kolanuts converged at another point, the trade in dried or smoked meat and fish merged, at one point, with the kola trade. This is mainly because the Yoruba and Hausa traders conveyed dried or smoked fish and meat to Southern Nigerian urban markets, and brought kolanuts back to major markets in Northern Nigeria and beyond.

¹⁴ For instance, in 1943 about 19,000 people (most of whom from the neighbouring colonies of Chad and Cameroon) were engaged in construction works of various types in the province: see, Arewa House Archives (Marble Office), Kaduna: "Class 7, No. 35313 (secret), Report on Bornu Province, January 1943 by Ag. Resident, C.R. Niven".

¹⁵ NAK, 384/s. 1, vol.i: "Bornu N.A., List of Rich Traders-Yerwa District". As rightly observed by Gina Porter, many people of southern Nigerian origin initially moved to the north during the colonial period to work as clerks in government and commerce, with a sizeable number turning to trade because of the opportunities it offered: see PORTER 1990, p.73. In the post-World War II period, some Igbo people who could not find employment in government and commerce in Borno turned to the trade in dried fish to southern Nigeria.

Just as the commercial position of the north-western town of Nguru was profoundly affected by the extension of the Kano railway, the improvements carried out along the Maiduguri-Kano and Maiduguri-Jos roads greatly facilitated the development of Potiskum as a prominent commercial centre. Probably among the first indigenous traders to establish a canteen in the Borno area was a Yoruba trader who, in 1927, opened one at Potiskum.¹⁶ With the development of groundnut and cotton export from Borno in the later years of colonial rule, Potiskum's role as a marketing centre became even more outstanding.

Sketches of careers of three leading indigenous traders

To illustrate the importance of the Kanuri and Hausa people to the commerce of Maiduguri during the colonial period, brief careers of three leading traders are presented here. The cases of these traders reveal that as the colonial years progressed, many traders involved in the internal and overland trade gradually came to serve as middlemen between the producers and the European firms, whose presence in Borno was assisted mainly by the improved transport facilities. Though coming at different times, the most important European firms represented in Borno were the United Africa Company Ltd., John Holt Ltd., Messrs Paterson, Zochonis & Co., the "French Company" (*Compagnie Francaise de l'Afrique Occidentale*), Messrs Rowntree & Co., the London Kano Trading Company, Ambrosini and Co. and Messrs A.J. Tangalakis.¹⁷

Kyari Karda

Born in the village of Dabira (Kanembu or Kukawa district), Kyari Karda started trading when he was about forty, initially in the town of Monguno, before he subsequently moved to Yerwa at about the age of fifty.¹⁸

While in Yerwa, cattle became or remained the principal commodity in which he traded. Besides cattle, he traded in kolanuts and the traditional Hausa cloth (*turkudi*). These two items were apparently brought to and sold in Borno and in Chadian and Cameroonian markets after selling cattle in Nigerian towns such as Ilorin, Ibadan and Lagos. Karda was also involved in trade in European cotton goods, which he normally bought from the European trading firms based in Maiduguri. These goods were in turn distributed to petty traders

¹⁶ NAK, SNP 17, Acc. No. 6808, vol. i: "Bornu Province, Annual Report for 1927". In the context of this paper, the "canteen" was a shop that contained various merchandise for sale to local and foreign buyers. Apart from disposal of wares, the expatriate owners of canteens also bought export items from the local people.

¹⁷ See MUKHTAR 1992, pp. 191-229.

¹⁸ Interview with Zanna Kyari (born in Monguno in about 1929) in Gaboru ward, Maiduguri, on 20.11.89. The informant is a nephew and namesake of Kyari Karda. He was with Karda throughout the period of the latter's district headship in Nguru.

who disposed of them in the various markets of Borno and of the neighbouring colonies.¹⁹

By 1924, Karda was reckoned to have been the wealthiest indigenous trader in Borno. Karda's commercial fame in the 1920s is attested to by both local oral sources and documentary accounts like that of Tegetmeier. According one local source, when the Bank of British West Africa opened its Maiduguri branch in 1929, Karda deposited £300 (three hundred pounds).²⁰ Again, on the general notion that the North Africans had great wealth beyond that of their Nigerian counterparts Tegetmeier had this to say:

Two or three Tripolitans are richer than the others and than the average Kanuri and Hausa trader but Kiari Kurda is probably as wealthy as any Tripolitan with the possible exception of Hamid Baft.²¹

When he became extremely rich, Karda employed the services of a number of agents in co-ordinating his trading activity. He particularly had agents who conducted the purchase of cattle in Kanem, Atia, Abeshe and other cattle markets in French Chad. He is also believed to have had agents in Nigerian towns such as Zaria, Ilorin and Lagos to which cattle from Borno and Wadai were mainly taken.²²

Documentary evidence shows that one such agent or servant - Kyari - had once in 1932 taken 80 head of cattle to Lagos.²³ The evidence in question refers to an incident in which Karda's agent was at that time swindled by a certain Ahmadu Kanike (a Borno cattle-broker based in Lagos), who having sold the cattle to butchers at £195 in Lagos refused payment.

This incident is important in at least two respects. First, the Shehu's intervention on behalf of Karda (the Shehu referred Karda to the Borno district officer) might signify a close relationship between the traditional ruler and the businessman. In fact, the Shehu requested the district officer to explore the possibilities of sending Kanike away from Lagos. Secondly, the incident happened a year before Karda was turbaned a district head by the Shehu. We may speculate that Karda's trading career might have begun to wane by this time, presumably because of unfavourable trading conditions. The attempt to recover the debt from Kanike could perhaps be a pointer to Karda's struggle to

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Interview with Abdullah A. el-Baft (born in Maiduguri in 1922) in Fezzan ward, Maiduguri, on 28.12.89. El-Baft believed that Kyari Karda was worth thousands of pounds, because, according to him, the deposit of £300 by Karda was made with the conviction that the money was gone forever. This, he believed, was the case because the indigenous people had at that time little or no faith in the banking system. He said before Karda and others of his standing could start using the bank, the Resident had to instruct the Shehu to campaign to his people about the possible benefits they could derive by using banking facilities.

²¹ NAK, Maiprof. 117/1925, "Yerwa Town".

²² *Ibid.*

²³ NAK, Maiprof. 462/1346: "Cattle Traders Complaints by (1930-32)".

recoup part of his capital which was already fast declining. We learn from that same report that Kanike's activity had indeed ruined a dozen or so Borno cattle traders.²⁴

If our assumption is correct, then the sudden death of Zanna Kabuskema as district head of Nguru, after being there for only twelve months and the appointment of Karda in his stead might have provided Karda with some satisfaction. This might be so as Nguru was at the time one of the most commercially viable centres of the province. With the brisk commerce which followed the arrival of the rail in Nguru in 1930, Karda could live happily on such a post since it also afforded him the opportunity of maintaining a large following, as he might have done as a rich trader. All this may reveal the strength of a kind of patron-client relationship between the Shehu and Karda.

Alternatively, Karda, doing well as a trader, was able to influence the Shehu to give him a suitable political appointment. An informant, very close to the Shehu's court, intimated to me that Karda had done a lot of favours for the Shehu; the latter felt that he had a duty to repay or reward Karda, and appointed him a district head.²⁵

Karda was appointed the district head of the North-western town of Nguru in 1933 (as Zanna Suloma Kyari) to succeed Zanna Kabuskema who died after serving as district head for twelve months. The Borno annual report for 1933 summarizes Kyari Karda's appointment in this manner: "Zanuwa Suloma Kiari, a man of substance and of a wide experience outside Bornu, has been appointed by the Shehu to succeed him."²⁶

Kyari Karda or Zanna Suloma Kyari served as district head for five or six years. We could not ascertain what led to his removal from office, but our principal oral source revealed that he was dismissed. He apparently spent the rest of his life in Fezzan ward of Maiduguri; he was neither given another administrative post nor did he engage in trade again. Indeed his trading career, which probably ended with his appointment as district head, was never continued by any of his children. On the contrary one of them born in the 1930s is the current (1995) head of the Fezzan ward in Maiduguri.

²⁴ Names of some of the Borno traders who were reported as being in a desperate situation waiting at Lagos for their money were given as: Bulama Shigashiga, Grema Ali Kachalla, Malam Kura, Bura Karawaru, Ali Kolo, Ari Karas, a servant of Shettima Kaza (also Known as Abba Kaza) and a certain Madugu.

²⁵ Interview with Shettima Mamman (born in Dikwa in about 1924) in Shehuri ward, Maiduguri, on 13.01.90. At the time of the interview the informant was the district head of Maiduguri as well as the holder of the title of Shettima Kanuribe.

²⁶ NAK, SNP 17/1, Acc. No. 21325, vol.i: "Bornu Province, Annual Report for 1933".

Ari Musami

The career of Ari Musami (also known as Ari Ci Shingowa)²⁷ is another illustration of the Borno traders who prospered in the transit trade in livestock and other commodities. A Kanuri by birth, he was born in the Maiduguri area in the late 1890s. He appears to have been connected with trading since childhood in that his father, who hailed from Dalori (a village near modern Maiduguri), was also a long-distance trader.²⁸

When Musami came of age he became engaged in the long-distance cattle trade between Borno and cattle markets in Chad and Cameroon on the one hand and between these places and some urban centres of Southern Nigeria on the other. It is argued that there were times when Musami transported as many as 500 heads of cattle to places like Ogbomoso, Ibadan, Abeokuta and Lagos. The chief informant on Musami's career, who is one of his oldest surviving sons, Muhammad Musami, was born in Bahr al-Ghazal in about 1931 during one of the trips undertaken by his father and mother.²⁹

Apart from cattle, Musami is also thought to have traded in horses during the colonial period, which he normally conveyed to Kano. The horses were principally meant for racing, and Musami's clients in Kano included Mahmud Dantata, who was the son of the famous Kano trader Alhassan Dantata, and Saul Raccah (a Kano-based groundnut merchant).³⁰

Having carried cattle and horses to various markets in Northern, but more frequently in Southern Nigeria, Musami brought dyed cloths of Hausa manufacture which he disposed of in both Borno and in the eastern cattle markets of Chad and Cameroon. He was equally involved in trade in hides and skins. After purchasing these goods from markets of Borno like Maiduguri, Gubio, Damasak, Dikwa, Gajibo, Marte etc., he sold them to the European trading firms based in Maiduguri. He is said not to have been an agent of these firms, although he also obtained textiles from them for sale in Borno's markets and those in Chad and Cameroon. Musami was also involved in trade with a certain Tabit, who was a Yemeni trader based in Maiduguri. This trader was probably an agent of some European firm.³¹

Musami died in 1968. His son, our main informant on Musami's career, recounted that his father stopped making the long-distance trips when he

²⁷ Interview with Abdullah el-Baft; interview with Umar Na Alhaji Lawan (born in Maiduguri in 1915) in Maiduguri on 23.11.89.

²⁸ Interview with Muhammad Ari Musami (born in Bahr al-Ghazal in about 1931) in Hausari ward, Maiduguri, on 26.11.89. Presumably the informant was referring to the Bahr al-Ghazal linked to Lake Chad, and not that linked to the Nile. Ari Musami is thought to have been one of the leading cattle traders in colonial Borno. See NAK, "384/s. 1, vol. i: List of Rich Traders - Yerwa District".

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.* For more information on the Dantata family, see DAN-ASABE 1987, pp.79-103.

³¹ Interview with Muhammad Musami.

became very rich and as some of his children could also conduct the activity on his behalf. During those years he confined himself mainly to his home in Maiduguri. He eventually stopped trading about ten years before his death. Although he left many children, only Muhammad Musami continued trading for a time. He too discontinued because of unfavourable conditions.³²

Usman Maidawa

To further illustrate the nature of trading activity in Maiduguri (as well as the commercial and social life of the town's Hausa community), during the colonial era, an outline of the career of Usman Maidawa is perhaps instructive. He was probably the richest of the visiting Hausa traders conducting business in Borno in the 1920s.

Maidawa is thought to have been involved in trade with Borno since pre-colonial days. Maidawa, who hailed from Madigawa quarters of Kano city, was by the turn of the century principally engaged in the long-distance trade between Borno and Kano.³³ While in Yerwa he initially used to lodge in the house of a certain Malam Shu'aibu, the maternal grandfather of Garba Kano, Maidawa's son and my main oral source on his father's trading career. Malam Shu'aibu is said to have been one of the householders that moved away from the old settlement of Mafoni to the Hausari ward.

Having married his landlord's daughter, Maidawa subsequently purchased his own house in Hausari ward of Yerwa, where he normally stayed whenever in Maiduguri on his trading trips.³⁴ He usually stayed in Maiduguri or Borno for five or six months before returning to Kano with the merchandise he had bought. This information, which was collected from Maidawa's son, Garba Kano, is supported by Tegetmeier's reference to Maidawa. According to Tegetmeier:

A very large trade is carried on by strangers, mostly Hausas from Kano, who arrive with donkey caravans of cloth and kolas and, after remaining for two or three months to dispose of their stock, return with cattle. Mai Dawa, the most important of these visiting traders usually remains in

³² Ibid.

³³ Interview with Garba Kano (born in Maiduguri in 1928) in Bolori ward, Maiduguri, on 26.11.89. Garba Kano, who happened to be my principal source on the career of Maidawa, is one of the surviving children of the latter.

³⁴ Interview with Garba Kano. The reason given by Garba Kano for his father's decision to stop lodging in his father-in-law's house, after marrying the informant's mother and instead buying a house in Maiduguri, seems to be purely cultural. Having given his daughter in marriage to his client, Malam Shu'aibu had by so doing added a new dimension to his relationship with Maidawa since in Hausa custom he had become a sort of father to Maidawa. That relationship, in addition to his ability to maintain a house in Maiduguri, influenced Maidawa to acquire his own house in Hausari. Garba Kano's mother remained in Maiduguri, while Maidawa continued with the Borno-Kano trade, having his main house in Kano.

Yerwa for about six months. A number continue their journey to the French markets but the majority dispose of their wares and purchase their livestock in Yerwa and Maiduguri. A few purchase in Mongonu where cattle prices are lower.³⁵

Maidawa principally brought into Borno items such as cloth dyed in Kano province, kolanuts, ornaments for horse decoration and red caps. During the return journey to Kano, he normally conveyed horses, natron and skins. Although my main informant on Maidawa did not mention cattle among the items that the latter carried to Kano, Garba Kano did however refer to cattle when describing the articles that Maidawa's eldest son, Saidu Na Maidawa, subsequently traded in.

Members of the Borno traditional establishment were among the customers of Maidawa. Garba Kano also estimated that his father used to arrive in Yerwa with about 50 donkeys and probably the same number of mules laden with merchandise. He is said to have been assisted by both servants and slaves in transporting and handling the merchandise. Even with the advent of motor transport, a change which Garba Kano clearly recognized to have revolutionized trade, Maidawa continued to engage in his traditional items - such as dyed-cloths, kolanuts, natron, etc.

Maidawa is believed to have died in Kano in 1947. His eldest son, Saidu, continued with the father's business in kolanuts, natron, cattle and hides and skins.

Range and limits of commercial activity

The expansion of the colonial economy coupled with Borno's geographic location partly explain the significance of the livestock trade, and more especially in cattle, among the Kanuri and Hausa merchants. During the 1920s, as the report of Tegetmeier demonstrates, cattle traders were among the most prosperous group of indigenous traders in the province. It is interesting to note that of the 35 leading indigenous traders in Yerwa (Maiduguri) in 1924, given in the report, nearly one-third (eleven) were involved in cattle trade between on the one hand Borno and on the other Wadai, Kano, and Lagos, while three were engaged in cattle trade between Borno and Ilorin and Lagos. Not only in Yerwa but also in the other major towns of the province, such as Potiskum, Monguno, Dikwa (and later Bama) and Nguru, cattle traders were among the most important group of indigenous traders. Emphasising the importance of this group of Borno traders, Tegetmeier indicated that:

A number purchase herds in Wadai, sometimes numbering as many as two hundred head, and sell them in Kano, Ilorin and Lagos - the whole transaction being carried out by themselves and without the intervention of any broker or middleman.³⁶

³⁵ NAK, Maiprof. 117/1925, "Yerwa Town".

³⁶ *Ibid.*

In essence, Borno's geographic position in relation to the Cameroon, Chad and Niger colonies made the province an important focus of overland commercial exchange. Apart from the huge numbers of livestock that the province possessed, thus serving as its principal trade item to other Nigerian provinces, Borno also acted as a transit route through which items such as cattle, natron, kolanuts, indigenous cloths and salt were exchanged between markets in Nigeria and the neighbouring colonies. For instance, this overland trade, engaged in by a number of Borno and Hausa traders, extended to cattle markets in Chad such as Abeshe, Atia, Bokoro, Bullong and Mao and to Nigerian urban centres like Ibadan, Lagos and Umuahia. A great deal of the merchants involved in this trade were also engaged in the wholesale transport of kolanuts from South-western Nigerian kola-producing areas to markets in Borno and the neighbouring markets in Chad, Cameroon and Niger. As indicated in Tegetmeier's and other accounts, the activity of some of the merchants extended up to the Nile valley.³⁷

The nature of long-distance trade engaged in by the indigenous merchants partly makes it difficult to determine their means with any precision. Referring to Yerwa's leading indigenous merchants in the 1920s, Tegetmeier rightly observed that, the traders themselves had hardly an accurate idea of their own means, since their capital was mainly tied down to goods and cattle in transit.³⁸

The search for profit and the withdrawal of the big expatriate firms from small-scale trading in up-country locations in northern Nigeria in the 1940s and 1950s influenced some prosperous indigenous traders to diversify. A number of indigenous traders, who were previously engaged in commodities such as kolanuts, cattle and local cloths, ventured into new areas like motor transport, retailing through permanent shops, and contracting.³⁹ An interesting aspect of the involvement of Borno people in the motor transport business relates to the women ownership of lorries during and after World War II. According to Rex Niven, the presence of the American contingent in Maiduguri during the war "brought great prosperity to the Nigerian ladies in the town - some bought lorries with their gains and were soon deep in the transport business".⁴⁰ This information is also reinforcing the extent to which the prostitution profession had by the 1940s become an important aspect of the

³⁷ NAK, Maiprof. 117/1925, "Yerwa Town"; NAK, SNP 8, No.106/1919: "Mr. H.R. Palmer's Journey from Maiduguri to Khartoum and Jeddah - Report", p.11; interview with Alhaji Muhammad Bala Dambatta (born in Dambatta in 1920) in Kumshe, Maiduguri, on 12.11.95.

³⁸ NAK, Maiprof. 117/1925, "Yerwa Town".

³⁹ NAK, Maiprof. 460, Acc. No.1339/s: "Northerners' Committee of Contractors, Bornu Province (1955-57)"; NAK, Maiprof. 1664, Acc. No. 4755: "Motor Transport Union, Maiduguri (1948-55)". Among the most prominent people engaged in contracting in the 1950s were Mala Garba, Ahmed Mai Deribe, Baba Bida, Mustapha Lawanbe and Bukar Ballabe. In April, 1948, fifteen indigenous lorry owners in Maiduguri formed a union in order to promote the interests of their members.

⁴⁰ Niven 1982, p.177.

social life of Maiduguri. As early as the 1920s, the town is reported to have contained some 330 prostitutes. Most of them seemed to have been accommodated in hostels owned by a certain Ngurgi, in Hausari ward, and one Audu Maidankali, in Zongo quarters.⁴¹

The involvement of indigenous traders in areas such as motor transport, retailing and contracting was an important turning point in the commercial history of Borno. The traders' entry into these new areas also involved a growing need for and use of modern banking facilities. But to engage in transactions with the banks, most Muslim indigenous traders had to compromise some religious injunctions, for example Islam's position on commercial dealings that relate to interest charge.

The effects of some colonial policies on indigenous traders

Despite Lugard's argument for imposing caravan tolls "upon merchandise in transit over considerable distances, as a return for the security and improvement of communications,"⁴² the negative impact of these levies on trade ultimately persuaded the British administration to abolish them in 1907.⁴³ One known anomaly in the tolls could be cited to show how long-distance traders might have been affected.

In 1904, the case of a certain Madugu Abubakar was brought up in Borno. This trader, who brought kolanuts from Lagos, arrived in Borno after having paid 25% instead of the 15% stipulated by the British government. It turned out that he had paid 5% at Ilorin, 5% at Bida, 10% at Zaria (including 5% for Kano where the trader did not go), and 5% at Hashidu (in Bauchi province). It was also in the case of that trader that the Borno Resident obtained for the first time proper clearance papers. The Resident promised the trader that on his return journey with cattle he was to pay nothing if he traversed two provinces only, or only 5% if he passed through three.⁴⁴

The unpopularity of the tolls could not have been greater than the arguments that came from some highly placed colonial administrators calling for the abolition of the tolls. In 1906, Northern Nigeria's Acting High Commissioner, Wallace, referred to a case from Borno in which he indicated that traders *en route* the province were taxed as much as 50% on the value of their merchandise. He also stated that most of the colonial officials charged

⁴¹ NAK, Maiprof. 117/1925, "Yerwa Town".

⁴² "Colonial Annual Reports, Northern Nigeria, 1900-1911", pp. 294-5.

⁴³ The opposition to the tolls from the Lagos colony administration and the Lagos Chamber of Commerce was particularly strong: NAK, SNP 15, Acc. No. 395, M2: "Papers on the Proposed Abolition of Caravan Tolls (1905)".

⁴⁴ NAK, SNP 15, Acc. No. 89: "Bornu Province, Report no.5 for May 1904".

with the responsibility of overseeing the toll stations had little or no idea of the actual value of the goods on which they were required to assess.⁴⁵

Apart from caravan tolls, which to some extent were short-lived, the long-distance traders had also to contend with customs duties and the problems of trading in countries with different colonial currencies, regulations and policies. At times those involved in trade across the colonial frontiers could easily become victims of the inter-European bureaucratic rivalry.

We may illustrate this kind of problem by citing the case of Alhaji Kolo, a Tubu trader based in Shehuri ward (Maiduguri) in the 1920s. This man, whose family is reported to have traded in Borno for generations, was one of the leading merchants involved in the transit cattle trade between Wadai and Lagos, and probably between Borno and Bilma. Alhaji Kolo, who seems to have spent a considerable part of his trading life in Borno, while at the same time maintaining a family and some property in Bilma, was the subject of correspondence between the colonial authorities in Nigeria and their French counterparts in Senegal and Niger. The correspondence appears to have centred on a letter sent to Kolo by the French officer in-charge of Bilma, warning him to come back to Kawar within a specified date or forfeit all that he had in Bilma.

While the Borno Resident took up the Kolo affair to express what he saw as a deliberate policy by the French to restrict their subjects from bringing camels, a valuable means of transport to the province's trade, for sale to Borno, the French tried to defend their action over Kolo as having been purely based on circumstances. In the end, it is not clear what actually happened to Kolo's property and family in Bilma.⁴⁶

The introduction of different colonial currencies in West Africa in general and in the Chad basin area in particular created some problems for overland trade. Perhaps to overcome some of the obstacles imposed by the colonial boundaries and distinct currency zones, some indigenous traders operating across these colonial frontiers resorted to practices such as smuggling, a phenomenon that still continues to haunt the independent states of the region. The business of currency exchange engaged in by some individuals (see below) was another way through which Africans operating across the frontiers tried to facilitate commercial transactions.

Methods and practices of commercial transactions

The central position of Yerwa in terms of the trade between the rest of Nigeria and the colonies of Chad and Cameroon as well as in terms of the movement

⁴⁵ NAK, SNP 7, Acc. No. 4545/1906: "Caravan Tolls and Canoe Tax - Abolition"

⁴⁶ NAK, SNP 10, Acc. No.119p/1920: "Haji Kolo (native trader resident at Maiduguri and having establishment at Bilma) letter addressed to by Commandant of Bilma as to his return"; see also NAK, Maiprof. 117/1925, "Yerwa Town".

of pilgrims created a favourable environment for the emergence of the hostel system in the town.⁴⁷ As already pointed out, the hostels were normally the places where the visiting non-resident traders lodged throughout much of their stay in the town. According to Tegetmeier, there were thirty-three hostel keepers in Yerwa in the 1920s.

More often than not the residents of Hausari provided accommodation mainly for Hausa merchants from Kano province who resided in the ward until they had disposed of their wares. Besides Hausari, in the 1920s, Zongo ward is reported to have contained several hostels chiefly occupied by Hausa people, and that a large compound owned by the leader of the Uda Fulani was predominantly used by his tribesmen. The hostels in Mafoni ward accommodated most of the Shuwa Arabs visiting Yerwa from the neighbouring colonies of Chad and Cameroon.

The sale of articles such as kolanuts, indigenous cloth, horses and cattle was conducted through brokers or commissioned auctioneers. Since most hostel keepers also acted as brokers in the disposal or purchase of goods on their guests' behalf, their business tended to be a lucrative one. Payment to the hostel keeper was made by way of a commission on the visiting merchant's wares. In the 1920s, sixpence was received by the hostel keeper for every gown sold by the merchant; threepence for each length of cloth; and 1% on kolanuts. The commission on kolanuts, known as *fatomaram*,⁴⁸ was paid in kind and only the best nuts were selected for the payment. The stranger also paid his host twopence on each piece of cloth he purchased in the European canteens. The hostel keeper is equally reported to have received commission on the goods in which a trader invested his money on leaving Yerwa. He normally obtained from 2/6d. to 3/- per head of cattle, 1/- per horse and 1/- per donkey.⁴⁹

The role of the hostel keepers and brokers brings us to the importance of credit system in the internal-overland trade. Many brokers, especially those involved in the cattle trade, were consigned items on credit;⁵⁰ they in turn disposed of the merchandise to the retailer (or the butcher in the case of cattle) through the same process. Through the use of credit facilities some brokers

⁴⁷ Pilgrimage to the holy land of Islam, being one of the five pillars of the faith, was undertaken by most wealthy traders, especially with improved security along the overland route and the coming of air transport. More often than not, the journey was supplemented with trading along the land route: see WORKS 1976, pp.170-2.

⁴⁸ *Fatoma* is the Kanuri term for the house owner, or in the context used here, landlord or hostel keeper. *Fatomaram* simply means a gift or commission for (or belonging to) the landlord.

⁴⁹ NAK, Maiprof. 117/1925, "Yerwa Town". Although Tegetmeier did not give any explanation, the commission on horse seems very low. It may have been that this rate was paid for poor quality pack animals.

⁵⁰ For an interesting analysis on the credit system in West African trade, see COHEN (1965), pp. 8-19; Bauer (1969), p. 384.

were able to generate sufficient capital to become traders in their own right. The case of Mustapha Turkudima of Lamisula ward, Maiduguri, is perhaps instructive here.

Born in Magumeri in 1925, he initially started trading in hides and skins. He abandoned that because of unfavourable returns, and became a broker in the local cloth of Hausa manufacture in his late thirties. The commodity was given to him at fixed rate by the wholesale traders, mostly Hausa from Kano. The price he charged for the commodity, while selling to the ultimate consumer, was mainly determined by the market situation prevailing at the time. Besides the profit he was able to make from the sale of the commodity, the wholesale traders usually paid him a certain percentage after every successful transaction. By the late 1950s he had become one of the leading traders of Maiduguri.⁵¹

Borno's transit position in relation to the neighbouring colonies of Cameroon, Chad and Niger as well as to the pilgrim routes stimulated the emergence of moneychangers in towns like Maiduguri. For example, four leading moneychangers were identified by Tegetmeier in the 1920s.

Although Islam forbids usury, a number of Muslims turned a blind eye to this religious prohibition by engaging in the practice.⁵² For instance, Tegetmeier mentions ten leading moneylenders in Maiduguri in the 1920s. Two among whom, Mabruka and Arima Kuseram, were women. Arima Kuseram was also a kola trader. Three among the thirty-five leading traders listed by Tegetmeier were moneylenders as well. These were Makinta Sanda, Murima Gana and Shettima Burma.⁵³

The practice of moneylending among the predominantly Muslim communities of northern Nigeria seemed to have become a matter of serious concern to some *ulama* and the traditional authorities, leading to some attempts at regulating the system. But in spite of attempts to deny certificates to Muslims who wanted to practice as registered moneylenders, some individuals still continued to operate underground.

A case in point is that of Mustapha Bintube of Shehuri ward who, in spite of being refused a certificate, carried on with the practice. Born in Dikwa in about 1916, Bintube started work in the Bornu Native Authority Works

⁵¹ Interview with Alhaji Mustapha Turkudima (born in Magumeri in 1925) in Lamisula ward, Maiduguri, on 11.ii.95; also NAK, 384/s.1, vol. i: "List of Rich Traders". Some dishonest brokers could also destroy many a successful trader. The case of Ahmadu Kanike (a Borno cattle broker based in Lagos during the 1930s) is important in this context: see above, information on Kyari Karda's career.

⁵² For more information on the profitability for engaging in this institution, see below.

⁵³ In 1949, a committee of seven (four Islamic legal officials and three leading *ulama* of Maiduguri) deliberated on the subject, and reiterated that "interest in moneylending is strictly forbidden in the Koran": NAK, Maiprof. 591 Acc. No.1851: "Moneylenders (1932-57)". In Arabic, the term *ulama* (singular *mu'allim*) refers to Muslim clerics or scholars.

Department in 1931, after attending the Craft School in Maiduguri. In addition to his job at the Works Department, he started moneylending the following year, and continued the practice for over twenty years.⁵⁴

The practice of building big mosques adjacent to the houses of very wealthy people, a fashion that assumes great momentum in recent years, is also reported on by Tegetmeier. The one built by Kyari Karda, apparently at the heyday of his trading career, appeared to have been the most conspicuous. In common with other individuals from the Shehu downwards, who believed that divine assistance is best attained through a certain category of people, the wealthy traders also sought the invocations of the influential *ulama*.⁵⁵ The Tijjaniyya brotherhood, the introduction of which to the Borno area could be traced to the early 19th century, had strong adherents among the indigenous Muslim merchants.⁵⁶

Parsimony on the part of the rich traders found expression in various ways. Apart from wearing their gowns for a shorter period than usual, "the lives and establishments of these richer householders differ but little from those of the poorer residents".⁵⁷ To avoid being overtaxed (in that the system of their assessment was mainly determined by their standard of living), wealthy traders of Maiduguri tended to live modestly, at least in the 1920s. Also in the 1920s, rich traders (perhaps with the exception of Abba Gana Kalabuh and Bukar Machiji)⁵⁸ are reported to have avoided getting married to women related to men of importance, for the simple reason that they made very expensive wives.

Native administration and colonial trade

The political and administrative changes initiated by the British in Borno had important implications for the organization of the market. In particular, the abolition of the old system of absentee landlords and the consequent creation of districts had the effect of expanding the operation of the market places. The presence of the traditional authorities and their retinues in the new local seats of government meant that these men of means could patronize trade in a wide range of goods.

⁵⁴ Interview with Alhaji Mustapha Bintube in Shehuri ward, Maiduguri, on 11.11.95.

⁵⁵ NAK, Maiprof. 117/1925, "Yerwa Town".

⁵⁶ On the strong root of the Tijjaniyya in Borno, see Louis Brenner's field notes collected in 1966/67. A bound copy of the notes is available at Arewa House Archives, Kaduna, catalogued under John E. Lavers's Collection.

⁵⁷ NAK, Maiprof. 117/1925, "Yerwa Town".

⁵⁸ Abba Gana Kalabuh, one of the richest traders of Maiduguri in the 1920s, was married to Shehu Umar al-Kanemi's daughter. During the same period Bukar Machiji, the second leading moneylender in the town, was married to the daughter of the Shehu, Sanda Kura.

While in Maiduguri, the district heads and other subordinates of the Shehu, who normally lived outside and only visited the town on special occasions, were important consumers of large trade goods also.

Furthermore, the relationship between the Shehu and some of the leading indigenous merchants was indeed very close. It is rather surprising that Tegetmeier overlooked this close connection by stating that although the wealthy people in Maiduguri during the 1920s paid periodic visits to the Shehu, and regarded him and his advisers in high esteem, they did not appear to have interested themselves in politics and life in court circles.

But among the leading traders mentioned by Tegetmeier six were clearly associated with the Shehu's court.⁵⁹ Besides Kyari Karda (about whom much has been said previously), Abba Kaza, later Shettima Kaza, probably the second wealthiest indigenous Borno trader in the 1920s, was a supporter of *kabuskema*,⁶⁰ which implies that he was a traditional title-holder. He was also later sent to Nguru as the *wakil* or emissary of the Shehu.⁶¹ Alhaji Lawan, another leading indigenous trader who prospered in the 1920s, was again a loyalist of *kabuskema*.⁶² Makinta Sanda, a trader and a moneylender, was a slave of the Shehu. He is also reported to have made many purchases on the Shehu's behalf. Abba Gana Kalabuh, another leading indigenous trader of the 1920s, is referred to as having been married to Shehu Umar's daughter. Mala Karfe, apart from being reported as a follower of the Shehu, is also mentioned as drawing a Native Authority's salary of £3/10-.⁶³ In an interview with the daughters of Mala Karfe, I learnt that he was subsequently offered the district headship of Gashua by the Shehu.⁶⁴

The above development appears to have been assisted by the attitudes, and at times policies, of some British officials in Borno, who encouraged the Shehu and his closest advisers to engage in trade.

⁵⁹ NAK, Maiprof. 117/1925, "Yerwa Town".

⁶⁰ The holder of the title of Kabuskema in the first half of British rule was probably among the most influential title-holders and district heads of colonial Borno.

⁶¹ NAK, Maiprof. 117/1925, "Yerwa Town"; interview with Hajja Fandi Shettima Kaza (born in Maiduguri in about 1908) and Alhaji Bukar Ari (born in Dikwa in about 1928) in Budum ward, Maiduguri, on 18.12.89. Hajja Fandi is the widow of Abba Kaza (later Shettima Kaza).

⁶² NAK, Maiprof. 117/1925, "Yerwa Town". Interview with Umar Na Alhaji Lawan (born in Maiduguri in 1915) in G.R.A., Maiduguri, on 23.11.89. Until his death in 1991, Umar, the son of Alhaji Lawan, was one of the richest and leading business people of Borno State. Towards the end of his life, he concentrated on construction and owning landed property.

⁶³ NAK, Maiprof. 117/1925, "Yerwa Town".

⁶⁴ Interview with Hajja Bintu (born in Marte District in about 1915) and Hajja Falmata (born in Nganzei District in about 1919) in Shehuri south ward, Maiduguri, on 28.11.89. The informants asserted that Mala Karfe had been a title-holder even before his appointment as district head.

For instance, as early as 1903 we find some of these "big" men being induced by the Resident to send a caravan to Yola where they were to exchange natron for cloth, coffee, tea, sugar etc. Even though the scheme proved discouraging to the men involved, as the Niger Company in Yola refused to buy the natron, it clearly indicates an effort by the British to introduce a section of the Borno society to trade direct with the Niger Company.⁶⁵

Apart from the above leading traders, we also have some individuals connected with the practice of moneylending, who were close to the Shehu's court. Tegetmeier mentions ten leading moneylenders operating in Yerwa in the mid-1920s, four of whom were associated with the Shehu's court. He refers to people of their category as the leading professionals in the business, perhaps to distinguish them from other individuals who were also in the position of lending money. He emphasizes that moneylending was a very profitable business, since the usual rate charged was 50% "irrespective of time, but the majority of loans are for a period of about a month".⁶⁶

A certain Wagani is reported to have been probably the biggest moneylender in Borno. He is reputed to have lent N.A. officials of all ranks and also to have been "on very good terms with the Shehu".⁶⁷ Bukar Machiji⁶⁸, apparently the second leading moneylender in the 1920s, was married to a daughter of the Shehu. It is interesting that this closeness to the traditional ruling circles had given Machiji a good opportunity to devise a strategy to encourage early repayment, since, as Tegetmeier has revealed, he falsely emphasized that the money belonged to his wife. Machiji also traded between Wadai and Kano. Shettima Harun, another leading moneylender, was until his dismissal a Treasury official in Geidam, thus indicating a connection with the traditional authorities. A fourth moneylender, Momo, is reported as a trusted servant of the Shehu.⁶⁹

It was probably through their association with some of the above individuals that the Shehu and other traditional rulers like the influential district head of Magumeri (Sanda Laminumi) participated in trade. For instance, on the advent of the railway in Kano in 1912 the Shehu and Sanda Laminumi were among the first in Borno to send cattle and sheep down to

⁶⁵ NAK, SNP 15, Acc. No. 48A: "Bornu Province, Report No.8 for October 1903". SNP 15, Acc. No. 48A: "Report Nos.9 & 10, November & December 1903".

⁶⁶ NAK, Maiprof. 117/1925, "Yerwa Town".

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ In Hausa, "*machiji*" (or *maciji* in modern orthography) means sNAK, e. Presumably such a nickname was given to Bukar by his customers because of the persistence with which he pursued recovery of his loans. Alternatively, the nickname may have been given to him because of the high interest he charged.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* In later years, Mustapha Bintube, referred to above, an N.A. employee and very close to Shehu Umar Kyari al-Kanemi's court, was one of the leading moneylenders in Borno.

Lagos from Kano in 1912 on the train. We learn that the Shehu made a profit of 90% from that venture.⁷⁰

The life and career of Sanda Laminumi are worth some closer examination. He was the son of Laminu Njitiya, one of the most powerful Waziris of 19th-century Borno.⁷¹ Sanda Laminumi's appointment as the district head of Magumeri appears to have arisen from his father's control over the Magumeri area as a fief during the previous century. Following the death of Sanda Laminumi in 1916, he was succeeded by his son, Abba Kyari (also known as Baba Sandabe), as district head of Magumeri.⁷² Although Osuntokun in his book, *Power Broker*, implies that Abba Kyari was dismissed as district head of Magumeri in 1918, another more authoritative source indicates that Kyari was still in charge of Magumeri by 14th October, 1919.⁷³ Kyari's son, Abba Sadiq, was at one time or the other district head of Magumeri and Kanembu. He became the *waziri* of Borno in later years.⁷⁴

Conclusion

This paper has focused on the role of internal-overland trade in Borno's colonial economy, with special reference to the indigenous traders in Maiduguri. In the first half of colonial rule, cattle traders were by far the most influential. As we have seen, it was rare for traders to concentrate on only one commodity, after selling their merchandise in a distant market, they thought it expedient to invest in something else which they could transport and sell at some profit. The search for profit, which influenced the local traders to invest in more than a single item, and the severe commercial competition that ensued among the different elements involved in colonial trade, forced many of these traders to partake in company trade. Moreover, the improved security and transport facilities had led to the appearance of many newcomers in the

⁷⁰ NAK, SNP 10, Acc. No. 95p/1914: "Bornu Province, Annual Report for 1913".

⁷¹ Laminu Njitiya died on 4th February 1871 (NACHTIGAL, 1987, p.300). Nachtigal, who was in Kukawa at the time of Njitiya's death, described that the deceased left an estate of: "several thousand slaves, nearly 1,000 stallions and many broodmares, some thousand head of cattle, 27 rooms with stores of cloth and other market goods, about 1,000 swords, 500 shields, several hundred muskets and carbines, 200 coats of mail and 20,000 Maria Theresa dollars in cash" (*vol. ii*, p.302).

⁷² NAK, Maiprof. 264/1919: "Magumeri District - Special Report on, by G.C. Whiteley, A.D.O."; NAK, SNP 10, Acc. No. 392p/1916: "Bornu Emirate - Shuwa Arabs with Special Reference to Konduga District, Report on by G.J.E. Tomlinson"; NAK, SNP 10, Acc. No. 145p/1917: "Bornu Province, Annual Report No. 58 for 1916".

⁷³ See OSUNTOKUN (1987), p.1, pp.8-9. Assistant District Officer G.C. Whiteley's report on Magumeri, compiled in 1919, reveals that Abba Kyari was still the district head of Magumeri (NAK, Maiprof. 264/1919: "Magumeri District - Special Report on, by Whiteley.").

⁷⁴ See OSUNTOKUN 1987, pp.121-2; see also MCCLINTOCK 1992, p.192.

profession. There was even competition between these newcomers and the older long-distance traders of the pre-colonial period. In that competition some of the established long-distance traders survived either because they generated sufficient capital to keep afloat and continue in the old items or because they were successful in their involvement in trade with the European firms. As a matter of fact, the role of indigenous traders as middlemen in the import-export trade increased with the progression of colonial rule.

It is true, as indicated by Bauer, that internal trade has proved an important training ground for some indigenous merchants who became dealers or sub-agents in export commodities.⁷⁵ But in Borno, unlike Hausaland, the failure of local businesses to continue for a long duration has made it difficult to see a repetition of the Dantata saga. In Borno, very few long-distance traders of the pre-colonial period have actually managed to come far and be transformed into great entrepreneurs of the Dantata type.⁷⁶ There are truly some important business people in Borno, such as Ahmed Mai Deribe, Umar Na Alhaji Lawan and Umar Ali, whose fathers are known to have been involved in long-distance trade, but one cannot say with certainty that extensive capital transfers were made from one generation to another as in the Dantata case.

References

- ALEXANDER, B. (1907): *From the Niger to the Nile*, vol.i. London
- AREWA HOUSE ARCHIVES, Kaduna, Class 7, No.35313 (secret): "Report on Bornu Province, January 1943 by Ag. Resident, C.R. Niven"
- BAIER, S. (1980): *An Economic History of Central Niger*. Oxford
- BAUER, P.T. (1963): *West African Trade*, 2nd. ed. London
- COHEN, A. (1965): "The Social Organization of Credit in a West African Cattle Market", *Africa*, 35, pp.8-19
- COLONIAL ANNUAL REPORTS, Northern Nigeria, 1900-1911
- DAN-ASABE, A.U. (1987): "Comparative Biographies of Selected Leaders of the Kano Commercial Establishment". Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, Bayero University, Kano

⁷⁵ BAUER 1963, p.385.

⁷⁶ The failure of businesses to outlive their founders in Borno could be attributed to: (i) shortage of capital or limited financial resources; (ii) competition from other trading groups, especially the Levantines; (iii) certain institutions in African trade such as brokerage have their drawbacks; (iv) poor state of communications, especially in relation to the kola and cattle trade; (v) the division under Muslim law of inheritance of the estate of a deceased, particularly where many children born of different wives are involved; and (vi) the acquisition of "Western" education by the children of the traders led them to become public or private employees of government, companies, etc.

- DUNBAR, G.S. (1970): "African Ranches Ltd., 1914-1931: An Ill-fated Stockraising Enterprise in Northern Nigeria", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol.60, no.i, pp.102-123
- MCCLINTOCK, N.C. (1992): *Kingdoms in the Sand and Sun: African Path to Independence*. London
- MUKHTAR, Y. (1992): "Trade, Merchants and the State in Borno, c. 1893-1939". Unpublished PhD. Thesis, SOAS, London
- NACHTIGAL, G. (1987): *Sahara and Sudan*, vol.ii: Kawar, Kanem, Borku, Ennedi, translated from the original German, with an introduction and notes, by Allan G.B. Fisher and Humphrey J. Fisher. London
- NIVEN, Sir R. (1982): *Nigerian Kaleidoscope: Memoirs of a Colonial Servant*. London
- OSUNTOKUN, A. (1987): *Power Broker: A Biography of Sir Kashim Ibrahim*. Ibadan
- PORTER, G. (1990): "Retailing in northern Nigeria: Patterns of Continuity and Change", in Allan M. Findlay et al., eds., *Retailing Environments in Developing Countries*. London, pp.66-84
- SEIDENSTICKER, W. (1983): "Notes on the History of Yerwa (Maiduguri)", *Annals of Borno*, vol.i. pp.5-15
- WORKS, Jr., J.A. (1976): *Pilgrims in a Strange Land: Hausa Communities in Chad*. New York

National Archives Kaduna

- NAK, SNP 15, Acc. No.19: "Bornu Province, General Reports for 1902"
- NAK, SNP 15, Acc. No.48A: "Bornu Province, Report No.8 for October, 1903 and Report Nos.9 & 10 for November & December, 1903"
- NAK, SNP 15, Acc. No.89: "Bornu Province, Monthly Report no.5 for May 1904"
- NAK, SNP 15, Acc. No.395, M2: "Papers on the Proposed Abolition of Caravan Tolls (1905)"
- NAK, SNP 7, Acc. No.4545/1906: "Caravan Tolls and Canoe Tax - Abolition"
- NAK, SNP 7, Acc. No.1271/1910: "Bornu Province, Annual Report for 1909"
- NAK, SNP 10, Acc. No.95p/1914: "Bornu Province, Annual Report for 1913"
- NAK, SNP 10, Acc. No.392p/1916: "Bornu Emirate - Shuwa Arabs with Special Reference to Konduga District, Report on, G.J.E. Tomlinson"
- NAK, SNP 10, Acc. No.145p/1917: "Bornu Province, Annual Report No.58 for 1916"

- NAK, Maiprof. 264/1919: "Magumeri District: Special Report on, by G.C. Whiteley, A.D.O."
- NAK, SNP 8, No.106/1919: "Mr. H.R. Palmer's Journey from Maiduguri to Khartoum and Jeddah - Report"
- NAK, SNP 10, Acc. No.119p/1920: "Haji Kolo (Native Trader Resident at Maiduguri and Having Establishment at Bilma) Letter Addressed to by Commandant of Bilma as to his Return"
- NAK, SNP 10, Acc. No.69p/1921: "Bornu Province (Bornu Emirate), Special Report on Uje District by Mr. J.R. Patterson, A.D.O."
- NAK, Maiprof. 117/1925: "Yerwa Town: Special Report on, by Capt. P.A. Tegetmeier, A.D.O., 1924"
- NAK, Maiprof. 462/1346: "Cattle Traders Complaints by (1930-32)"
- NAK, SNP 17/1, Acc. No.21325, vol.i: "Bornu Province, Annual Report for 1933"
- NAK, Maiprof. 591, Acc. No.1851: "Moneylenders (1932-57)"
- NAK, Maiprof. 1664, Acc. No.4755: "Motor Transport Union, Maiduguri (1948-55)"
- NAK, Maiprof. 460, Acc. No.1339/s: "Northerners' Committee of Contractors, Bornu Province (1955-57)"
- NAK, 384/s.1, vol.i: "Bornu N.A., List of Rich Traders - Yerwa District, 1957-59"

Appendix⁷⁷

The estate of Sanda Laminumi⁷⁸ who died in 1916 as district head of Magumeri. He was the son of Laminu Njitiya, one of the most powerful *waziris* (chief or prime ministers) of 19th-century Borno. Sanda Laminumi's level of accumulation, as illustrated in this appendix, is important for this paper since he was, together with the Shehu, among the first in Borno to start sending trade livestock by train from Kano to Lagos in 1912. Following his death in 1916, he was succeeded as district head of Magumeri by his son, Abba Kyari.

Family: one son, and one daughter, born of different wives. Two different wives (neither of whom was mother of either of his children).

Estate	Estimated value
Sixty-five slaves	£156: 0: 0
18,000 saas of corn	£129: 0: 0
35 horses, 20 big horse cloths ⁷⁹	£183:10: 0
16 coats of mail	£80: 0: 0
133 head of cattle, 4 donkeys	£200: 0: 0
80 gowns, trousers etc.	£128: 0: 0
145 pieces of different kinds of European cloth	£54:17: 0
76 pieces of native "black" cloth	£18:10: 0
Various articles of household furniture	£84:10: 0
	<u>£1,034: 7: 0</u>
Cash (all in British coins)	£842: 8: 0
TOTAL	£1,876:15: 0

100 heads of cattle were given to son four years before Sanda Laminumi's death. 26 heads of cattle were given to daughter four years before his death. £200 (in Maria Theresa dollars) was given to son four years before Laminumi's death. £70 (in Maria Theresa dollars) was given to daughter four years before his death. Apart from the above, we also learn that a large but quite unspecified amount representing cattle was "handed over to Magumeri and other *talakawa* (commoners) of which the ownership had either become uncertain owing to Sanda's patriarchal ways or had been forgotten".

⁷⁷ Source: NAK, SNP 10, Acc. No. 145p/1917: "Bornu Province, Annual Report for 1916".

⁷⁸ The -mi suffix in the name means "son of" in Kanuri: thus Sanda son of Laminu.

⁷⁹ Conceivably, the "big horse cloths" were the libbes or padded armour with which horses were often protected in battle: the "16 coats of mail" may be referring to the same padded armour, also used by riders.