

## CHAPTER 10

### PROBLEMS OF SLAVE CONTROL IN THE SOKOTO CALIPHATE

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Slaves in the Sokoto Caliphate, like slaves in many societies, were difficult to control. By its very nature, slavery is an institution that requires the use of force to obtain recruits and relies on coercion to keep slaves in their place. In the first instance, therefore, slaves had to be intimidated, which involved the omnipresence of terror. Slaves had to cope with this threat, and they did so by accommodating themselves to their condition as much as possible. Sometimes, however, slaves were pushed to the breaking point, and they struck out at their masters or tried to escape their bondage. As Robert Ross (1983) has demonstrated in his study of slavery in Capetown, the point at which slaves resisted their captivity touches a sensitive nerve in any slave system. Ross's insight is as valid for the Sokoto Caliphate as it is for South Africa.

This chapter examines the plight of slaves in the Sokoto Caliphate by focussing on how they struggled against their bonds. Such struggle invariably combined careful consideration of the conditions of slavery and irrational, often sudden, decisions that were prompted by the violence stemming from punishment and by the harsh reality of every-day life. Consequently, any analysis of resistance must also take into account the extent to which slaves were able to accommodate themselves to their servility.

Daily, often passive resistance was a common feature of this slave system, as it was of most others. Such covert testing of the chains, to use a phrase of Michael Craton (1982), was more or less consciously perceived in a context in which slaves sought to avoid punishment but nonetheless registered their discontent. An understanding of this resistance requires an appreciation of the forms and the severity of

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punishment, a level of analysis that individual slaves had to undertake themselves. Slaves could try to minimize the harsher features of their bondage most effectively when they understood the consequences of such expressions of will. And slaves knew that punishment could be severe if their masters decreed punishment. They also could maximize their material and physical conditions by taking advantage of the avenues of accommodation that existed in caliphate society.

And like other slave regimes, the Sokoto Caliphate maintained a vision of an ideal society that had a place for slaves and justified their bondage. While individual slaves committed errors of judgement and did not always act consciously in their own interests, the evidence on the extent of resistance demonstrates that many, probably most slaves tried to improve their lot by challenging masters to uphold their ideals, and if that failed, by running away or otherwise demonstrating their hostility to their condition. Most of the time, of course, slaves found themselves torn between accommodation and resistance.

In the annals of the caliphate, slaves first demonstrated opposition to their servile status during the jihād that brought that caliphate into existence. By claiming allegiance to the cause of Muslim revolution, slaves could seize the opportunity to assert their independence. Consequently, slaves played a major role in the initial uprising in the Hausa states between 1804-1808 and elsewhere later as the jihād spread as far west as the modern republic of Burkino Faso (Upper Volta) and as far east as northern and central Cameroon. This prolonged period of expansion and consolidation lasted for several decades after the first phase of the jihād was over with the conquest of the central Hausa states of Gobir, Katsina, Kano and Zaria in 1808. Here the appeal of the jihād to slaves is examined in four phases: first, the initial four-year rising in Hausaland; second, the campaign among the Gurma in 1809-10, which led to the creation of Liptako; third, the revolt in Oyo between 1817 and the early 1830s, which resulted in the consolidation of the emirate of Ilorin among the northern Yoruba; and fourth the civil wars among the Nupe from the 1820s to 1857, which ultimately resulted in the creation of five emirates, including Bida. In all these cases, Fulbe (Hausa: Fulani) clerics and pastoralists were a crucial component of the uprisings, comprising the leadership, but fugitives provided the fodder for the jihād canon. It is not possible to weigh accurately the relative importance of the various components in the jama'a (community); slaves were involved significantly enough to be visible, but to what overall effect is not clear except in these cases.

The struggle between slave and master shifted to a new arena as the caliphate was consolidated. When this shift occurred varied considerably - around 1810 for the central,

Hausa emirates but decades later elsewhere. The timing of the shift depended upon when each of the thirty emirates and numerous sub-emirates were founded. The caliphate extracted a huge slave population from its enemies as the jihād continued on the frontiers, and caliphate officials settled newly-enslaved people in the emirates. It gradually became difficult for fugitive slaves to justify flight on the basis of political and religious loyalty to the jihād. Those people captured in the jihād became political prisoners within the caliphate who had no recognized claim to freedom on the basis of religious conviction. Since the caliphate relied on slave labor to a great extent and used enslavement as a political weapon to extend its authority over much of the central Sudan, slaves had to find other ways to resist, unless they accepted the ideology of the caliphate and used adherence to Islam as the foundation for possible emancipation. Usually, slaves agreed to convert, if they were not Muslims, or reform, if they already considered themselves Muslims, but interpretations of religious orthodoxy varied and were, in any case, a necessary but not sufficient condition of emancipation. Hence a variety of forms of resistance continued and can be documented as a major factor in the governance of master-slave relations as early as the 1820s, within fifteen years of the successful conclusion of the jihād in the central Hausa emirates. Elsewhere, this evolution in the forms of resistance occurred only after the establishment of emirates and the settlement of substantial numbers of slaves.

Daily and often passive resistance, while difficult to document everywhere all the time, appears to have been common throughout the nineteenth century. Flight, in particular, was a major expression of discontent; only now slaves usually did not flee to the cause of the jihād but to the enemies of the caliphate. Slaves also participated in several rebellions, especially after mid-century. Of particular importance is the fact that some slaves joined Islamic reform movements, often millennial in character. The first of these movements began in the late 1840s in Kano; others occurred in Liptako in the 1870s and in Sokoto in the 1890s. The slaves who supported these movements escaped from slavery for political and religious reasons. They perceived their actions in terms of hostility to the caliphate and Islamic orthodoxy. The appeal to people on the basis of religion, which had been an essential feature of the jihād, thus broadened to include different and conflicting doctrines. Slaves and other dissidents were able to twist the ideology of the caliphate to justify resistance to the caliphate itself.

Resistance to slavery erupted most dramatically during and immediately after the European conquest (1897-1903). Slaves deserted on a massive scale, more so than in any earlier period, probably including the jihād itself, although the

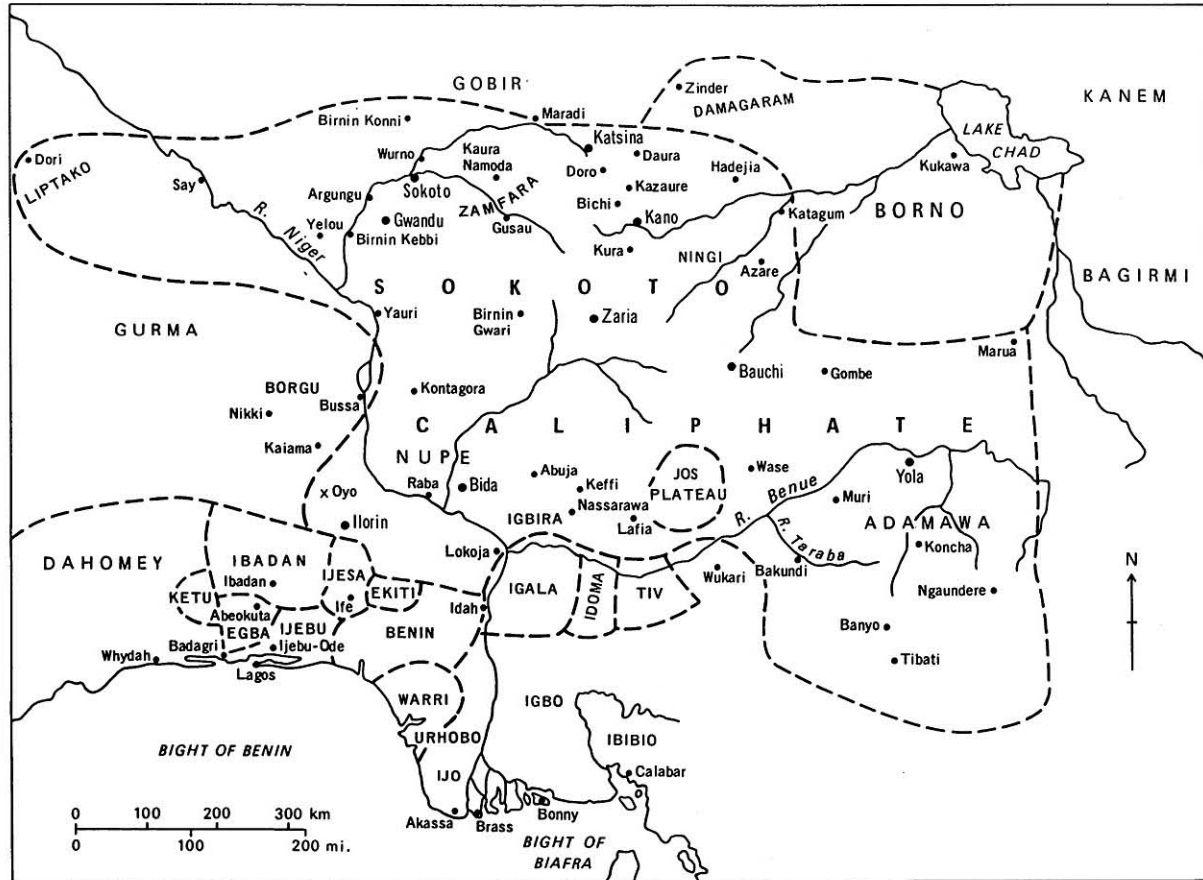
limited documentation on the period before the conquest prevents confirmation of this hypothesis. Those slaves who did not escape were able to renegotiate the terms of their servility, so that work loads and possibilities of emancipation improved. The changes that took place at this time were so significant that they require a separate study (Lovejoy 1986: 74-77, 82-91; Hogendorn and Lovejoy, forthcoming) and hence are mentioned here only to indicate that the process of resistance did not end with the colonial conquest. The focus of the present study, therefore, is the period 1804-1897.

### Slavery under the Caliphate

The consolidation of the Sokoto Caliphate between 1804 and the middle of the nineteenth century resulted in a complete reorganization of the political map of the central Sudan, and slavery was an essential instrument of that reorganization. The thirty emirates that were formed owed allegiance to one or the other of the twin capitals of the caliphate - Sokoto and Gwandu (Usman 1979:55; Adeleye 1971; Last 1967; Mahadi 1982; Usman 1981: 94-124). The largest - Fombina (Adamawa) - included sub-emirates under Yola, four of which (Banyo, Tibati, Rai-Buba, and Ngaundere) were as large as many of the other emirates (Abubaker 1977: 97). A number of factors explain why these emirates stayed together: first, common allegiance to the descendants of Usman dan Fodio, the founder of the caliphate, expressed through tribute payments, often and sometimes entirely, in slaves; second, acceptance of common Islamic legal and religious strictures, many of which were interpreted by Usman dan Fodio, his brother Abdullahi and his son Muhammad Bello; and third, aristocratic governments that drew upon Fulbe clan leaders and clerics - and hence was based on a self-contained and conscious ruling class.

Slavery was an integral part of state policy throughout the nineteenth century. The  Jihad  caused the enslavement of large numbers of people, even as it allowed some slaves who claimed to be Muslims to escape. An old tradition in the western and central Sudan, indeed throughout the Muslim world, allowed for the enslavement of non-Muslims, and the leaders of the  Jihad  fully adhered to that tradition (Lovejoy 1981: 208-209; Barbour and Jacobs 1985). Indeed, enslavement was a cornerstone of caliphate expansion and consolidation. It was used as a weapon to reduce the strength of caliphate enemies. New captives were both exported to obtain foreign goods and, more significantly, incorporated into the caliphate. Slaves performed agricultural labor, engaged in crafts, carried goods, tended livestock, undertook domestic work, staffed the administrative structures of government, filled the ranks of the military, and served as concubines in the often large harems of

Map 10.1 SOKOTO CALIPHATE, c. 1880



the wealthy. They were everywhere, forming a majority of the people in palaces and in the homes of merchants. In some rural districts slaves constituted the bulk of the farming population as early as the 1820s, and the size of this population grew dramatically, although unevenly, during the next seventy years. While a census of the slave population is impossible, Watts (1983: 191) is probably correct in suggesting that by the time of the European conquest there were several million slaves in the caliphate, between 25-50 percent of the total population (Lovejoy 1981: 201; 1979: 1280).

Because enslavement was state policy, sanctified by religion and law, the institutions of slave acquisition and distribution were well developed (Mason 1969; Tambo 1976; Hogendorn 1980; Yakubu 1985: 35-51). Most embarked on annual slave raids, and many emirates required conquered peoples to pay tribute in slaves. The merchant class, which became very influential by the end of the century, moved slaves between emirates and even exported them in considerable numbers across the Sahara desert and southward towards the Guinea coast. While the scale of these annual movements of captives has never been fully studied, it is safe to say that many thousands of individuals were captured and traded in any given year. The trans-Saharan trade alone involved the export of 3,000-6,000 slaves per year between 1810-1830, 4,000-8,000 slaves between 1830-1870, whereupon trade declined because of falling demand in North Africa (Lovejoy 1985: 94). It is likely that a trade of a similar magnitude was directed southward (Tambo, 1976: 204-205; Lovejoy 1981: 202-203). The internal redistribution of slaves must have been on at least the same order as the export trade. Tribute payments to Sokoto and Gwandu alone came to several thousand slaves per year by the middle of the century (Hogendorn 1980: 480; Fisher and Fisher 1970: 150-151).

Many slaves who were settled in the caliphate travelled only a few hundred kilometers from where they had been captured, except for those sent as tribute to Sokoto and Gwandu. In Bauchi, for example, many slaves came from the nearby Jos Plateau (Yakubu 1985: 36-48), while slaves in Zaria often came from Gwari country to the south (Hogendorn 1980). As a result, slave populations frequently included recognizable contingents of people of the same ethnic background. To some extent merchants and owners attempted to break up these potential communities of slaves, but such efforts were far from successful. Nonetheless, the pattern was for slaves of all backgrounds to learn the language of their masters - usually Hausa, the common tongue of the caliphate - and to adopt some of the rudiments of Islam. It may well be that further study will demonstrate that ethnic solidarity was a factor in slave resistance. The relative proximity of slaves to their homelands, however, did mean that escape to familiar territory was sometimes possible.

Aristocratic power translated into the possession of large numbers of slaves. The aristocracy had first claim to new captives; the state legally took a fifth of new captives, although in practice a larger portion - perhaps one-half - became state property, including tribute payments to Sokoto and Gwandu (Last 1967: 106). The emirates used slaves to clear debts, and the remaining slaves were divided among the aristocracy and its clients (Tambo 1976: 199-200; Yakubu 1985: 46). Even some of the official booty was redistributed to loyal followers and thereby also ended up in the control of the aristocracy and its trusted slave officials. Merchants also were able to acquire many slaves in return for credit advanced to the state and aristocrats. Traders also travelled to the field of battle, where slaves were inexpensive, and in this way even those merchants who were not major creditors could gradually buy more and more slaves (Hogendorn 1980).

Among the aristocracy and the merchant class, slave holdings could be very large, amounting to over one thousand slaves for the more important emirs and their major officials and several hundred slaves for the wealthiest merchants (Lovejoy 1979: 1281-1282). Without doubt there were many small holdings; most free adults, especially in the towns, appear to have owned at least one slave by the 1890s, a pattern that probably had been established decades earlier. The proliferation of titled officials and the growth of the merchant class suggest that the number of large slave holdings rose steadily in the course of the century. It may be that most slave owners actually had relatively small holdings, but there is no question that the people who owned the most slaves - aristocrats and merchants - dominated society and economy. Their activities and their access to wealth and power determined in large measure the nature of this slave society.

The treatment of slaves and hence resistance to slavery varied considerably depending upon the location of slaves in society. For purposes of comparison, the situation facing three types of slaves are considered: plantation slaves, domestics, including concubines, and slaves in the military and administration. Slaves in these occupations accounted for the overwhelming majority of the captive population, but the conditions of their servility differed to such an extent that they had few interests in common and certainly had a poorly developed identity as a class.

Plantation slaves seldom lived in the same compounds as their masters and often lived in their own villages in the country while their masters lived in towns. In the largest holdings, masters appointed overseers, who were sometimes slaves themselves, to manage plantations, so that slaves rarely came into contact with their owners. Field workers were often organized into gangs, who farmed the main field of the plantation from sunrise until the 2:00 P.M. prayer, when they broke

for a meal and then were free to work their own, small gardens. There were variations: some slaves had to work for their masters again after the 4:00 P.M. prayer, as late as dusk, but the tradition, as remembered by those who had an ideal of the work regime fixed in their memories, is that slaves only worked until "noon," i.e. the mid-day prayer. Sometimes masters may have let their slaves work on their own more, in return for which they took a portion of the harvest, but communal work on a central field seems to have been most common. It appears that slaves always had the right to their own labor at least one day a week, and some masters even allowed their slaves two days per week. The terms of employment varied, therefore, but the relative distance of slave from master was a common feature of the plantation sector. Most masters visited their estates periodically and often lived there for at least part of the rainy season. There is no evidence that plantation slavery changed much from the 1820s to the 1890s, although the plantation sector certainly expanded considerably in these decades as more and more slaves were settled in rural districts (Lovejoy 1978; 1979; 1981; Hogendorn 1977; Yanusa 1976; Yakubu 1985; Sa'idu 1981: 19-41, 105-140; Baier and Lovejoy 1977; Mahadi 1982: 461-463).

Domestic slaves, by contrast, interacted with their masters regularly. Masters selected the most attractive young girls from their plantations as well as among recent captives for their harems, and sometimes took slave children into the household for training as domestics. Hence there was some movement between plantation and domestic sectors. Concubines and many other domestic slaves could develop ties of dependency that were more or less perceived in terms of kinship. Even in large mercantile and aristocratic households, it was possible for individual domestics to establish strong ties of loyalty to their masters, mistresses or other free members of the household that were seldom possible for plantation workers. Most domestics were women and undertook the heavy tasks associated with the preparation of food, especially grinding grain and carrying water, and they also cleaned compounds and cared for children. Concubines, who usually fulfilled household tasks as well as provided sexual access, were a special sub-category of domestic, and the terms of their servility were clearly defined under Islamic law. Their children by their masters were legally free, a right that appears to have been widely respected; the women themselves could no longer legally be sold once they had given birth and were supposed to be emancipated on the death of their masters. As concubines, they could not terminate their relationship with their masters, and they had heavier workloads than free women. But they were exempted from certain kinds of work, especially agricultural labor, and often received material benefits, particularly clothing and jewelry,



that befitted women of the wealthy and powerful (Lovejoy 1981: 205; Yusufu 1976: 15-34; Fisher and Fisher 1970: 83-126).

Slaves assigned administrative and military duties found themselves in yet another type of relationship, one that approximated clientage. A master was also a patron, and the tasks that a slave performed were intended to promote the interests of the master. Most slaves in this category were males. They filled the lower ranks of the military, caring for horses, transporting baggage and foodstuffs, and staffing the infantry. Sometimes their ranks were drawn from young males on royal plantations, and in some emirates officials had their male slaves farm in the rainy season and join military expeditions in the dry season. Slaves also served in the administration as messengers, tax collectors, and retainers. Their numbers increased in the course of the nineteenth century, and as their influence grew they developed attitudes and behavior that set them off from the rest of society. From the perspective of free peasants and plantation slaves alike they represented the authority of the state. Most of these functionaries wore uniforms and lived in or near the palaces of the emirs or the large compounds of the aristocrats. It was possible for individuals to rise high in the ranks of government and the military, but they did so as clients of free officials who wanted trustworthy subordinates. Specific titles in the military and the courts were reserved for royal slaves, and the emirs and other aristocrats usually placed such individuals in control of their plantations (Yusufu 1976: 42-54).

Slaves contributed their productive activities, in the case of plantation slaves, their social subordination, in the case of domestics, and political intimidation, in the case of government slaves. Collectively, these slaves reinforced a social formation that relied on slavery in complementary ways. Through their labor power, plantation slaves supplied the foodstuffs that sustained the households of the aristocracy and the merchant class. Their contribution was essentially economic, and the product of their labor maintained the political ascendancy of the aristocracy and directly or indirectly contributed to commercial prosperity. Concubines and other domestic slaves maintained the households of the dominant classes, thereby helping to regenerate social relationships. The offspring of concubines were assimilated directly into the families of the merchants and aristocracy, while trusted servants assisted in the business of commercial households, including the marketing of slaves. Government slaves shared in the administration of society, and in so doing guaranteed the primacy of the aristocracy and the subordination of the free peasantry, the merchants, craftsmen, and the dependent, conquered peoples, as well as the rural slave population. Slave soldiers even helped in replenishing and expanding the slave population through enslavement. In different ways, therefore,

slaves assisted in maintaining the structures of their own domination.

### Slave Resistance during the Jihad

The political turmoil that accompanied the jihad (1804-1808) allowed many slaves to escape - exactly how many will never be known. Wars are usually remembered as a time when slaves were seized; slaves were booty for those involved. The victors more often bragged about their conquests than reported those slaves who escaped, and the losers blamed their opponents for their misfortune, whether or not slaves were captured or fled. Except in rare cases, such situations were not conducive to historical recording, but we can be certain that slaves did run away when the opportunity presented itself. Political instability was a chronic problem in the central Sudan; the jihad brought some peace and security to areas as they were incorporated into the caliphate, but the extension of the jihad beyond the Hausa heartland took many decades. Raids and counter-raids between the caliphate and its enemies were an annual affair, and during these battles slaves were able to escape.

The historical record for slave escapes during the jihad is fragmentary, both in the initial phase of the jihad in the Hausa region (1804-1808) and in later phases elsewhere. Nonetheless, all available evidence leads toward an important conclusion: fugitive slaves played a major role in its success. The early leaders, most especially Usman dan Fodio himself, mention fugitives in their writings, although they do so in a general way and do not provide eyewitness accounts of slaves participating in battle. For many of the thirty emirates that eventually were established, there is no evidence one way or the other at this time, and it can be expected that future research will uncover a variable pattern of slave involvement, particularly since in Fombina and some other emirates there were relatively few slaves in the pre-jihad societies that were displaced.<sup>1</sup> In Gurma, Oyo and Nupe, however, there is considerable information - oral data and eyewitness accounts - that establish extensive slave participation. In these areas, the jihad destroyed existing states in which there was a sizeable slave population which responded to the call for revolt. The jihad began in Gurma country in 1809-1810; it erupted in stages in Oyo from 1817-1835; and it took the form of protracted civil war in Nupe from the 1820s until 1857. These cases, which are better documented than any other areas of the caliphate, throw light on the probable impact of fugitive slaves in the initial jihad in the Hausa states of Gobir, Kebbi, Katsina, Kano and Zaria between 1804-1808. Whether or not future research will confirm the thesis

presented here is, of course, unclear, but the circumstantial evidence is strong enough, I believe, to warrant my conclusions.

A major complaint that sparked the jihad was that free Muslims had been and were continuing to be enslaved in the central Sudan. The protest against this practice was not new. Since the time of Ahmad Baba, who wrote in the early seventeenth century, some Muslim clerics had accused political authorities of this transgression (Barbour and Jacob 1985; Fisher and Fisher 1970: 30-31). Usman dan Fodio and his supporters repeated this charge, quoting Ahmad Baba and other scholars to strengthen their case.

The accusation that nominally Muslim governments were involved in illegal enslavement was not a protest against slavery as such, but the charge did establish a close correlation between Islam and freedom, on the one hand, and pagans and slavery, on the other (Adeleye 1971: 88-89; Al-Hajj 1979: 12-15). Such complaints reveal that the Muslim leadership perceived that Muslims had a right to their freedom, and that this right could not be denied slaves who claimed, with justification or not, that they had been enslaved illegally. By placing limits on who could be enslaved legitimately, the jihad leaders were interpreting slavery in a religious context that was to help shape the institution under the caliphate. Resistance to slavery thereby assumed specific forms, and indeed in accordance with caliphate ideology accommodation to slavery also was perceived within a religious context.

In his analysis of the social origins of the jihad, Muhammad Al-Hajj (1979: 13) established that fugitive slaves constituted one of the four "discontented elements in Hausa society" which were attracted to the banners of revolt in 1804 (the others being the settled Fulbe [Fulani], the nomadic Fulbe, and the free, Hausa peasantry). Shehu Usman dan Fodio attacked the "uncanonical enslavement" of free Muslims, especially Fulbe, who had found themselves caught in the eighteenth-century wars among the several Hausa states. Usman's community welcomed Muslims, despite their backgrounds. As early as 1788, Usman had secured a number of concessions from Sarkin Gobir Bawa, including the pledge "that nobody who responded to [Usman's] call be prevented from joining his community" and a provision for freeing political prisoners (Al-Hajj 1979: 15). Yunfa, Bawa's successor in Gobir, revoked both of these pledges. The Gobir army attacked the settlement of Abd al-Salam, a follower of Usman, in 1804, and seized many people. It is unclear whether Yunfa had enslaved these captives or was treating them as political prisoners. In either case, Usman's supporters had additional grievances and they retaliated by freeing their compatriots. Now Yunfa ordered Usman to leave Gobir, and the subsequent evacuation, known as hijra [Arabic: flight], was accompanied with an open appeal for

all Muslims, including slaves who were willing to convert, slaves who were already Muslims and free Muslims who had been illegally enslaved. Usman's regulations (1978: 117-120) for the hijra included,

the law concerning giving freedom to slaves of unbelieving Belligerents if they flee to us; . . . the law concerning one who has been found as a slave in the hands of unbelievers and claims to be a freeborn Muslim but has not emigrated: And the law concerning one who has been brought from a land where the selling of free men is common-place and claims to be a free-born Muslim.<sup>2</sup>

The extent to which this appeal attracted slaves is not certain, despite Al-Hajj's claim, but it is likely that in the ensuing jihad many slaves took the opportunity to escape, sometimes to the side of the rebels and sometimes not. Gimbana, for example, many well have been a center for ex-slaves escaping to the Muslim cause from Gobir (Last 1967: 14 fn).

In Kano, Katsina and Zaria, there is no direct evidence that slaves fled at the time of the jihad, but circumstances suggest that flight was common.<sup>3</sup> In all three states, as in Gobir, the old ruling class was dispossessed of its property as well as its political position. In Kano, for example, only one major pre-jihad title holder survived the uprising, and while his estates and official territories were confiscated, he was given control of new areas, albeit on a reduced scale that guaranteed that he could not foment opposition to the new regime (Mahadi 1982: 373). Since titled aristocrats had held large numbers of slaves, both in Kano and elsewhere, the removal of these individuals from office made it easy for slaves, especially on rural estates, to escape. Most dispossessed officials were killed or fled beyond the borders of the new emirates created by the jihad. Temporarily, at least, large numbers of slaves had the opportunity to assert their independence. Undoubtedly, the victors were able to re-establish conditions of servility over many, but the dislocation of the rural population was so considerable that many others could easily have melted into the ranks of the peasantry, joined the jihad forces or tried to return to their original homes elsewhere. Perhaps future research will provide details of the fate of some of these slaves.

In the initial phases (1809-1810) of the jihad in Liptako - the western-most emirate in the caliphate - the Fulbe "promised slaves . . . their freedom" in return for support against the Gurma. One fugitive who achieved particularly startling success was Yobi Katar, who attracted many escaped slaves to his regiment. Subsequent to victory, the Fulbe were

reluctant to honor their promise, and Yobi Katar and his followers deserted Liptako and proceeded to harass the Fulbe until Sokoto "counseled the Fulbe to live up to their obligation to liberate slaves who [had] helped them" (Irwin 1973: 155). This case comes to the attention of history because the Liptako Fulbe violated Usman dan Fodio's "law concerning giving freedom to slaves of unbelieving Belligerents if they flee to us." There must have been many more instances in which fugitive slaves gained their freedom without incident and hence remain unrecorded.

Fugitives and rebellious slaves also were a factor in the success of the  Jihad  in Oyo - the Yoruba kingdom that dominated the interior of the Bight of Benin until its collapse in the 1830s. Indeed R.C.C. Law (1977: 258) has argued that of the many factors contributing to the collapse, the "widespread revolt of the northern slaves held by Oyo slave-owners" was "perhaps most damaging to Oyo."<sup>4</sup> In 1817 the Oyo cavalry, based at Ilorin, rebelled against the central authority of the state. The military commander, Afonja, incited his slave troops to revolt as a means of increasing his influence. Yoruba oral tradition, as recorded by Samuel Johnson (1921: 193) at the end of the nineteenth century, attributed much of the success of this revolt to fugitive slaves:

All the Hausa slaves in the adjacent towns hitherto employed as barbers, rope-makers, and cowherds, now deserted their masters and flocked to Ilorin under the standard of Afonja the Kankanfo and were protected against their masters. . . .

As the slaves were mostly Muslims from further north, they welcomed the opportunity offered by Afonja, initially to support him, but eventually to join the  Jihad  and to encourage other slaves to do likewise. Ali Eisami, a Borno slave in the capital at the time, was just such a slave and fearing as much, his master sold him to the coast, whence he was transported to the Americas. According to Ali, "a war arose: now, all the slaves who went to the war, became free; so when the slaves heard this good news, they all ran away" - all of them except those like the unfortunate Ali (Smith, Last and Gubio 1967: 212).

These rebels, including a recognizable contingent of fugitive slaves, were responsible for undermining Oyo authority in many parts of the empire. In 1821, for example, an invading army of Fulbe, Oyo Muslims and runaway slaves attacked Osogun, the native town of Samuel Ajayi Crowther, who later became a bishop of the Church Missionary Society (Schön and Crowther 1842: 372-373; Law 1977: 257). Crowther's description of this attack is significant because his identification of a fugitive slave faction in the invading army demonstrates that people in

the Oyo empire recognized at the time that a slave revolt was in progress. There can be no better indication that slaves did not accept their lot. Islam provided a rallying cry for active resistance, if not revenge, against not only their Oyo masters but the Oyo political system itself.

In 1823 or 1824, the Muslim revolt turned on its initiator, Afonja, who no longer could control his troops. Afonja died at the hands of assassins. Now the escaped slaves and other Muslims formally recognized the suzerainty of the caliphate. The alafin (king) of Oyo identified the rebels as "his slaves from Housa" and told Hugh Clapperton (1829: 28, 39) in 1826 that they had "been in rebellion these two years," and now had "joined the Fellatahs," that is the caliphate (Law 1977: 259). Clapperton (1829: 204) learned that the  Jihad forces had earlier,

entered Eyeo, or Katunga, the capital, a great part of which they burnt down, giving liberty to all the Mahometan slaves, and encouraging others to kill their pagan masters and join them.

Oyo did not finally fall until the early 1830s. Clapperton's account has credibility precisely because he learned from the Oyo opponents of the  Jihad how the revolutionary army was using Islam to undermine Oyo power by appealing to the slave population. As in Liptako, fugitive slaves were a factor in the success of  Jihad.

Fugitive slaves became a pawn in the struggle for political supremacy, again in the name of Islam, in the neighboring province of Nupe, where a protracted civil war between Muslim Fulbe, Muslim Nupe and traditional claimants to Nupe political office lasted until 1857 (Mason 1983: 23-48; 1970: 82, 169). Malam Dendo, from a base at Raba on the Niger River, emerged as the dominant figure by the 1830s, but his authority was far from secure and Raba was eventually destroyed. In 1831, the Lander brothers (1832: vol. II, 71) (on their way to explore the course of the Niger River) learned that Dendo appealed to slaves: "All runaway slaves are encouraged to join the ranks on condition of receiving their freedom; and they are joined by a vast number from the surrounding country." MacGregor Laird (Laird and Oldfield 1837: vol. 2, 87), who journeyed up the Niger to Nupe in 1841 after the Landers had shown the way downstream, reported much the same: "The army of Rabbah is composed of liberated slaves, whose freedom is granted on consideration of their taking up arms." As the Nupe case demonstrates, the appeal to slaves could not guarantee political success, but as in Oyo, Liptako and probably elsewhere too slaves could exploit the political situation and establish a new life for themselves as free Muslims in the emerging caliphate.

The absorption of discontented slaves into the jihad presented new opportunities for escape. Usually slaves had not been part of political struggles, although it can be assumed that wars and dynastic disputes had enabled them to escape. Indeed slaves had to flee, for they were seized as booty. Re-enslavement had long been a principal technique of erasing the gradual assimilation of slaves into society. By appealing directly to slaves, asking them to join the Muslim cause, Usman dan Fodio introduced ideology into slave resistance, perhaps for the first time in the central Sudan. Now slaves could flee because they were Muslims; not to flee left them open to re-enslavement, as before. Moreover, escape from slavery during the jihad on the claim of Islamic belief was sufficient reason to be accepted as a free person.

#### Resistance and Accommodation under the Caliphate

How slaves responded to their captivity depended upon a variety of factors, including their position in society, their age and gender, their work regime, whether or not they had been born into slavery or recently captured, the geographical distance from the point of enslavement if recently seized, and the concentration of slaves who shared a similar identity. Concubines, field hands and soldiers anticipated different fates; their response to bondage was governed as much by where they found themselves as by their constant reassessment of whether or not their expectations were being realized. Any slave, no matter what category he or she fitted into, might well feel over-worked beyond what was considered customary. A concubine who did not receive as much clothing as her rivals could feel aggrieved sufficiently to attempt escape or to try to murder her master. A field hand always faced the threat of severe whipping or other punishment, whether or not he or she worked hard. It did not take much temptation to run away. A slave bureaucrat could not prevent his master from taking out his political frustrations on him, and he could respond to such behavior by absconding with his master's goods to a distant market town.

The extent of acculturation influenced the forms of resistance, not because slaves always acted rationally - although sometimes they did - but because individuals could not hope to blend into caliphate society if they were not sufficiently practised in Islamic rituals or if they did not speak Hausa fluently. Furthermore, women in urban households were usually restricted in their movements and had fewer opportunities to escape, although they were exposed more fully to Islamic culture than rural slaves. Even if they did escape, it was not acceptable for women to be on their own; they needed an accomplice, preferably a male or someone who could pose as kin.

In contrast, plantation slaves could not be watched as carefully but had less chance to acquire more than the rudiments of language and religious training. If they escaped they might have trouble disguising the fact that they were fugitives. These problems of resistance, especially flight, help explain why accommodation within slavery was always a factor in the thinking of slaves.

Despite these variables, broad patterns can be identified in the forms of accommodation and resistance. First, slaves acted differently in the jihad than they did later. Initially, it was possible to escape if slaves heeded the call to join the Muslim cause (Lovejoy 1986a). Accommodation to slavery had little appeal then, although undoubtedly some slaves stayed with their owners, and slaves belonging to supporters of the jihad did not necessarily benefit from the uprising. Second, later moments of political crisis that punctuated the normal course of the nineteenth century also affected slave actions. Dynastic disputes, civil wars, and foreign invasions presented specific opportunities and dangers that individual slaves had to confront, often unexpectedly. Third, dissent within the caliphate sometimes attracted slaves, and when individual slaves became identified with popular movements they got caught up in broader issues.

Despite the importance of specific historical moments, accommodation was usually necessary for survival. Each slave had to decide the extent to which he or she should give into his or her master's will. The dialectics of slavery involved accommodation and resistance. Individuals committed acts of resistance that ranged from the symbolic to the extreme when oppression and the indignity of slavery became overwhelming; often they acted out of desperation or because of a rare opportunity. Of course individual slaves could adopt behavior that consistently strained the bonds through sabotage, deliberate laziness and other forms of resistance, but usually slaves tried to establish a niche for themselves where they could benefit from the advantages of acculturation and gradually reduce their burden. In short, individuals had to come to terms with slavery while they remained in captivity. Although Michael Craton (1982: 14) - describing slavery in the Americas - perhaps claims too much for any slave regime when he writes that "the slave system was shaped largely by the slaves," accommodation to slavery was an active response by slaves who were trying to minimize their oppression, and to the extent that slaves stretched the opportunities for accommodation, they helped shape the slave system as much as they did when they resisted.

The institutions that allowed for the amelioration of status included: death-bed proclamations of emancipation, army service, government duty, concubinage, self-purchase (murgu), and the ransom (fansa) of third parties. Access to these



opportunities of course varied with the location of slaves in society and other factors, but the possibilities for improved status and complete freedom were real and widely understood. The institutionalization of these measures was cast in a specific Islamic mold which reinforced the religious component of caliphate ideology. Concubinage and emancipation as a religious act were long recognized in Islamic law and tradition, and it was to be expected that a regime that came to power on the appeal of religious revival should publicly encourage adherence to such principles. Administrative duty and military service too were part of the Islamic heritage, although bureaucrats and soldiers were usually not given their freedom as such. The continued servility of these favored slaves remained a technicality in many instances; their status as clients tended to replace their legal position in society (cf. Pipes 1981: 21-22). Concubines, too, remained slaves in law, but the restrictions on their sale and the promise of eventual freedom after the birth of children were safeguarded both in the courts and in public opinion. The fact that several sultans of the caliphate were sons of concubines served as a powerful example to be followed by the rest of society.

Favored slaves could lose their positions or be denied rights that had been acquired, and pious masters were not compelled to observe Islamic ideals through acts of generosity towards slaves. No doubt some masters even refused to recognize the free status of children by concubines. Illegal acts, inhumane treatment and irreligion probably frustrated the process of accommodation in numerous instances, for traditions recount that moral pressure sometimes had to be brought to bear on masters who violated custom and religion (Lugard 1906: 299, 300-301; 1970: 247; Lovejoy 1981: 233-238).

Self-purchase (murgu) was one opportunity for improving status, but it was possible only for male slaves who were fully acculturated and had thereby accommodated themselves to their subordinate status. If the master agreed - and he had the right to refuse - a slave could have his purchase price set and then work on his own account, paying weekly or monthly installments towards eventual emancipation (Lovejoy 1981: 233-234; Schön and Crowther 1842: 187; Ferguson 1973: 231-232; Lugard 1970: 232-234; 1906: 147-148, 302, 307-308).<sup>5</sup> Such an arrangement was often in the interest of the master, who received a fixed, non-taxable source of income that could be re-invested in the purchase of another slave. Since individuals purchasing their freedom were often skilled, their purchase-price was usually relatively high in comparison to new captives, and hence masters could even earn enough money through murgu to buy more than one slave. Murgu was not only acceptable religious behavior but a good investment. James Richardson (1953: vol. 2, 274) learned in the 1850s that many slaves in Kano were held under such terms:

these are permitted to work on their own account, and they pay him [their owner] as their lord and master a certain number of cowries every month: some bring one hundred, some three hundred or six hundred, or as low as fifty cowries a month. On the accumulation of these various monthly payments of the poor slaves the great man subsists, and is rich and powerful in the country. This system prevails in all the Fellatah districts [i.e., throughout the caliphate].

Richardson's report demonstrates that the institution of murgu was fully developed by mid-century. By then large numbers of slaves had been incorporated, even as a steady stream of new captives arrived to take the places of those attaining their freedom. Although most plantation slaves were not in a position to avail themselves of murgu, many domestic slaves were.

Individual slaves somehow found their niche along a continuum from successful incorporation, with some social mobility, to successful flight and the establishment anew of ties outside the master's community. The ideological framework of caliphate society encouraged accommodation and thereby submission to the master's authority. In theory, new slaves entered a period of tutelage during which they acquired the tools of religious and cultural assimilation. Yet, remembering other days, slaves smarting from present indignities pulled against their bonds. Clever slaves learned to adjust to a situation that promised amelioration but constantly tempted them to escape.

Daily resistance, passive or otherwise, was intrinsic to caliphate slavery and assumed forms that were common elsewhere. Slaves were pictured as lazy, untrustworthy, and stupid, charges that most certainly were true in individual cases, but when masters applied such judgements categorically to the slave population, then masters were inadvertently providing circumstantial evidence that slaves were doing less than was desired of them. As Imam Imoru, the learned jurist and scholar, put it:

People have nothing but contempt for slaves in Hausaland. The slaves suffer: people look at slaves as worthless creatures; they do not consider them human beings; and they treat them harshly (Ferguson 1973: 230).

In short, the lazy slave was perceived as not working hard enough; the untrustworthy slave was thought to be taking things that the master did not want him to have, and the stupid slave took longer to understand or to accomplish a task and thereby reduced efficiency. Slaves were even identified as being idiots or weak-minded; these were categorical allegations.

Such people were shashasha [unreliable], and with such people one was not supposed to be angry (Dalziel 1937: 42). But such behavior was often used to disguise forgetfulness, to escape punishment and to secure favor. To the extent that slaves displayed behavior that could be criticized, they were setting limits on what could be expected, whether or not their actions were intended or in their self-interest. Consequently, they placed restrictions on the degree to which they could be exploited.

Evidence for such passive resistance is fragmentary but nonetheless conclusive (Tahir 1975: 330). Proverbs demonstrate that sabotage and theft were common: hasada ba ta hana bawa rado - "envy will not stop the slave from getting his share", that is even if the slave has to steal to get it (Whitting 1940: 94). Sometimes slaves resorted to protective medicines to fool their masters, although the effectiveness of such measures is open to question. The plant Jussiaea suffruticosa was mixed with natron as one preparation. According to Dalziel (1937: 42), who compiled botanical information in the 1920's and 1930s, "a slave who does wrong rubs his body with the plant or sucks it with red natron to escape detection or to avoid pain if beaten for his fault."

Discipline problems also offer proof of resistance. Slaves were punished for failure to report for work, laziness and disobedience.<sup>6</sup> Slaves were whipped, tied in the sun, and restrained with ropes and leg-irons; female slaves were usually whipped out of sight of the male slaves but males were made an example in front of others. J. S. Hogendorn (1977: 376) describes the measures employed on Zaria plantations as follows:

Serious offenders usually were beaten or fastened to a large log in the sun. Depending on how long it continued, the latter method could be mild or severe. Beating as punishment for various offenses was done in the field with a supple branch of the kargo tree, which was said to cause more pain than a blow from a small leather whip, but serious flagellations (as for a recaptured runaway) were held in a special punishment house where the slaves were assembled to witness the event. Before it began, a formal announcement of the offense was made. Sarkin gandu [the overseer] did not administer the strokes; this was the duty of a special freeman.

As in other plantation societies, violence was an essential feature of slave discipline, whipping being a crucial means of social control. An individual did not have to experience a beating to know that it was preferable to avoid punishment.

Hogendorn's data indirectly confirm that slaves resisted their exploitation in ways not unlike the ways slaves reacted in the Americas and elsewhere. Such acts of resistance even led to attempts on the lives of masters. In the 1820s Clapperton reported that an Arab merchant in Katagum slept with a dagger and loaded pistol because he feared his household slaves; such stories among the merchant community were common, and it was female slaves who caused the most trouble: "the master being often strangled at night by the women of his household" (Denham, Clapperton and Oudney 1826: 132).<sup>7</sup>

As Hogendorn (1977: 376, 379) has shown in his study of two Zaria plantations, slaves were even sold for "bad behavior." Indiscipline, and therefore slave resistance, is difficult to quantify, but it appears to have been as common as one would expect, most especially through the practice of selling uncooperative slaves, usually under humiliating circumstances (Lugard 1906: 303). Recalcitrant slaves were accused of wanting to change masters; popular tradition even allowed for slaves to damage the property of another master as a means of forcing such a sale as compensation for the damage. Among the Tuareg who did business in the caliphate, cutting the ear of someone's camel was sufficient grounds for such a transfer of ownership (Baier and Lovejoy 1977). Despite the impression that slaves voluntarily decided to change masters, the more likely reason was that masters were tired of insubordination and chose to replace difficult slaves through sale. In Kano, Zaria and probably other towns, slaves were rubbed with ash and displayed in the market-place (Hogendorn 1980: 489).<sup>8</sup> The ash symbolized their sorry fate, for only recalcitrant slaves were punished in this fashion. Slaves sold as the result of bankruptcy or the division of inheritance were sold privately. And the ash was punishment, not only because it was a visible symbol, but because the slaves slept in rooms filled with ashes until they were sold.

The supposedly "voluntary" nature of these sales conformed with the dominant ideology of the caliphate, which pictured slavery as a benign institution that brought pagans into the Islamic fold. Masters were perceived as the reluctant party, even to the point that they are remembered begging slaves not "to take themselves to market." But the reasons that are remembered for such sales are not so different from the conditions of sales in other regimes in which slaves performed vital economic functions. Slaves "demanded to be sold" because of "maltreatment, too much work, lack of enough food, lack of clothes, cursing and beating:" these were the conditions that led to "the worsening of relations between a master and a slave."<sup>9</sup>

Through the rich proverbial wisdom of the Hausa language, masters recognized the inherent contradiction in a slave system based on violence and a religious doctrine that emphasized

leniency. Slaves were needed as workers; the problem was how best to maximize their labor. Another proverb explained the dilemma: "however useless a slave, it is better than a house without one" (komi mugun bawa ya fi gidan wolfi) (Merrick 1905: 30). "Uselessness" is often a sign of resistance to slavery. When possible, slaves worked slowly for their master, reserving their energies for their own farms and crafts. Hugh Clapperton (1829: 210), who was in Sokoto in 1827, learned that "disobedient slaves, who, on a complaint to the sultan that they will not work, are sent to prison."

Their only food is the bran or husks of millet and dourra [sorghum], with water; but their friends are allowed to give them food, if they have any. It is a filthy place, and the terror of the men-slaves of Soccatoo. The prisoners are taken out, two and two, every day to work at the walls, or any laborious work which may occur.

Similar prisons were found at Kano and probably other towns as well (Lovejoy 1981: 232-233; Yunusa 1976: 23-24).<sup>10</sup> Masters could dictate the terms of imprisonment and periodically checked on their slaves to see if they had been "broken."

The severity of slave discipline can be an indication of the extent of resistance or the sadism of individual masters or both, and certainly the treatment of slaves varied more with the temperaments of individual masters than with time. At least the available evidence does not suggest changes over time. Harsh treatment had long been an established feature of slavery. Heinrich Barth, who was in Kano in 1851, learned that local Arab merchants treated their slaves severely, in contrast to other slave owners, whom Barth thought were more lenient. But Barth observed Arab owners and only heard about the more "mild" treatment of other slaves (Barth 1857-1859: vol. I, 527). The story of one slave, recaptured in Keffi after escaping from Bauchi in the 1870s or early 1880s, makes it clear that punishment could be severe on the estates of aristocrats, although the fact that this slave had been a fugitive complicates the analysis. The slave recounted to Sir H. H. Johnston (1889: 111), "when I failed to do good work, I got many a flogging from the overseer of the governor's plantations; and one day it was said to me that as I was a worthless slave I should be sold in the market." Other cases from Kano also demonstrate that conditions on royal plantations were not always pleasant. An overseer (sarkin gandu) had the power to get rid of a slave he did not like, although final authority to sell slaves rested with the master or his manager.<sup>11</sup> Shortly after the British conquest of Sokoto in 1903, Resident Temple had to deal with the plight of a boy whose hands were so tightly bound that one fell off and the other was maimed.<sup>12</sup>

Although Temple thought that such cases were uncommon, it is unlikely that he was in a position to judge. Considering British attitudes toward slavery, it is a wonder even this case came to the Resident's attention. Oral traditions, which date to the late nineteenth century, emphasize that wealthy merchants generally pushed their slaves harder than aristocrats, but even this distinction did not always apply.<sup>13</sup>

### Flight from Slavery under the Caliphate

Although many slaves took the opportunity of joining the jihād as a means of asserting their freedom, captives who were seized in the holy war were obviously not able to claim that they deserved freedom, unless they could prove the difficult case that they were Muslims before they were enslaved and hence were being held illegally. And conversion to Islam after capture was not grounds for emancipation. By then, slaves either had to adjust to their servility or wait for the chance to flee; that is, an appeal for freedom on the basis of religion only worked while the jihād was in progress. Thereafter, slaves had to adopt other strategies of resistance. Because of geography and political insecurity, flight continued to be one such strategy, so that there was a steady trickle of slaves escaping from their bondage throughout the nineteenth century.

The geography of the central Sudan facilitated escape. The open savanna offered few natural barriers that could contain slaves. Even the Niger and Benue Rivers were not serious obstacles to slaves who needed to cross over to reach home country. As Clapperton (1829: 143-144) noted in 1827, "Those who are taken when grown-up men or women, and even boys and girls, run whenever an opportunity offers, and, whenever they can, they take their owner's goods or cattle to assist them on their journey. Instances of the kind happened every night." Clapperton was at Kulfu, in northern Nupe, which was the principal market-town between the Hausa cities and the Niger River in the 1820s. Similar observations could be made for many other places in the caliphate at different times in the nineteenth century,<sup>14</sup> especially during periods of political turmoil, such as the Zamfara uprising (1817-1818), the Hadejia rebellion under Buhari (1848-1863), the Bauchi civil war (1881-1882), the Kano civil war (1893-1894), and succession disputes elsewhere (e.g., Kano 1819; Zaria 1873, 1897; Yola 1872) (Mahadi 1982: 388-393; Adeleye 1971: 61). Additional opportunities - indeed opportunities bordering on necessity - presented themselves because of raiding from caliphate enemies and revolts among the peasantry. Argungu (90 km west of Sokoto), Maradi (75 km north of Katsina), Ningi (between Kano and Bauchi), Abuja (in southern Zaria, 140 km east of Bida), Damagaram (200 km north of Kano), and other strongholds

harassed the caliphate periodically, often staging raids deep into caliphate territory. Although slaves in the path of these forays were seized, it can be assumed that many others were not captured but took the chance to flee instead.

The major problems for fugitive slaves were distance and insecurity on the frontiers of the caliphate. It was often difficult for slaves to return to home villages, even if it was known that a village still existed. Journeys for many new captives were long, and recent captives could not easily retrace their steps, even if they knew the way. The best strategy for masters was to buy slaves whose homes were at a distance, as Frederick Schön (Schön and Crowther 1842: 187) learned in Nupe in the 1840s: "The Egga people seldom make or purchase slaves from their own, that is, the Nufi nation; but always prefer purchasing such whose native countries are far away." Nonetheless, large expanses of territory were sparsely populated, and fugitives could hide from caliphate authorities. It was more difficult to become attached to a functioning community, although one can assume not impossible. Insecurity continued to be a problem, whether slaves were moved considerable distances from the point of capture or not. The effect of caliphate raids and the counter-raids from enemy fortifications was that huge tracts of land were simply unsafe to live in. Undoubtedly, individuals lived by foraging the countryside, and bandits, some of whom must have been fugitive slaves, plagued the highways. Even so, raiding parties prevented the consolidation of independent settlements, except in hill retreats, and refugees from the caliphate armies soon occupied such sanctuaries as the jihad spread outward.

References to fugitives are scattered throughout the available documentation. Given the nature of the data, it is not possible to establish the incidence of such escapes or to determine if the number of escapes increased or decreased at different periods. But the haphazard record does suggest that flight was a major problem. A significant portion of the surviving correspondence between the various emirates concerns efforts to track down fugitive slaves (Aliyu 1974: 634-642; Adeleye 1971: 88; Backwell 1927: 17, 36-37; Last 1967: 199).<sup>15</sup> These letters accused people of being fugitives, asked for assistance in locating missing slaves, and announced that individuals had fled. Correspondence reveals that the government of Bauchi, for example, was in regular contact with Sokoto, Misau, Gombe, Katagum, and, to a lesser extent, Muri about such matters. Forty percent of over three hundred surviving Bauchi letters relate to fugitives (Yakubu 1985: 77). Similar letters have also been found among the correspondence between Sokoto and other emirates. Such evidence establishes not only that escapes were common but that masters reported flights to the authorities. The correspondence largely

concerns the escape of individual slaves, although small groups of slaves are mentioned on occasion.<sup>16</sup>

Slaves sometimes were physically confined to prevent flight. Imam Imoru observed, "the owner is not prevented from tying [a slave] up to prevent him from running away" (Ferguson 1973: 231). Indeed, as one proverb advised, "the shackle is the medicine for a runaway slave" (Ferguson 1973: 330). As S. Passarge (1895: 486-487) observed in Adamawa in 1894: "slaves are often employed for heavy labor, especially work in the fields, are often treated badly - at least regarding their food - and are sold frequently. Sometimes they even have to work in chains in order to prevent them from escaping." Masters resorted to special charms to prevent flight (Yunusa 1976: 18).<sup>17</sup> They put medicines in the food and drink of slaves, and sometimes smoked the rooms in which new slaves were to sleep. Such measures reputedly confused the slaves so that they would not know which direction to follow should they try to escape. Slaves knew that these preventative measures were taken, but it is unclear to what extent slaves believed them to be effective.

Even concubines fled, although they were supposed to be treated better than most slaves because of the close relationship with their masters. Again proverbial wisdom draws attention to the problem: kuyanga, yi magana, ce ba ki kara kai taki bakin marmaro: "Female slave speak! Say that you will never take manure to the stones bordering the farm (i.e., escape)" (Merrick 1905: 27). Concubines who had given birth to children by their master had greater difficulty in fleeing than newly enslaved women, but they still left on occasion. Concubines were kept under close surveillance precisely because escape was a possibility.<sup>18</sup>

Sometimes slaves fled to nearby plantations, where they attempted to get other masters to intervene on their behalf. The owner tried to negotiate the return of a fugitive, but if the slave refused the two slave owners struck a bargain that involved compensation for the slave. Such an arrangement was known as taralaya. According to some traditions, slaves committed a criminal offence by escaping because they caused owners to lose property (Yunusa 1976: 41); escape was also considered proof of unbelief.<sup>19</sup>

Johnston's fictional saga of the fugitive slave mentioned above provides useful information on one strategy for escape; he recounts how the slave donned his master's clothing, pretending to be a Hausa merchant and feeling safe in his recent conversion to Islam. The account, apparently based on information Johnston (1889: 109-111) gathered in Calabar, reveals the difficulty of such disguises; the unfortunate fugitive was apprehended in Keffi because he could not speak Hausa properly, and the Fulfulde he knew betrayed the accent of a slave. His



new religion provided him little solace during this difficult time.

Oral accounts conflict on the frequency of discovery; some traditions insist that once a slave had escaped he was gone forever. As Baba of Karo claimed (Smith 1954: 43), "you would hunt and hunt for them, and then one day you would hear that someone had seen them in a far-away town. If anyone questioned him the slave would say he had been sent to do an errand for his master. You never caught them again." But Alhaji Mahumdu Dayyido recounts a procedure in Kano that was sometimes effective:

When slaves ran away, the owner could make an announcement and describe the slaves. So wherever they were found, they were taken back to the owner. There was a compound built in Kano where run away slaves were put when they were caught.<sup>20</sup>

Imam Imoru (Ferguson 1973: 231) describes what happened when recaptured:

When a slave runs away, and is found, he is punished. He is not killed, but he is tied up and humiliated very much: no elder or important person will go to his aid because running away is a grave offense for a slave.

The timing of escapes not only related to punishment or threatened punishment, but also to the fear of sale and the inability of masters to maintain discipline and probably the agricultural cycle and other factors relating to work load. As Baba of Karo recounted, eighty of her grandfather's 130 slaves fled when he died. It may be that the anticipated division of the inheritance instilled some apprehension, since some slaves may well have had to have been sold to allow for equitable shares. It may well be, as Baba claimed (Smith 1954: 39), simply that "the slaves saw their chance and ran away" and that the distress in the family merely provided an opportunity. In Liptako, slaves sought refuge in Tera (a Songhay center to the east), Diagourou (the base of a renegade Muslim of the same name), and Koala (a Gurma town south of Liptako), among other places (Irwin 1981: 17). Although slaves ran away throughout the nineteenth century, the reign of Emir Sori Hama (1832/3-1860/1) is remembered in particular as a time when "many slaves deserted masters they thought too weak or too poor and attached themselves to raiders" (Irwin 1973: 146 fn).

Large-scale desertions also occurred as the result of political turmoil and probably because of famine and drought. In one case, which we know about thanks to the presence of Heinrich Barth shortly after a revolt against the caliphate in the late 1840s, the flight of slaves can be identified in

Dallol Fogha, the location of a salt-making industry in western Kebbi. The rebels, centered at the Dendi stronghold of Yelou, raided Dallol Fogha a number of times, concentrating their attacks in particular on the town of Kawara-Debe. As a result, according to Barth (1857-1859: vol. 3, 165), the local Fulani slave owners of the town "lost the whole of their slaves, who, under such circumstances, had run away in a body." The fate of these slaves is unknown. They may have joined Dendi resistance or they may simply have fled elsewhere. Their actions, nonetheless, demonstrate that slaves took advantages of opportunities to escape whenever feasible.

It was still possible to escape to the side of the caliphate after the  Jihad , if fugitives came from areas outside the caliphate. Several groups of slaves arrived in Liptako in the nineteenth century, for example. According to Paul Irwin (1981: 17-18),

The Mallebe of Malere, who ran from the Tuareg in the Oudalan, and the Bargarebe or Bargabe of Bargare, who fled from the Silube of Barga in northeast Mossi country, came to Liptako in this way. More numerous than either were the Bellabe, who had been Tuareg slaves. They came to Liptako from the Oudalan in many different groups and founded the villages of Kouri, Oulo, and Sounkoum, where they had their own leaders, and separate quarters of several Fulbe-ruled villages, including Dantchadi, Koria, and Malbo. Some say that their migration and their acceptance of Islam made the Bargarebe, the Mallebe, and the Bellabe free; others deny it. In any event they could not be bought and sold by the emirs, who were their protectors, or by anyone else.

As can be seen from the Liptako example, slaves ran both ways, crossing political frontiers to their advantage. This pattern probably reflected a long tradition in the northern savanna. Caliphate policy in encouraging its continuation was largely an extension of official attitudes towards slaves of belligerents during the  Jihad .

Despite their intermediate status as clients of the Liptako emir, the Bargarebe, Mallebe and Bellabe had severed the ties to their masters through flight and in the name of Islam. It is likely that a similar phenomenon occurred in other parts of the caliphate. Whole communities of former slaves were found in Katsina and Kano Emirates; these people - Agalawa and Tokarawa - trace their ancestry to Tuareg society, and while their traditions generally recount a peaceful resolution of their slave status, it is possible that many Agalawa and Tokarawa are descended from fugitives.<sup>21</sup>

Slave revolts and mass escapes were rare in the nineteenth century, if available evidence is to be believed. Because it was relatively easy for individual slaves to flee, conspiracies on a large scale were unnecessary, unless ethnic loyalties kept slaves together until group action could be instigated or, as in Oyo, revolt could be harnessed to the jihad. Still there were at least two revolts after the middle of the nineteenth century. One such uprising occurred in Wase sometime in the 1850s or 1860s, when slaves rebelled against the emir (Aliyu 1974: 600-601, 707-708; Lovejoy 1981; 230, 239 fn).<sup>22</sup> Apparently these slaves were primarily agricultural workers; their leader was entitled Sarkin Gandu, who was usually an overseer on a plantation. The slaves were part of the inheritance of Madaki Hassan, who left five thousand slaves when he died. Of these, one thousand went to the emir of Bauchi, the overlord of Wase, one thousand went to Hassan's sons, and the remaining three thousand went to the new emir of Wase, Sarkin Dutse Abdu.

According to Asalin Mutanen Yelwa Kasar Chandam, the written account of the revolt, the slaves rebelled three months after Abdu died and his son Hamman acceded to the emirship. The slaves - many of whom may have been Jarawa from the Dass area - sought the support of the local peasantry (the account does not state whether or not they received it), and they invited neighboring pagans to join them. Some - the Yergam and the Jukun of Wase Tofa - did, but Kanam and others refused. In the battle of Wase River, the leader of the rebellion, Sarkin Gandu Usmanu, was killed - it is claimed by the hand of Sarkin Wase Hamman himself. The rebellious slaves fled on the death of their leader and for a while lived among the Yergam, but they subsequently withdrew because the Yergam began to seize their children for sale. They then went to Shendam where they were warmly received by the Ankwe ruler. This alliance also collapsed, and from Shendam they moved on, founding their own town at Yelwa. As an independent center, Yelwa entered into local politics. For a time Shendam and Wase joined forces to wage war on Yelwa but were held off. Eventually Yelwa made peace with Wase and for a period assisted Wase in war. Yelwa then became involved in a Shendam succession dispute and appears to have backed the wrong side. One of the Shendam claimants called upon Wase for assistance, and in a battle the Yelwa people suffered severe casualties at the hands of Wase. Wase was pressing hard on Yelwa at the time the British arrived and ended the saga.

The Yelwa refugees had experienced quite a transformation; enslaved in Wase, they had successfully staged a revolt and entered into a series of alliances, including one with Wase itself. This saga tells us much about resistance to slavery, for the Yelwa community more closely approximates the maroon settlements of the Americas than most centers of refuge in Africa. Maroon settlements struggled to establish an

independence from the dominant slave society, even to the point of concluding alliances with the political authorities of that society to return fugitives; security was more important than fighting slavery as an institution. The Yelwa fugitives were also preoccupied with security, but their strategy differed from the maroons. They achieved a status impossible to attain in the Americas, and instead of cooperating with a slavocracy, they became involved in regional politics on the basis of equality. Slavery was no more threatened than in the Americas but for different reasons.

A second mass escape took place near Bauchi in about 1870, when "an establishment of 700 slaves of the serakuna [rulers] at Bauchi broke into open revolt and 350 of them found their way to Dugurie, which was under Kanna [Kanam], and settled there calling their village Yuli,"<sup>23</sup> located in southern Bauchi. The community had some difficulty maintaining its autonomy; its inhabitants were subject to kidnapping from the ruler of Duguri, just what the Wase refugees experienced among the Yergam. Because of these violations, the history of the village came to the attention of the British. The people of Yuli appealed for protection in 1902, shortly after the consolidation of British rule in Bauchi. It may be that common ethnicity had kept these slaves together, just as the revolt at Wase may have been based on a single contingent of related slaves. Both cases are exceptional only in the scale of activity, however. The aim of these revolts was identical to that of the individual fugitive - escape rather than hopeless confrontation with the slave regime. Flight, not rebellion, was the usual response of slaves who had been pushed too far.

### Millennial Movements and Slave Resistance

In a society in which religion was a strong motivation, it is not surprising that slave resistance continued to be expressed in religious terms. The  Jihad  associated religious appeal and resistance; Usman dan Fodio had summoned enslaved Muslims. Thereafter adherence to Islam became the principle justification for enslavement, and refusal to convert assumed political dimensions. Dissent in this context also sometimes wore a religious cloak. The religious message promised a better society, freed from corruption and oppression. In the best of times, political leaders often fail to deliver on such promises. The nineteenth century was hardly the best of times in the central Sudan. Usman dan Fodio and other caliphate leaders had to contain this sentiment of a purified world - not because they did not want it but because the real problems of political consolidation were too great. Popular expression of discontent added to the trouble because it assumed millennial dimensions in the form of Mahdism. Shehu Usman denied that he

was the expected Mahdi, even though there was widespread belief that the thirteenth century of the Muslim era would witness the appearance of such a figure, but his denial hardly ended speculation. Mahdism was to remain a potent force throughout the nineteenth century and indeed thereafter (Al-Hajj 1973). Even more extreme movements also developed; the most important being the Isawa sect, which, like Mahdism, promised a purge of the world, only in the name of Isa (Jesus) (Patton 1975, 1981; Linden 1975, 1982). Both Mahdists and the Isawa were persecuted, although the Isawa suffered more. While the Mahdists found some adherents among the aristocracy, the Isawa only appealed to non-Fulbe. Both movements found strong support among the slave population.

The Isawa were closely associated with resistance centered on the Ningi hills between Kano and Bauchi. Hamza, a popular Islamic mystic from Tsakuwa, gathered a local following in southeastern Kano Emirate in the 1840s which refused to pay taxes, other than the zakka, the religious tithe (Patton 1975: 126-179; Linden 1982: 79-98). In 1848 Hamza was forced to evacuate Tsakuwa and retreated to the hills, where he and his successors fashioned an alliance with local pagans against the caliphate. The Kano authorities continued to persecute the Isawa; the leader of the sect in Kano city, Malam Ibrahim, was impaled as a heretic in the market in about 1855, and the remaining Isawa dispersed to a number of places, including Tsakuwa (and ultimately Ningi) and a village near Zaria. Hamza, despite the fact that he was a slave owner himself, followed the now established tradition of appealing to slaves to escape in the name of Islam. Eduard Vogel, who was in Bauchi in 1855, learned that the Isawa-led alliance in the Ningi hills recruited fugitive slaves, a claim which certainly reflected the fears of Bauchi slave owners if not the actual situation in Ningi itself (Patton 1975: 185; Ritter 1856: 481; Wagner 1860: vol. 2, 279).<sup>24</sup> Paul Staudinger (1889: 283), a German agent who was in Zaria in the 1880s, learned that the current Ningi leader, Haruna,

had gathered some heathen tribes and escaped slaves under his flag and made his robberies from a place in the mountains only a few days journey from the capital. His robberies spread fear and horror among the farmers and traders. His gang grew more and more; fugitive criminals, escaped slaves were accepted by him and - as soon as they had stood the test of fighting - became members of the gang enjoying equal rights. In vain the king of Saria [Zaria] sent large armies against him.

Haruna ruled from 1870-1886, and he seems to have continued the precedent established by Hamza (Patton 1975: 210). People were seized in raids on the surrounding emirates or they were

attracted by the religious and political opposition to the caliphate. Fugitive slaves were not the only ones who joined the renegades, to be sure, but there must have been a sizable number among the 3,000-man army of Ningi (Patton 1975: 210).

In Liptako, too, opposition to the established government sometimes assumed religious proportions. Seeku Diagourou, a cleric mentioned earlier, attracted a following in the 1860s, although whether or not he cast his appeal in Mahdist terms is unknown. He split with the Liptako government over the interpretation of Islamic law, and perhaps his own political ambitions. When he was forced out of Liptako in 1869/70, he "promised slaves their freedom if they would join him." Many did. In 1876/77 Liptako had to mount a major attack on Diagourou's community - located near the Gurma town of Koala - in order to stop raids on the emirate (Irwin 1981: 159-160). Even then Seeku Diagourou retreated to Tera, another harbor for fugitive slaves. The Fulbe could not allow this challenge to central authority any more than Sokoto could tolerate Mahdism and the Isawa sect. And the flight of slaves had to be curtailed or at least impeded, although neither Koala nor Tera were eliminated as refuges.

Another center of resistance formed at Satiru, only 20 km from Sokoto. Several poor clerics began to spread Mahdist doctrines in the mid-1890s, and soon their community became a sanctuary for escaped slaves and disgruntled peasants (Mohammed 1983). Eventually, but only after the colonial conquest in 1903, the community swelled to a population of about 10,000. The Satiru clerics preached against the Sokoto government, encouraging followers not to pay taxes and urging slaves to escape from their masters. The growth of this community is fairly well documented because it revolted against British rule and the Sokoto aristocracy in 1906, but it is likely that other communities of similar persuasion were also founded in the nineteenth century.

### Conclusion

Slaves struggled with their masters, despite popular belief that slavery was not a harsh system. Although individual slaves may have acquiesced in their status, most slaves fought in subtle and not so subtle ways to assert their rights - rights only grudgingly attained during the nineteenth century. The inherent contradiction in slavery between slaves as chattel and slaves as human beings provided the crack in the institutional edifice through which customary rights could seep; the ideology of the caliphate shaped the form of those rights. The status of concubines, acts of emancipation, public sentiments that opposed the sale of slaves born into servitude, and other limitations on the extent to which masters could

exploit their slaves conformed more or less to Islamic traditions, as interpreted locally. Most slave masters liked to think of themselves as pious Muslims, and because religion can motivate people to act in ways that are not always in their best interests materially, slaves were sometimes able to benefit from the sincerity of their masters. Individual devotion and close personal interaction could reinforce each other. Domestic servants, palace officials, concubines and other slaves thereby attained positions that were not unenviable, although there was always the risk that a master's temperament would change or that one favorite would be replaced by another.

The position of a slave in society was as important in determining the likely form and extent of resistance as the specific relationship between individual masters and slaves. Plantation slaves were more likely to attempt escape than domestic servants; palace slaves usually had good reasons to outlast temporary handicaps, for they might secure material rewards and achieve bureaucratic responsibilities that were beyond the hopes of most free people. Even though concubines had legal rights, individual women did not always accept their domination, and consequently abused concubines very well might run away.

Each category of slave had its own problems and opportunities, which is one reason why slaves did not act in concert as a class. Slave officials and other trusted slaves often had more in common with their masters than with the mass of the slave population. Personal ambitions conspired to undermine further the development of consciousness among slaves. The control of the slave population depended upon these divisions; struggle was more often than not reduced to a personal quest to obtain small favors and to avoid punishment. In the face of the absolute authority of a master, the individual slave could do little more than try to temper the master's power, thereby reducing the level of coercion to which he or she was subject as a slave and consequently increasing the margin of benefits he or she could attain as a human being.

#### NOTES

1. It should be noted that little is known about the plight of slaves and the possibility that many escaped in other parts of the central Sudan as the jihād spread to these areas. This is particularly the case for Bauchi, Gombe, Adamawa, Nassarawa, Say and many of the smaller emirates. In Borno, where the jihād lasted from 1806-1812, probably many slaves escaped. The capital district around Birni Ngazargamu was devastated and virtually deserted by the

- early 1820s, and the numerous slaves in this district were either re-enslaved or fled (Lovejoy 1986b: 232). Information on this important dimension of the jihād in Borno is circumstantial, but it seems reasonable to hypothesize that the pattern in Borno was similar to that elsewhere in the central Sudan.
2. Usman dan Fodio cited numerous Muslim authorities to support his ruling that fugitive slaves were free if they joined the jihād, and that free Muslims who had wrongly been enslaved could also claim their liberty.
  3. Neither Mahadi (1982) nor Sa'id (1978) addresses the problem for Kano; Usman (1981) ignores the question for Katsina; and there is at present no modern study of Zaria during the jihād.
  4. By contrast, Gbadamosi (1978: 11) argues that the role of Muslim slaves may have been less important than previously thought, but my reading of the literature supports Law's interpretation. See Danmole 1980: 41-45, 82, for example.
  5. It should be noted that Patterson (1982: 271, 274) is wrong in estimating the rate of manumission of slaves in the Sokoto Caliphate as "high" or "frequent." Manumission was certainly no more common than in the western Sudan, which he ranks as "infrequent." Such a comparison is inevitably relative, but the nature of the data is so poor as to render comparison difficult.
  6. Malam Sa'adu Dogari, Gogel (Kano Emirate), 23 June 1975, interviewed by Yusufu Yunusa. Unless otherwise noted, oral data refer to Yunusa's interviews, transcripts of which are on deposit at the Northern History Research Scheme, Ahmadu Bello University. The interviews were conducted under the supervision of J. S. Hogendorn and myself. Also see Yunusa 1976: 18-19, 60, 61 and Ferguson 1973: 230-231.
  7. For other accounts, see Sa'adu Dogari; Dunk 1983: 87.
  8. See, for example, the accounts of Alhaji Wada of Kano, 18 July 1975, and Malam Zubairu, Gandun Sawaina, Kano Emirate, 11 September 1975.
  9. Muhammadu Rabi'u, Fanisau (Kano Emirate), 13 July 1975.
  10. The Kano prison was known as Gidan Ma'ajin Watari.
  11. Hamidu Galadiman Shamaki, 3 April 1975. Hamidu was born around 1905. For a discussion of the plantation sector, see Lovejoy 1978, 1979 and Hogendorn 1977.
  12. C. L. Temple, Sokoto Report No. 33, 31 March 1907, SNP 7/8 137/1907 (unless otherwise noted, all archival references are to the Nigerian National Archive, Kaduna).
  13. Muhammadu Rabi'u.
  14. A similar pattern existed in Kano late in the century; Alhaji Isyaku of Kano city (born c. 1897), 8 May 1975; Malam Sa'adu Dogari of Gogel (Kano Emirate), 23 June 1975.



15. Also see the letter from the Emir of Gwandu Umaru to the Sultan of Sokoto requesting assistance on behalf of the bearer of the letter in capturing a fugitive (G.O.K. 1/25) and the letter from Sarkin Tambawel Haruna to Sultan Attahiru, who refused to see a member of a delegation sent from Sokoto because the man had been accused of being a fugitive slave (G.O.K. 1/2/48). One of the conditions of peace in settling a revolt in Zamfara in 1891 was that the town of Mafara should return all runaway slaves to Sokoto (Adeleye 1971: 96).
16. According to Mason (1970: 128, citing Crowther to Venn, 2 November 1841, CMS C A1/079), the model farm established by the Niger expedition at the confluence of the Niger and Benue Rivers in 1841 "serve[d] as a sanctuary and refuge for runaway slaves." The farm was short-lived, but it is probable that slaves went elsewhere and consequently disappeared from recorded history.
17. Alhaji Wada, 18 July 1975.
18. J. W. Webster, Nassarawa Province, Report for the month of December 1904, SNP 7/5 346/1904.
19. Abdurramaan Hamadu Hambarke, Liptako, 19 October 1971, and Maccudo Yigo Gela, Liptako, 17 December 1971 (both interviews by J. Paul Irwin, whom I wish to thank for sharing them with me).
20. Interviewed by me in Bakin Zuwo ward, Kano City, 14 July 1973. Hogendorn (1977: 376) thinks that escapes were usually unsuccessful, but of course it is difficult to reach a conclusion on this matter on the basis of present evidence.
21. In my earlier work, I identified Agalawa and Tokarawa as freed slaves, rather than escaped slaves. In light of Irwin's research among comparable groups in Liptako, however, it seems possible that fugitives were also involved. Certainly the traditions that I collected never mentioned this possibility, but then traditions serve to explain Agalawa and Tokarawa success as merchants. In the context of caliphate ideology, freed slaves were acceptable; fugitives were not. The question is in need of additional research (Lovejoy 1980: 75-81, 94-95; Baier and Lovejoy 1977: 406-407).
22. I am indebted to M. B. Duffill who examined the Hausa text of Asalin Mutanen Yelwa Kasar Chandam from the Edgar Collection in the Nigerian National Archive at Kaduna. The analysis here is a summary of Duffill's translation. I am indebted to Duffill for the probable identification of these slaves as Jarawa. It should be noted that Aliyu mistakenly cites the size of the rebellion at 30,000, not three thousand and I duplicate this error in Lovejoy 1981: 230.

23. Foulkes, Bornu Report, 1902, SNP 15/1 Acc 18. In fact Durguri was probably an ally of Kanam, not a tributary.
24. Adell Patton (1975: 185), the leading scholar of the Ningi resistance, doubts the accuracy of this accusation, but it seems logical in the light of additional information. Linden (1982: 82) does accept the role of escaped slaves, apparently basing his information on oral testimony.

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