

THE
AFRICAN
FRONTIER

*The Reproduction of
Traditional African Societies*

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
IGOR KOPYTOFF

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- . n.d.(a) "Ibiteekerezo: Historical Narratives from Rwanda," Chicago: Center for Research Libraries (CAMP). Among the relevant texts see Reel 1, Rugaanzu Ndori texts 6 and 8; and Reel 4, Ndahiro Cyaamatatare text 14, Rugaanzu Ndori texts 14, 29, 42, 49, 51, 53, 57, 71, 87, 92.
- . n.d.(b) "Ibiteekerezo: Historical Narratives of Rwanda." On file at the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, Belgium; these texts differ from those noted above in n.d.(a).

BUILDING A STATE ON AN ALIEN FRONTIER

In the preceding case studies, the cultural differences between the frontiersmen and the host societies had not been profound; they have ranged from insignificant (Kpelle, Goba) to marginal (Ekie), to moderate (BaShu, Rwanda). This kind of cultural affinity between frontiersmen and their hosts characterized most of the internal African frontier. There were, nevertheless, instances when the cultural distance was considerably greater. Within the historic past, deep cultural contrasts on a frontier stemmed from the impact of outside forces that brought in new cultural identities. The next three articles are concerned with that kind of frontier. Two of them deal, respectively, with communities of escaped Bantu slaves in Somaliland and with a twentieth-century polyethnic community of settlers in Tanzania. The other, which follows, is a study by Adell Patton of the building of the Muslim Ningi state in the institutional vacuum of a "pagan" frontier area in northern Nigeria.

The immigrants were Muslim divines (*mallams*) and their families. Espousing a reformist quasi-millennial ideology, they moved, in protest against what they regarded as unjust taxation, to the frontier areas of a Muslim state. Here, they planned to build a community based on their convictions—an example of frontiersmen as utopians, but one that needs to be qualified and rigorously stripped of any Western connotations of the term "utopian." For the utopianism here was well within the local Muslim metropolitan cultural mold: the ideology (a term, when one deals with Islam, preferable to "religion") included a trading-and-raiding ethos, a consciousness of belonging to the cosmopolitan world of Islam, a militant and militaristic outlook, and a political culture that did not preclude expansionist state-building. This cultural configuration stood in contrast with the host societies on the frontier—non-Muslim, pagan, parochial, and politically fragmented. The cultural isolation of the immigrants was exacerbated by the fact that the mallams knew that they were unlikely to be joined by others like them. At the same time, the integration with the local population could only be minimal. The resulting society was thus necessarily different from those we have seen built on culturally less alien frontiers.

The course taken by the mallam polity (which came to be eventually known as the Ningi state) exemplifies a series of paradoxes. The mallams tried to detach themselves from what they saw as an illegitimate Muslim social order, and set out to build a pure Muslim community; but it was the only social order that furnished them with a model for social construction

and the only one with which they shared a moral universe. Yet the very hostility of the neighboring Muslim metropolises and the immigrants' weakness meant that they had to seek refuge among pagan populations. They sought to reproduce on the frontier a polity that would take its place among the great metropolitan polities in the region from which the mallams came, but the polity lacked an urban base and had to rely for its political and military recruitment on the local parochial societies. Their dependence on pagan subjects *cum* allies made them accept these supporters as they were and precluded an aggressive imposition of Islam on them; instead, the mallams sought to insure their support by magic performances. This, in turn, precluded moral ties with the pagan supporters and their ideological integration into the fledgling state. The relationship that was built was one of instrumental cooperation: the supporters' uncertain loyalty had to be paid for with booty. And to obtain booty, one had to turn to raiding neighboring Muslim states.

The historical trajectory began with dreams of a reformist frontier community and ended with a powerful predatory state. The state was Muslim-ruled; but resting on a pagan base, it was increasingly dependent in its dynastic politics on pagan sub-chiefs and alien slaves even while modelling itself on the metropolises. In this respect, the story of Ningi illustrates very well the role of the frontier as a reproducer of political forms: whatever new social forms the frontiersmen may originally have had in mind for the institutional vacuum that the frontier ideally represented, the success and growth of the community necessarily involved it in the regional system, with all the conformities that such involvement imposed. The peculiarity of Ningi lay in that it had to deal with two regional cultural traditions and it tried to reproduce one while having to build on the other. In the other cases we have seen, there was no such cultural disjunction.

—Editor

Adell Patton, Jr.

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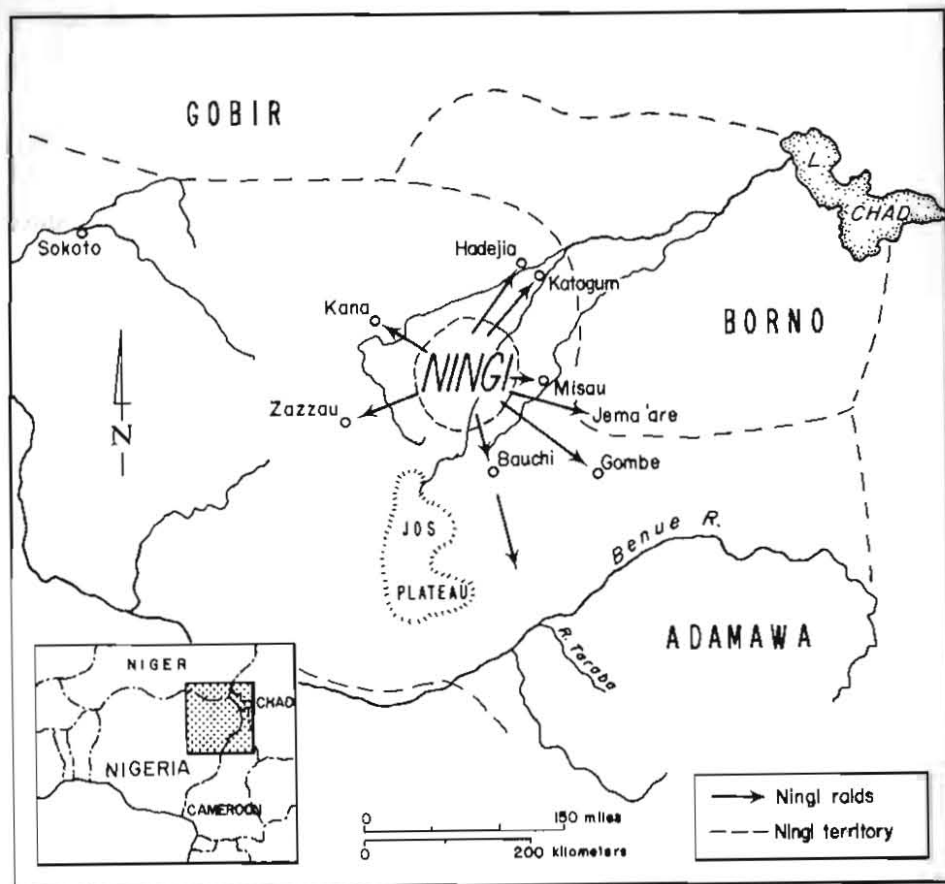
*An Islamic Frontier Polity:
The Ningi Mountains of Northern Nigeria,
1846-1902*

Frontier areas often provide refuge for those in rebellion against the metropolitan society. But once on the frontier, they face certain organizational problems. If there is a local population, they may meld into it, or keep apart from it, or try to use it for their own purposes. And the immigrants are often forced, sooner or later, into some kind of relationship with the metropolitan centers. This paper examines the case of a group of Hausa mallams (learned men) who fled their own society and established a polity on the fringe of the Sokoto Empire, in the Ningi mountains of the Jos Plateau of northern Nigeria. They came to live in an area occupied from time immemorial by vigorous but small-scale "pagan" societies, with rudimentary forms of organized political authority. At the same time, the immigrant mallams had not withdrawn entirely from the reach of the organized states—emirates led by the Sokoto Caliphate. Thus, paradoxically, this Muslim reformist polity came to depend on an alliance with its new non-Muslim neighbors in order to survive pressure from the Muslim states with which it had immensely greater cultural affinities. The contradictions that this entailed are at the heart of our story.

THE MALLAM REVOLT IN KANO

Kano Emirate was perhaps the most important of all the emirates in the Fulani-dominated Sokoto Empire that emerged after the successful Fulani *jihād* of 1804-1808. By the mid-nineteenth century, Kano had become not only an outstanding metropolitan center of Islamic learning but also the financial entrepot for the Caliphate. But like many empires, Sokoto began to suffer from the costs of expansion and its citizenry responded in various ways to the increasing burdens of rents and taxes. Most, to be sure, remained loyal; others joined dissident brotherhoods; and some fled to the fringes of the empire (Last 1970:345-357).

At the end of 1846, some sixteen Hausa learned men (mallams) and their families, led by Mallam Hamza, left the Islamic center of Tsakuwa in Kano Emirate, pursued by Kano forces for their refusal to pay the land tax (*kurdin kasa*)—a tax from which they had been exempted before the Fulani



conquest (Patton 1975:125-179). The community (*jama'arsa*) established itself in the Ningi mountains, a frontier area at the fringes of and surrounded by such Sokoto vassal states as Kano, Zazzau, Bauchi, Gombe, Jema'are, Misau, Katagum, and Hadejia.

The nucleus of Hamza's following came from a guild of free entrepreneurs. In time, this nucleus developed into an informal Sufi religious body. From its beginning in Iran in the eighth century, the Sufi tradition contained elements of protest against social injustices and obsession with material gain and worldly affairs; and it harbored ideas of salvation through asceticism and spiritual discipline. In time, Sufism developed particular patterns of communal organization, various Sufi communities arose over the centuries within Islamic societies, and Sufism became a subsidiary but well established current within the broader Islamic stream (Jah 1973:93-96). Oral traditions at Tsakuwa and Ningi hold that Hamza had prayed in seclusion for long periods of time in search of "The Way" (Patton 1975:146). But unlike many Sufi movements, the one led by

Hamza never developed into a cohesive brotherhood (*tariq*). Instead, its retreat into a non-Muslim area on the frontier of Islam made it the founder of a predatory polity.

THE NINGI FRONTIER ZONE

The area into which Hamza's mallam community moved was peripheral to the Islamicized metropolitan centers of northern Nigeria sociologically, culturally, ethnically, politically, and geographically. In this sense, it may be regarded as a frontier zone. The Ningi area is the northernmost extension of the Jos Plateau massif. It is mountainous, incised with valleys suitable for plain and terraced agriculture. Most of it is some 2,000 feet above sea level, the central area rising to 3,000 feet and peaks reaching 6,000. The Ningi area of our story nearly coincides with present Ningi Division, which is just under 2,000 square miles. The area experiences a completely rainless season and it generally shares in the hardships of the "famine zone" of the Western Sudan (Renner 1926:583-596).

Even in the remote past, Ningi appears to have been an isolated fringe area from the perspective of the flatlands on which arose the old Hausa city-states. It shows a great deal of cultural and linguistic diversity and it had never developed, within historic times at least, important integrative networks among its communities. It is impossible to know what the population of Ningi was when the mallams arrived. The first assessment in colonial times, done in 1908 (Groom 1910), gave a total population of some 21,500, some 17,000 of these being of "original" stock. Among these, the largest groups were the Warji (ca. 7,000), the Pa'a (ca. 5,000), and the Buta (over 3,000); the other groups were each in the range of a thousand or less. These figures suggest that the non-Muslim population that the mallams found and that came to represent their "reservoir" of economic and military strength was in the range of a score of thousands.

What historical population movements we can reconstruct appear to have consisted of small groups of migrants who sought out unoccupied areas and often absorbed previous inhabitants or were absorbed by them. The result was the presence, in historic times, of several ethnic groups, the chronology of whose appearance in the area can be roughly established. The Buta (with their relatives the Ningi, who, though few in numbers, gave their name to the area) seem to represent the most ancient, non-Hausa-speaking stratum; they are the northernmost extension of the Benue-Congo language family. The Warji belong to a branch of the Afro-Asiatic languages concentrated around Lake Chad. The Siri are Chadic speakers from the Kano area, and they arrived in the Ningi area well before the 1800's. The Chama and Basa, of the Benue-Congo family, followed. The Chadic Pa'a came next, from Bauchi, sometime in the early nineteenth century. Thus, the migration of the Hausa mallams from Kano in 1846 was but the last important influx of outsiders into the Ningi frontier.

Surviving oral traditions tell us nothing of the history of these groups; they do not even yield myths of origin or commonly accepted founding heroes; and the earlier arrivals did not always allow subsequent immigrants to assimilate (Patton 1975:45). Slave raiding by the old Kano kingdom and, in the nineteenth century, by neighboring emirates served to reduce the population and probably confuse the mythical charters of the Ningi societies (Patton 1979b:18). And the establishment of the Ningi state by the immigrant mallams from Kano and the consequences of this intrusion brought further confusion into historical self-perceptions.

The political systems of the Ningi plateau peoples were highly localized (Patton 1975:56-58), though there existed a few supra-ethnic networks of social relations: some ethnic groups were connected by institutionalized "joking relationships," most of them exchanged wives, and all were connected to trade networks. Villages were autonomous and the process of fission within them often led to secondary settlements at some distance from parent villages. Each settlement was dominated by its founding patri lineage. The lineage head was usually its most senior male member, and he acted on behalf of the autonomous village community in its dealings with outsiders and as its priest of the land cult. Above several such lineage heads stood what was the highest local authority—a *tsafi*, the ritual head of the sacred shrine center linking several autonomous villages and himself usually the head of his own patri lineage.

The shrine thus provided the only formal basis for a certain degree of socio-political integration above the village level. Within the territory of a shrine, people came to consult about crop planting, famines, and judicial matters; they also mobilized for defense against external threat. The parochial nature of political relations can be seen from the fact that, for example, the Warji people (numbering perhaps 5,000 in the mid-nineteenth century) were under the jurisdiction of seven *tsafi* (Izard 1918a,b). One of them, at Beima, was the civil and ritual senior over the others, and another, at Ranga, acted as the head in times of war. Some competition no doubt existed among the *tsafi* within a single language cluster. While the overall hierarchy followed the sequence of the foundation of settlements and their shrines, succession struggles among autonomous lineages did take place when a senior *tsafi* died.

For the surrounding emirates, the position of these plateau societies was broadly defined by Muslim law, which allowed them either to enslave populations refusing to convert to Islam or require them to pay *kharaj*, land tax (Khadduri 1955:46-47). Oral traditions in Ningi hold that the Sokoto Caliphate pursued a policy of taxation when possible, while raiding those many villages that refused to pay tribute. The Buta and Warji sometimes organized themselves, each into a temporary quasi-federation, in answer to incursions from Kano and the Caliphate, but the organization remained a purely military one. In time, the military leadership solidified among the Buta: Gwarsum began (ca. 1807) a line of nine leaders which

stretched into the early twentieth century. When the Emir of Kano Ibrahim Dabo (1816-1846) invaded Buta territory, Gwarsum defeated him at Basshe. Gwarsum's victory was not decisive but it did set the stage for continuing resistance to the emirates that flared up periodically through the nineteenth century.

It should be noted that the opposition was not strictly that between the mountaineers on one side and the Muslims on the other. For example, Kano and Bauchi Emirates competed in their efforts to impose tribute on the mountaineers. The Buta around Marra and Dua villages paid tribute to Bauchi; those around Burra paid it to Kano, as did the kindred Ningi people and the Kuda. The nearby Pa'a, on the other hand, successfully resisted Bauchi while themselves imposing tribute on the Sira. Thus, the mountaineers were not strangers to relatively complex tributary relationships, nor were they entirely on the receiving end of predatory activities. Nor was the movement of the mallams into their area in 1846 without precedent. When the Sokoto Caliphate established its rule over Hausaland in 1808, some Hausa leaders fled to the fringes of Ningi with their followers, and some of these joined the Buta in their resistance to Sokoto.

THE RECEPTION OF THE MALLAMS BY THE MOUNTAINEERS

Hamza's progression into the Ningi interior was gradual. At the end of 1846, the mallams settled in the hills of eastern Burra. Burra at that time was headed by *tsafi* Gira and it was under Kano control. During the dry season of 1847, the mallams moved completely beyond Kano control and settled among the Buta at Dua, under Bauchi jurisdiction but under the direct control of Dan Daura, the Sarki (chief) of Marra and a Fulani. Dan Daura welcomed them. In Hamza, he saw a learned man who knew many secrets and whose blessing would be beneficial; Hamza would be a good teacher for his son and would enhance Marra's prestige. Dan Daura even took Hamza to Bauchi to introduce him to Emir Ibrahim, who granted Hamza permission to stay at Dua. But the Emir warned Dan Daura: "Some day these mallams will prove too strong for you; you better leave them with me." Nevertheless, Dan Daura returned to Marra with Hamza and gave him food and lodging, and the mallams settled at Dua.

The Buta first and then the other mountaineers easily accepted the new mallam settlement in their midst. As metropolitan attempts at oppression were growing, the mountaineers became more open to the idea of larger-scale organization and more receptive to the idea of leaders knowledgeable in the affairs of the neighboring states and their modes of warfare. While their own political culture militated against a centralized organization arising from among themselves, they seemed to be open to the idea of a profitable alliance with an alien organization.

There was also, it appears, a certain messianic element in at least

some local groups that made the mallams welcome. Buta traditions speak of prophecies in the past that foretold that mallamas with "little black bags"—leather satchels containing the Qur'an—would come to liberate them from tributary servitude (Sarkin Dua 1973). Some of these stories of prophecies are undoubtedly *ex post facto* elaborations; but it is also not unlikely that some echoes of utopian Islamic thought in Hausaland had reached the mountaineers through individuals acquainted with metropolitan affairs. Such prophecies should have found fertile ground in the anxieties of the mountaineers as they saw the power of the emirates closing in on them. In 1832, yet another emirate, Misau, was established by Fulani from Borno, followed two years later by Jema'are—both on Ningi's eastern flank. The inexorable course of events may well have been making the peoples of Ningi ready to accept new leadership that promised them salvation.

There were reasons, then, why the mountaineers should have welcomed Hamza and his mallam community. Hamza had come from cosmopolitan Kano, he possessed full knowledge of Caliphate affairs and its mode of warfare, and the polity he was about to found could therefore help them to resist Sokoto expansion (Vansina 1973). And there may also have been an element of sympathy: the people knew that Hamza had broken the law of the Caliphate in the same way that some of them had from time to time when they refused to pay tribute.

THE VISION OF THE NEW STATE

In 1848, the Hamza movement took on millennial overtones that echoed the millennial currents in Islam that began to gather strength in the eighteenth century. The impending appearance of the Mahdi and the end of the world were expected, and injustice, oppression, and social disorder were all signs of the Mahdi's coming. The situation in which Hamza and his community found themselves no doubt reinforced such a view of the world. They were in the midst of non-Muslim mountaineers and at the mercy of a small provincial Sarki, in stark contrast with their previous position, when they enjoyed privileges, close ties to the pre-jihad dynasty at Tsakuwa, a successfully developing Sufi community, respect in Qur'anic circles, and independence as free producers. They could observe the Buta paying tribute to the Sarki and may have seen the new setting as not very different from the one they had fled.

The strains of their new situation appear to have plunged Hamza into a psychological crisis and he entered into communion with God (for a discussion of this dynamic, see Brenner 1973). However he might at the time have perceived his mission, Hamza began preaching to the Buta, calling on them to fight for their freedom. The millennial character of Hamza's preaching is preserved in the following oral text collected at Dua, in which Hamza says to the mountaineers:

Some people, red people will be coming and they will conquer everyone and stop you from fighting one another . . . and take power from you. No one will have the right of enslaving anyone nor the right to fight Kano and Bauchi. After the red people again another group will come. They will be black, and they will fight and defeat all (Sarkin Dua 1973).

Whatever concrete actions Hamza now wished to take, it had to be in a setting dominated by military power, and that power was overwhelmingly on the side of the neighboring emirates who saw the Ningi area as a natural source of captives and tribute. In brief, the state power of the enemies had to be countered by some kind of state organization.

THE CREATION OF THE NEW STATE

At the end of 1848, Hamza and his mallams began the moves by which they would eventually transform the acephalous societies around them into a centralized polity without resorting to conquest (which, in any case, would probably not have succeeded). Hamza built a mosque and word of his presence spread. He combined traditional Islamic practices with traditional Ningi ones into an appealing amalgam with magic (*Sihir*) at the center of it. He also began to side with the Buta in their perennial disputes with Dan Daura. The latter thereupon accused Hamza of intriguing among his subjects and mustered his troops. In the first confrontation at Dua, the mallams and the Buta defeated the Bauchi troops and Dan Daura had to flee for his life.

Hamza now turned to political action on a broader scale. His messengers propagated among the mountaineers the mystical meaning of his victory. The people of Burra, Tiffi, Ari, Guda, Badunga, Rabi, Kuluki, and other places came to Hamza, and he shared the victory booty with them and offered their leaders positions of responsibility. He told them:

You have now succeeded because you have found amongst you a person like me; come to my fold and I will deliver you from the obligations to the Fulani—the Fulani who are unjust, the Fulani who impose upon you a lot of duties and impose upon you things which you cannot pay (Imam Mahmud 1957-62:168).

As Hamza continued to call upon the mountaineers to rebel against the Caliphate, he combined his preaching with his *Sihir* magic. Word of his extraordinary powers spread: he could throw paper in the air which would remain suspended; he could mount a mat floating in the air; he could stretch his tongue around his head like a turban, or stretch his leg to the length of two spears and bring it back to normal size, or resurrect dead ants. Hamza would have someone kill ants, have them placed in baskets, and resurrect them. He would then tell the people: "Even if the Fulani kill you, that is how I will return your lives to you; nobody will ever be able to defeat you as long as I am amongst you" (Imam Mahmud 1957-62:169).

The Emir of Bauchi sent troop reinforcements to Dan Daura for an attack on Hamza at Dua. Hamza's own troops now numbered probably well over two hundred; he also had weapons and horses captured at the first encounter and additional troops from newfound followers. Hamza set a pattern in these encounters, one that was followed by his successors. As the troops formed for battle, Hamza stayed behind, reciting prayers for victory from the Holy Book. Being his own *Sarkin Yaki* (war chief), he would, upon completing the recitation, rush out in front of the troops toward the enemy (Patton 1975:158-159). When the Bauchi forces arrived at Dua, Hamza appeared before them and showed them his magical skills. This apparently astonished them, and some of the troops retreated. The bulk of the Bauchi forces were routed and Dan Daura was killed. This victory marked the foundation of Ningi as a state. The new state incorporated with varying degrees of firmness and reliability most of the mountaineers, with the exception of the people of Sonoma valley and the Warji (Patton 1975:149).

News of Hamza's activities reached Sokoto during the Caliphate of Amir al-Muminin Ali ben Bello (1837-1859). In the educated circles of Sokoto, Hamza was acknowledged as both a learned man and a magician (Houdas 1966 [1899]:356), and his new activities were no doubt seen with great apprehension by Sokoto and the other emirates. Indeed, Hamza had already begun to raid. He burned the town of Gau, an important fief of Bauchi, forcing the inhabitants to resettle farther away from Ningi. His raiders attacked fiefs and estates that had an abundance of food, cattle, horses, and people to enslave. This established the basic raiding style which Ningi warriors were to follow throughout the 19th century.

About 1849, Emir Ibrahim of Bauchi made preparations for war against the mallams. The latter had built a number of compounds surrounded by walls of rock at Dua, which they did not want to risk being destroyed. Hence, Hamza decided to confront Ibrahim at Jengere rather than at Dua. But the Ningi forces were no match for the Bauchi and were routed. How exactly Hamza met his death remains unknown—his body was never found. Local tradition explains the failure of Hamza's magical powers in this instance. As the battle was about to unfold, it is said, the Pa'a troops rushed out to fight before Hamza could complete his prayers and incantations. As the war leader, Hamza felt compelled to lead the attack. Mounting his horse prematurely and brandishing his spear, he rode out in front of his troops toward the enemy and to his death. He was about sixty years old.

THE FOUNDING OF THE SECOND MALLAM STATE

The Hamza period of the mallam state ended in 1849, after two years at Dua. Hamza's fragile state, still tied ambiguously to millennial hopes, had collapsed and the mallams now faced a number of problems: sheer survival, the need to select a new leader, and the fear among their new non-

Muslim adherents that Kano and other emirates might join Bauchi in stamping out all signs of Ningi rebelhousness. Indeed, the tsafi leaders of the Buta, Kuda, and Pa'a quickly withdrew to their own areas, leaving the leaderless mallams virtually alone. It was clear that the mountaineers' adherence to the mallam state was opportunistic and that they were mainly interested in booty. A new and more viable state would thus require institutional intervention in mountaineer affairs in order to insure loyalty.

The mallams and their families—altogether probably a little over fifty men, women, and children—decided to move some twenty miles away from Dua into the less accessible mountain interior. They chose Tabela, a Pa'a village. Hamza's widow Atta played a decisive role in the informal process of selecting the new leader (and she continued to exert her influence in Ningi affairs for the following quarter century). Since Hamza's sons were too young to rule, leadership passed to Mallam Ahmadu, Hamza's brother. The non-Muslims of the original alliance accepted the new leader.

The reformist features of Hamza's original vision had by now almost completely receded. Rather than move in the direction of a Sufi brotherhood—as it probably would have had it remained in Kano—the community was on the way to becoming a predatory frontier polity. Ahmadu gave the fledgling state an outright military cast. He made forays into Bauchi territory and the renewed Ningi belligerency caused some concern in Kano. Barth, who visited the area in 1851, observed that the Buta of Burra continuously seized Kano couriers en route to Bauchi and confiscated the messages (Barth 1965 [1857]: 618). Bauchi finally responded with a war that lasted nearly seven years and in which it lost some 7,000 men. Bauchi received incidental help from another European traveler who visited the Emir's war camp outside of Tabela. In December 1855, Dr. Edward Vogel wrote to his father in Germany an account of his encounter with the mountaineers:

On a scouting trip which we made to the enemy city situated on a rock, we fell into ambush and were greeted with a hail of poison arrows. My Fellata [Fulani] companions fled and left me behind to cover their retreat. I was able to do this with a gun, killing one of the attackers and causing the other to flee. The Sultan sent me a fat wether [sheep gelding] that evening for the deed. You must know that I can use guns skillfully now, and can shoot hens and ducks with a bullet if I don't have buckshot (Wagner 1860:279).

Mallam Ahmadu did not outlast the war and died about 1855. But the Emir's siege of Tabela was unsuccessful, the losses were costly, and the task of suppressing the mountaineers appeared impossible. The war dragged on for nearly another two years before the Emir of Bauchi withdrew his forces. The cessation of the open hostilities gave time to both sides to attend to much neglected business.

Mallam Abubakar Dan Maje emerged as the successor of Ahmadu. Though unrelated to Hamza, he was a logical choice: the circumstances called for an able warrior, and Dan Maje had fought and had been wounded at Jengere in the battle against Bauchi. Dan Maje decided that Tabela was no longer safe as headquarters for the weakened mallam state—its non-Muslim allies were now reduced in the main to the Pa'a, the Kuda, and the Buta. Since each group had its own area of settlement, the mallams sought a similar area of their own, one that would provide added protection and would also be almost exclusively Muslim. The move may be seen as further "naturalization" of the mallams in Ningi—a step toward becoming another "ethnic" group among others and a realistic admission of the need for its own territorial base. But it also implies a retreat from the supra-ethnic stance of Hamza's early efforts. With the help of several hundred Kuda warriors, Dan Maje took over the "fortress" of Lungu, a geological cubbyhole surrounded by high mountain walls, expelling the fewer than 300 Ningi who were occupying it—an action that brought little or no outcry from the surrounding groups. The mallams then resettled in their new impregnable capital and from here Dan Maje organized his administration. His council consisted of the Hausa scholars (*ulama*) only, less than a dozen in number. The senior counselor was also the war chief, Sarkin Yaki.

In about 1860, Dan Maje conquered the Warji and established with them a tributary alliance. Once the mallam state's control over the surrounding countryside was achieved, raiding could be conducted from a secure base. The Warji were useful allies that joined him en route to raids on Katagum and other eastern emirates. The frankly military state grew remarkably in power under Dan Maje's guidance: toward the end of his rule, he had nearly 3,000 horsemen under his command.

In 1870, after losing two of his war commanders while plundering southern Bauchi, Dan Maje himself died in an engagement at Toro from an arrow wound behind his ear. His followers buried his body in a secret place to prevent it from falling into Bauchi hands and being used to immobilize his spirit. But the secret spot, in the Kwandon Nkaya vicinity, was discovered by a Bauchi official who exhumed the corpse, cut off the head, and took it to the Emir of Bauchi.

THE MALLAM STATE AT ITS ZENITH

It is a measure of the strength the Ningi state had achieved that Dan Maje's death had no effect on its stability. Indeed, the state reached its apogee in the following decade under the leadership of his successor, Haruna Karami.

There were new factors to strengthen the cohesion of the new state. A bureaucratic structure gradually developed. The office of *Mallam*—as the ruler of the state was called—had become institutionalized by the 1870's.

The Mallam now determined who would be the leader of each of the non-Muslim peoples, and he thus stood at the top of the Ningi hierarchy. And the military character of the state and of the Mallam's leadership meant that there was no hesitation to use force against any transgressor against authority, be he an ordinary mallam or a tsafi.

The scholars, *ulama*, served as the supreme council to the Mallam. The raids were not undertaken haphazardly but were a matter of carefully examined policy. The council planned the raids and also engaged in divination to determine whether a raid would be successful. A consensus was required on most issues, and the Mallam and the *ulama* also consulted the *tsafi* of the non-Muslim peoples. The territorial segments thus participated in the state processes and often the decisions sanctioned at the top came from the bottom (Patton 1975:93, 196).

Other offices were consonant with the predatory character of the state, and Haruna himself introduced some changes in offices and created a number of new ones. The office of the war chief, Sarkin Yaki, was detached from the Mallamship, its incumbent now being one of the senior counselors to the Mallam. The military offices of *barde* initially reflected a segmented military system: every compound in the mountain fortress had its own *barde*, more or less equal to and autonomous of any other. Haruna put all the *barde* under a single head, and these accomplished warriors now formed the front ranks in battle. The *barde* system also became the vehicle for the distribution of booty. The booty was divided into five parts; besides the Mallam, the participants in the raids, the elder leaders in the capital, the junior *ulama*, and the *barde* themselves received, each as a group, one part. By dispensing the booty further down, into the compounds, a *barde* could gain followers and sometimes divert loyalties from the Mallam. Since the power of the *barde* decreased whenever raids were discontinued and peace prevailed, they tended to align themselves with the more warlike factions in later struggles over succession.

Slaves held certain offices. Mohammed Yayo, a slave seized in a raid at Maganni in Kano, occupied the office of *Maga Yaki*, concerned with the surveillance and scouting that preceded a raid. One important function of scouting was to spy on the movement of tribute to Sokoto in order to capture it. The scouting reports of the *Maga Yaki* went directly to the *barde* who collectively decided whether to mount a foray. Another slave held the office of *Shamaki*, in charge of all the palace slaves, who were quite numerous in Haruna's time; this office became influential in later palace politics. Ordinary slaves did maintenance work and some farming, and served in Haruna's army.

The mallam state was not without its share of internal troubles—primarily succession troubles. There were no precise rules of succession to the Mallamship. To become leader, one had to be a Hausa scholar but not necessarily the eldest scholar. In contrast to the hereditary system of the emirates, it was merit in war that primarily determined who led in Ningi.

However, there were always several mallams who were experienced warriors and who might be tempted to bid for power. And there were always the sons and relatives of the deceased ruler who were apt to feel that they had a special, even if not exclusive, claim to the Mallamship.

When the electoral council chose Haruna to be the ruler in 1870, the sons of Hamza, the founder of the state, contested the selection. When two of them realized that their pretensions had no hope, they went away to raid in Zazzau and died there. Hamza's third son, Iboro, stayed in Ningi; but failing to gain palace support, he went to Tutu, the vassal chief of the Buta at Burra, and obtained his adherence. In the fight that ensued, the retired chief Zeriya of Burra came to the aid of Haruna and Tutu was defeated and removed from his position as Sarkin of Burra. Haruna thereupon restored the chieftaincy to the Gira family, then living in exile. The new chief, Abduraman, became the first Buta chief to convert to Islam. In the meantime, Iboro prevailed upon the Pa'a to revolt against Haruna. Haruna killed a number of Pa'a in battle before the opposing forces made peace by swearing on the Qur'an, and Iboro too swore fealty to Haruna. These facts suggest the continued precariousness of the non-Muslim adherence to the Ningi state. While the state had the power to impose chiefs on these subordinate groups, dissension at the core could quickly radiate out to the vassal peoples and, in times of crisis, they could play a significant part in the outcome.

The relations between the Ningi state under Haruna and the non-Muslim mountaineers continued to be tributary. They supplied the mallams with food and, as the state's foundations were strengthened in Dan Maje and Haruna's time, the annual tribute from these people came increasingly at the end of Ramadan or of Salla. The mallams themselves did not farm in this period, and administrative offices were not based on fiefs. "Warring was their farming" according to Ningi informants (Patton 1975:235-236). The Warji, however, always posed a problem. A flat agricultural plain separated their plateau from the mallam state, and they were farther from it than from the powerful emirates. It is for this reason, it appears, that the Warji maintained a fragile balance in their relations with Ningi on the one hand and Kano on the other, while each of these engaged periodically in re-conquering the Warji to insure their loyalty.

The Ningi government levied no taxes on its citizens and vassals, preferring instead to collect *gaisuwa* (gifts) in the form of chickens, goats, foodstuffs, and the like. This brought it new adherents. Thus, some Fulani and others, fleeing oppressive taxation, came to Ningi from Katagum, Gombe, Zazzau, and Kano, and they were able to provide Ningi with information about places that were rich and raidable. These events indicate Ningi's increasingly more aggressive political—rather than merely military—posture in the local inter-state system.

It was Haruna's achievement to routinize the predatory functions of the Ningi state. Reacting to what promised to be Ningi's permanent pres-

ence in the area, the emirates tried to contain it physically: Bauchi and Kano built *ribats* (frontier fortresses) as a barrier to raids and appear to have resettled some of the non-Muslim populations who resided within the radius of Ningi raiding. But the emirates had also to contend with Ningi's skillful use of their common Islamic traditions as diplomatic and strategic weapons. Foremost among these was the concept of "peace," *aman* (see Khadduri 1955:163-166 and al-Mawardi 1915).

Haruna negotiated (*aman*), "the peace," first with Kano and then Bauchi in the mid-1870's. The peace legitimized Ningi as an independent state and it ushered in new peaceful relations with Sokoto as well. For in Islamic theory, the *aman* placed Ningi in a peaceful relationship with all the other surrounding emirates. This periodic interest in compromise involved Ningi in some long-distance diplomacy. Arabic documents show that Ningi messengers went as far as Sokoto once in the early 1870's and on several occasions to Kano with diplomatic immunity (Kanoprof Vol. 1, #17:161).

Sokoto's conditions for peace stipulated that the Kano merchants would not go to Ningi with horses for sale and that Ningi would not purchase horses in Kano. The non-Muslims in the Ningi area did not own horses before the mallams set up their state. Islamic law forbade selling horses to them and it was Caliphate policy to extend the prohibition to the ever troublesome Ningi, with its amalgam of Muslim and non-Muslim. Horses, of course, brought some parity to the parties in a war—Ningi's possession of horses explains much of its success in its forays against the emirates. Dan Maje could produce a force of 3,000 horsemen, and under Haruna the number reached 4,000. For the emirates, there was no hope of neutralizing, let alone defeating, Ningi unless the trade in this critical military resource could be stopped. However, at the time, the Caliphate area was experiencing monetary instability because of the inflation of cowries that had begun in the 1850's, and captives from raids came to constitute for Sokoto a subsidiary currency. It appears that this led some wayward Fulani princes in search of slaves to take horses to Ningi to trade them there for slaves.

In practice, the peace of *aman* provided Ningi with the time to heal its wounds from the losses it suffered at the hands of Caliphate forces. Ningi usually appealed to *aman* after military losses to its principal adversaries, Bauchi and Kano, and it returned to the attack when there was renewed promise of success. Thus, in the late 1870's, when succession problems festered in Zazzau, Kano, and Katagum, Haruna broke the peace and resumed raids against the emirates. With an army of nearly 4,000 horsemen, the Ningi state had become haughty and apparently even began to harbor hopes that the crisis prevailing in the metropole might provide it with an opportunity to seize control at the center. In effect, the frontier state was in a position to take a political offensive against the metropole and began to see itself as part of it. It may well be, of course, that the

mallams had in fact seen themselves all along as being only in temporary exile.

Ningi began to form external alliances with factions within the emirates. In 1878, Ningi lent a helping hand to the *Galadima* (senior titled official) Suleimanu, a Hausa who had tried without success to become Emir of Zazzau. Rival aspirants to the thrones of both Zazzau and Bauchi had also offered Haruna substantial holdings in slaves and territory for his help (Patton 1975:236). During the Bauchi civil war of 1881, several dissident groups allied themselves with Ningi. A vassal people, the Gere, joined Ningi and threw off Bauchi domination. And some Fulani dissidents fled Bauchi City and formed an alliance with Ningi in order to maintain their independence.

About 1880, following another Ningi peace request to Amir al-Muminin Mu'adh of Sokoto, the mountaineers agreed to desist from fighting Muslims "in the East, West, South, and North" (Arewa House 1973). This suggests that at one time or another Ningi had taken on all of the neighboring emirates and, further, that in Haruna's time Ningi was apparently recognized as an autonomous power by the Amir who dealt with it directly.

Mallam Haruna is regarded as the most powerful leader in Ningi history, one who made Ningi in the 1870's into a local power to be reckoned with. Under him, Ningi had, again and again, cut off Kano from its usual source of captives for use on its plantations and as a kind of currency (Last 1970:349, Lovejoy 1978:343). And by successfully resisting and attacking Sokoto, as well as negotiating with it on terms of equality, Ningi asserted its position vis-à-vis the highest legitimizing power of the region. In the oral history of the Caliphate, "Ningi" became a common term for the place from which raiders were to be expected (Patton 1980:6).

TRADE

If Ningi's political relations with the emirates were in a constant state of flux because of the predatory nature of the mallam state, so was its trade with them. Before the mallams settled there, trade in the Ningi area was apparently relatively desultory despite the fact that Ningi was linked into the trade route network that also involved, among other centers, Kano and Bauchi (Izard 1918a:13). The commodities that the Ningi peoples could offer to the outside were few; their terraced agriculture served essentially their subsistence needs and their area was relatively deficient in natural resources. Internally, however, barter trade was ubiquitous in Ningi, with iron and medicines being of special importance (Sirawa Elders 1973:2, Butawa Elders 1973:4).

The coming of the mallams and especially Dan Maje's rule (ca. 1856-1870) introduced a new dimension to trade activity in Ningi and on the Plateau in general. Although Gerhard Rohlfs, who visited Bauchi in 1867, reported that the decade of 1856-66 was a peaceful one (Rohlfs

1874:153), peace did not mean an end to hostility between Ningi and Bauchi. The earlier freedom of travel was gone and there was insecurity and fear both within the Ningi mountains and along the trade routes. About 1868 or earlier, Dan Maje disrupted the trading activities of the Hausa tin-smelters at Ririwai-n Kano, and disrupted them twice again as they kept moving their settlement (Roberts 1918, Tambo 1979:5, 12, Morrison 1974).

In spite of the military instability, neutral cosmopolitan markets nevertheless appear to have developed in the Jos area and at Sanga (Lovejoy 1979, Morrison 1976:195-197, 203). Before or about 1875, cowries reached the area to become the basic currency. Sanga, according to Morrison, was also the only center in the area for trade in captives (generally, captives went north and big horses went south). Ningi increased its revenue by releasing captives, caught in raids, for ransom in cowries at these neutral markets.

UNRESOLVED INTERNAL PROBLEMS OF THE NINGI STATE

The mallam state at its zenith did not succeed in resolving a number of internal problems, the foremost being that of succession. Haruna's death about 1886 was followed once more by a succession dispute among three candidates: Gajigi, Haruna's younger brother; Inusa, son of a Ningi mallam; and Usman Dan Yaya, holder of the powerful office of Head Barde and possibly Sarkin Yaki in Haruna's time. The candidates were first-generation Ningians. In the competition, Gajigi gained the support of the powerful palace slaves, who in turn secured the support of the surrounding tsafi. The slave leaders slew Inusa, while Dan Yaya fled the capital and settled among the Pa'a.

As Mallam, Gajigi raided only once. He pursued a policy of peace and sent letters to Bauchi and Kano, requesting aman. The reasons for Gajigi's unwarlike stance remain unclear. Millennial thought continued to reach Ningi throughout its history, and Gajigi may have been influenced by the *Isawa mallamai*—believers, in the context of Islam, in the Second Coming of Jesus, *Isa*—who had been given refuge by his brother Haruna in 1870 and who were Gajigi's own devoted palace supporters. In the new relaxed climate, the mountaineers began to move freely and unmolested between Bauchi and Kano as in the old days before the Ningi state. But the movement toward economic integration with the surrounding emirates was soon cut short.

Dan Yaya, who had retained the office of Head Barde, did not want peace with Sokoto and began to intrigue against Gajigi and gained widespread support. Both Haruna and Gajigi had allowed much of the booty to remain in the Head Barde's hands, and Dan Yaya proceeded to distribute gowns, cattle, women, and slaves to the non-Muslim mountaineers, par-

ticularly to the Kuda warriors. He also got himself elected chief (sarki) over the Pa'a. Failing to gain the support of the Buta and Warji, he managed to prevent the annual gifts (gaisuwa) and various supplies from reaching Gajigi, and this caused a famine in the capital.

Dan Yaya also persuaded Gajigi's nephews to join forces with him, and to mask his own ambitions, he began to support one of them, Adamu Da, who was hoping to obtain the Mallamship for himself. He accused Gajigi of ineptness and held that if the state was to survive, Gajigi had to be deposed. In 1889, the supporters of Gajigi and Dan Yaya clashed outside the palace. The Kuda locked out Gajigi, preventing him from taking refuge inside the palace. Some of his supporters fled and the abandoned Gajigi was stabbed to death by his nephew. Thereupon, in an about face, Dan Yaya warned the ulama not to entrust the leadership to one who had killed his blood uncle; with their support, he entered the palace as the new leader of Ningi. Several of the remaining sons of Haruna fled Ningi and turned to raiding the Birnin Gwari, perhaps joining Ningi's enemies among the emirates.

Dan Yaya began to consolidate his power by killing a large number of Gajigi's supporters, including one of the Isa mallams, or chasing them from Ningi. To avenge Gajigi's selling of his mother Ramata into slavery, Dan Yaya sold Gajigi's children (Malam Yahaya 1973). Dan Yaya turned to a warlike policy. Needing a frontier lookout to guard against Kano raiders from the north, he cleared a large area of bush and made it into a slave farming estate known as Kafin Dan Yaya. He was now ready to raid.

He broke the peace by raiding in several directions—against Hadejia, Katagum, Kano, and Bauchi emirates. To end the Warji's tributary alliance with Kano, he defeated them at Chan-Chan. But the introduction of firearms into the Caliphate put the Ningi cavalry at a disadvantage, and it turned to terrorizing surrounding villages. When, in 1891, Kano administered a stinging defeat to Ningi, Dan Yaya requested aman, "peace," from Emir Muhammad Bello of Kano. The conditions for peace set by Kano required that Dan Yaya desist from raiding in Gombe, Misau, Katagum, Dilara, Shira, Hadejia, and Zazzau. Dan Yaya's reply survives in a letter in Arabic, and it shows him to be literate as well as diplomatic:

From the Khalifa of Ningi, Usman Dan Yaya, son of Malam Haruna Baba, best greetings, good will and respect to the Sultan of Kano, Muhammad Bello, son of the late Ibrahim Dabo. Your letter has reached us and we have read it and understood what is in it completely. And as for me, I ask peace of you, peace between us and you; for peace [aman] is in the hands of God and his Prophet [i.e., you cannot avoid making peace because it is God's will]. And if there is recognition of justice between us, send to us one of your servants of whom you approve, and I will make the covenant with him for this aman, which will not be broken if God wills. This is the extent of my desire. This is all Peace (Bauprof Vol. 1, #58:65).

As before, Ningi was resorting to the strategy of peace when the balance of forces had become unfavorable. But the balance had not shifted so far as to make aman unattractive to Emir Bello as well and from 1891 to 1893, when Bello's reign ended, Kano and Ningi were once again briefly at peace.

From 1894 on, Dan Yaya's unpopularity with his own people grew. The resumption of hostilities with Kano brought no rewards. While Ningi's defenses weakened, Kano built up its own line of interlocking towns that protected successfully its own borders against raids. Finally, in 1895, Emir Aliyu of Kano invaded Ningi and followed this up with another raid in 1898. In one of these raids, he reportedly took 1,000 slaves; and he burned the granaries of the Kafin Dan Yaya estate and destroyed other crops (Robinson 1896:205-8). But in the long run, the forces remained in balance. While insecurity grew and trade came to standstill, the raiding and counter-raiding between Ningi and the surrounding emirates went on intermittently until the coming of British rule.

THE END OF INDEPENDENT NINGI

The colonial expeditionary force left Bauchi for Ningi on July 23, 1902—a seventy-five man detachment of the West African Frontier Force, equipped with one Maxim gun, led by Captain Monck-Mason, and aided by Bauchi (S.N.P. 15, 1902:1-17). When the force arrived in Ningi, Dan Yaya refused its offer of peace, declaring that they must either go away or stand and fight: "Your lies are finished (karyanku ya kare)," he said. But Dan Yaya's forces were no match for the new enemy: the colonial troops entered the town and sprayed it with bullets. Ningi suffered some fifty casualties, mostly among the palace guard. It was now clear to all the mountaineers that Dan Yaya's rule was at an end. The Buta turned against him and Dan Yaya fled his capital. He was found by the Buta of Sama on July 25. Sitting under a tree, he told the Buta to send a small boy to shoot him with a non-poisonous arrow, since special charms protected him from poisonous ones. The boy came and did as he was told. Thus, like most Ningi rulers (with the exception of Haruna, who died in the palace) Dan Yaya died a violent death. The local frontier on which Ningi's history had been made was now gone, swept up by the larger moving frontier of colonial rule.

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